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The Tariff Debate in England

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An American feels at home in England just now for he constantly reads in the newspapers and hears on the streets the tariff arguments so familiar in the United States. I can almost imagine myself in the midst of a presidential campaign, with import duties as the only issue. I have been especially fortunate in arriving here at the very height of the discussion and I have been privileged to hear the best speakers on both sides. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, lately secretary for the colonies, left the cabinet some three months ago in order to present to the country the tariff policy which he believed to be necessary. Not desiring to make the government responsible for the proposition put forth by him he turned his official duties over to another and has been conducting one of the most remarkable campaigns that England has seen in recent years.

He enters the fight with a number of things to his credit. He is a great orator, he is pleasing in manner, experienced in debate, skillful in the arraignment of his adversaries, and possesses the faculty of so holding the attention of his hearers as to make them eager to catch the next sentence. He is not an impassioned speaker, he has no grand climaxes that overwhelm an audience, but he does have what his friends call a "restrained eloquence" that leaves the impression he never quite reaches the limit of his powers. He is a man who would rank high in any land and as an antagonist he would not fear to meet the best on any platform.

He is about five feet nine or ten inches in height and weighs about 175 pounds. He wears no beard and is impressive in appearance. The cartoonists take liberties with him as with other public men in drawings of him, and I may say in passing that there are some newspaper cartoonists over here who do excellent work.

Mr. Chamberlain is urging a departure from the free trade policy which England has followed for fifty years, and he defends his position on three grounds:

First—That it is needed for the protection of English manufacturers and English laborers.

Second—That it is necessary for the defense and strengthening of the empire.

Third—That a tariff can be used when necessary as a retaliatory weapon to make a breach in the tariff walls that other nations have created.

In presenting the first proposition he employs the usual protectionist arguments. He appeals to particular industries and promises better wages to labor and more constant employment. He complains that foreign products are being "dumped" in England. The foreigner is accused of selling his surplus wares here without profit or below cost while he sells for enough at home to enable him to carry on his business.

I heard Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Cardiff, the chief city of Wales. It was an audience largely made up of wage-earners, and his appeals were adroit and elicited an enthusiastic response. He dwelt at length on the tin industry; figured the growth of the industry from 1882 to 1892 and showed that during the next decade the tin industry had suffered by the establishment of tin plate mills in the United States.

He assumed that if the English government had been authorized to make reciprocal treaties it might have persuaded the United States to forego the protection of tin plate in exchange for trade advantages in some other direction. He estimated the loss that had come to Welsh workmen because of the lessened demand for their tin plate and he contended that it was necessary to give preferential treatment to the colonies in order to increase or even to hold their attachment to the empire.

In discussing retaliation he seemed to assume what the protectionists of the United States have often declared, namely, that the foreigner pays the tax; and his argument was that England ought to tax the goods coming in from other countries if other countries taxed goods imported from England. He has coined phrases that are going

the rounds of the press, the most popular of which is embodied in the question, "If another nation strikes you with a tariff tax, are you going to take it lying down?" This phrase aroused a spirit of pugnacity at Cardiff and was enthusiastically applauded.

In presenting the claims of the empire, Mr. Chamberlain occupies much the same position as the American protectionist who contends that a tariff wall makes our own country independent of other nations. In presenting this argument the late colonial secretary has the advantage of the great popularity which he won during the South African war, and the spirit of empire is just now quite strong in England.

So much for the leader of the tariff reform movement, for strange as it may seem the English crusade for the adoption of a tariff is being conducted through the Tariff Reform League, which, with Mr. Chamberlain's indorsement, is asking for a campaign fund of \$500,000.

On the other side are, first, the conservatism that supports the settled policy of half a century; second, the political and economic arguments which weigh against a protective tariff, and, third, the ability and personal influence of the men who are arrayed against Mr. Chamberlain. I have attended a number of meetings of the oppositon.

CHRISTMAS.

To north, to south, to west, to east,
To all beyond and in between;
To old and young, to greatest, least,
Where ray of Christmas sun is seen,
This message send we, ringing clear:
"MERRY CHRISTMAS; A GLAD NEW YEAR!"

