

FREE TRADE  
IN  
GOLD AND SILVER PLATE AND WATCHES.

SECOND EDITION.

BY  
EDWARD J. WATHERSTON.

LONDON:  
CLERKENWELL PRINTING COMPANY, 61 & 63, ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.  
1879.

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Houses of the Oireachtas

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## PREFACE.

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IN placing the following collection of letters on the subject of the taxation of gold and silver plate, originally contributed to the columns of the *Clerkenwell Press*, before the public, it may perhaps be as well to mention that on the occasion of the deputation to the President of the Board of Trade to urge upon the Government to support a Bill for the further protection of Watchcase Makers, I made a speech of which the following is a report by the *Daily Chronicle* :—

Mr. EDWARD J. WATHERSTON said he represented a loyal but long-suffering trade. They had lived to see the beneficent principles of Free Trade extended to every craft save their own. The silver trade was taxed to the extent of from 12½ to 20 per cent., which was unjust, seeing that no other similar trade was taxed, and that silversmiths had to compete with electro-platers, whose goods were wholly untaxed, and whether good, bad, or indifferent, were permitted to assume marks closely resembling the hall-mark upon the genuine article. The tax was likewise, for good and sufficient reasons, impolitic, subversive of the principles of modern fiscal legislation, obstructive to art progress, and an insurmountable obstacle to technical education in its application to silversmiths' work. He cordially supported the watch-case makers in their appeal to the Government, in order that the subject of hall marking might obtain the attention it deserved. At present the importation, for purpose of sale, of foreign plate was virtually prohibited. It was true that it might be imported, and that duty might be paid upon it ; but it could not legally be exposed for sale until marked by the Goldsmiths' Company. This Company was altogether incapable of administering to the modern requirements of the trade. The Court, or governing body, was composed of twenty-five members, only three of whom were in any degree connected with the craft—the executive, viz., the wardens, being severally, an engineer, a porcelain manufacturer, a stockbroker, and a merchant. The



## PREFACE.

laws relating to the silver trade, enacted in the reign of Edward I., altered by successive Kings, and finally "tinkered" in the reigns of George III. and Victoria, were antiquated, effete, and mischievous. Representing the interests of eleven thousand licensed dealers, he advocated freedom of trade and complete exemption from interference on the part of the Goldsmiths' Company.

This speech drew forth the following remarks from the paper in question :—

Mr. WATHERSTON spoke, we understand, as the representative of the interests of eleven thousand licensed dealers, and we have not the least doubt but that his utterances will be widely approved throughout the trade. The deputation was timely in its application; let us trust that the result will be happy, and that the strong arm of Parliament will be stretched out to shelter from further foreign aggression one of the leading branches of our native industries.

As I took exception to the concluding remarks of this article, I wrote the first letter to explain my real views on the matter. The others have been written as occasion required, and the matters to which they specially refer are fully explained in the footnotes to each letter.

Trusting that the publication of these letters may assist in some slight degree to the removal of the obnoxious burdens under which the gold and silver trades at present labour,

I am, &c.,

EDWARD J. WATHERSTON.

*Pall Mall East.*



# FREE TRADE IN GOLD AND SILVER PLATE AND WATCHES.

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## No. I.

FROM the concluding sentence of your leading article of Saturday last I fear you have misapprehended the policy of which I was the representative upon the occasion of the deputation of watchmakers to the President of the Board of Trade.

In common, I hope, with every Englishman, I desire that my country should be pre-eminent in her manufactures. But I do not desire that "the strong arm of Parliament should be stretched out to shelter English manufacturers from foreign aggression." I desire that every manufacturer and dealer should be perfectly free in the exercise of their several callings. I believe that the hall mark itself is the obstruction from which watchmakers are now suffering. It is a wretched little bit of protection, which, in these Free Trade days, is an anachronism—antiquated and effete, and mischievous in its effect upon the craft. This is an age of trade marks—not of hall marks. Why, let me ask, is it that the manufacture of the cheaper class of watches, for which there is an enormous demand in this country, is principally in the hands of foreigners? Why cannot we produce a 40s. silver watch, and a £5 gold watch, for the masses in England? The answer is simple—the hall mark prevents us. Abolish the hall mark, substitute a trade mark, and foreigners will no longer be able to dodge our manufacturers, who will then be able, if they will educate themselves, to make fortunes by the production of what are termed "Geneva watches," that is to say, the cheaper class of watches, which alone are within the reach of the masses. If watches can be made in America by machinery they can as easily be made here by machinery.

I know that by seeking to abolish hall marking (by which I mean compulsory hall marking—voluntary hall marking may, for aught I care, continue to the end of time,) I am attacking an ancient and time-honoured institution. I am aware of it. Ancient institutions are very difficult of displacement in this country. Temple Bar has only lately been swept away by the tidal wave of progress. That was a mischievous obstruction; so is hall marking. The Goldsmiths' Company, in its connection with the trades in gold and silver plate and watches, is, by far, a more mischievous obstruction. I desire to sever this connection. The modern requirements of the trades demand it; the tidal wave of progress will, in time, accomplish it. "A short Act of Parliament," as suggested by the President



of the Board of Trade, will delay it. But after this short Act of Parliament has had the inevitable "coach and four" driven through it, when it is discovered that the laws relating to hall marking, enacted in the reign of Edward I., altered by successive kings, "tinkered" in the reigns of George III. and Victoria, and finally further tinkered by the Watchmakers' Deputation, are unjust, impolitic, subversive of the principles of modern Free Trade legislation, and inoperative to prevent foreign aggression, it is devoutly to be hoped that hall marking, as an institution, protected as it is by penal laws affecting the liberty of the subject, may follow Temple Bar, and that in a wider thoroughfare manufacturers may press on to that pre-eminence in the watch trade which is at present denied to them by the foolish laws of their country.

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## No. II.

I was fully prepared to find that the ancient and time-honoured hall mark has many warm admirers and skilful advocates. Reformers always find that ancient customs and institutions, however anachronistic, however mischievous, commend themselves to certain persons simply by reason of the dust of ages. They pay no consideration to the altered condition of society, to the increase of population, and to its modern requirements. I met with an old Act of good "Queen Bess" a few days ago. The enactment was very much as follows:—"That, whereas the inhabitants of Westminster had so increased in numbers as to be unable to serve God or to be loyal to Her Majesty, no more houses should be built in Westminster, no two families should be permitted to live in one house, and the houses then being built should not be finished."

Thus much for the laws of Queen Elizabeth. The laws relating to hall marking are about as foolish. If hall marking be of any service at all as a protection against fraud, it must be protected by governmental supervision of workshops and stocks of retail dealers. Unaccompanied by such supervision, it is practically useless, as evidenced in the case of old plate. Apart from the fact that such supervision is impossible, owing to the enormous increase of population, I submit that it would not be tolerated at the present day. Involving, as it assuredly would, inspection of an inquisitorial character, it would be absolutely subversive of the principles of modern English government. Such supervision is no part of the duty of Government; it does

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In the number for February 23, a letter appeared in the columns of this paper supporting the use of the hall mark, as it was in the opinion of the writer—Mr. Alfred Cooper—England's trade mark, and the best guarantee to the public which the nation could offer.



not prevail in the case of other trades, and it is unnecessary and undesirable in the case of the gold and silver trades. What is wanted in this country, with its 32 millions of inhabitants, increasing by births over deaths at the rate of 1,253 a day, is complete freedom of dealings. No hindrances should prevent people from getting an honest living. Taxes should be levied, not upon goods on the way to the consumer, but upon the wealth accumulating from the free sale of commodities. Hall marking in the case of watches is a hindrance to a man in his attempt to get an honest living. His countrymen want cheap watches. Foreigners can import these watches, good, honest watches, with metal domes. Shopkeepers can buy and sell these watches; but no one must make them in the United Kingdom. Why? Because they must not be marked. The law of the land is that every watch must be marked, and that watches with metal domes must not be marked; therefore they cannot be made. The result of this is that watches to the amount of more than half-a-million sterling were imported into this country last year. Another result is that foreigners seek to avail themselves of the hall mark, because they know that it goes down, so to speak, with the British public. We shall see whether "The Short Act of Parliament" proposed by the President of the Board of Trade will prevent the unfair use of the hall mark. I believe that it will be wholly inoperative. But let us hope that no such foolish legislation will pass the House of Commons. Better by far that there should be "a Select Committee" to consider the laws relating to the gold and silver trades. All that we ask for is a fair field and no favour. Let us ask for the most perfect freedom in the exercise of our several callings. And, above all, let us ask for complete severance from the control of the Goldsmiths' Company. The connection with this self-elected and self-created body corporate,—composed as it is of a court of twenty-five members, only three of whom are craftsmen in fact, the wardens, as I have already stated, being respectively an engineer, a porcelain manufacturer, a stockbroker, and a merchant,—is no longer to be tolerated. Now, is it possible that these gentlemen can rightly administer to the modern requirements of a trade of which they know nothing? I object altogether to be under their control. I do not seek to manage other men's businesses. I object to men of other trades managing my business; most especially do I object to having my business managed by a body of gentlemen, many of whom, having purchased their freedom, have quickly become members of the court, and thus by a money payment have become my masters, with penal laws in their hands affecting the personal liberty of 12,777 members of my trade.

I should equally object to be under the control of the Goldsmiths' Company if the court were, as, of course, it was at the time of their charter, composed of "lawful, honest, and sufficient



men best skilled in the said trade"; that is to say, "craftsmen." The interests of manufacturers and those of dealers are not identical. "Protection" is the interest of the former—"Free Trade" that of the latter. It is the interests of more than 11,000 licensed dealers to buy and to sell foreign productions whenever they can find a customer for them.

I hope that ere long Parliament will consider these interests, and will extend the beneficent principles of Free Trade to goldsmiths, silversmiths, and watchmakers.

### No. III.

In the first place allow me as a member of the "Free Libraries" Committee to thank you for the able article in your last week's issue. However, I fear that very many articles will be necessary before we can convince the London ratepayers that a penny in the pound would be judiciously expended in providing books for the common advantage of all. During the last week the utility of such institutions has manifested itself in the correspondence addressed to me upon the subject of hall marking and the taxation of gold and silver wares. I do not hesitate to affirm that much that has been written would not have been written had the writers had the advantage of a "Free Library." I am fully convinced that, had many of my correspondents read the "Apology of Socrates," "Bright's and Cobden's Speeches," "Lord Macaulay's Essays," Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," John Stuart Mill's "Essay on Liberty," and his "Principles of Political Economy," or even Mrs. Fawcett's "Political Economy for Beginners," the absurd nonsense which has reached me, principally from London, could never have been penned. But, when I think of all the glorious books which could, for the modest penny in the pound, be brought within everybody's reach—the evenings with Addison, Goldsmith, Steele, Johnson, and hundreds of others—when, in my enthusiasm, I see "John Locke on the Human Understanding," and "Whately on Logic," brought within reach of the Goldsmiths, Silversmiths, and Watchmakers of the future, I find fresh energy in the task before my colleagues and myself, and although I know that what we seek to accomplish may be the work of years, I am in no way disheartened. Fortunately we have influences at work which must, sooner or later, bring about the desired end. The London School Board, and the Birkbeck Institution with its 3,309 pupils, will, it is to be hoped, entirely alter the state of things; education will surely work its way, unassisted even by our humble committee. There will come a time when mechanics will know that "to tax labour is to diminish wealth," that "taxes upon manufactures, as they always raise the price of the commodity taxed, discourage its consump-



tion and consequently its production," and again "that consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and that the interest of the producer ought to be attended to only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer."

And they will be familiar with the writings of the immortal "Mill," who said that "trade is a social act. Whoever undertakes to sell any description of goods to the public does what affects the interest of other persons and of society in general; and thus his conduct in principle comes within the jurisdiction of society; accordingly it was once held to be the duty of Governments in all cases which were considered of importance to fix prices and regulate the processes of manufacture. But it is now recognised, though not till after a long struggle, that both the cheapness and the good quality of the commodities are most effectually provided for by leaving the producers and sellers perfectly free, under the sole check of equal freedom to the buyers for supplying themselves elsewhere." When this is understood, as it will be understood ere long, we shall hear no more about compulsory hall marking, and the duties upon gold and silver wares will be numbered with the foolish legislation of a bygone period, the result alike of ignorance and of prejudice.

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#### No. IV.

I find a very general impression prevailing, that silver plate being an article of luxury, may fairly be taxed. In the correspondence addressed to me with reference to the proposal to abolish the duties upon gold and silver plate, I observe that a very erroneous opinion exists, on the part of even the better educated members of the trade, with reference to the taxation of luxuries. The arguments advanced are principally these—"Taxes must come from somewhere;" "If you take the tax off plate, what tax will you substitute for it?" "Luxuries ought to be taxed; they are bought by the rich,—rich people ought to pay taxes." With your permission I will endeavour to show

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In the preceding number two letters had appeared from gentlemen more or less in favour of upholding the present system of hall marking. The first, signed "Fair Play," set forth that the true cause of the falling off which was exhibited in the silver trade of late years, was "to be attributed to the almost universal introduction of electro-plate rather than to the taxation, and that the public had a right to be protected from sharp dealers, who, if there was no hall mark, would take advantage of the public, and make inferior goods." This letter also advocated that only 18 carat gold should be marked. Another letter, signed "Thomas Jones," maintained that the real fault lay in the method in which the manufacture of watches is carried on in this country, and the fact that scarcely any progress had been made in our method of manufacturing for many years. The writer further stated his belief that a reduction of 6d. per ounce would meet all requirements.



your readers why these arguments are fallacious. In the first place, it may be observed that fiscal legislation is in no sense dogmatical. For instance, it would be as possible to govern this country under a system of Protection, by taxation of luxuries, as it is under the present partial system of Free Trade. It is simply a matter of theory, grounded upon experience as far as this country is concerned, that Free Trade is the better of the two. But logical consistency must be demanded of Protectionists. If it be an established principle that luxuries ought to be taxed, it follows that all luxuries ought to be taxed. The question then naturally arises, what are luxuries? Where is the line to be drawn? where does necessity end and luxury begin? Probably the better form in which to put the question would be this—what is not a luxury? Granted that silver plate is a luxury—no one denies it—are not watches, clocks, jewellery, carriages, pictures, high-class furniture, silk dresses, and electro-plate equal, if not greater luxuries? are not hundreds of other articles luxuries? But not one of these articles is taxed. Taxation is now confined to tea, tobacco, beer, wine, spirits (all articles of rapid consumption), and silver plate. Free Traders not unnaturally say, why silver plate? It is no answer to say that silver plate is a luxury, and that is why it is taxed. They say that the manufacturer of an article of luxury differs in no degree whatever from the manufacturer of an article of necessity. Wealth being “that which has an exchange value,” it follows that manufacturers of articles of luxury contribute to the wealth of the country in a similar manner to manufacturers of articles of necessity. Wealth being wholly derived from land, assisted by labour and capital, it is clear that the wealth of the country equals the labour of the country. It matters nothing whether the labour expended be upon articles of luxury or upon articles of necessity. A marble statue has an exchange value just as much as a rick of hay or a sack of flour, which derive their value from the labour expended upon them. Labour taxed is labour hindered—in other words, labour taxed is wealth decreased; and as all taxation must be derived from wealth in some shape or other, to decrease wealth is to decrease the very sources of taxation itself. In order to make labour productive it must be free; otherwise, cost of production is increased, and wealth, the product of labour, is decreased. The worst form of taxation is that which is levied upon goods in transit to the consumer. Its effect is to check consumption, and therefore production. This is the principle which guided Mr. Gladstone. He, as is well known, took off taxation from more than twelve hundred different articles. Be it remembered he did not take a tax from one article and put it upon another. He simply cleared away the impediments to the free exchange of commodities, being sure that, as hindrances to trade were abolished, so the revenue would increase. In a future letter I will endeavour to



show, by reference to statistics, how fully Mr. Gladstone's theory was justified by results.

## No. V.

When the taxation of silver plate is fairly considered, the trade may be regarded as "a standing monument" to the advantages of Free Trade, and the fallacy of Protection and Taxation of native industry. It stands alone, half-starved and attenuated, yet scornfully regardless of its more prosperous surroundings. It has seen Free Trade principles extended to every other trade, the results of which are manifested whichever way the eye is turned; it has seen a new and wholly untaxed and unhampered rival spring into existence, and prosper and flourish at its very door; it has observed the world getting richer and richer, and the demand for luxuries daily and hourly increasing; it has remarked the development of art progress in kindred trades, especially that of brass; and yet it declines to be a partaker of those very principles which have been the cause of the otherwise universal prosperity. Free Trade is within its grasp. No Chancellor of the Exchequer would in these days withhold its application, provided the revenue admitted of any abolition of taxation. The claim for relief is so strong that no argument would be required were the trade to be united in an effort for freedom. The unfair competition of electro-plate, the falling number of ounces annually manufactured, and the peculiarly isolated position of the silver trade as the only taxed art-industry, would alone insure the abolition of taxation at the very earliest opportunity.

Depend upon it no statesman will say a word about the propriety of a tax upon silver plate because it is a luxury. That fallacy has long since been abandoned. A man must indeed be ignorant of political economy to talk in these days about taxation of articles of luxury other than those of rapid consumption, and those only so long as they may be required for the purpose of revenue. Sugar has gone. Tea will follow ere long. Let us hope that silver plate will precede it. Wine, beer, and spirits may last until true Free Trade principles shall have crushed out indirect taxation altogether, and the revenue shall be collected solely from "ownership and occupation." But people must be better educated before this can happen. The only solvent for the prejudices which now hamper trade is education. Let us be thankful for the rapid progress it is making. It is fast overtaking the requirements of the altered conditions of modern trade. Everything is altering in scale. Population is increasing, wealth has increased, knowledge has increased, so that every business feels the general movement, and circumstances demand alterations which old men of business never



dreamed of. We must be prepared to look a-head, and to exchange the accustomed line of business for a line more in accordance with the times in which we live. It must be left to education to accomplish this. We can hope but little from the generation which exists with its previously formed convictions (founded upon error), but "we must educate the young, knowing that as the child is taught in early life so will he be as a man, and his children after him."

We must try to teach young silversmiths that taxation of their trade is wrong in principle; that compulsory hall marking is only another form of taxation; that voluntary hall marking may be a very useful institution, but that the methods of marking are open to many and great improvements; that the "touch" should be in many cases substituted for "the scrape and parting assay;" that foreign plate should be admitted free; and, lastly, that no laws should prevent the free manufacture and free sale of anything under the sun, with the sole exceptions of articles—such as poisons—as are dangerous to the community at large.

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## No. VI.

Protectionists are a peculiar people. They have the faculty of writing very long letters, and they offer to "enlighten" Free Traders upon general principles, but, in words familiar to literary men, "when their matter is boiled down there is very little soup."

If any argument were required to prove that to Free Trade rather than to Protectionist principles we must look for a further development of the resources of this great country, it is to be found in the revenue returns now in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The fact that the income-tax in a year of unparalleled dullness of trade has produced the unprecedented sum of £1,940,000 to the penny is the best possible proof of the soundness of the principles upon which Free Traders base their arguments.

