

desire union with England first, independence next, annexation to the United States last of all. They desire a free exchange of products with us, because they believe the existing restrictions upon our commerce are prejudicial to both countries; and they desire nothing more. What the feeling is with the great body of the people in Canada, I have no means of knowing. That they desire free intercourse with us, there is no doubt. Beyond that, I know nothing of their opinions or wishes.

For myself, I have heretofore spoken freely on this subject. I would neither be forward in courting the annexation of adjacent States, nor backward in acceding to it. I would neither make overtures nor repel them, without good cause. I believe we are large enough for all the purposes of security and strength; but I do not fear further extension, nor would I decline it when circumstances render it convenient to ourselves or others.

Mr. President, this consideration has been urged, and urged directly, as an objection to commercial freedom between the United States and Canada. I have recently heard it from the anti-liberal party in Canada, who are for new restrictions on our commerce. They are in favor of existing restrictions as well as new ones, upon the ground that free intercourse may lead to a political union between Canada and the United States. The Board of Trade in Montreal, in a petition to the Queen, on the 18th December last, prayed for a renewal of the discriminating duty on American grain in favor of colonial grain; and one of the reasons assigned was, that the recent changes in the commercial relations of Canada had led to "a growing commercial intercourse with the United States, giving rise to an opinion, which is daily gaining ground on both sides of the boundary line, that the interests of the two countries, under the changed policy of the Imperial Government, are germane to each other, and under that system must sooner or later be politically interwoven."

Whether this view be just or not, I do not believe the result is to be defeated in either of the modes proposed—by a continuation of existing restrictions, or by the imposition of new ones. I believe the tendency of such measures will be to hasten and to consummate the very end they are intended to defeat. Let us see if it be not so. A man at Champlain, New York, or Swanton, Vermont, wishes to sell an ox to his neighbor in Canada, living in sight of him, and take wheat in exchange. On making his entry at the Canadian custom house, he is taxed \$7 on the importation of his ox. He brings back thirty-five bushels of wheat, at \$1 a bushel, and, on entering them at our custom-house, he is taxed 20 per cent. *ad*

*valorem*, (\$7 more,)—fourteen dollars tax to the two Governments for the privilege of exchanging his commodity with his neighbor, separated from him in one case by a narrow sheet of water, and in the other by an astronomical line. Now, I venture to assert that these impositions will not long be submitted to on either side; and if they are not removed by the two Governments, the inhabitants of both countries will look to annexation as the only practicable measure of relief. Sir, a liberal policy is always the most wise as well as the most just; and, I say again, that the people of the two countries will not submit to such a system as I have described—a system executed by an army of custom-house officers on each side of the boundary line, placed there to enforce exactions which absolutely prohibit commercial intercourse, or to fill their bags of plunder out of the hard earnings of the frontier inhabitants. And I cannot believe that those who advocate the doctrines of free trade will sustain a state of things so utterly at variance with their own principles; that they will be found acting in-unison with the anti-liberal party in Canada, upholding commercial restrictions, which do no good, against commercial freedom, which works no injury; throwing impediments in the paths of those who are marked out by the great features of the districts they inhabit for friendly intercourse, and creating these embarrassments for the avowed purpose of making them alien to each other.

Notwithstanding the opinion of the Senator from Maryland, there is another consideration in favor of this bill which I consider of vital importance to us. We have earnestly desired, since the American Revolution, the free navigation of the St. Lawrence. In 1826 it became the subject of diplomatic correspondence between the two countries. The discussion exhibits the high value we have attached to this privilege. Indeed, we claimed it as a right; and it was asserted as such by Mr. Clay in a letter of great power and eloquence. The right was not admitted by Great Britain, and the matter was dropped. But there has been no period when we would not have been willing to grant an equivalent for a privilege in which, according to Mr. Clay, nine States have an interest. Canada is now desirous of granting it without equivalent. She stands ready to pass a bill opening the free navigation of the St. Lawrence to our vessels. Her Parliament is in session. The liberal party, which is now in power, is about to bring the measure forward; and I am happy to say that Lord Elgin, the Governor—a gentleman distinguished for an enlightened and liberal statesmanship—is in favor of the measure. Its success is certain, if we do not decline the reciprocity asked for by this bill.