

tional," as used throughout. As Canada is not really a nation it must be so designated, either as a matter of courtesy to ourselves, which might be in questionable taste, or by way of suggesting complete nationality as the goal to which we aspire. Many might wish for clearer definitions before identifying themselves with the organization. Again it would seem worthy of consideration whether a much greater work might not be accomplished were the monthly as well as the annual meetings devoted to the discussion of themes more directly related to the great objects of the Society. Probably, however, local branches might make their own By-laws in regard to this matter.

The Tariff Bill which has been introduced into the American Congress by the Democratic majority of the Ways and Means Committee may not fully meet the expectations of the more sanguine free-traders among the advocates of tariff-reform, but it certainly, if it becomes law, will falsify the predictions of those who have been declaring that the Democrats in Congress would not have the courage to carry into action their ante-election pledges. The Bill has evidently been framed with very great care, and though it will probably undergo minor modifications in its passage through the two Houses, it seems, so far as may be judged by a cursory examination, to have been so far constructed on a general principle that it will be difficult to change materially its details without seriously damaging and possibly imperilling the whole structure. As an instalment of tariff-reform the measure may be viewed in two aspects. It is not more noteworthy for what it does than for what it foreshadows. As it is, it goes quite as far in the changes it makes as could have been expected by reasonable reformers, especially at a time when a widespread business depression has laid its paralyzing hand upon almost every industry. It is one of the evils of a protective system that the economic conditions it produces are so artificial that it is almost impossible to effect a reform without giving a temporary but disastrous shock to the whole business of the nation. There are those who argue with some force that it is better for the patient in such a case to undergo the one severe operation which promises a radical and permanent cure, than to suffer for a prolonged period under less heroic treatment. But the majority, even of ardent opponents of the principle of protection, recognize the fact that statesmanship is a practical business, and that it is in many cases better that it should reach a distant goal by easy stages than by reckless driving. It is not likely that many, even of the most ardent tariff reformers, in the United States, have yet looked so far into the future as to recognize absolute freedom of trade as their true goal, but even had the majority done

so they could hardly have prudently advanced further towards it at a single bound than they will be carried by the Wilson Bill, should it become law without important changes.

But what of the outlook? Its relation to the future is the other aspect in which the Wilson Bill will naturally be regarded by many, especially by those who are far enough from the scene of operations to see events in their proper perspective. If the Democratic policy means nothing more than a change from a higher to a lower grade of protection, the reform may prove very beneficial, but cannot be regarded as thorough. Then, again, apart altogether from the question of the present range of Democratic foresight, it may well be doubted whether it is possible for the political stage coach, or steam engine, which ever it may prove to be, to find a permanent stopping-place at the middle of the inclined plane upon which it is now moving. But, no doubt, circumstances will have much to do with the arrest or progress of the new policy on its way to its only logical resting-place. Should the present cloud of depression pass by in time to allow the reformed tariff a fair trial before the next Congressional election; should it be found as we may with some confidence predict, under such circumstances, that not only is the industrial life of the nation stimulated rather than retarded by the removal of so many of its restrictions; and should the result within the next few years be, as it is not unlikely to be, a great increase in American exports and a revival of American ocean commerce, no selfish interests in the nation will be strong enough to prevent the speedy taking of the next step towards complete freedom of trade. When that step shall have been taken and the liberating process completed, then, and not till then, may the manufacturers of Great Britain begin to fear for the sceptre of the world's ocean commerce which they have so long awayed.

Canada's interest in the Wilson Bill is not inconsiderable. The addition of iron, coal, eggs, fish and other commodities which we have to dispose of to the free list, combined with the reductions in the duties on live animals, lumber, breadstuffs, barley, dairy products, beans, peas and other vegetables, etc., cannot fail to redound to our advantage by giving us a choice of markets for some and the only available foreign market for others of these productions. A most hopeful condition of the improved prospect is that the United States is making these changes, not as a favour to Canada, nor as the result of a commercial bargain, but solely on the grounds of enlightened self-interest. This increases the value of whatever advantages may accrue to us, because it, in a manner, guar-

antees their permanence. Whether our neighbours proceed farther in the direction of free-trade in the near future or not, it is scarcely conceivable that they can re-enact a McKinley tariff, if once repealed, in this generation. We have little fear that our Government and Parliament will fail to respond to the invitation to more friendly trade relations held out in the proposal to admit free of duty bread-stuffs and various coarse grains, either in the kernel, or in the shape of flour and meal, from any country which imposes no import duty on the like product when exported from the United States. The course of tariff reform in the neighbouring nation will have another beneficial effect in that it cannot fail to strengthen the similar movement now in progress amongst ourselves. Truly, events move rapidly in this Western world, notwithstanding the slowness of Republican legislative machinery. He would have been counted a blind prophet indeed, who should have ventured to predict, two or three years ago, when the McKinley star was in the zenith, that the year 1893 would see such a bill as the Wilson Bill before Congress, with excellent prospects of success.

#### SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

The discussions which took place at the annual meeting of the Social Problems Conference in the Auditorium in this city last week merit a much larger share of public attention than they are likely to receive. While a considerable and increasing number of thoughtful citizens are studying earnestly these tremendous problems with a view to finding the real solution which one must believe to be possible, the great majority still either ignore the very existence of the problems, or pass them by with an indifference or procrastination born of absorption in their own personal affairs, or, still worse, content themselves with searching out the weak places in each of the schemes proposed by the few who are intensely in earnest in seeking remedies, and perhaps sneering at their advocates as "cranks" or enthusiasts. But no one with a heart in his bosom can look fairly in the face the inequalities of social condition which abound in the great cities of the world to-day, much less inquire into the reality of the suffering and destitution which exist even in our own happy land, without coming to the conclusion that almost any other attitude of mind is nobler than indifference. The veriest enthusiast who believes that in some pet scheme he has found the magic solvent which will transmute poverty into competence and enforced idleness into remunerative industry, no matter with what lack of insight or of foresight he may urge forward his hobby, occupies unquestionably a higher moral position than the wisest philosopher, or the most influential member of society, who gives none of these things a serious thought.