

The Problem of Empire

THIRD PAPER

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THERE remain two aspects of this problem to be considered, British Preference and Imperial Defence. We all remember how, a few years ago, the Liberal party in Canada gave a preference to British goods, thereby effacing the brand of disloyalty which the Conservatives had burned upon it long before, and affording Great Britain an opportunity to offer similar treatment. For a time it was thought in England that a great field would be opened in the colonies for British manufactures. Mr. Chamberlain seems to have cherished this opinion, if we are to judge by his Glasgow speech. The colonies would be content to supply the good and raw material for the great workshop of the Empire. Of course the conception, though genuinely imperial, was mistaken, as everyone now recognises.

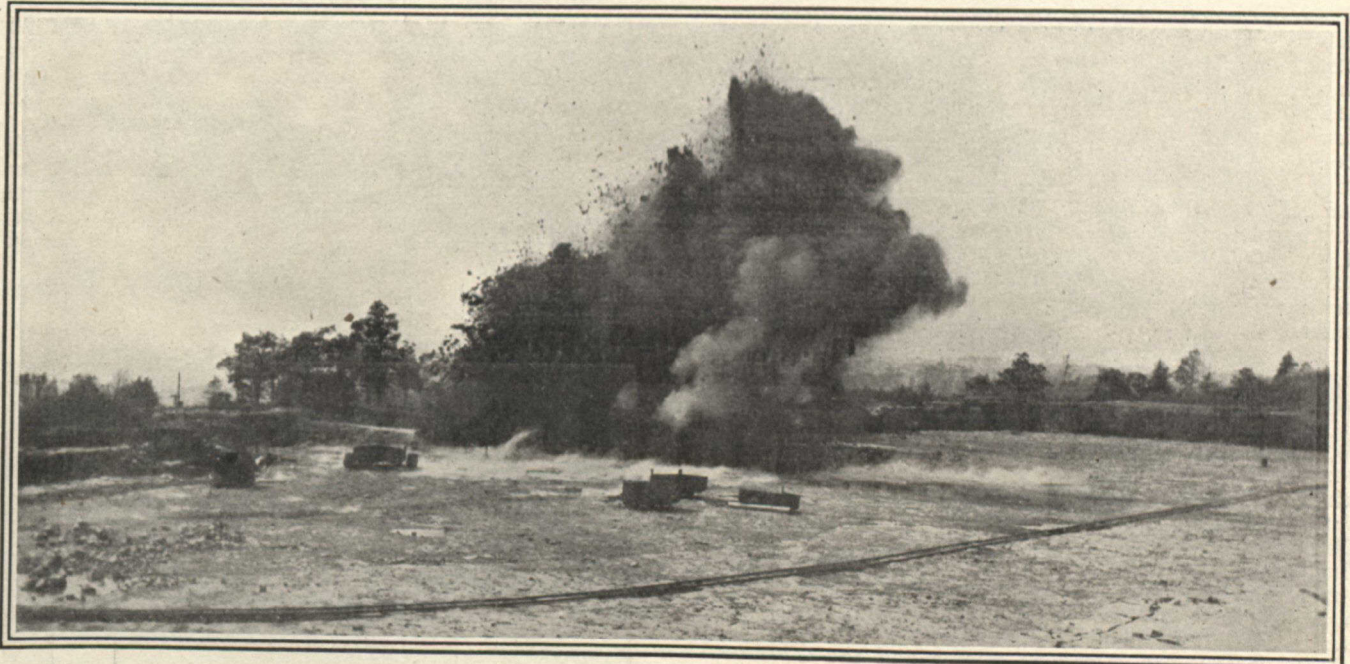
Our manufacturers seek sufficient protection in order that they may build up home industries and may thereby render the highest service to the Empire. But they will not be sacrificed. They urge, however, that over and above the articles manufactured by them there will always be vast imports into the country; Canada might as well make these purchases from Great Britain as from Germany or the United States. This is perfectly true, and is sufficient reason for our retaining the preference. Certainly the slight reduction in the tariff will benefit consumers. Hence where preference injures neither our manufacturers nor consumers, we cannot ask a return from Great Britain on the ground that we are making a sacrifice. That would not be a very dignified, or indeed an honest plea. We should not allow ourselves to be represented in English papers as having made some demand upon, or asked some boon from the mother country. Surely there is no general indignation felt throughout Canada because England does not enter into a special trade arrangement with us. The fact is that Great Britain will have to adopt a preference, only if she fully believes it to be in her own best interests.

Whether such a step would be of advantage is, of course, an open question, and will be much disputed before another election. The Free Trader puts the case thus: A preference will be of no value to the Canadian farmer, unless he gets a higher price for his wheat, for at present he can sell what he produces. If he gets a higher price, then bread will be dearer in England, the cost of labour will rise and British manufacturers will be further handicapped in the foreign field.

Home preference will create the very evil which protection is meant to remedy. The preferentialist urges, on the other hand, that even though prices should not rise, the colonial farmer would take the foreigner's place in the British market. Trade will be furthered in consequence between the various parts of the empire, with a resulting advance to a better understanding. Just as a protective tariff holds remote and widely different districts both in Canada and in the United States together against the world, so a tariff-wall will unite the Empire. Should, perchance, prices rise in England, then the English farmer would find some profit from his agriculture, and increasing national security would safeguard the manufacturer. Such is the general drift of the argument, though at times it ranges further afield. It is urged, for example, that England could not accept the various demands of the colonies without hampering her foreign trade and shipping, and creating thereby at home an anti-colonial party. Furthermore, any restriction of markets would hamper the liberty of the colonies to sell and buy where they will. Should England take all our grain, the United States would probably at once develop markets in the East and thereby make up any loss in a field upon which Canadians are most desirous of entering. But the whole discussion simply proves that while we should gladly accept anything likely to assist our agriculture, we must leave England free to judge of her own concerns. Precisely this liberty of action, we claim in all imperial affairs. In this connection the "Spectator" quoted aptly the prophecy of Robert Lowe that just as English colonies had been lost because of England's attempt to tax them, so the Empire would go some day because of the colonies' desire to tax the mother country.

Many who feel no loss of dignity in asking a preference from England maintain with real concern that we are not doing our duty in the matter of Imperial Defence. But it is idle to overlook the deep-rooted affection of our people for peace. They have not known the danger of immediate attack, and are for the moment taken up with material pursuits. We know how our workingmen would regard a distinct soldier-class. Of course this is not all gain, the discipline of military service might strengthen the average citizen and bring him to understand his fellow-Canadians. A city crowd still feels a stir of the blood and impulse to quick vigorous

DYNAMITE AND THE STONE QUARRY



This photograph shows the effect produced by a dynamite blast of 2000 pounds weight put off in the stone quarry of Doolittle & Wilcox, Dundas. It took two steam drills 22 days to drill the holes, and it required two men two and a half days to load them. The estimated weight of rock blasted was 6000 tons.

Photograph by G. E. Thompson, Hamilton.