

THE COMMERCE OF NATIONS

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The commerce of nations by C. F. Bastable

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OF NATIONS**

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THIS book has been written in the belief that existing commercial policy and the doctrines respecting it are best explained by reference to their history. A method that has been so fruitful in all other directions of social inquiry can hardly be ineffective in this one.

Thus—to give instances. The McKinley Act (p. 77) is not properly understood until it is regarded as a single step in the legislation of a century. The Sugar Bounties (pp. 173-4) take us back to the continental system and the old colonial policy; and a Customs Union of the British Empire presents difficulties only known to those who have studied the effect of the differential duties (p. 206). So it is also with plans for reciprocity. Their strongest refutation lies in the fact that they have been tried and failed (p. 196). In like manner the most effective justification of the English Free Trade system is supplied by the history of its introduction (Chapter VI.).

What is true of legislation applies equally to theory. Modern Protectionism should be studied in its development in order to see its connexion with ideas and sentiments unsuited for industrial civilization. Only in this way is it possible to understand how so many able and enlightened

men have adopted a system that is notwithstanding injurious both to social and economical progress.

One result of this mode of treatment has been to diminish the amount of space devoted to certain topics that are prominent in most works on the subject. Little is said about the Corn Law struggle, nor is the Free Trade movement regarded as if it began and ended with Cobden. A few years can after all be but one stage—a highly important one it is true—in a movement that must in its entirety occupy centuries.

The absence of footnotes has prevented reference being made to the various works used ; but a general acknowledgment must here be given to those who have supplied so much of the material necessary for a study of the kind.

C. F. BASTABLE.

*Trinity College, Dublin,
November, 1891.*

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

ONE of the most striking features of modern times is the growth of international relations of ever-increasing complexity and influence. Facilities for communication have brought about closer and more constant intercourse between the different countries of the world, leading to many unexpected results. This more intimate connexion is reflected in all the different sides of social activity. International law, that two hundred years ago was almost wholly confined to the discussion of war and its effects, now contains a goodly series of chapters treating in detail of the conduct of nations during peace. It draws the bulk of its materials from the large and rapidly-growing body of treaties that regulate such matters, and form so many fresh links between the states that sign them. Literature, Science, and Art have all been similarly affected; their followers are engaged in keenly watching the progress of their favourite pursuits in other countries, and are becoming daily more and more sensitive to any new tendency or movement in the remotest nation.