

beer tax. Those who propose the tax know this, and the brewers know it. The brewers object to the tax, but that is not because they expect to pay it; it is because they fear a loss of custom. A moment's reflection should satisfy anyone that the brewers would not pay the beer tax. They would not if they could and probably could not if they would, pay \$35,000,000 a year more in taxes than they pay now without recouping themselves either by charging higher prices for beer or by supplying a poorer quality for the old price. The war tax on beer would be a tax upon beer drinkers; and as beer has become—whether that is matter for congratulation or not makes no difference—a national beverage with the common people, it would be a tax upon the common people, the very class that will be called upon to do the fighting.

So it would be with the tobacco tax. The class that would be asked to enlist, and that would enlist, are the largest consumers of tobacco. And strange as at first it may sound to say so, this also is the class that would bear the brunt of the proposed tax on bank checks. The use of small bank accounts has become exceedingly common within the past decade, and with it the custom of drawing small checks; and most of the small checks are drawn by men who are not rich but are of the class from which "bullet-stoppers" will be drawn when the first effervescence of patriotism subsides. For every small check these men draw they would pay as high a tax as their rich neighbor would pay on large checks. In addition to that, the tax on business checks generally would be shifted to customers. And not only the tea and coffee tax, besides the taxes already mentioned, but nearly if not quite all the other proposed war taxes would be borne in greatest degree by this same class.

Now let it be observed that what this class as a class will be called upon to contribute to the war will not come back. It will not come back to them in any form, except it be in the form of meagre pensions grudgingly bestowed, and in the privilege of calling that their country to the valuable part of which most of them have no legal right to a foot. What they give, whether in money or blood, will be given outright. Not so with what other classes give. In some degree, a very small degree, comparatively, they too will give outright when they drink beer or tea or coffee, or smoke tobacco,

or draw a check. What they thus give will not come back to them. But the substantial war contributions of these classes are to be neither in taxes on beer or coffee or tea or tobacco or small checks. Their contributions to the war are to be loans on bonds. And these contributions will come back to them; aye, will come back to them with a profit. Not only will the bonds bear interest, but they will be so carefully protected as to the money of their redemption, that at the close of the war they will command a premium. Many a bond of the civil war, for which the government received less than 50 cents in gold value money, has since risen to \$1.15 and more in that money, besides paying interest year by year. Large as is our pension expenditure, it is exceeded by the interest and premiums on the bonds which our money patriots of the civil war period bought.

So it will be with the method now in course of preparation for raising funds for the pending war with Spain. These funds will be so raised that the fighting masses will contribute outright, and the thrifty classes will lend on good security and profitable conditions. It is too much to hope for, probably, that the United States government may at this crisis reverse the old custom of putting all the burdens of war upon the common people. He would be an optimist, indeed, who should look at this time for a war revenue measure which would put the financial burden of the coming war upon the monopolists of the country, and a dreamer who should propose it; but some good may possibly be done in the future by calling attention now to the fact that both in blood and treasure the losers by the war about to break upon us are as usual to be not the privileged classes but the working masses.

#### DECAY OF COBDENISM.

In the North American Review for April, John P. Young has a paper in which he attempts to show that Cobdenism in England is extinct. Mr. Young mistakes the decline of an organization, and a tendency in some quarters against the specific reform which that organization originally represented, for the extinction of the spirit of freedom which gave vitality to the organization at the start. Because the Cobden Club is moribund, it by no means follows that the principle which gave it birth is dead. What has killed the Cobden Club is not its adherence to a dead principle,

but its failure to adapt itself to the expansion of a living one. Having stood for free trade when the free trade principle made itself manifest only in a movement to reform the customs revenue, this club clung to that manifestation long after the principle had vitalized more advanced agitations, and so in the very nature of things it fell into a decline.

In its origin Cobdenism was a great democratic movement. It struck at privilege, and it struck hard. The evidence of this is not confined to the fact that the plutocratic elements of England broke out violently against it. There is abundant internal evidence also. At that time English laws put a high customs tariff upon imported grain. They did so in the interest of the agricultural landlords of England. By "protecting" English grain from foreign competition, they increased the price of bread and raised agricultural rents, thus enabling the parasitic landlord class to live with greater luxury in the sweat of the faces of the industrial classes. A similar situation, reversed as to parties in interest, exists to-day in Germany. The agrarian movement there, which constitutes the backbone of German protectionism, is organized for the purpose of raising the rents which feudal landlords exact from their agricultural tenants. What that movement is trying to establish in Germany is precisely what the Cobden movement demolished in England—special tariff privileges for the monopoly owners of agricultural land.

But with the overthrow of this particular privilege the Cobden movement stopped. The Cobden Club has tried to live upon the glory of the past. Instead of carrying the free trade principle farther into the heart of special privilege, it preached merely the abolition of customs tariffs, as the remedy for industrial oppression and the secret of national greatness. The abolition of customs tariffs, did we say? Why, it did not go even so far as that. The sum and substance of its demands was a reduction of customs tariffs to a revenue basis. The club saw no more in free trade 50 years after the corn law fight than the anti-corn law agitators saw in their first glimpses. That club was to free trade what a star gazing society would be to astronomy, if it had advanced no farther in Galileo's science than the first crude perceptions of the Copernican school; or what a railroad company would be to

transportation, if it used old Stephenson locomotives. Of course the Cobden Club is virtually dead. It has been virtually dead for years, and all intelligent free traders have known it. No protectionist magazineer was needed to give them that information. And what is more, it deserved to die.

