

It has not been my purpose to enter into the argument between Mr. Blaine and Mr. Gladstone. Indeed, it appears not to have been Mr. Blaine's purpose to enter into the argument to any great extent. I was anxious, as I am sure tens of thousands of other men were, to see what answer he could give to the clear exposition of Free-trade principles, everywhere applicable, given by one of the greatest statesmen of our age. If any man in the world is able to answer adequately, it ought to be our brilliant countryman. Has he done that? Certainly not. He has not even attempted it. He has evaded every issue and taken refuge in a cloud of smoke and—pretended history.

I cannot take my leave, however, of my old friend without alluding to one or two things not directly involved in the substance of the controversy between him and Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Blaine sneers at Mr. Gladstone for declaring that protection is immoral. Indeed! Can Mr. Blaine see no immorality in a law that taxes a poor widow a higher price for her clothing and that of her children, for her bedding, her coal, her dishes, and furniture—for nearly everything she and they need—not for the use of the Government, but to add to the prosperity of those who produce such articles? If Mr. Blaine can see no immorality in that, I assure him that there are millions of his countrymen whose consciences are keener than his own. John Bright could see it clearly when he held up the corn laws of England (no less justifiable than our clothing laws) as a "crime of the deepest dye."

In this same connection Mr. Blaine goes out of his way to inform Mr. Gladstone, and, as he supposes, to surprise him, with the statement that out of the fifty largest fortunes in the United States not more than one has been derived from protected manufacturing; and that the other forty-nine were acquired from "railway and telegraph investments, from real estate investments, from the import and sale of foreign goods, from banking, from speculations in the stock markets, from fortunate mining investments, from patented inventions, and more than one from proprietary medicines." Will Mr. Blaine please tell us how many fortunes among the fifty greatest fortunes in the United States have been derived from "real estate investments" that were made vastly profitable by protection, as, for instance, investments in pine lands in Michigan? Will he please tell us how many of these immense fortunes have been made from "mining investments" which were protected by our tariff law, as the copper and iron mines in Michigan and all the other mines of metal and coal everywhere in the United States? Perhaps, if Mr. Blaine were to go into the subject carefully, he might be surprised to find that not only one but many of the largest fortunes in America were the result, in some way, of protection in behalf of private interests.

But he says it is safe to go further and state that among the one hundred largest fortunes in the country there are not over five that have been derived from protected manufactures. Well, that is making progress. There is one among the first fifty, but there are four among the second fifty. At this rate among the third fifty there would probably be sixteen, and among the fourth fifty forty-eight, and so on.

But, seriously, will Mr. Blaine undertake to say that among, say, five thousand of the richest men in America there are not one-half, if not three-fourths of them, who have made the bulk of their fortunes in business, or investments, in which they have been personally assisted by the protective tariff? It would be exceedingly unjust to apply any hard terms to men who have made even great fortunes by their industry, skill, economy, inventive genius, perseverance or sound judgment. But when the law has interfered to add to the value of investments, or to the profits of particular kinds of business, and we find the beneficiaries of the law acquiring fortunes far in excess of any they are justly entitled to by any merit of their own, we are justified in arraigning the law as a horrible instrumentality of wrong.

Mr. Blaine betrays an uneasy consciousness that this is true, when he goes out of his way to explain that "the evil effect of large fortunes is exaggerated," because under our laws they are apt to be scattered in two or three generations. That is, he sees no everlasting, irreparable evil result in the accumulation, even when aided by a tariff law, of multitudes of colossal fortunes, because, forsooth, in fifty or a hundred years they will probably be scattered. But the question is not whether these fortunes, so acquired, will be held together through all coming time, and thus becoming a permanent menace to the future liberties and welfare of the country. That is not the point. It is this: Is it just and morally right to tax more than sixty millions of people to build up a few thousand vast, over-grown fortunes? The consolation that Mr. Blaine offers to the people who have their hard earnings filched from them for this purpose, is, that after all, there is nothing deplorable about it, because in one, two or three generations (long after the people now living are in their graves) these great fortunes will be scattered, or dissipated, by the misfortunes, extravagance, follies and vices, of the children, grand children or great-grand-children of those who, aided by an unjust and cruel law have accumulated them. This is the soothing powder that Mr. Blaine gives the people to make them oblivious to the inconvenience of having their money extracted from them to confer it upon the special pets of the law. It remains to be seen whether the medicine will have the desired effect.