

SENATOR VANCE'S SPEECH.

A Discussion of the Cotton Tie Question—A Sample of Legislation Against the Farming Interests.

On Saturday, August 8, Senator Vance made a vigorous and humorous speech against the proposed increase of the duty on cotton ties. In the course of his speech he said: The farmer has these disadvantages under this system: The prices of all his products are fixed by the markets abroad, and why? Because he makes more than will supply the home market and the surplus which goes abroad fixes the price of that which is sold in the home market, and the very fact that there is a surplus to sell abroad is evidence that the home market is abundantly supplied, and that abundant supply, according to the well known principles of political economy, operates to keep prices down.

He cannot increase those prices by an artificial scarcity on account of the impossibility of forming a combination like those to which the manufacturers resort. His interest is so widespread, the persons engaged in agriculture are so broadly diffused over the whole land that it is impossible for them to act in concert and to create an artificial scarcity. They are obliged, therefore, to send their articles abroad, and there they are sold in competition with the cheapest labor of this world. Our farmers' wheat is sold in competition with Indian wheat which is grown with labor at 6 cents a day, and the Southern planters' cotton is sold in competition with the cotton of India, which is made with the same labor, in competition with the ryots of India and with the fellahs of the Nile, whose pay is still less than that of the ryot of India, and in competition with the half breed labor of South America and the islands of the sea, and everywhere that cotton is produced. So, then, the men, women and children who work in the cotton fields and in the gin houses of the South are compelled to labor in competition with the cheapest and most degraded labor of our race anywhere to be found.

The farmer is, therefore, compelled by this plan to go abroad to sell his surplus; having just sold his home product at prices fixed by competition with the lowest labor in the world, he goes abroad and sells in the same free trade market. If he were permitted to buy in the same market at prices cheapened in like manner he would be compensated to some extent for these disadvantages, but he is not permitted to buy there. When he gets to Liverpool and sells his wheat or his cotton at these reduced prices, if he could buy the hardware that he requires for the use of his farm at English prices, or if he could buy woolen goods which he requires for the use of his family at English or German prices, or crockery ware for the use of his family at the prices there in a market cheapened by the free trade labor of the world in the same way, he would to a great degree be compensated for these disadvantages, but he cannot do it.

If he buys in Liverpool with the proceeds of his cargo of wheat a supply of iron goods and woolen goods and crockery ware for his own use or the use of his neighbors, when he arrives at the port of New York the Government of his country takes from him one-half of all the iron goods he got, it takes over one-half of all the crockery ware he got, and it takes three-quarters of every piece of woolen goods he has got, under this bill, as a tax, as a punishment for daring to go abroad and sell his surplus products. It was his duty to have permitted them to rot rather than buy cheap goods from foreigners.

He is treated as a criminal by the laws of his country and subjected to fines and penalties in the way of duties. If he comes back with a dollar's worth of crockery ware for the use of his family, for which he had sold a bushel of wheat, the Government takes over 50 cents of it; if he comes back with a dollar's worth of iron supplies for the use of his farm, the Government takes one-half; if he comes back with four yards of cloth, the Government takes three yards of it and leaves him one.

Mr. President, is it any wonder that the thing has produced its natural result? Whilst the farmer is paying the tax to his neighbor to sustain him in busi-

ness, from whom is he to recoup his losses? Where is there a man below and subject to him upon whom he may cast the burden of his taxation? He is nowhere. There is nobody. He pays that out of his earnings a dead loss forever.

Is it any wonder, I ask, if in this unequal struggle which has been going on in this way ever since the war, for more than twenty-five years, that the agricultural classes have been falling behind? They have been heaping up mortgages and indebtedness; they have been in many places forced to burn their corn for fuel for the want of a market for it. They live harder, they make less advancement in the arts of luxury and comfort, they endure more privations, they work harder, they give less education to their children, they have less opportunity for acquiring information and cultivation for themselves than any other class of the community; whilst we see the other classes, according to the statistics of the census tables, heaping together all the wealth and concentrating in themselves all of the prosperity of the country.

Those are facts which cannot be denied. Mr. President, this item of cotton ties which we are considering well illustrates the iniquity of the workings of this whole system of tariff taxation, of which the manufacturers and miners are the beneficiaries and of which the agriculturists are the victims.

Cotton is cultivated in America from the Roanoke to the Rio Grande, all along the shores of the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico to the borders of Mexico. At least 800,000 square miles of the fairest and most fertile portion of American soil is devoted chiefly to the production of cotton. It is the chief business of ten million people. It is interwoven with our whole social and domestic life in a manner that I cannot describe to you. The language of poetry could only depict it. From the time that the first seed is put into the ground until it springs up, and all during the tender period of the plant, it is watched with that anxious solicitude by our whole people with which the chamber and the news from the chamber of a sick person in a family is watched.

