

in exchange for theirs, but they insisted upon being paid in gold. If I correctly interpreted some of the observations of my hon. friend, he gave himself instances of unfairness to his country in the relations which have existed between ourselves and our neighbours—not through any fault of ours, I am sure; but the blame, if blame there is, and I think there is, rests upon our neighbours and not upon us. Now, strange to say, while there is a better feeling appearing on the horizon which seems to indicate the dawn of a better day, men there are in this country who tell us, Stop! stop! don't go any further; put an end to these advances towards remedying a condition of things of which we have been complaining so long. This is the question which, in my estimation, engrosses at the present time the attention of the Canadian people, and this is the question which I think they expect to hear us discuss on this early occasion after the meeting of parliament for business.

To-day we have a new condition of things. The House is aware that last session my hon. friend the Minister of Finance communicated to the House a request which had been placed in our hands from the President of the United States, suggesting that there should be friendly negotiations with a view of improving those commercial relations of which we have been complaining so long. The House will pardon me, I am sure, if I give this part of the correspondence which was exchanged at that time between the Secretary of State for the United States and my hon. friend the Minister of Finance. In a letter addressed to my hon. friend by Mr. Knox, Secretary of State, on the 26th of March last, these words are to be found:

The President is confident that the policy of broader and closer commercial relations with Canada will receive the hearty support of the large majority of the people of the United States, and he has learned with much satisfaction of the existence of a similar sentiment in the Dominion. It may be added that the conditions of the present day, as contrasted with the traditions of the past, are bringing into clearer light the truth that not only mutual trade interests but ethical and social considerations of the highest moment reinforce this common sentiment.

Let me, then, take this opportunity to express, by his direction, the desire of the President that your government will find it convenient to take up with this government, at such time and in such manner as may be mutually satisfactory, the consideration of a readjustment of our trade relations upon the broader and more liberal lines which should obtain between countries so closely related geographically and racially, as indicated by the President in his recent public utterances.

Consequent upon this invitation delegates visited the city of Ottawa a few weeks ago, and there has been an inter-

change of views between them and the commissioners appointed by the Canadian government. The Canadian commissioners were my hon. friends the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Customs. They met the American commissioners, not under the rigid rules of a protocol, not by formal and official communications, but simply for the purpose of exchanging informal pour parlars and general views, so as to find whether it was not possible to reach a common basis upon which they could act, and to devise a new policy for these two countries which have so much in common, and between which there should prevail better commercial relations than we have had in the past.

In the meantime advice to us has not been wanting. It has come to us in different forms, by letter, by resolution of public meetings, and in the various manners by which the public voice expresses itself in these days. All our enemies—and some of our friends—have been very emphatic in telling us that we should have absolutely nothing to do with these American commissioners, that we should eschew them as we would eschew a pestilence, that we had nothing whatever to gain by improving our present trade relations with them, that nothing could be expected which would conduce to the welfare of Canada. My hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) has gone further in this respect than anybody else. In a speech which he delivered a few weeks ago in Toronto, with characteristic exaggeration, and with a serene disregard for truth, facts and common sense, said that at this moment there were only two men in Canada who were anxious to have commercial intercourse with the United States, and these two men were the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Sir, my hon. friend from North Toronto, if he will permit me to tell him so, on that occasion paid my hon. friend the Minister of Finance and myself a high compliment, unconsciously of course, and unwittingly, but none the less effectively. My hon. friend perhaps will not find fault with me if I tell him I did not expect that from him, I did not expect such a compliment as he paid me. My hon. friend is not given to paying compliments. His tongue, glib on whatever subject he treats, is more glib when he pours vinegar than when he pours oil. On that occasion my hon. friend paid me a compliment which I accept with all modesty, but notwithstanding this incentive to my vanity, my modesty refuses to believe that out of eight million people there will be only two men—two only—who would appreciate the great advantage it would be for these eight million people to have access to a market of 90,000,000 men which has been denied to them up to the present time by a most rigid tariff.