In the earlier days of Free Trade a penny in the pound produced about a million sterling. Few people see how great an increase of national wealth this fact represents. Mr. R. Giffen, in an able paper read before the Statistical Society a few weeks ago, clearly proved that in a period of ten years the taxable resources of this country have increased by no less a sum than 2,400 millions sterling. But Free Traders can point to other figures even more startling. In 1840 the total revenue from all sources amounted to  $47\frac{1}{2}$  millions sterling. It now amounts to

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In the number for March 30, a letter from Mr. J. Main appeared, who, while agreeing that the duty should be lessened as much as possible, was of opinion that it should be retained in part for the purposes of hall marking.



80 millions. During this period taxes have been reduced by 32 millions. Taxation has been abolished in the case of more than 1,200 different articles. In 1840 the exports of British produce amounted to 51 millions, averaging 38s. 9d. per head of the population. Last year they amounted to 200 millions, averaging £6 11s. 3d. per head of the population. The imports increased from 62 millions, averaging 47s. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., to nearly 400 millions, averaging £12. In the twenty-three years ended 1877 the total business transacted with foreigners amounted to nearly 11,000 millions sterling. This enormously increased trade added to the tonnage of British carrying ships to such an extent, that, whereas, in 1823 we possessed 2,717,864 tons, in 1876 the registered tonnage amounted to 25,717,638. These are only a few of the facts upon which Free Traders rely. When the sugar duty was repealed in 1875 it produced £2,282,903. It can be clearly demonstrated that this Free Trade policy has increased the prosperity of this country by not less than ten millions sterling per annum. The abolition of the paper duties and the stamps upon newspapers is responsible for an amount of national prosperity which no one as yet has attempted to calculate. The Post Office returns suffice to astonish any student. In the year 1876, 1,019 million letters were delivered in the United Kingdom, in addition to 93 millions of post-cards and 299 millions of newspapers and book packages.

But let us turn to the results of this prosperity upon the people. They are seen by reference to the returns of the savings banks. In 1863 the sums due to depositors amounted to £44,328,333; in 1876 the amount had increased to £70,280,120.

I ask your readers are these facts to be attributed to Free Trade or are they not? Can Protectionists prove their principles by a like reference to statistics? Can those members of the trade whom you so rightly call "Obstructionists," who are now doing their best to prevent the extension of Free Trade principles to the silver trade, advance an equally sound argument for maintaining the mischievous laws which prevent silversmiths from partaking of the otherwise universal prosperity? One gentleman has endeavoured to enlighten us—viz., Mr. Williams, of Bristol. Mr. Main promises a further development of Protectionist theories. It is possible that the combined effort of the St. James' Hall "Obstructionists" may produce those convincing arguments which may crush us Free Traders, but I would bid them remember the words of Byron—

"For freedom's battle once begun,  
Bequeath'd by bleeding sire to son,  
Tho' baffled oft, is ever won."



## No. VII.

"Pursue that notion," said the ghost, "and you will be in the dark presently." I wonder whether any of the members of the trade who were present at the St. James' Hall meeting have read "Southey's Colloquies on Society," or Lord Macaulay's "Criticism" of that remarkable book. In the words of the ghost, but from Macaulay's standpoint, I would say to those gentlemen, with reference to taxation of trade, "that bubble was one of those contagious insanities to which communities are subject." The bubble has burst, and has become but "the shadow of a shade." Remarkable as it may appear to be, a very paradox, Free Trade principles have become a dogma in the fiscal legislation of this country. At the present time a Conservative Chancellor presides over our national purse. Apart from the fact that, in his Exeter speech, he proclaimed himself a Free Trader, the Budget has proved Sir Stafford Northcote to be what he proclaimed himself. In other words, the principle of direct has been preferred, in the main, to that of indirect taxation. Those who fondly hoped to have seen a duty reimposed upon sugar must have been grievously disappointed. Equally so must have been they who desired to see the liquor traffic saddled by increased taxation. "Put a tax on luxuries," cry Protectionists. "Take taxes off trades," cry Free Traders. Sir Stafford Northcote replies to Protectionists, "Pursue *that* notion, and you will be in the dark presently." And so "Free Trade," at last, has been recognised, even by the Conservative Party, and taxation and protection of native industry may be numbered amidst by-gone and exploded fallacies. All augurs well for the emancipation of the trades in the precious metals. "The cold frown of obstruction" need no longer alarm us. The St. James' Hall meeting is robbed of its terrors. We need not be frightened by Demetrius when he cries—

"Who'er this tax shall dare displace,  
Shall meet Bombastes face to face."

The tax is doomed. It is simply a matter of time. British interest in the Dardanelles have postponed the day of our freedom, but British interests in Clerkenwell, British interests in the United Kingdom, will assert themselves at the proper time. Let us wait and be thankful.

Opposition simply paves the way to reform. Reform will be more complete after "the fiery trial" of "a hole and corner

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A letter from Mr. R. T. Stothard, pointing out that one of the compartments of the shield of Wellington was, when finished, sent to the Hall to be marked, was sent back as not pure silver, and the metal that had been worked upon by Pitt and other chasers at one and two guineas a day, was obliged to be sacrificed, appeared in the present number, the intention of the writer being to point out this was a bar to art progress.



meeting" with closed doors and no reporters. "None ever wished that the truth should be hid but those whom the truth would indict."

Reform, which, in the first place, was asked for only in the case of taxation, will include a thorough alteration of the laws affecting hall marking. Foreign manufactured plate will be admitted free, and its sale will be permitted without "let or hindrance." All hall marking will be "Voluntary," and not "Compulsory." The public, doubtless, will desire hall marked plate, as they now desire and obtain hall marked chains. It will be in their power to obtain what they want. No one wishes to prevent them. But that a manufacturer or shopkeeper should be under serious pains and penalties for selling an article without a hall mark, if he can find a customer, is no longer to be tolerated.

A watchmaker will be able to make a watch, hall marked or not hall marked, as he may think proper. In point of fact, freedom of action will prevail, to the advantage alike of buyer, maker, and seller, and to the advantage of the revenue of the country, which benefits wholly and absolutely by the increased prosperity of the people.

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## No. VIII.

The trade are to be congratulated upon the events of the past week. A Tory Bill, for the further protection of watch-case makers has been quietly shelved, and a Liberal motion for "a Select Committee of Inquiry" has met with the unanimous approval of the House of Commons. A man must be singularly obtuse not to foresee the result of this inquiry. It is as certain as that night follows day that the report of this "Select Committee" will be in favour of a policy of freedom. The history of England is emphatically the history of progress. It is the history of a constant movement of the public mind, tending invariably in the direction of improvement. Lord Macaulay speaks of it as a history of "actions and reactions." He compares it to the action of the sea when the tide is rising. "Each successive wave rushes forward, breaks, and rolls back; but the great flood is steadily coming in." He goes on to say—"A person who looked on the waters only for a moment might fancy that they were retiring. A person who looked on them only for five minutes might fancy that they were rushing capriciously to and fro. But when he keeps his eye on them for a quarter of an hour, and sees one sea-mark disappear after another, it is impossible for him to doubt of the general direction in which the ocean is moved."

Let us be thankful that it has now "moved" in the direction of the trades in the precious metals. May it roll onwards and



onwards until every sea-mark has disappeared, and until, in deeper water and in a broader thoroughfare, the silver trade may press forward to its proper place amidst the unhampered industries of this great country!

That reform is slow in this country must be admitted. But it is sure. British interests abroad are constantly interfering with British interests at home. It is natural to this empire that such should be the case. How heartily could one endorse the lines—

“No more they make a fiddle-faddle  
About a Hessian, horse, or saddle;  
No more of continental measures,  
No more of wasting British treasures;  
Ten millions, and a vote of credit,—  
'Tis right. He can't be wrong who did it.”

How true it is that history repeats itself!

That reform should come from manufacturers is not to be expected. No reform ever did emanate from such a source. It is as natural that a manufacturer should be a “Protectionist,” as that a bee should make honey. Reform and revolution are principles akin to the manufacturing mind. One might as well expect reform from the City Corporation as from a firm of manufacturing silversmiths. A man may even be a Liberal in politics, but he will be a Tory in business. He is as frightened without protection as a horse without blinkers. The “leading strings” by which he is guided are to him as a support. Like a boy who has learned to swim with belts, he is afraid to strike out into deep water. The duty and hall marking are his belts. He thinks it impossible to swim without them, albeit he sees other men, who have had their belts dragged from them, swimming in water 50 fathoms deep.

It must be left to “the Select Committee” to teach silversmiths to swim without belts. That they will swim very well is not to be doubted.

The duty will be abolished. Hall marking will be voluntary, and as effective and as general as it is at the present time. We must try to improve the *modus operandi*, and to invent a less hideous mark. “The touch” should, in the case of artistic plate, be substituted for the “scrape and parting assay.” These are matters of detail which “freedom will provide.” I know that we “Free Traders” are thought to be very stupid persons. As in the fable of Hans Andersen, “Just look at that fellow,” said the chickens. Then the turkey cock puffed himself out as large as he could, and inquired who he was; and the ducks waddled backwards, crying, “Quack, quack.” Then the stork told them all about warm Africa, of the Pyramids, and of the ostrich, which like a wild horse runs across the desert. But the ducks did not understand what he said, and quacked among themselves, “We are all of the same opinion, namely, that he is stupid.” “Yes,



to be sure, he *is* stupid," said the turkey cock, and gobbled. And the ducks continued to walk backwards, crying, "Quack, quack." That this will be my fate I can readily understand.

## No. IX.

Mr. Main has contributed a thoughtful letter to your columns. He sees by the eye of a practical man that the silver trade is unfairly "weighted" in the race of competition with electro-plate. He observes, with justice, that the "antique plate craze," with its attendant evils arising from an improper tampering with hall marks, is prejudicial to the interests of manufacturers. "All these things mentioned," says Mr. Main, "serve to act as a check against the producer." It is "this check against the producer" which I seek to remove. There ought to be "no check" against any man in the honest pursuit of his calling. The silversmith, at the present time, is surrounded by "checks." One especially is to be noted. Every piece of plate manufactured has imprinted upon it a date mark. It is passed into the stock of a retail dealer, or it remains unsold in the stock of the manufacturer. In a few months it bears upon it the proof that it is *old* stock. I wonder whether any dealer or manufacturer can be found to argue in favour of such "a check" as a date mark. Again, there is the leopard's head, the distinctive London hall mark. What can be said in favour of a mark which in many instances conveys a false statement as regards the locality of the manufactory? Is it not a fact that the greater portion of "country" made plate is sent to Goldsmiths' Hall to be marked, in order that it may be sold as "London" made? I would like to hear what manufacturers have to say upon this subject. If a mark be desired, it should simply be one of quality; it matters nothing where plate is made; the London manufacturer has no special claim beyond those of Birmingham, Sheffield, Newcastle, or Dublin. At the present time a talented manufacturer in the country is taxed most unfairly by the trouble, inconvenience, and delay arising from the necessity under which he is placed of sending his goods to London to be marked, in order that they may not be condemned as "country" made. This is only one of the many "checks against the producer" to which Mr. Main would do well to turn his attention.

But, let us be thankful; we are now going to have a thorough inquiry by a Select Committee of the House of Commons. Nothing pleases Free Traders so much as inquiry; especially

In his letter, Mr. Main advanced as his opinion that the small amount of silver manufactured in this country, was due to a variety of causes, amongst others being the craze for plate bearing old hall marks, the constant repairing of silver plate, simply because it has been handed down from time to time, while electro plate is broken up rather than incur the expense of repairing it.



when it is conducted by men whose only interests are those of their country; nothing but good can result from it. If manufacturers think that the result will be that the cords of Protection will be bound more closely round the trade in the precious metals, they are grievously mistaken. Free Traders are in a glorious majority in the House of Commons. But we must not let a sense of security serve to risk any defeat. Complete freedom we must have. No half measures, no tinkering of old and mischievous Acts of Parliament, no "short bill," as suggested by the late President of the Board of Trade, will satisfy us.

" 'Tis not in mortals to command success,  
But we'll do more, Sempronius ; we'll deserve it."

We will deserve it by the justice of our demand. As Milton said, "Whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" We are not they who have "to trust to their memory for their figures and to their imagination for their facts." We shall have a far better argument to lay before the Select Committee than the one first adopted at the St. James' Hall meeting: "That considering the high estimation in which British plate is held in all countries on account of the guarantee given by the Government mark, it is most undesirable to interfere in any way with the present system of hall marking."

I am thankful to think that no such nonsense as this will be submitted to the "Select Committee" on the part of "Free Traders." "High estimation" may be very flattering, but it is "poor food." I wonder how we shopkeepers would get on if the public held our wares in "high estimation," but never bought a pennyworth!

" 'Tis an old maxim in the schools  
That flattery is the food of fools."

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## No. X.

All men of average sagacity must be fully aware that the duties will ere long be abolished in the cases of gold and silver plate. Doubtless the time is approaching when it will require every effort on the part of Free Traders to carry out the object which we have in view. We must not underrate the power of our opponents. There is much work for us to do, but the work shall and will be done.

It is comforting to know that all great measures of reform have been met in the first instance by opposition. The greatest of all modern fiscal reforms was not carried until after years and years of opposition—viz., from the riot of 1815 until 1846.

Again, reform has always been the work of minorities. A few earnest and intelligent men—"Agitators" Tories delight to call them—have accomplished all modern improvements.



Majorities, unhappily, have the power to postpone, but there is a limit to the period of their obstruction. One fact of the greatest importance is to be observed. The Press, liberal and conservative, is unanimously on the side of those who ask for freedom for the trades in the precious metals. There is something so obviously honest and just in what we advocate that no article has appeared in the public press in disparagement of our doctrines. My paper read before the Social Science Congress has been favourably reviewed by nearly seventy organs of public opinion; I have failed to hear of a line having been written by disinterested writers against the reforms which have been advocated. Those reforms are, (1), the total abolition of the duties upon gold and silver plate; (2), the substitution of a "voluntary" for a "compulsory" system of hall marking; (3), the abolition of the date mark, and the distinctive town mark; (4), the free importation and free sale of foreign productions; (5), the substitution of "the touch" for "the scrape and parting assay," so that foreign manufactured plate, *of standard quality*, might be marked, if desired, by a distinct "foreign plate" mark; (6), no gold articles to be marked below the quality of 18 carats fineness; (7), the repeal of the law by which watches of English manufacture are obliged to be hall marked; (8), the abolition of the license, or the application of licenses upon a reduced scale to all trades and professions. I believe that an universal system of licensing would be of great benefit to our national exchequer, and that it would be a just mode of levying direct taxation. It would be a means of checking adulteration and fraud; it would be easily collected; and the revenue derived from it would increase with the increase of population. The only objection to be urged against it is that it savours of a poll-tax, and that a small tailor in the country would object to be taxed to the same extent as a Lombard-street merchant. To meet this objection it might be urged, on the other hand, that the Lombard-street merchant pays a far larger income tax, and that in all cases of such trades as are *now* licensed the small trader pays a contribution equal to that of the large trader. An auctioneer in the country, who but rarely gets a sale, has to pay the sum of "ten pounds," exactly the same as Christie, Manson, and Woods. A country jeweller who sells a tea set, or a gold chain of a given weight, must pay the sum of £5 15s. for a license, exactly the same as Hunt and Roskell.

It is clear that should the Government not be prepared to license all trades, they should abolish existing licenses. Nothing can be urged in favour of "inequality" of taxation. "We must not tax one another for the benefit of one another."

In a future letter I will endeavour to show how greatly these reforms would increase the prosperity of our trade; how greatly they would facilitate business and tend to the rapid extension of art progress and improvements. The object of these reforms is



for the benefit of the entire trade, from the wealthy manufacturer or dealer to the errand boy. It is to be admitted that some may suffer a temporary loss from the abolition of monopoly; but in the end the entire trade will be permanently benefited.

At present, unhappily, we can hope for no assistance from those best calculated to afford it. The report of the proceedings at the St. James' Hall meeting is a melancholy proof that obstruction will do its worst. But this is not very alarming. "You are all unanimous, gentlemen," said Mr. Gladstone to the Protectionist timber merchants when they waited upon him to beg for anti-Free Trade legislation; "well, then, I am sorry to disagree with you, but I have determined to take off the tax."

Perhaps Sir Stafford Northcote may make a similar reply to the St. James' Hall obstructionists. History sometimes repeats itself.

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## No. XI.

A wise manufacturer should always regard the raw material in which he works as that on which to give employment to the people, so that by the application to it of increased intelligence, energy, and capital, he may produce increased returns of wealth. A careful examination of the history of his country should convince him that nothing in the shape of taxation should be permitted to check consumption. It cannot be denied that silver possesses in itself more than a sufficient hindrance to any very considerable extension of trade. In a degree second only to gold, its intrinsic value offers a temptation to thieves. Thus it is that many people purchase electro-plate rather than be worried by the responsibility attaching to the possession of silver. Again, one can readily understand, in these days of luxury, that many people object to lock up large sums of money in heavy candelabra, meat dishes, tureens, salvers, and such like plate, especially when the same effect can be produced in electro-plate at such a considerable reduction of cost.

But these considerations do not affect the arguments of Free Traders. Granted, we say, that silversmiths are prevented by the nature of their trade from rivalling the larger staple industries; granted that it must always remain a limited trade reckoned by ounces and not by tons; why, we ask, add to the number of your hindrances? Surely the fact that electro is so nearly like the silver plate which you manufacture should cause you to look with jealousy upon your untaxed and unhampered rival. He copies your patterns, imitates your marks, laughing all the while at your folly in allowing him such manifest advantages. Farcy what an absurdity it would be on the part of watchmakers were they to allow gold watches to be taxed to the



extent of from  $12\frac{1}{2}$  to 20 per cent., and aluminium watches to be perfectly free! Can anyone in his senses imagine Messrs. Frodsham arguing in favour of taxation in manner like silversmiths? —“Gold watches are a luxury; luxuries ought to be taxed; if the tax be abolished, no more watches will be sold; thieves have a partiality for gold watches; people prefer aluminium; watches last for generations, and all old families possess gold watches.” The fact is that silversmiths fall into an error common to most people who argue without thinking. “It is not unusual for a person who is eager to prove a particular proposition to assume a *major* of huge extent, which includes that particular proposition, without ever reflecting that it includes a great deal more; . . . as soon as we examine it we find that it contains an infinite number of conclusions, every one of which is a monstrous absurdity.” So wrote Lord Macaulay. Luxuries ought to be taxed. What luxuries? What are and what are not luxuries? Where is the line to be drawn? “I, for one, desire Free Trade with all my heart,” said the chairman of the St. James’ Hall meeting, “*therefore I shall vote against Free Trade in silver plate*,” it might be added. “The English market is everywhere held in high estimation,” said another wiseacre; but he forgot to remark “*but foreigners buy little or nothing of our productions*.” “If there were no duty on plate it might be impolitic to impose one, but as it has existed for very many years I would strongly urge the desirability of retaining it,” said another manufacturer, a gentleman who was elected to the Court of the Goldsmiths’ Company to represent the craft! Let us for a moment think over the absurdity of this proposition. Apply the argument to taxes which have been swept away before the growing intelligence of this country. If there were no duty on corn (or paper, or sugar) “it might be impolitic to impose one, but as it has existed for very many years, I would strongly urge the desirability of retaining it.” The same with Temple Bar, or the window tax; the same with hanging for petty larceny, or public executions; the same with dozens of other similar antiquated, effete, and mischievous institutions,—“as they have existed for very many years, I would strongly urge the desirability of retaining them.” “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.” What an argument, in this age of progress and improvements!