If it can escape the perils which beset it in its tender state, then the Heavens are watched with anxiety to see if they will be propitious; and as it grows the whole force of the plantation is turned out to cultivate it, and when it begins to bloom and has that far escaped the casualties of its delicate existence, every man, woman and child in the land begins to smile; and that smile breaks into open rejoicing when beyond all danger the white fleecy staple begins to make the fields glow with the promise of comfort, peace, abundance and happiness. It is a continuous labor. It is not like the labor on most other agricultural products. By the time the last white fleecy ball is picked from the hard, decaying stalk in the field the plow is coming in again for the next crop; and so it goes. The result of all that labor is that seven-eighths of all the cotton in this world that enters into commerce is produced in those Southern States, more than 7,000,000 bales out of 11,000,000 for the world.

That cotton furnishes more than one-third of all the exports which this country sends to foreign countries. Out of the \$730,000,000 worth of exports for the fiscal year ending on the 30th day of June last, \$250,000,000 were cotton from these Southern fields, and almost half of everything that agriculture furnishes for exportation consists in this cotton; almost as much as all the wheat and corn and oats and meat, beef, pork, live stock, cheese, butter, and all dairy products put together—almost, not quite so much. And it is not necessary to say that foreign commerce supports our exchanges and makes the balance of trade in our favor and prevents the outflow of the precious metals from our circulation, and that of all the foreign products of commerce this item of cotton is the leading article. It is the support, the employment, the hope, the peace, the abundance, the happiness, of ten millions of people, and it receives not one dollar's worth of benefit in any conceivable way from your tariff taxation.

On the contrary, every tool, every piece of harness, every plow, every wagon, every barrow, or implement used in its production, and every article of household supplies used by the operatives in the field is subjected to the heaviest kind of tax for the benefit of the manufacturer and the miner.

Now, Mr. President, after these people, these men, women and children, black and white, rich and poor, high and low, have made this great crop that clothes the world and sustains your foreign commerce and your exchanges, instead of encouraging it by taxation for its benefit you come down upon this one indispensable article which secures the bale of cotton in shape and envelops it for the market, and instead of saying, "I will reduce that duty or remove it altogether for you, to encourage this great and useful calling," you double and almost treble the duty on it. From 35 per cent. you advance it to 103.71 per cent.

Mr. President, look at it now from a protectionist standpoint; look at it in the light of your own profession, Senators, and see if this duty is just. You say you want to encourage American industry. Is not the production of 7,000,000 bales of cotton, the daily occupation and life of ten million of people, an industry? Is it not an American industry? Are not its laborers your countrymen? Is it not meritorious and deserving in every sense of the word? Why cannot you protect it? You cannot, indeed, benefit it by imposing direct taxes upon the foreign competitors of the article, for it has none in this market. Then, in the name of heaven, if you cannot protect so meritorious an industry, as you do, all of your own, by the imposition of taxes, can you not protect this great industry of these people by the withholding of taxation? If the Constitution gives you power to promote private interests by taxing, can you not do the same thing by refraining? If so, is it not equally your duty? All that we ask you to do is to withhold this tax.

If you refuse to withhold the tax, knowing that the tax which you have levied upon foreign raw cotton is a sham, a delusion and a snare; if you insist on oppressing this American industry in this way by trebling the tax already existing upon it, and thus crippling the strength of the man who labors in the field for the support of American commerce and for the clothing of the world; if you do that, I ask, when some of you are standing on the hustings and talking about the protection of American labor, might not some man in your audience with great propriety say, "That is a lie, and you know it; you know that you are not for protecting all American labor;" for the 7,000,000 bales of cotton are oppressed when prepared for the foreign market by a tax three times higher than that which is imposed upon many other articles that you are manufacturing.

Mr. Butler—The Treasury does not need the money.

Mr. Morgan—It did not use to need it; it needs it now.

Mr. Vance—In that view of it, considering that I am standing and talking to a protectionist, I can see every reason in the world why, when you cannot encourage an American industry by direct taxation, you should encourage it by withholding taxation as the only means left to you. If you will not you show plainly that your professions are false and that love for American industries is only an excuse for plundering the American people. The Treasury does not need the money. I am free to say that at the rate we are going, I think it soon will; but when we assembled here to legislate for the people we were all agreed that the revenue ought to be reduced, that there ought not to be a surplus dollar taken from the pockets of the people and paid into the Treasury that the Government does not need. And when we met here there were \$57,000,000 in the Treasury that could not be used at all properly and legally. Therefore the government does not need the revenue.

If it did and if it was necessary to increase duties in order to make more revenue, then according to the bill that you have introduced, which is declared to be an act to reduce the revenue, equalize duties on imports, and for other purposes, then according to that profession contained in that title you should equalize this taxation and you should not make it higher on this than on anything else. According to my recollection,

there is only one item in the bill in the iron schedule that is now as high as this tax on cotton ties will be. Structural iron, I believe, was 105 per cent and you reduced it to 82; cotton ties were 35 per cent and you raised them up to 103. Is that equalizing taxation? And if it is not equalizing it, is then the title of your bill false and deceptive?

