

The Colonist.

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AN IMPARTIAL OPINION.

Impartial observers note the wide difference that there is between the public utterances of leading Conservatives and leading Liberals on the questions before the country. Some of the Conservative Ministers lately delivered public addresses in London. Commenting upon those addresses the Toronto Week, which is a really independent journal, says "they did not conflict with one another, and there was no uncertain sound about them. In these particulars the Conservatives have the advantage over the Liberals. We know exactly where they stand on the trade question, the National Policy is firmly adhered to and their faith in it shown by the fact that no opportunity is lost to prove that were the Liberals to come into office that policy would be promptly swept away. On the Manitoba school question an equally definite stand was taken; if in the end the minority has a grievance which is not remedied by Manitoba itself the Federal Government will take all reasonable and proper methods to have that wrong righted. It is the first duty of an Opposition to frame a clear and definite policy and lay it plainly before the people. It is not enough to point out mistakes by the Government and expose its corruption and dirty deeds. All this is necessary. But something more is required and that something is a policy about which there can be no doubt and which everybody can understand."

THE STONE QUESTION.

Thursday evening's Times contains an article entitled "A Question of Stone," in which a great deal is insinuated but very little openly and boldly asserted. The first insinuation is that the new Post Office contractors are not in a position to go on with the work as rapidly as they would like, on account of the smallness of the appropriation. There is no ground whatever for this suggestion. There is a large amount of the appropriation still unexpended, more in fact than can be used before the meeting of Parliament. The progress of the work, we are informed, has not for a single hour since its commencement been suspended for want of funds. Then our contemporary would have the public believe that there has been something wrong, something "suspicious," about procuring a supply of stone for the construction of the building. Most of its statements are evidently purposely vague, and those of them that are definite are not in accordance with the facts. "By some means or other," says the Times, "the judgment of the Ottawa expert who condemned the Gabriola stone was revised and permission has been given to the contractors to use material that only a few weeks ago had been rejected."

The readers of the Times will perhaps be surprised to learn that the Gabriola stone which the contractors are now permitted to use, was never rejected by the Ottawa or any other expert. That stone was examined, tested and approved by the Department at Ottawa. It was not rejected and the decision afterwards revised as the Times incorrectly states. Samples of stone from both Saturna and Gabriola islands were rejected by the Department, but they were from quarries at some distance from those from which the accepted stone was taken on both islands. The distance in the case of the Saturna stone is only half a mile; in the case of the Gabriola stone it is a mile and more. The stone accepted by the Department is, we are assured, a good building stone, and is superior in every respect to that which was used in the old post office building.

The delay in getting stone for the building was owing to circumstances, over which the Government had nothing whatever to do. It was caused by disputes and disagreements between private parties with which the Government could not, and therefore did not, interfere. The Government did in the matter what it was empowered to do by the

contract. It, when it was appealed to, approved of a building stone which was equal in quality to Saturna stone. Our contemporary does not attempt to show that the stone sanctioned by the department is not in every respect of as good quality as the Saturna stone; it does not try to prove that the public will be injured in the slightest degree by permitting Gabriola stone to be used, and though it does its best to create the impression that there is something "suspicious" in the choice of the stone it does not adduce a single fact on which such a suspicion can be reasonably based. We very much suspect that it is being made the willing tool of disappointed speculators and fooled schemers.

Since the above was written we find that the Times has been informed by Messrs. Smith & Elford that what it stated on Thursday relative to the Gabriola stone is "entirely to the facts." If our contemporary had made a few simple and necessary inquiries before it published its article it would not have been obliged to make this humiliating admission. The parties who could give all the information it needed were near at hand, and their statements could, if there was any doubt as to their accuracy, be easily verified.

INEFFECTIVE ACTION.

The Hutchison inquiry was most unsatisfactory in every respect. If the Superintendent of the city electric lighting department had been negligent of his duties, and if his official conduct needed inquiring into, the City Council went about the work of disciplining him in such a way as to create for him an active sympathy among a very large proportion of the citizens. There is a love of fair play and open dealing among men under British rule that is most creditable to them and to the institutions under which they live. If men in authority do not take this feeling into consideration, and do not defer to it in their dealings with those under them, they will be certain to enlist the sympathy of the majority in favor of men with whom fault is found—even those who are accused of serious delinquencies. Sending policemen to shadow Mr. Hutchison was looked upon as unfair and un-British, and created a feeling in his favor among many of those who, perhaps, did not approve of the way in which he performed his duties. These persons were determined that espionage should not win a victory here in Victoria, and it would be hard to blame them for forming such a determination. We have no doubt that this sympathy did much towards making the inquiry into Mr. Hutchison's official conduct ineffective.

