

Office and saw Sir Robert Herbert, who was the Chancellor of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, if I remember rightly, at that time. I applied for permission to accept an order precisely similar, except that one was from Belgium and the other from France, to that received by the right hon. gentleman. That permission was refused; and it was not only refused, but Sir Robert Herbert placed in my hands a statute which declared Her Majesty had not the power to consent to the acceptance of a decoration from a foreign power except for services on the battlefield. I do not know whether my hon. friend won his decoration on the battlefield; but unless he did so, I cannot understand why he should appear as Prime Minister of Canada wearing a decoration that I understand to be prohibited by the authority of the Crown, except in cases in which Her Majesty is able to give consent, and that alone applies to a distinction won on the field of battle.

To pass to more serious subjects, I regret that the eloquence with which the right hon. gentleman enthralled the people with whom he came in contact on the other side of the Atlantic, was not used in the interest of Canada. I watched narrowly the course which the right hon. gentleman pursued during the time he was representing this country, and it is with the deepest regret that in the discharge of the duty which I owe to this House and the country, I am compelled to say that instead of having used wisely his eloquence, which at such a time might have accomplished more for Canada than perhaps at any other period in our history, the right hon. gentleman forgot what was owing to the Dominion and turned back not only on Canada but on himself, and used the high authority with which he was clothed to do the greatest injury to Canada that it is possible for any man to do. What was that? I dare say this House has not forgotten that the subject of preferential trade has been discussed in this country. What is preferential trade? Preferential trade is the policy of adopting an arrangement between the British Government and her colonies under which colonial products will go into the markets of England free as at present, while the products of foreign countries coming into competition with them will be subjected to duty.

In 1884 the Right Hon. Mr. Foster, one of the most distinguished men who ever adorned the Liberal ranks in the United Kingdom, founded the Imperial Federation League with a view of drawing more closely together the colonies and the mother country. He did me the honour to consult me on more than one occasion, and I told him that after giving the subject the closest consideration, I had arrived at the conclusion that what would bind the colonies and the mother country indissolubly together was a policy of preferential trade

such as I have referred to. The answer of the right hon. gentleman to me was: Well, I am a free trader, but I am not so fanatical a free trader that I would not be perfectly willing to adopt that policy to accomplish such a result. Mr. Foster unfortunately died, and a number of the members of the Imperial Federation League were not so emphatically in favour of going as far as he would in that direction. I had not taken much part in the Imperial Federation League from its formation down to 1889, but in the latter year I was pressed to attend the annual dinner of the league, and to give my view in regard to the status of the question in Canada. I repeated there that in order to cement the tie that bound the colonies to the Crown, it was in my judgment necessary to adopt a policy of preferential trade under which the interests of Great Britain would be greater in her colonies, and under which the colonies in return would evince their gratitude by giving a corresponding advantage to British products in the markets of Canada. That became the subject of a very lively discussion, and I am quite certain that it had something to do with the dissolution of the Imperial Federation League. At all events, the difference of opinion that arose in the league on that occasion led to the formation of the United Empire Trade League in March, 1891. That league was formed by leading gentlemen of both parties in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords, who advocated by all means in their power the adoption of this policy of preferential trade on the basis I have stated. They waited on the Marquis of Salisbury in 1891, and put before him the great advantages that would accrue to the Empire if Great Britain adopted the policy of placing her colonies on a better footing than foreign nations in her markets. The Marquis of Salisbury replied: That is a very grave question; it is one for which the public mind is hardly prepared, and he told the deputation to go forth and promulgate their views, and that if the people of the country were converted to that doctrine, then their battle would be won, because the Government would offer no opposition. As a result of this, at the close of the last general election in England, those gentlemen were able to go to Lord Salisbury and point out to him that a very great number of the representatives in Parliament had been elected as avowed supporters of preferential trade. Lord Salisbury then said that it would be impossible to take up the scheme unless some plan were put forward on business principles. Our Parliament in 1891 resolved that when the British Government would admit to the United Kingdom the products of Canada upon better terms than those accorded to the products of foreign countries, then Canada would be prepared to make a corresponding reduction of duty in favour