

A MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

At the end of last week a Banquet was given to the Canadian Ministers at Cornwall, and in reply to one of the toasts the Minister of Finance delivered a speech, in which he made reference to the trade position of the country, and furnished an indication of his commercial policy in the coming Session of Parliament. Without alluding to the political subjects on which he touched, we will give the points of his statement with reference to commercial subjects. Alluding to the Reciprocity negotiations, he stated that Canada was never in a better condition than she is now to bear any political change. He said:—

"Within my recollection Canada was never in so prosperous a condition as it is at this present time. I judge by the Returns, which are submitted to me in my official capacity, which show the extent of our exports and our imports, our dealings with England and all foreign countries, and I there see that in the last seven months we have sold ten millions of dollars worth (\$10,000,000) more than we have bought—a thing which has never before occurred,—and when I make this statement, I make one which certainly ought to bring forth in every body feelings of thankfulness, and also of pride and self-reliance. [Applause.] It is well, Sir, that we should have such sentiments; it is well that we should feel that we are, that we are able to meet the difficulties which may arise from the fact that on the 17th of this month our Trade Relations with the United States will probably be subjected to serious disturbance. [Cheers.]

This is, undoubtedly, a statement on which the country may well be congratulated. He next contended that there had been a disposition on the part of the country to over-estimate the importance of the Reciprocity Treaty, notwithstanding that he held it to be greatly important, and further that the utmost energies of the country would require to be taxed to meet the derangement of present business relations that commenced on the 17th instant. He denied in very emphatic terms that the Government had been apathetic in regard to this question. He stated that they had done all which they deemed it best to do. As much has been said on this point, it is probably only fair to give Mr. Galt's own words:—

"We were charged last Session with not having paid attention to it, for, we were told, the salvation of this country (if I may use the word) depended upon the maintenance of the Reciprocity Treaty. We informed Parliament, that we were awake to the necessity of the time, and to the interest we had in continuing the best possible intercourse with our neighbours in the United States—that our attention had been constantly directed to the subject, and that when the proper time came, the people would be aware that the Administration had not been wanting in their duty in this respect. * * * What, I would ask any gentleman in any part of Canada, what was the position of the country a few months ago? What did many men—the real enemies of the country—say would be the result of the cessation of our communications with the United States? Moreover its due importance, Sir, was given to that Trade and the country was apparently willing to surrender to it more than ought to be given. The Government, however, did not share that feeling; they believed it was right to do what was fair, but to do no more than what was fair. [Cheers.] * * * As long ago as July last my hon. friend, Mr. Howland, and myself were deputed by our colleagues to visit Washington."

We simply give this statement without entering into any discussion which might arise upon it. Mr. Galt then gave a narrative of the negotiations at Washington in which he made this statement:—

"We found that the principal ground the Americans had in opposing freedom of trade with us was connected with the taxation under which their people are labouring. They said that British people should not come into their markets without bearing similar burdens to their own. But they never asked, and we never proposed that they should tax our exports without our having the same liberty to tax theirs. It was never proposed that if they chose to put a duty of one cent or of twenty cents on a bushel of Canadian wheat imported into the States, we should not have the option of putting an equivalent duty on American wheat imported into Canada. The Americans never dreamed of asking that they should impose duties on Canadian products which Canada should not have the right of imposing on theirs. * * * It was proposed to leave the canal, fisheries and transit questions in the same position as at present—that so long as other matters were satisfactory, the existing arrangements respecting them should go on—and I cannot conceive how it is possible that any man can make it a charge against the Government of Canada that we should be willing to continue agreements which have been beneficial, provided arrangements in other respects were satisfactory." [Hear.]

He added, with respect to the canals, that the negotiators proposed the same policy that he had announced in his place in Parliament, and which he understood the country to demand. With reference to the important point of extending the Free List, we think it better to give Mr. Galt's own words:—

"What we said was this, 'Let us see whether the Reciprocal Free List, which has benefitted both coun-

tries so much, cannot be extended to certain classes of manufactures.' We had faith in the ability of our people to manufacture; we knew we had a cheaper country; we believed we had a people equal in intelligence, we thought if our people had a fair start in the race, that, being more lightly burdened, they would win it. If we were wrong, we were wrong in our estimate of the abilities of our people to compete with the Americans, and not in what was our conception of our duty towards them. [Loud cheers.] Once again, Sir, it has been said that our intention was to discriminate against our own Mother Country. A more flagrant violation of truth was never written. [Cheers.] Such an idea never entered the brain of any of the delegates. We would never consent to treat our fellow-subjects in Great Britain—with whom we are connected by the bonds of blood and of affection, worse than a foreign power. Whatever we were prepared to give to the United States, we were prepared to give to our mother country, aye, and more too. We were and are, and I hope shall be for centuries willing to spend our last man and our last shilling for her. How can it be supposed that we would dream for a single instant of putting her productions on an inferior footing to those of the United States? I desire to give the most emphatic contradiction to any such statement as this." [Loud applause.]

He claimed for the negotiations that they had established good understanding, and that leading papers and people of the United States had come to look upon trade relations with Canada in a different light than formerly, and to speak in a different and more friendly tone. In fact, they condemn in decided language the narrow view which Mr. Morrill and his friends in Congress have taken.

