

THE CHAMBERLAIN PROPOSALS

FROM A CANADIAN POINT OF VIEW.

The first question to be considered in connection with the Chamberlain proposals is the end or purpose they have in view. And with regard to this end or purpose there is, up to the present, at any rate, a real and logical demarcation between the views of Mr. Balfour and those of Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Balfour desires fiscal reform for the purpose of obtaining what he considers will be a weapon in the hands of the British government to compel protectionist countries to deal less unfairly with Great Britain. He calls the weapon Retaliation. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, professes to desire fiscal reform for the purpose of giving to the colonies such advantages over other countries that they will become indissolubly attached to the Mother Country and will be prepared on their part to offer more solid and real trade advantages to Great Britain than they have hitherto given.

Such are the ostensible purposes of Mr. Balfour and of Mr. Chamberlain, in the briefest form. But do they constitute the real underlying purpose or purposes of the two leaders? The answer to this question would in no essential way affect the discussion of the Chamberlain proposals from the Canadian point of view. It is asserted by the opponents of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain that they are simply the leaders of a movement in favor of protection for its own sake and are deriving support from that portion of the British manufacturing interest, which, for some time, has been jealously observing the opportunities for spoliation enjoyed by competitors in Germany and the United States, and from that portion of the British agricultural interest which considers that its prosperity lies in the control of food prices.

But whether protection for its own sake is the real purpose of the movement or not, the fact we are confronted with is that the Chamberlain proposals, with the ostensible purpose of welding the Empire together by means of tariff arrangements, have been with great energy brought before the attention of the whole Empire and will probably compel consideration for some time to come. Difference and, indeed, variety of opinion on the subject exists in Canada as well as in Great Britain, but naturally difference of opinion is less acute in Canada where the question has not as yet been thrown into the political arena. At the same time it has to be admitted that there is in the Dominion a good deal of acquiescence in the proposals, as manifested by the endorsements of the boards of trade throughout the country, but it is to be noted that the discussion of