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IS BRITISH INDUSTRY ON THE WANE?—WILL A PROTECTIVE TARIFF ARREST THE CAUSE?



WHEN England had all to gain and naught to lose by free trade with every nation, the doctrine was hailed with delight by the greater mass of her people—but now she has much to lose and little to gain from it, and why? because she has taught other nations to benefit by her experience, and by the perfection of her machines, so that they can manufacture for themselves at cheaper rates than they can buy from English markets.

For years previous to the adoption of Free Trade by England, and which she had done her utmost by commercial treaties to force on other countries, she had been protecting her own industries to an extent unknown to almost any other nation. At that period in her history, that her circumstances required such protection there can be but little doubt, but when she had grown in strength and wealth, and was recognized among nations as the great workshop of the world; when her improved machinery in every branch of manufacture had, to a great extent, superseded manual labour, then she felt that her industries no longer required protection, and that the policy of promulgating the doctrine of free trade became a necessity to the nation, in order that every port might be open to receive, free of duty, those manufactured goods in which she had no competitors, and that her people might be kept in constant employment. But with all the success that attended such a policy, it could not last forever. It was only a question of time and the progress of civilization which caused such rapid strides to be made in art, science and machinery, when other nations—offshoots of the parent tree—would, in their turn, become skilled in

the manufacture of those articles made in England, which they were admitting free in their own countries. Such nations would, in the course of time, become powerful rivals. The period has now arrived when Canada, the United States, France, Germany, and other countries, can manufacture for their own requirements, and spare enough to import into England, and sell as good an article and at as low a price as they hitherto received from abroad, and on a class of goods, too, which England had drove with almost an absolute monopoly. And now, when every nation is developing its own resources, Great Britain has to seek for other channels to find employment for her people. Already are there indications of a growing feeling of discontent shown by formidable union strikes, and the low muttering of a suffering people, that foretell the storm, so that means must be adopted to give to British manufactures and British industries of all kinds a fresh impetus. Her trade is becoming paralyzed by the force of foreign competition, her people are suffering poverty for the want of employment, and famine is once more pointing its finger at Ireland and may soon be again stalking over that unfortunate country.

In the natural course of the progress of civilization it could not but have been foreseen by political economists that the days of free trade in England could only exist whilst that country was receiving the whole benefit of the arrangement. But the great natural resources of this continent, and its rapidly increasing population, particularly that of Canada, naturally created a feeling to turn into account those rich gifts which nature had placed within their reach, and by developing them to their own use they would find employment for their people, and no longer be dependent upon Great Britain, or upon any country, and they thus began to build up their own industries and benefit by the past experience and improvements made by other nations. The wealth England had acquired and her commercial greatness were only an incentive to people coming of the same stock to become ambitious also of commercial greatness and independence as well, even had they at first to pay higher prices for goods manufactured at home, as the money was circulated among their own people, and, therefore, so long as they built up their own country,