

ceive patients from all parts of the kingdom, but, as places of medical education, they confer benefits on the community far beyond the walls of the cities in which they exist. On this ground, hospitals which are used for educational purposes receive support from the state.

One word in conclusion, as to the plan of allowing part of the expense, while in hospital, to fall on the patient or his family. This is a great principle, as yet undeveloped in this country. M. de Watteville, in his admirable report on the French charities already alluded to, tells us that in France an annual income of 1,817,967 francs is derived from this source. "Not only", he says, "is the creation of paying beds in the hospitals useful to these establishments, but it is eminently useful to the working classes."

But it is not under the supposition that any considerable sum could be realized in this way, that the plan seems worthy of the warmest advocacy; it is because of its moral influence; it is because the industrious poor man may be received into the same hospital and treated alongside a pauper, yet this feeling that he is doing something towards his own support causes him not to hang his head for honest poverty. Though it were but a penny a week, it is enough to fix a great gulf between the poor man and the pauper.

### III.—*Universal Free Trade.*—By Monsieur Corr Vander Maeren of Brussels, President of the International Free Trade Association.

[Read before the Section of Economic Science and Statistics of the British Association at Dublin, on Friday, 28th August, 1857.]

My first words must be the expression of my sincere gratitude, and that of my colleague, Monsieur Jottrand, for the honour which your eminently useful Association has conferred upon us by addressing to us a special invitation to attend this meeting. We present ourselves here as delegates from the central committee of the "International Association for Customs Reform" established at Brussels, of which I have the honour of being the president. My colleagues of the central committee have, no doubt, chosen me as their delegate on account of my being of Irish origin. They hoped, as I do myself, that that circumstance would create in your minds the indulgence I am so much in need of, on account of my inexperience in the language, and my other deficiencies for the performance of my task, which nevertheless is one, allow me to add, that I accepted with pleasure. The very fact of touching the shores of Ireland fills my mind with strong feelings of sad delight.

I am directed by the central committee to call your attention to

the object of our association, and to make known to you the progress we are making in the more practical application, particularly in Belgium, of the principles of political economy to the international intercourse between nations. I shall also venture to add a few observations upon the British tariff.

The Belgian tariff was established by the united legislation of Belgium and Holland in 1822, and was, in its origin, based upon principles still more liberal than the great measures of reform carried out in this country with such energy by Sir Robert Peel. The duties were fixed according to the following principles:—Raw material to pay a maximum duty of three per cent., and manufactured goods six per cent.; upon the principle that such a rate of duty, to which must be added freight, commission, and other expenses, should be a sufficient protection for the home industry, and that the Belgian manufacturers who could not compete with foreign produce upon their own market with such a protection, would act wisely in turning their attention to something more profitable. However, those liberal dispositions were soon contaminated by the selfish anxiety of some influential manufacturers, who, under the mask of apparent solicitude for the interests of the working classes, succeeded in obtaining from time to time a heavy increase of duty upon iron, coal, cotton goods, corn, linen, &c., while the articles of luxury remained at their primitive duty of six per cent. At length came the memorable downfall of protection in England. This event, one of the most important in the history of humanity since 1789, had a great influence all over Europe. In Belgium, protection ceased to make any further progress; and, in order to come in aid of public opinion, we got up a free trade movement in 1846. The year following we convened an international *Congres des Economistes*, which attracted the attention of the different countries of Europe to the questions of political economy. A more liberal ministry having at length obtained possession of the government in 1847, the duty upon corn was suppressed, and many other reforms of our tariff were prepared; when, unluckily for us, the political commotion of 1848 put a stop to the progress of peaceful discussion on questions of social economy.

We, however, resumed our agitation in 1856 in a more practical form, under the title of "The Belgian Association for Customs' Reform." This association got up meetings all over the country, and succeeded in obtaining the removal of many commercial restrictions. Looking forward to the necessity of arousing like dispositions in other countries as well as in our own, we convened at Brussels, in September, 1856, an international congress for customs reform, to which we invited all nations to send delegates. The following were the particular questions which were submitted to each member of the congress for discussion.

First question—What are the natural or artificial obstacles opposed to the extension of the commercial relations of the country to which you belong?

Second question—What are the practical means proposed, or to be proposed, in each country in order to remove or diminish the obstacles

which impede the extension of commercial relations with other countries?

A circular, containing these simple questions, and emanating from a very few private individuals, brought together a congress composed of 642 men of rank and influence, from all parts of Europe.\* It was before that distinguished assembly that we had the honour to propose the establishment of the "International Association for Customs' Reforms," which we represent here to-day before this highly talented assembly of the practical and scientific men of Great Britain. This association proposes as its object, "by uniting the scattered influence of various countries, to advance the progressive reform of tariffs, and by all legal and peaceable means to encourage the popularisation of the principles upon which is based commercial freedom; in a word, to continue the work of the congress."

