

many years weighed down by a system which controlled her commercial freedom, and effectually prevented her attaining that commercial expansion to which her natural resources entitled her. In the old days of French dominion, Canada was little better than a military post, whose feeble garrison was condemned to live in a state of perpetual warfare and insecurity, frequently suffering from famine, without any trade except what was monopolised by privileged companies. Under the new régime, and with the influx of a class of settlers whose instincts are all in the direction of commercial enterprise, it was natural that commerce should make a certain progress, which would have been less possible under the French system of colonial government; but still that progress was more or less trammelled, for many years, not only by the political troubles which resulted from the operation of an erroneous political system, but chiefly by the working of the restrictive commercial policy of the mother country. This policy was a system of restrictions on the imports and exports of the colonies, with the view of keeping their trade and its transport in British hands, as far as practicable. It took many years for English statesmen and economists to see the short-sightedness and tyranny of this policy. Writers of all parties, with a few memorable exceptions, concurred in lauding a policy which was considered the very corner stone of the colonial system in the British Empire. It was not till the principles of free trade began to make some headway in the mother country, and English statesmen saw the necessity of giving to Canadians the free control of their own affairs, that the Navigation Laws were repealed in their entirety, and Canada left free to trade in the manner best calculated to develop her resources.

The Canadian people have now, virtually, control over all matters affecting their Trade and Commerce, and can

regulate their fiscal policy solely with a regard to their own necessities. The rights of Canada, in this particular, have always been practically admitted by the British Government, and when, some years ago, they were called in question, they were distinctly and emphatically vindicated by Sir Alexander Galt, then Finance Minister:—

‘Self-Government’—we quote from his Report to the Government on the 25th October, 1859,—‘would be utterly annihilated if the views of the Imperial Government were to be preferred to those of the people of Canada. It is, therefore, the duty of the present Government distinctly to affirm the right of the Canadian Legislature to adjust the taxation of the people in the way they deem best, even if it should unfortunately happen to meet the disapproval of the Imperial Ministry. Her Majesty cannot be advised to disallow such Acts, unless her advisers are prepared to assume the administration of the affairs of the colony, irrespective of the views of its inhabitants. The Imperial Government are not responsible for the debts and engagements of Canada; they do not maintain its judicial, educational, or civil service; they contribute nothing to the internal government of the country; the Provincial Legislature, acting through a Ministry directly responsible to it, has to make provision for all those wants. They must necessarily claim and exercise the widest latitude as to the nature and extent of the burthens to be placed upon the industry of the people.’

The broad principle, enunciated in the foregoing State Paper, has never since been questioned, but has been practically acquiesced in by the British Government. We see that very clearly in the case of the Canadian Tariff of 1879, which has been avowedly framed not only to raise a revenue to meet the absolute requirements of the country, but also to develop native manufactures and other interests which, it is claimed, cannot be fostered, except through such fiscal legislation. Whatever may be the effect of this policy—and that is a question which has nothing to do with the present argument—no Minister of the Crown in England