

THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF FREE TRADE.

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He who follows the principle of free trade to its logical conclusion can strike at the very root of protection; can answer every question and meet every objection, and appeal to the surest of instincts and the strongest of motives. He will see in free trade not a mere fiscal reform, but a movement which has for its end and aim nothing less than the abolition of poverty and of the vice and crime and degradation that flow from it, by the restoration to the disinherited of their natural rights and the establishment of society upon the basis of justice. He will catch the inspiration of a cause great enough to live for and to die for, and be moved by an enthusiasm that he can evoke in others.

It is true that to advocate free trade in its fullness would excite the opposition of interests far stronger than those concerned in maintaining protective tariffs. But on the other hand it would bring to the standard of free trade forces without which it cannot succeed. Opposition is not to be avoided by those who would arouse thought. Without opposition that attention cannot be excited, that energy evoked, that is necessary to overcome the inertia that is the strongest bulwark of existing abuses. A party can no more be rallied on a question that no one disputes than steam can be raised to working pressure in an open vessel.

The working class of the United States, who have constituted the voting strength of protection, are now ready for a movement that will appeal to them on behalf of real free trade. For some years past educative agencies have been at work among them that have sapped their faith in protection. If they have not learned that protection *cannot* help them, they have at least become widely conscious that protection *does* not help them. They have been awakening to the fact that there is some deep wrong in the constitution of society, although they may not see clearly what that wrong is; they have been gradually coming to feel that for the emancipation of labor radical measures are needed, although they may not know what those measures are.