

IN his interview with the Canadian press representatives Mr. Chamberlain summed up the preliminary difficulties in the way of Commercial Union with admirable terseness. "First of all, you must have your plan and let other people know what it is; second, you must prove that a majority of the people of Canada want it, and thirdly, you must prove that a majority of the United States want it." The order of the objections is significant. No one can pretend that any clearly outlined plan for Commercial Union has as yet been laid before the people of Canada. Not only so, but the foremost advocates of the misty scheme which is being aired under that name, seem to be at the outset divided in opinion on a fundamental question. The broad disparity between mere commercial reciprocity and Customs' Union is in itself almost sufficient to warrant refusal on the part of the cool-headed to discuss the question, until they are in a position to know what kind of project they are discussing, and whether it is really revolutionary or not. And it is clearly premature to claim and impossible to prove that a majority of the people in either Canada or the United States want the innovation, until they can be told with some approach to definiteness what it is and what constitutional changes it involves. Mr. Chamberlain's statement that he had not "met one single American in the States who thought Commercial Union possible except as a step to annexation," is not, perhaps, entitled to great weight as evidence of American feeling. As British envoy his intercourse with the American people is necessarily not only restricted within narrow limits, but sure to be guarded in character. Moreover, if Mr. Chamberlain was correctly reported as saying that he did not see the Canadian newspapers, it is possible that he also fails to read those of the United States, and thus deprives himself of one very important means of gauging public sentiment. And this, it must be admitted, is pre-eminently a people's question.

WE do not suppose that Mr. Chamberlain's commission qualifies him to speak with authority on any and every question which a curious interviewer may choose to put, or that he himself would wish his views, so frankly expressed, to carry any weight other than that which properly belongs to the words of a prominent British statesman. There is, nevertheless, little room for doubt that he reflects pretty correctly the prevailing sentiments of the political leaders with whom he is closely associated. When he says that the British people will never consent to tax their own food for the benefit of their colonies, he but echoes in another form a statement that has been made with great emphasis by such representative men as Lord Salisbury on the one hand and John Bright on the other. The fact seems too clear to admit of modification or of doubt. It remains for the advocates of "Imperial Federation" to suggest some mode of attaining the commercial unity aimed at without surrender or modification of any part of the British free trade system, or to dismiss the project as impracticable.

THE London *Advertiser* takes exception to the view that the Liberal party modified its platform on the tariff question before the last election, and says that a comparison of Mr. Blake's speech on that occasion with his address to the country in 1882 will show that the same principle pervades each. That is, to some extent at least, correct. Both of the deliverances referred to are so far open to the same criticism. But no one can read the latter, which we had particularly in mind, without inferring that it was chiefly designed to reassure the manufacturers, and the protectionists generally. It is unnecessary to point out that, for this reason, the speech was not that of a free-trader, for Mr. Blake has, we believe, always consistently declared that free-trade is not and cannot be made a question of practical politics in Canada. The gist of our criticism is that the speech is not even that of a revenue-tariff reformer. It foreshadows simply a revenue-tariff structure built on a protectionist foundation, or, if that is a contradiction in ideas, a revenue-tariff subordinated to protectionist uses. No one will claim that the present tariff is framed on strict revenue-producing principles, i.e., with a view to raising the largest possible revenue with the lowest possible rate of taxation. It will hardly be denied that a tariff constructed on that simple principle would differ very materially from the slightly modified National Policy which Mr. Blake indicated as the extent of his proposed reform. If these points be admitted surely it is just to say that Mr. Blake and his associates modified the revenue-tariff plank of the old Liberal platform in the direction of protection. The modification failed, as might have been expected, the protectionists naturally enough preferring to accept their specific at the hands of those who professed to have faith in it, rather than of those who proffered it reluctantly, as a matter of necessity, or a choice of evils.

