

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

THE *Irish Statesman* published in Dublin is one of the ablest edited papers in the English speaking world. It is a pleasure to read it for its admirable English and its intelligent comments on international politics or questions of domestic concern. But in its treatment of Protection it is as perverse as the most ill-informed American worshipper at the feet of the high tariff Baal. In a recent issue it says:

It is not clear to us why universal free trade should be part of the Pacifist economic programme put forward by the Women's International League Congress. We had free trade between Ireland and Great Britain for over a century without, as it seems to us, noticeably improving the good relations between the two communities. We would like to believe that free trade made for peace, but Great Britain, which had a monopoly of free trade in practice, indulged in as many wars as any highly-protected state. We doubt whether the true Pacifist mood, which is a spiritual state of consciousness, can be created by material means. The real difficulty about free trade doctrine, that without protection every country will produce and be most prosperous and happy doing it, is that any country which has got a start in production, has amassed capital, technical skill and experience, and is highly organised, can wipe out under free trade any competition starting in another country, no matter how naturally fitted that country may be or how naturally intelligent and industrious its people. If free trade became a world policy we would probably find four or five of the most highly-organised industrial communities extinguishing the manufacture in other countries through a competition that they would at present under free trade be unable to face. These countries might be reduced to be mere agricultural communities without any variety in their lives, and that certainly would not make for peace between nations. We are rather inclined to think that if the policy advocated at the Dublin Congress was in operation for seven years half the nationalities in the world would be crying out lamentably against the policy which had permitted their native industries, nursed up by protection, to be wiped out of existence. Free trade can be defended on economic grounds when countries have reached a certain stage in their development, but we do not believe that it will help in the slightest to make the world more peaceable or that it may be regarded as an auxiliary policy to that preached in the Sermon on the Mount.

IT would require more space than we can give it to cover all the points raised by *The Irish Statesman*. If Mr. Russell can prove that the relations of Great Britain and Ireland were more cordial when the former was using the tariff to crush out Irish industries, laying embargoes on importations and exports to suit the interests of her manufacturers at home,

that point might have had greater weight. The historian, John Mitchell, has something to say in this connection. He is speaking of the condition prevailing in Ireland in the period immediately preceding the establishment of protection, and says: "Enjoying for the first time in her history an unrestricted trade, a sovereign judiciary, the writ of habeas corpus, and a parliament acknowledged to be the sovereign legislation * * * the country did certainly begin to make a rapid advance in material prosperity."

ON the statement that Great Britain with a monopoly of free trade has indulged in as many wars as any highly protected state, we are provoked to reply, *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*, and that she also engaged in many wars prior to 1846, the year of her free trade beginning. Nor does it greatly matter whether this is so or not, since wars do sometimes spring from other sources than the tariff. But taking the position he does, it is incumbent upon Mr. Russell to prove that tariff barriers are not frequent causes of international friction that many times in history have developed into armed conflict. The war between the North and South was helped along by the tariff imposed in the interests of Northern manufacturers at the expense of the Southern cotton growers.

IT is a curious doctrine that the cause of peace can be anything else but hindered by tariff barriers that interrupt friendly communication between peoples, and all historical precedent, as well as the dictates of common sense, support the economic programme of Free Trade put forward by the Women's International League Council. To imagine that the true Pacifist mood is only a spiritual state of consciousness wholly uninfluenced by material considerations, is a doctrine worthy of a poet—and "Æ" is a true poet—but hardly worthy of a poet and editor who is trying to think in economic terms.

THE appalling picture that Mr. Russell gives us of all the countries but a half dozen that have "got a start in production and have amassed capital and technical skill, etc.", seeing their nascent manufactures extinguished and being reduced to the condition of agricultural communities, is mild as compared with some of the harrowing predictions drawn from the Protectionist Chamber of Horrors. Has Mr. Russell ever read the doleful prophecies with which British protectionists warned the Commons of what would happen if Protection were overthrown? The mildest of these

pictured England reduced to about the condition of the Desert of Sahara.

