

In compliment, we may assume, to the Toronto Board of Trade, which had originated the meeting, the president of that board, Mr. Ames, was made chairman of the congress. He performed his functions well. The subject which engaged the greatest interest was that of Trade Relations within the Empire, presented by the Montreal Board of Trade. The resolution affirmed that Great Britain can best serve the interests of the Empire by giving the products of her colonies a preference in her markets, as against the products of foreign countries. Some of the speakers seemed to want the Mother Country to make a definite discrimination in favor of Canadian food products, but this suggestion, it was perceived, would seem very ungracious coming from Canada. The broad proposal was, therefore, made that Britain should discuss with the colonies, through delegates, the preferential treatment of imports from various parts of the Empire, and this was agreed to be recommended. The unreasonable embargo against Canadian cattle entering United Kingdom ports was pronounced against. It is well known here that the disease which is made the excuse for this embargo has no existence in Canadian herds, but still the stubborn British official representing Old Country agricultural interest sticks to his injustice.

The Kingston Board of Trade presented an argument for retaliatory duties being placed by our Government upon German goods because that country had discriminated against our cereals. The conference deemed it wiser however, to prefer a milder resolution, not naming the offending country, but making the proposal general. This course, as Mr. Allan pointed out, could not give umbrage to Germany, with which country our trade is growing steadily. A wordy contest developed over the proposal of the St. John Board of Trade, warmly advocated by several speakers, to ask the Government to allow the existing preferential duty on British goods only when they were imported direct through a Canadian port. It was pointed out that this attempt to force trade into a particular channel, however much we desired it, could not succeed, and Mr. Hathaway, the mover, eventually withdrew his original motion and accepted that of Mr. Munro, of Montreal, "that in order to encourage the importation of British goods into Canada this conference desires that the preferential rebate on goods arriving by United States ports be limited to 25 per cent."

So enthusiastic were the delegates during the Wednesday forenoon and afternoon sessions that they resolved to sit again at night. This they did, and threshed out various subjects, the cattle question, for example. There was introduced, too, the State-owned cables scheme of Sir Sanford Fleming which, with little or no discussion, the conference endorsed. The last item approved, and a very important one, was that asking for "a practical trade representation of the Dominion of Canada in London by the establishment in that city of a depot of exhibition, presided over by business experts, having at their head a man of comprehensive knowledge of Canadian products, the whole purpose and scope of the enterprise being the increase of Canadian trade throughout the Empire, and the direction of the attention of the people of the British Isles to the products and capacities of Canada both as to emigration and investment."

THE SHOE AND LEATHER TRADE.

The chief source of interest in the boot and shoe trade just now is the attempt to form a combine among the manufacturers. Meetings looking to this end have been held in Montreal during the last week or two, but so far nothing has been put beyond the preliminary stage. The chief idea among those in favor of carrying the scheme through seems to be the saving and increased efficiency which might be accomplished by means of the plan of specializing products. It is not disguised, however, that there are several difficulties in the way of the proposed amalgamation, and we believe the judgment of several important men connected with the business is that it is very likely to fall through. As one prominent Quebec manufacturer puts it, "he would consider a change in his relative position now as equivalent to the dog which should leave go of its beefsteak in the middle of a stream." It has been claimed by some that the chief jobbers of the country could be taken into the amalgamation, but, so far as is known, those of Ontario at any rate have not been approached on the matter.

Present trade in the boot and shoe line is very fair as a whole throughout the Dominion. British Columbia conditions are improving, though business in that section is still somewhat on the quiet side. Possibly, in view of the wonderful crop last season in Manitoba and the North-West, trade has not quite come up to the standard expected of it, owing to the fact that difficulties of transportation have caused part of its prosperity to remain latent. In Ontario, both in the cities and the rural sections, travellers report everyone feeling prosperous and in a mood to give good-sized orders, though the unsettled weather has not helped this state of things. Quebec province manufacturers and retailers apparently find nothing to grumble at. In the Maritime Provinces sales have been reported to be on the slow side, though business is picking up. The early opening of navigation gave an impetus to trade, which is being felt to this time. The importations into that part of the Dominion of shoes from the States latterly have shown considerable falling off, probably due to the continuous improvement in the quality of the domestic article. Complaint, however, is made as to the slowness of delivery from some west Canadian factories, and this is said to account for the number of boots and shoes which still are shipped in from Boston.

This importation of shoes from the United States reminds us of a serious defect in Canadian sentiment. In a good many lines it is unfortunately still the tendency on the part of the Canadian public to think that foreign made goods are better than the domestic. In no department is this more noticeable than in the boot trade. "American shoes" and "American quality" are no proper mottoes to be seen displayed in our store windows. More emphatically may this be said when it is true, as in this case it is true, that the Canadian are fully the equal of the goods imported. Retailers are largely responsible for this reprehensibly unpatriotic state of things which, if carried logically to the bitter end, would mean the ruin of Canadian industries. But still more to be reprimanded is the general public, which allows the manufacturers of its own country to be so slighted.

It is a long time since the leather trade was in such a generally prosperous position as it is to-day. Stocks are light, with the result that prices, which have been firmly held for some time past, now have a distinctly upward tendency. This is not to be wondered at either, when the generally high cost of wages and the enhanced prices