However, as John Stuart Mill says, “wrong opinions and principles gradually yield to fact and argument.” And I hope that they will prevail upon the present occasion. In a few days the opportunity will be afforded to us to prepare the way to such a reform of the silver trade as may result in increased prosperity all round. Let us approach the subject with judgment, and with a respect for ancient institutions so far only as they may be useful under the altered conditions of society resulting from increased and rapidly increasing population. As Demosthenes



said, "with the measures of good citizens the advancement of their country should keep pace; their counsel should still be the salutary rather than the agreeable: to the latter will nature herself incline: to the former a good citizen must direct by argument and instruction." . . . "I continue to offer counsel by which I sink below others in your regard; but you, if you followed it, would be exalted."

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## No. XII.

The Bill for the protection of watch case makers, as was expected by those acquainted with the procedure of Parliament, has been referred to the Select Committee already appointed to consider and report upon the present condition of the trades in the precious metals. This is precisely what was wanted. Watchmakers, Silversmiths, and Jewellers are equally interested in an inquiry into the laws affecting their trades. If, after a proper inquiry, those laws be found to be as beneficent as the St. James' Hall obstructionists assert, doubtless the advocates of their repeal will confess themselves to have been in the wrong. Should a Committee of the House of Commons report that taxation of silver plate is calculated to increase the prosperity of the trade, or that compulsory hall marking is "a British interest" not to be interfered with, well and good! However, such a report is simply impossible. That it is improbable may be gathered from the history of modern fiscal legislation, which has tended invariably in the direction of increased freedom of trade, alike from taxation and from needless interference on the part of authority. The tendency has been, most justly, to leave buyers and sellers to make their own bargains; the latter to produce such articles as their intelligence and enterprise may suggest; the former to purchase what may commend itself to their taste, and be within the means at their command. Why this principle should be denied to buyers and sellers of one, and only one, simple commodity, called "Silver Plate," it is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to conceive. If buyers must be protected in the purchase of a tea-pot, should they not also be protected in the purchase of a carriage, a house, or other commodities of equal, or even of greater importance to themselves individually? Wherever authority asserts itself over production, its effect is to cramp the producer, to check his enterprise, and to place a hindrance in the way of improvement. Another effect is to create monopoly, for the reason that such a trade is certain to be confined within the narrowest possible limits, thereby affording no temptation for outsiders to adopt it as a profession, and thus depriving it of that wholesome competition to which may be attributed the development and rapid extension of British



commerce. Art progress is rendered impossible by the action of authority. Artists, as other mortals, like "loaves and fishes." They turn their attention to trades in which is a fair prospect of advancement. That they should give a wide berth to the silver trade might fairly be expected. No advancement is possible in a poor poverty-stricken trade like that of silver plate. Where is the manufacturer who can afford to pay a large salary to an artist? Echo answers, "Where?" Notably, in this country, only in the case of firms who have treated silver plate as an advertisement, by which to sell either diamonds or electroplate! In no case of a firm manufacturing silver plate pure and simple. In such a case, art has been conspicuous by its absence. I apprehend that no trade in the United Kingdom can show so little improvement as the silver trade. Brass is literally miles ahead. There is more art in a poker or a pair of tongs than is to be found in a modern centre-piece. I myself possess a fender and fire-irons which, in point of design, would compare favourably with any tea-pot which is to be seen in Bond-street. Art in the silver trade is dead. Monopoly, and ignorance its legitimate offspring, have killed it. Duties and compulsory hall marking have crushed it out. Who can wonder at it?

I maintain that when these "antiquated, effete, and mischievous" hindrances are removed, that very moment when the silver trade is permitted freely to breathe, the manufacture of silver plate will partake of the advantages to which other trades have been long since been accustomed. Art will revive; improvements will be rendered possible; monopoly will cease to be all-powerful; and the silver trade will push on to its proper place amidst the unhampered industries of this great and fast progressing country.

Let us persevere—those of us who entertain these opinions—remembering, in the words of Coleridge, that "if we hope to instruct others, we should familiarize our own minds to some fixed and determinate principles of action. The world is a vast labyrinth, in which almost everyone is running a different way, and almost everyone manifesting hatred to those who do not run the same way. A few indeed stand motionless, and, not seeking to lead themselves or others out of the maze, laugh at the failures of their brethren, yet with little reason; for more grossly than the most bewildered wanderer does *he* err who never aims to go right. It is more honourable to the head, as well as to the heart, to be misled by our eagerness in the pursuit of truth, than to be safe from blundering by contempt of it." "Strong reasons," says Shakespeare, "make strong actions." By "strong actions" I hope to show the Select Committee of Inquiry "the strong reasons" for altering the laws affecting my trade.



## No. XIII.

During the last few weeks I have visited the largest and best of the American workshops, and, by the courtesy of the principals, have been invited to make a careful inspection of their modes of production.

The visitor to an American workshop is at once struck by the cheerfulness of its surroundings, its light and airiness. The buildings are lofty, having large windows back and front, and the arrangements show careful forethought and consideration for the comfort of the employés, a large number of whom are women. This point of the economy of an American workshop had special interest to myself, as I am convinced that among the numerous social questions of our time that are pressing for solution, there is scarcely one more important than the industrial employment of women. In the Waltham watch manufactory, upon the day on which I visited it, there were 957 persons at work, one-third of whom were females.

The largest silver ware manufactory in America is that of the Gorham Company, at Providence, in the State of Rhode Island. It is charmingly situated by the side of a river, and is a model of what an atelier of an art manufacturer should be. The artist, who is manager of the works, is surrounded by castings and models of everything in the world of interest to a silversmith. His library includes all the books upon art, which have been published in Europe. He possesses photographs or engravings of art treasures of every museum, and his collection of old china, of Indian and Japanese ornaments, is as interesting as it is extensive.

It is sad to find in such a collection, specimens of English plate used, not as models for imitation, but as fearful examples of bad taste and workmanship to be avoided by their workpeople, and as a foil for the sale of their own beautiful productions. This museum is open to the workpeople, and to that I attribute the success of the firm. Everyone in the place seemed to take an interest in the work in hand, such questions being put to me by the workpeople as—Do you think, Sir, that our work is better than that in the old country? Do they use much machinery in England? Are the workshops as good as ours? Do you think that we shall get a medal at Paris? &c., &c.

I was much pleased to find how proud the workpeople are of machinery—how anxious to show what each machine will do, especially when, as frequently occurs, the last improvement to it has resulted from their own suggestions. This, again, is a point deserving of attention. In an American manufactory everything is done upon the premises. The raw material is the only import. Silver is alloyed, melted, flattened, and manufactured throughout. Engraving, chasing, enamelling, gilding, and every other process have their separate departments. But,



better than all, the machinery itself is made upon the premises, so an improvement—the result of the intelligence of a workman—can at once be tried by a visit to the tool-shop. If it be thought that time may be saved by an alteration, the alteration is effected, or even a new machine is made, and the saving is accomplished. There is no jealousy on the part of the workman, in the fear that more rapid production may decrease the demand for his labour, and there is, what is so lacking in England, the enterprising intelligence of the masters, only too anxious to avail themselves of any and every improvement, and willing to incur any amount of trouble and expense in pursuit of perfection in point either of design or execution. The result is, that whereas we in England are content to go on manufacturing fiddle and plain, king's and queen's, and other hideously ugly spoons and forks, and other articles of silver ware which might rightly be described as "the usual thing, Sir," the die-shop of an American manufacturer is, week by week, turning out something of novel and exquisitely beautiful design.

Let it not be supposed that American silver ware is all machine made; on the contrary, their modelling, chasing, and engraving are of the highest order. I saw an iron shield in course of manufacture which would have done credit to Paul Lamerie himself, and the chasing on a service of plate being made for a Californian millionaire, by the eminent firm of Tiffany and Company, is equal to the finest of fine Italian work of the Middle Ages. There is no lack of hand-labour, and that of the very best, in America.

But it is with reference to the finish of their work that they are so far in advance of Europe, and here it cannot be denied that their success is owing to the intelligent use of the lathe, by which a surface is brought upon an article, before gilding, equal to the finest satin. It was depressing, upon my return, to observe the want of finish in English productions,—the slobbering solder marks, the unpolished joints, the tinkered handles, and the hideous hall mark, oftentimes in the very front, placed recklessly askew, contemptuous alike of art and expediency.

Well may we remember the first resolution adopted at the meeting of the Saint James' Hall obstructionists—"that, considering the high estimation in which English plate is held abroad, it is inexpedient to alter the laws relating to hall marking." Why, Sir, English plate, as it richly deserves to be, is held in utter contempt abroad, as it unhappily is by the educated classes in our own country. The greater portion of it is a disgrace to those who make it, and to those who, like myself, are obliged to sell it.

And this state of affairs must continue until Parliament gives us freedom. So long as we are governed by the old-fashioned laws of six centuries ago, administered by a Goldsmiths' Company (goldsmiths only in name), composed of a body of



gentlemen remarkable not for their artistic knowledge, not for their acquaintance with the craft over which they preside, but rather for their determination to maintain obstructive laws in their integrity—so long as this state of things prevails, we must, I suppose, be content to see foreigners applauded and patronised by our own English princes and noblemen, and money be paid to American manufacturers which, under happier influences, would find its way into our pockets, to the advantage of the workmen of the country in which we live.

I appeal to workmen to help me, and those who agree with me, in an honest endeavour to obtain the abolition of those “old, antiquated, and mischievous laws” which now prevent the extension to our trade of those principles of freedom to which this country owes so much, and to which all other trades are indebted for their pre-eminence amidst the unhampered industries of the world.

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## No. XIV.

It is gratifying to find, from the report of the Select Committee lately issued, that its labours are postponed until next session. The inference which may be drawn from this postponement is that the proposal to abolish the duty and to make hall marking a voluntary proceeding—in other words, to extend the principles of freedom to the gold and silver trades, requires further consideration; at all events, it is, in the opinion of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, not altogether so foolish a proposition as the Saint James’ Hall “obstructionists” would invite us to believe. It would indeed have been remarkable had the Committee decided more hastily upon a subject of such interest, not only to the trades in the precious metals, but to the public at large. The great difficulty I experienced when first it was determined no longer “to grin and bear it” was in obtaining a hearing in quarters likely to be of service to the cause of freedom. “It is a matter of but very little public interest,” said Mr. Editor; “it is such a small matter,” said a well-known member of Parliament, “otherwise I would gladly have assisted you;” “I quite agree with you,” said another M.P., “but I do not think you will get a Select Committee; it is such a small trade, that of silver plate, and no one takes any interest in it; however there can be no harm in your trying.” And I did try. Faith in an honest and good cause, and a determination to succeed never before produced a more devoted slave. In the face of organised opposition, backed by the powerful influence of the Goldsmiths’ Company, in spite of the sneers of the “great houses,” and the incredulity of the “small fry,”—the courteous pooh-poohings of the members of Parliament, nevertheless, notwithstanding,—the Committee is an established fact. That the



evidence obtained by this Committee will eventually produce that complete freedom for which I am fighting may be regarded as an absolute certainty. Remember, I say "eventually;" obstructionists, unhappily, may have power to postpone. The Goldsmiths' Company may have influence sufficient to retard the work of reform. It matters little; sooner or later the time must come when the cords of protection will be cut. Sooner or later the connection at present so unhappily subsisting between the Goldsmiths' Company (goldsmiths only in name, as far as its governing body is concerned) and the trade will be terminated. It is simply a matter of time, the extent of which cannot at present be defined. Let us hope that they themselves will assist in the work of their own disestablishment by means of such anachronistic and mischievous notices as that issued to the trade during the last week, one which reminds us, in language almost absurd in its solemnity, that the silversmith is not legally entitled to get an honest living; that, whereas the manufacturer or dealer engaged in every other similar trade is at perfect liberty to carry on his business in manner as may seem to him to be best, the silversmith must obey laws unparalleled for their tyrannical obstructiveness and their mischievous inconsistency with the period of time in which we are living. *"The Wardens trust that this second warning will obviate the necessity of any further proceedings on their part."* Enough! We know what sort of opposition we are likely to meet with,—an opposition blind to facts—obstinately regardless of the modern interests of the trade—profoundly ignorant of the statistics of results of modern fiscal legislation—careless of art progress, and conservative only of the antiquated and mischievous policy of our forefathers. Such an opposition must not be allowed to discourage us. We must fight resolutely but hopefully, comforted by the knowledge that we have in the evidence already obtained by the Select Committee sufficient testimony that the interests of the craft (by whom I mean not manufacturers only, for "the craft" comprises 12,777 "licensed dealers," of whom manufacturers form an insignificant minority—query the odd 777?) are utterly disregarded by those who constitute themselves our masters. An examination of the evidence will doubtless be of interest to the craft, so in subsequent letters I will endeavour to place before your readers good and sufficient reasons—logical conclusions from the "Blue Book"—that the testimony of our opponents is nothing more nor less than conclusive argument in our favour.

## No. XV.

A valuable work has just been issued from the Press, of interest to collectors and to all who are engaged in the ancient trade of the silversmith. I allude to "Old English



Plate," by Mr. Cripps (published by Murray). Its effect, I hope, will be twofold—first, that of attracting public attention to the grandeur of the trade as it prevailed in the Middle Ages, and the sad decadence of the art of the silversmith in modern times; secondly, that of preparing the way to a resuscitation and revival of the art, by such practical means as may present themselves. We read much, in these days, of technical education; we are promised much; the air may be said to ring with schemes, more or less practical, for the improvement of English handicrafts, but months and years roll by without much progress being made towards organisation. Mr. Cripps's work is, undoubtedly, the best history of the craft which has yet been published. It is, as the preface informs us, a continuation and completion of an earlier work by Mr. Octavius Morgan, F.R.S., and it appears most opportunely, seeing that the trade is now in the hands of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, the members of which will derive much practical knowledge from its well-arranged and highly interesting pages. I will leave to the reviewer the task of consideration of Mr. Cripps's admirable volume, as a book. To the collector it will be serviceable; to the trade it should be suggestive; to the reformer it is invaluable. The history of hall marking is traced with exactness from the date of its institution, A.D. 1300, to the time when modern intelligence admitted "brass alloyed with gold" to its ancient and venerable privileges, A.D. 1854. "The leopard's head," "the maker's mark," "the date mark," "the lion," and "the monarch's or duty mark," are all treated with the befitting preciseness and care of an enthusiastic amateur. The work is admirably illustrated by engravings, which, as the *Saturday Review* suggests "may prove of use to modern makers deficient in originality." The value I attach to the book is that it traces the connection of the Goldsmiths' Company with the craft, and proves to demonstration the impossibility, without reform, of the Company "administering to its modern requirements." The fact is that the world has grown too large to admit of a trade being governed by a company, however cleverly composed. If, as was the case in the year 1300, and for centuries afterwards, the Goldsmiths' Company were entirely composed of craftsmen, or if the wardens were, as their charter directs, "honest and sufficient men, best skilled in the said trade," it would simply be impossible, even if it were desirable, to carry out the provisions of the musty old Acts of Parliament under which it was incorporated. "Tempora omnia mutantur." In the first place, it must be observed that such an institution as a trade guild, having restraining powers over a given craft, is an anachronism. The ancient guilds of the City of London—notably that of the Goldsmiths'—were trade protection societies, not, as many suppose, corporations for the encouragement of the several trades in their



artistic development, but purely and simply trades unions, encouraged by the Kings and Queens of the time being for their own selfish ends, the object of the one being to keep the trade in their own hands to the exclusion of foreigners and outsiders, that of the other the protection of the coin of the realm. For this purpose it was ordained—I quote the words of the charter—that “all of the trade of goldsmiths should sit in their shops in the High street of Cheap;” that “no silver or gold plate be sold in the City of London, except in the King’s Exchange, or in Cheap;” that “none of the trade shall keep any shop except in Cheap.” In an earlier enactment, the guild of goldsmiths had the power to prevent “any one working in secret, or anywhere but in the public street, so that gold might be seen not to bear any colour but its own”—*i. e.*, that it might not be alloyed. Such was the jealousy of the goldsmiths and the cutlers that, history says, fights used to take place in the open streets, and Mr. Cripps mentions that, in 1267, “in an affray which occurred between the goldsmiths and the tailors”—possibly about button-making—“those trades met and fought to the number of 500 men on each side, of whom some were killed, the dead being, it is said, thrown into the Thames.” The book teems with evidence that the object of the city guilds was to confine the trades within the city walls, and to bar the entrance to any craft but by way of apprenticeship. Time, as we all know, has long since severed the connection between the guilds and the crafts, with but few exceptions. The Goldsmiths’ Company, unhappily, still retains its powers, albeit it has long since departed from the terms of its charter. Fortunately for the trade, as undoubtedly it is for the Company, the wardens no longer go “from shop to shop, seizing and breaking” goods, and Cheapside is no longer the only permitted resort of the silversmith, who is allowed to conduct his business in a snug workshop in Soho, Clerkenwell, or elsewhere, instead of in the open street within sound of Bow bells. Writing, as I am, in the month of October, I cannot but shudder when I think of the silversmith of the thirteenth century shivering in the cold, with a member of the Goldsmiths’ Company peeping over his shoulder. But, Sir, since all this happened, Adam Smith has lived and written; John Stuart Mill and others have lived and passed away; Sir Robert Peel has abolished the Corn Laws, and Mr. Gladstone has given us free trade in everything save wine, spirits, beer, tea, tobacco, and silver plate. *Mirabile dictu!* Why silver plate? What has the silversmith done that he should not be permitted to participate in the prosperity resulting from such beneficent, if partial, legislation? Must it be spoken? Because the Goldsmiths’ Company still acts out, to the best of its capacity, its part as a trades union, not for the encouragement of the art of the silversmith, not in the direction of the development of the trade, but in the interests



of a few manufacturers, whose productions are thus referred to in an able paper in the *Saturday Review* of September 14th: "In one of the abortive exhibitions held a few years ago in the hot galleries which adjoin the Conservatory of the Horticultural Gardens there was a melancholy show of modern plate. Few people saw it, in all probability; and we do not remember that it was noticed in the newspapers, though many thousand pounds' worth of bad designs were exhibited. A visitor who believed in the vitality of English art could not find a single specimen which he would have taken or given as a present, and declared that he would have preferred, to the best cup or group, as much unworked metal in a lump." Is it to be wondered at that the trade has fallen so low? Certainly not. Without reforms suitable to the age in which we live, it will assuredly fall much lower; year by year the amount of plate manufactured decreases; capital and cultivated labour, instead of being attracted to the trade, seek other and more profitable employment; one by one manufacturers retire, to the detriment of wholesome competition and to the narrowment of the prospect of improvement either of design or execution. This is the result of an endeavour to maintain old and mischievous legislation simply from a love of ancient institutions—the mistaken belief that, under altered conditions of society, with an increased and rapidly increasing population, laws framed in the period of Edward I. are adapted to the requirements of the period of Queen Victoria. In the words of Marcus Aurelius, "We must not receive the opinions of our fathers as do mere infants, for the simple reason that our fathers held them." Our fathers thought that there ought to be a duty levied upon nearly every trade, even that of glass. Our fathers thought that England would be ruined if the corn laws were abolished. Our fathers thought an infinite number of stupid things; even in later years there were people so foolish as to think that England would be injured by the abolition of the paper duty. In point of fact, there are to be met with people whose life is devoted to an honest endeavour to prevent any alteration whatever, either of custom or law. It is to be feared that this is the policy of the Goldsmiths' Company. That it is the policy recommended by their clerk, Mr. Prideaux (who, possibly, is the Goldsmiths' Company *in propria persona*), can be seen by a reference to his evidence before the Select Committee. The good old Tory gentleman would just as soon disestablish the English Church as abolish hall marking, or the duty upon silver plate. Alter a law of Edward I.! Abolish an institution nearly 600 years old! Far better to return to the good old days, and cut both a silversmith's ears off and pillory him if he dare make a piece of plate without sending it to be marked. It is useless to try to persuade Mr. Prideaux. I, for one, would not attempt it. But what I conceive to be wanted in the modern interests of the craft, is freedom. I desire to see the Gold-



smiths' Company deprived of any control of the trade. It will be better for the public; it will be better for the trade; it will be better for the Company. In a future letter I will endeavour to explain in what degree it will be better for all parties.

