

HISTORY OF THE TEA AND COFFEE TAX.

The Repeal of the Duty in 1871—The Crowning Work of the Swindling Protectionists.

"FREE BREAKFAST TABLE" FOLLY—HOW THE PEOPLE ARE DECEIVED BY THE SELFISH AND SCHEMING.

The question of relieving the people from oppressive taxation, now amounting on the average to forty-five to fifty per cent, on a large portion of the necessities of life, including clothing, is second in importance to no measure that can come before Congress. To effect this relief on the great staples that enter into the consumption of every family, and to reduce the tariff from an average of forty-five per cent to an average of twenty-five per cent, without diminishing the revenue, is the problem which addresses itself to the intelligent members of that body whose business it is to provide ways and means for carrying on the Government. Being of the opinion that one of the most certain and efficient means of providing increased revenue would be to lay a moderate duty on imported tea and coffee, we propose to the Treasury and the President to show what rate of taxation has been at different times imposed upon those great staples of consumption from the origin of the Government. It will be remembered that both the Treasury and the President have commended the restoration of the tea and coffee duty at this time.

The first tariff in the United States was that of July 4, 1789. By this act duties were imposed on various grades of tea varying from 15 to 45 cents a pound. Two years later, in 1791, the tariff was again revised, and the duties on tea increased about 10 per cent. Other revisions of the tariff occurred in 1794, 1795 and 1800, with no change in the tea list, which remained at 15 to 50 cents per pound. In 1800 the duties were raised on the middle grades of tea from 27 cents per pound to 50 cents per pound, at which rate they continued until the war with Great Britain in 1812.

There were three adjustments of the tariff during the three years of the war with England, each of which added to the burden placed upon tea, and by the revised tariff of 1813, 1814, 1815, the duties on tea were raised to a large revenue to pay for the heavy debt incurred for war expenses, the tariff on tea was fixed at the enormous rate of 34 cents for the lowest grade, and 81 per cent for the medium and higher grades of the article.

In 1809, the debt being measurably reduced, a great reduction in the tariff took place, by which tea was taxed from 14 to 18 cents per pound. These duties continued in force for about ten years, through all the tariff revisions of 1824, 1825 and 1828. In 1830 a still further reduction took place, by which the cheap tea was admitted at 6 cents per pound, and the intermediate and higher grades at 27 cents per pound. In the days of low tariff, beginning with 1832, and during the years when the United States Government was wholly out of debt and an immense surplus revenue was in the treasury, the tariff on tea was reduced to 15 cents per pound, with the single exception that tea imported in foreign vessels were taxed 10 cents per pound from 1832 to 1841. The same rates were re-enacted in the tariff of 1842, and continued until the revision of the tariff in 1843, which imposed a duty of 15 to 20 cents a pound on teas. This was raised by the act of 1852 to 20 cents, and still further raised to 25 cents a pound in 1864. His high rate continued until the act of July 1, 1870, when the tariff on teas was reduced to 15 cents a pound. By act approved May 1, 1872, entitled "an act repealing the duty on tea and coffee," it was provided that after the 1st of July, 1872, no duty should be placed on the free list, where they have ever since remained.

The first duty imposed on coffee in the United States by the tariff act of 1789 levied a duty of 25 cents a pound. This was increased in 1791 to 40 cents a pound, and in 1795 to 5 cents a pound, where it remained until the war tariff of 1812 and 1815, which rendered war duties necessary, and the tax on coffee was fixed at 40 cents per pound. In 1816 a reduction was made in the duty on coffee to 5 cents a pound, and by 1830 to 2 cents a pound, according to the tariff. The days of low tariff and no tariff coming about, coffee was made free from 1832 to 1841. In the latter part of the tariff of 1842, a duty of 5 cents a pound was imposed, and the tax continued at 5 cents per pound during the war and the years following, until the act of July 1, 1870, which reduced the duty on coffee from 5 cents per pound, until it was wholly abolished in 1872, as previously stated.

It will thus be seen that during the eighty-six years of our existence as a nation, tea and coffee have been on the free list for thirty-two years, and have been taxed fifty-four years. Nearly two-thirds of the time these commodities have brought a heavy revenue into the Treasury. The sudden repeal of the duty on tea and coffee in 1872 was due to the sharp reduction of the duties, and the combined ignorance and carelessness of the majority in Congress. A bill to repeal the duties was introduced on the 19th of February by a Pennsylvania Protectionist, for the purpose of preventing a reduction of the exorbitant duties on the manufactures of iron, wool and other fabrics, and on coal.

