

cheaper or a little better. The object of the tax is to do this; and, so far as it operates at all effectively, it does it. Only so far as the consumer is made to pay is the preference an operative force at all.

INTERFERENCE WITH COLONIAL LIBERTIES.

Preference has so far been in a fluid and experimental stage: each Colony has retained and exercised complete freedom to shift its tariff and its preference as often as it likes. It has been simply a freewill offering to the Mother Country or to a sister Colony. But so soon as a Colonial preference is made the basis of a definite bargain with Great Britain, and the several preferences of the Colonies and the Mother Country are erected into an Imperial Tariff system, designed to secure a growing unity and economic self-sufficiency for the Empire, this freedom of each Colony to chop and change its tariff according to the policy of each changing Government, or the passing exigencies of Colonial finance, cannot be retained. If tariff systems are to be arranged so as to secure to the Colonies a firm, full hold upon the British market for their foods and raw materials, and to secure to British manufacturers a regular, sufficient outlet for their surplus goods in Colonial markets, each party must be able to develop its agriculture and lay down its plant with some reasonable assurance that the tariffs which are to secure the market for their produce shall not suddenly be altered to their detriment. This applies not merely to the relations between Great Britain and the Colonies, but to the inter-Colonial relations.

If Great Britain had specifically engaged to give a substantial preference upon Canadian wheat and Australian wool, in return for a valid preference upon her textiles and her metal manufactures, she must require some assurance that Canadian or Australian manufactures shall not, by raising their protective tariffs, damage or cancel the preference. Each part of the Empire would have a vested interest in the tariffs of the other parts. Not only must not the formal preferences in the several tariffs be withdrawn or altered without