

Mr. Chamberlain's Crusade Dangerous.

All such questions as these may be safely left for the British combatants to settle. What concerns us is not Mr. Chamberlain's motives, but that he has begun an active crusade to impose on the colonies, under cover of, or in exchange for, commercial gains, some of the most retrograde political changes proposed by any Colonial Minister of modern times. They are essentially antagonistic to the great future which her most devoted sons have heretofore mapped out for Canada, and I quite agree with the learned Professor Dicey, himself one of the foremost Unionists and Imperialists, whose very able article in *The Contemporary Review* for last September clearly demonstrates that, if fully carried out, Mr. Chamberlain's proposals would be fatal to the Unionist party, against Imperialism, and lead to the Empire's disturbance, and possibly disintegration.

Before proceeding farther, a few words in regard to preferential tariffs may clear the way for what is to follow. That the Motherland and the colonies might give a preference in their markets to each other's productions appears not only reasonable, but taking. Whenever the advantage is mutual, our commercial intercourse cannot be too free and easy. Unfortunately, the interests of Great Britain and Canada do not always harmonise. Commercially, they are often diametrically opposed, and in such cases neither should be asked nor expected to act contrary to its own interests. The Canadian preference on British goods has been a success. Sir Wilfrid Laurier wisely asked nothing in return, and if Great Britain can give our productions a preference in her markets, on the same terms—that is, without imposing new burdens on her own people or ourselves—all Canadians would be glad to accept it. But, as we shall see later on, that is precisely what it is proposed not to do.

This brings us to the crux of the question: Mr. Chamberlain's contentions. Without repeating particulars, they may be fairly abridged as follows: (1) British commerce is standing still or decaying; (2) Free trade must be partially or wholly abandoned, and protective duties enacted; (3) the Empire is in danger of dismemberment; (4) this danger can only be averted by giving the colonies certain commercial advantages over foreign countries in the British markets; and (5) thus bring about an Imperial Federation which will make all the (now) self-governing colonies as much a part of the Empire for certain purposes of legislation and taxation as Yorkshire or any other English county.

The first answer to this is, Mr. Chamberlain's premises are essentially incorrect. Statistics do not sustain his declarations of British commercial stagnation and decay. In trying to prove this he has had to go back to the year 1872—over thirty years—to find a basis for his calculations. This was a period of unprecedented inflation, arising from the Franco-German war. So immensely did British exports increase to France and Germany and all parts of Europe at war or in commotion, that 1872 became known as the "freak year," and the British Board of Trade gave warning that any comparisons based on its returns would be quite misleading. Nevertheless, Mr. Chamberlain chose