Again, Mr. President, these ties are not manufactured in this country, so that the tax imposed for the encouragement and protection of American manufactures in the name of protection, in this instance is false and fraudulent, for there is no manufacture here to protect. But the intimation is thrown out that perhaps there will be. Let us hope that there will not be.

Mr. President, such has been the abuse of the taxing power in this matter that I give you my word, as much as I love my country and as greatly as I rejoice in its prosperity, that it gives me sincere sorrow to see a new protected manufactory started in this country, or a new mine of any valuable mineral discovered, because I know it simply means another pauper to be charged upon the parish.

Mr. Hoar—May I ask the Senator if he would be glad to have all the existing ones closed on the same theory?

Mr. Vance—No, sir.

Mr. Hoar—I do not see any distinction.

Mr. Vance—There are men who can see a distinction, happily.

Mr. Hoar—Very true.

Mr. Vance—I do not want to see one of them close, but I want to see their profits derived from the taxation of my people closed. That is the sight that I long to see.

Prophets and kings desired it long,
But died without the sight,
Says the old hymn.

I hope to be able to see that yet before I die. I hope to be able to see manufactures in America flourish just as the agriculturist in my country flourish, without taxation. I hope to see them flourish by the sweat of their brow and their own honest industry, instead of by the sweat of my brow and the honest industry of my people.

Articles of luxury and foreign fashion, said the chairman of the committee, must bear the increased taxation. Consequently, those pictures of the great old masters and the renaissance, and the battle pieces of the Old World, that hang in the galleries of the rich are permitted by this party that is the friend of the American workingman to come in free of tax; but with the hungry desperation of the tiger they pounce upon the poor man's cotton tie and treble the tax upon that, and then turn to the public as unconcerned as if nothing whatsoever had taken place and thank God that they are not as other men, and I thank God that other men are not like them.

Oh, they tell us that art is educating. So it is; but cotton is food, cotton is clothing, cotton is shelter, cotton satisfies the hunger of crying children, cotton covers the nakedness of impoverished humanity. And art is educating. Much education the people of the cotton fields will get from a picture in the gallery of a wealthy man on Fifth avenue. They would have no earthly chance of seeing it.

No, Mr. President, the whole thing is a delusion and a snare. Now, sir, at the proper time I shall move to put this upon the free list and I shall propose to exchange with you on that side, and will give you for the Treasury the duty on shotgun barrels or on Zante currants or on laces and braids and plaits made of straw—do not let me forget to put that in—I will give you all that if you will permit this great American industry of cotton-growing to be encouraged so much as to permit the material with which it is prepared for market to come in free.

Mr. President, the wayfaring man, though a Republican, can see from the way in which this item is disposed of whether this system of protective taxation is beneficial to the agricultural classes of our people or not. They have at last waked up, and greater still will be that awakening when they come to see the systematic iniquity that in the name of law has robbed them and despoiled them of the results of their industry for twenty-five years. When they come to find that instead of getting better it is getting worse; that instead of their doing any-

thing to encourage them by the removal of taxes where the taxes could be spared they are studiously seeking every means of increasing the taxes upon them and the means of their industry—when they come to see that fully, Mr. President, then my mission will have been ended. I need exert myself no more. No other man who believes as I do need give himself any further trouble. Something will be heard to drop.

I can see the coming of the storm now, sir. The cloud is bigger than a man's hand. I can hear the roar now, which, though indistinct, is still an indication not that it is a slight breeze but that it is the real thunder of Niagara itself. Take warning and get under shelter when you can. Take off the duty on these cotton ties, reduce the duty on this whole iron schedule, reduce the duty on the woolen schedule, give the farmer such a chance that when he ships anything abroad he can obtain a reasonable price for it and can bring home a return cargo without being treated as a criminal. Give him a chance to reap some of the benefits which accrue to all people who occupy this great and glorious and happily situated land. Do not make them any longer the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for you. They have acted as the scape goat for your protective system long enough. They have been the ultimate payees and the common vouches of this system which has enabled you to make profit.

You had better, if you understand your own interest, revise this tariff yourself, and revise it justly, for if you do not it may be like the waters which accumulate above the dam, instead of falling over in quantities sufficient to carry off the excess without damage, it may gather strength and head until it will sweep away the whole dam and everything that stands within its reach below.

It is time something was done to equalize the burdens of the people, to shift the taxation so that all shall bear a part and all shall be exempted alike. That is your lookout, though, Senators, not mine. My party is not in power. I have no responsibility here whatsoever after I have protested and pointed out the evils and done what I could to have them redressed. The responsibility, then, rests with you.

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