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CURRENT TOPICS.

It is now definitely announced, on apparently good authority, that the rejection of the Army Bill by the German Reichstag, which is now almost certain to take place, will be followed by a dissolution of the House in April. In that event the German Empire will probably be for a few weeks the theatre of the most intense political struggle it has ever known: a struggle fraught with results of the highest importance to the welfare of the country, the constitutional liberties of the people, and possibly to the prerogatives of the crown. It is hard to say what will be the strength of the influences which the Emperor may be able to bring to bear. That his appeals to the national pride, and above all to their "loyalty," will be fervent and impassioned, may readily be believed. Yet, judging from the

present attitude of the majorities, it would seem highly improbable that the imperial and "imperious" will can prevail.

One of the most inconsequential and fallacious ways of arguing that a reduction of the tariff upon British and American goods would not benefit the Canadian farmer is to quote the tables of articles imported into Canada from these countries, in a given year, under the present high tariff, with a view to showing that the goods so imported are mainly of kinds used only by the wealthier classes. What was the high tariff imposed for if not to keep out the articles which the people would be most likely to import but for the obstacles thus put in their way? The true test, and the only one worth applying, it cannot be too often urged, is to remove the tariff from the articles which the farmer most needs, or to reduce it to a revenue basis, and then see whether he will import them or not. If he does not the fact will prove that the tariff is no longer needed. If he does it will prove that the tariff compels him to buy the article which he does not prefer instead of that which he would like to have, thus interfering with his rights as a free citizen.

Among the various services which the Government Experimental Farms are rendering to the farmers of the Dominion one of great and immediate practical value is the free testing of the germinating power of grain and other agricultural seeds. This work is now in active progress at the Central Experimental Farm at Ottawa, and farmers are invited to avail themselves freely of the opportunity for testing the quality of any seeds which they may be proposing to use in the coming spring. Any farmers desiring to send samples for test should forward them without delay. The packages should weigh about one ounce each, and they can be sent free through the mails. In Manitoba and in some other parts of the Dominion the weather last autumn was very wet, and the grain in the stook was liable to sprout before it could be housed. "A large proportion of such samples," Professor Saunders says, "show a low degree of germinating power, and if sown as seed will be likely to result in poor crops." The samples can be tested and reports made usually in about ten days after the grain is received.

Referring to Mr. McCarthy's speech, the Quebec Chronicle, though a supporter of the Government, frankly admits that the

protectionist business has been greatly overdone since the introduction of the National Policy. The thin edge of the wedge was slipped in, it says, in 1879, and ever since, the burdens of the people, the great consuming classes, have been piled higher and higher, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. But this is the natural and inevitable outcome of protection as a policy. This was pointed out and insisted on with great emphasis by the abler opponents of the N. P. when it was under discussion in Parliament and in the press, prior to its adoption. It was then prophesied that the result of a few years of protection would be to create manufacturing and other interests and monopolies so powerful that the Government and Parliament would come largely under their control, thus rendering it very difficult, if not impossible, to undo the bad legislation and return to a sound fiscal policy, even after the evils and abuses of the protective tariff should have become apparent. Who can deny that these forecasts have been verified to an alarming extent? What possible motive can the Government have, apart from the influence of the powerful interests it has created, including its obligations to the Red Parlor, for delaying or refusing to reduce the burdens at the demand of the people?

A recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States is of considerable interest to all interested in labour legislation, but especially to Government employees. Ever since 1868 a law has been upon the statute book of the Republic making eight hours a day's work "for all labourers, workmen and mechanics" employed by the Government. For a time this law was evaded by giving full pay to those only who were willing to work ten hours per diem. This led to an agitation which compelled the President to issue a proclamation in the following year, and from that date till 1877 full pay was given for eight hour's work in all the navy yards and stations of the country. Then the Secretary returned to the plan of compelling all who would not work ten hours to accept a proportionate reduction in wages. After a time this ten-hour day was made to apply only from March to September. But the men have claimed extra pay during those months, and the Committee on Labour reported in 1890 that the Government could not escape responsibility for its payment. Now, by a decision of the Supreme Court, the same thing is affirmed in reference to the Post-office, which has