

of these poor people go away with the hope of returning; but it is a sad commentary on our hopes for the future, if there are to be no means to remove the stern necessity, the hopeless poverty and want of employment, which drives them, unwilling away. We are told that depression prevails in the States—which is true, but the manufactures are established there, and even the limited production goes on, the markets are supplied, and the poor labourer is employed and paid. It is to him matter of little moment, whether the dividend of the stockholder is small or great, so long as his services are continued and he is enabled to sustain and educate his family. No doubt if a like chance were open to him here, he would return to his native country to-morrow. And for all this, is there no remedy? Tell me which of your statesmen has proposed one. We may drag on as we are, but it were folly to hope for any rapid or general prosperity. The Politicians of Ontario, ignoring the outwards signs—profess to stand in no need of relief; but there is a different feeling in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. It is said, there is hope of a new Trade Treaty, which would be a great boon, but it must promise *permanence*, to create confidence. We must have free and assured commercial intercourse with the States, and they need it as well as ourselves. I shall be told these theories lead to annexation; and it is true, that so far as our embarrassments relate to commercial intercourse, annexation would supply a remedy. But would it be the best remedy? I think not; and even if it were otherwise, would it be desirable or possible of achievement? I shall speak of this later on. But mine is another scheme and I think a better one for a system of continental trade. I would banish the Custom Houses along the frontier: but I would preserve the imaginary line, as a broad division between two friendly nations, who desire, while maintaining free intercourse, to maintain their autonomy; to work out their own destiny and develop their own free institutions. Before the formation of the Zollverein by Treaty stipulations, the commercial intercourse of the several German States was hampered by disabilities and restrictions similar to those which prevail between us and our neighbours at this moment. The introduction of merchandise from one State to another was not permitted without the payment of duties. In addition to this, numerous prohibitions existed and the trade relations between the contiguous sovereignties were fettered by oppressive and vexatious restrictions. But the inconvenience became manifest and intolerable, and the German States, while retaining their autonomy, introduced a wiser commercial policy. They removed those unnecessary burdens which only tended to clog enterprise and choke the channels of legitimate trade

between contiguous states. They adopted one consolidated Government for commercial purposes, one line of customs on the Geographical boundaries was established,—one tariff, export and transit, was enforced for all, and the revenue thus acquired was distributed among the members of the confederation in proportion to the population of each. This system for a long series of years has given satisfaction in Germany, and it is conceivable that Canada and the United States might adopt something akin to it with mutual and permanent advantage. This would be preferable to any possible Reciprocity Treaty, because it would be absolute and permanent free trade between the two countries. It is preferable again, because it could be more easily obtained, and would indeed be a favourite arrangement with the Americans. It would save both parties immense expense along their frontier, and would disband a vast army of smugglers. It might be effected in six months, and while it would be equally advantageous to our neighbours, it would make Canada a great agricultural, mining, and manufacturing country. It would be popular in the United States because it would please the Free Trader, and Mr. Greeley, the great protectionist, has promised us his support. It would settle the Fisheries and give them the free navigation of the St. Lawrence, and it would open half a Continent to their enterprise and capital. It would give us access to the market of 40,000,000 of people. It would attract to us unlimited capital, and our Country would be dotted with numerous mining and manufacturing villages. Our agricultural and commercial interests would multiply and expand in proportion. Our people would be employed at home, and multitudes of foreign labourers would be attracted from abroad. Happiness and contentment would walk hand in hand with the prosperity of our countrymen. You like the picture, but alas! it has awkward shades; and it is set in an ugly frame. We can't negotiate such a treaty. Canada has great interests, but she has no power. She can exercise no diplomatic functions, because she has no recognized foreign relations. She might attempt it and be snubbed, after the manner of Prince Edward Island. There were those who sneered at my ignorance when I made this statement in the House, because the British Minister had been instructed to consult us in his negotiations. Do they think Mr. Thornton would negotiate this Zollverein for us? No! Because it would conflict with the policy of the Empire. Canada, as a dependency, can never become a party to a Continental Commercial policy here, because it would involve a discrimination against British goods. This is reasonable, and we must not complain of it. It would, indeed, be a vicious system, which would ignore the