

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

A wealthy citizen, whom I once supported, and called on others to support, for the Presidential chair, under the impression that he was a Democrat of the school of Jefferson, has recently published a letter advising us to steel-plate our coasts, lest foreign navies come over and bombard us. This counsel of timidity has for its hardly disguised object the inducing of such an enormous expenditure of public money as will prevent any demand for the reduction of taxation, and thus secure to the tariff rings a longer lease of plunder. It well illustrates the essential meanness of the protectionist spirit—a spirit that no more comprehends the true dignity of the American Republic and the grandeur of her possibilities than it cares for the material interests of the great masses of her citizens—"the poor people who have to work."

That which is good harmonizes with all things good; and that which is evil tends to other evil things. Properly does Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," apply the term "protective" not merely to the system of robbery by tariffs, but to the spirit that teaches that the many are born to serve and the few to rule; that props thrones with bayonets, substitutes small vanities and petty jealousies for high-minded patriotism, and converts the flower of European youth into uniformed slaves, trained to kill each other at the word of command. It is not accidental that Mr. Tilden, anxious to get rid of the surplus revenue in order to prevent a demand for the repeal of protective duties, should propose wasting it on steel-clad forts, rather than applying it to any purpose of general utility. Fortifications and navies and standing armies not merely suit the protectionist purpose in requiring a constant expenditure, and developing a class who look on warlike expenditures as

conducive to their own profit and importance, but they are of a piece with a theory that teaches us that our interests are antagonistic to those of other nations.

Unembarrassed by hostile neighbors; unentangled in European quarrels; already, in her sixty millions of people, the most powerful nation on earth, and rapidly rising to a position that will dwarf the greatest empires, the American Republic can afford to laugh to scorn any suggestion that she should ape the armaments of Old World monarchies, as she should laugh to scorn the parallel suggestion that her industries could be ruined by throwing open her ports to the commerce of the world.

The giant of the nations does not depend for her safety upon steel-clad fortresses and armor-plated ships which the march of invention must within a few years make, even in war-time, mere useless rubbish; but in her population, in her wealth, in the intelligence and inventiveness and spirit of her people, she has all that would be really useful in time of need. No nation on earth would venture wantonly to attack her, and none could do so with impunity. If we ever again have a foreign war it will be of our own making. And too strong to fear aggression, we ought to be too just to commit it.

In throwing open our ports to the commerce of the world we shall far better secure their safety than by fortifying them with all the "protected" plates that our steel ring could make. For not merely would free trade give us again that mastery of the ocean which protection has deprived us of, and stimulate the productive power in which real fighting strength lies; but while steel-clad forts could afford no defense against the dynamite-dropping balloons and death-dealing air-ships which will be the next product of destructive invention, free trade would prevent their ever being sent against us. The spirit of protectionism, which is the real thing that it is sought to defend by steel-plating, is that of national enmity and strife. The spirit of free trade is that of fraternity and peace.

A nobler career is open to the American Republic than the servile imitation of European follies and vices. Instead of following in what is mean and low, she may lead toward what is grand and high. This league of sovereign States, settling their differences by a common tribunal and opposing no impediments to trade and travel, has in its possibilities of giving to the world a more than Roman peace.

What are the real, substantial advantages of this Union of ours? Are they not summed up in the absolute freedom of trade which it secures, and the community of interests that grows out of this freedom? If our States were fighting each other with hostile tariffs, and a citizen could not cross a State boundary-line without having his baggage searched, or a book printed in New York could not be sent across the river to Jersey City without being held in the post-office until duty was paid, how long would our Union last, or what would it be worth? The true benefits of our Union, the true basis of the interstate peace it secures, is that it has prevented the establishment of State tariffs and given us free trade over the better part of a continent.

We may "extend the area of freedom" whenever we choose to—whenever we apply to our intercourse with other nations the same principle that we apply to intercourse between our States. We may annex Canada to all intents and purposes whenever we throw down the tariff wall we have built around ourselves. We need not ask for any reciprocity; if we abolish our custom-houses and call off our baggage searchers and Bible confiscators, Canada would not and could not maintain hers. This would make the two countries practically one. Whether the Canadians chose to maintain a separate Parliament and pay a British lordling for keeping up a mock court at Rideau Hall, need not in the slightest concern us. The intimate relations that would come of unrestricted commerce would soon obliterate the boundary-line; and mutual interest and

mutual convenience would speedily induce the extension over both countries of the same general laws and institutions.

And so would it be with our kindred over the sea. With the abolition of our custom-houses and the opening of our ports to the free entry of all good things, the trade between the British Islands and the United States would become so immense, the intercourse so intimate, that we should become one people, and would inevitably so conform currency and postal system and general laws that Englishman and American would feel themselves as much citizens of a common country as do New Yorker and Californian. Three thousand miles of water are no more of an impediment to this than are three thousand miles of land. And with relations so close, ties of blood and language would assert their power, and mutual interest, general convenience and fraternal feeling might soon lead to a pact, which, in the words of our own, would unite all the English-speaking peoples in a league "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, (sic) provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty."

Thus would free trade unite what a century ago protectionism severed, and in a federation of the nations of English speech—the world-tongue of the future—take the first step to a federation of mankind.

And upon our relations with all other nations our repudiation of protection would have a similar tendency. The sending of delegations to ask the trade of our sister republics of Spanish America avails nothing so long as we maintain a tariff which repels their trade. We have but to open our ports to draw their trade to us and avail ourselves of all their natural advantages. And more potent than anything else would be the moral influence of our action. The spectacle of a continental republic such as ours really putting her faith in the principle of freedom, would revolutionize the civilized world. For, as I have shown, that violation of natural rights which imposes

tariff duties is inseparably linked with that violation of natural rights which compels the masses to pay tribute for the privilege of living. The one cannot be abolished without the other. And a republic wherein the free-trade principle was thus carried to its conclusion, wherein the equal and unalienable rights of men were thus acknowledged, would indeed be as a city set on a hill.

The dangers to the Republic come not from without but from within. What menaces her safety is no armada launched from European shores, but the gathering cloud of tramps in her own highways. That Krupp is casting monstrous cannon, and that in Cherbourg and Woolwich projectiles of unheard-of destructiveness are being stored, need not alarm her, but there is black omen in the fact that Pennsylvania miners are working for 65 cents a day. No triumphant invader can tread our soil till the blight of "great estates" has brought "failure of the crop of men;" if there be danger that our cities blaze, it is from torches lit in faction fight, not from foreign shells.

Against such dangers forts will not guard us, ironclads protect us, or standing armies prove of any avail. They are not to be avoided by any aping of European protectionism; they come from our failure to be true to that spirit of liberty which was invoked at the formation of the Republic. They are only to be avoided by conforming our institutions to the principle of freedom.

For it is true, as was declared by the first National Assembly of France, that "*ignorance, neglect, or contempt of human rights are the sole causes of public misfortunes and corruptions of government.*"

Here is the conclusion of the whole matter: That we should do unto others as we would have them do to us— that we should respect the rights of others as scrupulously as we would have our own rights respected, is not a mere counsel of perfection to individuals, but it is the law to which we must

conform social institutions and national policy if we would secure the blessings of abundance and peace.