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MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE FISHERY NEGOTIATION.

WHAT is the true value of the newspaper clamour against the service of Mr. Chamberlain on the Fisheries Commission? I have not observed these objections in any journal of England, Canada, or the United States not open to suspicion of serving party or business interests at every turn or opportunity. Yet, though the source of the attacks may be tainted in every instance, for aught I know or believe to the contrary, the attacks themselves may be perfectly true and valid.

In this country the question of the Fisheries is primarily and chiefly a New England question, the rest of the community having neither capital nor population engaged in the North American fisheries, and the extra cost of fish for the table of the consumer, due to the New England policy of an exclusive market, awakening but a languid public interest, if any. But the idea is abroad among us that these fisheries are an important nursery of seamen, which our defensive needs require us to foster in every reasonable way, and as, in the absence of interest or organisation elsewhere, the New England version of the Fisheries story finds exclusive circulation and credit, our people generally suppose that Canada, relying upon or actually backed by England, has been "giving impudence" to and filching small change from the pocket of the big and good natured Uncle Sam; hence there is an undercurrent of genuine though not quick resentment against Canada that ought not be left out of calculation by those in the places of authority in Great Britain and Canada. This feeling has a direct and material relation to the state of parties within the United States.

Mr. Cleveland wishes and hopes and more than half expects to be chosen as his own successor in just a year from now. The Republican leaders share his expectation, but none the less hope for the unexpected, either through factional disaffection in the President's own party, the discontent among independents who supported him in 1884, or some miscarriage of action or policy on his part between now and next September, when the Presidential canvass shall begin to warm. They cannot forget by what a small and even doubtful majority in the pivotal State the election was decided in 1884, and they trust for the best from a strong candidate and a good "war-cry" in 1888. If the Fishery negotiations should turn out badly for our side, that will be made a leading issue against the party in power, and however it may turn out, the customary unscrupulous use will be made of it to influence the electorate.

For some reasons Mr. Cleveland would gladly let the Fisheries Question remain in *status quo* till he could secure the firm seat of a second term of office. That he does not do so is evidence that he either fears to go into his canvass next year with a repetition of irritation on the fishing grounds, with all its opportunities of misrepresentation and partisan exploitation to his injury; or that he expects a surrender by England of a substantial part of the Canadian position, which would help him greatly; or that he feels strong enough in other directions to carry a fair and honourable settlement over the heads of partisan clamour, prejudice, and ignorance, and to reap the benefit at least of honest work and gain.

Whatever Mr. Cleveland's motives and expectations in entering upon a

present discussion of the Fisheries controversy, there are certain elements of weakness in his position that may tend to the injury of England or Canada. The only part of the community that has a lively interest in our side of the question is against the President and his supposed views of policy. The Senate, a constituent part of the treaty-making power, is against him in numbers and in weight of political ability. He is much weaker than he ought to be in the House of Representatives, and his Secretary of State, a just, conscientious, and painstaking man, is without the influence that ought to belong to so much character, experience, and high-minded public service. For the good of Canada and of Great Britain, the President ought to be helped in every possible way in carrying through the good work he has undertaken, and the appointment of Mr. Chamberlain is in no sense a help to him. Mr. Chamberlain will of course be received kindly and the best done with him that circumstances will allow, and upon those brought into immediate relation with him he is expected to make a good impression in respect of all desirable qualities in a negotiator. It is also possible that he will form pleasant personal relations with influential Senators and Representatives of both parties, and return to England a social and conference-room success, but all that and much more will not prevent the results attained by his coöperation from being bitterly assailed by the Irish-Americans and the large number of politicians and journalists who bow to the strong, because organised and compacted Irish-American sentiment; and the assaults of the Irish upon anything partaking of Mr. Chamberlain will play directly into the hands of the Republicans, who will leave no stone unturned to wrest the Federal Government and its vast patronage from the hands that but just seized them three years ago.

It is an open secret in Washington that no choice could have well been more distasteful to our authorities than Mr. Chamberlain, and if inquiry had been properly made before his designation to the Joint Commission, he certainly never would have been gazetted. The disregard shown by the home authorities to the exigent position of Mr. Cleveland in the matter indicates that that wide-awake diplomatist, the British Minister at Washington, was not confidentially sounded as to who would and would not be *persona grata* here.

Washington.

B.

COMMERCIAL UNION.

THE third objection taken to the scheme of Commercial Union is the most difficult to deal with. It is that it would be impracticable for two independent nations to adjust a common tariff satisfactory to both. It is argued that the revenue necessities of each might differ, and a tariff which produced enough revenue for one of them might not produce enough for the other. And even if a satisfactory adjustment was made in the first instance, in the course of time the exigencies of either might require an increase or a reduction, and that infinite difficulties would stand in the way of a readjustment. These are substantial difficulties, and need to be looked into carefully.

It will be kept in mind that this objection is one to form, not substance. It is a mere matter of detail. If it can be successfully shown that the result of Commercial Union would be to double the wealth of Canada in five years, it is not likely the Canadian people would be daunted by any mere difficulties of detail. But the objection is a practical one, and merits consideration. Granted that Commercial Union is a good thing, how is the scheme to be worked out?

This very difficulty suggests the folly of tariffs of all kinds. Who can doubt that the world would be better and the whole human race be brought nearer to the realisation of a common brotherhood if there were no such things as custom-houses? Who also will undertake to controvert the fact that tariff revenues are the foundation of national extravagance and official jobbery? It is a vulgar impression that a revenue collected through the custom-house and excise departments is not a tax at all, and that consequently the more revenue you get the more money you will have to lavish. This is the origin of reckless expenditure and growing and multiplying wants. If all the money required by National Governments were raised by direct taxation we should see a system of economy, which would remind one of Spartan virtue, and we should not have to worry over such questions as Commercial Union, for the whole world would form one great Commercial Union.