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## A Herculean

### Task.

Whatever differing opinions there may be in respect to the character of Mr. Chamberlain's statesmanship in general and in respect to his scheme for an Imperial Zollverein in particular, there is no question as to his great ability and the influence which he is able to bring to bear upon any question of public policy. Moreover Mr. Chamberlain is not a man who having once put his hand to the plough is likely to look back, and having definitely declared himself in favor of a scheme of preferential trade between the United Kingdom and the Colonies, he may be expected to work strenuously for its realization both by personal effort and by such influences as he is able to command. It is evident that many pens are already busy promoting the crusade for preferential trade and it is said that the Colonial Secretary has a large fund at command for this purpose. But if Mr. Chamberlain shall succeed in persuading the people of the United Kingdom to abandon free trade for the new gospel of a preferential tariff it will be an example of persuasive power such as has seldom been given to the world by any statesman. For, if ever a whole people were united in the endorsement and support of any fiscal policy, it has been the people of Great Britain in reference to the doctrine of free trade. And although there are some of the people's representatives in parliament, who, like Mr. Balfour, profess an open mind in reference to this question now forced to the front by the Colonial Secretary, there is hardly a public man of note who ventures to take his stand squarely with Mr. Chamberlain as an apostle of preferential trade, while many of the leaders of both political parties have emphatically declared themselves entirely opposed to any move in that direction.

## Mr. Asquith's

### View.

The arguments and interests with which the propaganda in favor of preferential trade must contend are fairly well indicated in a speech recently delivered at a meeting of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation by Mr. H. H. Asquith, K. C., who, though comparatively a young man, ranks as one of the ablest among the Liberal leaders. In dealing with the proposition to discard the old doctrine of free trade in favor of an Imperial Zollverein and incidentally with the argument that under free trade Great Britain is not now holding her own in the field of trade as against certain other nations, Mr. Asquith contended that it was not to be expected that Great Britain should retain a monopoly of the markets of the world. "We got the first start, we got the first cut, as it were, and a man must have been living in fool's paradise to imagine that America and Germany, with their trained and skilled populations, would never look in and take away from us some of the trade." As to Germany, though it was to be admitted she had taken great strides in the development of trade, yet her exports at present, it was shown, were per capita little more than half those of Great Britain, and further, from 1880 to 1900 the rate of increase of British exports to Germany had been substantially greater than the rate of increase in German exports to the United Kingdom. Then the German manufactures imported into Great Britain belonged mainly to two classes, "Either, though called manufactures, they are in fact the raw material upon which British skill and labor is going to be exercised in order to complete and send it into the market, or, when they are manufactures in a finished state, they are manufactures which the Germans can produce more cheaply and better than we can." One of the reasons why Germany can manufacture certain articles more cheaply than they can be produced in Britain is the cheaper labor and the lower standard of comfort that obtain among the working men of Germany. In this respect England does not desire to emulate Germany. But Mr. Asquith acknowledged that Germany possessed another advantage, and one most worthy of imitation, in the vast superiority of her system of secondary and technical education. "And when you ask, how are you going to meet what I admit to be a formidable obstacle in the way of British trade, how are you going to meet the German competition? I say I am not going to meet it by taking down from its dusty shelf in the political museum the old blunderbuss of retaliation, which is as likely as not to explode in your own hands. No, I say, on the contrary, let us rather avail ourselves of

the weapons of precision which science has forged, which the British people as well as the German can be taught to handle, and which are in truth the arms of quick-firing and of long-range in the industrial campaigns of to-day." In the better education and training of its artisans and in the wise and liberal use in the interests of the community of the facilities which science affords, the country would find a means of contending against German or any other competition far better and more effective than a thousand import duties.

