

manufacturers would be content with the moderate profits, and the slow accumulation of wealth, for which alone the farmer can hope. Is not the clamour for Protection largely dictated by the circumstance that, without its artificial privileges, the manufacturers would generally require to content themselves with a moderate competence instead of a large fortune, and to take their fair share in that hard labour by which alone the wealth of a country can be developed?

3. An additional injustice involved in the system of Protection is the fact, that it withdraws the capital—that is, the labour—of the people from its most remunerative into less remunerative spheres. It is said, indeed, that Protection may be justified as necessary to tempt capital into manufactures, and that, as soon as they are established in vigour, they will stand alone without Protection. Now, as to the first of these points,—the necessity of Protection for the purpose of inducing capitalists to undertake manufactures,—the most familiar facts in our commercial history disprove the assumption. So eager is capital for investment with any fair prospect of remuneration, that scarcely a day passes without some bogus joint-stock enterprise being rapidly floated on the flood of subscriptions which pour into its stock, even though its brilliant advantages exist only in the imagination of the subscribers excited by the delusive prospectuses of the projectors. But as to the second point,—that, after being protected for a time, manufactures will be able to stand alone,—it is sufficient to say that, even if manufactures, which have been forced into existence by such a process, would survive the withdrawal of the stimulus, it would be impossible to convince manufacturers of the fact. The only means by which they could be induced to surrender their privileges, would be the discovery that the whole system of such privileges is a delusion and a snare to themselves, and that all the industries of a country will flourish with a healthier vigour by every sort of monopoly being swept away. It is this discovery that furnishes the true explanation of a circumstance in the commercial history of England, of which Protectionists commonly make an amusing misinterpretation. Here again the Editor of the SPECTATOR has made himself the mouthpiece of Protectionist reasoning. In the same paragraph, from which I have already quoted, it is said that “under a system of Protection England became ‘the greatest commercial and maritime nation in the world’; and then, when there was a feeble foreign competition, when England was—by reason of money and perfect machinery and skilled artisans—master of the situation, Free Trade was demanded and granted.” Now, the truth is the very opposite of what is here alleged. The true industrial greatness of England has been achieved since the system of Protection was abolished; and even if her industrial greatness had been reached *under* that system, it could not have been reached *by means of* that system. On the contrary, what eminence she had attained before the abolition of Protection can only be supposed to have been attained *in spite of* that system, else it would be impossible to explain the marvellous expansion of all her industries since she entered on her career of Free Trade with the world. There is no proof, moreover, of the cunning generalship which is here ascribed to her in a campaign against other nations for commercial supremacy. She had simply opened her eyes to the fact, that the retired student in the little town of Kircaldy, who made the Science of Economy at home among English readers, had made a great discovery upon which the Wealth of Nations depends; and she simply, but wisely, altered her polity to suit the new revelation of science. It is ludicrously unhistorical to charge her with having first taken care to secure the benefits of Protection before endeavouring to reap those of Free Trade. As well assert that she first of all secured the advantages of Slavery and Persecution before adopting and preaching the great principles of Freedom of Labour and Freedom of Conscience.

4. The last injustice to be noticed here as involved in the system of Protection is its interference with the freedom of individual action. If there is any sphere in which the freedom of the individual should be unrestricted by unnecessary interference of Government, surely such a sphere is to be found in the transactions of trade. Now, the essence of individual freedom is, that I shall be allowed to act up to my convictions of what is right, as long as by doing so I do not infringe upon the like freedom on the part of others. In the matter of trade I hold it to be little short of insanity for a man to prefer paying a dollar and twenty-five cents for an article when he can obtain it for a dollar; and it does not appear to be any wiser for a nation to prefer paying a hundred and twenty-five millions for manufactured articles, when these articles can be purchased for a hundred millions, and the odd twenty-five may thus be employed upon other expenditures. Is it not an outrage upon the principles of liberty, that I should be compelled by law to adopt, in my trading transactions, a course which, in an economical point of view, appears to me insane? I do not dream of interfering with the right of those who differ from me to act up to their convictions; why should they interfere with my right to the same freedom of action? In fact there is a very simple method by which Protectionists may accomplish their object without any of that irritating fuss which they are at present creating in our political life. If they are sincere, let them show their sincerity by acting up to their professions without any legal compulsion. An interesting experiment might thus be instituted between the results of buying always in the cheapest market and those obtained by refusing to buy foreign goods, however cheap they might be in comparison with domestic productions. But unfortunately the Protectionist is as stubborn as any Free Trader in purchasing what he wants wherever he can get it at the least cost, except in so far as he is prevented from doing so by law; and I am credibly informed that some Protectionists have been occasionally observed by their fellow-travellers to be guilty of a little harmless smuggling on their return from a trip to Europe or the United States.

