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Current Topics.

Imperial Unity.

At the Canada Club's banquet in London, on Wednesday night, Mr. Chamberlain made another notable speech on Imperial unity. He said, amidst much confirmatory applause, that it was no longer thought in England, or in Canada, that the "manifest destiny" of the Dominion was annexation to the United States. He noted with great interest the marked contrast between the doubt and hesitation of former years and the determination now of every son of Canada to maintain the local Constitution in its entirety, and, at the same time, to draw closer the bonds which unite him with the great parent State. Mr. Chamberlain spoke with keen appreciation of the steadfastness and loyalty of Canada at the time when war between Great Britain and the United States was imminent. He also referred, in appreciative terms, to Mr. McNeill's eloquent speech on the "loyalty resolution" a few weeks ago. In speaking of Imperial Federation Mr. Chamberlain expressed his belief that it could only be reached by a process of gradual development. "We may endeavour to establish some common interests and common obligations, to deal with which it is natural that some sort of representative authority should grow up. The greatest obligation is the Imperial defence. The greatest interest is the Imperial trade. The former must be reached through the latter, as was the case in the creation of the German Empire." With respect to preferential trade Mr. Chamberlain remarked that the proposal merited respectful consideration. It was a startling proposal for a free trade country like Great Britain. Her foreign trade is so gigantic in proportion to the foreign trade of the Colonies that the burden of taxation would fall with much greater weight upon the Mother Country than upon the Colonies. But Mr. Chamberlain invited the Colonies to continue their efforts. He was inclined to favour a Customs union comprising the whole Empire, by which the aggregate Customs revenue might be equitably proportioned among the principal communities. Its advantages to the Colonies, he claimed, would be so enormous that they would be bound to give such a suggestion their careful consideration. In such a general free trade arrangement Mr. Chamberlain held that exceptions must be made in the case of articles such as spirits and tobacco, which are chiefly taxed for revenue purposes. "If we are to make even the slightest progress in such a direction, protection must disappear, and the only duties must be revenue duties, not protective duties, in the sense of protecting the industries of one portion of the Empire against the industries of another." Though the matter

presents difficulties, the Colonial Secretary rightly believes that with the existing good-will and the ultimate goal in view, something like a working agreement would be reached, and free traders, even if they had to abandon their principles to some extent, must remember the enormous gain that would compensate for the loss in England's dealings with foreign countries. For the States forming the Empire are, after all, more likely to develop and increase in prosperity, population, wealth, power, commerce, and enterprise, than any foreign States.

The Times' Opinions.

In commenting editorially on Mr. Chamberlain's speech at the Canada Club, The London Times says: "Mr. Chamberlain's stirring speech departed from the traditional commonplace of Imperial officialism, and struck boldly the keynote of free trade within the Empire. It is important to note that while the speech appears to have met with an encouraging reception, Canada has hitherto been more committed to the protectionist system than any other Colony. Even in Canada, however, protection is less popular than formerly. Therefore, it does not seem an Utopian hope of Mr. Chamberlain that overtures are worth consideration. It may be presumed that such a change would involve the reimposition of a shilling duty on foreign corn, and the levy of a tax on foreign sugar. A very moderate advantage would be given to the Colonies, and it would be a scarcely perceptible influence on the great bulk of our foreign trade. We are inclined to think that the obstacles on each side have been exaggerated. There is, at any rate, weighty matter for discussion in Mr. Chamberlain's suggestions." These remarks are eminently encouraging, and show clearly what a marked advance has been made in England of late touching the matter of Imperial unity. The London Chronicle, too, has little but praise for Mr. Chamberlain's speech, but appropriately suggests that before the government talks of a Zollverein, they had better drop the policy of ruining the Colonial meat and cattle trades by left-handed protection of English breeders.

The Death of Thos. Hughes.

The author of "Tom Brown's School Days" is dead. In law, in politics, and in letters, he appeared to be equally at home. He won distinction in all three realms, and was withal a man of marked individuality and nobility of character. It is now nearly forty years since his famous "Tom Brown's School Days" appeared. It gives an excellent account of Rugby school, under the famous Dr. Arnold—whose pupil it was Hughes' privilege to be—and many delightful sketches of scenery, rural customs, and sports in Berkshire. Four years later "Tom Brown at Oxford," was published, which, although an admirable book, hardly equals the "School Days." Since that date Mr. Hughes has produced a goodly array of literary wares. He was called to the Bar in 1848, appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1869, and made judge of the County Court Circuit No. 9 in 1882. Mr. Hughes was for some time an active member of Parliament, warmly advocating the interests, without flattering the prejudices, of the working-class. In all social questions he took a deep interest, and was ever animated by a manly and patriotic spirit. His failure with his Tennessee settlement was always a sore point with him. Happy is the man who has only one failure to think about and mourn over. Mr. Hughes