Besides the paramount object indicated by its name, the "International Association" has received from the congress a mission to agitate in favour of other objects, such as the uniformity of weights, measures, and moneys—the uniform rates of international postage and telegraphic despatches—the reform or modification of the present absurdly vexatious system of passports—the encouragement of the general establishment of tribunals and chambers of commerce. The introduction of this last question is due to the efforts of one of our learned secretaries, Mr. Henry Dix Hutton, one of the most active

\* STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CONGRESS.

The following sent delegates to the Congress :—

1—Four governments officially represented	...	...	8
Fourteen institutions of science, of political economy, of navigation, of commerce, and industry	...	...	56
Twenty-one chambers of commerce (fourteen foreign and seven Belgian)	...	...	43
Members of tribunals and chambers of commerce attending without official power	...	...	20
2—Amongst the members and adherents (Belgian and Foreign) of the congress, were observed—			
Ministers and late ministers of state	...	...	7
The Lord Mayor of London	...	...	1
The Burgomaster of Brussels	...	...	1
Members of parliamentary bodies (lords, senators, deputies)	...	...	35
Ex ambassadors and chargés d'affaires	...	...	5
General Officers	...	...	2
Councillors of state of different countries	...	...	10
Préfets, and governors of provinces	...	...	6
Members of academies, professors, and engineers	...	...	28
Lawyers and doctors	...	...	11
Consuls	...	...	15
Number of members officially delegated	...	...	248
3—Manufacturers, Belgian and Foreign :—			
Merchants	...	...	191
Proprietors of land	...	...	121
Authors, professors, and members of the press	...	...	41
Authors, professors, and members of the press	...	...	41
Total number of members delegated and otherwise	...	...	642

members of the congress. The congress established the central working committee of the association at Brussels. In several countries committees are formed; they correspond with the central body. Amongst those already at work we find France, Germany, Holland, and Spain. The English committee, headed by Mr. Cobden, seem unwilling to move actively. They say, "Let those who will be free fight their own battles as we have done; besides, our interference would increase the use of the singular argument put forward by the protectionists all over the continent, who say that free trade is an invention of England to ruin all the world." It is true that a few privileged monopolists raise the cry that we are paid by England to agitate the question of free trade upon the continent; but we despise such absurdities. We are of opinion that the destruction of a system which taxes the food and the general wants of the community, particularly of the working classes, for the benefit of a handful of wealthy manufacturers in each country, is not a question peculiar to any place—that it is not an English question, or a Belgian question, or a French question. It is a question of humanity—of universal peace. It is a question which involves the future welfare of society, to which every thinking man, who looks before him, must give his attention sooner or later.

Amongst the committee already formed, I mention last, but not least in my estimation, the Irish committee. I like to see the name of Ireland connected with international questions. The names of the distinguished members of the Dublin committee are sufficient to show what may be expected from them.\*

Many people ask why Brussels, the capital of a little country, should be chosen as the centre of this great association. On examination the congress found that Belgium had many political and geographical advantages, which make it the most eligible spot to become the heart of progress and civilization on the continent of Europe. Its constitution, which is now so admirably working for a quarter of a century, is justly considered the most truly liberal of any country. I am happy and proud, upon the present occasion, to be supported here by one of the framers of the Belgian constitution. My old and learned friend, Monsieur Jottrand, was a distinguished member of the constituent assembly of Belgium in 1830. He aided in giving to his country a constitution which is the essence of freedom, based upon the strictest principles of order and justice, and which has made our little country of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions of inhabitants great, prosperous, and free; there all are free, all are equal before the law. Our state is wedded to no religious creed; no favours, no privileges can exist in Belgium; no hereditary peerage; there no obnoxious oaths guard the doors of our senate or our chamber of deputies, for the purpose of excluding men on account of their religious creed. No man can legislate for Belgium unless he be legally elected for that purpose by his countrymen,

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\* Dr. Hancock, President; R. H. Walsh, LL.D., Richard Allen, James Houghton, James A. Lawson, Q.C., Jonathan Pim, R. D. Webb; Henry Dix Hutton, Secretary and Treasurer.

and when once duly elected no power can impede his exercising his legislative duties. In a word, Belgium enjoys the most unlimited freedom of the press and of speech. Civil and religious liberties are exercised there in all their purity, and to crown this combination of free institutions, we are blessed with the greatest of treasures—the best of kings; a constitutional king who understands his business, and who is, consequently, like your illustrious queen, beloved by all parties. We have to add to those advantages the fact of our using the French language, which is the language most used all over the continent of Europe; and again, the central position of our little country. Everything, in fact, appears to have pointed out Belgium to the International Congress, as the proper spot to find a solid foundation for erecting a light-house for freedom.

