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RANDOM REFLECTIONS.



IN the discussion of social questions how often do we hear the statement that "human equality is only a dream," and this fallacy is usually coupled with another in the same mind, that a thing may be right enough in theory, but will not do in practice, that it may be true and yet it is not expedient to act on its truth—that a thing may be true in some circumstances and not in others, or in other words that truth may be dependent on circumstances for its character. The protectionist almost invariably asserts that free trade is right and good in theory but hurtful in practice—that free trade with all the world would be a good thing, but that it would hurt us to set the example of doing right in this thing because others would not do the same.

The defenders of our present social organization, while admitting the truth of the objections of those who point out its glaring inequalities and the truth upon which remedial proposals rest, deny the expediency of acting on these truths. The partizan in politics, compelled to admit the rottenness resulting from partizan management of national affairs, assures us that purity of government, though good and desirable, is unattainable, and even if it was not, is inexpedient. He tells us that

we must not forget that the men who manage our public affairs are human and that we must not expect perfect rectitude in the conduct of fallible men.

I would remind the apologist for political fraud that, without forgetting that man was prone to error, God made for his guidance a perfect law—"Thou shalt not covet," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not kill," without any modifications to suit the inclinations or weaknesses for those to whom it was to be a guide. That guilt under the law pertains not only to those who actually covet, steal or kill, but to all who profit by, condone or conceal the offence. That this law is not the expression of whim or caprice for the purpose of asserting despotic authority, but the provisions of divine wisdom in man's truest and best interests—that what is good in theory acted on as a rule of conduct can be hurtful, or that there is any justification for our refusal to do right to others because others will not do us right in return—I deny.

We are told that if any country imposes barriers against our trade we should, to prevent their profiting by our trade more than we do by theirs, do the same. Yet these people lose sight of the truth that this is an argument that recoils on themselves. If it be just on those grounds to shut out the trade of the United States, it would be equally just for Great Britain to treat us in the same spirit. Protectionists who insist that because the McKinley bill shuts out Canadian butter and eggs we should retaliate with a tariff on American exportations to us, are filled with an exceeding great joy for that Britain receives from us all of our surplus of these good things, and at good prices, forgetting that if retaliation be just as against the United States on our part, it would be equally just against us by Great Britain.

But those who suffer in the end the worst consequences of wrong are the wrongdoers. While it is true that one of the objects of the American tariff is to hurt us, and that to some extent it does do so, the worst effects of their tariff fall on the Americans themselves. The market to which they might send American goods in exchange for Can-

adian products is lost to American manufacturers, or rather to American workmen who consume butter and eggs, for the manufacturers are compensated for a less output by increased profits on their home trade which their employees do not share. Butter and eggs have been made dearer to American consumers, and the increased prices to American producers have been more than offset by increased prices in other directions, the result of this same bill.

The imposition of retaliatory tariffs to get square with the Americans is simply blind folly resulting from ignorance. The advocates of tariff taxation speak of importations being sold in other countries as if we received in exchange gold or silver, and their value was returned to us in that form. Any one who has a knowledge of export and import trade knows that this is false, and any argument based on these premises by the fully informed, presumes on the prejudice or ignorance of those whom such argument is intended to influence. Our goods or produce sold in a foreign market are paid for in other goods either the product of the country in which we sell or of some country with which they have exchanges, and this trade or barter is conducted by medium of bank clearances.

The shipping of large sums of money, the mysterious influence of the appreciation of gold in international trade, exists only in the mind of bumptious political ignorance or the crafty schemings of political deceit. Canadian butter and eggs being sold in Britain, are paid for in British goods or goods that have come into the current of British trade by exchange. It follows that a tariff of 35 per cent. on such goods lessens the purchasing power of Canadian butter and eggs 35 per cent. to the producer, to say nothing of the profit on the 35 per cent. added by the Canadian dealer in goods. In this way the chickens of our national folly and prejudice come home to roost and are made the instruments by which we are enslaved and plundered.

But the one which works the most evil of all these contentions is that which denies the reality of human