The Secretary of the Treasury had recommended in his annual report a reduction in his annual report of the duties—a reduction which the state of the revenue then admitted of. The Committee of Ways and Means, as was to be expected, was maturing a bill largely reducing the duties on the necessities of life, and many articles of manufacture. To forestall this action, the Protectionists crowded in this bill to repeal in advance the whole duty on tea and coffee, and it was passed without the benefit of the Senate, and the duties were reduced to a cent for tea, and a cent for coffee.

This piece of sharp practice on the part of the Protectionists was subsequently got through the Senate without the false demagogue cry of "free breakfast table." It effected almost as heavy a reduction on imports as the Secretary of the Treasury had reported Congress subsequently reduced the duties on iron and woolen fabrics and some other staple commodities ten per cent, the whole reduction was reimposed two years later, under the stress of the revenue, and a threatened deficiency of revenue.

But no corresponding restoration of the abolished duty on tea and coffee was made. The Protectionists completely triumphed in both their enterprises—first, in developing the revenue by taking off the whole tax on tea and coffee, all of which went straight into the Treasury without compelling the people to pay taxes; secondly, in re-imposing on the consumers of the products of the tea and coffee every dollar of the taxes that had been taken off the necessities of life.

It is gratifying to record the fact that Mr. Speaker Kerr both spoke and voted against this demagogue measure, as well as the two Representatives of Cincinnati in the House, Messrs. A. F. Perry and Job Stevenson. Mr. Kerr said of the tax on tea and coffee: "It is a revenue tax pure and simple; and every dollar it costs the people it pays the Treasury, with not a cent for protection, monopolies, trusts, or tariff."

Where do you obtain so many millions in revenue that will cost the people? Nowhere. It builds up no ill-gotten fortunes or powerful corporations, and does not excite competition, nor violate the law of the land, nor bring possible income as a protective duty on tea or coffee. There is no domestic producer of them to protect. Hence the protectionists want them free. They want no tariff taxes imposed that will not pay for themselves, or more than they pay to the Treasury."

To show the extremely substantial and important place that tea and coffee hold in the category of revenue paying, it is only necessary to add the figures of the tea and coffee duties, and aggregate duty paid into the treasury during the last two years when tea and coffee were still dutiable articles. During the fiscal year 1871 we imported not less than 50,000,000 pounds of tea, and the revenue of 38,943,321. The same year we imported 32,000,000 pounds of coffee, aggregating a revenue of \$9,550,691. In the following year, 1872, though there was a great falling off in the value of imports, it being possible to know fact that both articles would come in free after July, 1872, there were 33,000,000 pounds of tea imported, netting \$5,209,728 to the treasury, and 23,000,000 pounds of coffee, paying \$7,200,000 into the treasury. Twelve millions of dollars and eighteen millions are not sums to be lightly considered in distributing taxation to provide ways and means for national revenue. And this heavy addition to the revenue of the Treasury and the President from these articles even at the very low duty of fifteen cents per pound on tea and three cents per pound on coffee, both much below the average tax which these commodities have to pay in other countries, will afford a century of our commercial history.

Resumption by Railroad.

The Great American board of transportation and commerce have adopted a brace of resolutions of a most extraordinary character, touching the subject of currency. The first of these resolutions lays it down as an axiom that "the presence of a metallic currency is the result of commercial prosperity, and not the cause of that prosperity," and proceeds to deduce from this "fundamental truth of finance" the conclusion that in order to restore this kind of currency it is only necessary "to supply the means of exporting our grain, flour, and bacon, tobacco, cotton, oil, and other products, at prices which will enable us to purchase these products of other countries," whatever that may mean. The second of these resolutions declares that the only way in which the means of exporting our grain, flour, and bacon, tobacco, cotton, oil, and other products, at prices which will enable us to purchase these products of other countries, is by the co-operation of the people through the machinery of government. To put it briefly, value money is the result, not the cause of swapping things. Therefore the only way to provide the means of swapping things; and the only way to provide the means of swapping things is to set Uncle Sam up in the business of common carrier.

