

Ninth Day.
1 May 1907.
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PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.
(Dr. Jameson.)

as a question of uniting together in defence, which is the most important subject, all the portions of the British Empire. Then also in the Cape and South Africa, the practical carrying out of preference with the Mother Country was largely helped—certainly, I might say almost, brought about—by Lord Milner. When I mention these three names in connection with preference, I think South Africa perhaps has given what I might call a useful object lesson in a subject of this kind which affects the whole Empire, and as far as the leaders of political opinion in South Africa at all events are concerned, it was kept outside party politics, because I do not think any one could say that Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Hofmeyr, and Lord Milner were on all fours in domestic politics in South Africa.

As I have said, Mr. Deakin has practically put the whole case before us, and any one following Mr. Deakin, especially as in my case I endorse every word he has said, would in attempting to elaborate it only weaken the case. So I am not going to attempt it. But I take it we are here to-day to try and get something from the Imperial Government. I am not going to split words about it. I am not going to say we are making a wonderfully generous offer from the Colonies, and it rests with the Imperial Government to do what it likes. Of course, it rests with the Imperial Government to do what it likes. As Mr. Deakin quoted from a statement of the Premier of Queensland yesterday, of course there was no question of insistence on the Imperial Government or any other Government adopting this preference principle, but I think we are all bound to influence in every possible way that we can, not only the Imperial Government but the other Colonies, to enter into some preferential arrangement. Therefore we are asking for preference from the Imperial Government—however small, I will put in—we want, if possible, the principle established. We who believe in preference believe it will grow of itself. So, however small it is, we will not say we will be satisfied, but we will be thankful. I know the objection of a certain section of the people is: "That is exactly the thing; we do not want a principle established; we do not agree with it." To that I say, let us try the experiment, and see whether it will grow into a principle or not, and that might get over their difficulty.

You, Lord Elgin, told us, I think, in your opening speech on this subject, that perhaps we are not all agreed, but at the same time we could speak fully to each other on the subject, and perhaps come to an agreement and understand each other. Although it may be presumptuous for some one from abroad to attempt to influence the people in this country, I venture to say it is our duty, if we can, to influence them, even at the cost of being considered presumptuous. Remembering, as I say, that we are asking for something from the Imperial Government. I would say at the same time, from my view of the subject, we are not asking the Imperial Government to change its fiscal policy at all. I take it we are all agreed that all that we are really asking for is for the Government to change its methods with regard to fiscal policy, and are not asking them to change at our bidding its fiscal policy. I take it, some 60 years ago or more, when Free Trade was established in the United Kingdom, it was avowedly put forward that this was with a view to getting universal Free Trade throughout the world.

Mr. ASQUITH: No.

Dr. JAMESON: Well, I have always understood so. If it was not so, I say, from our point of view, our bringing forward preference at present is with the object of getting universal Free Trade throughout the world. Then we preference advocates at bottom are trying to go for Free Trade by steps, not at one jump. We do not expect, after the experience of the last 60 years,