We now come to the important announcement of the speech, namely, the course to be pursued by this country in view of the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty. We quote Mr. Galt's words:—

"It is necessary for the Government to consider now, and it will be necessary for Parliament to consider soon in the most earnest way how they will deal with the commercial future of Canada, and what its Trade policy shall be. [Cheers.] It is perfectly clear that the Union with the Lower Provinces must speedily be carried out. We must complete our communications with them, and have our mutual commerce as free as possible. The Government have sent a commission to the West Indies and Brazil to forestall the action of the American Government. It is the intention of this Government to give effect to the recommendations of the Commission whenever they have made their report to Parliament. With regard to the markets of England and France, the two great consuming countries of Europe, it can scarcely be imagined that they can be made more free than they now are. But it is the duty of the Government to endeavour to make such arrangements with the Colonies of the two Powers, and with Spain and her colony, Cuba, as will secure the reciprocal interchange of some of their products and ours. [Hear, hear.] I am plain that the Government will have to propose to Parliament a complete revision of our system of taxation: for the burden of the people will have to be readjusted to stimulate the great agricultural interest of the Province, and to make Canada at once the cheapest country to live in, and the most attractive country in the world for the labour and capital of foreign lands. [Hear, hear.] Our policy must be one of development and not of stoppage—development not of Canada alone, but of all the vast territory stretching from Newfoundland and on the one hand to the Pacific on the other. We may have to postpone for a time the enlargement of the canals that has been spoken of for several years, because we have not yet the assurance that the American trade will be permitted to use them, but this will leave us all the more means for opening up the great North-West. [Hear.] The opening up of these lands, Eastward and Westward, and especially Westward, will entail the inauguration of a new system of emigration. Immigration is what the New World must look to—and the fact that my hon. friend, Mr. McGee, is at the head of the department which has charge of that subject, must give the people confidence that emigration will be directed in the best manner for the hard-working sons of labour who come to Canada as a refuge from all parts of the world." [Cheers.]

We think the great majority of the people of this country will sustain the Minister of Finance in the policy which is here announced. It is one which will promote trade and build up the commercial prosperity of this country, in a manner heretofore unknown. It is due to Mr. Galt to say that, throughout, his speech is remarkable for clearness and ability.

There is one other point which we may mention here. We believe it is not the policy of the Canadian Government to recommend any measure of reprisal. It is understood that the Transit in Bond Regulations will remain as at present, as will also the navigation of inland waters. No duty will be levied upon American natural products now in the free list, except, perhaps, on coarse grains, which are chiefly used for the purpose of distillation, the object being to check importations from the Western States for this purpose, and so cause the consumption of grains of Canadian growth.

—The Crown Land sales in two County of Simcoe, advertised to take place on the 1st of March, have been postponed till the 15th of March, some alteration in the conditions of sale having been made.

NEW CHANNELS OF TRADE.

ON the 17th of this present month, as is well known to all Canadians, will terminate the Reciprocity Treaty between the British North American Provinces and the United States, which has now been in force for eleven years.

That it has been a boon to this country, and that through its influence, to a great extent, Canada has become what she now is, no one will deny. When this country was in its commercial infancy, when capital was wanting and energy slumbered, when railroads were measured by hundreds only, instead of by thousands of miles, when dense forests had still to fall beneath the axe of the settler, whose feet yet tarried afar off; when our powers were undeveloped, and we knew not our strength, then did we need, as since then we have profited by, the near market for our cereals and our timber that this Treaty of Commerce afforded to us. Unfettered by legislation, trade flourished and grew into manly proportions. All parts of the land, even to the most remote, felt the quickening influence, and though during the last decade, there have been seasons of over-speculation followed by almost utter stagnation, still the material prosperity of Canada has gone on increasing with cumulative force and rapidity. We do not seek to lessen or make light of the great benefits which have arisen as a direct result of the Reciprocity Treaty, nor do we wish it supposed for an instant that we believe Canada will suffer no present loss from its termination. Nevertheless, we are confident that out of this present apparent evil will spring much good, and many happy results. Amongst them we may mention, more reliance on ourselves as a nation, and the development of new and much more profitable channels of trade.

Scarcely have the negotiations for a renewal of the Treaty been broken off and our Commissioners returned from their not altogether fruitless mission to Washington, when we receive intelligence that events have transpired which will render it almost a certainty, that ere long the commercial barriers now existing between the British Colonies on this continent will be broken down and swept away by the triumphant carrying out of the grand scheme of Confederation. New Brunswick and Newfoundland have already declared in favour of it, and Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island must follow suit. The immediate construction of the Intercolonial Railroad will be a necessity, and then will commence a new state of things commercially, between Canada and the Maritime Provinces.

Another subject of congratulation is the progress made by the Trade Commissioners to the West Indies. We are not in possession of the details of what they have accomplished as yet, but it is certain they will be able to make a report more favourable and satisfactory than most people could have at all anticipated or ventured to predict. At a dinner given to the Commissioners at Georgetown, British Guiana, Governor Hincks, in the course of a speech, in which he pointed out the deficiency in the present means of communication between this country and the West Indies, said that "it was one of the objects within the scope of the present mission to consider if possible the extension of postal communication between the North American provinces and the West Indies, as well as other countries, and he (the Governor) had not hesitated to assure the Commissioners that in any well-considered measures for meeting the object, they might rely on the cordial co-operation of British Guiana."

The importance of the trade which may be carried on with the West Indies and South America cannot well be overestimated, and we trust ere long to see it in so flourishing a condition that all regrets for default reciprocity may be entirely absorbed and forgotten in the prosperity attendant on it.

New G. W. R. Passenger Station at Toronto.

The celebration of the opening of the Station took place on Saturday, the 3rd inst., and was honoured by an excursion to Niagara Falls and a lunch at the Clifton House, with appropriate speeches and toasts. The new station, situated at the foot of Yonge street, consists of the main building a long rectangle 310 by 61 feet, arched over with a very lofty roof; a lower building, flat roofed, on the north side, containing the waiting and refreshment room, offices, &c.; and on the south side, next to the water, is the freight house and office. The building presents a very fine appearance, and is altogether superior to anything of the kind in Canada, which, after all, is not saying a great deal for it.