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THE AMERICAN TARIFF.

Mr. Morley, a member of the English House of Commons, now in the States, advises the Americans to lower their tariff. Advice from foreigners, when there is a chance that the volunteer adviser might have an interested bias in favor of another country, the Americans have never shown a disposition to take. Dickens fancied that he could induce the Americans to change their copyright laws in favor of English authors; and ever since the enactment of the Morrill tariff the English press has been unanimous in the opinion that a combined missionary effort of all the organs of English opinion, to convert the heathen protectionist of America, was the only possible means of commercial salvation. Advice so volunteered is much more likely to be resented than acted upon, and as a matter of fact this is what has actually happened whenever the United States has been advised to modify its tariff according to English ideas.

Mr. Gladstone has lately taken the opposite tack. England, he said, was certain to retain the large share of the world's trade which she now enjoys, so long as the United States adheres to her protectionist policy. This is true on the condition that the Americans can retain the home market only by means of a protectionist tariff; but if she could retain that market under a free trade regime, and a protectionist tariff continued to exist, there would be nothing to prevent her competing successfully against foreign manufacturers. Mr. Gladstone, in this matter, is at variance with the uniform teaching of the British press, from the time of the abolition of the corn laws to the rise of the fair trade movement; and Mr. Morley might take a leaf out of his chief's book with advantage.

Meanwhile the American protectionists, who never know when they are well off, are clamoring for an increase of the tariff. They have called a convention, to be held in the Cooper Institute, New York, on the 29th and 30th inst. A New York Times reporter

has been interviewing some of the manufacturers to learn what are their reasons for asking an increase in the tariff. The steel manufacturers want a higher duty put on English blooms and wire rods, simply because the cruel Treasury Department gives a crooked decision on the all-absorbing question of blooms and wire rods. If the manufacturers were allowed to interpret the law themselves, they would be satisfied with the tariff as it stands, but to correct the wrong-headedness of the Treasury Department they want a declaratory law in favor of their own infallible and disinterested interpretation. A drug importer being interviewed said: "Now, you take our branch of business, there is a positive necessity for some radical changes in our branch of business. The stamp tax must be wiped out." The merest justice to himself, the maltster is sure, would give him the shield of the specific duties he asks, for it is absolutely necessary to check the rapidly increasing importations of Canadian malt. So said Mr. Ward, maltster, who favors the convention as a means of getting a government commission to enquire into the wrongs of his class. The malt industry, he modestly asserts, ought to get "the protection it asks for." There were about 33,000,000 bushels of malt consumed in the States last year, of which 1,033,447 was sent from Canada. A little over one-thirtieth of the whole. Mr. Ward finds this an alarming proportion; but it is not so much the proportion as its progressive increase that troubles him. If you go back to 1875, the total amount was only 144,487 bushels; next year there was a bound up to 286,930 bushels; in 1877, the figure rose to 314,139; in 1878, it was over half a million (552,656); and though a little less the next year, it rose, in 1880, as we have seen, to over a million; one million odd out of thirty. Mr. Van Vliet is alarmed and is quite sure the government ought to grant whatever the maltsters, in the ardor of their patriotism, may make up their minds to ask. Mr. Von Vliet would like to have Canadian barley go in duty free, and in this all the maltsters agree with Mr. Van Vliet; but the farmers won't stand this, and so Mr. Van Vliet and the maltsters will be satisfied with such an increase of duty as will save the country from the danger of the monarchical principles which lurks insiduously in Canadian malt. Mr. Deau has studied the tariff for a quarter of a century, from a personal stand-point, and has convinced himself that a large increase of duties would be the right thing. And so on to the end of the chapter; every man wants special legislation to put money into his own pocket.

One thing is certain, the high tariff cannot always be maintained. When the debt is

paid off—and some estimates say this can be done in ten years, which we very much doubt,—or greatly reduced, there will be no need for the revenue which the present high tariff produces. But when a change is made, the excise duties which to some extent counter-vail the customs, will go first, and in this way protection will survive till it dies a natural death. When the crisis comes some nostrum is likely to be resorted to in the hope of prolonging a life which will have reached its natural term.

Meanwhile a similar convention has met in Chicago, and has shown itself to be in accord with the opinions expressed by the parties interviewed in New York. Mr. McKinley, the chairman, wanted protection for its own sake and revenue only as an incident; thus reversing the idea of a revenue tariff so formed as to afford incidental protection. Another speaker disclaimed the idea that the right of purchasing free ships would afford any aid to the depressed shipping interest; he wanted a mercantile marine built up by means of protection, on the pretence that it could easily be converted into a naval marine in the time of war. We apprehend that it would be found that dear ships, brought into existence by protection, could not compete against the cheaper ships of other countries; and the notion of converting a mercantile navy into a warlike force on which the nation could rely in an extremity is fantastical in conception and would prove disastrous in practice. The other speakers took a similar extreme view. The effect of demanding so extravagant a degree of protection will be that the convention must fail in its aims. It cannot carry public sentiment with it; and Congress is not likely to be goaded into a compliance with demands which every disinterested person feels to be unreasonable.

WANTED—A BETTER LAW.

Again and again we have adverted to the folly of continuing our present process—we cannot call it a system—of winding up bankrupt estates. Examples of the injustice inseparable from the existing order of things have been frequent enough in spite of the great improvement that has taken place in the trade of our country, which has so surprisingly reduced the aggregate of failures. Some of these instances we have at various times called attention to. Another is added to the list by the failure of Best Bros., of Collingwood. This firm obtained from their creditors some months ago an extension of time, and appeared to be making some headway towards the recovery of their position, when all they had was swept away by the late disastrous fire in that town. When this loss occurred it was discovered that the