J. CLARK MURRAY.

### THE METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE.

The Methodist Conference now in session in this city is the Second Parliament of the formerly separate bodies now forming “the Methodist Church in Canada.” Its functions are purely legislative: it having no power to review the executive action of the local annual Conferences; to whom it pertains to carry out existing laws and discipline. Thus it is in no sense a Court of Appeal:

differing broadly in this respect from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church; before which any of the lower local Church courts may be brought for review and possible reversal. It may be said to approach more nearly to the idea of an Anglican Synod: from which, however, it has again its special differences. An outsider might imagine that a settled and time-honoured institution like Methodism, which has always plumed itself upon its fixed order and unchanging methods, would furnish little work for a legislative assembly: even though held only once in four years: but it must be remembered that there was considerable diversity in the practice of the different ecclesiastical bodies which are now joined in one. The New Connexion Methodists, for instance, originally separated on certain points of practice: the disagreements remaining at the time of union in 1874. The first General Conference was largely occupied in bringing into line the existing diversities, by a scheme of temporary compromises: and a number of important points were only dealt with tentatively and experimentally; with the understanding that they would come up for review at the present Conference.

In addition to this foreseen business, the results of the experience of four years' working of the new machine, the outside forces of advancing thought have been at work preparing new issues and new problems for the legislative wisdom of the Conference. This is seen by a glance at the Notices of Motion which have been placed upon the paper: and which have been referred to a committee; to which has been given the serious and questionable responsibility of reporting or not reporting upon them. It is thus rendered probable that many pet bantlings will be at once quietly smothered in committee to stop their crying; and will be heard of no more. Whether this is better than the annual “slaughter of the innocents” at the close of a parliamentary session is a question. Probably some of the authors of these propositions will not submit to see their offspring smothered without making a fight for it. On the other hand, much unprofitable discussion may be saved; and this will be something: for the accumulated steam of four years will take a long time to blow off in any case.

Before advertizing to some of the points in debate, let us take a look at the Conference. It is held with open doors, so that there are no secrets: except such laundry work as is reserved for the privacy of committees. And yet a stranger would be apt to think that the building chosen for the assembly had been chosen with a view to privacy; for it is extremely difficult to hear five following words from the majority of the speakers. It is true that the hard rasping tones of Dr. Douglas, the Chairman, can be heard distinctly all over the building; as also can the voices of some other speakers: but very many do not evidence the traditional “shouting” of a Methodist preacher, and are altogether inaudible beyond the middle of the church. As usual in such assemblies, a few men only are prominent. The fine head and features of Dr. Nelles, of the College at Cobourg, are at once noticeable: as also the burly majesty of the old Montreal favourite, Dr. Potts: who, speaking but sparingly, yet comes down now and again with sledge-hammer stroke upon some twaddling brother or nonsensical proposition. Dr. Ryerson, the venerable “Bottom” of the Toronto *Globe*, who has played so many parts during his long and active life, gives sign that he can play a good part still. He has a pretty hand for the broadsword, in spite of his great age; and in his address, slashed away famously at the absent Dr. Carman for daring to claim precedence for the Episcopal section of Methodism. Rev. A. Sutherland, the new Secretary of the Conference, is also necessarily prominent. The selection is an excellent one: for Mr. Sutherland is a ready, clear and forceful speaker and business man: perhaps just a little too originating for the recording function he has to perform. Dr. Carroll, from the Toronto Conference, is very noticeable in the meeting: his thin eager face and sharp, almost querulous, tones being soon made familiar by the frequency with which he jumps up to speak. The good Dr. is very deaf; and wields his huge copper trumpet as if it were a marshal's *bâton*; or the nozzle of a “Babcock” engine: with which he was distributing heavy gas upon the fiery crowd in front of him. For it must be confessed that the Conference was somewhat noisy and excited in its earlier sessions: and it is not pleasant to have to listen to more than five speakers at once!

It is difficult to name all the distinguished men in a Methodist Conference. Each is “one of the most distinguished men in”—his own neighbourhood. But the “Doctors” are all distinguished men certainly: and it is one of the effects of this advancing age upon Methodism that it is becoming extensively “Doctored.” The frequent repetition of the title several times provoked an audible smile. Two names must, however, be mentioned, whose owners have indeed distinguished themselves: the one by his intellectual attainments and Christian culture, the other by the fervour of his devotion to his work, and the amount and quality of what he has accomplished. Dr. Coley's broad-beaming, innocent-looking face scarcely gives promise of the great mental power stored behind it. Yet with all the winning modesty of his address one soon observes the quiet dignity of conscious strength. Mr. Taylor's name suggests the enquiry as to his possible relationship to “Father Taylor” of Boston: for there is a great deal in common in the quaint rough earnestness of their language and style; as well as in the self-abnegation and consecrated effort of their lives. The Conference has honoured itself in the honour it has accorded these two visiting brethren, who, from the far-east and the far-west, have crossed paths and struck hands here in Montreal.

Dr. Coley well expressed the general impression one receives from looking at the Conference, when he quoted the old Yorkshire-woman's “bless their hearts, how bonnie they be”: more grateful than Pharaoh's kine, they *do* look the better for the kindly treatment they have received. The opportunity of comparing men from different sections of the Dominion is not as good as was expected; owing to the disregard of the geographical divisions placarded about the church. Men were forced to crowd to the front in order to hear; or went hither and thither to sit with an old friend: so that the bays allotted to New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are entirely deserted. The lay element in the Conference deserves notice; though as a rule, it has not made itself heard much in debate. Exception must be made of Mr. W. Kenneny of Toronto: a prominent merchant; whose set determined face with its abundant framing of hair (now, alas! a grizzly gray, though not long since a jetty black) is often turned to address the meeting. Judge Jones, of Brantford, was early