

The gentlemen from whose proceedings Mr. W. H. Howland the other day withdrew the veil, showing them in the act of bargaining with the leaders of party for fiscal protection to their own trades, were practical beyond question: whether they were operating or believed themselves to be operating in the interest of the community at large is a point on which the very fact that they shrouded themselves in secrecy is enough to breed a doubt. That advocates of Free Trade have forgotten the limit practically set to the application of a sound principle by fiscal necessity is the very basis of our special position on the question; and we differ from the extreme purists who refuse to resort to retaliation as a mode of opening ports and enforcing justice. But when protection is demanded, we ask, and in no captious spirit, for a clear statement of principle. What are the native industries to be protected? On what ground is the selection made? Wherein is the justice of taxing the whole community for the profit of particular trades? What is gained by forcibly diverting capital and labour from one trade to another? Are we to renounce selling to other nations as well as buying of them? Is the protection to be temporary, or is it to be maintained for ever? The original plea was for temporary protection only, to shelter the industries in their infant state against the severity of competition: but rueful experience has proved that for the purpose of levying a tax on the community the infancy of an industry never ends.

THE Chicago Free Trade Conference has had its say, and it remains to be seen what effect its resolves may have upon Congress. The appeal is to a Congress to be modified by future elections. And on these elections the Conference hopes to produce some influence; one recommendation to revenue reformers being "to vote only for such Congressional candidates as openly oppose a tariff for Protection." The resolutions are not very aggressive. They begin by asking that no increase of protective duties be sanctioned; and they proceed to claim for crude materials freedom from duty, and that on the products of these materials no additional duties shall be put. Free ships are demanded and the abolition of the restrictive navigation laws called for, while bounties and subsidies are condemned. This is the full measure of the demand made by the Conference. There is wisdom in the moderation manifested; a demand for more radical tariff reform, to begin with, would have frightened many people from giving it their countenance on whose support of the present resolutions it is safe to count. Powerful interests stand in the way of a more sweeping tariff reform; and all that is asked, moderate as it is, will not be granted without a struggle. What makes the manufacturing interest specially strong in the United States is the fact that it finds expression in a vast number of powerful corporations. These corporations have an influence which individuals could never hope to wield. The moderation of the Conference is shown even more in the minority than in the majority report. The minority demanded an immediate reduction of the entire tariff to the revenue standard, a demand which the majority rejected in favour of the instalment of which we have given the chief items. Many of the changes asked by the majority were supported by manufacturers, in whose interest the abolition of duties on crude materials would have found utterance long ago if it were not for the high duties on the finished products. The majority resolutions are only intended as the thin end of the wedge. The preamble discovers the ground of future action which the resolutions do not cover. The Democrats in Congress will probably be found not to be an unit in the advocacy of the first step proposed by the majority of the Chicago Conference to be taken. But whatever influence the resolves of that Conference may have it will be in the right direction.

THE first set of nominations to the Revising-Barristerships, or whatever the appointments are to be called, has been almost unexceptionable: this it is right to say. Unfortunately it does not follow because a power is not abused at the outset, and when all eyes are fixed on its exercise, that it will not be abused in the sequel. The scene in England shows us of what Party in its frenzy is capable, and the sight of the means to do ill deeds too often makes ill deeds done. The nomination of the revising-officers by the head of the Party in power is inherently objectionable; nor has a good reason ever been assigned for departing from the British practice, or rather from the constitutional principle on which it is based. Watchfulness is the price of liberty even under the elective system, and practical usurpation may take place without violation of forms. Without any violation of forms, and by legal processes in which there was not a flaw, Charles II. broke the charters of all the great municipal corporations, got the corporations and the Parliament into his own hands, sent the leaders of the Opposition to the block, and practically restored absolute monarchy. Those days will not come again; but there is no saying, even now, to what extent, under a constitution like ours, an unscrupulous Party with a leader equally

