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Reciprocity and Imperial Relations

Undoubtedly, the great issue in this election is "RECIPROCITY." We should endeavor in discussing it to free ourselves, if possible, from political prejudices. I am satisfied there are a great many Liberals supporting Reciprocity for no other reason than that they are Liberals, and that it is fathered by a Liberal Government. I am also quite satisfied that there are a great many Conservatives opposing it for just the opposite reason, and if we could lift Free Trade and Reciprocity out of their association with a particular party we would be in a position to better understand their merits. There is hardly any question which is wholly right or wholly wrong. Opponents see all the wrongs, and the advocates all the rights, and between them they fail to appreciate, very often, the true dividing line.

RECIPROCITY A TRADITION.

There have been several views of Reciprocity current in Canada favorable to its acceptance. One is the traditional favor in which it has been held. Another is the market of 100,000,000 it opens to Canada. Still another is the sort of general belief that absolute free trade among nations is a good thing, and the nearer we approach it in actual conditions, the better. There is still another view which has gained some ground, and that is that it is to our best interests to live on the friendliest terms with the people of the United States and Reciprocity is, therefore, a step in that direction.

This sounds well, but involves serious fundamental errors. We are all too apt to accept things for what they stand rather than for what they really are. "Free Trade" in England is an instance. A great many years ago, Adam Smith, one of the ablest of political economists, proved with much clearness and conclusiveness that under conditions which existed in his day "Free Trade" among civilized nations was a good thing for those nations—in fact, ideal.

Adam Smith's views on Free Trade became the gospel of a subsequent generation. His theories became popularised in Great Britain by such splendidly eloquent men as Cobden, Bright, and others of that school; and Free Trade was a very natural step to take owing to the peculiar genius of her people. They were essentially commercial in their instincts, a nation of shop-keepers, as Napoleon termed them, who had built up a shipping that encircled the world, and who not only carried for the world, but bought and sold, and manufactured for the world. Naturally,



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