These resolutions were not adopted without opposition. Mr. Jonathan Young Seaman moved to lay them on the table. He thought the currency question should not be broached in a convention which had as its object the repeal of the tariff. The convention thought otherwise, and refused to lay the resolution on the table. Mr. Thurber then proposed a substitute, which he said had been adopted by the convention. The substitute would reduce to adopt the resolutions reported by the committee. This substitute, which had nothing whatever to do with the currency question, was favored by Mr. Seaman. It was opposed, however, by Mr. Frobel, of the resolutions committee, who favored the adoption of the resolutions as reported. "Everybody knew," he said, "that gold must be drawn away from the country by means more than it sells. Therefore the presence of gold represented the prosperity of the country." Hence the committee had thought best to embody in the resolutions the "fundamental truth of finance," and to make it a condition of the convention that it should not be the cause of commercial prosperity. The convention agreed with Mr. Frobel, and voted to enunciate the "fundamental truth of finance."

It is to be regretted that the Convention did not adopt the resolution which would have reduced to five cents a pound, and bring it within the average capacity of apprehension. It is not everybody who is capable of seeing at a glance how the exportation of grain, flour, bacon, tobacco, cotton, oil, and other products, at prices which will enable us to purchase these products of other countries, can supply us with a gold circulation. There is a prevailing opinion among those who have given some thought to this subject that there are only two ways in which it is possible to obtain gold, namely, to buy it, or borrow it. And those two ways are at last reduced to one, for if we borrow gold we must eventually pay for it, unless we repudiate the debt. There is another way of doing the business, and we can obtain gold by exchanging commodities for commodities, as distinguished from gold, it would be well to explain for the benefit of mankind the nature of the exchange proposed to reduce gold, any more than the exchange of gold for silver can produce commodities in general. If this can be made to appear, the rest will necessarily follow. It will follow that we can resume specie payments by building railroads, digging canals, improving our water courses, subsidizing steamship lines, and otherwise increasing the means and reducing the cost of transportation. But unless it can be made to appear that the exchange of commodities will produce gold, it will still remain to be proved that cheap transportation can in any manner contribute to that end.

It would appear from Mr. Frobel's remarks that the "fundamental truth of finance" he had in mind, and which he supposed to be expressed in the first of the currency resolutions, is the balance-of-trade doctrine. "Everybody knows," says Mr. Frobel, "that gold must be drawn away from a country by means more than it sells. Therefore the presence of gold represented the prosperity of the country." Hence the committee had thought best to embody in the resolutions the "fundamental truth of finance," and to make it a condition of the convention that it should not be the cause of commercial prosperity. The convention agreed with Mr. Frobel, and voted to enunciate the "fundamental truth of finance."

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more will not of itself create a demand for gold for home use as currency, and that demand must arise before, or keep either attract gold from abroad, or keep our own gold product at home. The "fundamental truth of finance" which the board of transportation and commerce did not enunciate, and with which it does not appear to be acquainted, is the truth that a cheaper medium of exchange will be sought for, and that we will persist in using a depreciated paper currency, or so long as this currency, even if not much depreciated, is sufficient in quantity to serve as the medium of our internal exchanges, and that we will continue to leave us as fast as we dig it out of the ground, and we shall retain no more than is necessary for the payment of customs duties and interest on the public debt. Of this we may be sure if we consider the high rate to which the syndicate of foreign capitalists should do all our internal and ocean carrying for nothing.

There is just one way in which we can create such a demand for specie as to attract it from abroad, and that is to make room for it by discontinuing the use of an inferior currency as the common medium of exchange and the legal tender in payment of debts. Every step that we take in the direction of this result, a more invention of quackery. This truth must be recognized and acted upon, or we shall never get to the specie basis, or establish a sound currency system except by way of inflation, and the collapse of our present system. By adopting a policy founded on this truth, we may introduce a sound monetary system without disaster, and without serious detriment to the interests of any but those who are already in the high road to bankruptcy. England did this during the period from 1818 to 1844. France is doing the same thing now. We may do likewise, if we will only consent to learn from the experience of others, and recognize the "fundamental truth of finance." Unhappily there is very little prospect of our being able to act wisely in this matter until we have been instructed by a season of bitter experience. The number of those who are ignorant of the nature of the monetary science is so small, and the number of financial quacks is so large, that there is little reason to expect that we shall be able to do the right thing until after another season of inflation, and the consequent collapse of the paper-money balloon.

The Cincinnati Gazette says of the President's meddling in a personal way in public affairs: "The President may nominate and may remove, but when from personal favoritism he nominates or removes the subordinates in the revenue service over the chiefs in the respective departments, he is guilty of a crime against the service, reduced government to a mere personal thing, and makes responsible administration impossible. This evil effect is seen all through the St. Louis disgrace of the Administration, from the appointment of Morton to the war, the remonstrance of those who represented the public interest, to his constant personal intercourse with the White House, and the interference with the order of the Secretary transferring the Supervisors."

