

rangement being made with Germany and Belgium and other nations, and in this case we are giving something for nothing, and our people will strongly object to it.

Another objection is that this proposition destroys all chances of ever securing a preferential arrangement with Great Britain. That, in my opinion, is a very serious objection. I know it is said we can never expect to obtain a preferential arrangement. We do not know, however, what may happen. We can try to secure it, at all events: if we fail, we can remain as we are. It is folly for any nation, situated as Canada is, to throw away all chances of ever securing a true preferential arrangement. I do not think that statement is too strong in its terms. If any hon. gentleman questions it, I have an answer which will satisfy him, for the "Globe" will no doubt be accepted by hon. gentlemen opposite. That paper says:

If, however, there should be other issue, and Great Britain should decide that the Canadian tariff infringes upon the sanctity of Imperial treaties, and should refuse to denounce the treaties with Belgium and Germany, then our measure of tariff reform becomes still wider, and if the manufactures of countries can be sent into Canada even under the special schedule that it was designed should apply only to British goods, we do not know that the masses of the Canadian people need complain. But in this event a fatal blow would be dealt to preferential trading arrangements within the Empire, and the agencies that are making for Imperial union on the basis of inter-Imperial trade, would have received notice to withdraw from the field.

That is conclusive to my mind, and as it is taken from the "Globe," I hope it is conclusive to gentlemen on the other side of the House. While the argument, that this is a dangerous resolution is a good argument, and while the argument, that we are giving valuable concessions for nothing, is a better argument, I believe that this last argument is the strongest of all. It is: That in introducing this resolution and entering on this system, we are throwing away all chance of what we have talked about and dreamed about for years, and which would be a great benefit to this country. Sir, I hope that the Government will reconsider this. I suppose they are not pledged to it so that they cannot withdraw it, but if they should persist in it, for my part, I hope it will not be found workable, because I think it would be a most unfortunate thing for this country. I do not suppose that any advice of mine will have weight with the Government, but I hope they will reconsider the question and look into it carefully. I believe that it would be the part of wisdom to withdraw a resolution like this which is fraught with such serious consequences.

But if they do not reconsider it, and if it goes through the House, I prophesy—although I am not giving to prophesying—that the general tariff will have disappeared altogether in a short time, and that instead

of this general tariff which to-day we are willing to take because we cannot get any better one from the Government, which we are willing to take because a great part of it is practically our own tariff; I prophesy that this general tariff which they are holding up before the manufacturers of this country for them to see, will have vanished from before their eyes, and that all that will be left will be the specific tariff. Then, Sir, our fortunes will be almost decided. I know that hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House have in times past ridiculed protection, and said it did no good to this country. I am glad, Sir, they have belied their former statements by what they have done in the present tariff. I am glad that they do admit, I am glad that their chief organ the "Globe" admits, that Canada needs protection; and yet I am sorry to see that by this preferential arrangement as they call it, they are still bent on destroying protection, and in destroying protection, destroying the manufacturers of this country.

Mr. ROSS ROBERTSON. Mr. Speaker, I cannot pretend that the very little learning I can bring to this all-important question, has been gained in any higher school than the school of experience and observation. Abler men than I will approach this subject from the standpoint of political economy; I will have to try and wrestle with the question without any help from Adam Smith. I was reading the other day that Sir Walter Scott was always telling strange stories about the abstraction and singularity of Adam Smith; how, that a man who could hardly put on his coat or order his dinner at the butchers, was scarcely fit to decide on the proper course of industry or the mercantile dealings of nations.

The point I want to make out of this reference is: that the teachings of political economy are of less value to Canada just now than the teachings of common sense and experience. The proverbial difference between theory and free trade is always wide, and never is it wider than the awful gulf fixed between the theory of free trade and the practice of free trade. The question how a country can best develop her own industries and raise a revenue, is a question that every country must decide according to the circumstances of her own position and the interests of her own Government.

Free trade might be very good for England and very bad for Canada. Probably no man on earth would be more disappointed if he could come to earth to-day than the late Mr. Richard Cobden; for did he not, in 1844, say:

You have no more right to doubt that the sun will rise in the heavens to-morrow morning, than you have to doubt that in less than ten years from this time, when England inaugurates the glorious era of commercial freedom, every civilized community will be free traders to the backbone.