I, however, deeply regret to have to say that, although the principles of equality are specially and strictly prescribed by the charter of Belgium, yet privileges have found their way into our laws; they crept in under the shape of protective duties, giving monopolies to a few cotton and iron manufacturers; but our association is fully determined never to cease agitation until the last of those iniquitous and oppressive monopolies is destroyed. The Belgian congress charged the International Association with the care of publishing its debates, and the numerous and very interesting documents received at Brussels from all parts of Europe. One volume has already been printed; but I am sorry to say that circumstances have prevented us hitherto from going on with this valuable work.\*

You will observe, gentlemen, from what I have already said, that the International Association for Customs Reform has undertaken a great work, a work which can progress only by the energetic and persevering united efforts of men in various countries uniting in action to combat the ignorance and absurd prejudice which exists between people of different nations; seeking encouragement only in the uncompromising conviction that each one is labouring in the cause of humanity, to promote peace and brotherly feelings amongst all men; and to procure for all classes of society, particularly for those whose daily toil forms their only capital, an increase of comfort with a reduction of labour. We look

\* The documents awaiting for publication, either by extract or in extenso, are 141 in number. As follows:—

From Great Britain	...	...	...	...	35
France	...	...	...	...	6
Holland	...	...	...	...	18
Germany	...	...	...	...	18
Austria	...	...	...	...	5
Denmark	...	...	...	...	1
Switzerland	...	...	...	...	14
Spain	...	...	...	...	8
Italy	...	...	...	...	7
Belgium	...	...	...	...	26

forward to the day when all men shall enjoy the blessings of plenty, that the Almighty has in His bounty so profusely spread over different climes, and of which men debar themselves voluntarily, by absurd customs, laws, and international restrictions. Humanity owes much to England for the glorious example given by her to the world in the free trade movement, so admirably inaugurated by that great nation. Still, our association hopes to see England progressing in that direction towards a more complete application of the principles of political economy. The British tariff still contains many customs restrictions. Some high duties upon wines and other articles, which, without causing advantage to any one, form so many black spots in your tariff, which our opponents upon the continent point at when we invoke the example of Great Britain. Many people in England think that the reform is perfect—that the work is done—that you have only to enjoy its results. The results are, indeed, of a glorious character, and the gratitude of the nation are not wanting to the memory of the great statesman who dared to make the magnificent experiment, and for that reason you should not neglect to follow up the work.

I hear English people say "our tariff is not protective; the duties are not raised for the profit of any class of manufacturers. They are raised only for fiscal purposes upon articles of luxury." Those who say so do not reflect that many articles thus taxed are made articles of luxury by the tax itself, which renders them artificially dear and out of the reach of the humbler classes. For example, Providence has placed within a short sail from your shore a magnificent vintage, producing the most delicious wines; those wines are produced in such profusion that in ordinary years (you are aware that the disease of the vine has of late reduced the production), they are sold on the spot as low as 6 francs the hectolitre, about 3d. per gallon. It is, no doubt, common wine I allude to; but there are many better qualities which, were they made known to the humbler classes of this country, would, I am convinced, be found to suit both their palate and their purse. The prohibitive duty of 5s. 6d. per gallon (1s. a bottle) has kept the population of Great Britain quite ignorant of the very existence of the article of which I speak. They have heard of some qualities of French wines with fashionable names, which are now and then consumed in small quantities by the more fortunate portion of their countrymen. The word wine is, of course, to them similar to luxury—it is never seen upon their tables. It is a crying injustice to tax equally by measure wines of all qualities with so high a duty. By this system the rich man, who consumes at his table choice wine for which he pays 10s. per bottle, is charged 1s. duty; the artizan would pay the same duty upon ordinary wine, which cost him 3d. to 6d. per bottle: and you will observe the luxury of the rich man is taxed 10 per cent., whereas the want or comfort of the humbler consumer is taxed four times the cost of his modest beverage. Thus the rural population, the artizan, the shopkeeper—in short, all the humbler classes, are trained to believe that wine, with which

