

FREE TRADE AND AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS.

[By Henry Ware Allen, of El Paso, Tex.]

The experience of American manufacturers has been that, while protective legislation has at first given positive advantages to the industries protected, the ultimate effect of this stimulus, except where combinations for the purpose of preventing domestic competition have been affected, has been to attract increased competition, to force production beyond its normal limit, and so to do more harm than good to the branches of trade affected. Where competition has had free play, any special privilege to the American manufacturer has been dissipated by the natural factors of supply and demand. When a manufacturer pays duty on raw material, he adds this duty to the selling price of his product, of course; but he gets no more special advantage from having to pay this unnaturally high first cost than he would get by having to pay excessively high rates for rent, fuel, or wages. So that this prejudice against manufacturers, which exists especially in the West, is not well founded.

That the manufacturers interested in this league expect to benefit directly or indirectly by the advent of free trade will not be denied. The advantages which they aim to secure by absolute free trade, however, are not intended to be secured at the expense of any other interest, by the granting of special privileges, or by any favors whatsoever of the government. What they would do is simply to remove the unjust and discriminating taxes which hamper trade. The motto of the league might well be "Live and let live." The same idea is expressed by the motto it has adopted, "Equal Rights to All, Special Privileges to None."

A curious phase of economic inconsistency on the part of upholders of custom-houses is illustrated by their zeal in advocating the annexation of foreign domains. They annex the Sandwich Islands, Porto Rico, the Philippines, and would annex Cuba, Mexico, and Canada. Yet these same patriots would spare neither naval extravagance nor the lives of armed guards in keeping out, so far as possible, these countries' products at the present time. They instinctively realize, in spite of their economic creed, that, as free trade over the mighty domain of the United States is clearly a benefit to all concerned, free trade over a larger area would be proportionately more desirable; but with foreigners—never! Their only alternative is to secure this free trade by the clumsy method of making fellow-citizens of the cigar-makers of Cuba, the miners of Mexico, or the mongrel population of Hawaii.

The narrowing of trade to our "home market" is not a business proposition, and is advocated only by those jingo

patriots who are on principle opposed to everything foreign simply because it is foreign, and those trusts which by means of "protection" are monopolizing the home market. Those pseudo-patriotic fraternities, home market clubs, have reason enough to be satisfied with our present tariff law. Numerous manufacturing industries in New England, having prohibited the Newfoundland coal supply, have no alternative but to shut down their works, as many have done, or to get their supply in the Pennsylvania "home market" at unnaturally high cost. The importation of Mexican ores being heavily taxed, American capital has been forced over into Mexico to build smelters there. True, this has taken millions upon millions of dollars away from American manufacturers; but it has served admirably in giving "home market" distinction to a few of our mining camps. The tariff war precipitated by our recent tariff reform enactment has also caused European powers to boycott certain of our staple products, but American live stock may thereby feel more secure in the prospect of having their carcasses strung up in a home market; and, if the sugar trust is felt to be a trifle oppressive, our national pride may be flattered by knowing that it, like the steel rail trust, the lead trust, the whiskey trust, the cordage trust, and the bicycle trust, is a product of our home market.

American manufacturers have in times past, with great expense and risk, succeeded in establishing certain channels of trade with foreign countries only to have an American congress, to please some political party, clap on a new tariff which has entirely upset trade conditions and ruined large investments. These acts of commercial hostility on the part of our government have then been followed by retaliatory tariffs on the part of aggrieved nations, thus ruining or greatly injuring other channels of trade. Then, after commerce had again adapted itself to new conditions, another set of politicians at Washington has provided new schedules, and so made an entirely new adaptation again necessary, and so on.

Year after year the tariff has been a football for political parties, a plaything and stock in trade of politicians, while commercial interests have been jeopardized, sacrificed, ruined, our manufacturers having accepted this interference with commerce as an inevitable condition.

But the American Free Trade League is an expression of an awakened consciousness of natural rights: it is a new Declaration of Independence. A large manufacturer said not long ago in an address delivered before the Kansas City Commercial Club: "The pretensions and the usurpation of politics have grown apace in the United States until every business in the country is

subjected to their capricious control. There lurks a danger in this condition of affairs which cannot be overestimated. If matters have come to such a pass that important interests which have grown up under long-established law are ruthlessly torn down; if the security of capital invested in mills, in railroads, in the building up of towns, is endangered; nay, if the commerce between nations can be destroyed for the sole purpose of political reward or advantage,—it is indeed time that the business men of the country should assert their rights."

HOUSE CLEANING.

Now we dig the insides out of our houses, throw the contents out on the grass, let the fire go out and invite the spring sun and wind to do their purifying work on the scene of our hibernation. The birds have a better way. How nice it would be if we could all have clean new houses every spring! Something like the Japanese paper and bamboo houses; take a sunny day, pile your furniture out in the yard, set fire to your house and telephone down town (if you had saved the telephone) for another. The birds have a distinct advantage in one respect, however. They don't have to worry about plans. The Creator has agreed with each little bird upon a design for his abode, which is perfectly satisfactory to both parties. He has made no such arrangement with women. If housekeepers had to decide on a new set of plans every spring it would be more trouble than cleaning house.

HIS MONUMENT.

Somebody—we don't care for his name—died the other day somewhere, and the papers all over the world (at least all over the part we can see from here) began to print his picture. It seems that when he was very young he wrote a forlorn set of doggerel rhymes about Sweet Alice and Ben Bolt; and that years afterward another man wrote a book in which he quoted these rhymes; and that the public took a fancy to this book, on account largely of the heroine's feet, though the book, feet, heroine and all are forgotten long ago.

Now all this taken together constitutes Fame, and the papers say that those rhymes made this man famous and are his monument. As for himself, he is reported to have expressed his estimation of them on his death-bed in the following remarkable language: "Damn Ben Bolt."

All of which goes to show that some men have greatness thrust upon them.