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## No. XVI.

It is satisfactory to the silver trade reformers to find that the best witness on their behalf before the Select Committee was Mr. Farrer, the Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade. Speaking on behalf of the department, he condemned the duty and the system of compulsory hall marking, *toto cælo*. His conclusion is that "there is no sound reason for the law as to compulsory hall marking of gold and silver, and that France and other nations having similar laws are equally foolish in retaining such legislation."

Such, Sir, is the opinion of the Board of Trade. We may well hope, therefore, that the day of our emancipation is nigh at hand! When it is found that the Government department absolutely responsible for the trade of the country, recognises the necessity for an immediate alteration of the law, we need scarcely be anxious respecting the ultimate issue of the Parliamentary inquiry now in progress. If the Committee attach importance more to one witness than to another, surely that one would be a gentleman of such experience as Mr. Farrer.

It is refreshing to study the evidence of this gentleman; he is by far the greatest reformer who has as yet appeared upon the scene. He objects to "any legislative interference with the quality of the materials used in manufacture," "buyer and seller should be free to please themselves in the matter." The duty is objectionable because it "helps to maintain hall marking." He argues that the public do not require a legal test or standard of quality, in the case of silver, any more than in the case of other articles of commerce; that manufacturers only seek for such laws "from fear of foreign competition;" that "the public are injured by the absence of such competition;" that "small capitalists are kept out of the trade under the present system;" that "art progress is impeded," and he informs us that "compulsory hall marking is often cited in support of other restrictions solicited by different traders."

The trade would do well to study the evidence of Mr. Farrer; especially would I suggest this study to the Saint James' Hall obstructionists,—those gentlemen who framed the ridiculous resolution, that, "seeing that English silver plate is held in such high estimation abroad, it is undesirable to abolish the duty, or to interfere with the laws relating to hall marking," &c.

How I would have liked to have met this resolution by a direct negative to the effect that "seeing that English silver



plate is held in utter and absolute contempt abroad, it is desirable that immediate steps be taken to alter the laws relating to its taxation by means of an excise and compulsory hall marking, in order that the trade may have a chance of recovering their lost laurels."

When one reads the resolution which was passed "*unanimously*," it is said, one cannot help remembering the story of "Hie diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle"; but it is simply impossible to imagine sixty sane persons passing a resolution to the effect that "the cow jumped over the moon." However, strange as it may appear, something very like it occurred at St. James' Hall, under the presidency of Mr. F. B. Thomas, one of the Wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company.

But let us not be too hard upon those who disagree with us; let us rather remember that "knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up."

The Goldsmiths' Company,—this reminds me that their clerk, Mr. Prideaux, was called to give evidence before the Select Committee.

He positively declines to believe that "the control mark," abroad, is oftentimes the result of "the touch," and not of "the scrape and parting assay"; in other words, he goes out of his way to try to disprove a fact, the truth of which anyone having business relations on the Continent, may discover for himself.

However, we need attach but little importance to this gentleman's evidence; the Select Committee might just as well listen to a man who desired the maintenance of "the curfew bell," at the sound of which thirty-four millions of people should be required to tuck themselves up in a bed at eight o'clock every night. But his ignorance must be exposed lest it should be hurtful.

It is not a little singular that Mr. James Garrard, who ought to know better, labours under a similar delusion. But one must recollect what curious mistakes foreigners, who have never travelled, make respecting English institutions. I met an American only a few weeks ago who was under the mistaken impression that Queen Victoria governed her own people; he could scarcely be persuaded that the United Kingdom is the grandest republic on the world's surface, albeit the grandest monarchy since the Roman Empire! There are still some Englishmen who believe that French people live on frogs, and that the Kilkenny cats ate up one another. There is, in point of fact, nothing too absurd for some people to believe. Mr. Garrard thinks that English silver plate is held "in high estimation abroad." If he were to travel abroad methinks he would be rather cruelly undeceived. Possibly English silver plate is held "in high estimation" in Panton-street. "So far, the Court is quite with" Mr. Garrard. But the jury at the



Paris Exhibition have come to a different conclusion; they, poor deluded mortals, prefer a work of artistic merit, the metal of which is "an unsolved problem," to a hall marked butter-dish with a cow at the top, or the orthodox centre piece—a stag under an oak, or an elephant under a pine tree—albeit the Queen's head, the date-mark, the leopard's head, the lion, and the maker's mark are the distinguishing feature of the stag or the elephant. But let us earnestly hope that by the time the next international exhibition takes place the trade mark may have supplanted the hall mark: then it may be confidently predicted that English plate will be "held in high estimation abroad."

## No. XVII.

There is a very formidable argument which I may call the stock argument of those who oppose the abolition of the system of compulsory hall marking, it is this, "the hall mark is a protection to the public; if it be done away with the public will have no protection in the purchase of silver plate, dishonest people will make all sorts of rubbish, and the public will be deceived," &c.

Now, as this is an argument very calculated to attract support from the unthinking many, against the thinking few, I will, with your permission, examine it with a view to see (1) how far the public need, and (2) how far it is desirable that they should have, such protection.

In the first place, it must be admitted that a strong case should be made out if it be desired to prove that protection is required in the purchase of silver ware, seeing that the public have no sort of protection in the purchase of any other article under the sun, wedding rings and articles of food only excepted. It must be proved that silver differs in a material degree from any other metal, that it is either more valuable or more easily adulterated than any other metal or article of manufacture; in point of fact, if the public require protection in the purchase of silver ware, it must be proved that there is something altogether exceptional in that material beyond all other materials whatsoever.

Remember, it is a most important matter, because, if it were granted that increased trade and increased employment, and therefore increased prosperity to numerous individuals would follow an alteration of the law, the public must prove that their interests are paramount, that trade must be decreased, its development be held in check, employment be limited, and the prosperity of numerous individuals be sacrificed, rather than that these interests should be in any degree trodden upon.

But, Sir, is it possible to prove such to be the case? What is the value of the metal for which such special legislation is desired? Four shillings and three-pence an ounce! It is there-



fore by no means an exceptionally valuable metal; platinum is worth six times, and gold of 18-carats fineness, fourteen times as much as silver, in the case of neither of which have the public any protection; and yet they do not complain. Do not let it be supposed that platinum is an unimportant metal; I believe I am correct in saying that platinum vessels, for distilling and other processes, are made to the value of £2,500 each, and yet there is no hall mark, and no one ever thought of asking for one. Jewellery, we all know, can be made of any quality, and Sarah Ann is quite as happy, in her way, with a pair of seven-and-sixpenny ear-rings, as Lady Angelina with a pair of Streeter's 18-carat machine made ear-rings. And I would like to know what harm there is in Sarah Ann's love of finery. The ear-rings were not made without hands—there have been a manufacturer, (possibly a factor,) and countless hands engaged in administering to Sarah Ann's vanity; dozens, I might say hundreds or thousands of families are supported by the manufacture of cheap jewellery; rubbish it may be called, but it is rubbish which sells, and it contributes to the wealth of the nation in a far greater degree than the better class of jewellery, which holds its humble competitor in such utter contempt. If we admit, as we must admit, that employment of the greatest number is one of the chief aims and objects of society, we cannot help coming to the conclusion that it is little short of folly to lay down laws respecting the quality of any given article of raw material, excepting only articles of food. Would there be any more harm in a manufacturer undertaking to make a thousand pint pots of silver, alloyed to a value of three-and-sixpence an ounce, than there would be in another manufacturer making a similar number of pots of white metal with a mere coating of silver? Assuredly not. Then why deny the right to the silversmith? I maintain that he has quite as equal right to get his living, as may seem to him best, as another man has to make tin-kettle pianofortes, or carpets at half-a-crown a yard, Tottenham-court-road furniture, or electro-plated spoons and forks at twelve shillings a dozen. As far as I can see the world is none the worse for cheap stuff, and it would, methinks, get on very sadly if Elkingtons, Gillows, Jackson and Graham, and Broadwoods were to be allowed to lay down laws as to qualities of goods. How many pianofortes would find their way into the houses of the middle classes if nothing could be obtained under fifty or sixty pounds? For this very reason it is that there is such an insignificant demand for silver tea sets. The law says, "if you cannot pay forty or fifty pounds you shall not have a tea set at all." And, laughably enough, the silversmith approves of the laws which prevent an extension of his trade! He is told it would be wicked to alloy his silver below 11 oz. 2 dwt. to the pound troy, and he positively believes it, or thinks he does, reminding one of the lines of Moore—

"But faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast  
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last."



## No. XVIII.\*

Free Traders, like trade itself, at the present time are under a cloud. They are summoned to almost perpetual conflict, for the reason that their enemy, Protection, is undying. The pernicious doctrines of Protectionists, and the fallacies of reciprocity theorists, are so deeply rooted in the very essence of human nature that no force of argument can ever completely exterminate them. They crop up everlastingly from the bed of narrow-sightedness and selfishness which overlies the industrial and commercial life of nations. It is a pity that political economy should ever have been classed with science. Political economy, it is true, rests upon a foundation as permanent as that of astronomy, and one hundred years have failed to shake its doctrines, the truth of which remains to this day a saddening protest against the errors of the ignorant. But it is a science so-called, and as a science is disregarded by the masses. It teaches truths of the greatest importance to millions, and it is studied by tens; the food of a people, it is treated as the delicacy for the table of Dives; and why? because as it dwells in a temple of science, it finds few listeners. Thus it is if we turn our eyes to the nations of the world, that this is the picture we find. One of the greatest of empires, though sorely in need of financial progress, is deeply entrenched behind the walls of Protection. Bounties still maintain themselves in some highly civilised countries. Free Trade is losing ground in some quarters. Americans, who account themselves the most progressive of mankind, sentence themselves to diminished trade, reduced wealth, and lowered comforts, by enriching particular traders at the expense of the whole community. Our colonies are in danger of being led astray at the instigation of ignorant democracies. It is rumoured that Germany, in order to procure military resources, is disposed to treat the voice of political economy with contempt, and to inflict prohibitive duties on foreign goods; and, with a feeling of sorrow and shame, be it said, it is asserted that the weight of commercial depression is causing disloyalty in England to the principle of Free Trade on the fallacious ground that it is the duty of the English people to tax themselves in order to keep English industries alive. Added to which we have the still more melancholy spectacle of hundreds of thousands of pounds of lost wages, protracted poverty, misery of wife and children, over-crowded workhouses, starvation itself, resulting from the misconception that capitalists and labourers are natural enemies, and that the profits accruing from their efforts must be divided by combat. And thus it is that, in the silver trade, the same ignorance of political economy, the same inattention to its voice, prevails. It is a science. Few

\* This letter was founded upon the excellent address of Professor Bonamy Price to the members of the Social Science Association, at Cheltenham.



will study it. It is in vain that we point to its claim upon our regard,—“Restriction of colonial trade to the mother country abolished; export and import duties and bounties swept away; navigation laws repealed; taxes on raw materials extinguished; protection abandoned; freedom of trade enthroned in its place.” These are only a few of the results of political economy. And yet the silversmith, willing enough to sing a *Te Deum* in praise of Free Trade, hugs the duty upon silver plate and the hall marking tax in contradiction of its first problem, its first commandment, I might say—“Thou shalt not tax thy neighbour’s goods in the process of their manufacture.”

## No. XIX.

I think it has been clearly shown in my previous letters, how advantageously the trade and the public would be affected by the abolition of all hindrances to the manufacture of silver plate. I have shown how, by the application of freedom, such as is now enjoyed by members of all other similar crafts, trade will be rapidly extended as to quantity, art progress will be encouraged, and technical education will be rendered possible. By the system of voluntary hall marking, which, without doubt, will prevail almost universally, at all events for some time to come, in compliance with the desire of the general public, no one will have cause of complaint. A manufacturer who desired to depend upon his name and his trade mark, would carry on his business at his discretion, his good name being dependent upon himself and himself alone. The man who, on the contrary, preferred the hall mark as guaranteeing his productions would be at liberty to avail himself, at a trifling cost, of a system suitable to his requirements. The manufacturer at Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield, or, which is most likely to occur, in country villages (as in America), will be enabled to carry on his trade, with or without the hall mark, with this further boon, that in the event of his requiring a mark, he will get one, at the nearest hall marking centre, precisely the same in respect of guarantee as that to be obtained anywhere else, and one which shall not convey to the purchaser any evidence of the locality of the manufacture of the article. Thus a man, who by reason of the cheapness of land, should think fit to establish himself in some village twenty miles from a town, would be able to produce goods in fair competition with his rival who might select a locality in the heart of a city. The words, “Town made,” “London made,” and “Country made,” would then altogether disappear, the article offered for sale depending simply, as foreign goods do now, upon their excellence of design and workmanship. Let us think for a moment. Who would suffer by such beneficent legislation? The public? No. They would



be benefited by increased competition, by art progress, and by the technical education which freedom would develop. The trade, *i.e.*, the great body of retailers? No. They would be benefited by competition, which would assuredly (1) bring down prices, and (2) improve the design and workmanship of manufactures, creating, in a twofold degree, by cheapness and superiority, a demand for commodities. The workmen? No. There would be an increased demand for labour, which means a rise in wages, added to which more numerous openings for the sons (and daughters, let us hope) of workmen. Manufacturers? Yes! Manufacturers, as many unhappily are at the present time, as a rule, more in want of technical education than their workmen; manufacturers who content themselves with paddling on in the old grooves, insensible of the world's progress, and indifferent alike to art and to education—such manufacturers will go to the wall, the best place for them. But there will be very few such men. A short time will suffice for a revolution of the trade. Artists of eminence, once the trade free, and there be a prospect of emolument, will flock to the manufacturers, some from France, some from Italy, some from the South Kensington Museum, ladies and gentlemen now designing fenders and fire-irons, wall-papers and carpets, brass lecterns and coal-boxes—they will be designing centre-pieces, tea services, and claret jugs before three months are over our heads. But, lastly, there is the Goldsmiths' Company. Will that venerable body be injured? Most assuredly not. The sooner, in their interests, the trade be severed from their jurisdiction the better; there can be no doubt about it. The Clothworkers severed themselves, or were severed, from the craft 150 years ago. Are they injured by the separation? Is the craft injured? No. All the other companies, with but few exceptions, have been separated from the crafts. Has any one of them been injured? No. Would the cloth trade have prospered as well with, as it has without, the interference of a trade guild? Can anyone be doubtful as to the answer to this question? Would England export 70 millions worth of cotton goods annually, if there were a Worshipful Company of Cotton Spinners, presided over by an engineer, a porcelain manufacturer, a stockbroker and a merchant, constantly interfering by means of a test of quality, and by a 12½ to a 20 per cent. *ad valorem* duty, with all the attendant worries of obtaining the drawback? Certainly not. And yet this is the state of affairs which last year prevailed as regards the Goldsmiths' Company in its relation with the craft of the silversmith. I ask your readers, can anything be more mischievous, more anachronistic, more absolutely absurd than such a relationship? What good does it do to the Company, what good to the trade? Assuredly, none whatever. To the trade the connection is as a cord binding their arms, and paralysing their energies and enterprise. To the Company the connection must be embarrassing.



to the greatest possible extent. Who are the craft? How many does it contain? Are all the 12,777 (increased this year to 13,022) licensed dealers in the United Kingdom craftsmen? One is reminded of the story, "There was an old woman who lived in her shoe, she had so many children she didn't know what to do." There sits the Goldsmiths' Company, her family increasing beyond her capacities—cackling, like the old hen of the fable, when any one of her children (albeit they be spread all over the country) wishes to run alone. The fact is that the Goldsmiths' Company would be as happy without the craft as the craft would be without the Company. The Company could, as doubtless it would, employ a portion of its enormous revenues, not as now in preventing the expansion of the trade, but by judicious encouragement of its artistic development. I will reserve the *modus operandi* for a future letter.