Providence has blessed certain climes in profusion, is not intended for his use—that it is a beverage reserved exclusively to the rich and wealthy. The question of wine duties is disposed of by saying, “Wine is a luxury. The consumer can well afford to pay a heavy tax; besides, French wines are a sour, bad drink.” This recalls to one’s mind the fable of the “fox and the grapes.” I am sorry to see that some of the influential organs of the press perform here the part of the fox by repeating this cant. To enable you to judge of those “sour grapes,” I have brought with me some samples of cheap Roussillon wine, which, I think, will convince you that if it were put within the reach of your population they would cease the cry of “sour grapes.” I paid for this wine to Monsieur Justin Durand of Perpignan, 8d. per bottle at this period, after six years of scarcity: but this description of wine was sold in 1848, 1849, and 1850 at 13f. to 15f. the hectolitre (about 6d the imperial gallon), and could have been then delivered in your docks at 1s. a gallon, that is 2d. per bottle. Now, supposing to make it a capital good wine, this price were doubled by four or five years’ keeping, and that instead of the present duty of one shilling per bottle, which I have paid, it were taxed with an increase of one quarter of its value (25 per cent), the population of this country could drink good wine, excellent, strong, full-bodied French wines, at six-pence per bottle, and they would drink less, or reject altogether, that horrid English gin, which too often poisons the man and his morals at the same time. And if we are to judge by experiments successfully made in reducing prices, your revenue would probably not be the worse of it. By prohibiting as it does the lower qualities of wine, the British tariff violates the laws of Divine Providence, by artificially excluding, without any benefit to any one, that which is intended for the use and comfort of man. It encourages the sale of gin, a beverage which contains a crime in every bottle of it which is consumed; it protects gin distillers, at the expense of the health, morals, and comfort of the population.

Many other anomalies exist in the British tariff; they appear to have been overlooked in the reform of the customs laws; for instance, some colonial differential duties. Many articles of little importance are taxed with duties which are not worth the expense of collecting. The reform has hardly done anything to diminish the nuisance, the loss of time, the grievous impositions of porters and of clearing agents, and the scandal of all sorts which accompany the searching of passengers’ luggage.

A singular example of the anomalies of the British tariff has come under my knowledge. I shall, if you will allow me, just mention the fact. Some Irishmen residing in the British colony of Australia, being desirous of giving expression to their feelings to their countryman, Mr. Smith O’Brien, subscribed a sum of money and presented him with a gold cup. This cup was made by Hackett, Brothers, of Cork, British subjects now residing at Melbourne. Its value is about £800. It arrived in London by the ship Anglesey, from Melbourne, in May, 1855, and was consigned there to Messrs. Puget and Bainbridge, bankers. The duty claimed

upon this cup was so enormous, that Mr. Smith O'Brien, then residing as an exile in Brussels, ordered it to be sent there. A friend offered to take charge of it to avoid expenses, but this favour was refused, and the cup was shipped direct to Antwerp by the Baron Osy, on the 19th of the same month (May.) There again a heavy duty was claimed. However, having stated the case to our minister of finances, he permitted the cup to remain in bond in my house ever since, and to be taken out of the country without one penny expense. This cup weighs 124 ounces. I paid duty upon it at the port of London, for which I hold the receipt, £130 10s., making 25 per cent. upon the intrinsic value of the gold at £3 17s. 10d. per ounce. What can be more anomalous than the fact, that one of her Majesty's subjects residing in the colonies cannot send a present to his fellow subject at home, if it be in worked gold, without taxing his friend with 25 per cent. upon the value of his present? A few such presents as the one I mention would ruin many people. I mention this fact as an example, to show the necessity of looking closely into the details of the tariff.

We are aware that, as long as the present system of indirect taxation exists in various countries, the customs tariffs must be maintained for fiscal purposes. The customs in Great Britain produce to the public revenue about 23 millions sterling annually; of this sum about 20½ millions are produced by seven articles—viz., wine, spirits, sugar, tea, tobacco, coffee, and silk. Does it not appear from these figures as if some combination might be found to enable the Chancellor of the Exchequer to go a few steps further in the right direction? Upon this point allow me to direct your particular attention to a memorial addressed upon this subject to the Board of Trade by the Chambers of Commerce of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Shields and Gateshead. All the Chambers of Commerce in Great Britain should join in supporting the object of this very able memorial.

I shall here conclude my communication by expressing to you my sincere thanks for your patient hearing. I may perhaps be considered by some as having been rather free in a few remarks which I have made, but I beg to recall to their minds that the association which I have the honour to represent upon the present occasion is essentially of a cosmopolite character, and that it is consequently our duty to speak plainly in every country where we send delegates. We are in hopes that any mistakes or blunders which may occur through our inexperience of the various languages, manners, or customs of the different countries, may be excused in favour of the great object of the "International Association for Customs Reforms."\*

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\* The Central Committee of Brussels has sent deputations this month to the following places:—1. To the National Exhibition of Swiss Industry at Berne, with a mission to report upon the present state of the prosperity enjoyed by a country where, until lately, no customs duties existed. The amount of the present fiscal duties of the Swiss tariff is from 1 to 2 per cent. 2. To the Congrès de Bienfaisance of Frankfort. 3. To the Statistical Congress of Vienna.