

Prominent Topics.

The Payne Tariff Bill.

Any change in the tariff policy of the United States must always be of considerable interest to Canadians, although the time has gone by when anything that Congress can do in this connection could be regarded as of vital interest to the Dominion. Canada is now commercially independent, thanks largely to the unfriendly policy of American statesmen in the past, forcing it to work out its own commercial salvation. The general trend of the Payne bill is in the direction of tariff reduction and discrimination.

Certain clauses are frankly and manifestly intended to bring pressure to bear on Canada, but it seems to be generally recognized in the press of the United States, that the experiment is so belated that it is a forlorn hope. There is not the slightest danger to-day of Canada placing all its eggs in one basket, and then entrusting the holding of the basket to the United States Congress. Wood pulp and bituminous coal promise to give rise to a big fight at Washington, because there are very diverse and conflicting interests to be reconciled. These the bill proposes to admit free from Canada on condition that Canada imposes no export duties on them, admits them free of customs dues and generally accords to the United States most favoured nation treatment. It will be the duty of Parliament to consider each of these questions in a friendly spirit, but purely on its own intrinsic merits from the point of view of Canadian interests. The wood pulp question is of vital importance to Canada, as well as to the United States. They have the larger market, but we have the larger supply, although none too large for the probable demands of the early future. Our forests are still the greatest source of natural wealth in the Dominion, and we have an unquestioned right to utilise them to our own best national advantage. In this matter of all others, it will be wise not to enter into any bargain that will tie hands for any long period of time. All over the continent, the forests are being rapidly depleted and the demand for paper is increasing at a prodigious rate. Our motto should be the Canadian Forests for Canadians, and we shall be shortsighted if we allow this principle to be lost sight of for any other considerations.

Employers' Liability. The Hon. Mr. Taschereau has introduced into the Quebec Legislature, a Workmen's Compensation Bill, one of those measures that so many legislatures have recently passed, but which have not proved altogether satisfactory in their practical operation. From the details published, it would appear to provide for an indemnity of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$2,000 in every fatal case in which the death is not caused by the victim's own wilful fault. For permanent and absolute incapacity, the victim is to receive a rent equal to half his wages.

Greater New York. The growth of New York is strikingly illustrated by the fact that it is now in contemplation to spend \$500,000,000 in providing transportation facilities of one kind and another for the big city. About \$400,000,000 is intended for tunnels and subways and it is proposed to spend \$80,000,000 on a system of underground moving sidewalks.

Steel-Coal Progress.

A week ago, "the street" had it that settlement of Steel-Coal matters was close at hand, on the basis of continuation of the old contract and abandonment of Steel Company's claims for other than past damages. Then came word that the Steel Company's president declined to sign the tentative agreement unless assurances were first given that the Coal Company would at once pay over the excess price which the Steel Company has paid for coal purchased since 1906—leaving the remaining claims of the company to be ascertained by the referee appointed by the Nova Scotia court. To this, the Coal Company replied with an offer of \$2,500,000 cash, as payment on account of amounts claimed, on the understanding that any unpaid balance should be recovered upon final adjudication. Next, the Steel Company's president announced that this offer would not be accepted. Later came the statement of the Coal Company's president at yesterday's annual meeting, to the effect that a larger cash payment, after some negotiations, had been agreed upon—the Steel Company having agreed to furnish an itemized statement of its claims.

And now—latest to date—comes the announcement that the only issue still pending is with regard to the particulars of the Steel Company's loss arising from short deliveries of coal and the shutting down of its works in 1906. Settlement seems at hand. 'Tis a consummation most devoutly to be wished, for the sake of the country's general business good.

The German War Scare.

There is no particular reason why the whole British Empire should lose its head over the German war scare, which we suspect has been intentionally and perhaps justifiably exaggerated with a view to impressing the British tax-payer with a due sense of the importance of putting the Englishman's home in a state of defence. But, nevertheless, the occasion is one to which the Colonies should rise. There has been a strong feeling in Canada for some years that the Dominion should contribute something to the defence of the Empire. The suggestion that Canada should pay for one or more Dreadnoughts is, we think, very timely and appropriate. There is an opportunity to do a patriotic thing gracefully and without offence to anybody.

Nova Scotia Steel and Coal.

The Directors of the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Co. have issued a circular stating that they have under consideration the re-organization of the finances of the Company, but will not be able to report to the shareholders by the 31st of March, the date fixed for the annual meeting. In view of this fact, and in order that a complete report may be furnished to the shareholders at the earliest possible moment after the plans of the Directors are matured, it has been decided to adjourn the annual meeting from the 31st of March to the 20th of May. The annual meeting advertised to take place on the 31st of March, will be convened, but will not transact any business other than to adjourn.

The British House of Commons has amused itself, and at the same time put itself on record, by passing the second reading of a bill to confer the franchise on all men and women over twenty-one years of age.