

## WHAT'S UP WITH PREFERENTIAL TRADE?

THE REVIEW favors preferential trade between Great Britain and her colonies because it is the policy which promises to bring prosperity to every class in the community. Some people say it cannot be obtained. That may be; but it is certainly worth trying for, and if the Dominion Government are not making every possible effort to promote this policy they are not doing their plain duty.

It is being said that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, when in England, declined an offer for preferential trade. The Toronto Globe, in explanation, says that the offer made in London by Mr. Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, to the Colonial Premiers was an offer based on complete free trade between Britain and her colonies and a tariff against the rest of the world. The Globe has inside information on official subjects, and its statement, we have no doubt, was made in absolute good faith and may ultimately turn out to be correct. It is still, however, officially unconfirmed. If true, we are inclined to think that the Canadian Premier could hardly promise at once to wipe out all the duties on British goods. The loss of revenue, to say nothing of the revolution in trade, would be large. To make up the \$7,000,000 or \$8,000,000 of national revenue now derived from duties on British goods, heavy taxes would have to be placed on business companies, merchants and farm lands. We doubt if Canada is prepared for this.

But, meantime, the facts are in doubt. The official statement issued by Mr. Chamberlain shows that he spoke of the difficulties in the way of an Imperial preferential arrangement, but no mention was made of its being on a free trade basis. Then Mr. Chamberlain went on to suggest that a Royal Commission should be issued to investigate the question. That offer, we submit, should have been accepted. Enquiry would have brought out a valuable array of facts, and upon the evidence thus adduced we could all have made up our minds. Sir Wilfrid Laurier is an able man, but he is a lawyer. Lawyers have a notion that they know everything. In matters of trade, however, they are profoundly ignorant. There are some business men in the Ministry, like Messrs. Fielding and Paterson, and a question of this kind should be left largely to them. If the offer of a commission to investigate the possibilities of preferential trade is still open it should be accepted by our Government and an enquiry set on foot. That much the country will accept. When Parliament meets the whole question will be discussed, and the mystery which now enshrouds the facts will be cleared away.

In the interval Sir Wilfrid Laurier has been down at Washington. The politicians at Washington—with whom are not to be confounded the people of the United States—usually get the credit of being a set of sharks. Sir Wilfrid probably thinks they cannot trap so clever a man as he into a one-sided treaty. In this belief he may be quite correct, but it is just as well not to be too sure. To get ahead of the Washington politicians you have to get up very early in the morning, in fact, it is usually wise to stay up all night, and even then it would be risky to bank too heavily on your superior acuteness. If the Americans want a trade treaty with Canada they can propose one. Canada has done the proposing for over thirty years with no results. It is time to call a halt in this cowardly scramble for a business that has been repeatedly and

forcibly declined to us. No merchant pursues that sort of policy in his own business, and he does not want the Government of his country to do so either.

## MERCHANTS AND POLITICS.

THERE are signs, here and there, that merchants are growing tired of giving up valuable time to the game of politics. A short time ago the Toronto politicians wanted Mr. W. R. Brock to be a candidate in the bye-election that has just taken place in that city. Influential deputations urged him to enter the field, but he declined emphatically and decidedly, and seems to have replied that he was a business man, not a politician, and intended to devote his time to business.

Anxious as THE REVIEW is to see business men in Parliament and to have public affairs administered in a plain, common-sense, business way, we cannot blame Mr. Brock for refusing to enter Parliament. The fact is that politics to-day demand something more than time; they force a man to become part of a huge machine which administers patronage in the interests of the few favored ones. The expensiveness of elections has been greatly increased during the last ten years, owing to the growth of gangs of ward heelers who have to be paid their expenses instead of doing the work for nothing. When a party is in power the offices are parcelled out, not with the efficiency of the man and the public interest as the first consideration, but according to the amount of "pull" you have in the general scramble. This is one of the most disgusting phases of politics. Is a man's grandmother's nephew's second cousin a Catholic or a Presbyterian; is he a defeated candidate; is he a flat failure in every walk of life; is he lazy and incompetent, but needy? These are vital considerations in determining the choice of the politicians.

No objection can be reasonably made to a party appointing its own friends to public offices, but the selections should fall to competent men, not to worn-out hacks and ward heelers or unsuitable men with a "pull."

## GOOD ADVICE.

IN the will of the late Hon. Hiram Black, legislative councillor for Nova Scotia, who died not long ago, there occurred some sensible advice to his children. He urged them to protect and care for their mother while she lived and then to assist and defend each other. The will went on: "Be temperate, industrious and careful about getting into debt. Try and prepare yourselves for and get started in the profession or calling in life which best suits your inclinations. Always be careful to maintain a good character. . . . Always remember that you have to rely on your own exertions to gain a living and a position in the world. Keep out of politics, but vote as you think best for the country's interests." There is something very striking in these parting counsels from an old father to his children, and there is the ring of sound sense and morality about them. Not the least remarkable is the advice to "keep out of politics." It is quite evident that the old legislative councillor had seen enough of the ways of politics to consider a warning necessary.

Many men who used to be tied to party politics are now breaking loose. They are ready to vote intelligently and with vigilance, but to be the serfs of the heelers is a little more than they feel equal to. This is especially true of business men.