PRESIDENT CLEVELAND has thus far every reason to be satisfied with the result of his bold experiment. His now famous address to Congress has, as was to be expected, cost him a few of his adherents, but it has undoubtedly rallied to his standard a much larger and more influential corps of allies from the opposite party. It has placed before the country one great issue, which is now being discussed in every newspaper and at every street corner. The Message did not create the issue. It simply laid hold of the existing fact, ignored or fought shy of by timid and time-serving politicians, and forced it to the front, where it belonged by virtue of its supreme importance. The President's action has proved that he rightly read the signs of the times. His Message announced to the tariff reformers that here at length was what they had long wanted—a leader. As it was flashed over the length and breadth of the Union it changed irresolution to decision, timidity to confidence, and whispered opinion to outspoken resolve. It has undoubtedly defined the issue and staked out the battleground for the coming electoral campaign, unless indeed it should happen, as is possible, though scarcely probable, that the present Congress should embody his principle in legislation. Mr. Blaine's rejoinder and counter proposal, emanating as they did from his ablest adversary, have but shown the logical weakness of the opposition to tariff reduction. The great Republican party, with its proud record of great reforms, is not likely to wax enthusiastic on a platform of cheap tobacco.

A SOMEWHAT remarkable feature of the political situation in England just now is the apparent complacency with which both parties are watching the progress and forecasting the issue of the Irish struggle. The Gladstonites, on their part, seem to have accepted it as an axiom that time is on their side, and that sooner or later, but in any case before any other special legislation can take place, "Home Rule" must win. In their view every public meeting suppressed, every "patriot" orator or journalist imprisoned, every eviction accomplished, is but another nail for the coffin of the existing system, another stepping-stone by which Ireland is climbing painfully towards the goal to which she aspires. The Conservatives and the Unionists, on the other hand, seem equally confident. They claim that they are making steady headway; that order is being restored and the supremacy of law re-established in Ireland; and that it is being openly demonstrated that, as the *Spectator* puts it, "the majority shall rule, whether the minority approve or not." Meanwhile the time will soon be drawing nigh when the seat of conflict will be transferred from Irish fields and courts and prisons to the floors of the British Parliament. "Mr. Smith," the *Spectator* says, "is buckling to work again," and stands ready to pledge himself that "the interests of England and Scotland shall be considered by the House of Commons, notwithstanding that the will of the minority stands in the way." We are assured that obstruction will not be permitted, and "if mortal man can cure the pest, it will be Mr. Smith tramping on with his Closure in his pocket, arguing as little as may be, but sure of the confidence of the country, and good-humouredly shouldering opponents out of the way." It is admitted that this "is not the ideal way of passing either Bills or Resolutions, especially in the British Parliament," but, argue those who urge heroic measures, "the House has been so disorganized by the Parnellites and their allies, and necessary work is so completely arrested, that it is the only way."

THE *Spectator* stigmatizes with just severity M. Pasteur's proposal in the *Paris Temps* to compete for the prize of £25,000 offered by the Government of New South Wales, for some mode of destroying the rabbits which have become a pest in that colony, as an "almost diabolic expedient." M. Pasteur's proposal was to transport to New South Wales the microbe of chicken cholera, and to spread the disease among the rabbits by watering their food with contaminated soup, in which this microbe would be conveyed to them. This, the *Spectator* thinks, bears out the contention always put forward in that journal "that science is becoming more and more unscrupulous in its manipulation of the mighty but only half-understood agencies which it has itself discovered." The physiologists "turn vivisection into a scourge," and now prepare "to spread plague with truly sublime rashness amongst our poor fellow creatures, and this without any possibility of knowing what this tremendous instrument may effect." Less dangerous perhaps, since its effects are better known, but scarcely less repulsive to the finer feelings of humanity is the suggestion of a resident of Winnipeg, to ship to the afflicted country some North-west rabbits affected with a plague which is said to appear periodically among the rabbits there and carry them off in great numbers. We can scarcely suppose that the sanitary science which is striving so hard to prevent the spread of contagious diseases in men and animals would look complacently upon a deliberate attempt to transport and propagate beyond the seas even a rabbit-destroying and mumps-producing epidemic.