

Letter 8.

**"PROTECTION IS THE FOLLY OF ASKING A MAN TO MAKE
ALL HIS OWN CLOTHES."**

From the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS, Jan. 2, 1875.

The foregoing quotation is one of the many sophisms employed by Free-Traders. It is the style of argument used by all that class, from Mr. Bright to his humblest followers. Professor Price, who is claimed as an advocate of Free-Trade, is reported to have said in one of his lectures, "Protection is the folly of asking a man to make all his own clothes." This is a misrepresentation. Neither Horace Greeley, Morrill, nor any living protectionist writer, ever asked a man, or even a nation, to do any such thing. Again, the Professor says, "It is folly to foster 'home industry,' by requiring the people of the country to produce *everything* they want." This statement is worse, if anything, than the other. It means that protectionists recommend producing their own silk, tea, sugar, spices, and so forth, in whatever climate they live. I would like to know where the Professor met with men advocating these opinions. Further on he says: "Nations, like individuals, have special facilities, faculties and aptitudes, with respect to production." This is what we perceive, and we ask nations to produce those things for which they have "special facilities and aptitudes," instead of importing them from other countries.

Again, "nobody ventures to maintain that the people of Maine should not trade freely with the people of Texas; the people of New York with the people of California." He gives this as his reason why there should be Free-Trade between Canada and the States. The Professor appears to forget one thing, and, forgetting this, he falls into a very grave error. The relations of Maine, California, Texas and New York to each other are different from the relations of Canada to any of them. Canada is under a different government, and has different interest, both commercially and politically. For Maine to be dependent on California, or California on Maine, does not affect the safety of either, for each is pledged to the defence of the other; but for Canada to be dependent on either is perilous, neither being pledged to her defence, but occupying the attitude of interested enemies. One quotation more from the Professor, "The folly of compelling *everybody* to make all his own clothes will soon be relegated to the shades that envelope the old Navigation Act of Great Britain." There is more sound than sense in this quotation. The Professor is a very ignorant man if he does not know that his recommendation has been adopted, by Protectionists as well as free-traders, long before the repeal of the Navigation Act.

Nothing leads to more frequent errors in reasoning than comparing things which are not comparable. The Professor asserts something of a man which is strictly true, so long as affirmed of a man, but utterly erroneous when applied to a nation. The acceptance of Free-Trade principles by the public depends entirely on the capacity of the leaders to mix, confuse and mystify the matter. They require to be kept to the point, like the Professor. When they make unquestioned assertions, don't allow them to transfer or apply the conclusions to something dissimilar.

The moment free-traders state the exact idea intended their arguments lose force. Had the Professor said, "It is a folly to ask a nation to produce everything it requires, for which it has natural facilities," he would have stated the negative of protection fairly and clearly. But the other form of expression, till questioned, answers his purpose better. J. S. Mill admits all that protectionists affirm, when he says that "any country having natural facilities for any