

EDITORIAL

FARMERS' FREE LIST BILL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LEAVING aside the jokes that Mr. Mann, the Republican leader in the House of Representatives, cracked at the expense of the Farmers' Free List bill, many of the points he scored were excellent.

Mr. Mann demanded from the Democrats who pushed the bill a definition of a number of terms—

What is "prepared cereal," does it include or exclude distilled rye?

What are "agricultural implements"—do they include horticultural implements; market garden implements; mowing machines, wheelbarrows and axes?

What are "farm wagons and farm carts"—will the Treasury Department refuse consent to the farmer's using in town the wagon or cart imported for farm use?

The points are well taken against a Democracy that attempts "scientific treatment" of so utterly unscientific a thing as "tariffs." The points are well taken against the Democratic posture of a "tariff for revenue," as tho' the absurdity of tariffs could be rendered rational by any qualification whatever, any more than a vulture could be turned into a turtle-dove by plucking its feathers. By the same token the points were also well taken against the Republican "tariff for protection."

A tariff is an attempt to raise artificial barriers to commerce. Tariffs are schemes to supply mountains, where none exist between Nation and Nation. Tariffs are "Chinese Walls" and imply all the mental backwardness, economic and sociologic ignorance implied in the Chinese Wall. Tariffs, accordingly, whatever their object, are grounds so fertile of contradiction that nothing approaching precise definition can be expected from them.

Where the tariff is for "protection," it has at least the virtue of stating its abhorrent purpose, if not bluntly, yet with parliamentary frankness. "Protection" is a parliamentary term for Chinese-Walling. Where, however, the tariff is for

“revenue” it has not even the saving virtue of frankness. It is a heaping up of wrong upon wrong—in so far as it is a tariff, it can not escape its Chinese Wall flavor; in so far as it is a measure of taxation, it is a macchiavellic scheme to conceal the fact that the Government is something apart from the useful portion of the population: it is a method of extracting support clandestinely.

One may as well enjoy the annoyance of the Democratic “reformers” when galled by the identical style of sarcasm that they have long been plying their Republican brethren with.

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