

# THE DRESDEN DAILY

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## THE FISCAL DEBATE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The Labour members, one and all, in their public utterances have frequently called attention to what they term the outrageous waste of time in the House of Commons. If ever this criticism was justified surely it has been in the past week when two whole evenings have been given up to that work of supererogation, vulgarly known as "flogging a dead horse". That the Ministerial party are vastly elated with their unexpectedly large majority is natural enough, that most of them are avowed Free Traders, or, perhaps to define them more accurately, rabid anti-Chamberlainites, is undoubtedly true, but that a great party, pledged to bring in and pass a large programme of reform measures, should deliberately waste two precious evenings of the Parliamentary session by solemnly asking the House to affirm that Protection is the accursed thing, when there is not the remotest possibility of there being any change in England's fiscal policy for four or five years, seems almost too ludicrous to be true. The resolution affirming the blessings of Free trade would have been sufficiently fatuous and mistimed had it been moved by a member of the Opposition, but that a member of the Government party should be put up to move a vote of censure on the Opposition, as one of the latter party perfectly fairly described the manoeuvre, was a lamentable error in tactics. That the resolution would be carried by an enormous majority was a foregone conclusion, the number of those members who would be certain to oppose it could not, in any case, much exceed a hundred, and therefore nothing was to be gained by this tremendous display of force. When, nearly twenty years ago, the mandate of the country was taken upon the Home Rule question, and the Conservative party came back again to power with an overwhelming majority, how bitter would have been the scorn of Mr. Gladstone, how deserved the satire, that would have been directed against any misguided member who had risen from the Government benches to move a platonic resolution, invoking the blessing of the House, i. e. of the majority, on that consummate piece of statesmanship, the Union between England and Ireland. The Government are, in fact, hardly to be congratulated on their achievements up to date. Since the Debate on the Address closed, the sole result of the deliberations of the House has been the passing of resolutions approving the principle of feeding poor school children, and the payment of members, and with regard to the latter it may be noticed that the Prime minister, while bestowing on the idea his most unctuous blessing, modified the enthusiasm of his supporters by frankly admitting that the lack of funds peremptorily forbade any attempt at present to make his approval of the theory concrete as well as abstract.

The wording of the resolution, which Sir James Kitson moved in a portentously dull speech, was singularly maladroit, inasmuch as it gave Mr. Balfour, who was enabled, to the general satisfaction, once more to make his appearance in the House, an opportunity of showing his dialectical skill as a debater. He was, in fact, at his very best or his very worst, according as his hearers agreed with him or disputed his views. He pointed out that the resolution admitted the interpretation that the Government were prepared to violate the Free trade doctrine in every way except by imposing a duty on corn.

The Prime Minister, by declining to answer any of Mr. Balfour's questions, which were put with the supposed intention of elucidating the actual meaning of the resolution, committed a fresh error in tactics; for, in the first place, Mr. Balfour is the official leader of the Opposition and as such is entitled to some consideration, and in the second place much valuable time would have been saved, a division avoided and the House spared a considerable display of bad feeling. For Sir

Henry Campbell Bannerman, as he has shown before now, is by no means at his best when driven into a corner: the home thrusts of his opponents do not, as a rule, have the effect of increasing his skill as a debater, but merely result in his losing his temper; and to shout "Enough of this foolery" is neither calculated to disarm the criticism of his foes or to raise the dignity of debate. Towards the close of the discussion members themselves seemed to recognise the futility of it all; no new arguments either pro or con were adduced, nor had any one expected them; the whole debate was a miserable farce, to be ended at last by a division, the result of which every member could have foretold to within a unit or two before proceeding to give his vote. The only contribution to the debate, worthy of even passing note, was the maiden speech of one of the Liverpool members, who in the course of a clever attack on the Ministerialists, ventured to describe the members opposite as begotten by Chinese slavery out of Passive Resistance, a rogue sire and a roaring dam, a description which if somewhat lacking in refinement was not wanting in polemic pungency.

## THE SHRINKAGE OF THE ENGLISH CABLE MONOPOLY.

By Dr. LENSCHAU, from *Die Woche*.

(Continued.)

