

NATURE OF MR. BLAINE'S ARGUMENT.

Can there be a higher offense than a deliberate perversion of history for a partisan purpose? it is an offence that no man should be permitted to perpetrate without some rebuke, however great his talents or high his position. Indeed, the greater his talents and the loftier the position of the man who commits the offence, the greater the offence becomes. For of the thousands who may see a misstatement of historical fact made by such a man in the most dogmatic manner, few will suspect for a moment that the statement is not only wholly groundless, but is at utter variance with the truth.

This is the offence that Mr. Blaine, consciously or unconsciously, is guilty of in his recent article in the *North American Review* in reply to an article by Mr. Gladstone on "Free Trade."

Mr. Blaine does not attempt to argue the question in dispute as a question of principle. Conceding that free trade may be good policy for England, he again and again asserts that we have found by more than fifty years of experience that protection is the true policy for us. He relies wholly on alleged results to establish the conclusion that the protective policy is that which, from the organization of the government to the present time, has always been the prolific source of our highest prosperity. If the historical statements on which he relies are not true, nay, if they are directly opposed and entirely contrary to the truth, of course the whole fabric of his argument topples over and tumbles down.

COMPARATIVE PROSPERITY UNDER VARIOUS TARIFFS.

EARLY TARIFFS—1789—1816.

In the article in the *North American Review*, Mr. Blaine only goes back to the war of 1812 in order to prove that protective tariffs have been beneficial. A year ago, in his speech at the Polo Grounds in New York, he went back to the first tariff—that of 1789—which he assumed to be a protective tariff. He asserted that under that "protective" tariff this country had been wonderfully prosperous; that a prosperity which attracted the attention of the whole world marked the period of its existence. He asserted that all departments of business, agricultural, manufacturing and commercial, had been exceedingly profitable. But Mr. Blaine did not state in that speech that the tariff law of 1789 levied the lowest rates of duties we have ever had, averaging only 8½ per cent. He called it a "protective" tariff, and attributed all the marvelous prosperity that followed for twenty-three years to its protective provisions. He took the trouble to tell us that from time to time the law was slightly amended, and generally in the direction of higher rates, but he was careful not to say that the average rate of duties from the organization of the Government to the breaking out of the war with England was, as a rule, about 18 per cent., or a great deal less than one-half of our present tariff rates.

THE TARIFF OF 1816.

To make Mr. Blaine's history perfect, he should have repeated the history embraced in his New York speech a year ago. But he has not. Yet what he does say in the *North American Review* is quite as open to criticism. He says: "On the eve of the war of 1812 Congress guarded the national strength by enacting a highly protective war tariff. By its own terms this tariff must end with the war. When the new tariff was to be formed, a popular cry rose against 'war duties,' though the country had prospered despite the exhausting effect of the struggle with Great Britain. But the prayer of the people was answered, and the war duties were dropped from the tariff of 1816."

There are several statements in this extract that require correction. Mr. Blaine says that Congress "guarded the national strength by a highly protective tariff law." What Congress did do was to double the rates of duties as a revenue measure, not for the purpose of protection at all. It was provided in the act increasing the rate of duties that, as soon as the war closed, the increase should be taken off. This was actually done, and the old low rates were restored. Consequently there was no popular cry raised against "war duties." They had already been removed by the very act that created them. Therefore, they were not "dropped" from the tariff law of 1816. That law was a law to increase duties, not to reduce them. It was the first of our long series of tariff laws enacted distinctly and avowedly for the sake of protection. Col. Benton says: "The question of protection for the sake of protection was brought forward and carried (in the year 1816). This reversed the old course of legislation; made protection the object instead of the incident, and revenue the incident instead of the object." Speaking in 1824, Mr. Webster said: "We hear of the fatal policy of the tariff of 1816. And yet the law of 1816 was passed avowedly for the benefit of manufacturers, and, with very few exceptions, imposed on imported articles very great additions of tax, in some important instances, indeed, amounting to prohibition." In his debate with Mr. Calhoun, in the Senate in 1838, Mr. Clay made a similar declaration. When