## No. XX.

That there are at least two sides to nearly every question may readily be admitted, and that Protectionists have a standpoint no one is disposed to deny. Adam Smith himself had his critics, and John Stuart Mill lost his election for Westminster, although undoubtedly the greatest political economist and philosopher of the age. A few days ago I met a farmer who was fully persuaded that the corn laws ought never to have been repealed. I can understand his objections to Free Trade. Not many weeks ago I endeavoured to prove to a silversmith that the principle of taxation of silver plate was quite at variance with the doctrines of Adam Smith. "Ah!" said he, "but Adam Smith was not a silversmith." People, in our days, wonder that Lord George Bentinck opposed the abolition of the corn laws; one can hardly believe that a late Earl of Derby should have offered such violent opposition to railroads; the same with the sugar duty, the paper duty, the tax upon glass or timber, the introduction of gas. Obstructionists prevailed then, as they do now. To-day it is the turn of silver plate, and obstructionists are, as usual, to the front, with the same old cry, "The trade will be ruined!" Ruined! By what? By freedom? "Most assuredly not," we Free Traders reply. "The day will come when you, and those who come after you, will wonder that you did not yourselves seek for freedom years and years before it was forced upon you." But enough. To-day is the day of "obstruction." Let us turn to Mr. James Garrard's evidence before the Select Committee; we find it there in its native simplicity. Seeing that the examination extends to 526 questions and answers, it is manifest that it is impossible within the limits of a letter to place before your readers the evidence as a whole. Suffice it to say that the argument advanced by this prince of monopolists is simply: "Let well alone. I and my



firm are quite contented with what the gods provide us. Hall marking has prevailed for centuries; the duty and hall marking have been united for so many years, that it is a pity to part them. The Goldsmiths' Company is as nearly perfect as possible. The hall mark is an indication of the value of an article, *if it is only fit to be melted*. Without a hall mark I could not buy in an auction-room. Mr. Watherston is wrong about the profit upon the rebate of duty upon unfinished plate. It is nearer  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. than 2d. The hall mark has an historical value. The public require protection in the purchase of silver plate; the public do not require protection in the purchase of electro-plate. I would recommend that the hall marking and duty laws should be extended, which could easily be done by striking out all exemptions enumerated, leaving the final clause in the present Act. I would not include watch-cases; that would be going back in legislation. I would compel a locket to be marked. Electro-plate has been no injury to the silversmith's trade. I value the hall mark as a date-mark. I rather like to leave well alone." The above, taken simply at hazard from the Blue-Book before me, may be regarded as a fair sample of this gentleman's evidence. How similar to what we may suppose to have been Lord Derby's objections to railroads!—"I rather prefer to leave well alone; the posting system is as nearly perfect as possible"—or Lord Bentinck's objections to the repeal of the corn laws, "The profit to the farmer is not quite 8s. a quarter, it is nearer 7s. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.;" or the objections of those who opposed the abolition of the paper duty, or the stamp upon a newspaper—"It has existed for so long a period, that it is a pity to do away with it." Arguments such as these are simply pitiable, and yet they find favour with some people. "Temple Bar is as nearly perfect as possible; therefore do not disturb it." "Tolls have been paid on Waterloo Bridge ever since it was opened—better leave things as they are." "Turnpikes have existed for centuries; why do away with them?" We will answer these questions:—Because the world is not now what it was; because the population has increased, and is rapidly increasing; because freedom has been proved to be the best principle in the long run; and because "monthly nurse" legislation and "paternal Governments" have been proved to be supremely ridiculous and wholly inoperative, of late years, for the purpose for which they were intended. So it is with hall marking; it is supremely ridiculous as an institution, and is suggestive only of a hundred-and-one other old and antiquated obstructions which have been cleared away before the growing intelligence of a free people. And so it will be, and so it must be, in the case of the institution now under consideration; it must give way to the modern institution, "a trade-mark." Modern requirements demand it; modern intelligence will eventually provide it.



## No. XXI.

It may be asked, "How is it possible that it can be to the interest of the Goldsmiths' Company to be relieved of the control of the gold and silver trades?" With your permission I will endeavour to prove such to be the case. In the first place it may be observed that an erroneous impression prevails as regards the profits accruing to the Company from the exercise of their hall-marking and duty-collecting powers. The amount of duty collected by the Company may be estimated at about £50,000 a year, upon which the Government allows a commission of one per cent., or £500. The charges for hall marking are so low, that the receipts from this source cannot, in the aggregate, amount to much. It is in evidence that, allowing for the expenses of an efficient staff, and providing for pensions for the retired servants of the Assay Office, the Company, instead of gaining by their connection with the trades, positively lose by the transaction. Therefore, they can have no monied interest in maintaining the prevailing laws beyond that appertaining to the present members of the Assay Office, who would be justly entitled to compensation were hall marking to be entirely abolished. However, such is not the desire of the silver trade reformers. What we want is that the duty should, in conformity with a sound Free-Trade fiscal policy, be entirely abolished, and that hall marking should become a voluntary instead of a compulsory institution. We further desire that hall marking, as a voluntary institution, should be conducted upon a system more in accordance with the modern requirements of the craft—that "the touch" should be substituted for "the scrape and parting assay," thus allowing finished goods to be marked, as in France, with a control mark which shall not be an eyesore, and which shall not injure any article submitted to its process. In other words, we want complete freedom of action on the part of manufacturers and dealers, and immunity from the control of the Goldsmiths' Company, acting as we assert they do, in obedience to "old antiquated, and mischievous laws," altogether at variance with the modern interests of 13,022 licensed dealers. It is urged that it is equally to their interest to be severed from us, as it is to our interest to be severed from them. Not that we propose to resign all connection with the Company. Their duties to the craft would still remain. They are trustees of moneys left for certain purposes appertaining to the trades in the precious metals. I contend that the trades should be the object of their careful consideration—"the trades," 13,022 licensed dealers, not six or seven manufacturers, who now nestle snugly in the maternal bosom of the Goldsmiths' Company, pro-



ted from the rude blast of competition by the warm blanket of Protectionist legislation of a bygone period! I maintain that retailers and dealers have just as much right as manufacturers to participate in the benefit to be derived from connection with so rich and powerful a corporation as that of the Goldsmiths' Company. But, as is manifest, the interests of retailers and dealers and those of manufacturers are not identical. It is the interest of retailers and dealers to sell foreign productions, whenever and wheresoever they may find a customer. I claim that the Goldsmiths' Company should recognise these interests. But, beyond this, I maintain that the artistic development of the trades should be the chief object of their solicitude; that they should be a trade protection society in the best and loftiest sense of the term, not, as now, a trade prevention society; that they should devote a part of their enormous revenues in encouragement of excellence of design and workmanship; that they should use their noble hall for an annual exhibition of works of merit; thus, and at once, commencing a work of technical education which should redound to the credit of the Company in a like degree as to the advantage of the crafts; that, for this purpose, prizes should be offered for designing, modelling, chasing, engraving, &c., with special regard to the work of apprentices. But, Sir, I might proceed far beyond the limits either of your readers' patience or of a letter. I will simply ask, "Would this not be to the interest of the Goldsmiths' Company?"

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## No. XXII.

It is impossible to over-estimate the advantage to the craft in being connected with so powerful a corporation as the Goldsmiths' Company, provided all compulsory legislation be abolished. The revenues of the Company even to a limited extent, if directed to the development of the trade, as an art industry, would, in a very short time, render England the greatest silverware manufacturing nation of the world. America, doubtless, would run England close, although possessing no such advantage as that of a partly endowed technical school, such as the Goldsmiths' Company could, if it were so willing and so advised, institute. The first duty of the Company would be to divest itself of all consideration for the quality of the metal employed by manufacturers. This should be left to the discretion of manufacturers themselves. The better class, in their own interests, would use such material as would bring credit upon their productions. The lower class



would adjust their qualities, like other manufacturers, to the requirements of their trades. Art,—that should be the primary concern of the Goldsmiths' Company. Outline, detail, such as chasing, engraving, enamelling, &c., these should be the great objects of the Company to improve. Drawing and modelling should have most careful attention, in a school in which models, together with an art library, should be available for the students. The school, once established, ought to be as self-supporting as possible. I am no advocate for a free school. Let people pay, however moderately, but let them pay, for the advantage of a technical trade education. The Goldsmiths' Company might build a school, furnish it with a library of books collected from all parts of the world, and a museum of models, including old china, old Wedgwoods, and modern ware such as Doulton's—and they might hand it over to a committee or council of technical education, composed partly of a few of their own craft members, of court and livery, nominated *ex-officio*, and partly of such members as might be elected at a meeting of subscribers properly convened for that purpose. This committee, or council, might, in its turn, elect a sub-committee of management, which would appoint competent masters, and superintend the finances, which, as I said before, should be conducted upon a self-supporting principle. Every year the council should elect a president, who might be expected to make an address at the time of his inauguration. There should be a monthly evening meeting of members, at which, with the president in the chair, papers might be read having reference to the object of the school. Thus, papers might be read upon such subjects as modelling, chasing, engraving, &c., or papers the result of travelling abroad, and an acquaintance with foreign art galleries and museums. Prizes and scholarships might be given annually by the Goldsmiths' Company, who, as founders of the school, would naturally, and for all time, be more and more interested in its progress. It would be necessary that only subscribers should take part in the management of the school, or be eligible for election to the council, as it would manifestly be impossible to convene a representative meeting of the craft, seeing that there are not less than 13,022 persons licensed to deal in gold and silver plate in the United Kingdom. There need be no hesitation in the Company adopting a principle of subscription, as it would tend (1) to make the school self-supporting, and (2) the school once built and furnished, the Company would have no further voice in its management beyond that of those Company members who might be annually nominated as *ex-officio* members of the council. The school would thus become a society, having no rent to pay, but in all other respects liable, as other societies are liable, for the success of the undertaking. What I venture to think as being so desirable, is that the trade should have a real interest—there is nothing like a pecuniary interest—in the school; and,



secondly, that the council should be a representative body, responsible to the world for the success of the undertaking, and not responsible simply to the Goldsmiths' Company, who would, as patrons, occupy much the same position as the Queen does as "Patroness of the Infant Orphan Asylum," or the Duke of Edinburgh as "Master of the Trinity House." All this, and more, could be done at a small expense, moderate when estimated by the revenues of the Goldsmiths' Company, and such a school would soon become a model institution for imitation in the provinces as time and funds might permit. I venture to submit this scheme to the consideration of those to whom the subject may commend itself.

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### No. XXIII.

"A Conservative Silversmith" is of opinion that, ere long, this country will return to a partial system of protection of native industry. I myself should not be surprised if an agitation were started for this purpose—of course, that it will ever succeed, even in the smallest degree, I regard as an utter impossibility, but in all probability it will be attempted, and, like Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Permissive Bill, will run its course until its authors are elbowed out by the inevitable progress which this country is certain to make as time advances.

Less than forty years ago, Lord Melbourne, who was then Prime Minister, declared in the House of Commons, that "during his life it had been his lot to hear many mad things proposed, but the maddest of all the mad things to which he had ever to listen was a proposal to abolish the corn laws."

Sir James Graham, in reply to a deputation from Manchester, urging the repeal of those laws, said, "If the corn laws were repealed, great disasters would fall upon the country; that the land would go out of cultivation; that church and state could not be upheld; that all our institutions would be reduced to their primitive elements; and that the people we were exciting would pull down our houses about our ears."

What would Sir James have said, if alive at the present day, when studying the Board of Trade Returns relating to the importation of food? In 1857 we imported £23,712,422; in 1862, £52,293,118; in 1867, £58,006,062; in 1872 the amount reached £74,227,939; and in 1877 it had reached £99,692,899. And, strange to say, the country is not ruined, nor going to be ruined; the land, if not cultivated to its fullest extent, is far better cultivated, and far more productive than in 1857, and church and state are still upon visiting terms.

But Free Trade has done more than supply us with food. English men and women are not only better fed, but they are better housed, better clothed, better warmed, now than in the



days prior to Free Trade. It is but little known, but nevertheless it is a fact, that before the abolition of the corn laws, masses of people in this country were but little better than starving; agricultural labourers subsisted upon roots, wages being reduced to a few shillings a week. Since that period taxes have been abolished in the case of not less than 1,200 different articles, 400 of which being articles of consumption, with the result that our exports have risen from 58 millions in 1847, to nearly 200 millions in 1877, and our imports have increased from about 120 millions to nearly 400 millions—our business with foreigners amounting in 23 years to nearly 11,000 millions sterling! And yet we have successors of Lord Melbourne and Sir James Graham who positively desire us to return to a system of protection of native industry. Surely they cannot be aware what their policy would lead to. It would enrich a few manufacturers at the cost of the great body of consumers. It would increase prices and decrease consumption, ultimately decreasing wages and exchanging national prosperity for national poverty. Our imports would decrease for the worst of all reasons, because we should no longer be able to afford to pay for them.

The fact is that if our Protectionist friends would simply study figures, we should hear no more of proposals for a retrograde policy, but they would join the ranks of Free Traders in an attempt to obtain legislation calculated in time to do away with all protection, to abolish custom houses and excise offices, thus to obtain the revenue from its only legitimate sources, viz., "ownership and occupation." In a country where more than half its revenue is obtained from customs and excise it is too much to say that we are, at present, a Free Trade nation, but let us hope we may eventually become one.

A study of the fiscal history of our country clearly proves that never in the history of the world has such prosperity been known as that of England. The progress of British commerce is altogether unparalleled in the world's history.

There are no figures so calculated to prove the fallacy of Protectionist proposals as those relating to income-tax. If Free Trade, so far as it has yet been established, be wrong in principle, how is it that a penny in the pound now produces nearly two millions sterling as against one million "in the good old times;" and how is it that the capital of the country, as proved by those income-tax returns, has increased by 2,400 millions, or 240 millions per annum during the last ten years?

This prosperity has of late received a check for reasons which I sought to indicate in a former letter; but no one can doubt that this depression of trade is only of a temporary character, which will pass away under the economy of time and capital, which most sensible persons are now practising. "Half-Holiday Jack" may say what he likes, but he cannot get over



one fact, that the half-holiday is a great luxury, and that these are not times when we can afford great luxuries. I cannot for one.

## No. XXIV.

I find, from many letters addressed to me, that some of your readers are very interested in figures relating to British Progress during the last forty years. Figures are at all times wearisome; thus it is that but few persons ever dip into them, and thus unhappily arises the fact that much misconception prevails as to the effect of England's Free Trade policy upon the welfare and well-being of the nation. Would that the people knew more about this subject! Let us begin at 1840. The population at that date was estimated at  $26\frac{1}{2}$  millions. It is now nearly 34 millions. The national income was  $47\frac{1}{2}$  millions sterling; it is now  $81\frac{1}{2}$  millions. The expenditure was 49 millions; last year it was 83 millions. The reduction of taxation during that period amounts to £32,378,398, of which 26 millions was for customs alone; excise has been increased by more than half a million; other items—income-tax, postage, stamps, and miscellaneous taxes have all been reduced.

I propose now to turn to our foreign trade; the imports in 1840 were 62 millions, and the exports were 172 millions; last year they were respectively 394 millions and 252 millions. Now let us look at shipping; in 1840 we had 3 millions of tons registered, entering and clearing annually 6,490,485 tons; last year we possessed 6 millions of tons registered, entering and clearing 34,765,907 tons. In 1840 we had 414 steamers afloat, last year we had 3,218 steamers. It is curious that, at the same time, thanks to the repeal of the navigation laws, foreign tonnage increased from about 3 millions to  $16\frac{3}{4}$  millions, entering and clearing, so that British and foreign ships enter and clear  $51\frac{1}{2}$  millions of tons of goods to and from British ports. Such has been the result of the repeal of the navigation laws. The decrease of the national debt during that period is, roughly, about ten millions.

By far the most interesting figures are to be found in the Post Office returns, which have benefited beyond all conception by our Free Trade policy. Unfortunately I have no figures prior to 1863. In that year 642 millions of letters, and 89 millions of newspapers and book packets, were delivered in the United Kingdom; in the year ended 31 March, 1878, the numbers were as follow:—1,058 million letters, 102 million post cards, and 318 millions of newspapers and book packets. This, thanks to the abolition of stamps on newspapers, and to the abolition of the paper duty, in addition to the effect upon our internal commerce of the abolition of other duties. We must also thank our Education Act; doubtless, ere this, eight years after the passing



of the Act, boys and girls educated at our schools are beginning to write love letters to each other, to the advantage of themselves and of the Post Office; after a while they will set up in business, and their invoices and orders will be flying through the post. Thus it is that the revenue of this department of the State advances even in spite of the bad times. Free Trade is at the bottom of it! Free Trade permits and encourages business upon an extended scale; business upon an extended scale necessitates correspondence; correspondence is profitable. If we were to listen to, and act upon the advice of, our Protectionist friends, we should decrease business and diminish correspondence; hence down would go our Post Office revenue:—but we are not likely to listen to our Protectionist friends:—however, let us give them a word of comfort, by showing how much better off they are, thanks to Free Trade, how much more they eat and drink now than they did “in the good old times,” to which they so frequently refer. Really, to hear them talk, one might think that Great Britain was a paradise before the advent of Free Trade, instead of what it was—a land of poverty and starvation! Remember “a land of poverty and starvation” to the masses; it was always a pretty snug little nest to the upper ten thousand, and to the manufacturers who lived in clover under a system of Protection. Read Macaulay. Read Cobden and Bright if we wish to know what sort of place England, Ireland, and Scotland were between 1830 and 1840! I will conclude this letter with the following facts relating to the consumption of food imported from abroad. The increase is remarkable. The figures are per head of the population:—

	1840.		1877.
Bacon and Hams, lbs.....	0·1	.....	8·04
Butter „ .....	1·05	.....	5·34
Cheese „ .....	0·92	.....	5·37
Corn, Wheat, and Flour lbs. ....	42·47	.....	203·26
Currants and Raisins „ .....	1·45	.....	4·18
Eggs No. ....	3·63	.....	22·45
Potatoes lbs. ....	0·01	.....	26·63
Rice „ .....	0·90	.....	12·79
Sugar „ .....	15·20	.....	54·06
Tea „ .....	1·22	.....	4·52
Tobacco „ .....	0·86	.....	1·49
Wine „ .....	0·25	.....	0·53

I hope the above, which are only a few of the facts relating to Free Trade, will at least prevent many who are Free Traders at heart, but who are “weak brethren,” owing to the mischievous and pernicious doctrines at present being circulated by those who desire a return to Protection under the guise of so-called reciprocity, from becoming backsliders. Let them not listen to those doctrines for a single moment.



