A very fine audience assembled at the Detroit Opera House last evening to listen to the address of J. B. Sargent, of New Haven, Conn., upon free trade. The auditorium proper and the dress circle were thronged with people, and the audience overflowed into the gallery. Prominent free traders occupied seats on the platform.

Hon. W. G. Thompson presided and introduced the speaker. He was greeted with applause upon his appearance, and frequently interrupted with cheers. He said:

While the injury from the maintenance of the war tariff to Detroit is in a sense local, the injury to the best business interests of the whole country is general, and has grown to such alarming proportions as to challenge the attention of all. The commercial failures of 1884 exceeded by far in amount those of any previous year. Bradstreet has recently published the result of an investigation of the statistics of unemployed labor in the United States, which shows that there were in December, 1884, 350,000 fewer operatives at work than were employed in 1882, a loss of 14 per cent. The rates of wages are compared with those of 1882, which shows that the industries protected by the highest tariff duties are those in which the heaviest reductions in wages have been made, and that these reductions are generally in proportion to the amount of protection afforded to them. In cotton and woolen mills the reduction has been from 25 to 30 per cent., while there has been no reduction in the wages of the unprotected carpenter, mason, plumber and stone cutter. The reduction of iron-mill workers has been from 15 to 22 per cent., while the pay of butchers, bakers, millers, tanners and printers, has not declined at all, thus emphatically controverting the proposition that a high tariff makes high wages for the workingman.

John Bright, in a letter written the 12th of last March, says the price of labor in England has advanced fifty per cent. since the free trade movement commenced there, while the hours of labor in many trades have been reduced.

The tariff has destroyed the foreign carrying trade of the United States; our flag has disappeared from the ocean. We pay a tribute of not less than $400,000,000 annually to foreign vessels and are supporting 100,000 British sailors, every one of whom would be an enemy in time of war.

The tariff prohibits imports that might purchase the products of American labor. It has cut down the sale of American manufactures at home and abroad and depleted the returns of American agriculture, an industry followed by more than half of our people. It has given the absolute control of the commerce of Canada, Mexico and the republics of Central and South America—countries which by reason of their contiguity we might easily control—to trans-Atlantic nations.

This is interesting to me, as showing the course of things in protected countries,



and proving that even in the United States they are subject to the same difficulties that we find here.

HON. MR. PLUMB—And in England, too.

HON. MR. MCCLELAN—Mr. J. B. Sargent then addressed the meeting and said:—

I was born into a manufacturing family and in a manufacturing community. The settled policy of the whole civilized world then was to collect the revenue for the support of governments largely through taxes on imports, under the claim that it was protecting manufactures, and that the revenue really came from the foreign manufacturers or producers--a scheme of tyrants to get from the people more money than the people would have been willing to pay by any kind of direct taxation. I became familiar with manufacturing life in the manufacturing village of my birthplace, near which were factories for the manufacture of cotton and woolen goods, the operators being nearly all immigrants from the manufacturing districts of England. The manufacture of supplies for cotton and woolen mills was the business that I, in part, inherited from my father. I well remember the discussions of manufacturing and business men in my boyhood days concerning the hazards of the manufacture of woolen goods, the sales of which were confined to the one market—the United States. The course of the business was often described, and it ran like this: The manufacturers started with their business in good times and with only a moderate capital, because wealthy manufacturers were scare and interest high, and loans to manufacturers were hazardous.

Business would be brisk for about three years from the previous hard times, and by that time the market was fully supplied and sales became few. It was expensive for the manufacturers to stop, and therefore they got all the advances they could from their commission merchants. Then, sales were made at a reduced price to force the goods upon the market, then reduction of wages, then short time, then suspension of work, then failure and bankruptcy. The villagers were almost dead for about three years till the overstocked market became bare of goods. Then the mills, under a new owner, were repaired. The card clothing and delicate parts of the machinery that had been spoiled by inactivity and rust were replaced with new. Workmen were gathered into the mills and manufacturing was started with a rush again; and after about three years of business prosperity the dullness of an overstocked market came again, and then the failures.

I was raised in business as a merchant in the dry goods business in Boston, and went to Georgia as a merchant in 1843, that is more than forty years ago. My teachings on