

tor in these things, and we will probably get to some conclusion that can be practically worked out. He goes on :

If it were the wish of the other colonies to join in such inquiry, Her Majesty's Government would be delighted to make arrangements for the purpose, and to accept any suggestions as to the form of the reference, and the character and constitution of the Commission, and would very gladly take part in it.

That is the latest from the right hon. Secretary of the Colonies ; that is his statement when the assembled Premiers of the colonies were before him in that conference : that was the statement he made after the ruthless tongue of the right hon. gentleman, at the first available opportunity, in Liverpool, declared that Canada would have nothing to do with preferential trade, that she wanted Great Britain to pursue the path of old Cobdenism, and not to be led away by any impractical suggestions that might arise from a century and a time far different from those in which Cobden lived.

Sir, I say this, that the Toronto "Globe," in my opinion, never placed that semi-official announcement there without some authority—and it could only come by leakage—if it came straight and embodied the truth of the conference of Premiers in England. I say, that the Premier on Friday last laid down an absolute condition which he could only have laid down on the ground that that had been stated to him in England and by the authority of the British Government, and if he was not prepared to lay the papers of that conference on the Table of the House, I submit he had no right to draw a conclusion from the papers on the assumption that such a proposition was made, especially when all the probabilities of the case go most strongly against the assertion that Mr. Chamberlain ever made such a proposition. It would not have been business-like, and Mr. Chamberlain's conduct in regard to this question from the first has been eminently broad-minded and business-like. The hon. gentleman said :

I did not go about advocating the cause of preferential trade.

We have seen he did not. No, he went about denouncing it, he went about declaring that Canada would have none of it. That is the way he fulfilled his London, Toronto and Montreal pledges, and that is the way he misrepresented the sentiment of Canada in its business point of view. Like Cato, he cried from morning till night, "Delenda est Carthago," and went about Great Britain chanting the chant of death instead of the note of life, a new-born life which was just appearing above the horizon, and which promised such great strength, development and permanence for the British Empire throughout the world.

If preferential trade—

Mr. FOSTER.

he says,

—is not a vain and idle dream.

Mind you, the right hon. gentleman almost asserts it is a vain and idle dream—he gives it conditionally—if it is not, he says, the first step was taken when I was in England, namely, on August 1st. Whilst those treaties existed no idea of preferential trade could be entertained, said the right hon. gentleman. He has confounded results with causes which bring about results. He has not distinguished between an idea and the realization of the idea. He thinks that the realization, so far as the denunciation of the treaties is concerned, having taken place when he was in England, that was the first step, when in reality, if not the last, it was very nearly the last step. The idea produces the realization in every great reform and change that takes place in the world. The idea is to be sown, nurtured, cultivated and spread until it gathers force beneath its covering so as to break down intervening barriers and come to its full realization. Yet the hon. gentleman, filled with his own importance, declared that not a step was taken towards this realization till he was in England. The despatches which have passed between this and other colonial governments from 1880 until the present time, the conference of 1894, when representatives of all the British colonies met in this city and passed a resolution in favour of preferential trade, count for nothing, the influence is nil. The resolution of this House of Commons praying for this same arrangement by petition and a resolution affirming the willingness of this House to grant preferential treatment to Great Britain, count for nothing as moulders of opinion and as contributing to a final result. The work of Englishmen, hundreds of thousands of them, good men and true, who for the last ten years have been working for free trade as against the bare tenets and bald results of free trade, those men and their labours count for nothing : the first step was taken when the right hon. gentleman was in England. For years we laboured in vain, all barren of results. The Gordian knot was there and not untied until Alexander of Macedon came and ripped it up with his little sword. I congratulate Alexander of Macedon ! But I will take the liberty of saying to the right hon. gentleman that the Gordian knot or a sphinx-like puzzle is scarcely to be compared in its solution, which must be instantaneous, if at all, to a great forward movement amongst a great Saxon people, which has for years made for breaking down long-established barriers and the opening up of a new commercial era which will add to the life-blood, strength and prosperity of the British Empire.

A better way, I think, I could have counselled, and it would have been this : That the right hon. gentleman should have decided first plainly and clearly what to do, to