Yet the free trade principle still lives in England. It is stronger than it was in Cobden's day. The reason that the protectionist writer in the North American cannot see this is the same reason that has extinguished the Cobden Club: The principle has assumed newer and more radical forms. The specific reform which Cobden accomplished has been accomplished for good. Despite the occasional reactionary appearances in ultra tory clubs and aristocratic magazines, an English ministry could no more re-establish a bread tariff in England than it could re-establish the feudal system. It could not even re-establish any kind of tariff exclusively for protection. There is a significance which protectionists overlook in the fact that every diplomatic and military movement of England has the "open door" doctrine, the doctrine of open ports for all nations, for its purpose. That would not be so but for Richard Cobden. Even in this sense, then, the spirit of Cobdenism still lives in England. But it lives there in a deeper sense. From the vitalizing principle of a mere customs reform, it has become the vitalizing principle of a general fiscal reform, and better yet of a general social reform.

In one of his speeches in parliament during the corn law agitation, Cobden warned the landowners of England against forcing on the attention of the middle and industrial classes the subject of taxation. "Mighty as I consider the fraud and injustice of the corn laws," said he, "I verily believe if you were to bring forward the history of taxation in this country for the last 150 years you would find as black a record against the landowners as even in the corn law itself." Then he added, referring to the landed aristocracy:—

I warn them against ripping up the subject of taxation. If they want another league at the death of this one—if they want another organization and a motive—then let them force the middle and industrial classes to understand how they have been cheated, robbed, and bamboozled.

In those words Cobden foreshadowed the direction the free trade movement would take when the Cobden Club should have died. He seems to have seen that the free trade principle went far beyond the question of abolishing a customs tariff on grain.

It must have seemed clear to him that that reform, while it would reduce agricultural rents, would, by encouraging manufactures, increase town and city rents. And so the event has proved. The pecuniary benefits of his reform have been largely absorbed by city landlords, like the Duke of Westminster, and thus his free trade reform, the free trade of the Cobden Club, has been in a sense a failure. Not, however, because free trade is a false or ineffective doctrine. It is neither. But because his successors have not carried the doctrine far enough.

It has, therefore, fallen out, just as Cobden intimated in his speech that it would, that upon the death of his movement another got under way, one which differs from his only in giving to the principle of free trade full play. This movement is advancing directly upon landlordism. It does not stop with depriving landlords of the benefit of a protective tariff upon bread; it aims at depriving them of the benefit of all kinds of tariffs, all kinds of taxation, all kinds of special privileges. It questions their right to the land itself. This is the significance of many events in England during the past decade, not least among which is the recent defeat of landlord interests at the London elections.

Whoever attempts to size up the free trade spirit in England by the test of the present attitude of Englishmen toward the specific reform which Cobden advocated in the infancy of free trade agitation, as Mr. Young has done for the North American, may find reason for supposing the spirit of free trade to be extinct; but let him look for it in the light of the social agitations which are shaping English politics, and he will find the free trade spirit in England to be more vital, more determined, and more aggressive than ever.

## NEWS

Pursuant to the congressional resolution printed in full below, President McKinley conveyed to Spain on the 20th, a few minutes before himself signing the resolution, the

ultimatum of the United States regarding the Cuban question. The ultimatum has not at this writing been made public upon official authority, but it is understood to have required the departure of Spanish troops from Spain, and to have demanded an answer from Spain within three days.

Upon being informally notified of the ultimatum, the Spanish minister at Washington turned over the affairs of his office to the French ambassador and the Austria-Hungarian minister and, obtaining his passports, departed for Canada, where he intends to remain until the close of the war. The American minister at Madrid has turned over the archives of his office to the British representative, preparatory to departing.

The Spanish resolution adopted by both houses of congress on the 18th and signed by President McKinley on the 20th, is in full as follows:

Joint resolution for the recognition of the independence of the people of Cuba, demanding that the government of Spain relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters, and directing the president of the United States to use the land and naval forces of the United States to carry these resolutions into effect.

Whereas, The abhorrent conditions which have existed for more than three years in the island of Cuba, so near our own borders, have shocked the moral sense of the people of the United States, have been a disgrace to Christian civilization, culminating, as they have, in the destruction of a United States battleship, with 266 of its officers and crew, while on a friendly visit in the harbor of Havana, and cannot longer be endured, as has been set forth by the president of the United States in his message to congress of April 11, 1898, upon which the action of congress was invited; therefore,

Resolved, first, That the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent.

Second, That it is the duty of the United States to demand, and the government of the United States does hereby demand, that the government of Spain at once relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters.

Third, That the president of the United States be, and he hereby is, directed and empowered to use the entire land and naval forces of the United States, and to call into actual service of the United States the militia of the several states, to such ex-