To those who strive for better things,
To all who others' burdens share;
To hearts aweary that yet sing,
To struggling mankind ev'rywhere
Go forth this message of good cheer:
"MERRY CHRISTMAS; A GLAD NEW YEAR!"
—WILL M. MAUPIN.

The first was at St. Neots, Huntingdonshire, where I heard Mr. H. H. Asquith, one of the liberal leaders in parliament. He is of about the same height as Mr. Chamberlain, but heavier, his face and shoulders being considerably broader. Mr. Asquith differs very materially from Mr. Chamberlain in his style of oratory, but is a master in his line. His is more the argument of the lawyer. He is more logical and a closer reasoner. He is regarded as one of the ablest public men in England, and after listening to him for an hour I could easily believe his reputation to be well-earned.

While he discussed with thoroughness all phases of the fiscal question, I was most impressed with his reply to what may be called the imperial part of Mr. Chamberlain's argument. He insisted that preferential duties would weaken instead of strengthen the bonds that unite England to her colonies because partiality would not be shown to one industry without discrimination against the other industries, and he warned the advocates of protection not to divide the people of the colonies and the people of the home country into warring factions and suggested that when these factions were arrayed against each other in a contest for legislative advantage, the

harmony of the nation would be disturbed and ill-will between the various sections, elements and industries engendered.

At a house dinner of the National Liberal club in London I heard another member of parliament, Mr. R. S. Robson, a liberal, who took retaliation for his subject. Mr. Robson presented a clear, comprehensive and concise analysis of the policy of retaliation; the strongest points made by him being, first, that retaliation meant commercial war, and, second, that it contemplated a permanent policy of protection. He pointed out that no country had ever aimed a retaliatory tariff at England; that tariffs in other countries were laid for domestic purposes and, not out of antagonism to another country. He contended that other countries instead of modifying their tariffs because of attempted retaliation on the part of England would be more likely excited to an unfriendliness which they had not before shown, and that if England were the aggressor in such a tariff war she must necessarily be a large loser. He said that it was impossible to conceive of concessions being secured by a threat to raise a tariff wall in England. It would be necessary, he contended, if a retaliatory policy was undertaken to first impose a high tariff all around and then offer to reduce it in special cases. This would be a radical departure from the policy of free trade and would bring with it all the evils that had led to the abandonment of a protective policy under the leadership of Cobden.

Besides the liberal opposition, Mr. Chamberlain has to meet the antagonism of a number of influential leaders who would indorse Mr. Balfour if he only proposed retaliation in a particular case where there had been an open and grievous blow struck at England, but who are not willing to join Mr. Chamberlain in advocating a return to a protective policy.

I attended a great meeting held under the auspices of the Free Food League and heard speeches delivered by the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Goschen. I was told that the duke was the only English statesman who ever took a nap during the progress of his own speech. Thus forewarned, I was prepared for a season of rest, but the duke surprised his friends (and they are many) on this occasion and his speech has been the talk of the country since it was delivered. It was a powerful arraignment of the proposed tax on food, and taking into consideration the high standing and great prestige of the duke, will exert a widespread influence on the decision of the controversy. The duke is a tall, strongly built man, with a long head and full sandy beard sprinkled with gray. He speaks with deliberation and emphasis, but lacks the graces of the other orators whom I had an opportunity to hear. If, however, ease and grace were wanting, the tremendous effectiveness of the pile driver and the battering ram make up for them.

He denounced the proposition to put a tax upon the people's food as a blow to the welfare and greatness of the nation. He scouted the idea that the tax would not ultimately extend to all food or that it would not raise the price of food and showed that the increase in the cost of food and clothing would take from the laboring man any advantage which Mr. Chamberlain promised to bring by his protective policy.

At the Free Food meeting the duke was followed by Lord Goschen, a conspicuous leader of the unionist party. Though now about seventy years old, he possesses great vitality and entered into the discussion with an earnestness that bespeaks the extraordinary power of the man. In appearance he reminded me of Gladstone and of Paul Kruger. I should say that his face had some of the characteristics of both—rugged in its outlines and giving an impression of courage and strength combined with great intellect. He replied to Mr. Chamberlain's challenge, "Will you take it lying down?" with the question, "Will you hide behind a wall?" He denied that it was nec-