The corporation should deal with its servants as a fair and judicious man deals with his employees. If he finds a man in a position of trust slack in the performance of his duty, he quietly warns him that such slackness will not be tolerated in his concern. If he can observe no improvement as time goes on, if the same negligence is practised and the same faults committed, he tells the unfaithful servant that he has no further use for him. There need be no fuss, no publicity, in the matter. All that is required are fairness, firmness and good judgment. It is absolutely necessary that the officials of the Corporation, from the highest to the lowest, should be made to feel that habitual neglect of duty and self-satisfied incapacity will not be tolerated.

NEWFOUNDLAND.

Newfoundland, it seems, is coming to its senses. Its leading men, at any rate, are beginning to see that confederation with Canada has for their country many advantages. This conviction will perhaps have the effect of causing them to be reasonable in their demands. They now see that it is unwise for them to come to Canada with proposals for union which it would be folly for any Canadian Government to accept. They must know by this time that Canadians are not so very eager to have Newfoundland become a member of the Confederation that they are ready to agree to almost any terms. Many patriotic Canadians no doubt have a strong desire to round off the Dominion by including the "Old Colony" within its bounds and are consequently prepared to deal with the Newfoundlanders as liberally and even as generously as they can in justice to the people of Canada. There is, as far as we know, no wish to conceal this desire, but the colonists should be warned against taking advantage of it to insist upon terms that are evidently unfair to Canada and impossible to its Government. Newfoundland is in a position to make a very good bargain with Canada, and if its Government is wise they will be content with a good bargain and not try to get anything more, because if they do they will not succeed. The Newfoundland delegates last spring were unreasonable and consequently their mission was a failure. The Toronto Globe, speaking of that mission, says:

No reasonable man will say that the Dominion Government was to blame for moving cautiously and slowly in the matter and for not yielding to those extremists who would have bought the island on any terms, and even without obtaining the consent of its people. . . . The union will be good or evil according to the wisdom with which the terms are arranged. The acquisition of a new Province whose people would be heartily in accord with us in completing the work of Confederation, who would be Canadians in the true sense of the word, would be a matter for congratulation; but no friend either of Canada or Newfoundland desires to see an arrangement hurried through in such a manner as to give rise to discontent on the island, to agitations for repeal, to applications for better terms, or to quarrels with the French over the shore question. The Globe is sound and sensible on the Newfoundland question. Let Newfoundland be admitted into the Union on fair terms—fair to Canada as well as to Newfoundland—or not at all. There need be no hurry

about the matter. The disadvantages of isolation will be felt more and more by the Newfoundlanders as time progresses and the day is certain to come when its inhabitants, who now look on Canada with suspicion will see plainly that it will be to their interest to unite their destiny with that of the people of the Dominion.

MANHOOD SUFFRAGE.

Not very long ago Radicals and Republicans believed that manhood suffrage was the cure for all the evils from which the body politic was suffering. They reasoned plausibly that when every man had a vote governments in all that they did would consult the welfare of the people and that alone. If any statesman or legislator became corrupt or ventured to abuse the power with which the people had entrusted him, he would be quickly called to account and if found guilty promptly punished. The people would be always alive to their own interests, and misgovernment would become impossible, or next to impossible. But experience has shown that there must have been something radically wrong in this reasoning. Governments elected by manhood suffrage—national, state and municipal—have been corrupt, extortionate and bent upon carrying out the designs of ambitious, grasping and selfish men, who did not care a rush for the public good. It was found that a corrupt or an ignorant electorate could be bribed or duped into furthering the designs of sordid scoundrels and in supporting measures and policies that were not calculated to promote the public good. It dawned even upon radicals that if the people were to be sovereign it was necessary that the people, in order to be able to exercise their sovereignty intelligently and honestly, must be carefully instructed as to what is good for them, and trained to walk in the paths of political virtue. They were forced to the conclusion that wisdom and virtue are just as necessary to the ruler who has a million of heads as to the ruler who has only one head. The Republicans of South Carolina have come to find that manhood suffrage is not what it has been cracked up to be. Accordingly they in state convention assembled have decided to amend the Constitution of South Carolina by inserting in it provisions which restrict the qualification of the voter to men who can read and write well or who possess a certain amount of assessable property. Consistently enough the convention declines to submit this amendment to the present electorate at the polls. This is what the New York Times says about the work of the South Carolina convention:—

It was said in the debates in the convention and in the current discussion in South Carolina that this plan of applying a test of intelligence to qualify electors before applying the permanent qualification of education or ownership of taxable property is justifiable if it be applied with absolute justice and impartiality. That seems to us to be quite true, but the chance of its being applied with absolute justice and impartiality is exceedingly slim. As the avowed purpose is, not to suppress the illiterate vote or the ignorant vote but to give the vote, as we say, to what was loudly proclaimed during the canvass for the election of delegates to the convention that white supremacy was to be maintained without disfranchising any white man except for crime, it is greatly to be feared that boards of registration appointed by the Governor and representing only one party will find a white man's explanation of a selected section of the Constitution more satisfactory than a black man's in most, if not in all instances. Here is where the unjust discrimination will come in, if anywhere, and, unfortunately, suspicion of it will not be due merely to the liability of such a provision to abuse, but to the avowed purposes of those who devised it.

