

COMMERCIAL UNION AND BRITISH CONNECTION.

The principles underlying commercial union are precisely the same as those which existed under the reciprocity treaty from 1854 to 1866. The only difference is, that while the free interchange of articles was limited to the natural products, it is now proposed that no restriction whatever should exist; and that all articles, whether natural, manufactured, or imported, should be as free of interchange between the United States and Canada as they are now between Quebec and Ontario, or between New York and New Jersey. During the twelve years of the reciprocity treaty there was far less talk of annexation than before or since; and all will remember the simultaneous burst of loyalty which met the suggestion in 1866 that Canada could by a repeal of that treaty be forced to forswear its loyalty to Great Britain. If during the period of the prevalence of the treaty no sentiment prevailed for annexation, what justification exists for the assertion that in consequence of its renewal on a broader basis a desire for annexation would follow? The inference from experience is in a precisely opposite direction, and furnishes another argument in support of the claim of the advocates of commercial union that in no respect does it impair or threaten British connection.

The only force to the argument that British connection is threatened by commercial union is found in the fact that discrimination against British goods would be necessary, as compared with the free admission of American products. It is true that this savors of a preference for American over British connection, but Canada has for some years been taxing British goods as much as she would have to tax them under commercial union. The recent advance by the Finance Minister of the duty on iron is a discrimination quite as marked in its practical effect as anything else would be if commercial union were to go into operation to-morrow. Indeed it would look as if the Finance Minister were making preparations for commercial union by raising the tariff on so essential an element as iron to a rate almost as high as that of the American impost, while the practical discrimination against Great Britain in this matter might very well be cited as an experiment just to see how such a movement applied on a larger scale would be regarded. Yet no one accuses the Finance Minister of disloyalty. The average duty in the United States over and above that prevailing in Canada is about ten

per cent. If under Commercial Union the United States should reduce its tariff five per cent. and Canada advance her tariff five per cent. so as to equalize both, the result to Great Britain would be a positive advantage. A larger quantity of goods would be absorbed in the United States in consequence of this reduction than would be lost by the enhanced duty in Canada, while the prosperity and purchasing power of the Canadian people would be so augmented in consequence of better prices, enlarged markets, and increased communications, that a broad-minded British merchant would soon see that free trade on the continent of America would in no respect differ from the free trade with the rest of the world, which he so much loves, and under which he has so much prospered.

My own conviction is, from very careful thought on this subject, that nothing will contribute to a greater degree to a perpetuation of British connection than a close commercial alliance with the United States, and therefore I answer most gladly your question, that there is ample room on the platform of the commercial unionist not only for your good self and all your friends, but for every Canadian who loves his native land, and values as one of his chief blessings a connection with the dear mother country. That you were long ago a strong advocate for commercial union I am delighted to see from an article from your pen which appears in the *Contemporary Review* in 1885, in a very able paper on "Anglo-Saxon Alliance" the following sentence appears, which is so appropriate to the present time that I close my letter with the quotation:

"Canada while she is unwilling to abnegate her British allegiance, is unable permanently to renounce her paramount interest, which lies in commerce with the United States, along whose border her populations form a fringe three thousand miles long and about a hundred miles broad, stretched along a single isothermal, and having in consequence no adequate variety of climates or products. *That plan only would fully solve her problem that would secure to her at once her British citizenship and the freest and fullest intercourse with her all-important neighbor.*"

I claim most respectfully that the plan as implied in commercial union fulfils in the highest form all that your loyalty to England and your interest in Canada hoped might come when you wrote the foregoing lines.

With much regard to you, I am,

Truly yours,

ERASTUS WIMAN.