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DISINTEGRATING THE EMPIRE.

Mr. Chamberlain made a speech in the House of Commons a few days ago, in which he alluded to the efforts that had been made by the British Government to persuade the United States to grant more favorable terms to the British West India Islands. He said that Canada had also been applied to, and had met the Mother Country in a spirit of liberalism which the Dominion had recently shown in a remarkable degree regarding Imperial matters. Canada, Mr. Chamberlain said, concedes 25 per cent. preference to sugar from British possessions in return only for the concession that the same terms be allowed Canada as are given to the United States. Unfortunately the concession, about 16 shillings a ton, failed to give the sugar of the West Indies sufficient advantage. It induced the planters to ship to Canada rather than the United States, and now the Imperial Government was asking the Dominion if it were possible to secure some further privilege, feeling the advantage Canada is to the Indies in the encouragement of trade. "We think," pursued Mr. Chamberlain, "that in return for sugar sent from the West Indies to Canada the ships should reload such products of Canada as lumber, corn, and pork." Whether or not this was practicable Mr. Chamberlain could not say, but if there were no obstacles in the way much benefit would result to both countries. "I have proposed," said he, "that conjointly with Canada, we subsidize a line of steamships between the West Indies and Halifax and other Canadian ports."

It is quite evident that Canada is to be used as a cat's paw with which to rake chestnuts out of the fire for free-trade Britain. Under the Cobden doctrine now in force, Germany finds free entrance into the British market for her bounty-fed sugar which can be sold there at much cheaper prices than those at which British West India sugar can afford to be sold; and as the latter article is barred out of the United States by the Dingley tariff, the British Government are casting about to find a way of relief for an industry that is now in a condition of collapse.

With a countervailing duty in Britain upon all bounty-fed sugar, Jamaica and all the other British West India Islands

could afford to sell their sugar in Britain, but Cobdenism prevents and forbids it, and the only hope for the British West India sugar industry is that Canada will come to the rescue. And notwithstanding all that Canada is doing in this direction, the British Government find that our concessions are not sufficient, and wants Canada to go still further and help the West Indies by joining in subsidizing a line of steamers to ply between Halifax and those Islands. We are told that the Colonial Secretary has discovered that the Canadian preference to Jamaica sugar, which was given last year, is not sufficient to make its sugar trade with this country profitable. Mr. Chamberlain does not seem to comprehend the fact that, even if Canada were to admit British West India sugar entirely free of duty, our market is not sufficiently large to absorb all the sugar that might be thus sent, and that a very considerable portion of it would have to be marketed elsewhere. Where? Not in Great Britain, for reasons already given. Not in the United States, for the Dingley tariff interposes an insuperable bar.

Mr. Chamberlain should bear in mind that the condition of the British West Indies is rapidly becoming worse and worse. A couple of years ago it was so bad as to call for the appointment of a commission to investigate the situation, but no satisfactory solution could be suggested. Since then the sugar industry of the people of those islands, good British subjects all of them, has been going from bad to worse. Since then Spain has been driven out of Cuba and Porto Rico, which are great producers of sugar, and it is safe to say that the day is not far distant when Cuban and Porto Rican sugar will either be admitted into the United States duty free, or at a rate of duty entirely unattainable to Jamaican sugar except under similar circumstances. Does Mr. Chamberlain comprehend what that means? What have the Jamaicans to hope for? They ask for bread and—they don't get it. The Mother Country turns a cold shoulder and tells them that it will neither give a bounty on the production of sugar as Germany does, nor will it impose a countervailing duty on German sugar as the United States does. But Canada is both great and good. It is rich and prosperous, and in its daughter-like love for the dear, good mother, assumes to do for Great Britain what Great Britain refuses to do. Canada, to please Britain, throws off 25 per cent. of duty on sugar imported not only from the British West Indies, but from all British countries. But this concession is not enough, and now Mr. Chamberlain wants Canada to bear a large portion of the cost of instituting and maintaining a line of steamers that will bring at very reduced rates of freight Jamaica sugar to Canadian refineries. The scheme looks patriotic and pretty, but it will not work. What would be the use of dumping more sugar into this country than can be consumed here? The excess would deteriorate the value of the whole, the Jamaicans would be forced to accept lower prices, and the investment in steamers would not prove remunerative.

And then how about the loyalty to the Mother Country that is supposed to possess every British subject, including the negroes, mongrels and halfbreeds who live in the British West Indies. These latter feel that they have not been treated properly by the Home Government. They have seen the governments of other West India Islands, and other sugar producing countries, make treaties with the United