

Commissioners appointed had every facility granted to them by Her Majesty's Government; a man-of-war was placed at the command of some of their number. The offers these gentlemen made—under instructions received from the Minister of Finance of Canada, and approved by Her Majesty's Government—in the various parts of the world to which they extended their travels, were in the direction of reciprocal arrangements for the remission of Customs duties. These proposals were made not only to the British West Indian Colonies, but to the Spanish West Indian Dependencies, and to the Imperial Government of Brazil. That the Commissioners were not disinclined to make exceptional and specific arrangements, may be gathered from the following proposal, made in Cuba to the Intendente, the Count De Toledo:—"I venture to suggest to your Excellency, that it would be an important step in this direction, if the Spanish Government would sanction some considerable reduction in the rates of duty—say on grain, flour, meal, provisions, fish, lumber, and other productions—provided they be imported from British North America, in vessels sailing under the flag of Spain."

It is surely unnecessary further to urge that the Imperial Government have shown as much alacrity to aid the British American Provinces to form reciprocal alliances, as they have shown a contrary disposition in respect to the Australasian Colonies. Yet there are many records of opinion that these reciprocal arrangements were vastly beneficial to the North American Provinces; and it is in point to add, that those Imperial officers in the Australasian Colonies whose opinions are recorded, strongly recommend that the Colonies should have conceded to them the powers for which they ask. Thus the Earl of Belmore epigrammatically disposed of the objections which had been raised, when he wrote, "I am sure the true policy with regard to Australia, so far as the law permits of it, is to do everything to bring its various divisions closer together, even at the expense of a certain amount of economic theory." Governor Du Cane has personally supported in cogent terms the representations of his Responsible Advisers on the subject.

Of late, some of the Australian Colonies have narrowed their demands to a power to make reciprocal arrangements amongst themselves. But in October, 1868, the then Premier of New Zealand, Mr. Stafford, invited the Australian Colonies to agree to a Conference, to consider, amongst other subjects, a resolution of the House of Representatives, moved by the present writer, recommending that steps should be taken to ascertain the position of the Colony in relation to Commercial Treaties between Great Britain and Foreign Powers, and especially that authority should be sought to enable New Zealand, in connection with the Australian Colonies, to negotiate with the United States for the free admission into that country of wool, the product of the several Colonies. That invitation was favourably received by all the Colonies, although the Conference was not held, owing to an agreement not being arrived at as to the time of meeting. Resolutions were, however, in January 1870, agreed to by the Representatives of New South Wales and New Zealand, one of which was to the effect that the respective Governments should "address an earnest representation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, respecting the disadvantages under which the Australasian Colonies labour, in regard to the doubts which exist as to their power to make mutual arrangements for the interchange, duty free, of their several products and manufactures, as also in respect of the doubts which exist as to their powers to enter into Conventions with foreign countries; to point out that Canada for a lengthened period has been placed on a more favourable footing; to urge that all doubts as to the right to exercise such powers be removed; and that, in entering into arrangements with foreign countries, the Imperial Government should aid the Colonies. That such aid should be immediately granted in respect to endeavouring to negotiate with the United States for the introduction into that country, duty free, of wool, the product of the Australasian Colonies."

The Colonial Treasurer does not urge that arrangements between the Colonies and foreign countries should necessarily be made by the Colonies. It would be more in consonance with an Imperial policy that such Treaties should be made for the Colonies at their desire, by the Imperial Government. Mr. Hammond, of the Foreign Office, in a letter dated November, 1865, to the Under Secretary of the Colonies, laid down an apparently very convenient mode by which such Treaties might be arranged. A copy of the letter is appended. In some way, the want of arrangements of the kind must shortly be recognized. The Imperial Government have declined to accept the cession of the Fiji group, and of other groups of islands in the Pacific. The consequence is, that, more or less near to the Australasian Colonies, foreign possessions are continuing to increase; whilst concurrently the trade between them and the Australasian Colonies is also increasing. Thus, there are already the Fiji Islands, a *quasi*-independent kingdom, and the Navigator group, likely to become a United States dependency; and of older standing, there are the French Colonies of New Caledonia and Tahiti, the independent kingdom of Hawaii, and the Dutch dependencies of Java and New Guinea. The necessity must, sooner or later, arise of regulating the relations between these countries and their Australasian neighbours; and it must be decided whether the Colonies are to act for themselves, or whether the Imperial Government is to act for them.

To return to the question of simple Intercolonial Reciprocity. Lord Kimberley seems to ridicule the idea of a Customs Union comprising the whole Empire, when he writes—"It may perhaps be thought that if it has been found impossible for adjacent communities, such as those of Australia, to come to an agreement for a common system of Customs Duties, it is scarcely worth while to consider the possibility of so vast a scheme as the combination of all parts of the British Empire, scattered over the whole globe, under such widely-varying conditions of every kind, into one Customs Union." In fairness to himself, the Colonial Treasurer must point out, that Lord Kimberley scarcely does justice to the suggestions on which he comments; and that it is hardly accurate to say that it has been found impossible for adjacent communities, such as those of Australia, to arrive at an agreement for a common system of Customs Duties. Those communities have desired to arrive at such an agreement; but the opportunity has been denied them by the Imperial Government—that is to say, the Imperial Government have refused to allow them to make reciprocal arrangements. The Colonial Treasurer is surprised that suggestions such as those made by him are considered extravagant, since the theory involved in those suggestions has been enunciated by one who was recently Her Majesty's Prime Minister, Mr. Disraeli. The Colonial Treasurer wrote—"If Great Britain were to confederate her