

MONDAY, MAY 14, 1888.

WHY HE IS A FREE TRADER.

A Shoe Manufacturer Who Was a Protectionist Until He Realized what it Meant. From the New York Standard.

A shoe manufacturer of this city, who employs between four and five hundred people, told a party of friends last Friday evening why he is now a free trader.

"I had been for many years," he said, "a protectionist because, as I had been told, the tariff duties, from the manufacturers' standpoint, kept up prices. Well, a month or so ago a buyer for a large firm in our line in Brazil came to New York and brought a letter to me. Of course, I paid him considerable attention, took him to my house and we became well acquainted. One day I said to him:

"What is the objection you South Americans have to trading with us?"

"We do not object to trading with you," answered the Brazilian; "in fact, the Brazilians would prefer to trade with the United States if they could do so on as favorable terms as with the English."

"Wherein are the English terms more favorable than ours would be?" I asked.

"Oh, well," he answered, "they probably do not pay so much for their labor, and as a consequence they can undersell you."

"I thought over his last words; they worried me; I thought to myself, if that obstacle could be removed I might come in for an order. I talked with my superintendent, my foreman and with some of my hands about the matter of wages, and how our higher priced labor made it impossible for me to do business with our Southern neighbors. One of my foremen gave me a pointer, which was that shoe workers in this country did more work in a day, owing to our improved machinery, than they did in the old country, and that when I came to find out the amount of work done for, say, a dollar in this country and England, I would see that, if anything, the shoe worker here got less for his work than the shoe worker across the water."

"If that was so—and upon investigation I found it was—I concluded I ought to be able to come pretty near getting an order from Brazil. So at the next opportunity I told him that if he had any loose orders he wanted filled I would like to figure on them. He had one, and a large one, that he had intended forwarding on to England, but if I could fill it at the English figure I could have it.

"It was for fine French calfskin shoes—genuine French calfskin—the kind of calfskin which only the French appear to be able to make. Well, I figured and figured away, with the assistance of the superintendent and foreman, and I got the labor item way down fine, and I put the calfskin and material in at cost, for I wanted to get the order if I could; and by the time all of us had got through figuring there was a mighty narrow margin for us, but we seemed to be certain that the order was ours."

"The next time my buyer friend and I met at the office, I told him what we would fill the order for."

"His answer was, 'Too high.' I thought he must be mistaken, and I pointed out to him what I have explained to you, but he assured me that the same order had been given time and again in England, and that the figure had always been so and so."

"I confess I was astonished. I knew that we had figured the labor down to below the English rate, and the materials had been put in at cost. I would have to get them from precisely the same country as my English competitors, so I couldn't understand it. The order went on its way. The more I thought over it the madder I got. Finally I determined to probe the matter to the bottom, and after persistent inquiry and considerable examination I found the reason."

"The duty on French calfskins coming into this country was what knocked me out of the Brazil order."

"To say that I was astonished, puzzled; that I kicked; that I jumped, swore, tore the ground up, would hardly express my feelings. A pair of great big hose blinds, window blinds, the biggest kind of blinds, fell from before my eyes, I thought to myself, 'What an ass have been!'" Here I had been for years a protectionist, because "protection protected manufacturers," only suddenly to find out that protection had done me out of an order, which, if I had got it, would have been certain to have brought me other orders, which would the least calculation have doubled my business. I could have doubled my working force, and paid them at least the same wages I do now. I tell you I was disgusted."

"Yes, gentlemen, I am now a free trader, and for business reasons. I have been spending all my spare time since I lost that order—and I have paid others to spend their time—in a close examination of the various tariffs and their relations to the interests of legitimate capital and legitimate labor in this country, and I have demonstrated, to my own satisfaction, at least, that free trade means money in my pocket, and more prosperity to the men who work at shoe making."

"And I am further convinced that when we have free trade in this country we can take all the South American markets away from England, and can give her a tight rib in all the other markets she now has in monopoly of."

"And I am also convinced from what I have learned in the last month that the Englishmen feel now that American free trade means business death to the English manufacturers."

The Job Was Stopped.

Talking together some time before the President's message about the evident need of a strong protection, of an anti-protectionist, and with a Pennsylvania firm which makes such finally to a Pennsylvanian, who has made a number of millions in growing land and selling timber, "Well, if this measure goes to the world, we can buy up the best tracks while."

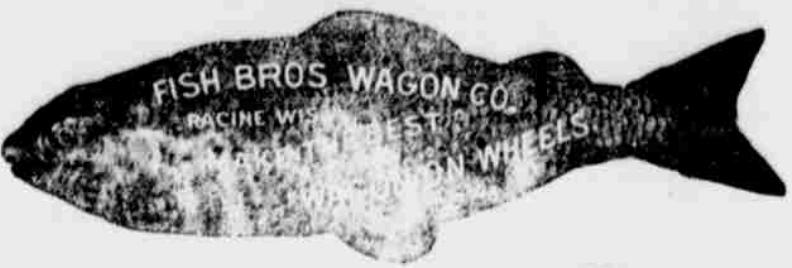
"Will you?" retorted the Virginian. "When you do, that job will be looped with Pennsylvania iron."

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