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A TARIFF FOR THE EMPIRE.

Imperial federation implies, first of all, a common tariff for the empire. The advocates of this new form of union, who recently met in London to launch the project, confined themselves to generalities: they studiously avoided entering into any detail. But that imperial federation meant a general tariff, it was quite evident, would soon have to be acknowledged. And we have not had long to wait for the acknowledgement. At the meeting of the British Association, in Montreal, Mr. Stephen Bourne, in a paper on "The Interdependence of the several portions of the British Empire," formally proposed a common tariff for the empire, in connection with imperial federation. He laid down the doctrine that "there ought to be the most unfettered interchange of the commodities which each [the colonies and Great Britain] grows or makes, and whatever may be said as to protection against foreigners nothing in the shape of protective duties ought to impede or avert commerce between portions of the same empire. Revenue duties stood upon a different footing, but they should be raised upon imported and home products alike. It would be a great step if in all the colonies and the mother country the same articles were subjected to customs and excise duties at similar rates, and the whole money so raised were appropriated to defraying the cost of defence. It is scarcely to be questioned that absolute free trade, at least between all parts of the empire, must ultimately exist, although it is possible that special circumstances may, for a limited period, require or justify that general economic principles should give way to particular necessities. As regards foreign countries the selfishness which induces them whilst availing themselves of all the advantages of free trade with us, to withhold from us the corresponding benefit should be met, not by protective duties, but by an absolute refusal on our part to trade with them at all." Here we have not only a common tariff, but a common purse, resulting from its product, as a means of defence.

The first question which the proposal involves is the right of Canada to make her own tariff. And that right being conceded, we must be permitted to give the tariff that form which to the majority of the legislature seems best. What is asked

is that we shall give up that right: surrender it, so to speak, for the general benefit of the empire. If we are not prepared to make the surrender, there is no common ground on which the discussion can be placed. That such a tariff would be for the general benefit of the empire, the proposal assumes; but the assumption at least needs to be proved. Each part of the empire will discuss the question from the standpoint of its own interest. Mr. Bourne's proposal taken as a whole, would be rejected by Great Britain, without a moment's consideration. The proposal that England should refuse to trade with foreigners is an invitation to commit suicide. England's colonial trade is less than a quarter—twenty-four per cent—of the whole. Is she to give up three quarters of the whole, for the purpose of monopolizing the colonial trade, which, if it could be doubled, would leave her only one half of her present trade? The net result would be the death of that empire which it is the aim of the scheme to strengthen and consolidate.

Canada has incurred heavy obligations, and requires a large revenue to enable her to pay her way. To this fiscal necessity she must, first of all, make her tariff subservient. She cannot afford to pool her customs revenue into a fund for the common defence of the empire. To do so would lead to insolvency; for apart from the customs revenue she could not find the means of paying her way much less her debts. To ask Canada to pool her customs revenue, for this purpose, is to ask her to do something that is not within her power. England will never ask the colonies to sustain her in a conflict with the rest of the world, begun by a refusal on her part to continue to trade with it; and we need not enquire what the colonies would do in an emergency which can never happen.

Mr. Bourne had convinced himself of, "The absolute necessity for some form of federation which may bind together more closely the various portions of the empire, and so counteract any tendency toward disintegration, but what ever may be the result of deliberation on this proposition or the form it might ultimately assume, why should not the Dominion at once seek for an actual incorporation into the United Kingdom? In point of distance, when measured by time, she is scarcely further off than was Ireland when she became a part of the kingdom. By means of the electric telegraph, instantaneous communication with the Pacific will very shortly be established. With trains crossing the land from shore to shore and the magnificent floating islands which our steamers will shortly, if they have not already, become, the continent and Atlantic will be bridged over more effectually than the Irish sea was at the beginning of the century. Our eastern possessions are so different in race, climate, and position that they must for a lengthened period at least constitute a different empire, though under the same sovereignty. Our southern settlements are more remote, though perhaps, not so much so as to necessitate their remaining in a different category. But the upper portion of the northern American continent has so many points in common with the British Isles, that it would be easy to weld them into one body. It is already evident at home that local governing bodies must assume somewhat of the rule which is now exercised by the Imperial parliament, and much of the existing organization in Canada need not be destroyed. It would be a grand day should she become as

much an integral part as Scotland and Ireland now are, by the United Kingdom becoming not that of Great Britain and Ireland, but of Great Britain, Ireland and North America."

Instead of asking "why should not the Dominion at once seek actual incorporation into the United Kingdom," an advocate of such a form of union should give reasons, likely to be satisfactory to her, why she should do so. The reasons which arise out of a common tariff and a pooling of custom revenue for purposes of defence, tell in the wrong direction. Between England and the Pacific coast, electric communication is assured; but we cannot legislate by telegraph. And if distance opposed no obstacle, our legislative contingent would be powerless in the House of Commons. Equal representation would give Canada almost as many members as Ireland. The representation of all the colonies in the House of Commons would make all sorts of combinations possible. Who can say whether the whole of the Canadian representation might not vote for Home Rule in Ireland; and if this were done would there not be danger of this new union producing disintegration at the centre of the empire? Would not the new elements which would be thrown together, in the House of Commons, be in danger of making serious changes in that body? The time is not far distant when the colonial population will outnumber the metropolitan; then equal representation would give the rule of empire to the outlying sections, and Great Britain would be outvoted in a British House of Commons. Is the sober common sense of Englishmen and Scotchmen prepared to accept a scheme of union which, at no distant day, must place them in this position?

Sir Richard Temple congratulated Mr. Bourne on "his admirable paper"; but he mildly suggested that it would be too soon for England to shut herself up in her shell and gather her colonies around her, like so many chickens, until the means of growing long staple cotton, the only thing the empire does not produce, could be found in Canada. If we wait till then we shall probably wait for ever. Mr. Benjamin Sulte, did, we believe, suggest the experiment of growing the sugar cane in Canada, if sorghum comes under that designation. Sugar made from sorghum could probably be produced here, at a cost of not more than two dollars per 100. But long staple cotton is another thing. In what part of Canada shall we make the experiment? We might raise sugar from sorghum at two dollars a lb., but long staple cotton we fear not at all; and until this can be done, Sir Rich. Temple is right in concluding that commercial England would do well not to shut the door in the face of seventy-five per cent. of her present customers, for the prospective advantage of monopolizing once more the trade of the colonies.

Mr. Bourne does not tell us on what he founds the belief that absolute free trade between England and the colonies will one day become the rule. There is nothing in the present condition, or as far as can be seen, the future aspect of things, to lead to that conclusion. He seems to have translated a wish into a belief; but wishes which are in opposition to the great moving forces which shape the destinies of nations, have no tendency to realize themselves; and this wish