Yesterday was a dull day on the steamboat landing, it being nearly deserted. The weather was warm enough for an August day. The prospect at sunset was fair for rain to-day. RATES OF FREIGHT—To the West—were unsettled yesterday. To Red and Ouachita rivers they are firm at one card to date. For lists of arrivals and manifests see marine column. News items were rather scarce on the landing yesterday. Our steamboat friends are we are informed, indebted to Col. Sam Boyd for the recent improvements made on the river front. The Alpha is the new name given to that popular resort for steamboatmen formerly known as the "Hole in the Rock" at New Bart Able. It will be pleased to see all of his friends there.

Considerable difficulty was experienced by the packets yesterday in procuring crews. It is fortunate for a few well known steamboatmen that Christmas comes but once a year. The departures yesterday were as follows: J. F. Frazier, Oriole, Martha and Geo. Spangler for Lower Coast, Natchez for Vicksburg, New Bart Able for Grand Ecore, Utah for Yazoo river, Mary Ida, Leslie Taylor, Henry Tete, Era No. 10, and St. John for Upper Coast, Lotus No. 3 for Opelousas, and Andy Johnson for Ohio river. News items are certain to all points on Red and Ouachita rivers. They were both rising at last accounts. We look for brisk business on the levee this week.

FROM OUR EXCHANGES. (Special to the Courier-Journal.) The Tom Sherlock leaves for New Orleans today. She will meet with better luck next trip. The Iron Mountain and low leaves for New Orleans at 4 o'clock this afternoon. Strick and Crane are her agents. Pittsburg, Dec. 22, Noon.—River four feet one inch, and rising. Weather cloudy and mild. Cincinnati, Dec. 22, Night.—River six feet two inches and rising. Weather cloudy and mild. Cincinnati, Dec. 22, Noon.—River falling one inch and mild. Cincinnati, Dec. 22, Night.—River eleven feet two inches; falling. Cloudy and mild. Arrived—Storm No. 3, St. Louis; Thomas Sherlock and C. B. Church, New Orleans. Departed—Glasgow, Evansville, Memphis, Ashland and Chickasaw, New Orleans. The regular Vicksburg and bend packet, Katie, Captain Tobin, leaves to-morrow as usual, at 5 p. m. The elegant St. Mary, from Opelousas, is due to-morrow. She leaves on Wednesday, 20th inst., at 12 o'clock. The champion R. E. Lee will be found receiving at the head of Canal street and intermediate landings. She leaves at 5 p. m. on Tuesday, 28th inst. Give her berth to-morrow. The fine passenger packet Gov. Allen (in place of the W. S. Pike), Captain Jno. J. Brown, master, S. S. Strick, clerk, leaves every Monday and Friday, at 5 p. m. for Bayou Sara. The St. John, Captain F. Bergeron, leaves every Monday and Saturday at 5 p. m., and Wednesday at noon. (By Telegraph.) MONROE, La., Dec. 24.—To Hite & Carlin: The Bertha Bruner leaves here tonight with a full load. Will leave New Orleans on Tuesday, 28th inst. Give her berth to-morrow. The fine passenger packet Gov. Allen (in place of the W. S. Pike), Captain Jno. J. Brown, master, S. S. Strick, clerk, leaves every Monday and Friday, at 5 p. m. for Bayou Sara. The St. John, Captain F. Bergeron, leaves every Monday and Saturday at 5 p. m., and Wednesday at noon. (By Telegraph.)

