

**PROTECTION AND FREE
TRADE TO-DAY AT
HOME AND ABROAD IN
FIELD AND WORKSHOP**

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Protection and Free Trade To-day at Home and Abroad in Field and Workshop by Robert P. Porter

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PRICE 10 CENTS.



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At Home and Abroad
In Field and Workshop

BY
ROBERT P. PORTER



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This paper, by ROBERT P. PORTER (member of the late United States Tariff Commission; author of "The West in 1880;" late Chief of the Wealth, Debt, Taxation, and Railroad Divisions of the United States Census), was read before the Arkwright Club, Boston, August 7, 1884, and ordered to be printed.

PROTECTION AND FREE TRADE TO-DAY.

AT HOME AND ABROAD, IN FIELD AND WORKSHOP.

THE arguments for or against Free Trade or Protection, can no longer depend upon the theories of political economists, but must rest upon a foundation supplied by the records of national progress during the last half century, and a study of the existing conditions of industrial populations. Such records are now made by all European nations as well as by the United States, fully supplying the requisite information for a scientific study of their industrial condition. Departure from this precise method of investigation can only result in a rehash of the theories of a past age, and involve the student and legislator in a never-ending circle of useless discussion and dangerous experiments. Following this scientific method, supplemented by the latest statistical information gained in my Census investigations and Tariff Commission work and by my personal observations during the past year in England, France, Germany, Holland, and Belgium, I propose to present, in this paper, a concise picture of the results of the free trade and protective policy of different nations as affecting national progress and the happiness and comfort of the people engaged in industrial pursuits.

The countries which levy imposts for the support of government, with a view to favor commerce in the first degree, are Great Britain and Holland. These two nations are the examples of free trade. After forty years of

active work, the free-traders of the world bear about the same proportion to the population of the world as the Mormons do to our entire population. Forty years ago Richard Cobden made many prophecies which have not been fulfilled. "Free trade," he said, "was to benefit British agriculture."

It has measurably ruined it. The population has decreased in many agricultural counties. Fewer persons are employed in agriculture now than during his life. Land is going out of cultivation; already 1,000,000 of acres have gone out of wheat cultivation in England; and 1,300,000 acres of arable cultivation in Ireland. John Bright himself admits that the English farmer has lost \$1,000,000,000 of late years. It has been found impossible to retain the sheep husbandry, which was brought into existence by protective measures, and the flocks have decreased 6,000,000. There were 25,964 or 10 per cent, fewer farmers in 1881 than in 1871, and 18 per cent more farmers' bailiffs. There were also 10 per cent fewer farm laborers.

The official figures of the British Census Reports of the decade between 1871 and 1881 refute the official optimism of Robert Giffen, Chief of the Statistical Department of the Board of Trade, who has recently skilfully marshalled an array of figures to show the progress of the working classes in England under half a century of free trade.

These official reports show that, of the population of England and Wales, of 26,061,736, the number returned as having definite or gainful occupations was 11,187,564 in 1881; while in 1871 the number was placed at 14,786,875. This enormous decline of workers can in part be explained by the changes in the classification of the census; but, after this has been accounted for, evidences of a great industrial decline remain. For example: the tin miners of Cornwall in 1871 numbered 15,543; and in 1881, 10,253; while the production of tin in the same period has fallen 21 per cent. The agricultural laborers in 1871 numbered 962,348, while in 1881 there were 870,778.

The population engaged in making boots and shoes has decreased from 235,477 in 1871, to 216,536 in 1881. The silk workers number 60,995, and show a decrease in this trade of 22 per cent, coincidentally with which there

has been a fall of 55 per cent in the amount of importation of raw silk. The producers of gloves, straw hats, and straw plaits have largely fallen off. Dressmakers, drapers, and haberdashers have increased more rapidly than the population. The linen and the lace goods industries are on the decline. There is a marked increase in the number employed in coal mines and in making machinery.

The one is the export and consumption of a wealth that can never be replaced; the other is the placing in the hands of foreigners the means by which other nations are competing with Great Britain. With a similar increase in other industries, this might be considered a healthy sign; with a decrease in every other industry, it is regarded by many statesmen with alarm.

The number employed in the five principal textile industries has declined from 919,817 in 1861 (here I have not the figures for 1871) to 883,303 in 1881.

The free-trade cry has for years been in England, "If one industry does not pay, try something else." In vain has the producer gone from one thing to another, until he stands surrounded by an idle army puzzled as to what he shall next try. The home market is steadily melting away, while new barriers are being erected in foreign countries. The following paragraph of Mr. Hoyle's tells the close of the sad story of cheapness and the degradation of human labor that the census figures and the wage statistics have so graphically portrayed:—

"In the forty-second annual report of the Registrar-General (page 27) I find that of the total number of deaths in 1879, one out of every fifteen died in a workhouse; while in London, the wealthiest city in the world, one out of nine died in the workhouse. Among the 600,000 outdoor paupers there are, doubtless, more deaths than among the 100,000 indoor paupers. If this be so . . . one out of about every seven of our population end their days as paupers."

One out of every seven of the population end their days as paupers! This is from the official record of the British Government.

Turning to the shipping industry of Great Britain, the pride and boast of the free-traders, what do we

find? In 1883 I visited the great ship yards of the Clyde. I ascertained the truth from the pay-roll of the leading ship-builders; the figures were taken from the pay-roll in the presence of two witnesses, one of whom was Mr. Henderson, Government Inspector of Factories for Northern England and Scotland. The particular pay-roll taken was for the last two weeks of November, 1883. The highest prices had been paid for labor, and, to use the language of a ship builder, "English and Scottish workmen always work like demons the few weeks preceding holidays." Added to this, the yard was overflowing with work. Every one was on full time. The exact number on the pay-roll, including foremen and apprentices, was 1,614; the exact amount of the fortnight's pay-roll was 3,988 pounds sterling. Of this number 27 per cent, or a little over one quarter, were "timers," and 73 per cent, or nearly three quarters, were "piece-workers." For convenience sake, give the odd 14 men about a pound each and call the number of men 1,600, and the amount of the fortnight's pay-roll 4,000 pounds sterling. Here is the result:—

$$4000 \div 1,600 = \text{£}2 \text{ 10s.}$$

Average fortnightly earnings of each man, $\text{£}2 \text{ 10s.}$ ($\$12.50$).

Average weekly earning of each man, $\text{£}1 \text{ 5s.}$ ($\$6.24$).

This pay-roll was a favorable one for the workman. It included foremen, platers, and riveters, and other skilled mechanics; the men could not earn during the year fifty-two amounts equal to the average weekly earnings of the two weeks taken. Could they, however, their individual earnings would not exceed $\$312$ for the year. Only 10 per cent of the total amount paid out was for unskilled labor. How many persons received the 10 per cent of the $\text{£}3,000$.

Number of unskilled laborers, "piece-workers,"	190
Number of unskilled laborers, "timers,"	248
	<hr/>
	438

The laboring man numerically represented considerably over 25 per cent of the number on the pay-roll, though he only received 10 per cent of the pay; a trifle over 18s.