

willing, though it may differ from anything done or suggested before. It is true that the present Canadian Government is not the one that appealed to the electors on the question of our trade relations with the United States, but it is bound to respect the verdict then rendered, and it could not, if it would, accept unlimited reciprocity without being guilty of an act of bad faith; it accepted the trust reposed in Parliament, and must carry it out according to the electoral decision.

Soon after Sir John Thompson's accession to the Ministry of Justice, it looked as if a change in the veto policy hitherto pursued would be made. On the Jesuit bill, the new Minister argued as if it were sufficient for a measure passed by a provincial legislature to be constitutional to save it from liability to disallowance. Probably the measure under discussion had something to do with his attitude on the veto question. Then the Church of Rome, a power in the land, did not desire the right of disallowance to be exercised. But now it invokes the veto, and the Government brings in a bill which will enable the Supreme Court to take evidence on the right of Roman Catholics in Manitoba to maintain the Separate School system. The bill recognizes two sets of bills on which the veto may be exercised, bills respecting which some constitutional question arises, and bills which may be vetoed on grounds of public policy. If, for instance, the Supreme Court should declare the Manitoba School Bill to be constitutional, the veto could not be exercised in reference to it, though an appeal to the Privy Council would be in order. This would save the Government from the responsibility of exercising the veto. Where a bill involves political questions, the responsibility of determining the public policy will not rest with the Executive, for, though the Supreme Court may be heard upon it, the judgment will be merely advisory, not obligatory.

A statement comes by cable that the British Government has refused its assent to the West Indies being erected into a confederation, but that it is anxious to see them united by closer trade ties to Canada. These statements may be true, though it is difficult to believe what we hear of a projected West India confederation for the first time, when we are told that it has been rejected. Great movements are not made in the dark, as this confederation plan must have been, if it ever existed at all. A colonial agent, not named, is credited with the statement that "the idea of the present [British] Cabinet is to make the West Indies dependencies of Canada." This is clearly an invention, a pretence arising out of a desire to see closer trade relations between the two countries. The West Indies would not agree to become political dependencies of Canada, nor would Canada be willing to accept them as such. The framer of the story adds that there is deep discontent in the islands with British rule. Uneasiness over the economic condition created largely by the competition of beet sugar there is, and we may expect to hear that it is heightened by the Blaine

treaties. The new Canadian sugar tariff has disappointed the sugar colonies. They expected that we should take a lesson from Blaine for our mutual benefit, and they see now that nothing can be done without a re-imposition of duty on foreign sugar.

In the free list there are no less than thirty-nine articles which the United States is entitled to send into Cuba and Porto Rico under the commercial treaty with Spain. Among them are woods of all kinds, and many manufactures thereof, including almost everything except furniture; lard, butter, cheese, fish in every form, oats, barley, rye, buckwheat and flour made therefrom; vegetables and garden products, fresh and dried; bran, hay, straw for forage; trees, plants, garden seed, tanbark, implements, utensils and tools for agriculture, the arts and mechanical trades. Practically everything which Canada could supply to Cuba and Porto Rico are taxed, while the American products are admitted free. This must be more or less felt. These treaties somewhat narrow the space in which Canada can cultivate commercial relations, and they tell no less adversely to the British West Indies.

THE UNITED EMPIRE TRADE LEAGUE.

One advantage which the members of this League have over the Imperial Federationists: they know what they want and tell us in terms that we can understand. Col. Vincent is founder of the United Empire League, its secretary and the chief expounder of its principles and aims. His plan is simply a return to preferential duties within the Empire; that the colonies shall favor British manufactures in comparison with foreign, and that Great Britain shall favor colonial produce. To do this the colonies would have to put discriminating duties on foreign manufactures, and Great Britain would have to tax foreign flour and provisions while admitting the produce of the colonies free. Col. Vincent began by telling us that he was authorized by the working men of England to propose this change. But by the time he got to Halifax, he admitted that he could speak only for his own constituents, the people of Sheffield.

Here is the way in which he puts the case: The British Empire embraces one-fifth of the surface of the globe, covering 11,000,000 square miles and having a population of 350,000,000 souls. It produces everything that can minister to the wants of man. And he tells us to make this test: "Hold a balance in your hand; place in one scale 350,000,000 people with all their markets, under the British flag. Place in the other scale 60,000,000 people in a territory smaller than our own [Canadian?] and a foreign flag. Hold the balance fairly in your hand, and has any one a doubt but that the foreigners' scale will rise high into the air?" But is this the only alternative? Must we have preferential trade with either Great Britain or the United States? Is no other course open to us? Is there

not more to be hoped in the future from the cultivation of trade with every country that is willing to trade with us on reasonable terms? It may be convenient for Col. Vincent to use commercial union as a buffer to set off the superior attractions of his own scheme, or what he presents as such; but suppose we point to the facts that the Canadian electorate and Parliament have refused to accept preferential trade, in this wholesale form, with the United States, and that there is no prospect of this decision being reversed; that the alternative which he suggests is fanciful and unreal; what could he say in reply? The present aim of Canada is to get a reasonable commercial treaty with the United States, and if we fail in this, it will be soon enough to consider seriously Col. Vincent's scheme of preferential trading under a United Empire League. It is something to have a scheme of this kind in reserve. For the present it may be put on the shelf. If the Americans prove reasonable in the coming negotiations it may remain there; if they do not, it may be taken down and examined with a view to extracting from it any good which it may be found to contain.

The fault of the commercial unionists is that they make propinquity everything, and speak as if no trade could be equally valuable with that which is near; the fault of Col. Vincent is that he talks as if the 200,000,000 of distant Hindoos could be made as good customers to Canada as the inhabitants of the United States. He places the two in opposite scales and treats equal numbers as of equal value. This is a delusive process. Equal numbers do not imply equal values as customers. Great Britain, with a population of less than four-sixths of that of the United States, makes from Canada larger purchases. But no other part of the Empire buys nearly as much, man for man, as the United States. Equal numbers in the contrasted figures presented by Col. Vincent represent such unequal capacities of purchase as to have no value, and can only be misleading in a comparison. What can the millions of Hindoos whose labor brings only a few cents a day buy from Canada? They do not need our wheat, for they produce a surplus themselves. They would not take our manufactures, for they can buy British on better terms. When the elements of trade exist, distance can be overcome; but when you reach poor customers, at whatever distance, you will find a million of them go a very short way compared with an equal number of more prosperous people.

When a nation depends largely, as Great Britain does, on supplies of foreign food, it needs to be sure of its sources of supply. Col. Vincent is good enough to credit Canada with ability to supply England with the wheat now obtained from the United States. In the coming time this will be not only possible, but easy; but at present it is impossible. The time when this will be possible will be hastened, he believes, by preferential trade within the Empire. To facilitate this change, the first thing to be done is to secure the abrogation of treaties which stand in the way, treaties with Bel-