

## Preferential Trade.

Then Sir Charles Tupper declares on every possible occasion that Sir Wilfrid Laurier threw away the offer of preferential trade ; that Sir Wilfrid Laurier might, if he pleased, without the slightest difficulty, have obtained from the English government any concession that he chose to ask, and that in place of that Sir Wilfrid Laurier deliberately slighted and scorned the offer which the English government were willing to make to him. Sir, that is a figment invented out of Sir Charles Tupper's brain alone. I know as well as Sir Charles Tupper what were the feelings of the English government, what were the feelings of the men who compose and who form the most influential part of the English government, and I have here before me, and I propose to read to you, a short letter sent to one of my colleagues by the president of the British Empire League, by one of the most eminent men in England, by a member of the present government, which sets forth in the strongest and clearest light the utter falsity of the imputation made by Sir Charles Tupper against Sir Wilfrid Laurier—that he deliberately set his face against the offer of a preference to our imports which the English government were willing to make to him.

Sir, that letter is in answer to a communication from one of our colleagues calling attention to Sir Charles Tupper's statement, is dated May 2, 1899, and is as follows :

### Duke of Devonshire's Letter.

“PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, LONDON.

“My Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of April last. The best answer I can give to your inquiry is to inclose to you a copy of the report of the speeches made on the various occasions in the summer of 1897, when I had the pleasure of meeting the colonial premiers in my capacity as president of the British Empire League. I do not think that in any of these speeches you will find anything to support the view of my opinion on the question of granting preferential trade in the colonies which appears to have been held by Sir Charles Tupper and by some of the journals in this country, which seek to attribute what they term protectionist heresies to members of the British Government. It was no doubt my speech at Liverpool on the 13th of June, 1897, which was referred to by Sir Charles Tupper, and my admission that free trade had not done for us all that was once expected may have been commented on by free traders or opposition journals. But while I congratulated Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Dominion of Canada on the offer which had been made of admitting British goods at reduced rates, as compared with those on the goods of other nations, as an important step in the direction of imperial unity, I had no authority to offer, and I did not offer, to Canada any preference in the British market. You are at liberty to make use as you please of this letter. Believe me, my dear sir, yours faithfully,

“DEVONSHIRE.”

That letter is from a man who bears in England the reputation of being one of the most straightforward statesmen that ever held a seat in any British Cabinet, and I say that it is not possible to find words in the English language which more completely and fully