

### FREE TRADE AND FOREIGN MARKETS.

All the earlier advocates of "protection," notably Henry Clay, its greatest apostle, urged it as the temporary means of building up American manufactures, which, they claimed, when once well developed, would maintain themselves without further government support, or permanent burden upon the people. Said Clay: "No one in the commencement of the protective policy ever supposed that it was to be perpetual." Declared Garfield: "I am for a protection that leads to free trade." Surely we have now reached that stage to which they looked forward, when our industries are fully grown and established, and abundantly able to stand alone. This is demonstrated by the vast and increasing number and quantities of manufactured goods we are sending abroad—fifty million dollars in value last year. In sober fact the country has at last fairly outgrown "protection," granting all its pretended needs in the beginning. Certainly the great lines of manufacturers now seeking foreign markets have nothing to fear from free trade. They cross the ocean and undersell the foreigner in his own market. How then can he compete with them in their home? There is no doubt that the great majority of American manufactures could today successfully sustain unrestricted foreign competition and if there remain any who are still unable to do so, the "protection" which even the lowest and most strictly revenue tariff that we can have for many years would give, should be sufficient. Every intelligent man knows that our manufactures are now so developed—and whether by means of or in spite of "protection" matters not—that they glut the home market and are overflowing into foreign markets on all sides. They no longer need "protection" against the foreigner; no longer can it do them any good as against them. But the cry is now raised that even if not needed, "protection" can do no harm and should be preserved as a wall of defense for the future. The plea is a specious one, and calls for a little scrutiny. It does not follow necessarily that a measure that does no good, can work no harm; indeed the reverse is true in most cases, and this on examination will be found a striking instance of that fact.

No harm that the country is overrun by "protection" born trusts like noxious weeds which keep the prices of steel, lumber, coal, glass, lead, salt, and scores of other articles above the level of fair cost and profit? No harm that every consumer in the land is forced to pay tribute to these monopolists, who, having foreign competition shut out for their "protection," promptly combine to stop domestic competition, and exact every cent possible from the people? No harm, then why are so many public men and

journals, republican as well as democratic and independent, lamenting this state of things, and declaring that the true way to correct it is to abolish the "protection" which gave it birth?

#### Sell Cheaper Abroad.

The victor in the great struggle for the world's markets will be the nation that produces goods at the least cost and sells them at the lowest price. Every cent of extra cost levied by these trusts upon the articles used in manufacturing is a burden upon our industries and a handicap in the race for foreign trade. The aim and effort and effect of protectionists and trust monopolists alike is to hold up prices to an abnormal level, a level higher than the natural one. When nearly every material of manufactures is thus raised in price, even though in some cases the extra cost is slight, the goods produced must be greatly enhanced in cost, and so much less able to compete in price in foreign markets. But how much greater is the handicap when the tariff trusts actually sell their products abroad cheaper than they will at home. The public little knows how extensively this has been done, and is being done, but the discrimination in this way of the great steel trusts is so flagrant that it is attracting general attention. They have been selling steel plates by thousands of tons to British shipyards at prices far below what they exact from American shipbuilders. And some of the very men responsible for such unpatriotic discrimination against their own countrymen are foremost in trying to force the ship subsidy bill through Congress on the ground that American shipyards cannot compete with British. Let any one who doubts these facts read the report of the United States Commissioner of Navigation for October, 1900, and the Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance for last December of the Bureau of Statistics, pages 1,393, 1,396, 1,401.

The Boston Herald of Feb. 10th gives another instance. It says that two great steel companies, the Illinois Steel Co. of Chicago and the Lorain Steel Co. of Cleveland, have just sold 17,400 tons of steel rails to be delivered in Melbourne, Australia, for \$28.65 per ton. The price in the United States is, and has been for some time, \$26 at the mill. Deducting the cost of transportation to Melbourne, not less than \$10 a ton, and the price at which these companies sold their steel rails in Australia is only \$18 or \$19 a ton, which is \$7 or \$8 less than the price they exact from American railroads. Does the "protection" on steel rails of \$7.84 a ton work no harm, which enables these great steel companies to grant such advantages to foreign customers, while denying them to American? This tariff-trust policy of high prices artificially maintained at home, and selling goods abroad at low prices

will make America pay tribute to the world at large, and convert her foreign trade from a benefit into a grievous burden.

A like burden is thrown upon all our industries by the "protection" on the raw materials of manufactures, such as wool, flax, hemp, hides, ores, coal, lumber and many other articles which enhances their cost to the manufacturer even when not aggravated by trusts. No other civilized nation, not even highly protected France or Germany, thus taxes the food of their factories, the materials upon which their artisans exercise their skill, and adds an extra and unnecessary cost upon their products to handicap them in the race for the world's trade. Under modern conditions and competition the manufacturer in order to succeed must draw his supplies from the whole world, wherever he can find them best and cheapest. This is particularly the case with woollen manufactures, in which a variety of different wools only to be found in different countries are absolutely necessary, and the same is true of the iron and steel works and measurably of many other manufactures. Over and over again have the woollen manufacturers pointed out how heavy a load such "protection" on wool imposes upon their industry, and how indispensable is the use of foreign wool to mix with native, but all in vain. The political shepherds have protected wool until both the wool grower and wool manufacturer are languishing unto death.

#### Prosperity of Unprotected Boot and Shoe Industries.

The American boot and shoe manufacturers, owing to the superior skill and efficiency of the highly-paid American workman, are now beating the world in their goods, both in quality and cheapness, and are beginning to send them widely abroad. As an encouragement to their enterprise, skill and industry, the Dingley act took hides from the free list, where they were for many years, and laid a duty of 15 per cent upon them, which gave just so much "protection" to the great Chicago meat packers, who alone reap any benefit from it, and added just so much to the cost of boots and shoes, and made the struggle to introduce them into foreign markets so much the harder. How can our manufacturers compete for foreign trade under such burdens with any hope of success? Must they always have to contend with their own government as well as with the foreign competitor?

Perhaps the greatest evil and burden of this so-called "protection" to the people at large, especially to the great agricultural producers, lies in its restriction and prohibition of imports. Products for products is the rule of commerce. Imports shut out, only keep exports shut in. National trade cannot