In dealing more particularly with the proposal for a preferential tariff between the United Kingdom and the Colonies, Mr. Asquith discussed the subject along the line of the two questions: First, what are we going to give? and, secondly, what are we going to get? As to the former question, the scheme of the Colonial Secretary demanded the imposition of a duty upon food. That must mean, in the first instance, a duty upon wheat—a good substantial duty of not less than five shillings a quarter. This, taking account of the enhanced price of home-grown grain, consequent upon the higher price of imported grain, would mean, according to the calculation of Sir Robert Giffin, the imposition of a tax of £8,250,000 on the consumers of bread in the United Kingdom. But "this enormous tax on bread indefinitely prolonged does not complete that side of the account. Different parts of the empire must be dealt with equally. If a tax were put on wheat, Canada alone would get something like 40 per cent. of the benefit. This would not do. New Zealand and Australia would be entitled to a corresponding advantage over foreign countries in the matter of meat, and so to the British working-man's bread tax must be added a tax on his meat. Then South Africa and Australia would be sure to want their wool protected in the British market. India too might justly expect a share in the general advantage through a preferential tariff on her cotton, hides and other exports. And so a tax upon the raw material of British manufacturers would be inevitable. When Mr. Asquith came to consider the other side of the question—what the United Kingdom was to gain in return for what it would be required to give in the carrying out of Mr. Chamberlain's programme—he showed that the range of commodities in which a preferential tariff in the colonies would have any effect on the export trade of the mother country was comparatively limited, and that the colonies would not give such preferential rates as would enable British goods to compete in their markets with the home-made products. In summing up the matter Mr. Asquith concludes that the realization of Mr. Chamberlain's scheme would mean dearer food, the lowering of real wages, diminution in the efficiency of labor and the raising of the price of raw material of some of the most important industries of the country. "What does that mean?" asked Mr. Asquith. "It means that by adding to the cost of production you would under the stress of industrial competition, still further handicap your trade in every neutral market; you will have fostered at home—and this is one of the worst features of the whole—the growth of artificially protected industries, which, as we are being constantly told, inevitably leads, under modern conditions, to obnoxious developments of trusts, cartels and syndicates; you will have jealousy, discontent and clamor as between different interests at home, and between different members of your empire as to their relative share in the preference which it will be alleged, is being unfairly given to one and unfairly withheld from others. In addition to that, you will have, all round the world, a war of tariffs with those foreign countries which are your best customers. What is to be set off against these evils? . . . Assumed old-age pensions . . . are a purely hypothetical rise in wages—where it is to come from heaven only knows! A rise in wages which at best can only affect certain classes of producers, and will leave the great bulk of your industrial population nothing to compensate them for their certainty of dearer food and less profitable employment."

## The King and

### Queen in Ireland.

King Edward and Queen Alexandra, with the Princess Victoria, are visiting Ireland. And in spite of the churlish disloyalty of the Dublin City Council in refusing to vote a welcome to their Majesties, the welcome given to the royal party by the people of Dublin has been most enthusiastic. Possibly

the example of the Dublin Council may be followed by a few other towns, but it seems evident that the people of Ireland mean to emphasize their disapproval of so churlish a spirit by making the popular welcome all the more cordial and demonstrative. There was no doubt, the despatches say, about the quality of Dublin's welcome. Not only were the streets beautifully decorated, but the cheers of the people were even more enthusiastic than those heard last August in London at the Coronation. From Kingston to the Vice-regal lodge is eight miles, and the whole distance was belagged and decorated. The King and Queen held splendid court in the castle in the evening, in the famous St. Patrick's Hall which was gorgeously decorated and illuminated for the occasion. There they received the most representative body of the Irish nobility and the Irish people that has been seen at the Castle for many years. Altogether sixty-three deputations presented addresses during the day. Replying to the Dublin citizen's committee, the King said there was no part of his dominions in which he took greater pride than in Ireland. The Queen and himself had long been in sympathy with the movements tending to advance the social and material well-being of the community, and they hoped now to become acquainted with the conditions under which the people lived and to learn what could be done to brighten the lot of the poor. Replying jointly to the other addresses, His Majesty said he rejoiced to hear of the awakened spirit of hope and enterprise among his Irish people, which was full of promise for the future. It would be a source of profound happiness to him if his reign was coincident with a new era of social peace and industrial and commercial progress for Ireland. King Edward afterwards held a levee at the castle, which was attended by a great number of prominent people from all parts of Ireland, including the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

## The War Cloud

### in the East.

There has been a good deal of talk lately of the possibility of war in the East between Russia and Japan, with Great Britain and possibly the United States taking part with Japan against Russia. The situation is no doubt one of some tension, but it is hardly likely to result in war. Neither Great Britain nor the United States wants war with Russia, and Russia quite as little wants to go to war with Japan especially if she were backed by one or both of the other powers mentioned. But Japan is greatly exasperated at Russia's continued occupation of Manchuria, and it is hard to say what may take place if Russia still pushes her aggressive policy despite her promises to withdraw. So far as Great Britain and the United States are concerned they will probably not actively oppose Russia's occupation of Manchuria, if the country is freely open to trade. The assurances that Russia has given so far in this respect are not regarded as satisfactory. On the whole it seems probable that Russia will yield, either in respect to trade or in respect to territory, only so much as she is obliged to. She will no doubt guarantee open ports in Manchuria if a refusal to do so means war with either of the English-speaking nations, but she may prefer war with Japan to evacuating Manchuria. The report that Russia has lately arranged with French capitalists for a loan of \$26,000,000 may have significance in this connection. It is to be noted as a feature of the Eastern situation and as indicating the strong hold that Russia has secured upon Manchuria that the Chinese Foreign Office, in dealing with the United States, has positively declined to guarantee free commerce in Manchuria and has done so on the ground that the towns of that country are in possession of Russian troops and accordingly no longer under the control of China.

King Edward is credited with having given the death blow to one of the most insidious drinking customs in the army and the navy in saying that his health can be drunk just as well in water as in wine. It is said—but we cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement—that it has been hitherto the custom both in the army and the navy to insist that every officer, no matter how young, and even if he never drinks otherwise, shall toast the King in a glass of port wine. Such a custom would of course not only make teetotalism virtually impossible in the service, but would tend strongly to promote drinking habits among officers who would otherwise abstain.