

his income. A change has taken place, by which the latter tax will not be paid. Building societies of the old form, which lend only to their own members, are exempted. This makes a distinction which it would be difficult to justify between different lenders of capital, and is no doubt a homage paid to those who are assumed to be the poorer, an assumption which would not always be true. The effect of the several amendments will generally be to improve the measure and make it less objectionable and less unjust.

CANADIAN TRADE WITH AUSTRALIA.

A visit to the city of Toronto, among other places, of the Hon. Mr. Reid, Minister of Defence, Victoria, Australia, serves to keep before the people of this province the question of intercolonial trade as a bond of union between the several outlying branches of the empire. He was officially appointed representative of his province, so far back as December last, to appear at the Australia-Canada Conference, which was then expected to meet as early as February, but which will not get together till next month. Except from Canada and Australia, we need perhaps expect no delegates, Cape Colony and Natal having declared their inability to send representatives at the date fixed for the conference.

Mr. Reid came to Canada by way of England, and when there he was doing what he could to forward what is understood by many to be one of the objects of the intercolonial movement, preferential treatment within the empire. As matters stand at present, there are serious obstructions of a constitutional kind against this form of preference. It is forbidden by the Australian constitution, just as the instructions of governors sent from Great Britain to the colonies used to forbid them to give the royal assent to any bill imposing discriminating duties. Mr. Reid, while in England, tried to ascertain whether it would not be possible to get an alteration in the Australian constitutions which would remove this restriction. In interviewing members of the British Government, with this view, he had the ready assistance of our resident representative, Sir Charles Tupper. They together saw Lord Rosebery and Lord Ripon, and pressed their views on them. What encouragement they got, if any, Mr. Reid does not tell. The reasonable conclusion is that there was in fact nothing in the form of progress in this direction to report, though it has since become known that the Imperial Government have agreed to consider the request. It is one thing for Imperial Ministers to listen to new and unusual proposals; another thing for them to accept what is proposed.

It is something to see a colonial statesman taking not only an imperial view, but one more lofty in its aims than imperialist statesmen are in the habit of dwelling upon. Mr. Reid combines the commercial and the strategic view of colonial relations to one another and to the empire. "Should any trouble come," he said in his Toronto speech, "to our native land, and should there be a combination of the powers against us, our

present service to the East, through the Suez Canal, and the steamers sailing down the Mediterranean from week to week, with ever increasing cargoes, would have pointed at them the guns of the navies of every state in Europe; the watch-dogs in time of war would be a menace to our mail service, and the conduct of our trade with the East." In such an emergency, he would seek safety in the Canadian route to the East. But in war, where one nation can go, others can follow, though it be at a disadvantage. A universal maritime combination of Europe against Great Britain is, let us hope, impossible; certainly it is in the last degree improbable; but if it were really to occur, the difference of routes would scarcely prove the plank of salvation. It is creditable to a colonial statesman to take elevated views of what concerns the empire at large. Pinchbeck patriotism may sometimes pretend to views which it does not at bottom entertain; but the enthusiasm of Mr. Reid has every appearance of being genuine.

The trade of Australia with the outside world amounts to £80,000,000 per annum, of which the share of England is £69,000,000. A country which has developed so large a commerce, in so short a time as Australia counts, is capable of great things, and no one can doubt that such a country has a splendid future before it. Of the existing trade Canada could not, perhaps, be expected to divert much to herself; but it is desirable that both Canada and Australia should be in a position mutually to develop new trade suited to their needs and their capacities. And there is no need that this development should seek an exclusive channel. To do so, would be to search for what is in the last degree difficult, if not impossible, to get, or if got to retain. If we trade with one another according to our mutual wants, why should we seek to exclude others? The answer is that we are of the same empire; but trade is of no nation; to reach the greatest extension it must be without preference. Preference belonged to the early days of colonial history, when it took a form more or less mutual, more or less restrictive. This was the period of infant growth, when swaddling clothes were deemed essential; but it is a period which we have outgrown, and to which it is scarcely possible that, in the nature of things, there should be a return. Preference within the empire is purely a political idea, which could be worked out only at the expense of the highest measure of commercial liberty. At present it is entertained by only a comparatively small, but perhaps increasing, number. Before that minority will have a chance of becoming a majority, many things will happen. If we would increase the trade between Canada and Australia, we cannot wait upon the realization of the idea of preference within the empire, and there is no reason why we should wish to do so. We must be practical, and if we are we shall content ourselves with realizing cable and steam communication sufficient to do all the business that can arise between the two countries.

MERCHANTS AND CHARITY.

We ventured the opinion, not long ago, that grocers, bakers, butchers, shoe dealers, in fact shop-keepers generally, bore more than their fair share of the burdens of "the poor" by giving credit to operatives and laborers out of work, and waiting for the payment of their accounts till better times came. And we expressed the view that much of the sympathy of the public was given to such debtors without a thought of the claims of their creditors to consideration. A Boston paper tells of the address of the late Rev. F. H. Hinman, one of the most eloquent of Boston's young pulpit orators, at the last annual dinner of the Boston Retail Grocers' Association, which confirms the view we have taken. That speaker said that some of his people wanted to set apart a day wherein they should fast for the benefit of the poor. "I opposed this proposition," said he, "because it would injure the grocers without benefiting the poor. I know grocers who are carrying the poor these winter months. Nobody knows how many grocers are to-day counting up their assets and wondering how under God's heavens they are going to carry the poor until spring." It was this intimate acquaintance with every day life and every day business that made the lamented clergyman a power in the city. Some of our Canadian philanthropists would be the better of taking a wider view before they expend all their sympathy and all their effort in bestowing charity upon the wage earner. We have known merchants to be accused of illiberality because they demurred to subscribe towards the assistance of families whose heads already owed these very merchants from \$50 to \$100 each for the necessaries of life.

ARE YOU READY FOR FIRE?

A correspondent of the *Moncton Times* writes in a semi-humorous vein from Shediac, N.B., asking what has become of the village fire engine; doubts if half the people know if there is such a thing, and whether any one but the fire committee of the town knows where it is kept; reminds his readers that although haste was made to get it down from Fredericton [second hand, we presume] two years ago, yet from that day to this nothing has been done to provide reservoirs for water, and suggests that the machine will shortly become a mass of "choice firewood and old iron," for "it never gets a drink of water or a chance to take the air."

What this writer urges in his playful way upon Shediac we would impress seriously upon our readers in many Canadian towns. We know of places to the fire appliances of which all that is said above will apply. There must be other places in like case. The apathy of communities with respect to means of fighting fire has grown into a proverb, and the neglect of those persons supposed to be in charge of fire engines and hose, reservoirs and ladders, is often most culpable. It has been shown time and again, in matters of fire protection, that, to apply the old rhyme:

For want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.