

cheap food. Agricultural implements, which are so necessary for the resurrection of island cultivation, and the adoption of modern machinery to aid in lower cost and larger crops, are free. Rough lumber for mills, coopers' materials for sugar, molasses, and tobacco, and bags for coffee, are free.

"Carriages to cheapen transportation and trees and plants to give variety in crops by raising large and small fruits, for which the island is particularly adapted, are free, as are all drugs which are used in the malarial diseases of tropical countries. In a word, every product of the farm or factory in the United States which will help Porto Rico, enable her to rise triumphant from her ruins, and give remunerative use for capital and employment and wages to her people, is on the free list."

Can this be the same Mr. Depew who, for so many years, has been telling the American farmer that the tax on the machinery he uses was paid by the foreigner, as a contribution for the privilege of selling his goods in American markets? If the arguments advanced heretofore by Mr. Depew have any foundation, instead of its being a kindness to the Porto Ricans to remove the tariff upon articles imported from this country, it is an act of positive injustice as it deprives them of a donation from American manufacturers and producers of food products. If Mr. Depew's original political philosophy is wrong, and his late admissions indicate that he believes it to be, then a tariff upon the importation of articles used by the American farmer is unjust and unwarranted. THE CONSERVATIVE is curious to know what sort of a protective argument Mr. Depew will advance when addressing an audience of American voters.

THE PORTO RICO BILL.

The Porto Rican tariff bill passed the senate Tuesday, April 3d, by a vote of 40 to 31. The debate was the most exciting of any since the discussion of the war resolutions two years ago. The bill was passed by a party vote. The republicans voting against it were Davis, Nelson, Mason, Hoar, Proctor, Simon and Wellington. The democrat voting for was McEnery; silver republicans, Jones and Stewart; and populist, Kyle. The bill as amended by the senate provides for a duty of 15 per cent of the Dingley rate upon goods exported from Porto Rico to the United States and free trade upon most of the food products and agricultural implements imported from this country. The tariff is to continue until the local government of Porto Rico makes provision to raise the necessary revenue by local taxation. The main argument advanced in support of the bill was the necessity of establishing a precedent relative to the constitutional status of the new territory, whether the guarantees of the constitution extended

to them of their own force or whether the privileges of citizenship were dependent upon congressional action. The republicans in passing the measure have committed themselves to the position that the constitution does not apply while the democrats believe it does. The issue is thus clearly defined and will without doubt assume a position of pre-eminence above all other questions in the approaching presidential campaign.

THE BOER WAR.

The past week in South Africa developed several startling incidents. Colonel Broadhead, who was in command of a small detachment about 38 miles to the east of Bloemfontein was warned of the approach of the Boers and hastily retired towards the water works, 17 miles nearer Bloemfontein. He arrived there the night of March 30th and the following morning was attacked by a large force of Boers from three sides. He dispatched two batteries of artillery and his baggage toward Bloemfontein. They had only gotten about two miles out when, in a deep ravine, they encountered a strong force of the enemy, who had concealed themselves there during the night. The surprise was complete. The drivers were shot down at short range, seven guns and all the baggage were captured. The British casualties were 350.

This is another illustration of the weakness of British generalship in a lack of proper scouting that has been so evident throughout the war. When surrounded by a superior force of the enemy it was folly for Colonel Broadhead to detach a small portion of his command and send it out without first having ascertained the position of the enemy and the condition of the road. The scouting tactics of the American army would make impossible such reverses.

Broadhead was reinforced by General French and an effort made to route the Boers from the water works but was unsuccessful. General French then retired toward Bloemfontein, leaving the water works in the possession of the enemy. General Roberts is being severely criticised for leaving a small body of men 38 miles from Bloemfontein when a superior force of the enemy was in the vicinity. If he knew of the presence of this force he might have felt assured they would not let such a splendid opportunity pass unimproved. If he did not know it, it displays a weakness in generalship in not obtaining information so important and so easy of acquisition. The London Times thus comments upon the situation:

"One is involuntarily reminded of the observation made by the late Commandant Joubert to an English friend, some little time before the war began, when he said: 'Your officers have not much brains, and, what is far worse,

they don't believe that other people have any.'"

A few days later another force of the British, consisting of 500 men, were surrounded within a few miles of Bloemfontein and all taken prisoners. The Boers made their escape with their prisoners without leaving any trace of their route. It is these altogether too frequent surprise parties and the kidnapping of large bodies of British soldiers that is proving so humiliating to London. It is now quite apparent that the pacification of the Free Staters was only pretended and that they are in large numbers rejoining the Boer army. The recent successes of the latter has greatly revived their hopes.

THE CIVIL SERVICE.

It is well, at this time, to remind the people of the plank in the Chicago platform relative to the civil service and the manner in which Bryan construed the same. In his letter of acceptance, he thus refers to this plank:

"Without entering into details, I suggest that it is possible to place the civil service upon a substantial foundation, by providing a fixed term for appointments—with the possibility of one reappointment in case of special merit—the appointments to be divided among all political parties in proportion to their political strength, and among the states in proportion to their population."

The American people are beginning to realize the necessity of an efficient civil service, based upon the merit system, or the appointment of men as a result of competitive examinations without inquiry into their political affiliations, with the tenure dependent upon good behavior and not upon party expediency. In order to attract a high grade of intelligence to the service, merit must be recognized and the tenure must be certain. Otherwise, good men could not afford, upon the present basis of compensation, to put in the best part of their lives in acquiring the special knowledge requisite for the efficient and faithful performance of duty. The change suggested by Bryan, of dividing (?) the appointments among the political parties, would make partisan considerations, not merit, the basis of appointment. The limiting of the tenure to one or two terms, as the appointive power might determine, would destroy the certainty of the employment and thereby make ineffective the reforms in the civil service. President Cleveland labored so faithfully and industriously to bring about Bryan's renomination, in addition to the opposition it would meet with among sound money men, and the more conservative element of American voters, would be vigorously opposed again, as it was in 1896, by the friends of civil service reform.