

By WILLIAM H. BERNARD.

WILMINGTON, N. C.

FRIDAY MORNING, Feb. 9, 1894.

CROWDING THE FARMER.

A few days ago Senator Hoar presented in the Senate a remonstrance signed, or alleged to be signed, by four hundred farmers of Massachusetts against the passage of the Wilson bill. In their unsophisticated innocence those Massachusetts farmers who signed that "remonstrance" had an idea that the Wilson bill would hurt them, by encouraging more Canadian eggs and other edibles to come from Canada. The New England farmers, like other farmers of this country who have supported the protective policy of the Republican party, have been deluded with the belief that it was a good thing for the farmers and supplied them with a "home market" that would be knocked winding if the bounty to the manufacturer was reduced.

We can understand how the workmen in the protected industries can be influenced by the contention that protection insures higher wages to them, because the wages are controlled by the employers and they may raise or lower them as their interests may dictate. At a time like this, for instance, some of them are reducing the wages of their workmen and giving as a reason the reduction in protection provided for in the Wilson bill. The workman takes it for granted that this is so and naturally concludes that reduced protection means a permanent reduction in wages. There never has been an election in which tariff reform was an issue that either a stoppage of industries or a reduction of wages was not threatened for the express purpose of influencing the votes of the men who were dependent for a livelihood upon these industries. These tricks were generally successful and resulted in keeping the bulk of the workmen in the protected industries solid for protection. They never had an opportunity to test anything else, and consequently had to form their opinions from what was told them and from their own experience.

This being the case we can understand how the workmen have been deceived by the representations made to them and were deluded into the belief that protection to the manufacturer was a good thing for them, but we cannot understand how the farmers of this country have so long permitted themselves to be imposed upon and made to believe that protection to the manufacturer was a good thing for the farmer.

With here and there an exception of an extraordinarily thrifty farmer or one who raised some specialty for which there was a demand, the farmers of this country have saved nothing out of their past twenty years' labor, and instead of being much better off as they should be, they are not as well off, if not really in a worse condition than they were twenty years ago. But all this time they have had the advantages that it was alleged protection gave them and have had that unrivalled "home market" whose praises the protection advocates so loudly sang and

eloquently portrayed. From 80 cents a bushel for wheat twenty years ago it has got down to an average of 50 cents the past year, when the average cost of producing wheat in this country is 51 cents a bushel. Other farm products, with the exception of meat, run in about the same proportion. Even at the highest price here quoted, when we consider the average yield per acre of wheat—about twelve bushels—we see how little the Western farmer has to depend upon for profit on the crop which he regards as his main money crop. But the fact is the farmers, especially of the West, have been raising and marketing their crops for years at an actual loss, allowing them fair wages and interest on the capital invested in land and stock, &c. They have not made any money, and they have been enabled to live simply because they have raised what they ate, had their own fuel as a general thing, and had to pay no house rent.

But notwithstanding this, a very large percentage of the farms are so heavily mortgaged that it is doubtful if the mortgages can ever be cancelled, while no small percentage of the farms have gone into the hands of creditors, and the former owners now live as tenants on them.

Let us take Illinois as a sample agricultural State of the West. It is one of the best, perhaps *the* best, because with a naturally fertile soil it is centrally located, with splendid transportation facilities by land and water, and the best markets this country affords. If the farmers of any State in this Union are prosperous the farmers of Illinois should be, if there be anything in the theory of protection and the "home market." From 1873 to 1893 the farmers of Illinois raised 651,000,000 bushels of wheat which they sold for \$541,000,000. They produced in the same time about 1,000,000,000 bushels of oats which they sold for \$478,000,000. They got for their wheat 10 cents a bushel more than it cost to raise it and sold their oats for 2 cents a bushel less than it cost to raise it. The cost of production has increased as the price of the grain produced has decreased. Take these two items of wheat and oats, give the farmers the 10 cents a bushel they made on wheat and deduct the 2 cents a bushel they lost on oats and they come out \$45,000,000 ahead in 20 years, or \$2,250,000 a year to be divided among the farmers of one of the greatest of our agricultural States on two of their principal crops. It wouldn't give them an average of \$5 a piece.

In Pennsylvania, a great manufacturing State, farming lands have decreased \$57,000,000 in value in ten years. Could these things be if the protective tariff was good for the farmer, when according to estimates the wealth of this country is increasing at the rate of a million dollars a day? The farmers constitute about one half the population so the wealth must be going to the other half and as the larger percentage of these are toilers the wealth must be going to the smaller percentage of this half. Somebody has been getting rich, and these are the ones who have been holding the bags into which the farmers and other toilers have been dropping tribute.