

preferential terms, on better terms than those enjoyed by any foreign country, and that England should revert to her former position of giving to the products of her colonies a preferential position in her markets. That is the policy for which the United Empire Trade League have worked with great zeal and immense success, and while England is perhaps the most conservative country in the world, yet I have never anywhere witnessed such a revolution in public sentiment as I have in England, in regard to this question of preferential trade. I need not tell the House that preferential trade would increase the population of Canada, develop our wealth and expand our resources to an extent that cannot be hoped for under any other system. A deputation from this United Empire Trade League waited upon Lord Salisbury in June, 1891, with the object of asking to have the Belgian and German treaties modified, and if they could not be modified, to have them denounced so as to remove the restrictions which made it impossible for any colony to give preference to Great Britain. In the course of his speech, Lord Salisbury said :

On this matter public opinion must be framed or formed before any government can act. No government can impose its own opinion on the people of this country in these matters. You are invited, and it is the duty of those who feel themselves to be the pioneers of such a movement and the apostles of such a doctrine, to go forth to fight for it, and, when they have convinced the people of this country, their battle will be won.

This plainly shows that Lord Salisbury was ready, whenever he was supported by public sentiment to adopt a policy of preferential trade within the Empire. Then, on the 25th April, 1892, the Parliament of Canada passed the following resolution :—

That if and when the Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland admits Canadian products to the markets of the United Kingdom upon more favourable terms than it accords to the products of foreign countries, the Parliament of Canada will be prepared to accord corresponding advantages by a substantial reduction in the duties it imposes upon British manufactured goods.

The passage of that resolution was followed by the historic conference which took place in Ottawa, and which cordially endorsed that sentiment when it passed this resolution :

That this conference records its belief in the advisability of a customs arrangement between Great Britain and her colonies by which trade within the Empire may be placed on a more favourable footing than that which is carried on with foreign countries.

The next important step in this matter was made when the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, now Secretary of State for the Colonies, declared at the Canada Club banquet, that for so important a purpose as to secure the unity of this great Empire, he would be prepared to abandon the Cobdenite view of free trade to the extent of taxing

the products of foreign countries coming into England in competition with the products of the colonies.

It is true that he coupled that with the expression of opinion, that it ought to be accompanied by free trade within the Empire, or, that there should only be a revenue tariff, or, at all events, that there should be no protection within the Empire, but that the protection should be against outside countries. As I have said, the United Empire Trade League took up the question enthusiastically, and in obedience to the expressed opinion of Lord Salisbury fought for the principle, and after the last general election in England they went back to Lord Salisbury with this statement :

The greater number of the members returned to the present Parliament in support of Your Lordship's policy and Administration, advocated either in their election addresses or in their platform speeches, the policy of United Empire trade, and to this fact must be ascribed some portion of the unparalleled majority in the House of Commons by which Your Lordship is supported—especially from working-class constituencies.

The "Times" newspaper, March 10, 1896, says :

The Prime Minister has addressed a letter to Sir Howard Vincent, as honorary secretary of the United Empire Trade League, in reply to the memorial presented last month by the council of that body, praying that notice might be given denouncing the clause in the commercial treaties with Germany and Belgium preventing British colonies from levying a lighter duty upon British goods than upon foreign goods, should they elect to do so. Lord Salisbury says that "since the accession to office of Her Majesty's present advisers the question of the trade relations between the mother country and the colonies has been taken into serious consideration, and that he is in thorough accord with the views expressed by Mr. Chamberlain as to the extreme importance of securing as large a share as possible of the mutual trade of the United Kingdom and the colonies for British producers and manufacturers, whether located in the colonies or in the United Kingdom." The letter goes on to add that "while the Prime Minister fully recognizes the inconvenient character of the stipulations in question—stipulations which should never again be agreed to by this country—he is not prepared to give notice for the termination of these otherwise valuable treaties until a definite scheme has been produced offering such probabilities of increased trade within the Empire as would fully compensate for the risk involved."

Mark, Sir, Lord Salisbury observed that this question of preferential trade had made an enormous advance, but he said that before they took the serious step of denouncing these treaties, he wanted something to assure him that it was going to result in advantage to the Empire. On the 13th February, the London "Times" had an article in which it said it assumes now that the Tupper ministry had been formed a scheme would be propounded for the consideration of Lord Salisbury, and that this question would be taken up.