

ing to a small camp in charge of an officer of the British West India Regiment, were killed and a larger number severely wounded, in a surprise attack by a strong force of natives headed by a French officer, has suddenly created a very uneasy, not to say dangerous, sensation both in England and in France. Happily, the latest despatches up to the time at which we are writing leave no room for doubt that the attack was due wholly to a mistake on the part of the French lieutenant in command. His own testimony, before his death in the British camp, to which he was taken, being found severely wounded on the field, seems conclusive on that point, while the fact that he was buried by the British along with their own dead, with military honors, shows that they had no doubt in regard to the matter. The fact, if such it prove to be, that the attack was made in territory well within the "British sphere" may add seriously to the complication, should such arise between the two Governments. As it is, however, by no means likely that territorial limits are as yet very well defined in that region, this feature of the case may, perhaps, be easily explained. Under ordinary circumstances, beyond the natural sorrow caused by so sad an event, no serious consequences could be feared. The friendly nation whose officer was responsible for the mistake would hasten to express its regret and to offer a liberal indemnity for the benefit of the families of the slain. As matters now are there is a possibility of danger arising out of the somewhat hostile feelings which have for some time existed between France and England. The French, as recent events have shown, are just now on the crest of a wave of popular excitement, and there is some possibility that the Jingo element amongst them may make it difficult for their Government to take the proper course. On the other hand, the feeling in Great Britain is so thoroughly aroused that ample acknowledgment will no doubt be rigidly insisted on. Yet it would be preposterous for two great nations to quarrel over the blunder of a military officer. To shed the blood of tens of thousands on both sides would be a grotesquely foolish way in which to atone for the loss of a dozen or two, through a military blunder. There may be some blustering on the one side and some obstinacy on the other, but it is incredible that anything more serious can result from the incident.

While the Minister of Trade and Commerce could not promise any definite results in the near future from his visit to Australia, he was able to talk in an interesting manner about our Australian cousins and their country. The difficulty to be met with in attempting any trade negotiations with seven distinct though adjacent colonies, each having its own government and legislation and its own political and fiscal systems, is obvious. From the fact that

Mr. Bowell made no allusion to the proposed conference between representatives of the different colonies and those of Canada, it may be inferred that the prospect of being able to bring about such a conference is not so bright as he might wish. This is to be regretted. A visit of representative statesmen of those colonies to Canada could scarcely fail to be productive of good in various directions. Without claiming too much in regard to the success of our own federation experiment, its material advantages are clearly such that a personal knowledge of the system and its results, on the part of leading men of the Australian Provinces, could hardly fail to give a powerful impetus to the federation movement among themselves. Mr. Bowell dwelt with a very natural pride and satisfaction upon the success of the Government policy in subsidizing the Australian line of steamboats. It is only to be hoped that their efforts may be equally successful at an early day in securing the fast Atlantic line which has been an object of their laudable ambition for some years past.

Two or three of Mr. Bowell's remarks on the trade question are well adapted to bring those who cannot accept his protectionist views to the front with both notes and queries. For instance, commenting on the promising growth of an important export business in agricultural implements with Australia and the Argentine Republic, he left it to the public to judge whether this increased trade has been brought about by the policy of the Government, or whether it was wholly owing to the superior intelligence and industry of our people. This is a question which it is really difficult if not impossible to decide, though Mr. Bowell and those of his way of thinking probably do not think so. Nothing is more common than to hear arguments based upon the increase of manufacturing industries in Canada, which assume that the whole credit is due to protection, and quite ignore the fact that the Canadian people did a respectable manufacturing business before the National Policy was thought of. Then, again, Mr. Bowell's suggestion immediately causes the mind of the free-trader to revert to the Mother Country and recall the unparalleled strides made by its manufacturers from the day when it cast off the shackles of protection. Those who advocate freedom to buy and sell in foreign markets are no less glad than the most ardent protectionists to learn of the success of Canadian manufacturing enterprise in foreign markets. One doubt, however, they would like to have set at rest. They would fain ask Mr. Bowell, or some one who knows, whether there is any ground for the impression which prevails in some quarters, that the agricultural implements and certain other products of highly protected Canadian factories are actually sold in foreign markets at a lower price than that which Cana-

dian buyers are compelled to pay, plus the cost of transportation and other expenses. It would surely be a great hardship should it be true that manufacturers bolstered up with high protective tariffs are really giving an advantage to foreign purchasers at the expense of the Canadian farmer or other consumer.

Another incidental remark made by Mr. Bowell, whose speech, for obvious reasons, invites particular attention, is curiously suggestive. Referring to the fact that the managers of the ocean steamboat lines are accustomed to take advantage of any rise of price of Canadian products in foreign markets, by so increasing the freight rates as to deprive the Canadian exporter of the chief part of the benefit, the Minister very properly suggested that the Government should tell the steamboat companies that when we pay them large annual subsidies they on their part should not deprive the producers of this country of the benefits arising from an increase in market prices. We are glad to hear this opinion from a responsible Minister. It chimes with the view which we have from time to time urged with respect to freight-rates on railroads built largely with public money. Mr. Bowell, it is true, specifically praises the Canadian Pacific for its readiness to give cheap rates for the encouragement of the export trade, by way of British Columbia, we presume. This, of course, would be in direct line with its interests, which are largely bound up in the development of the transcontinental trade. But Mr. Bowell must be well aware that the people of the North-West are complaining bitterly that the freight rates on their grain to the seaboard, by this same road, are so high as to become one of the chief causes of their impoverishment, through the excessively low returns they are able to get for their grain. Has the Canadian Government no right to say anything to the railway managers in this case? This is, however, by the way. It was another remark made by the Minister in the same connection which struck us as peculiarly suggestive. While he enunciated what we believe to be a sound and common-sense principle in regard to the relation of the Government to both subsidized railways and steamboat lines, he prefaced the enunciation with the apologetic remark that being somewhat conservative, he did not like the idea of interfering with the legitimate enterprises of trade. Did it not occur to him or his hearers in this connection that the protective tariff of which he is so ardent an upholder is a gross and arbitrary interference with the legitimate trade of every purchaser in the country? Why should the rights of wealthy companies or corporations be so much more tenderly regarded than those of the mass of industrious citizens, who are just as anxious to use their labour to the best advantage by exchanging its products for the necessaries and comforts of life in the best markets?