

propositions ; we are informed that principles and plans as yet never fairly discussed, though elsewhere become practical and visible realities, are the dreams of a speculative and theoretical philosophy. Such arguments as these may well be despised by reformers inspired with a great idea. Such arguments would have strangled the infant agitations by which the liberties and prosperity of England have been placed upon their glorious footing. There was no more conspicuous illusion to the stupid dogmatism of the past than the doctrine of Free Trade ; or, to go further back, than the creation of the most powerful republic the world has ever seen from the fortuitous league of some rebellious colonies.

It is possible that we may turn out to be to this age but unpractical speculators. *Laissez-faire* may win the day, as it has so often done before ! But with what consequences of blood, of tears, of agonies social and political, of morbid outbreaks and remorseful retrospects !

As an example of the manner in which the Colonial question is discussed, I may refer not unkindly to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. A bold and brave journal, not given to hysterical favouritism, it wins our admiration and must always challenge our respectful attention. This paper is one of few in the English press. It is not sold unconditionally to any man or devil, though it is not seldom very bigotedly tenacious of certain of its views. Yet in reviewing this Conference it falls into the style of tinkling, sprinkling, briskness that denotes shallow water—absolutely forgets itself—even ignores opinions seemingly not long since entertained. To its clear and infallible gaze, the members of the Conference were a company “ sitting to afford an opportunity of ventilating all the crotchets which are formed in busy but unpractical minds, concerning one at least of the greatest problems of the day.” Let us “ at least ” be thankful for the admission—*there is a problem !* The writer of this article on the face of it shows that he never honestly attempted to ascertain what the busy and unpractical minds had said about it. This may pass. So may the other assertion that “ the subjects touched on in this Conference appear to be so very miscellaneous, and some of them *so slightly connected with what is possible in politics* ” (a phrase of remarkable sound, but extreme shadowiness of meaning) “ that very slight notice of them may suffice.” In fact, we are forced to be content with no further notice of them. It would seem that the critic, when he came to look at the subjects, found that such notice would spoil his