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CURRENT COMMENTS

Tariff Reform at Home and Abroad

THE most important political and economic news of the world has been for the past two months a matter of the tariff. In Canada, in England, and in Germany a discussion of the tariff policy has been going on in various aspects, and the interest it has awakened goes to show that protection is throughout the world a question of the day. The political excitement which its discussion produces is an evidence of its economic importance.

In Canada a general revision of the tariff was asked for in the House by Mr. Tarte, who has taken a foremost place in the matter of tariff reform. Mr. Tarte claimed that Canadian industries stood in need of more adequate protection if Canada were ever to become the power in the business world which she should, and a general advance in our tariff was a pressing necessity. The arguments put forward by Mr. Tarte were practically such as have already been frequently presented in THE NATIONAL MONTHLY, and a logical summary of his former utterances. A short time previously Mr. Borden, leader of the Opposition, had moved that a specific advance be made in the iron and steel duties, in the interests of an industry which was of growing importance to Canada. Both Mr. Borden's and Mr. Tarte's motions were defeated, and

tariff reform is again at a standstill. That another year will find it a still more pressing necessity, and stronger in its demands, there can be no doubt.

The political situation in England was stirred up to a remarkable degree by Mr. Chamberlain's preferential tariff propositions. For England to give Canada and her other colonies a preference would mean that she should impose a tariff against foreign countries, and England has been so long a free trade nation that such a proposition must necessarily be slow of acceptance. Following Mr. Chamberlain's notable speech an amendment was proposed in the House of Commons in favor of the corn duties; it was overwhelmingly defeated, England being apparently not yet ready to forsake her free trade traditions. The significant feature of the situation, however, is that a protectionist element has arisen and the natural result will be that it will grow. The Government renounced its responsibility for Mr. Chamberlain's remarks, though it was believed that a ministerial crisis was impending, and Premier Balfour professes to himself have an "open mind."

In Germany the tariff forms a problematical feature of the fiscal system, which has been considerably endangered by the recent victories of the Socialist party in the general elections. The Socialists are strongly opposed to taxes or duties of any kind, particu-