

CHAPTER III.

THE ALLEGED PREFERENCE.

UNITED STATES PREFERRED TO BRITAIN.

The Ministers and their supporters claim that they have given a tariff preference to Great Britain. Before going into the history of this feature of the tariff it is worth while to examine the tariff itself and see how far it prefers the mother country to other nations and particularly the United States. It has already been shown that the Fielding tariff increases the duty on many articles. A careful examination of the list will prove that these increases are mainly in manufactures chiefly imported from Great Britain. On the other hand the principal reductions are made in iron and steel in early stages of manufacture. This class of goods is almost wholly imported from the United States. The principal articles added to the free list are binder twine, wire and corn, all of which are procured from the United States and not from England. Having thus arranged matters the Finance Minister was able to take off a quarter of the duty from British goods without giving Great Britain more advantage than she had before as compared with the United States.

The following table shows the percentage of customs duties collected on imports from the United States and Great Britain during the past ten years. It is based on the total merchandise imports for consumption. (The percentages are made up by the Trade and Commerce Department and given in the Trade and Commerce Report of 1899, page 15.)

Year.	Average Duty on British Goods.	Average Duty on U.S. Goods.
1890	22.13	15.82
1891	21.69	14.86
1892	22.10	15.10
1893	22.33	14.59
1894	22.26	13.72
1895	22.56	13.75
1896	22.42	14.51
1897	21.11	14.29
1898	20.75	13.29
1899	19.84	13.24

This table shows that the imports from Great Britain in 1899, paid within a fraction of 20 per cent. duties and that the reduction as compared with 1896 was not one-quarter, but only one-eighth. It also shows that there was a corresponding reduction in the average duty on goods imported from the United States.