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Woodstock, N. B., June 25, 1897.

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IMPERIAL TRADE.

Important Address by Ontario Minister of Education.

Hon. G. W. Ross of Toronto has made an important speech on the question of trade within the British empire. As this is a matter of interest to all who are concerned in Canada's future, we give some extracts from the address, which was delivered before the British Empire League, Toronto.

For many years our attention has been divided between the markets of two countries—the United States and Great Britain. To say the least of it, the markets of the United States have been fluctuating and unsatisfactory. Every commercial crisis in the American Republic reacted with tremendous force upon the trade of Canada, and, still worse, the periodical changes of American tariffs rendered the investment of capital and the establishment of commercial intercourse very uncertain. During this jubilee year we have, however, turned our attention more earnestly than ever before towards the markets of Great Britain. To my mind this circumstance will hereafter be just as notable in the history of Canada commercially as the evolution of a more generous loyalty to Britain will be politically.

Let me give a few reasons: Great Britain imported in 1896 for home consumption \$790,000,000 worth of food products, all of which with the exception of tea and fruit and some minor articles amounting to \$100,000,000, can be produced in Canada. For instance, in 1896 she imported 130,000,000 bushels of wheat, of which Canada supplied only 10,000,000 bushels; she imported 12,000,000 barrels of flour, of which Canada supplied only 90,000 barrels; she imported 5,500,000 bushels of peas, of which Canada supplied only 1,400,000 bushels; she imported 58,000,000 bushels of oats, of which Canada supplied only 500,000 bushels; she imported 52,500,000 bushels of barley, of which Canada supplied only 47,000; she imported 50,000,000 lbs. of bacon, of which Canada supplied only 47,000,000 lbs.; she imported 163,500,000 lbs. of ham, of which Canada supplied only 6,500,000 pounds; she imported 321,000,000 pounds of mutton, of which Canada supplied only 4000 pounds; she imported 6,000,000 bushels of apples, of which Canada supplied only 1,500,000 bushels; she imported 251,000,000 pounds of cheese, of which Canada supplied only 164,000,000 pounds; she imported 340,000,000 of butter, of which Canada supplied only 5,000,000 pounds. The whole export of foodstuffs of every description from Canada to Great Britain last year amounted to about \$48,000,000, or less than 7 per cent. of the food products imported by Great Britain for home consumption.

And this brings me to consider what should be done to obtain a larger recognition in the British market so far as we are concerned, and also what might be done by Great Britain to give to Canada and to the other colonies any preference over foreign nations consistent with the interests of the Empire.

Turning to our own side of the question, it is evident that the establishment of a fast ocean service, facilities for cold storage and more rapid transportation by railways are steps in the right direction, and steps that have not been taken any too soon. Following in the natural order, and for similar reasons, must come the enlargement of our canals and the improvement of our harbors; and next must come greater attention on the part of our merchants to the shipment of such goods only as are of the best quality and to their placement on the markets of Great Britain in first-class condition. Any prejudice that may exist with regard to the produce of Canada must be overcome, patiently and surely, by submitting to the consumers in Great Britain, Canadian butter, cheese, fruit and every other article of home consumption equal in quality to similar articles imported from any other country. Granted these three conditions, and I am satisfied the markets of Great Britain will respond very readily to Canadian enterprise.

While this is one way, and I believe a sure way, to promote the development of Canadian commerce, I see no reason why Canadians should hesitate to look to Great Britain for some encouragement and response on her part. True, she admits our products free of duty, but then she confers a similar favor upon foreign nations. Have we not a right to expect that her own subjects, though living abroad, will be treated more favorably than the Magyar or the Russian or the citizen of the United States.

The personal and political privileges of her subjects, even under a foreign flag, are protected against encroachment. Why should not the commercial interests of her own subjects, under the same flag, though separated by a few leagues of water, be equally the subjects of her protection?

In order to make my position clear, it might be worth while to give in detail a few of the considerations which might very properly influence Great Britain to give the products of Canada and of her other colonies a preference over the products of foreign nations. (1) The commercial advantages to the colonies with such a preference would

greatly strengthen and increase their attachment to the Empire. Commercial interchange means much more than simply buying and selling; it carries with it social and business relations and leads to a better knowledge of the political institutions of the countries concerned in such commerce. Nothing would conduce more to a permanent union of her colonies than a better understanding in Great Britain of Canadian sentiment and feeling, and no better way could be found of increasing an acquaintance than by increasing trade.

(2) The greatness of England depends upon the maintenance of her colonies. Every British statesman of any note, nowadays at least, admits that her position among the other nations of the world would be seriously affected by the loss of any one of her important colonies. In order to the maintenance of that pre-eminence, any measure not detrimental to her interests, apart from the colonies, is worthy of her most serious consideration.

