

looked forward and imagined that these were reasons that would induce this country to desire annexation. But I cannot see why reciprocity with the United States should have the influence upon the sentiments of this country that the hon. gentleman imagines. I do not see anything in the experience of this country from 1854 to 1866 to warrant such a conclusion. We had an annexation party in Canada in 1849, and, as my hon. friend at my right (Sir Richard Cartwright) said, the leader of this Government has shown his approval of that sentiment by taking care never to have a Cabinet without having one or more signers of that manifesto in his Cabinet. We had, I say, an annexation party in 1849, but did reciprocity, which began in 1854, encourage that sentiment and make annexationists more numerous? On the contrary, we lost sight of annexation sentiments entirely. When we got the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, the annexation party ceased to exist and never gave evidence of life during the continuance of that treaty; and so I believe it would be now. I believe that the reason why the people of Canada desire annexation is simply because they desire to have the advantage of free access to the American markets. Can we suppose that the average Canadian is enamoured of American institutions, that he considers their laws better than ours, their school system better than ours, their form of government better than ours? No, Sir; none of these things. These points do not enter into the thoughts of the annexationist. He is merely an annexationist because he wishes free access to the American market, wishes to see the barriers broken down that separate the two countries. Give him that free access, and what inducement is there for him to continue to be an annexationist? He has got all he wants. There are no reasons for supposing that the adoption of this policy would lead to annexation, and there is no warrant for saying that intimate commercial relations and distinct political autonomy are incompatible with each other. Why, Sir, the various members of the American Confederacy lived together on terms of commercial union from the organization of that Government down to 1860. But did commercial union, or unrestricted reciprocity, with intimate commercial relations, bind the two sections of the American people together? On the contrary, they were just as distinct in their sentiments, just as distinct in their views and aspirations when the rebellion broke out in 1861, as they were when the United States Constitution was framed in 1789. It had no influence, no effect in bringing these two sections of the United States together and making them one political autonomy although the commercial union of the two sections was perfect and complete for well-nigh seventy-five years. And so perhaps it would be with us. We may have intimate commercial relations with the United States, but they need not tend to break down our political autonomy, or our desire to maintain the political autonomy of the provinces of this Dominion. At all events, Sir, we do not need to drag in the question of annexation; what we want is greater commercial freedom—unimpeded access to the markets of our own continent—peace, good-will and friendly relations with our brethren to the south of us, and a marked and desirable improvement in our own condition. The political union question is probably not a practical question of our generation.

We do not need to trouble our minds about it, and we may safely leave it to take care of itself and give our attention to the question of great, immediate and practical importance—the question of free access to our national markets.

Then, Sir, another objection that is raised is that unrestricted reciprocity will ruin our manufacturers. Well, I suppose that when the hon. gentleman gets all the circulars that have been addressed to the manufacturers, he will know better what they think about that. I have conversed with many manufacturers and I do not believe it will have any such result; but even if it did, are the great masses of the people of this country to submit to exactions, to submit to undue taxation, to submit to the loss of their natural market, because the giving to the great producing classes of this country greater prosperity may prove a little detrimental to the small manufacturing classes? We might say the manufacturers are ruining us, but whether our policy would be calculated to promote their interests or not—and I believe it will promote their interests in the main—but whether it did so or not, still I am in favour of a policy that will benefit ninety-nine hundredths of the population of this country.

My hon. friend the First Minister, in the course of his speech, made reference to a recent letter from the Hon. Edward Blake, and he quoted certain sentiments advanced by that hon. gentleman, who recently held a seat in this House, with very great approval. I wish to read to the First Minister something Mr. Blake said which is applicable to himself and to his party. He says in that letter:

“The Canadian Conservative policy has failed to accomplish the predictions of its promoters.”

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. We have heard it before.

Mr. CHARLTON. The House has not; and, if it has, the House shall hear it again. Their admiration for Mr. Blake, I am sure, will lead hon. gentlemen opposite to desire that his words with respect to themselves shall be given again. I am really afraid the hon. First Minister has not read that portion of Mr. Blake's letter to which I am about to call attention. Mr. Blake says:

“Its real tendency has been as foretold twelve years ago, towards disintegration and annexation, instead of consolidation and the maintenance of that British connection of which they claim to be the special guardians. It has left us with a small population, a scanty immigration and a North-West empty still; with enormous additions to our public debt and yearly charge, an extravagant system of expenditure, and an unjust and expensive tariff; with restricted markets for our needs, whether to buy or to sell, and all the host of evils (greatly intensified by our special conditions) thence arising: with trade diverted from its natural into forced and therefore less profitable channels, and with unfriendly relations and frowning tariff walls, even more and more estranging us from the mighty English-speaking nation to the South, our neighbours and relations, with whom we ought to be, as it was promised we should be, living in generous amity and liberal intercourse. Worse, far worse. It has left us with lowered standards of public virtue and death-like apathy in public opinion; with racial, religious and provincial animosities rather inflamed than soothed; with a subservient Parliament, an autocratic executive, debauched constituencies and corrupted and corrupting classes; with lessened self-reliance and increased dependence on the public chest and on Legislative aids, and possesses withal by a boastful jingo spirit far enough removed from true manliness, loudly proclaiming unreal conditions and exaggerated sentiments, while actual facts and genuine opinions are suppressed. It has left us with our hands tied, our future compromised, and in such a plight that, whether we stand or move, we must run