

# THE CANADIAN MANUFACTURER

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As in our last issue we were compelled to encroach on the space generally devoted to editorial matter, in consequence of the great pressure of advertisements, we make amends in this number by omitting our usual illustrated notices.

## "LET US HAVE PEACE."

It is not the business of this journal to engage in political discussion and the warfare of party politics. It is what its name implies—a paper devoted to the manufacturing interests of Canada. But with these interests the question of Protection or Free Trade is intimately and indissolubly connected, and hence a certain necessity. It so happens that this question has been made a political one in Canada, and how, then, can you discuss it without getting into politics? Better not discuss it at all, it may be suggested: just leave it severely alone, and say nothing. The suggestion is easily made, but that we should adopt it is wholly inadmissible. It is absurd on the face of it to ask that a journal devoted to the interest of Canadian manufactures should avoid that main question affecting manufactures—the question of Protection or Free Trade. The play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out is one of those curiosities of absurdity which have been imagined: whether it was ever anything more than a joke of the imagination may be doubted. A journal of manufactures with no opinion on the question of protection to manufactures would be just such another. Nobody of common sense expects the CANADIAN MANUFACTURER to make the attempt, even, to occupy any such absurd and impossible position.

In the interests of manufactures it is to be regretted that this question of Protection or Free Trade ever became a political issue in any country whatever. The question is at bottom one of material facts and figures; one that must to a great extent be solved by application of the four rules of arithmetic. To get in a rage over such a question, and to make it a political issue, tends to obscure it all through, and to keep out of sight the solution we are trying to reach. This is a main reason why its ever having been made a political issue is to be regretted. To the extent that men favor either Protection or Free Trade, for political reasons only, the settlement of the question, *on its merits*, is defeated and delayed. And that its settlement on the merits should be thus defeated and delayed is, we hold, a general loss, and opposed to the public interest.

Taking the political relations of Protectionists and Free

Traders respectively, the world over, we find no uniformity of relationship, but contradiction instead; one thing here and the very reverse there. In England Free Trade was supported by the Reformers and opposed by the Conservatives, and the same relationship exists in Canada, though by no means to the extent that is generally supposed. In the United States it was the Radical party that carried high Protection, the Conservative party there—the party opposed to change—being all on the Free Trade side. The autocratic authority of the late Emperor Napoleon was strong enough to force France a step or two in the direction of Free Trade, much against the will of the people. But to-day France is a Republic, and Protectionist to the backbone. In the Australian colonies, again, the landowners' party is on the Free Trade side, while the Radical party is Protectionist. These various instances may well cause people in Canada to bethink themselves whether there is really in the nature of things any sound, logical reason why a Conservative must be a Protectionist, and why a Reformer must be a Free Trader.

It is for the country's interest that the trade question should be taken out of politics. And for this reason, namely (here we come to the second reason in the case, the particular and practical one for Canada), that as long as it continues to be a political issue there continues also the element of doubt and uncertainty as to the future, which is a prime hindrance to the country's development. In the interest of the country we take up General Grant's words, and say; "Let us have peace." Let us have an end of the *political* fight over this question; and then we can with more coolness of judgment proceed to its settlement, on the merits. As long as the political excitement over it lasts our minds are overheated, and the clear, cool light of reason, which should guide us to a true solution, is obscured. For want of complete assurance as to the permanence of the National Policy the country is losing millions annually. How much is being lost in this way each one may conjecture, on such information as he possesses, though of course no computation can be made. The current loss is an unknown quantity, but beyond all doubt a very large one. Capitalists require certainty, they want the assurance that the conditions upon which they embark their capital will be permanent. Something hinders this assurance from being as complete and as satisfactory as it ought to be, and what is it? Everybody knows that it is the interference of *political* contingencies with the question whether the investment of capital in this or the other industry would be safe. No doubt the country is progressing very rapidly with such assurance as we have already, but it would progress much faster if the idea of permanence in