THE TARIFF POLICY OF ENGLAND AND OF THE UNITED STATES CONTRASTED

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The tariff policy of England and of the United States contrasted by Erastus B. Bigelow

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Prof. Charles F. Dunbar
with the high regards
of the
Author.

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BY

ERASTUS B. BIGELOW.

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1877.

NOTE.

Some of the tables of statistics, and some of the arguments in this book, are taken from the author's work entitled, "The Tariff Question Considered in Regard to the Policy of England and the Interests of the United States," published in 1862.

Other statistical statements and numerical comparisons, giving results of more recent date, were compiled expressly for this work. In all cases, the statistical facts are derived from official sources.

E. B. B.

Boston, September, 1877.

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THE TARIFF POLICY

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ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES.

THERE is a prevailing expectation that our customs tariff will be revised by the next Congress. As such legislation will have a direct bearing on the prosperity of the country, it is important that the probable effects of proposed changes should be clearly understood. Theoretical and partisan discussion of the subject will do but little towards that end. Nor will the experience of other nations be a safe guide for us. The conditions of production are so various in different countries that the customs tariff of every nation should be determined by its own interests and needs.

There is no ultimate principle of universal application, involved either in free trade or protection. They are questions of policy. Free trade in England, and protection in the United States, have been so much discussed on theoretical grounds, in disregard of facts and the peculiar condition and requirements of the respective countries, that a popular misapprehension prevails in regard to their real character and effect.

It is my purpose to discuss these questions, in their practical relations to national interests. The free-trade maxims and example of England are so often and so zealously commended to our adoption and imitation, not only by Englishmen, but by many among ourselves, that it is especially important at this time, that we should rightly understand

her tariff policy, the exigencies which from time to time determined its character, and the interest she has in urging other nations to follow her lead. These topics I will endeavor to present as they appear in the light of unquestionable facts.

The Tariff Policy of England.

Great Britain derives her national strength mainly from her commerce; and her manufactures almost entirely sustain that commerce. This she well understands, and to protect, encourage, and extend her manufactures has been the wise and uniform policy of her statesmen for more than a century; and the result is seen in a manufacturing prosperity that is without a parallel. Although national advancement may be the constant object of a nation, the methods of its accomplishment must necessarily conform to the ever-changing conditions incident to general progress. The changes which England's tariff-policy has undergone, from time to time, exemplify this great truth. What those changes have been, and their relation to the exigencies which determined them, I will now briefly consider. They will be best understood by dividing the time of their occurrence into three epochs.

The first epoch covers the period in which manufacturing was mainly carried on by handicraft methods. During this period, the English possessed no superiority as a manufacturing people. Lower wages, cheaper living, and greater aptitude for handicraft in the inhabitants of several other countries, enabled their manufacturers to undersell the manufacturers of England. To sustain the latter under this unequal competition, bounties were offered, high duties were imposed; and, in some instances, prohibition was enforced under severe penalties.

"By the 8th of Elizabeth, ch. 3, the exporter of sheep or rams was, for the first offence, to forfeit all his goods for ever, to suffer a year's imprisonment, and then have his left hand cut off, in a market-town, upon a market-day,