commercial union of the Australias and New Zealand on the basis of a common tariff, with a distribution of the Customs revenue to the several Colonies, according to population. That object was found to be, at that time, unattainable; and the Conference adopted a unanimous resolution to the effect that it was desirable that the Colonial Legislatures should be freed from Imperial restrictions on their reciprocal fiscal arrangements.

Her Majesty's Government had intimated their readiness to assent to a Customs union of two or more Colonies; but, when such an arrangement was found to be impracticable, the Governments represented at the Conference were willing to rest content with the removal of the existing restrictions on intercolonial trade by reciprocity conventions.

It is difficult to apprehend the force of objections offered to this mode of treating the question when no objection is raised to a Customs union, which would produce precisely analogous results on a much larger scale.

A Customs union between all the Australasian Colonies would enable these countries to impose, if it were thought desirable, protective duties upon imports from Europe, while Colonial products and manufactures were reciprocally interchanged duty free. How, it may be asked, can such a system be deemed legitimate and admissible, when a plan for carrying it into only partial operation by less direct means is held to be open to grave objections?

Her Majesty's Government are prepared, we are informed, to sanction an arrangement that would enable a group of six Colonies, if they were so minded, to establish absolute free trade amongst themselves, in combination with protection against all the world beside. But when two Colonies desire to be placed in a similar position by a Tariff Convention, "Her Majesty's "Government are bound to say that the measure proposed seems to them inconsistent with those "principles of free trade which they believe to be alone permanently conducive to commercial "prosperity."

By Lord Kimberley's own showing, there are precedents for the legislation now submitted for the Royal assent; and there are no legal obstacles to its recognition in the shape of Imperial treaty obligations. It is only on an abstract theory of the superior advantages of a free-trade policy that the Secretary of State objects to a proposal which seems to sanction protection under the name of reciprocity.

These are views which can find no acceptance with Colonial Legislatures under a system of Constitutional Government. The question they desire to solve is one directly affecting the interests of the communities for which those Legislatures are elected to make laws. Its effects upon Imperial interests is almost inappreciable. The doubt whether "the imposition of differential "duties upon British produce and manufactures might not have a tendency to weaken the "connection between the Mother Country and the Colonies, and to impair the friendly feeling "on both sides," seems scarcely warranted by a fair consideration of the whole bearing of the application under discussion.

It may be observed that the tariffs of the Australasian Colonies have, in effect, for some years past, imposed duties on British manufactures, either intentionally or incidentally protective.

Is it to be supposed that the "friendly feeling on both sides" which has survived the imposition of protective or prohibitory duties on British manufactures would be "impaired" by a reciprocity convention; for example, between Victoria and Tasmania, which permitted the products and manufactures of those Colonies to be mutually exchanged duty free, or under a lower duty than similar articles imported from the United Kingdom? It may be suggested, with far greater probability, that "the friendly feeling on both sides" is more likely to be impaired by the refusal of Her Majesty's Government to relax a law which imposes an irksome restriction on the fiscal legislation, and vexatiously intermeddles with the domestic taxation of these self-governed Colonies.

Lord Kimberley seems to complain of the absence of "strong representations and illustrations of the utility or necessity of the measure." The unanimous resolution of the Conference of last year, and the subsequent identical legislation of New Zealand, South Australia, and Tasmania, may be taken as a sufficient indication of the strength of the conviction of the Governments and Legislatures of Australasia of the urgent necessity, and, by consequence, in their judgment, of the utility of the measure.

As far as the Colony of Tasmania is concerned, the "necessity and utility of the measure" are sufficiently obvious. Our Customs duties are imposed for revenue purposes only. But when our nearest neighbours practically close against our producers and manufacturers their best and natural market by the comprehensive operation of an intentionally protective tariff, we seek relief in reciprocity conventions, which, while they would extend the basis of commercial operations between us and our neighbours, would in no way prejudice the interests of European producers and European manufacturers, inasmuch as the desired convention would, for the most part, "deal with a limited list of raw materials and produce not imported to these Colonies from "Europe."

Lord Kimberley's treatment of this question indicates throughout a natural anxiety to avoid a decision which might seem to commit Her Majesty's Government to a departure "from "the established commercial policy" of the Mother Country. But since his Lordship assures us that Her Majesty's Government have not "come to any absolute conclusion on the questions "which he has discussed," we may venture to hope that a firm but respectful persistence in the course of legislation already adopted by New Zealand, Tasmania, and South Australia, will