

THE JOURNAL.

SUPPLEMENT.

THE GREAT ISSUE.

For the first time since the present generation came on the carpet, the people of the United States are called upon to decide squarely the main question of protection or free trade. Upon this subject, the platforms of the two great parties declare as follows:

REPUBLICAN.

We affirm the doctrine of protection. We call attention to its growth abroad. We maintain that the prosperous condition of our country is largely due to the wise revenue legislation of the Republican Congress. We believe that all articles which cannot be produced in the United States, except luxuries, should be admitted free of duty, and that on all imports coming into competition with the products of American labor there should be duties levied equal to the difference between wages abroad and at home.

DEMOCRATIC.

We denounce the Republican policy of protection as a fraud on the labor of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few. We declare it to be a fundamental principle of the Democratic party that the Federal Government has no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties except for purposes of revenue only, and we demand that the collection of such taxes shall be limited to the necessities of the Government when honestly and economically administered.

We denounce the McKinley Tariff Law enacted by the Fifty-first Congress as the culminating atrocity of class legislation; we endorse the efforts made by the Democrats of the present Congress to modify its most oppressive features in the direction of free raw materials and cheaper manufactured goods that enter into general consumption; and we promise its repeal as one of the beneficent results that will follow the action of the people in intrusting power to the Democratic party.

The Democratic party has played with the tariff question for many years. It has sung of "tariff reform," and talked softly of "incidental protection," but as for downright free trade, it has denied the impeachment as vigorously as Peter denied his Lord. At the same time it has done its best to make the people dissatisfied with protection. No matter what law has been in force, from the Morrill tariff to the McKinley bill, it has been denounced as unjust and unfair. There has been a manifest insincerity and inconsistency in its position all the time. Its voice has been the voice of Jacob, but its hands have been the hands of Esau. It has talked of tariff reform, but its arguments have been pleas for free trade. Now at last it confesses the truth of the charge which Republicans have made for years, that it is really a party of free trade. It declares that "the Federal Government has no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties, except for the purposes of revenue only." This goes to the bottom of the question. It denounces protection in every form and degree as unconstitutional. Congress may tax imports, but "for revenue only"—plain words with plain meaning. A duty on imported commodities the like of which are not produced in our own country, produces revenue, and revenue only. It protects nothing, for of those things there is nothing here to protect. Of that class of commodities are tea, coffee, India-rubber, quinine, bananas, pine-apples, and other tropical productions. By our present policy, all these come in free, while articles which compete with the products of our farms, mines and factories pay duty. The two systems are squarely opposed, both in theory and operation. One is the free-trade tariff of England; the other the present protective tariff of the United States. It is protection or free trade now, sure and certain.

To the giddy and light-headed, who care for none of these things, and to those who follow party leadership blindly, this signifies little. But there are men who think, and upon them is cast the whole responsibility for their country's welfare at a time like this. This is the thinker's campaign.

THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF PROTECTION.

An Address delivered before the Morton Club, at Fort Wayne, October 1, 1892, by Robert S. Taylor.

I hope you will not take it as an act of irreverence if I begin what I have to say to-night with a quotation from the scripture. "And God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

The part of this text pertinent to the present subject is the last two words—"subdue it." The divine command to man is to subdue the earth, all of it, in all its materials, productions, elements and forces to his own use.

The English political economists, from whom American teachers of that science have borrowed most of their theories, include among the maxims on which they base their reasonings one to the effect that man always seeks to gratify his desires with the least possible exertion. Henry George, who adopts the most fallacious parts of the old science as the foundation for a still more fallacious superstructure of his own, says of this principle that it is to political economy what the law of gravitation is to physics.

Applied to international commerce this maxim leads directly to free trade. If a man can gratify his desires with less exertion by producing some one commodity and exchanging that for the others which his wants require, his natural disposition will be to seek those exchanges, wherever he can make them to best present advantage, whether at home or abroad. So plausible is this argument, if the premise be admitted, and so easy is it to admit premises which have the sanction of scientific authority, that it is common to hear protectionists concede that free trade is undoubtedly right in theory, but is open to objections in practice.

Curiously enough, however, of all the writers who have employed this maxim not one has justified his resort to it by the further proposition that it is best for mankind that every man shall gratify his desires with the least possible exertion. But, manifestly, unless this is true, the maxim has no practical value. That the general disposition of men is to get as much enjoyment with as little labor as possible is not to be doubted. But it may be that to follow that disposition is not always the road to the greatest good. It is the province of political economy to point out how the energies of man can be most effectively applied to the production of wealth, taking that word to cover all material things which contribute to happiness. That this way is to be found in the guidance of enlightened judgment rather than blind impulse need not be said.

