

protective tariffs. His investigations in foreign countries convinced him that this belief must be surrendered. He became satisfied that other countries in adopting the policy of stimulating their manufactures by laying duties upon imports had not carried this policy to the stultifying extreme of taxing raw materials or partly manufactured substances which were to be subjected to further processes of manufacture; and he saw that while such a policy might enrich a few interests, it was necessarily detrimental to almost all industries of high grade, and tended to reduce the wages of skilled laborers. What was of even more importance he observed that such countries as Austria and Russia, whose manufacturers were most clamorous for protective duties, were precisely the countries where the lowest wages were paid, and he was forced to the conclusion that the payment of high wages in connection with the use of the most improved machinery was a proof, not of industrial weakness, but of industrial strength. In this way Mr. Wells found himself logically committed to the fundamental position in the theory of free trade, that general high wages are the result of a low cost of production and cannot possibly be produced by government interference.

Mr. Wells' proposed revision of the tariff, together with an elaborate report upon the revenue resources of the country, was submitted to congress, with the hearty endorsement of Secretary McCulloch, in December, 1867. It was embodied in a bill, and, strange as it seems in these days, came very near becoming a law. It passed the senate by a vote of 27 to 10. In the house it failed by a few votes in the closing hours of the session. It was impossible to get it before the house, except by a motion to suspend the rules, for which 106 votes were cast against 64 in the negative, not the required two-thirds. There are not many occasions upon which a change of half-a-dozen votes would have been attended with more far reaching political results.

In the matter of protective tariffs, however, the motto of the faithful has always been *Nulla vestigia retrorsum*, and the dominant influences in the republican party at that time were extremely hostile to the changed views which Mr. Wells expressed. Upon the publication of his report for 1869 Horace Greeley publicly asserted that Mr. Wells had been corrupted by British gold through the agency of A. T. Stewart. Mr. Stewart was extremely angry at the charge and wished Mr. Wells to bring an action for libel, several leading New York lawyers volunteering to conduct the proceedings, but Mr. Wells declined to seek a vindication of this character. His retirement from office at the expiration of his term became a foregone conclusion, President Grant assigning the personal dislike of Secretary Boutwell

to Mr. Wells as his reason for refusing to reappoint him, in case the office should be continued; but his services had been so plainly advantageous to the country that the leading members of both houses of congress, without distinction of party, united in offering him a public testimonial. The four volumes of the reports of the special commissioner of revenue, published in 1866-69, are among the standard works of statistical science, and although, of course, not popularly known, are probably the most enduring monument to Mr. Wells' capacity as a financier. They have given him a distinction in other countries that has, perhaps, been attained by no other American who has labored in this department of statesmanship.

Mr. Wells, however, was not allowed to retire to private life. As soon as it was known that he was no longer to be employed by the national government, the state of New York sought his counsel in the examination of the laws relating to local taxation, and he was made chairman of the commission appointed for this purpose. The investigation which he made was the most thorough that had ever been made of the various questions relating to local taxation. The distinguishing feature of the report was the abolition of all taxation of personal property (except that of moneyed corporations), and the substitution of a tax on the rental value of dwellings, to be assessed against the occupier, whether he be owner or tenant. The theory of this recommendation was that since personal property in its modern forms cannot, as a general rule, be found by the assessor, the best available index of wealth of an individual is the house that he lives in. The report was not adopted however, by the legislature.

In 1872 Mr. Wells was invited to lecture upon political science at Yale college, and in the same year he was chosen a delegate to the democratic national convention, occupying the position again in 1880. In 1876 he was a candidate for congressional representative from Connecticut, his residence being at Norwich in that state, but with the same lack of success as in 1890, the district being then as now overwhelmingly republican. He was appointed in 1876 one of the receivers of the Alabama and Chattanooga railroad, and in a little more than a year restored it to a condition of solvency, besides expending a considerable sum out of earnings for repairs and improvements. In 1877 he was chosen by the board of canal commissioners of the state of New York chairman of a commission to consider the tolls on the canals, and in 1878 made an exhaustive report upon that subject. At about the same time he became one of the trustees of the bondholders of the Erie railway for the purchase of that road at the foreclosure sale, and took part in its reorganization. While a director of the road in 1879 he was selected

by the associated railroads of the United States as one of the board of arbitration to which they agreed to refer their disputes over the apportionment of their earnings from competitive business, acting in this capacity for two years.

Mr. Wells' abilities as an economist were early recognized in foreign countries. He was elected a member of the Cobden club in 1870, and was invited to deliver the annual address before that club in 1873; became an honorary member of the Statistical Society of England in 1871; was elected foreign associate of the French Academy of Political Science in 1874, to fill the chair made vacant by the death of John Stuart Mill, and of the Regia Accademia dei Lincei of Italy in 1877, receiving its medal of honor from the latter society in 1873. The Berkshire Medical college honored him with the degree of M. D. in 1863, Williams college with that of LL.D. in 1871, and he received the degree of D.C.L. from Oxford in 1874, and that of LL.D. from Harvard in 1890. He was president of the American Social Science association from 1875-9, of the New London county (Conn.) Historical Society in 1880, and of the American Free Trade League in 1881.

In addition to the works already mentioned, Mr. Wells published, in 1875, "The Creed of the Free Trader" and "The Production and Distribution of Wealth;" in 1876, "Robinson Crusoe's Money;" in 1878, "Why We Trade, and How We Trade" and "The Silver Question; or, the Dollar of the Fathers vs. the Dollar of the Sons;" in 1882, "Our Mercantile Marine: How it Rose, Increased, Became Great, Declined, and Decayed;" in 1884, "The Primer of Tariff Reform;" in 1886, "Principles of Taxation;" in 1887, "A Study of Mexico;" in 1888, "A Short and Simple Catechism" and the "Relation of the Tariff to Wages." In 1887 he visited Newfoundland for the purpose of ascertaining on the spot the facts of the fisheries question, giving the results of his investigation in a speech before the Reform Club in New York. This speech contains all the information that is required for the speedy settlement of the dispute, and whenever the national government shall cease to consider it necessary to keep the sore running, Mr. Wells' suggestions will be put in practice.

Mr. Wells' last, and in some respects most important book, appeared in 1889, under the title "Recent Economic Changes." The substance of this book had been published as a series of articles in the Popular Science Monthly, the title there being "Economic Disturbances Since 1873." No recent work in economics has aroused more general interest than this, and it is peculiarly instructive at the present crisis. With a mastery of detail possessed by few practical men, Mr. Wells combined, in this treatise, an almost equally remark-