

Canada would have been willing to accept a partial measure of the sort had Washington been willing to grant it. In 1891 the Liberals had staked their fortunes on the issue of complete Reciprocity, or commercial union, and had lost. Since then the issue had subsided into a deathlike sleep from which awakening seemed impossible. Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself had frequently made capital by denouncing the policy.

But the situation in the United States had changed. The increasing exploitation of the resources of the Republic led its leaders to look longingly towards the treasure-house of natural wealth beyond the frontier. The ravenous paper and lumber industries, consuming the forests of the United States at a rate three times as fast as their natural growth, turned hungrily to Canada. The millers of Minneapolis computed with envy the growing crop of the new North-West. More than that, the protective system of the Republic, excellent in its ground-plan, had been pushed here and there by the amalgamated interests to the point of extortion. The rising cost of living, due chiefly to the progressive organization of labour, and tending to squeeze the middle classes between the upper and nether millstones, was laid by many at the door of Protection. A tariff question loomed upon the horizon. The voice of the consumer was lifted up in pain. The Democrats, encouraged by the cry, harked back to their classic doctrine of a revenue tariff. The Republican President must do something to set his house in order for the election of 1912. The attempted revision of the Protective system resulted in the abortive Payne-Aldrich tariff, satisfactory to nobody except perhaps to Mr. Payne and to Senator Aldrich. Reciprocal trade with Canada was eagerly taken up as a means of supplying the industries of the United States with the raw material of the Dominion, easing the agonies of the consumer at least until he should awake from the election of 1912, and above all as a means of enabling Mr. Taft to ride the high tariff horse and the low tariff side by side and to perform from their backs his distinguished double summersault into the Presidential chair.

The particular effect of Reciprocity upon the economic life of Canada it was no part of Mr. Taft's official duty to consider. But for British readers, who are habituated to an entirely