

PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE ?

By HENRY GEORGE.

CHAPTER V. (CONTINUED.)

THE PROTECTIVE UNIT.

Nor can there be any doubt that if our political organization made our townships independent of one another, we should have in our townships and villages the same clamor for protection against the industries of other townships and villages that we have now for the protection of the nations against other nations.

I am writing on Long Island, near the town of Jamaica. I think I could make as good an argument to the people of that little town as is made by the protectionists to the people of the United States. I could say to the shopkeepers of Jamaica, "Your townsmen now go to New York when they want to purchase a suit of clothes or a bill of dry goods, leaving to you the fag end of their custom, while the farmers' wagons that pass in a long line over the turnpike every night carrying produce to New York and Brooklyn bring back supplies the next day. A protective tariff will compel these purchases to be made here. Thus profits that now go to New York and Brooklyn will be retained in Jamaica; you will want larger stores and better houses, can pay your clerks and journeymen higher wages, will need more banking accommodations, will advertise more freely in Jamaica newspapers, and thus will the town grow and prosper."

"Moreover," I might say, "what a useless waste of labor there is in carrying milk and butter, chickens, eggs and vegetables to New York and Brooklyn and bring back other things. How much better for our farmers if they had a home market. This we can secure for them by a tariff that will protect Jamaican industries against New York and Brooklyn. Clothing, cigars, boots and shoes, agricultural implements and furniture may be manufactured here as well as in those cities. Why should we not have a cotton factory, a woolen mill, a foundry, and, in short, all the establishments necessary to supply the wants of our people? To get them we need only a protective tariff. Capital, when assured of protection will be gladly forthcoming for such enterprises, and we shall soon be exporting what we now import, while our farmers will find a demand at their doors for all their produce. Even if at first they do have to pay some what higher prices for what they buy they will be much more than compensated by the higher prices they will get for what they sell, and will save an eight or ten-mile haul to Brooklyn or New York. Thus, instead of Jamaica remaining a little village, the industries which a protective tariff will build up here will make it a large town while the increased demand for labor will make wages higher and employment steadier.

I submit that all this is at least as valid as the protective arguments that are addressed to the people of the whole United States, and no one who has listened to the talk of village shopkeepers or noticed the comments of local newspapers can doubt that were our townships independent, village protectionists could get as ready a hearing as national protectionists do now.

But to follow the protective

theory to its logical conclusions we cannot stop with protection between state and state, township and township, village and village. If protection be needful between nations, it must be needful not only between political subdivisions, but between family and family. If nations should never buy of other nations what they might produce at home, the same principle must forbid each family to buy anything it might produce. Social laws, like physical laws, must apply to the molecule as well as the aggregate. But a social condition in which the principle of protection was thus fully carried out would be a condition of utter barbarism.

CHAPTER VI.

TRADE.

Protection implies prevention. To protect is to preserve or defend.

What is it that protection by tariff prevents? It is trade. To speak more exactly, it is that part of trade which consists in bringing in from other countries commodities that might be produced at home.

But trade, from which "protection" essays to preserve and defend us, is not, like flood, earthquake or tornado, something that comes without human agency. Trade implies human action. There can be no need of preserving from or defending against trade, unless there are men who want to trade and try to trade. Who, then, are the men against whose efforts to trade "protection" preserves and defends us?

If I had been asked this question before I had come to think over the matter for myself, I should have said that the men against whom "protection" defends us are foreign producers who wish to sell their goods in our home markets. This is the assumption that runs through all protectionists arguments—the assumption that foreigners are constantly trying to force their products upon us, and that a protective tariff is a means for defending ourselves against what they want to do.

Yet a moment's thought will show that no effort of foreigners to sell us their products could of itself make a tariff necessary. For the desire of one party, however strong it may be, cannot of itself bring about a trade. To every trade there must be two parties who mutually desire to trade, and whose actions are reciprocal. No one can buy unless he can find some one willing to sell; and no one can sell unless there is some other one willing to buy. If Americans did not want to buy foreign goods, foreign goods could not be sold here even if there were no tariff. The efficient cause of the trade which our tariff aims to prevent is the desire of Americans to buy foreign goods, not the desire of foreign producers to sell them. Thus protection really prevents what the "protected" themselves want to do. It is not from foreigners that protection preserves and defends us: it is from ourself.

Trade is not invasion. It does not involve aggression on one side and resistance on the other, but mutual consent and gratification. They cannot trade unless the parties to it agree, any more than there can be a quarrel unless the parties to it differ. England, we say, forced trade with the outside world upon China, and the United

States upon Japan. But, in both cases, was done not to force the people to trade, but to force their governments to let them. If the people had not wanted to trade, the opening of the ports would have been useless.

Civilized nations, however, do not use their armies and fleets to open one another's ports to trade. What they use their armies and fleets for, is, when they quarrel, to close one another's ports. And their effort then is to prevent the carrying in of things even more than the bringing out of things—importing rather than exporting. For a people can be more quickly injured by preventing them from getting things than by preventing them from sending things away. Trade does not require force. Free trade consists simply in letting people buy and sell as they want to buy and sell. It is protection that requires force, for it consists in preventing people from doing what they want to do. Protective tariffs are as much applications of force as are blockading squadrons, and their object is the same—to prevent trade. The difference between the two is that blockading squadrons are a means whereby nations seek to prevent their enemies from trading; protective tariffs are a means whereby nations attempt to prevent their own people from trading. What protection teaches us, is to do ourselves in time of peace what enemies seek to do to us in time of war.

Can there be any greater misuse of language than to apply to commerce terms suggesting strife, and to talk of one nation invading, deluging, overwhelming or inundating another with goods? Good! what are they but good things—things we are all glad to get? Is it not preposterous to talk of one nation forcing its good things upon another nation? Who individually would wish to be preserved from such invasion? Who would object to being inundated with all the dress goods his wife and daughters could want; deluged with a horse and buggy; overwhelmed with clothing, with groceries, with good cigars, fine pictures, or anything else that has value? And who would take it kindly if any one should assume to protect him by driving off those who wanted to bring him such things?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Advertisement for a hair treatment. Text includes: 'NEW DISCOVERY by AGOOD', 'IT IS PERFECTLY HARMLESS AND SO SIMPLE ANY CHILD CAN', 'Lay the hair over and apply the mixture for a few minutes', 'Trade Mark'.

Large advertisement for Dr. Sanden's Electric Belt. Text includes: 'MEN! WHY ARE YOU WEAK?', 'DR. SANDEN'S ELECTRIC BELT AND SUSPENSORY FOR WEAK MEN', 'A NEVER FAILING CURE FOR ALL WEAKNESS OF MEN', 'WHO ARE DEBILITATED, AND SUFFER FROM NERVOUS DEBILITY, SEMINAL NESS, LOSSES, DRAINS, IMPOTENCY, LOST MANHOOD, RHEUMATISM, BACK, KIDNEY TROUBLES, NERVOUS SLEEPLESSNESS, POOR MEMORY & GENERAL ILLNESS', 'THE DR. SANDEN ELECTRIC BELT'.