## No. XXV.

Seeing that with a rapidly increasing population, England's interests are to offer all possible facilities for the employment of the people, it is manifestly the duty of the Government to remove all impediments to the development of trades. Trades want no protection—they are far better off without it. Protection of one trade is a fair and just excuse for protection of all trades. Protection of all trades would be a fair and just excuse for protection of wheat. Protected wheat means dear food, and at times even starvation. Of course there are certain trades in which Government interference is absolutely necessary. People must not be allowed to poison one another. Meat, fish, poultry, and other markets must have inspectors; slaughter-houses must be under sanitary regulations; cattle must be prevented from spreading contagious diseases; there must be laws regulating the sale and warehousing of explosives; people must not be blown out of their beds because a next-door neighbour chooses to keep a store of petroleum or dynamite. These are all cases where Government interference is not only desirable, but absolutely necessary. But trades which are neither noxious nor hurtful to the community ought to be free, under no other control than the Factory Act. Taxation of trades by excise is justifiable only so far as it may be a necessary part of revenue. For instance, at present it would appear to be necessary that a great part of the revenue should be collected from beer and spirits. There is reason in taxing these commodities. It would be far better not to tax them, if the revenue could be collected in any other way. Some day it may be found to be possible so to readjust the fiscal arrangements of this country as to permit of the abolition of all excise offices and custom houses. The sooner the better for all parties; but the time is not yet. Mr. Gladstone, in his celebrated Greenwich speech, hinted that he had a scheme in his head by which to do away with the income-tax. I have always been of opinion that this scheme, unfolded as it has remained to the present day, was, like all Mr. Gladstone's other fiscal schemes, based upon some large and well-considered principle. Depend upon it, the scheme was not simply a rearrangement, a mere shuffling of the cards in a pack. It did not mean a proposal to abolish the income-tax by placing taxes on manufactures; nor did he mean to accomplish his object by increasing the taxation of wine, beer, spirits, tea, or tobacco. What Mr. Gladstone meant we may never in his lifetime know, but until I do know I shall always be under an impression that the land and inhabited house taxes were in his eye, and that his scheme was none other than a revolution of the mode of collecting the revenue. Heartily do I hope that ere he passes away from the world which he has so benefited, ere the grave closes over the greatest philanthropist and statesman whom this generation



has seen, Mr. Gladstone may have an opportunity, as her Majesty's chief adviser, of placing the financial arrangements of the country upon a perfectly Free-trade basis, founded upon the principle of taxation of "ownership and occupation." People in this country know but little about the land-tax. If they did, they would soon take steps to alter the yield from this source. I will tell your readers some few facts relating to it. By the 4th of William and Mary, passed in 1692, upon an assessment believed then to be far below the real value, a rate of 4s. in the pound was to be levied on the full yearly value of all lands, tenements, and hereditaments, at a rack rent, with exceptions in favour of universities, schools, hospitals, &c., and on personal property, with exception of household furniture, &c. This tax produced nearly two millions sterling, or more than £800,000 in excess of what the same tax now produces. And why? Because, by the 38th of George III., c. 5 and 60, the land-tax was made perpetual at 4s. in the pound on the identical valuation of William and Mary, provision being made for the redemption of the tax at 18 or 23 years' purchase, according to value. The amount redeemed is £928,556. It therefore now only yields a little over a million sterling, no other valuation having ever since been adopted with reference to this particular source of revenue. Upon the latest valuation it would yield no less than £25,789,990. However, this would not suit our Conservative friends in the House of Commons. Thus it is that the tax, based upon the valuation of William and Mary, is now apportioned out to the different counties, with these curious anomalies, that Rutland pays 5½d., Cumberland a halfpenny, Lancashire half a farthing, Scotland 7-16ths of a penny, the average of Great Britain being 1¾d. This is a pretty account of a tax which is still called by Parliament one of 4s. in the pound on the full annual value! But the full annual value is that of 1692! Lastly, these two facts seem worthy of consideration; in fourteen years of the reign of William III. the whole public revenue, including 52 millions raised by debt, was £107,437,540, to which the land tax contributed nearly 21 millions—i.e., more than one-fifth; whereas, in 1875-6 the income in one year amounted to nearly 70 millions, to which the land-tax contributed only £1,100,071—but little more than 1-70th!

## No. XXVI

There is no greater delusion than the supposition that this is a Free Trade nation. In Parliament, and out of Parliament, one constantly hears the fallacy repeated. Nothing more surely proves the wide-spread superficiality of the reading of the present generation. Dipping here, and glancing there, is to be observed in all directions; but almost everywhere there is far too little steady, careful, and earnest thinking about what is



read. As has been well said, "there is no thoroughness, as a rule, in the popular mind in matters of study in relation to those works which the great minds of past generations left us as intellectual legacies, and which we generally treat after the manner of wrapping the talents in a napkin." Thus it is that we find so-called Free Traders who know about as much of Free Trade as they know of the Queen of Sheba. The fathers of the present generation of politicians were giants compared with their sons, who have been born, so to speak, "with silver spoons in their mouths," up to very recently having no necessity to study how to overcome difficulties such as beset their predecessors in their struggles for freedom and progress. Forty years have passed over our heads, and Cobden's great work is but half completed—and, sad to relate, no one is found to finish the work so nobly and so well begun. The Cobden Club—that caricature of the Anti-Corn Law League—contents itself with professions of Free Trade proclivities, having failed to inaugurate any single Free Trade measure worthy of the name. A distinguished member, Mr. Lowe, positively proposed to levy a tax upon matches, in absolute contradiction of the principles which called the club into existence. As far as I know, the right hon. gentleman was never requested to take his name off the books. Even Mr. Gladstone placed Mr. Lowe as Chancellor of the Exchequer, with power to pursue a retrograde policy to that which had gained for himself the confidence of the vast majority of the people. With such examples before us, we must not be surprised if we find that the miserable apology for Free Trade which at present prevails is regarded by the greater number of people as that for which Cobden may be said to have lived and died—a delusion which even a hasty glance at his writings would dissipate in five minutes. Cobden was a real Free Trader. "The man or body of men," said he, "who succeeds in abolishing, in this or any other country, the customs and excise duties, will be its greatest benefactor." This was Cobden's policy, and if a club exist under his honoured name this should be its policy, or the club is simply a mockery and a sham. If the working men and middle class electors were wise—if they knew how unjustly they were taxed—they would form one National League, based on the principles propounded by Cobden, himself a disciple of the immortal Adam Smith, principles founded upon the perfect law of liberty of thought, of labour, of capital, and of commerce. If working men, instead of wasting their means in fruitless attempts to drag from capital its legitimate rewards, would combine to drag from their representatives in Parliament measures by which custom houses and excise offices should become relics of a past and barbarous age, they would lay the foundation of such prosperity as neither this nor any other country has ever known. If they knew that, in this so-called "Free Trade" country, the Government takes



89 millions out of the pockets of the people in order to place 30 millions into the treasury, whilst the balance, 59 millions, goes to make millionaires of a few brewers, distillers, and others, enabling them to build gin palaces by which to demoralise the whole people, they would soon wake up to a trades-union which would command the respect, and obtain the support, of all right-thinking persons. What is wanted is a National League on the basis of universal Free Trade as the first condition of universal peace. The League should take Adam Smith in hand, and fight the question out by the light of his scientific reasoning, spreading his gospel of Free Trade broadcast through the length and breadth of the land, creating an enthusiastic public opinion which no power could withstand. Let it not be supposed that by such a policy the working men would be relieved from all taxation. This is one of the fallacies advanced by enemies of Free Trade in favour of indirect taxation. "The working classes would pay no taxes." Nonsense! They would pay taxes in rent, so that taxation would only stop where pauperism begins.

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Upon my return to England from America, where I had the opportunity of visiting all the best workshops of silverware, electro-plate, and jewellery, I addressed the following letter to "The Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith." Annexed are the comments of the Editor. E. J. W.

### A WORD OF WARNING.

Sir,—It has been asserted that English silver-ware is "held in high estimation abroad." My acquaintance with Board of Trade returns, which are a very fair test of the estimation of foreigners for British productions, leads me to question the truth of this assertion; I feign would believe it, but I cannot. However, one must admit that up to a short time ago such silver plate as was imported into Australia was of British manufacture. I say "up to a short time ago," as, when in America, I made careful inquiries as to whether the trade in silver-ware had made much progress in Sydney, Melbourne, or Adelaide. Of course, I was much interested in discovering whether American manufacturers were endeavouring to supplant us in our own colonies. Again, my brother, who was in Australia in 1875, tells me that he then saw no American plate in any of the stores.

But the thin end of the wedge has since been inserted, and the lever of education, capital, and intelligence has already opened the Australian trade to American enterprise. Travelers have been sent off, and orders have come in. Large chests were being packed, containing goods which I knew well enough would attract buyers (I only wish I could be allowed to sell such goods myself; there would be no difficulty in finding customers); and one saw at a glance that, however much or little English silver-ware was held "in high estimation"



abroad, it would not be held very long in high estimation in Australia.

And now, Sir, the newspapers have told Australians that English silver-ware is not held in high estimation in Paris. By this time, doubtless, our quick-sighted cousins across the Atlantic have notified to their correspondents that American silver-ware has "whipped the world," and it may safely be asserted that, in view of the approaching Australian Exhibition, the workshops of America are busily engaged in the production of goods which they hope may elbow the Britishers out of the market.

But, it may be asked, what are our silversmiths doing? Why, playing into the hands of their American rivals, by putting themselves shoulder to shoulder before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, to prevent the abolition of those "old, antiquated, and mischievous laws" which alone prevent the development of their trade.

And what is our Goldsmiths' Company doing? We have all heard the old story, "What are you doing, John?" "Nothing, sir." "What are you doing, James?" "Helping John, sir." But it is far worse than this. The Goldsmiths' Company at the present time is shoulder to shoulder with the silversmiths, assisting to the best of their power in the work of obstruction! Thus it is that, ere long, we may expect to see the grand prize at the Australian Exhibition handed over to America, and to find our trade with the colony a matter of history, as proved by "closed accounts" in our manufacturers' ledgers.

Yours, &c.,

EDWARD J. WATHERSTON.

*Pall Mall East.*

We can speak from personal experience that American plate is largely supplanting our productions in Australia. Our silver-plate is bought there not on account of its artistic excellence, but because it is English. Some of the colonists like to look upon it, because it reminds them of days long past, of the dear old home. The same class of people buy English cheese, for instance, although an equally good and often better article can be supplied by the colonies at half price. These good old people would never acknowledge that the colonies can match the old country in anything. Cheesemaking, they say, is an old industry in England, and it is not to be expected that "Young Australia" should be able to compete with it. According to such reasoning English silver-plate should be better than American, because the craft existed in England even before the discovery of Columbus. It ought to be, but we regret to say that it is not!—These patrons of our silversmiths are, however, fast dying out, and the rising generation is learning to appreciate beauty and skill independent of origin; in fact, "Young Australia" has a good deal of the Yankee element, it is ever on the alert for novelties and



improvements, and English ways are altogether too slow for them. American firms are largely and influentially represented in Sydney and Melbourne, especially at the latter place, and we may depend that they will lose no opportunity for bringing the excellent wares of their silversmiths prominently before the public. The loyalty of the Australian colonies to the mother country is however such that they would prefer to deal with us, always supposing that we can offer the same advantages as our competitors. We need hardly point out what an immense field wealthy Australia offers to our silversmiths, and the timely warning of Mr. Watherston deserves the most serious consideration.—ED.

During my absence in America, the Select Committee of the House of Commons proceeded with the examination of several important witnesses, among whom may be mentioned Mr. Bedford, the London representative of the Waltham Watch Manufacturing Company, whose evidence was misconstrued by many members of the trade, but more especially by Mr. Prideaux, the Clerk of the Goldsmiths' Company. This gave rise to the following correspondence, and editorial comments:—

*From the WATCHMAKER, JEWELLER, AND SILVERSMITH'S  
TRADE JOURNAL" of October.*

We have been requested to publish the following letter which has been addressed to Sir Henry Jackson, M.P., the chairman of the Select Committee upon hall marking.

New York, October 2, 1878.

Sir,—It has been reported to us that an American gentleman, giving evidence before the Select Committee of which you are chairman, has placed upon record his opinion that American manufacturers would greatly prefer to have a system of compulsory hall marking adopted in their country in imitation of that prevailing in England. Permit us, as the largest manufacturers of silver plate in America, to express our conviction that the English system of compulsory hall marking would be most detrimental to our interests. Nothing can be further from our desire than to have Government interference with our manufacture. We guarantee our wares to be absolutely of the standard of  $\frac{925}{1000}$  pure silver. So well is this fact understood that wherever our sterling silver ware is offered for sale, no question is raised as to the purity of the metal. The success which has attended the exhibit of a well-known American firm at the Paris Exposition is, in a measure, attributable to the absolute freedom from Government control which, happily, prevails upon this side of the Atlantic.

We have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servants,

(Signed.)

GORHAM, MFG. CO.

GORHAM THURBER, *Treasurer.*

To Sir Henry Jackson, Baronet, Q.C., M.P.



*To the Editor of the WATCHMAKER, JEWELLER, AND SILVERSMITH.*

Sir,—Permit us to state a few facts in connection with the “American gentleman’s” evidence before the Select Committee on hall marking, which Mr. Gorham Thurber, of the Gorham Manufacturing Co., Providence, U.S.A., in his letter to Sir Henry Jackson, M.P., has, we believe, inadvertently misrepresented.

He did not state “that American manufacturers would greatly prefer to have a system of *compulsory* hall marking,” and what he did say had no reference whatever to silver-plate.

No question was put to him on the question of hall marking silver-plate; he had nothing to say in relation to it. Watch-cases and silver-plate are distinctive manufactures, the only resemblance is that the metal employed is the same.

He did urge a compulsory distinctive mark on *watch-cases* made for other than English movements, and this in the interest of the English, as well as our own manufacture. Thousands of watches made on the Continent are put into hall marked cases, engraved with English names, and the same thing is done in imitation of our movements.

The honest English maker wants to stop this fraud; so do we; and as the English people will not buy a watch without the case bears the hall mark guaranteeing the standard, he proposed that all foreign watches (our own of course included) shall have stamped on the *case*, the name of the maker of the movement in addition to the Government mark: that is all he had to say about compulsory hall marking.

We imagine Mr. Thurber would be a very warm advocate of hall marking, if like circumstances applied to silver-plate.

Yours very respectfully,

ROBBINS AND APPLETON.

Sir,—The letter of Messrs. Robbins and Appleton, in your last issue, is so far satisfactory that it has removed an impression that the firm would advocate a system of compulsory hall marking in America, or desire to see such a system maintained in this country.

But it is equally certain that Mr. Bedford’s evidence before the Select Committee conveyed that impression; that it was so understood by Mr. Prideaux is to be seen from that gentleman’s evidence; indeed, it may be said that no other construction is possible when Mr. Bedford’s evidence is referred to. Question 1709 is as follows:—

“Your idea is that the distinction of having the hall mark is so advantageous that you wish it established in your own country?” Answer: “We would like to have an American hall mark for the protection of the maker.”



Then turning to Mr. Prideaux's evidence, question 1768; we find the following:—

“One word upon the evidence given by Mr. Alfred Bedford, the gentleman from America; that gentleman gave it as his candid opinion, did he not, that the hall marking system was a good one?” Answer: “He did; I think I heard him say they would desire to have it in America.”

Then follow questions and answers 1769 to 1772, which more clearly prove that Mr. Prideaux is under an impression that the system of compulsory hall marking would find favour in America, such inference being quite as much in the case of silver-ware as in that of watches. What opportunities Mr. Prideaux may have had of forming an opinion relating to the views of Americans upon the hall marking question, it is impossible to say, but I can scarcely believe that his opportunities have been greater than my own, seeing that there is scarcely a manufactory of any importance which I have not personally visited, nor a manufacturer of any note with whom I am not acquainted.

And what is my experience? Simply this, that the system of compulsory hall marking is ridiculed throughout the United States. Furthermore, nothing can be more certain than this, that there is about as much chance of Americans adopting a system of compulsory hall marking as of their having a king! It is rendered impossible by their system of State Government. If they passed such a law in Massachusetts, there would be no reason why such a law should prevail in Pennsylvania; if in New York, it would be wanting in Illinois,—and unless each State barricaded itself with protective duties, and surrounded itself with custom-houses, stopping each train as it passed from one State into another, it is difficult to see how any such law could be maintained. What would result here if we had compulsory hall marking in Kent and free trade in Middlesex, or *vice versâ*? The fact is that the matter is absurd, regarded from any point of view.

I can well understand that so long as we in this country are so foolish as to barricade ourselves behind such foolish legislation, Messrs. Robbins and Appleton will desire to avail themselves of it, so as to be on a level with English manufacturers. Their true interests, however, are freedom.

Yours, &c.,

*Pall Mall East, London,  
December, 1878.*

EDWARD J. WATHERSTON.

#### COMMENTS BY THE EDITOR.

In consequence of misinterpretation of Mr. A. Bedford's (the London representative of the American Watch Company) evidence before the Select Committee on hall marking, the erroneous impression got abroad that a hall mark would find favour in



the United States, and Mr. Prideaux, clerk of the Goldsmiths' Company, actually made such a statement, based upon that gentleman's evidence. Nothing is, however, farther from the intention of the American jewellers and silversmiths than the introduction of a Goldsmiths' Hall; and we have already stated, on the authority of some of the leading members of those trades, that they consider absolute freedom from Government control as essential to their progress and prosperity. We have since received several communications from the United States, expressing astonishment that the representative of a large American firm should have made such a statement on behalf of the precious metal trades of the States; the fact is, however, that Mr. Bedford's evidence has been entirely misunderstood by some, and misapplied by others. A letter in our December issue was intended to show the matter in its true light, but as it does not appear to have removed all false impressions, we are authorised by Mr. Bedford to clearly state the case again.

When we consider the "Watchcase Makers Bill" before the Committee, which excludes the hall marking of foreign watch-cases altogether, we think it but natural that the representative of the largest American concern in the trade should come forward and deem it his duty to oppose such prohibitory measures. This clause in the Bill brought Mr. Bedford before the Select Committee, and *it is to the hall marking of watch-cases alone* that his remarks were intended to refer; in fact, he was at first quite unaware that the Bill embraced any other question. He certainly stated that they (the American Watch Company) would like to have a hall mark for the protection of the maker. This is, however, simply meant for watch cases; and a hall mark corresponding with our own would, no doubt, materially assist that Company, as under present arrangements they are obliged to have the cases sent here to be stamped, and then returned to the States to be finished, a proceeding which must add a considerable per-centage to the cost. The Company does not require a hall mark for the States, as their own name is ample guarantee there for the genuineness of their goods, but they desire a mark for the English market, so as to be on the same footing as English makers. In short, Mr. Bedford was before the Select Committee as the representative of the American Watch Company in the interests of their *English* trade, and not as the spokesman of the jewellers and silversmiths of the United States.

We consider ourselves bound to give this explanation, as the advocates of the present hall marking system place great importance on Mr. Bedford's evidence, and, as already stated, interpreted it to suit their case, although it had not the slightest relation to that subject.



The following articles and letters have appeared in the Press. Particular attention is invited to the letters of "A Struggling Silversmith," "A Licensed Dealer in Silver Plate," "A Working Goldsmith," "A Working Silversmith," and to the article in the "Saturday Review":—

*From the "WATCHMAKER, JEWELLER, AND SILVERSMITH'S  
TRADE JOURNAL" of November 5.*

Manufacturers in many of our staple industries have of late years become painfully aware of American competition; but we doubt whether any of our manufacturing silversmiths ever thought of our transatlantic cousins as rivals in their time-honoured craft. It is, nevertheless, true that a New York firm has carried away the Diploma of Honour for Silverwork at the French Exhibition, an award the justness of which anyone, who has seen the Tiffany display at Paris, and who is not too prejudiced to be able to appreciate anything outside of his own country, must readily admit. It is certainly a startling fact, and may well cause our silverworkers to ponder. One thing is certain, the success which has attended American efforts in this direction is not due to the fostering care of a Goldsmiths' Hall. The silversmiths on the other side of the Atlantic being more practical than sentimental, dispense with such antiquated luxuries; in fact, they look upon perfect freedom of action as essential to the prosperity of their trade. (*Vide* the opinion of the largest silver manufacturing concern in the States, as expressed in a letter to Sir Henry Jackson, Bart., M.P., Chairman of the Select Committee on hall marking, a copy of which letter will be found in another part of this journal.) An attempt was made in one of the States, a few years ago, to impose an Act modelled after our own hall marking laws; but the manufacturers, almost in a body, protested against any such State law, on the grounds that its action would be detrimental to the best interests of the manufacturers of the State. It is thus evident, that although the silversmiths' trade has well taken root in American soil, legislation *à la Prideaux* meets with no encouragement. Fortunately our manufacturers in other branches of industry have come to the sensible conclusion that they must abandon old traditions and keep pace with the times by adopting the principles and methods of their successful rivals, if they do not wish to be extinguished from the commercial world. If the manufacture of silver plate is to remain a British industry the same course must be pursued, and the first step towards emancipating the trade from its present fettered state is the abolition of the oppressive duty and the hampering hall marking system. How is it that we have made such remarkable progress in the furniture, glass, and tapestry trades as evinced by our magnificent shows in Paris, and recognized by the International Juries by the bestowal of Grand Prizes? We need not seek far for an answer. It is because these trades are not handi-



capped with burdensome taxation and the harassing interference of a Trade Protection Society which might more appropriately be termed a Trade Prevention Society. Let us once be freed from these trammels, and the ways and means for elevating the craft and for reinstating it in its proper place among the arts, will not long be wanting.

