

population ought to be rapidly increasing, bringing with it a corresponding increase in the volume of exports and imports. Under the circumstances no Canadian should be content with a showing that indicates that we are scarcely more than holding our own from year to year. Then, again, legitimate questions arise as to the manner in which the taxation from which such results are obtained is levied. Does it fall in just proportions upon all classes in the country? Do the rich pay as much in proportion as the poor? Is the sum so levied as to be an encouragement or a hindrance to the trade from which the public coffers are replenished? Above all, is the manner of levying it such that the smallest possible proportion of the whole is diverted from the public chest? Or is it the fact, as so many complain, that for every dollar taken from the people's pockets for the public service, at least another dollar is exacted for the benefit of protected individuals and combines? The ideal of wise and economical government is reached only when the burden of taxation is the lightest possible consistently with the demands of the public service, and is distributed evenly among all the people. How much wealthier would the masses of the Canadian people be to-day had they been left free during the last ten years to purchase their goods in the cheapest markets, paying only so much taxation as was absolutely necessary in order to meet the wants of the treasury, without reference to protectionist doctrines and aims? These are some of the questions that are worth thinking about by every intelligent Canadian. They are questions which will be vigorously debated a few weeks hence at Ottawa. But every intelligent elector should satisfy himself, by his own patient enquiry and thought, so as to have his mind made up before the election is announced.

THE DEPARTING YEAR.

The year just closing will not go down in history associated with any great revolution by which the political map of the world was changed for all coming time. Nor has it witnessed any military struggle between great nations, though the tramp of drilling soldiers and the reverberations of experimenting cannon follow the sun in its daily circuit around the globe. But though there has been no terrible outburst of the pent-up forces which underlie our boasted civilization like the giants of classic fable beneath a slumbering volcano, it is not hard to discover the trend of tendencies which, though slower in operation, and less open to observation, are scarcely less potent agencies for effecting great changes than those more observable forces which are constantly threatening to rend the nations.

The rivalry in increasing armaments is still kept up, notwithstanding the almost intolerable burdens it imposes on states

which are poorly able to bear them. The Emperor of Germany succeeded, by dint of persevering effort and after an appeal to the people, in having his Army Bill passed, with some important modifications. But the financial pressure it involves is just now coming to be felt and resented, if not resisted, and the ultimate consequences to the nation it is impossible to predict. It is pretty certain, however, that the long patience of the people must one day give way under the strain. Meanwhile France has played into the hands of the military Emperor by the unrestrained enthusiasm with which the visit of the Russian fleet was hailed and the enormous sums which were lavished in the preparations for the reception and entertainment of its officers. The assumed union of the French and Russian fleets in case of war has given rise to a good deal of excitement in England as well as in Germany. Though the British Government has refused to admit that there is any ground for alarm, we hear of additional gunboats being ordered and additional expenses for fortifications being incurred, in a way that makes it pretty clear that the recurring annual scare is having its effect. Italy, the weak member of the Triple Alliance, has evidently reached the limit, not merely of its financial resources—that was reached and passed long since—but of the powers of endurance of its people. Even as we write, the masses are almost in open revolt against the new taxation which the Crispi Government has found absolutely necessary, if the head of the nation is to be kept above water. Ominous rumours are afloat, pointing to alleged dissatisfaction with the reigning sovereign. Evidently, either a revolution with some more popular form of government for its goal, or advances in the direction of a better understanding with the Vatican, are among the possibilities of the near future. On the whole, in view of the terrible strain under which the powers composing the Triple Alliance, on the one hand, and their two great adversaries, on the other, are constantly placed, it seems difficult to believe that another year can pass without a rupture of some kind. The first outbreak may be in some of the insignificant Balkan states, or the avalanche may be precipitated by some sudden movement on the part of Russia, whose Mediterranean fleet, in its possibilities of conjunction with that of France, has imported a new element of distrust if not of danger into the situation. Indications at the present moment are thought by some prophets to point in the direction of a descent upon the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, with the object of effecting a union of the Black Sea fleet with that of the Mediterranean, and a conjectural alliance of both with that of France, a movement which could scarcely fail to bring about a conflict with Great Britain.

A much more pleasing subject for thought and conjecture is afforded by the successful application of the principle of

international arbitration during the year, in the settlement of the Behring Sea dispute between the United States and Great Britain. Though Canada has, so far as at present appears, not much reason for self-gratulation on the result, it is not unlikely that impartial future history may show that substantial justice has been done. At any rate, there is no reason to doubt that all parties concerned will abide loyally by the decision, and that a question which was becoming irritating if not dangerous has thus been permanently settled. Unhappily there are, as yet, few indications on the part of other nations of any disposition to follow so good an example, and adopt this most sensible and Christian method of settling their disputes. The day of its general acceptance may not be far distant, but it is not likely to arrive until after the decisive trial of strength for which the great powers of Europe have been so long preparing, shall have been made. After that, it is not unlikely that very different conditions may prevail. It would not, in fact, be surprising should one or another of these "Powers" disappear in the struggle, or at least be relegated to the ranks of second or third class nations.

One of the signs of the time in Great Britain and Europe is the tendency so observable in many countries during the past year towards democracy. The actual progress in this direction has been most marked in some of the minor states, such as Belgium and Holland, but the same influences are manifestly at work in Austria-Hungary, Germany and other of the more conservative monarchies. With the exception, perhaps, of Russia, where the spread of liberal ideas is so effectively barred by the wall of absolutism, there is hardly a state in Europe not already democratized in which radical and democratic ideas are not making headway. The day cannot be far distant when, throughout almost all the nations of Christendom, the will of the people will be the supreme law. Closely connected, though by no means identical, with this movement, is the spread of socialism in some of the great states, particularly in Germany. Whatever may be the merits or dangers of Socialism, it is unjust to confuse it with Anarchy, as is so often done. Indeed, the one is in some respects the very antithesis of the other, for while Anarchy would destroy all government, Socialism would not only retain government, but extend its functions until it embraced almost the whole realm of human life and industry. The consequences of both Radicalism and Socialism when they shall have gained the ascendancy will, no doubt, depend very largely upon the extent and thoroughness of the education which may be given to our future masters.

Turning for a moment to our own continent, the two chief events in the United States, barring the great Chicago Fair, are the repeal of the Sherman Silver