VERY familiar stuff all this is to Americans. But the prophecy lacks confirmation and is no more valuable or convincing than the other fellows, "Taint so." As we have no experience with universal free trade it is idle to predict what would happen if we had it. But we do know that we had manufactures in America under all sorts of tariffs because we had the natural resources. And we soon got the technical experience and the capital because we had the resources. It is questionable indeed if Protection when it came did not crush out a number of valuable manufactures while it left others in a position to levy tribute on the consumer. And it is necessary to remember that nearly all the countries have done some manufacturing for several hundred years past and all of them have some technical experience and some capital. And as free trade is the natural trade—i. e., the trade that would go on under the absence of artificial restrictions—we must take *cum grano salis* the despairing pictures of what would take place under a system that would allow men to exchange freely the products of their labor for their mutual satisfactions. We just will not believe that prosperity is served by getting in the way of men who want to trade, and we do not believe that the peace of the world is helped by any system that keeps men apart in any of their relations.

WE would remind the *Irish Statesman* that those most prominent in the past as champions of Ireland's cause, Gladstone, Farnell and Davitt were free traders. Cobden had no stauncher advocate in his fight for free trade than that great free trader, Daniel O'Connell. But it may be well to say that Ireland's impoverishment is due to her land system, and not to any tariff policy, past or present. It used to be the fashion for Irish agitators to make this assertion, and it was true enough. But they always forgot to mention that there was nothing peculiar to the Irish land system that was not shared by the land system of every other country.

THERE is no word that has produced so much confusion of thought as "capitalism." Worse than that, it has stopped all thought. Does it mean private property, private enterprise, the *entrepreneur*, the "wage system"—another word that has stopped a lot of people from thinking—does it mean any or all of these things? The Socialist defines "capitalism" as everything that is not socialism—and lets it go at that. The economists have not gone much beyond the Socialists—in fact, they have adopted most of the Socialistic confusion about "capitalism" and so have resigned the field to their opponents.

WHAT in heaven's name is it? We can understand Socialism or think we can. The Government Owner-

ship of Land and the Means of Production. Government Distribution. Government Regulation of Wages—wages no longer, we suppose, but Compensations, since it is the wage system—whatever that is—that they set out to destroy. Government Meal Tickets. Bureaus and Commissions to "fix" things. Municipal Factories and government overseers. All this we can understand, though we don't like it. To us it seems like turning back the hands of time. And it is all designed to overthrow "capitalism," which, as we don't know what it is, and as nobody else seems to know, leads us to think we ought to examine a little closer what it is that calls for the substitution of all these proposed new agencies.

WE hear of the "era of capitalism," beginning we know not on what date. Was there a time when civilized mankind had no capital? How then did they produce any wealth at all since capital is wealth used in the production of wealth. Does the era of "capitalism" date from the abolition of feudalism? Sometimes we think it does, but then we run across some socialistic pamphlet that leads us to think it began much later. Or does it just mean "big business," the growth of great enterprises requiring large capital, which are of such recent development? Well, that is cooperation—not "capitalism." If it results in monopoly, that is not because of capitalism, if we even vaguely apprehend the word to mean anything at all, but is due to laws which foster monopoly. It used to be the fashion of some of our friends who ought to have known better to talk of "big business," as if the *size* of the thing mattered. We hear less of that now, though big business is bigger than ever, because the complaint was a childish and demagogic one.

AND this leads up to the article by Bernard Shaw in the *N. Y. Times* of September 13, part of which we reprint, and which we believe is designed for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The world is profoundly indebted to Shaw; he is a creator of great dramas and a keen satirist. But were a prize offered for a confused muddlement of economic hodgepodge, Shaw gets the rag doll. He begins by stating the law of rent and its consequences. To the failure of society to apprehend this great social law is due the evils which Shaw attributes to "capitalism." What is true in his statement Henry George has taught him. He once acknowledged his debt to George; he does not repeat this acknowledgement now, because his colossal egotism has grown with the years, and he makes acknowledgement to no man.

NOTE now the fine muddlement of his economic analysis. "Socialism (he means the doctrine, not the thing of course) never arises in the earlier phases of capitalism (again that word!) * * * There is plenty of land available for private appropriation by the last comer." Certainly And there is plenty of land available now for all comers