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From the "SATURDAY REVIEW."

OLD ENGLISH PLATE.\*

It is more than twenty years since Mr. Octavius Morgan published, first in the *Archæological Journal* and afterwards in a small volume, a list of marks on plate. The list was accompanied by some very terse remarks on the whole subject of silver manufacture in England. The book has been long out of print, and its contents appropriated by the literary adventurers who compile from other men's works, and swallow the profits of labour they never performed. It is impossible not to feel the greatest distrust of such publications, yet we have long had no others available for the study of several branches of art, silver among them. It is, therefore, with more than ordinary warmth that the collector will welcome Mr. Cripps's volume, for it bears on the title-page a line saying that its contents are founded upon the papers and tables of Mr. Morgan, and it is dedicated to him as one to whose aid it owes its chief interest. We may regard Mr. Cripps, then, as the expounder and continuator of Mr. Morgan, and may look upon the work before us as something very different from the crude notes and pilferings we find in too many other volumes.

It is well that special attention should be called to English plate. There was a time, now long gone by, when beautiful works were produced by our silversmiths. Some collectors love best the Gothic, some the Renaissance style; but both flourished here in their day, and both, we regret to say, are now extinct, or nearly so. As in all other branches of art manufacture, time rather than taste and knowledge is wanting. A silversmith cannot devote himself to the work of chasing and embossing with finish and care, because by some electro process it is easy to imitate or forge in less than half the time. The buyer does not care for good work. Paul Lamerie would starve in the London of to-day. His best patterns would be pirated, and the public would prefer the copy to the original. In silverwork more than anything else we look to the amateur designer; but, except in a few rare instances, he fails us. People who can afford to invest in table silver think only of the number of ounces employed, and are as well

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\* *Old English Plate, its Makers and Marks.* By Wilfred Joseph Cripps. London: John Murray. 1878.



satisfied with a badly modelled group after Landseer, or a jug on which the woodcut of a yacht race is reproduced, as they would be if their silver was modelled by Cellini himself. In one of the abortive exhibitions held a few years ago in the hot galleries which adjoin the conservatory of the Horticultural Gardens, there was a melancholy show of modern plate. Few people saw it, in all probability; and we do not remember that it was noticed in the newspapers, though many thousands of pounds' worth of bad designs were exhibited. A visitor who believed in the vitality of English art could not find a single specimen which he would have taken or given as a present, and declared that he would have preferred to the best "cup" or "group" as much unworked metal in a lump. There has been a little improvement in later years, but the demand for what is good must come from the buyer. As long as he prefers Milton shields and Doré tazzas the art of the silversmith will remain what it is.\*

The great art of forging marks is of modern invention. Mr. Cripps has much to say about it. He gives in full the provisions of the statute against it, and discusses the cases of several offenders who have been tried and convicted for transferring dies from one article to another. But the modern forger "often scorns to be at the trouble of transposing or adding, call it what you will, genuine old hall-marks to modern plate. He boldly fashions antique plate, marks and all." Here Mr. Cripps sounds a little note of triumph. The forger has had recourse to the pirated lists of marks, and our author, with his superior knowledge, is able to detect both at one glance. The "inquirer finds in nine cases out of ten that the forger has not learnt his lesson thoroughly"; or else the published lists "have, by their very inaccuracies, proved pitfalls for those who have used them for purposes of fraud." As an example, he tells us of a living amateur who saw in a shop, conspicuously labelled, a pair of Queen Anne candlesticks "bearing what purported to be a well-known maker's mark." Upon examination, however, he found that the date mark was of a year much earlier than that in which this particular manufacturer flourished. In another case, two specimens of the same period marked ten years apart, and with the initials of different makers, were found to have been forged in the same house, by the mere chance of a defective tool having been used on both. Even should the collector avoid such traps, he may yet be taken in if in a weak moment he divulges his desire for some particular period or pattern. Mr. Cripps instances a coffee-pot of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a thing which manifestly never existed. The coffee-pot will certainly be forthcoming at the hands of some fortunate agent, so true it is that supply meets demand, and will have been "formed of the sloping body of an ordinary chalice of a

\* Here I thoroughly disagree with the premises of the writer of this article. Demand does not precede supply; on the contrary, supply oftentimes creates demand. E. J. W.



well-known type in those days, turned bottom upwards to get the slope the right way, and fitted with a foot and lid, handle and spout of suitable fashion, the position of the hall marks upside down in a row round the lower part of the pot revealing to the uninitiated the ingenious adaptation." The position of hall marks will often guide the wary amateur who knows the rule by which they are placed, and can detect an alteration by their unusual position.

The whole subject of marks, indeed, has never before been so well and so fully treated. For example, not one of the articles presented by Archbishop Parker to Corpus Christi College has hitherto had its right date assigned to it. The earliest article noticed as bearing a mark is a spoon given by Henry VI., together with his boots and gloves, to Sir Ralph Pudsey, on which a heart in outline is stamped. An engraving is given of this interesting relic, of the genuineness of which there is no doubt. The head of the handle is hexagonal, and the flat top is engraved with the rose of Lancaster. Inside the bowl is the leopard's head, with which all old spoons were marked before 1660. The heart is the maker's device, and occurs on the stem; and the annual letter, a Lombardic *h*, is just above it. This agrees with the date and history of the spoon, and points to the year 1446; for this, the first known alphabet, began in 1438. The next examples are at least fourteen years later—a chalice and paten at Nettlecombe Church, in Somersetshire. They are of silver gilt, and exquisite in design. The chalice is nearly six inches in height, the paten nearly five in width. They were engraved for the Society of Antiquaries some years ago, when Mr. Morgan read a paper on them; and, being of very distinctly perpendicular design, have been largely used as patterns by the modern makers of Church plate. The centre of the paten presents an interesting and unusual feature in a small silver plate inserted from the back, on which is enamelled a "Vernicle," surrounded by a cruciform nimbus. From the sacred monogram on the back, of unmistakably English work, this precious little enamel would seem to be of native manufacture. The date mark is a B. A chalice or cup at Gatcombe, in the Isle of Wight, bears the next letter of this same alphabet C, after which there is a long blank till 1481, when the D of a new alphabet occurs on a cup, the "Anathema Cup," belonging to Pembroke College, Cambridge. Thus, slowly picking their way, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Cripps have identified here and there a few pieces, only eight in all, of silver work undoubtedly made before the end of the fifteenth century. In the list of marked specimens Mr. Cripps condescends to notice the mistakes of the more prominent compilers, so that readers who had already, before this volume came out, become possessed of one of the others, can now easily correct it. The tardy appearance of this book is, indeed, amply atoned for by its comparative completeness.

We have hardly mentioned the excellent engravings. They



supply a set of patterns which we fear will be only too extensively used by modern makers deficient in originality. It would almost seem as if the last great artist in silver in England was Paul Lamerie, who flourished in the reign of George II. One of his works, a ewer preserved at the Goldsmiths' Hall, is represented in the frontispiece; and others occur in the body of the book. "Much of the beautiful work which bears his mark must have been executed by his own hand," for it appears by his will that he only employed two workmen. Shortly after his death, in 1751, a few very fine pieces were produced, possibly under the influence of his genius. One such piece, a cup of large size, was made in 1771 for presentation to Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor, on his liberation from the Tower, to which, in the famous controversy about warrants, he had been committed by the House of Commons. It has on one side a high relief, admirably wrought, giving views of many of the City buildings from the Tower to the Mansion House, and is further ornamented with three medallion portraits of Brass Crosby himself and his fellow-sufferers, Wilkes and Oliver. Wilkes is in three-quarter face, and has the famous squint immortalized by Hogarth. Such a piece is of historical as well as artistic value, and the art bestowed upon it is worthy of the occasion; but, though commemorative plate is one of the most common of presentations, we cannot recall another example worthy of mention. The miserable design and worse modelling of some of the most magnificent and costly services is subject of regret with all who would like to see modern work surpassing the old. Mr. Cripps is hopeful on the subject; but it is with silver as it is with many other kinds of art manufacture, such as ivory carving and, till lately, glass-making—first-rate artists cannot afford to give it their time. The great revival of true art in ceramics is a hopeful sign for other manufactures. In moulding and blowing glass there has been a great advance. In cutting it, as in chasing silver, although our workmen are among the best in the world, they are at a loss for good designs; and we have heard that in the best cut glass from England exhibited at Paris the design was not even original, but was borrowed from the Portland vase or the frieze of the Parthenon. There is little doubt that a competent designer who was also himself a practical silversmith, like Paul de Lamerie, could command prices which would pay him. We have no place for the exhibition of good work of the kind. The Royal Academy would probably turn up their noses at the idea of placing a teapot in the Sculpture-room. At Paris, on the other hand, great encouragement is given to silver working, and plate, as well as wood and ivory carvings, paintings on china, and gem cutting, are annually in the Salon. A single design for something of the kind was in the last Academy; not in silver, however, but in plaster.



*From "ENGINEERING."*

### HALL MARKING OF GOLD AND SILVER.

Though the Select Committee appointed for the purpose last session were not able to draw up a report on "the operation of the Acts relating to the hall marking of gold and silver manufactures," they have, by publishing the evidence taken before them, put on record a good deal of interesting information. They were lucky enough to have before them advocates of opinions the most opposite. Mr. Watherston, the jeweller of Pall Mall, opened the proceedings, and Mr. T. H. Farrer, the permanent secretary of the Board of Trade, closed them. Both these gentlemen are ardent Free Traders, and had nothing but ill to say of the protective action of hall-marks. Mr. Watherston argued against their practical results, and Mr. Farrer inveighed against them in principle. The latter gentleman indeed treated the Committee to an extremely clever and lucid account of the way in which the practice had grown up, and proved with utmost clearness of logic that Goldsmiths' Hall and all its belongings were a mere relic of a barbarous age, which ought at once to be swept away by the reforming broom of modern legislation. Between these two gentlemen, however, the first and last witnesses examined, came a solid phalanx of obstructionists, manufacturers, dealers, and officials, who stood manfully up for their ancient rights, and could not see how trade could be carried on for a moment if those rights were once tampered with.

To speak the truth, it was evident that a bitter feud existed in the once united fraternity of goldsmiths and silversmiths. Certain of the trade had taken upon them to endeavour to root up the ancient landmarks, and thence a natural indignation among the rest. Mr. Watherston evidently has the courage of his opinions, and he found fault with the system itself, the manner in which it was carried out, the officials concerned in carrying it out, in fine with everything and everybody connected with it. The other side denied his deductions one after the other. Mr. Garrard, Mr. Prideaux (the clerk to the Goldsmiths' Company), Mr. Barnard, the well-known manufacturing silversmith, one of the partners of Messrs. Dents, and a number of other manufacturers, were all on the conservative side, though nearly all admitted that, in one direction or another, there was room for improvement.

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*From the "WATCHMAKER," "JEWELLER," AND "SILVERSMITH."*

Our readers will be pleased to hear that the "Gold Medal" for jewellery has been awarded to Mr. John Brogden, of Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Referring to Mr. Edward Watherston's letter, in another column, we may be permitted to



remark that Mr. Brogden's well-merited success is another argument in favour of the abolition of compulsory hall marking of silver plate. For that trade which is still hampered by its connection with the Goldsmiths' Company, which is often governed by a Court of Warders "wholly unacquainted with the modern requirements of the craft," has been ignominiously beaten in "design, workmanship, and finish;" whereas the trade in gold wares, which happily is not under the control of the wiseacres of Foster Lane, has met with the success which results from freedom of action and wholesome competition.

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*From the "CLERKENWELL PRESS."*

We have already in these columns dealt at length with the subject of hall marks, and have striven to show the serious defects and existing evils with which the present practice abounds. At a time when the Select Committee of the House of Commons is sitting to consider the subject it is of the utmost importance that the matter should be thoroughly ventilated and put before the public in an intelligible manner. The Act as it now stands does not afford the public the desired protection, and is, at the same time, injurious to the trade. The principle laid down in the hall marking Act is that *all* gold wares should be marked excepting where by the *nature* of the wares a mark *could not* be set without injury to the article. This is the right construction of the Act. The Goldsmiths' Company, however, have fallen into the error of confounding the terms "conditionally" and "unconditionally." The Act exempted gold wares from hall marking only conditionally when they would not bear the marks. The Company exempted them absolutely and unconditionally, though it were a plain matter of fact that they would bear the marks, and thus they made the Act to stultify itself. They could not deny, any more than we who are now living can deny, that the Act in the preamble declares that all gold wares shall be marked (Sec. 1), with the exception of jewellers' works, night earring wires, mourning rings, and gold springs of lockets (Sec. 2); yet they acted in such a way as to make the Act of Parliament nugatory, and totally inoperative for the purposes for which it was designed, and we ourselves have perpetuated the anomaly until the present time. The result of all this is, that custom has superseded law, and that what is being done now, and has been done for many years past, is not according to law, but according to custom, and now cannot be altered; nor, indeed, is it desirable that it should be. No one wants to see compulsory hall marking, either with or without Government duty, applied to gold wares. Unrestricted freedom has been too long enjoyed by the manufacturers for them ever to submit to the inconvenience of compulsory hall marking, or, to



the still greater oppression of a Government duty; but that is the very reason why the Goldsmiths' Company should seek to get rid of an Act of Parliament which has been so completely set at naught, and the provisions of which, neither they, nor their ancestors for so long a time, have been able to carry out in its integrity.

It will surely appear plainly enough from the above that hall marking as it is now practised does not carry out the intention of the Legislature.

To partly recapitulate let us remember that whereas the law relating to the hall marking, and the exempting from hall marking of gold wares is the statute of 12 Geo. II. cap. 26, the principle is that all wares of whatever kind soever that would bear the marks were to be marked, and such wares *only* as would *not* bear the marks were to be exempted from the necessity of being marked. Now, the difficulty of deciding this question naturally led to perpetual conflicts between the trade and the Goldsmiths' Company, the result of which has been the gradual but now universal exemption from hall marking of every kind of gold ornament whatsoever for the person, and which does not bear the denomination of gold plate, wedding rings being the only exception. This is, in effect, the legal status of the "voluntary hall marking" of gold wares now existing — a privilege founded on *custom* and having the force of law, but which, in our opinion, the trade should, while the Select Committee is sitting, strive to convert into law by a new statute, of which the following is a rough draft:—"Be it enacted, therefore, that from and after the passing of this Act, nothing in the Act of 12 Geo. II. cap. 26, or in the 7th and 8th Vic. cap. 22, shall extend to *oblige to be hall marked* any gold wares whatsoever," and this without any exception. Be it enacted also that from and after the passing of this Act, only two qualities of gold shall be hall marked under the now legalised system of voluntary hall marking, viz., those of 22 and 18 carats fineness, and that the qualities of 9, 12, and 15 carats shall be no longer hall marked."

This would certainly deal effectually with the existing anomalies, and be not only a great benefit to the trade but a boon to the whole of the public.

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*From the "CLERKENWELL PRESS."*

The past session has, indeed, been barren in respect to what may be conveniently called domestic legislation, and it is much to be feared that the coming Parliament will be too much convulsed by the throes of its approaching dissolution to busy itself over much with the solid but sober subjects of the hall mark and the duties on silver and gold plate. Not long since the



Report was published of the Select Committee appointed last session to inquire into the operation of existing acts, and also to consider the Watch Cases hall marking Bill. The Committee met frequently during the session, but could not agree as to a report. As a natural consequence, all that could be done was to publish the evidence, and request the reappointment of the Committee next session. The evidence in the Blue Book before us is most voluminous, and certainly covers the ground well. Among the principal witnesses were Mr. E. J. Watherston, Mr. Walter Prideaux, the clerk of the Goldsmiths' Company, Mr. Garrard, of the firm of that name, Mr. Garnett, of the Inland Revenue Office, Mr. E. J. Poynter, R.A., Mr. T. H. Farrer, of the Board of Trade, and several others. It is unfortunate that Blue Books are not as a rule regarded as popular reading. Their repellant bulk and the official character imparted by their very binding, all combine to render their perusal repugnant to the average public. It is decidedly a pity that this is so in very many cases, as Blue Books very frequently are truly replete with invaluable information for the people, but they seldom unite entertainment with utility. We have seen Blue Book dialogues of quite a dramatic pungency and have met with descriptions of facts quite as horrid as anything in the penny dreadfuls.

In the present instance, however, the evidence is unquestionably of vital interest to the trade at large, and we wish it could be fully popularized. It is, as we have ever urged in these columns, of the utmost consequence that the whole subject should be fully discussed and settled once for all. The question of hall marking, like that of the duties on silver and gold plate, is in reality national, and viewed in its industrial and artistic respect it is of great consequence to the community at large. We think that in the evidence now for the first time concentrated in a book-form that the whole subject may be fully understood by an outsider, and if this be so, it is needless to add that the trade has now no excuse for not being fully posted up in the *pros* and *cons* of hall marking. Our own views on the subject remain clear and fixed as ever, and we shall not cease to urge on the trade the necessity for promptly taking steps for removing an incubus which is altogether an evil incapable of justification. Meanwhile, as many of our readers are not familiar with the Report to which we refer above, we propose in a future issue to deal at some length with the actual evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons during the past session.

