

**PROPOSITIONS
CONCERNING
PROTECTION
AND FREE TRADE**

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Propositions Concerning Protection and Free Trade by Willard Phillips

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By WILLARD PHILLIPS.

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1850.

P R E F A C E .

Among the many important inquiries relating to the social condition of men, which now occupy contemplative thinkers, as well as practical statesmen, both in Europe and this country, that concerning protection and free trade is among the most interesting, since it touches the vital agencies of civilized existence.

The various branches of the subject are so implicated with each other, that it is not easy to come to satisfactory results in any part, without taking a view of the whole; and, at the same time, the subject is one upon which, under our political institutions, it is requisite that all men who take an interest in political affairs (and who does not!) should form an opinion.

It occurred to me that the inquiry might be facilitated by presenting and contrasting the propositions on both sides, in

a plain, concise form, intelligible to those not particularly conversant with discussions of the sort, as well as to those who are so. I have accordingly attempted, in this epitome, so to present them.

My only interest in the subject, is that which I have in common with every citizen who expects to live in the country himself, while he shall live, and hopes to leave representatives in it afterwards, for whom he is bound to care; and that interest is not small, for the welfare of each of us, and each of them, will be essentially affected by that of the community. My direct personal interest, lies, indeed, entirely on the side of "*let-alone*," for the attention I give to the subject at this time, is a material sacrifice, as well as inconvenience to me.

I should be happy to believe that there is little at stake, and that the doctrines of free trade do not tend directly to the distress, decay, and political subordination and degradation of this country, and the too great entanglement of its industry and interests with those of other nations. But it has not happened to me in thus devoting my attention more particularly to these inquiries, as it did some thirty years ago. Being then imbued with that economical creed which is taught in our public seminaries, I had occasion to attempt its vindication, against the aggressions then supposed

to be made on commerce by the useful arts, through protective legislation; and I had the good fortune or misfortune, on investigating the subject anew, to convert myself to the opinions I had undertaken to combat. I came out with the thorough conviction that the science, which seemed so luminous to those at the feet of the Gamaliels, consisted very much of groundless postulates and sophistry. I could not divest myself wholly of a feeling of resentment at having been imposed upon. It is possible that this sentiment may sometimes tinge my phraseology. If it does so, I will rely upon your accepting the cause as my apology, if you are not on the side of free trade; if you are upon that side, you will take it in good part, without any apology, for no persons are less sparing, than the advocates of that doctrine, in applying uncomplimentary epithets to such as cannot say "Shibboleth." I am, however, assured by friends who have been kind enough to look over my proof-sheets with me, that I have not committed any grave trespass in that way. On again reviewing my economical studies for this epitome, I have not, as you will perceive in reading it, experienced the least symptoms of a relapse into my early creed.

W. P.

BOSTON, APRIL, 1850.



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