(3) Her naval supremacy depends on a certain extent on the numerous coaling stations and harbors of refuge which she possesses under her own flag the world over. Anyone who studies the great ways of commerce with a map of the world before him can see how the loss of Gibraltar or Malta or Hong Kong or Halifax would seriously cripple England in maintaining her naval supremacy.

(4) Such a preference for the colonies would greatly stimulate the interest of the residents of the British Islands in colonial affairs, and would lead, I am confident, to a more speedy settlement of the wild lands of the various colonies and the development of their resources. From this there would be many advantages: (a) the congested settlements of the Mother Country would be relieved, and, to that extent, the burdens of maintaining a dependent population would be greatly diminished; (b) the increased population of the colonies would give a larger market to the products of British manufacturers, and (c) the increased products of the colonies would add to the value of British commerce and increase the freights of British vessels.

(5) To be against danger in time of war, it is important to the Empire that her food supply should be produced under her own flag. The development of the colonies, and particularly the development of Canada, with our vast wheat areas in the Northwest, would furnish a very considerable portion, if not all, of that food supply.

But, it will be said, even if reciprocity with the United States does not promote more friendly relations with the American Republic, it may, nevertheless, be a source of profit commercially to the people of Canada. In proof of this proposition the treaty affected by Lord Elgin in 1854 is constantly cited. It is not for me to dispute the opinion of commercial authorities respecting the treaty of 1854. I would merely, in passing, point out that during the last five years of the treaty the conditions of trade in the United States were exceptional. The republic was involved in a civil war, the most gigantic of modern times. Over 1,000,000 men were withdrawn from the productive industries of the country. They had to be fed and clothed at all hazards, and for several years Canada was liberally drawn upon for the supplies required by the American army, as well as to make up the diminution in other departments of trade and commerce, caused by the withdrawal of so many men from their usual avocations. Had the treaty of 1854 been continued for some years longer, it is doubtful whether the advantages to Canada, great as they no doubt were, would not have abated substantially by the resuscitation of industries which the Civil War had destroyed.

But, it will be said again, even admitting your argument with regard to the treaty of 1854, there is still room for the interchange of products which would be of mutual advantage to the two countries. Using the word advantage in a strictly commercial sense, that statement is possibly true; for instance, I think reciprocity in coal and lumber, and perhaps in a few other articles, would be a benefit both to Canada and the United States. It would be folly to say that nations as well as individuals could not profitably exchange products. Laws of exchange all the world over are against any such assumption, out, valuable as the exchange of commodities may be to the development of a country when such exchange becomes a subject of treaty, questions of an international character arise which must not be lost sight of. Trade then becomes a political as well as a commercial question, and it is its political aspect that I wish to call your attention.

A reciprocity treaty may be used as an admission that the weaker nation making such a treaty is dependent upon the stronger nation for a market, or such a treaty may foster a feeling of dependence in the weaker nation upon the markets of the stronger nation. In either case, any such feeling would be prejudicial to Canada. Though weaker numerically than the United States we must resist resolutely everything that would propagate a feeling of dependence upon her either for our commerce or our national existence. Such a feeling would utterly

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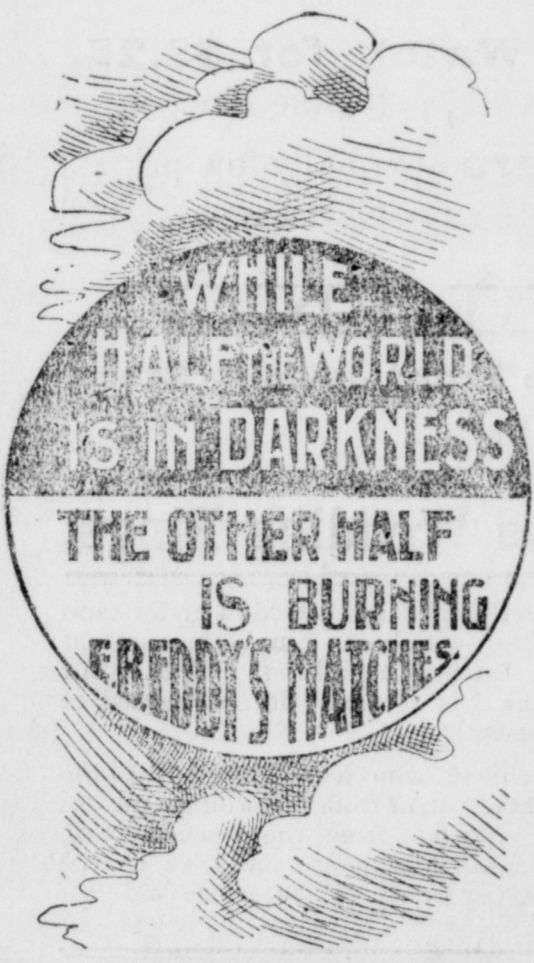
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