

read in the history of centuries gone by is beginning to repeat itself. Canada needs to-day strong men to break asunder the shackles which protectionism is silently putting upon true progress. The man of one idea, or as he calls himself in Yankee parlance, "the self-made man," is playing by far too large a part in our political arena. We need men of breadth and culture—men noted for more than one thing—men like Salisbury, Gladstone, Balfour, Goschen. Well might the battle for free trade be begun over again. Canada needs something more than a timid, wavering party like that led by Mr. Laurier—she needs a voice which can speak with no uncertain sound against monopolies and mercantilism.

The argument which convinced Peel of the expediency of free trade was the argument of necessity. So long as absolute starvation was not at the doors of the people of the electorate, all ears were deaf to the voices of Bright and Cobden. In Canada it would indeed be a bad policy and a bad Government that would prevent progress in some form from being made. The argument of necessity has not yet appeared. So long as the masses of people are clothed and fed, and the poor provided for, the corporations, however dangerous to the State, do not excite many apprehensions on their part.

The argument which carries weight with the Canadian elector—and about the only argument upon which the protectionist can rely in this country—is to the effect that Canada is situated beside a highly protected country and that if she strikes off her tariff chains, her manufacturers will be crushed by the unequal system of competition which would spring up between home and foreign trade. This argument has time and again been successfully combated so far as the stress of logic and clear thinking go, but its refutation has never yet found a lodgment in the public mind. Again and again has it been shown that freedom of competition in trade will work out by natural laws the salvation of all legitimate home industries, that the effects of exchange do not end with a single action and its corresponding reaction but extend into the whole mechanism of production and distribution—and, as some clear thinkers would say, with wholesome influences upon the mechanism of government itself. Still the men who cling to the "same old policy" make a very simple and easy explanation of the whole matter—too simple to be understood and too easy to be believed. If by doing away with protective tariffs the competition in our markets is rendered keener and the producer finds it harder to dispose of his commodities, the influences do not end here. On the other hand consumers pay less for their commodities. Now, not a few but the whole five millions of Canadians are consumers—they are consumers not of one or two articles but of all shapes and qualities of articles. A hatter, for instance, sells nothing but hats, but consumes hundreds of different kinds of commodities. If he finds that the market price of his article falls after the present tariff laws have been given to the flames, he is still compensated for his reduced income by the fact that he can buy his kerosene, his tea, his cottons and woollens and almost everything which he consumes at a reduced rate. Every dollar of the hatter's income, though smaller, is given a greater purchasing power.

In the second place, other things being equal, since the labourer can purchase his commodities at reduced rates, it is equivalent to an advance in wages. This, of course, for the time being, will be directly beneficial to the labourer. But, furthermore, it is a sound principle of political economy that an increase in wages, whether by putting the labourer in more comfortable circumstances and so inviting him to summon more children into existence, or by migration, tends to increase the number of labourers. Hence in the course of years the tendency will be to fix wages at a free-trade standard in place of the present standard which they assume under protection. It is now clear that the hatter referred to above will not only be enabled to buy his commodities at reduced rates, but he will also be enabled, since labour would be less expensive, to manufacture hats at a reduced cost. The hatter is thus strengthened as a competitor. What is true of the hatter holds also for all producers in Canada. Under a free trade policy there is no good reason why the Canadian should not compete successfully with the American in his own market. In the United States labour would be more expensive, their taxes higher, and the commodities which the great masses of people consume would be furnished

to them at a greater cost than in Canada. Why should Canadians not compete successfully?

One more point may be noticed with profit in passing. It may be suspected that, in the first shock in the introduction of a free trade policy, the Canadian manufacturer would be obliged to pass through a period of depression. Such would probably be the case. But it takes time for the industries of a nation to adjust themselves to any radical change. The national policy brought sorrow to many loyal hearts when it was first introduced. Peel's great measure of 1846 was the means of placing him in the cool shades of opposition. Still political justice must prevail. The manufacturer, as we have seen, would be partially compensated for his loss in the change by the increased purchasing power of his money. For the remainder he must wait until the standard of wages under protection changes to a free-trade standard. The period of depression would last during this change. If the labouring population do not press upon the limits of subsistence but are limited in point of numbers, while the amount of capital-seeking employment is greater than can be profitably employed while the change is taking place, the labourers will receive greater remuneration for their services, and at the same time receive the benefit of the increased purchasing power of their money. This in turn, as above indicated, by making it easier for the labourers to subsist, will tend to cause an increase in their numbers, and so, in the long run, the increased competition for employment, which would result on account of the increase in the number of labourers, would bring down wages to a free-trade standard corresponding to free-trade prices. We must not, however, in the meantime lose sight of the fact that if the labouring population receive more wages they must also expend more if they are to live more comfortably. This means that they must consume more. The market is thus widened for the manufacturer. So, however long the depression may be, through which the manufacturer must go during the change, it will not be great since the movement carries along with it its own panacea.

Now, the conclusion from this discussion is not that a general depression will be laid upon our people—far from it. Foreign commodities must be brought into our country, and our railways and other systems of carriage must be employed, but not employed without money and without price. If, after the cost of carriage is added to the cost of production of foreign commodities, our manufacturers cannot compete with them in our own markets, then we may suspect that such manufacturers are not carrying on a business which is conducive to political justice. The capital so employed should be transferred to some other form of investment in which the capitalists can save a margin after furnishing the people what they demand at rates either on a level or below the rates of the same kind of foreign commodities. Without involving ourselves in all the issues involved in the National Policy, it is still clear that these questions are not to be determined by any superficial considerations like those advanced by the Liberal-Conservative party. Deep in the whole system of representative Government the difficulties lie. Are we to say that all these ills are to be traced to party government? The case is clear. Party government is not wholly at fault. Deeper considerations will show that the chief source of the difficulties is to be found in the condition of those governed. "Now must we educate our masters," said a cynical English statesman after the passing of the last Reform Bill relating to the electoral franchise. If "Hodge" is to come to the polls to vote, then he must be made to understand the political issues. While "Hodge" does not exist in this country, "The boy" of the corporation and "Uncle Thomas" inside the ring and the man outside the ring seeking for a job do exist; and the Canadian statesman might well repeat, "Now must we educate our masters." Time will undoubtedly bring about the needed change. In the meantime it is to be hoped that the independent electors in the present campaign will make a powerful effort to capture as large a portion of the press of the Dominion as possible. Let them shower judicious criticisms upon the heads of both political parties until the day comes when every one of the 213 electoral districts will be set down by the office seeker in the list of the "doubtfuls" and when every elector must be approached as a man who possesses an opinion of his own.

QUEERCUS.

Nova Scotia.