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BUTTER—Fair supply of choice and only a moderate demand; ordinary grades are plentiful and no demand for them. Choice Western is quoted at 23 1/2c, medium Western 17 1/2c, inferior 14 1/2c, choice Goshen is quoted at 33 1/2c, medium 28 1/2c, inferior 23 1/2c @ 25c per lb. CHEESE—Light supply of choice; large stock of worn and damaged, owing to warm weather, for which prices are nominal. Choice Western factory is quoted at 12 1/2c; New York cream 14 1/2c; English dairy 16 1/2c per lb. COFFEE—The demand is better; 4800 bags of Gerhardt Edwin, and 624 cask Pascal, sold on private terms to importers. We quote cargoes: Ordinary 17 1/2c (gold), fair 19 1/2c, good 20 1/2c, prime 21 1/2c, 2 1/2c, 3 1/2c, 4 1/2c, 5 1/2c, 6 1/2c, 7 1/2c, 8 1/2c, 9 1/2c, 10 1/2c, 11 1/2c, 12 1/2c, 13 1/2c, 14 1/2c, 15 1/2c, 16 1/2c, 17 1/2c, 18 1/2c, 19 1/2c, 20 1/2c, 21 1/2c, 22 1/2c, 23 1/2c, 24 1/2c, 25 1/2c, 26 1/2c, 27 1/2c, 28 1/2c, 29 1/2c, 30 1/2c, 31 1/2c, 32 1/2c, 33 1/2c, 34 1/2c, 35 1/2c, 36 1/2c, 37 1/2c, 38 1/2c, 39 1/2c, 40 1/2c, 41 1/2c, 42 1/2c, 43 1/2c, 44 1/2c, 45 1/2c, 46 1/2c, 47 1/2c, 48 1/2c, 49 1/2c, 50 1/2c, 51 1/2c, 52 1/2c, 53 1/2c, 54 1/2c, 55 1/2c, 56 1/2c, 57 1/2c, 58 1/2c, 59 1/2c, 60 1/2c, 61 1/2c, 62 1/2c, 63 1/2c, 64 1/2c, 65 1/2c, 66 1/2c, 67 1/2c, 68 1/2c, 69 1/2c, 70 1/2c, 71 1/2c, 72 1/2c, 73 1/2c, 74 1/2c, 75 1/2c, 76 1/2c, 77 1/2c, 78 1/2c, 79 1/2c, 80 1/2c, 81 1/2c, 82 1/2c, 83 1/2c, 84 1/2c, 85 1/2c, 86 1/2c, 87 1/2c, 88 1/2c, 89 1/2c, 90 1/2c, 91 1/2c, 92 1/2c, 93 1/2c, 94 1/2c, 95 1/2c, 96 1/2c, 97 1/2c, 98 1/2c, 99 1/2c, 100 1/2c.

PEACANS—The market is bare of Louisiana. Light supply of Texas; they are quoted at 1 1/2c @ 2 1/2c. GRAIN AND WESTERN PEAS—Large stock and no demand. Northern beans are quoted at 2 1/2c @ 3c; white Western 2 1/2c @ 3c; red kidney 3 1/2c @ 4c; Northern white kidney 3 1/2c @ 4c; green peas 3c per bushel. DRIED FRUIT—In good supply. A moderate demand for apples but no demand for peaches. Apples are quoted at 9 a 1/2c, peaches 9 a 1/2c per bushel. HIDES—Are unsettled. Country greens are quoted at 7 1/2c, dry salted 9 a 1/2c, 10 1/2c, 11 1/2c, 12 1/2c, 13 1/2c, 14 1/2c, 15 1/2c, 16 1/2c, 17 1/2c, 18 1/2c, 19 1/2c, 20 1/2c, 21 1/2c, 22 1/2c, 23 1/2c, 24 1/2c, 25 1/2c, 26 1/2c, 27 1/2c, 28 1/2c, 29 1/2c, 30 1/2c, 31 1/2c, 32 1/2c, 33 1/2c, 34 1/2c, 35 1/2c, 36 1/2c, 37 1/2c, 38 1/2c, 39 1/2c, 40 1/2c, 41 1/2c, 42 1/2c, 43 1/2c, 44 1/2c, 45 1/2c, 46 1/2c, 47 1/2c, 48 1/2c, 49 1/2c, 50 1/2c, 51 1/2c, 52 1/2c, 53 1/2c, 54 1/2c, 55 1/2c, 56 1/2c, 57 1/2c, 58 1/2c, 59 1/2c, 60 1/2c, 61 1/2c, 62 1/2c, 63 1/2c, 64 1/2c, 65 1/2c, 66 1/2c, 67 1/2c, 68 1/2c, 69 1/2c, 70 1/2c, 71 1/2c, 72 1/2c, 73 1/2c, 74 1/2c, 75 1/2c, 76 1/2c, 77 1/2c, 78 1/2c, 79 1/2c, 80 1/2c, 81 1/2c, 82 1/2c, 83 1/2c, 84 1/2c, 85 1/2c, 86 1/2c, 87 1/2c, 88 1/2c, 89 1/2c, 90 1/2c, 91 1/2c, 92 1/2c, 93 1/2c, 94 1/2c, 95 1/2c, 96 1/2c, 97 1/2c, 98 1/2c, 99 1/2c, 100 1/2c.

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