

giving preferential treatment to the products of Canada, to a certain extent at least. He went on to state :

That practical statesman, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, has come to the conclusion that the time has come when it is possible to have within the bounds of the Empire another step taken which will give to the colonies in England a preference for their products over the products of other nations.

That is clear ; it shows what was clearly in the hon. gentleman's mind.

What would be the possibilities of such a step if it was taken ? We sell our goods in England. We send our wheat, our butter, our cheese, all our natural products, but there we have to compete with similar products from the United States, from Russia, and from other nations. Just see what a great advantage it would be to Canada, if the wheat, cheese and butter which we send to England would be met with a preference over similar products of other nations. The possibilities are immense.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the new and progressive Secretary of the Colonies, has declared that the time has come when it is possible to discuss that question. But, Sir, if England is going to give us that preference, England would expect something from us in return. What is it she would expect ? England would expect that we would come as closely to her own system of free trade, as it is possible for us to come. England does not expect that we should take her own system of free trade such as she has it ; but I lay it before you that the thing the English people would expect in return is that, instead of a principle of protection, we should adopt the revenue form of tariff, pure and simple. These are the conditions upon which we can have that boon.

Is not that as clear as anything the hon. gentleman has ever said ? The points are clearly defined : first, that England will give us a preference for certain of our goods ; and, second, that we shall have to come as closely as possible to England's free trade, though she does not expect us to conform to it altogether ; but we shall have to give up the protection idea, and that is the condition upon which we can have the boon. If ever a pledge was given by a public man just previous to an election that he would in Great Britain favour preferential trade for this country under these conditions, it was given by Mr. Wilfrid Laurier, as he was at that time, in the city of London. Now, in Montreal a little earlier than that, he stated :

In regard to this question of preferential trade, I desire to say that Sir Charles Tupper is no more in favour of the idea than I am myself. He added : " My hope is—nay, my conviction is—that on the 23rd of June the Liberal party will be at the head of the polls, and that it will be the Liberal party, with its policy of a revenue tariff, that will send commissioners to London to arrange for a basis of preferential trade.

I want to emphasise that remark. Where were the commissioners to be sent ? Sent to England, to arrange a basis of preferential trade. With whom ? With the British

Government. Not sent to a public meeting at Liverpool, which was the first place where the hon. gentleman opened his mouth, and where he did all the damage. I make this point now, in advance of my argument, that under that pledge, in view of the invitation of Mr. Chamberlain to a conference of the colonial Premiers at which commercial union was the first subject to be discussed, it was the hon. gentleman's bounden duty to have sealed his lips close until he sat with Mr. Chamberlain and with the other colonial Premiers at that conference. Did he do that ? We will see later on. The only point I wish to affirm now is that he knew the conditions of preferential trade when in London and in Montreal, and he pledged his honour as a public man in favour of them.

What more, Sir ? Have I need to say that there was a call for a conference ? Here is the despatch that was sent out on the 23th of January, 1897, and it was an invitation to discuss many subjects of the greatest interest to the Empire, such as commercial union, colonial defence, and so forth, commercial union being placed first on the list.

Then, Sir, they passed the preference tariff, so-called, and that was heralded in England as being exclusively for British products. There were the advance steps already taken. Public opinion had been cultivated in this country until nine out of every ten men would have welcomed preferential trade with Great Britain on those terms if it could have been got. Public opinion was being moulded in Great Britain until a great change had taken place there, and, under the influence of the Jubilee year, British trade sentiment was seeking for the basis of a compromise which would bring the colonies into commercial union with the mother country, and was ready under the generous impulse of the time to give to Canada and the other colonies all that possibly could be given to bring it about. The soil was well cultivated here, and well cultivated in Great Britain. The sower of the seed more than any one else in his capacity at that time, was crossing the briny Atlantic. How will he sow the seed, and what is the seed he will sow ? Then, Sir, when Mr. Laurier, as the representative of Canada, stepped off the vessel at the Liverpool docks, and made his way to that assemblage that was gathered to meet him, headed by the foremost men in the Cabinet of the country, what was the condition of things in Great Britain ? There was a great exultation of colonial importance among all classes, and the idea of inter-Imperial trade and inter-dependence never had been at such a tense heat. There was an intense feeling that something practical should be done in the Jubilee year to cement this union, and to add commercial bonds to those of loyalty and blood already existing. There was generous trend in British sentiment to go further than the old Cobdenistic theories would