unscrupulous might carry its encroachments without breaking the letter of any law, or how long it might entrench itself in possession of the Government. Gerrymandering, manipulation of the franchise, partisan revision, the Party use of the prerogative of dissolution, are all strictly legal; combined with patronage and corruption they are formidable instruments for controlling the elections; and he who controls the elections is all-powerful, whatever may be the nominal limits of his power. He is not only all-powerful, but almost irresponsible. No Royal Governor in the plenitude of his nominal authority would have ventured on the expenditure or the corruption which has gone on in Canada during the last forty years. We have now at the head of the State a Minister whose sole and absorbing object is to keep the Party which supports him in power. All the threads of influence have been gathered by a life of Party management into his hands, he commands an overwhelming majority, and Parliamentary opposition to his worst measures is hopeless. Once more, then, it is necessary to be watchful.

THE majority in favour of the Scott Act at Fredericton has been reduced since the last election, and will very likely disappear at the next if the question is tried again. But the Liquor Interest no longer care to try the question. They have found that to them the Scott Act means practically the free sale of liquor without license, and they have no inducement to fight their way back to a system under which they would have to pay license fees. At Fredericton, as was stated by the *Maritime Farmer*, a neutral journal quoted in our last number, the sale of liquor is perfectly open. The *Bruce Herald* reports the same result in that county. "The Act," it says, "is as dead as Julius Caesar." The idea that it would be sustained by a reverence for legal authority soon vanished. Prosecutions have failed, from the unwillingness of witnesses to give evidence against the hotel-keepers, who have public sympathy on their side, the people feeling that the Act sought to destroy a business and confiscate property created under the sanction of previous laws. The trials have become a farce. They have become a farce so far as the enforcement of the Act is concerned, but they are at the same time a very practical and effective school of perjury. Yet there are some excellent people who cannot be brought to believe, or even to admit the thought, that their neighbours may be opposed to this system and in favour of a different way of discouraging intemperance without being moral murderers, children of the Devil and enemies of God.

IN the contest between parties in England comparatively little is said about the House of Lords. Lord Rosebery, who has made the reform of his own branch of the Legislature his special province, dwells anxiously on the subject, but the Radical leaders hardly pay it any attention. This seems strange, considering the urgency of the question and the fact that not many months ago, when the Lords were attempting to block the Franchise Bill, the country rang with Radical threats to mend or end them. But the explanation is one which curiously supports our contention that it is from the Conservative point of view that a reform of our Senate is most earnestly to be desired. The fact is that the English Radicals for the most part care very little about ending the House of Lords, and are decidedly opposed to mending it. They see that if it were ended, as there would no longer be anything to prevent the Peers from becoming candidates for seats in the Commons, there would in all probability be a great addition to the Conservative forces in that body, whereas the hereditary chamber acts as a gilded ostracism of wealth and rank. They see that if it were mended and made like the Senate of the United States it would be a great Conservative force in itself. They prefer, therefore, as Sir Charles Dilke cynically avowed, that it shall remain as it is, discredited, decrepit and incapable of putting a real veto on any Radical measure. Moderate Liberals naturally reply that nothing can be worse for the nation than to have a branch of the Legislature in a state of impotence and ignominy. If they would turn their eyes to Canada they would see their assertion practically confirmed; though the House of Lords, having at all events the advantage of independence, can never sink to the level of a nominal Senate.

IT is only in politics that people are competent judges of momentous questions about which they know nothing. This will be strikingly illustrated a few days hence, when the British agricultural labourer will be called upon to pronounce his opinion on the reform of the House of Lords, Disestablishment, the Irish question, the Land question, the Local Government question, and a number of questions pertaining to foreign politics, including those of Egypt, Bulgaria and Afghanistan. With regard to the Land question, he has an idea that he would like a bit of land for himself. With regard to the other questions it is a very inadequate description of the density of his ignorance to say that he has no idea whatever. It