

**THE TARIFFS OF THE UNITED
STATES IN RELATION TO FREE
TRADE, SPEECH DELIVERED
IN LEEDS, 13TH NOV., 1890**

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The tariffs of the United States in relation to free trade, speech delivered in Leeds, 13th Nov., 1890 by Sir Lyon Playfair

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SIR LYON PLAYFAIR

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cover

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OF
THE UNITED STATES

In relation to Free Trade.

BY THE
RIGHT HON. SIR LYON PLAYFAIR,
K.C.B., M.P.

Speech delivered in Leeds, 13th Nov., 1890.



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THE TARIFFS OF THE UNITED STATES IN RELATION TO FREE TRADE.

RECENT COMMERCIAL LEGISLATION IN THE UNITED STATES.

SUCH astounding experiments in legislation have recently been made in the United States in regard to commerce that they deserve our serious attention. They are, under any view, great experiments and lessons in political economy. If they be right in principle and successful in practice, the whole commercial policy of the United Kingdom is founded on a gigantic error, and must lead to our ruin as an industrial nation. It is certainly the duty of a representative of a great manufacturing town like Leeds to address his constituents upon the bearings of that legislation on industry and commerce. I have been in America during the passage of these Acts through Congress, and have given to them a close study.

Let me at once rectify an error into which the English public have fallen. They seem to believe that the new Tariff Act, which will certainly, for a time, dislocate and contract many of our industries, to their present injury, though to their ultimate benefit, has been framed in special

jealousy and hostility to this country. There is no truth in this view, except in the fact that, while levelled at all foreign nations, it hits England hardest as being the greatest industrial nation. McKinley, the author of the new Tariff Act, is a sincere and honest Protectionist. He thoroughly believes that a wall of Protection, built round his country, is needful for the prosperity of his nation, and he has erected this wall in as good faith as the Chinese made their great wall as a defence from foreign foes.

IS COMMERCE INDUSTRIAL WAR?

It is strange that such well-known men as Senators Evarts and McKinley should, towards the close of the nineteenth century, believe that commerce is industrial war. Had they lived in the time of Queen Elizabeth, when buccaneering expeditions under Drake and Cavendish devastated the coasts of foreign countries in order to get booty, we might have understood them. My friend Senator Evarts is a man of high intelligence and culture, yet he actually used these words in the Senate—"Sir, let us understand that with us, in our system and age of civilisation, trade between nations stands for war in a sense never to be overlooked and never to be misunderstood." He proceeded to speak of the shores of the United States being ravaged by incursions in the guise of trade.

Commerce, gentlemen, has done more to preserve peace than any human agency. Trade is the handmaid of civilisation. Countries which shut themselves in by isolation, like

China and Japan, had their civilisation arrested and an antique social system stereotyped. Trade has knit together nations by ties of mutual interest and friendship. Seas, which were formerly barriers between nations, are now their connecting links. Indeed, commercial intercourse may be considered the circulating blood of a common humanity. Modern commerce is not war; it is peace. It is doubtful whether in the case of ordinary war, carried on by destructive agencies, there ever was a good war or a bad peace; but certainly industrial wars bring their own Nemesis, for nations, like individuals, were never intended for isolation. Commerce links nations by mutual advantages, and secures to them both physical and moral well-being. The time will come—possibly sooner than many expect—when civilised nations will recognise the meaning of commercial freedom; realising the eloquent words of Gladstone: "Then will the ships that pass between this land and that be like the shuttle on the loom, weaving the web of concord among nations." You will now recognise what has been the radical error of the framers of the new American tariff.

HISTORY OF AMERICAN TARIFFS.

In the course of a century the United States have passed above twenty Tariff Acts. Hamilton, one of the greatest of American statesmen, while in Washington's Cabinet, published an able memoir on manufactures, in which he urged the principle of Protection to native infant industries.