And when the question is put directly no one will say that to gratify our desires with the least present exertion is the highest good. On the contrary, the highest good is to make the greatest exertion. Man's best achievements are his victories over the forces of nature. It is these that bring him power, growth and wealth. Just in proportion as he subdues the earth he rises in the scale of being. The South Sea Islander plucks his bread from a tree; the New Englander bakes his from flour ground from grain grown on soil subjugated by labor and skill. Who eats the better bread? And which process of bread making develops the better race of men?

The people of the Argentine Republic export annually over twenty million dollars worth of raw hides and skins, of which the greater part are sent to England. There they go through the hands of skillful workmen, and are turned first into leather, and then into the thousand and one things made of leather, and a portion of the product is sent back in exchange for more hides. So long as cattle are plenty it may cost the South American ranchers less exertion to lasso

and skin them and exchange their hides for English-made boots and saddles than to carry on the business of tanning and manufacturing themselves. But when they have done that a hundred years what are they? Skinners of cattle still. Meanwhile their English customers have been studying chemistry, inventing machines and processes, training skilled operatives, and building up a great and beautiful industry—that of transforming the perishable skins of dead animals into forms of permanent use and beauty. What was once the coat of the king of the herd becomes a belt transmitting the power of an engine to thousands of spindles; what was the baby jacket of the youngest of his family furnishes a binding for Tennyson's poems, to be used, admired, enjoyed for a hundred years. Who, in this interchange of commodities gets the most and the highest good from the cattle on the South American plains?

THE STEAM ENGINE.

We are never tired of dilating upon the wonders which the steam engine has worked in the world. And, indeed, it is a subject upon which exaggeration is scarcely possible. But how has it brought mankind such incalculable good? Partly in mere diminution of labor, undoubtedly, but more in the development of the race. The men who design, make and use steam machinery and its accessories form the most splendid army that ever trod the earth. Here is one of them—a plain looking man in soiled overalls and with work-hardened hands. He modestly calls himself a mechanic. But he has the brain, the eye, the hand to fashion and join together the parts and organs of that king among machines—a locomotive engine. Not a man, not all the men on the face of the earth nine generations ago could have done it. By his side stands his comrade the engineer—the bravest soldier in the industrial army, a true hero in the service of humanity. Who does not doff his mind's cap in involuntary admiration to see him mount the footboard to take out his train? The grandest acts become commonplace by repetition; but when one stops to think of the wild charge of the night express into the battlements of darkness, and of the courage and nerve of the one man whose eye is on the track and whose hand is on the throttle, he must be made of soggy clay whose pulse does not quicken as though he read of the stand of the Greeks at Thermopylae, or the charge of the Old Guard at Waterloo.

The steam engine has cheapened the cost of all commodities. But a more important fact is, that it has increased the consumption of them. It has multiplied our wants and created new ideals of happiness and standards of comfort. Men's desires have so grown with their growth that it costs as much exertion to gratify them now as it ever did—if any odds, more. But life has become a new experience. Once beggars from nature, we have become her taskmasters. It is a good thing to have the steam engine transport us and our goods over the world swiftly and cheaply, and take the place of human bone and muscle in the labor of life, but greater than this is the change it has wrought in us. It has lifted us up to a new place in the universe; it has made us lords and masters of fire and water; it has enabled us to accomplish more in the subjugation of the earth within the last hundred years than our predecessors accomplished in five thousand years preceding.

ELECTRICITY.

Man's latest triumph over the forces of nature is the conquest of electricity. In all our schools young men are eagerly studying its nature and laws. Inventors are wrestling with its problems, and thousands of workmen are building and learning to build those weird, mysterious machines by which it is turned into light, heat and power. In a few years the occupations of electrical engineering and mechanics will rival

the steam engineering and mechanics of to-day; and, like them, will be occupations to develop the best powers of all who enter them. The electric light is a beautiful thing, and the electric car is a convenient thing, but the coming electrical army is more than either.

Suppose, to put a very extreme case, that we could make a bargain with England to supply us with all the electrical apparatus we shall use for a hundred years to come and take her pay in potatoes. We have the land; potato culture is one of the simplest forms of labor; such a market for such a crop would realize a free trader's fondest dream. And yet, who would not pronounce it folly to make such a bargain? What price could she pay us for the tubers that would compensate us for the loss of the industry?

THE LESSON OF HISTORY.