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*From the "SHEFFIELD DAILY INDEPENDENT" of October.*

The American correspondent of that paper wrote as follows:—  
In the *Independent* of September 30th I saw a letter from Edward J. Watherston, of London, upon his recent visit to the United



States. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Watherston during his stay in this city, and, judging from what I then saw of him, I was a little astonished to find him come out with such a strong statement against the manufacturers of silver ware in England. It is, however, most gratifying to find a man in the trade having the courage to come out boldly and, in unvarnished language, relate the extraordinary progress made in this branch of trade in the United States during the past few years. There is no doubt that everything said by Mr. Watherston is perfectly true. The superiority and economy in a silversmith's workshop in America is apparent the moment you enter it. The convenience and assistance afforded to designers by having light comfortable quarters, an excellent library, and a number of models which *they must avoid*, is of immense importance. Under such circumstances a workman is inspired to aim after something new and original, and not be content with a fiddle, king's or queen's pattern all his life. Perhaps these patterns suit the conservative English people, but do they suit the Canadian, Australian, and Indian markets? It is very well to force old ideas upon your own people who are at present compelled to swallow them, but it is impossible to do so in other markets, where, in consequence of the conceit of British manufacturers, you are each year slowly but surely being surpassed by foreign rivals. In proof of this, as far as the silver trade is concerned, you have only to look at the amount of silver upon which duty has been paid in England, say since 1855. In that year it was 994,360 ounces; in 1861 it was 893,493 ounces; in 1875 it was 886,493; in 1876 it was 870,507 ounces; and in 1877 it has fallen to 798,206 ounces, thus showing a steady decline during the past 23 years. If, during this time, a period of business depression and financial distress had been upon Great Britain, some satisfactory explanation might be given; but, according to Mr. Newmarch, we are told that she has enjoyed singular prosperity, and has enormously increased her national wealth; yet, in face of all this, an old and very important branch of her trade has declined by no less an amount than 196,154 ounces, equal to a wholesale trade of £100,000 a year. Now why is this? It would be well for your manufacturers to look into the cause, and to satisfy themselves whether it arises from the cost of taxation and hall marking, or whether because the patterns are so old fashioned and quite out of date. Not only would it be well for your silversmiths to look into the question, but I would make the same suggestion to manufacturers of electro-plated ware. Already the demand in Canada is extensive for American spoons, forks, and hollow ware. In Australia it is increasing. In South America there is a good trade, and in other foreign markets no stone is left unturned to build up a trade. To say that American electro-plate is not equal to English is all nonsense. If enough silver is added it is equal in every respect, and can be



burnished as highly. The white metal is superior to your Britannia metal, because it is whiter and does not dint ; it is almost as hard as German silver, and the colour is far better. There are houses here which get up illustrated catalogues equal to the finest ever produced by James Dixon and Sons, and have unlimited means and enterprise at their command.

In the same issue this letter appeared :—

Sir,—The hardworking silversmith in England has cause to be extremely grateful to Mr. Edward Watherston for his honest endeavours to release his trade from the bonds of so foolish a tax as that from which it suffers to-day. Mr. Watherston truly observes that the tax is a hindrance to art in the silversmiths' trade. Such, Sir, is the truth, which the following fact will show:—I have in front of me, in my workshop, three old Wedgwood teapots, the designs of which I consider very beautiful, but I cannot possibly make these articles without sinking several pounds in duty, and, more important still, in the event of these articles, when made, not being quite so salable as I expected, I cannot go to Goldsmiths' Hall and say, "Here is my teapot. I thought it would be a success, but it is a failure. I cannot sell it. Please return me the duty paid upon it." This, Sir, is the hindrance which I think Mr. Watherston wishes to point out to the public. In America, if a manufacturer should find, after making any given piece of silver work, and after having given it a fair trial he has not the good fortune to sell it, he at once melts it, sacrificing the labour expended upon it, but I, an English manufacturer, must, under similar circumstances, melt the duty as well. Is this not a good reason why I hesitate to produce artistic teapots? I should not mind the loss of my time, but I am not rich enough to lose the money paid for duty as well as work.

I most heartily hope that when the Select Committee sit again they will bear in mind it is from poor working silversmiths that they are most likely to obtain facts, and not from rich manufacturers who can afford to leave matters to remain as they are.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

A STRUGGLING SILVERSMITH.

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*From the "CLERKENWELL PRESS."*

Offensive as the assertion may seem to some, there can be no doubt but that the whole system of hall marking and of levying duties in gold and silver, are simply relics of mediæval days and of feudal oppression. The enactments, indeed, which so hamper the various great industries connected with precious metals and precious stones are akin in truth to those sumptuary regulations which once were all-powerful in keeping certain sections asunder in society, and, however suitable or even necessary such may have been in olden times, they are really



obsolete now, and the persistence in their enactment is a persistence in what is utterly repugnant to the spirit of the times. The hall mark is rather a snare than a security to the public, and could only be made any way effective by the institution of a numerous staff of inquisitors who should have unlimited powers to visit and search every working and every retail jewellers' establishment and test all articles found on the premises. This is evidently impracticable, and if it were at all practicable would never be submitted to in this country. Now, what would be thought if the Government were to levy a duty on furniture manufacturers and insist on stamping the different woods to protect the public against buying stained pine for satin wood, &c? In truth it has ever been found in actual practice that Governmental interference with any staple industry invariably tends to cripple the full development of the industry it seeks to foster, while those vocations which remain unfettered by the "constituted" authorities alone flourish and reach the natural limits of a free and healthy growth. A trade mark is in all ways a different matter. It is a man's own. It covers what he submits to the world as excellent, and if he attempts to palm off what is inferior at a high price, competition rises immediately in retributive form, and brings him to book much more surely than any available plan of fiscal inspection could ever do. Then, again, under a free system, the public know that caution must be exercised in certain transactions, and as a general rule do exercise that caution. At present—take a simple case—a person buys a ring. It is hall marked, says the vendor. That is enough, thinks the purchaser. It may be merely rubbish, but then it is hall marked, and, of course, he cannot be cheated in the face of what is equivalent to a Government stamp. Suppose, however, there were no such thing as a hall mark; well then the purchaser would simply require a written description that the article was gold of such a value, and in nearly every case even a trader wishing to defraud would hesitate if he had to give such a warranty. We do not need to have a Government stamp on our tea and sugar when we deal with the grocer. Yet on the hall mark principle it is quite requisite, so as to ensure us against being supplied with sand or British herbs. Let those of our readers who are interested in this great subject ponder well over these remarks of ours. There is more than many may care to acknowledge in the arguments we have here indicated, and we trust that by degrees a right understanding of the subject may be promoted among those who to a great extent have the issue in their power. We don't mean to desist from our assault on an obsolete, musty old feudal piece of useless protection, as it is termed, until we have seen it swept away as completely as some other relics of a barbarous age have been.

Summed up in two words the great present want of the nation is sound common-sense legislation directed to those domestic and



industrial matters that are notoriously in need of reform. Especially is this the case, as we have often demonstrated in these columns, with respect to the laws relative to the great gold and silver industries of the kingdom—laws which have little at the best to recommend or justify them other than a slavish submission to “authority,” and an increasing enthusiasm for ancient things, not at all because they are good or even expedient now, but simply because they are very old. It was, indeed, this servile worship of that which is musty for the sake of mustiness that prompted the well-known maxim:—

“*Plura faciunt homines e consuetudine quam e ratione;*”

or as it has been Englished:—

“Men more by custom than thro’ reason act.”

Certainly, however much “custom” may go to justify the existing laws relative to hall marking, there is now but little reason in the matter. We have the evil, as we consider it, of these statutes again brought very prominently under our notice by the fact that the wardens of the Goldsmiths’ Company have issued a very formidable notice to the gold and silver plate trade. They solemnly recall notice to the circular they issued with reference to foreign plate in December last, and are at the pains of reprinting the various clauses from the cumbersome Acts of Parliament that bear on the subject. This is, however, far from being all. They utter in ponderous periods and in large type a “warning” to the trade, and remind us that they “have been compelled to institute proceedings against several persons, the result of which has been the recovery of penalties in every case.” More than this the wardens further notify to the trade and dealers generally that they are bound by law, and in the interests alike of the trade and of the public, to deal with every case brought under their notice, in which any infringement of the Acts of Parliament relative to gold and silver wares shall have taken place, and that they will not hesitate to put in force the powers vested in them by taking such steps as may be deemed necessary for the purpose. After these warnings the Acts of Parliament are obligingly recapitulated, and the trade is left to infer that the Company now means to be very strict indeed. There can be little doubt but the enforcement of any essentially obsolete and now objectionable statute is an excellent way to ensure its prompt repeal. Only this week, at Banbury, we believe a dealer has been fined some twelve or fourteen pounds for dealing in silver plate without a license, and in various forms we may doubtless look for quite a crop of legal prosecutions in support of the special enactments which are so erroneously supposed by some to be beneficial either to the trade or to the nation. Let us have by all means fair play and free trade in all things. The Goldsmiths’ Company considered from an archaic or even æsthetic view point is admirable enough and highly respectable; but directly it meddles with the contemporary pro-



gress of a trade striving hard to keep abreast with a liberal and enlightened age, the venerable fathers who guide its councils are apt to blunder. We have nothing at all to say against an institution so venerable and enriched with such interesting historical reminiscences; we do but say let the Company preserve in all ways its archaic character; let it remain a subject for contemplative admiration, and carefully abstain from exercising legislative functions for which it is really essentially unfitted. The gauntlet of defiance, however, is now in a sense flung down to the trade and "dealers." Who will take it up?

### HALL MARKING OF JEWELLERY.

*To the Editor of the "CLERKENWELL PRESS."*

Sir,—The report of the Select Committee informs us that one of the principal witnesses, Mr. James Garrard, of the Haymarket, advocated a compulsory system of hall marking of jewellery. I wonder whether Mr. Garrard really meant what he said. It is difficult to understand how anyone presumably acquainted with the trade can have offered such a recommendation. If hall marking were rendered a compulsory institution in Clerkenwell or Birmingham, thousands of workmen and workwomen would be thrown out of employment, our colonial trade would be stopped and handed over *en bloc* to America, and numerous firms now employing hundreds of hands would be ruined. This would be the result if Mr. Garrard's advice were adopted. Hall marking of jewellery being now a voluntary proceeding, it is open to Mr. Garrard to avail himself of it to any extent he may feel disposed. But it is well known in the trade that his firm do not avail themselves of it. Doubtless, the high character of the firm renders a hall mark upon one of their bracelets a matter of indifference to their customers. It would be the same in the case of silver plate. A "Garrard" teapot would commend itself to the Duke of A, or the Marquis of B, just as well without as with a hall mark. Why, therefore, should it be a compulsory institution? Heaven forbid that hall marking of jewellery should ever become such!

I am, &c.,

A MANUFACTURING GOLDSMITH.

### FREE TRADE IN SILVER PLATE.

Sir,—I don't know whether the gentlemen of the trade who met at St. James' Hall, and who talked so loudly about the "high estimation" in which English silver plate is held abroad, will care to hear what the working silversmiths think about the matter. I and my shopmates who have been for many months



working on short time, not making more than three days a week, think very often about it, and we thank you, Sir, for taking the question in hand. Mr. Edward Watherston is a true friend to us working men, and time will show that he is in the right. He has his opinions, and the courage to express them. I have read his evidence before the Select Committee, and all I can say is that it compared very favourably with that of Mr. Thomas, Mr. Garrard, and Mr. Barnard, who ought to have lived 150 years ago, to judge by their opinions. Mr. Farrer's evidence is the best as far as I can see, and working silversmiths who can read, and think as well as read, would do well to study it. He clearly points out what nonsense hall marking really is, and no sensible man will ever think that taxation of his trade can help him to get a living.

I believe, Sir, that if a petition were sent round the workshops, it would be signed by all the working silversmiths in London, at all events, by all who are not under the thumb of the masters.

I am, &c.

A WORKING SILVERSMITH.

Sir,—In these days of technical education and art workmanship, when men produce chains and other objects of the goldsmith's art laying claim to some beauty, it is discouraging to find one's best efforts neutralized by the too frequent and emphatic indentation of the Goldsmiths' hall mark. Just imagine the name "Cubitt" struck across the face of the tinted Venus, and again across the bosom of that marble beauty, to certify the stone was genuine carrara! Yet this is what the Goldsmiths' Hall has been, and is, doing, too frequently certifying to the standard of the gold but mutilating the workmanship. I have seen chains returned from the Hall in so pitiable a condition that the face of the maker who had to restore them, turned pale at the sight, and was a silent remonstrance against officialism, whose name is obdurance. I have also heard other remonstrances, less silent, but no less eloquent, the repetition of which I dare not even whisper. Is there no way by which the executive at Goldsmiths' Hall can discharge their obligations and foster art workmanship at the same time? In fact, is not the fostering of art workmanship their principal obligation?

I am, &c.,

A WORKING GOLDSMITH.

*From the "CLERKENWELL PRESS" of October.*

Sir,—As a manufacturing goldsmith, I must say I cannot understand how it is that manufacturing silversmiths prefer to be taxed and hindered in the exercise of their business. As far as I understand their opinions, I believe that they are ready to



petition Parliament to maintain all the laws relating to the excise, the licensing, and the hall mark; the latter they desire as "a protection to the public." I deal in an article called gold, a commodity fourteen times dearer than silver. Surely the public ought to be protected in their purchases of gold, if they require such protection in the purchase of silver goods, and yet, as far as I am aware, goldsmiths have no desire for a duty upon their goods, or for a system of compulsory hall marking. That they think the charge of five pounds and fifteen shillings for a license, an unjust tax, I am assured, from an intimate knowledge of the trade. Silver is taxed and electro-plate is free, gold watches are taxed by means of a system of compulsory hall marking; aluminium watches are free. How should I feel if my eighteen carat gold jewellery were taxed, and if imitation jewellery were free? I should petition Parliament to take the tax off my goods.

I am, &c.,

A MANUFACTURING GOLDSMITH.

*From the "TIMES" of November 7.*

Sir,—Free Traders would better understand their Protectionist and reciprocity friends if they would propound a definite scheme for taxing foreign manufactured goods in the manner suggested by "An English Producer" in the *Times* of to-day. Let us understand what they propose to do. As far as I am aware, reciprocity theorists have, as yet, contented themselves with hypothetical statements. Why do not they come to the front and say what they mean? Do they wish to have a tax upon imported iron girders, and thus to raise the price of building? Do they desire what they call a "reciprocity" duty upon American cotton goods, or cutlery, or upon French silk, and thus to raise the price of shirts, knives, and silk dresses? Are we consumers to tax ourselves in order to protect Coventry or Clerkenwell watchmakers or Birmingham jewellers? Are we to tax one another for the sake of one another? If this be the recipe for a general revival of trade, let us prepare to swallow the Protectionist pill at once. But, Sir, "An English Producer" is very wrong in supposing that his advice will be taken; "the remedy would be worse than the disease."

I am, &c.,

FREE-TRADER.

Sir,—Sufficient, I think, has been evidenced to show that the duty is a decided clog, and that some alteration should take place in the present system of marking. To support argument of this character it is as well to remember both sides of the question. The public, as the purchasers, "from habit," put a certain value on the mark, and many learn to distinguish between the provincial and London stamping, but the majority are indifferent



in the matter, and buy silver goods with exactly the same judgment as they do jewellery, cabinets, dresses, and other requirements; the ruling feature is the most and best for their money. Taking the other view of the case, how easy it is to show that public marking is to the trade (manufacturing especially) a decided and almost full stop to production. "Bosh," say some of my critics. "How?" First, then, why is manufactured silver mixed up so much when jewellery can be melted down again and again? Simply because one has a stamp on and the other has not. Why is there not a great second-hand jewellery and precious stone trade in proportion to the second-hand silver ditto? Why because there is no mark upon them to give a fictitious value, and no duty by which they can be so lightly handicapped against the to-day made wares. I once thought that the compulsory marking system was perfect, but common sense and second thoughts, I am afraid, are best. The very anxiety to get old things botched and propped up so that they can be sold "just once more," for the twentieth time, is sufficient argument against the semblance of a mark that the worn-out old rubbish retains, under what right? On this point, all that are connected with and are interested in the manufacture of silver plate, may be permitted to say a word,—“by what right” has silver to carry with it a kind of stamped lease to perpetuate its salable life beyond the normal existence of other kindred manufactures?

I am, &c.,

J. C. MAIN.

### THE DRAWBACK ON SILVER PLATE.

Sir,—Mr. James Garrard informed the Select Committee of the House of Commons that it was his practice to send for the Custom-house officers to the Haymarket when he had plate to be exported.

Perhaps Mr. Garrard would kindly confer a favour upon the trade by informing them (1) where he applies for his accommodation, and (2) what extra payment he has to make by “tips,” or otherwise, for the services of these officials. It would be interesting to learn whether they have called to wish him “a merry Christmas, and a happy new year.”

I may add that I have been 40 years engaged in the trade, but up to the time of reading Mr. Garrard’s evidence, I had never heard of this privilege.

Possibly it may be found to be a perquisite of “the Crown Silversmith,” under some old Act of Parliament. It is evident that Mr. Watherston had never heard of it, and as his father is on the Court of the Goldsmiths’ Company, one is led to imagine that the practice referred to by Mr. Garrard is not very general in its application.

I am, &c.,

A SILVERSMITH.



*From the "SHEFFIELD DAILY TELEGRAPH," of October.*

Sir,—The public in general are unaware of the fact that any given piece of silver plate made out of England, however fine in quality, and notwithstanding a heavy duty has been paid on admission into this country by the importer, is prohibited, by existing antiquated and foolish laws, from being exposed for sale. Such, however, Sir, is the truth, and such is the mandate which has lately been sent forth from a corporation composed of a body of men flourishing under the denomination of "The Goldsmiths' Company." In order that the article may be in a fit state to be offered by any licensed dealer it has to undergo a process of marking and assaying, which being carried out in a clumsy fashion renders it necessary that it be sent to Goldsmiths' Hall in an unfinished state, in order that the damage done to the piece by scraping may be rectified. Therefore any article, however beautiful in design, would have to be imported in a half finished state, and after the dose of scraping, assaying, and marking had been administered, would then have to be re-exported, finished in its own native workshop, and finally re-imported, and duty again paid; then, and not until then, is it pronounced fit and proper, by the existing laws for sale in this country. The question having repeatedly been put to me by inquirers as to—"Why do you not simply send the article in question to Goldsmiths' Hall and get it marked?" proves that buyers are perfectly ignorant of the difficulties and obstacles in the way of dealers doing what they would be only too willing to do. The Goldsmiths' Company are ignorant, or are unwilling to take the trouble to learn, that, by means of a touch-stone, it is perfectly possible to ascertain whether the quality of any given piece of silver plate be the desired standard. This process would not in the slightest degree injure the article; a piece of silver ware could then be imported, finished ready for sale, and sent to Goldsmiths' Hall, and if it answered the touch-stone would be then good enough to receive the sanction of the law for sale. It appears, indeed, a strange thing that the Government first of all enforces and accepts a duty of 1s. 6d. per ounce on all silver plate imported into the country, and then denies the right to the dealer of honestly disposing of the same. Does the Government labour under the idea that the importer desires to pickle the consignment? If a dealer may not sell foreign plate, why should Messrs. Christy and Manson and other auctioneers be permitted the honour? Does this restriction benefit the buyer or the English manufacturer? Most certainly the latter; but at the same time it diminishes the benefit to the former by restricting the choice of selection. This being the case, legislation should be enacted for the many and not for the few. Competition whets emulation, and the result would be a decided improvement in design of silver plate in this country. The gentlemen forming



the Goldsmiths' Company are only to blame in that they adhere to statutes passed for bygone ages and not for to-day. It is not to be wondered at that such little interest should be taken by them in matters materially affecting the trade, seeing that the governing body is formed by a majority of men in no way connected with the craft. By giving publicity to the above truths you will confer a benefit upon a large body of hardworking men, who, allow me to say, assist in paying rates and taxes, and therefore to whom the nation to a certain extent looks for support.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

LICENSED DEALER IN SILVER PLATE.

