

and the normal pay of an English sailor, domiciled and engaged in Liverpool, is four pounds a month, and the union pay of an Australian seaman is eight pounds a month, the Lascar, while he is in Australian waters, must be given four times his ordinary pay; he must be raised to the position of a first-class English-speaking seaman, whose family has to be supported under Australian conditions. In this remarkable situation the British Board of Trade has acquiesced, not because it thinks it fair, feasible or fortunate, but because it recognizes that Australia must do as Australia pleases, and that interference or attempted dictation would be fatal to the community of interest which remains. There could not be a better demonstration of the strength of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's insistence that if you want Imperial unity you must permit, without controversy or reproach, the widest local liberty.

The Perversity of Motherhood.

The United Kingdom has just as much title to local liberty as the dominant trade unionist of New South Wales. The poor Old Country is guilty of many commercial stupidities. She persists in regarding herself as unquestionably facile princeps among the manufacturing and scientific nations of the world. She sometimes avows this venerable; and, at one time, thoroughly justified faith, with the pathetic sincerity with which an extra-matured spinster displays her belief that the fascinations of departed youth are still hers to wield with all-conquering grace. The perverse old thing sticks to the notion that she knows what is best for her own pocket, which grows bigger and fuller so persistently as to endow with all the attributes of courage the friends and relations who assert vehemently that there is a frightful hole in it. She will not even condescend to make a will that satisfies her young kindred. About money generally she is almost as incorrigible as her friends, critics, and advisers. Her Government has a majority unexampled in modern history. Her Prime Minister, from being in opposition the recipient of immeasurable contempt, enjoys the heritage of the meek, who are also strong. Whatever the position, from the point of view of the Mother of Us All, it is clearly futile to expect her to alter it because we vow that she will forfeit our respect if she does not change her business devotion.

Polemists of Half Vision.

It is impossible to sympathize with the political economist who talks as though a question of world-wide, twentieth-century business can be settled by a quotation from Adam Smith, or an appeal to Richard Cobden. Inter-imperial trade has not been, and cannot be, governed by simple propositions of any kind that cease to be simple the moment they are transferred from paper to the complicated currents of international negotiation. Free trade is a beautiful theory, compounded of philanthropy and the five per cent, that was sure to the man who enjoyed a practical monopoly of mechanical production of universally-required commodities. The unfair competition of the poorly-paid German workman is much used as an illustration of the disadvantages of unrestricted marketing and of the necessity for protection. Neither of these strategic positions of the fiscal polemist does more than half justice to Things as They Are, and, therefore, cannot find the way out for a country, however rich on the accumulated gains of priority in nearly all markets, which is becoming hard pressed in the stress of rivalry. The searcher for light must often look for it away from the schoolmen of politics; who are too often stumbling along in the darkness that marks the wake of the lantern-carrying electioneer.

Colonial Preference was not inside the arena of British politics until, by unexpectedly espousing it, Mr. Chamberlain disintegrated one party and consolidated another four years ago next Wednesday. The reason Mr. Chamberlain gave for his adhesion to a hitherto unpopular cause was twofold—Great Britain was losing

her trade supremacy, and unless she saved it by preferential arrangements with the Colonies, the Empire could not last very long. The high-and-dry free traders, who had been lamenting the effect upon trade of Mr. Chamberlain's policies—to this day they remember that the Boer war added eight hundred million dollars to the national debt, reduced consols disastrously, and bequeathed to South Africa a commercial depression which is an unconscionably long time in passing—straightway proclaimed that British commerce was never in such promising case, and that everything was for the best in a beautiful world. A political cleavage followed, the like of which no man had foreseen. Neither side shone in the controversy that rent the Balfour Government and converted a hopeless Opposition into a Government without having won a division in Parliament or secured a verdict at the polls. The tariff reformer thought he had made a great discovery when he had made only half a discovery. The free trader recited his creed, consulted the Board of Trade returns, and imagined that everything was settled for all time. Both sides talk in the same strain after four years' practice. Meantime the unemployed problem has become so serious that the Government has inaugurated permanent machinery for providing work for the workless; and the quality of the Imperial race in the Imperial city is deteriorating because an increasing proportion of it does not get plenty of food. The balance of inter-imperial influence is being steadily transferred to the King's dominions overseas. To this end they were born. It is not manly to fret because the courses of history do not move cyclonically.

Both Are Right and Both Are Wrong.

To appreciate the British situation you must examine independently the governing claim made by each party; and you will be driven to pushing your enquiries into regions which neither of them seems wishful to explore. Your quest for light will probably become really interesting where theirs leaves off—if you judge only by what both sides issue for public consumption. The tariff reformer says the commercial power of Britain is in grave danger. He is right. He says it is because of hostile tariffs, principally of Germany, France and the United States. He is only half right. There is more in international commerce than the history of a tariff war. To know the origin of a fight you must not merely ask who struck the first blow, but what led to it. The free trader says cheap food and raw material are vital to a commercial country that can neither feed itself nor grow the crops—such as cotton and wool—on which its major industries depend. He is right. He also says Britain has nothing to fear, because her turnover is increasing. He is wrong. He ignores the proofs that other countries are increasing their turnover more rapidly than Britain. Take shipping. In gross, Germany is away behind Britain. But she has progressed amazingly. Her steamers are the fleetest on the Atlantic. The North German Lloyd boats are in every sea—which cannot be said of any one British passenger-carrying company. Everywhere there is complaint that British ships are manned by foreign crews.

Low Wages and High.

Not so long ago England was literally the workshop of the world. The cotton trade of Lancashire was only possible because other countries either could not or would not make cotton goods for themselves. The industry is still the economic marvel of the nations. But it cannot retain the same degree of pre-eminence. Twenty years ago there was not a power loom in Russia. Now there are huge cotton mills in several cities, filled with English machinery and run by English foremen. Lancashire cannot go on exporting machinery and the goods which that machinery makes. The country that makes its yarn to-day will make its loom to-morrow. Japan and China have for centuries known how to weave exquisitely in silk. When the yellow man has learned to use power looms he will not go to Lancashire

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