Not to pursue these illustrations further, the sum of the truth which they suggest is, that the highest good of man is to be found in the largest victory over the forces of nature. Out of every such battle he comes equipped anew for further conquests, and with keener powers of enjoyment and stronger desires to urge him on. All history bears witness to this great truth. Man's first step toward civilization was to subdue the useful animals, to domesticate flocks and herds; his next was to subdue the soil and cultivate fields; his next was to sail the sea. So were laid the foundations of agriculture and commerce. Along with these came clothes-making, house-building, pottery, metal working, glass-blowing, and a long train of useful arts which led the favored branches of the race to a comparatively high civilization. But all this was slow and painful progress compared with that which has been exhibited by some nations within the last two or three centuries. And of this progress one of the remarkable features is its inequality. There are a few nations still in the barbarous state of a thousand years ago; a good many that have advanced only by outside influence and pressure, and a few that go forward by irresistible powers of their own, drawing the whole world after them. And, if we look closely into the conditions which accompany these widely different stages of progress, we shall find in every case that they correspond to the relative advance of the people in the work of subduing the earth. A people who live by the bow and arrow are a barbarous community the world over. A people who live on flocks and herds and the productions of the soil at first hand, are poor, simple-minded, backward and unprogressive. The rich and powerful nations, the leaders of the world's progress, the nations within whose borders Art and Science flourish and life rises highest, are the nations that practice and reward invention, make and use machinery, and compel every element and force of nature—water, air, sunshine, gravity, heat, electricity and all chemical affinities—to do service in ministering to the wants of man.

There was a time, ages ago, when the richest nation was the one owning most flocks and herds. There was a later time when commerce was the chief source of the greatest national wealth. But that time, too, has passed. Undoubtedly commerce is, and always will be, a means of large profit. But the main source of national wealth now, and for the future, so far as we can see it, is production; and of all production, those forms of it in which skilled and organized labor, aided by machinery, converts intrinsically valueless material into useful commodities. This is a fact often overlooked by tariff talkers. They cite the examples of Venice, and Holland and England, as though nothing were necessary in order to repeat those achievements but to open our ports and man our ships, and sail away for golden fleeces. But the world has taken a new departure since

those days. The best business of mankind no longer consists in carrying things about, but in making them.

THE FUNDAMENTAL TEST.

Upon the foundation of these simple principles we can now approach the tariff question. Every one will agree that, as between protection and free trade, that is the better policy which will promote in larger degree the real and permanent prosperity of the whole people in all their interests. Upon this issue there are many arguments and many kinds of argument on each side, all of which are valid, and some of which are weighty. But if the views already expressed are sound, the whole field of the inquiry can be covered by this comprehensive test: Which policy will for that nation, at that time, secure to its people the better opportunity and the stronger incentives to pursue with ardor those studies, arts and occupations which lead to the subjugation of the forces of nature to the service of man? This is the way upward. It is the road to wealth, power and happiness. All laws and policies which help in that direction are good; all which hinder are bad. All relations with foreign nations which promote that progress are useful; and all those which retard it are hurtful.

It is implied in this statement that protection is not necessarily and always and everywhere the better policy. And so I believe. It is in every case a question of time, place and circumstances. The very same reasoning which in one case demonstrates the superior advantages of protection may, in another, demonstrate the superior advantages of free trade. Of this fact, a complete illustration is found in the history and experience of the two greatest nations of the world to-day.

ENGLAND.

Fifty years ago no other nation had at once such combination of capital, machinery, inventive genius, skilled labor, ships, sailors and military and naval strength as England. With a hive of human bees crowding her little islands at home, with vast foreign possessions unsupplied with those commodities which labor-saving machinery was multiplying and cheapening, her ships, her flag and her wide-open ports were all that her people required to put within their grasp the commercial supremacy of the world. At the same time her situation was unfavorable for the highest development of the powers of her people within and among themselves. Her small area limited her natural productions to a few things. Wheat, grass, oats, barley, flax and vegetables were all her valuable crops. Of metals, she had only iron in abundance, with a partial supply of tin. In order to carry on manufacture upon a large and varied scale she must buy abroad all her cotton, and the greater part of her wool, silk, hides, copper and tin, besides all materials found only in tropical regions. She was obliged to buy largely of food, and with growth and prosperity must face the necessity of buying it still more largely in the future. She could not find profitable employment for all her people without manufactures, and with the improved processes which she had recently discovered she could not find sale among her own people for the commodities manufactured. In short, she had outgrown the resources of her home territory. She could not within her own borders feed her own people, or supply them with employment without manufactures, or furnish them with material to work upon at manufacture, or find a market for their productions.

She had come to this situation after long maintenance of a protective policy. Whether she could have reached it without the aid of protection, or not, is a question which I will not stop to discuss. The broad fact is, that she did reach a point at the end of some centuries of protection at which, in the matter of preparation for that conquest over the forces of nature which is the distin-