In the meantime France, also, has met with no little success in her attempts to wrest the telegraphic monopoly from England. While the war in South Africa was still going on, a Bill, aimed at the telegraphic censorship in Aden, was introduced into the Chamber, involving the expenditure of 200 million francs, and having as its object no less than the construction of a far reaching network of French cables; and in its main feature at least this Bill was adopted. In pursuance of this project in April of last year the great Brest-Dakar cable was opened which gave France direct communication with Senegambia and which found at its far terminus several important junctures. There is first of all the line Dakar-Pernambuco, which is admittedly an old cable and of little serviceability, and which the French Government purchased a short time ago from its erstwhile possessor, the South American Cable Co. Of more importance is the junction with the French land telegraph system in the interior which covers the greater part of the Western Soudan and reaches northwards to Timbuctoo, southward to Kotonu and Konakri. By the purchase of a few other sections of cable also somewhat old, formerly in English possession, a connection between Kotonu via San Thomé and Libreville in French Congo was assured, and this extended to Brazzaville in the Congo by an overland telegraph; so that at the present moment all France's West African colonies have their own connection with the mother-country. It appears that this connection is to be further strengthened by the so-called "Trans-Sahara" that is, a land telegraph through the Western Sahara from Algiers to Timbuctoo. Accordingly by now the greater part of the West Soudan has been withdrawn from the sole control of the United Companies; and the same might be said of Brazil, were it not for the fact that France is indebted to the goodwill of England for the forwarding of messages beyond Pernambuco. As a matter of fact the great connections of the Western Telegraph Co. from St. Vincent to Pernambuco, and their coast lines down to Argentina, are in such an excellent condition and of such superlative mechanical serviceability that they completely control the intercourse, and the present French connection Dakar-Pernambuco, on the other hand, need hardly be taken into consideration.

In this connection, however, there is a third event of the past year to be noticed which will have as its consequence a still further circumscription of the monopoly domain of the English com-

panies, an event too, initiated by German enterprise. For a great number of years the German Government has possessed a line from Berlin to Bucharest, and they have long had the wish to extend this line to the Roumanian harbour of Constanza, and from thence onwards by a Constanza-Constantinople cable to the Turkish capital. This project was furthered in every possible way by the Roumanian Government. But the opposition of the Eastern Telegraph Co. was all the stronger, since they possess, for some years to come, the sole right of landing cables on the boundaries of the Turkish empire. Now the German Government is certainly in a position to put a certain amount of pressure on the Eastern Telegraph Co., since in conjunction with the Indo European Co., which is closely bound to it, it has laid its lines through North Germany and therefore is dependent on a good understanding with the German Government. Still, it was not until October 1904 that the efforts to overcome the opposition of the English company were successful, and the permission of the Sultan was asked for the laying of the Constanza-Constantinople cable. The comparatively short line was completed very rapidly by the North German marine cable works by August 1905, and the management of the cable was handed over to the East European Telegraph Co. in Cologne; and consequently since last autumn the German Empire possesses its own connection with the Levant. But it is abundantly clear that this is but the first step in a still further development. For opposite Constantinople in Haidar-Pacha lies the terminus of the Bagdad railway, and there can be no doubt that with the construction of this great enterprise, which is under German influence, the Telegraph will follow the railway even if it does not precede it; so that in the comparatively near future the German telegraph lines may be expected to penetrate to the uttermost corners of the Persian Gulf, to Fao or Koweit. Apart from other possibilities, the new line, by reason of its shortness and mechanical efficacy, may attract a considerable portion of the Indian telegraphic communication which at present is monopolised by the Indo-European Telegraph Co., the Eastern Telegraph Co. and the Indo-European Telegraph Department, and in so doing, may considerably circumscribe the exclusive domain of the English cable companies.

The year 1905 marks, therefore, an important departure in the direction of the development of the international news services. Quite a number of oversea countries which were till then served exclusively by English cables have been furnished with new connections independent of England, and especially in the Northern hemisphere the English cable monopoly has been sensibly reduced. None the less, a very wide field is left to the United Companies for their exclusive profit, above all, Australia and Oceania, Southern Asia eastward to Singapore, by far the greater part of South Africa, and the countries on the East coast of South America with their bright prospects for the future; while especially the widespread colonies of England and districts under her suzerainty will always remain in the hands of the United Companies. Still we must remember that we are only on the threshold of the new developments, and the next step, as it appears, may be expected from France. In this direction points the Franco-Dutch Cable agreement, signed last year, by which the French Government assured, first the line of Saigon-Pontianak and with it the juncture with the Dutch-German-American connection across the Pacific, whereas, up to then, they only had a local service to Saigon and for the connection with Europe had to rely on English or English influenced lines. But further than this the agreement concedes to France the right to extend the Saigon-Pontianak line to any point desired on the coast of Java, a fact which seems to show that France is striving to obtain the second point in the programme of construction approved of by the Chamber of Deputies and mentioned above, viz. the crossing of the Indian ocean by a new cable. The cable will obviously be carried from some