THE BANK OF MONTREAL.

The Bank of Montreal's statement for the six months ending October 31st shows that it continues to be a skilfully, prudently and successfully managed institution. Although the half year has not been either in Canada or the United States, from a business point of view, a particularly lively one, the Bank has extended its business and increased its profits. It is able to give its stockholders a comfortable dividend of five per cent., and then leaves a nice little surplus to be carried to the right side of the profit and loss account. This sum amounts to \$823,302, being an increase of \$13,725 over the corresponding six months of last year. A comparison of the figures for the two periods shows that, the liabilities to the public, says the Montreal Standard, which amount to \$40,882,213, are increased by \$4,244,291, and the assets, which amount to \$60,008,068, by \$4,257,602. Assets exceed liabilities to the public by \$19,425,455, or nearly 33 per cent. The liabilities to the public consist of notes in circulation, deposits and balances due to other banks in Canada. Deposits show an increase of \$3,858,613, of which \$3,278,534 is in those not bearing interest and \$580,079 in those bearing interest. In circulation there is an expansion of \$375,682. The total amount of deposits is \$35,423,633, of which \$10,929,983 do not bear interest, and \$24,493,650 are interest bearing. The circulation of bank notes exceeds five millions of dollars. Of the assets the large sum of \$25,810,727 is immediately available. This is 63.6 per cent of the total liabilities to the public. The current loans amount to \$33,295,080, which exceeds the amount on October 31, 1894, by \$3,243,508. The cash reserves of the bank are \$6,361,549, of which \$2,030,505 are gold and silver coin current and \$4,331,044 are government demand notes. These reserves exceed the circulation of bank notes by \$2,307,960. A feature of the statement is the small amount of overdue debts, the total being only \$108,726.

That these results have not been easily produced may be inferred from the following passage from the Montreal Gazette:— At the annual meeting of the shareholders in June last the General Manager, in reporting the commercial situation, pointed out that the half-year they had just engaged on was likely to be a lean one. Money at that time could be borrowed in London at 4 to 4.5 per cent. per annum; in New York rates advanced as low as 7 per cent.; in Chicago, instead of 6 to 7 per cent., the rate was 4 per cent. With most business falling in the cities where the bank usually looks for

an opportunity to employ its surplus funds, there was also an era of low prices for staples in Canada. While the price of wheat was high for a part of the year there was comparatively little in the country to sell. The rates for cheese were also unusually low up to a month ago, and this meant both that less money was required to buy and move the product, and that there was less in circulation in the country for use in general business, which fact also reacted on the banks. In spite of these drawbacks, and in the dull half of the year also, the Bank of Montreal has earned more than its regular dividend. In this, it has only repeated its record made in three successive years of world-wide and extreme depression, from which trade is just beginning to emerge. This implies more careful management than is often necessary in time of commercial buoyancy, when much larger returns on capital investments are secured.

Canadians have good reason to be proud of the Bank of Montreal, which has won, and which maintains, a high position among the banking institutions of the world. They have also reason to place the highest confidence in their banks generally. They have proved their soundness during a time of extreme depression, when the banking system of the great and rich country south of us found it difficult to withstand the tremendous strain that was put upon it. In that trying time, when hundreds of banks in the United States were breaking down in all directions, the banks of Canada, with hardly an exception, stood firm and continued to keep their high place in the confidence of Canadians of all classes and occupations. The part which the Bank of Montreal took in that crisis in maintaining the credit of Canada and in preserving the faith of its people in the soundness and stability of their banks will perhaps never be known.

THE FAST ATLANTIC SERVICE.

Now that the British Government has decided to subsidize a fast Atlantic steamship service, a fast line between some port of Canada and a port of Great Britain will, no doubt, be before long established. The competition between the different steamship companies will be keen. There will also be a competition between Dominion seaports. In such a rivalry a few hours in the length of the voyage will make a very material difference. The port of arrival and departure of a fast line must be open all the year round, and it must be in direct connection with the transcontinental railroads. Halifax, and St. John are both favorably situated in these respects, but Halifax has the advantage in being somewhat nearer Great Britain. It may be that this advantage may, as regards St. John, be made up in superior railroad facilities. St. John is now some hours nearer to Montreal by rail than Halifax. Notwithstanding this, Halifax was the port selected by Mr. Huddart, and no doubt in making the choice the claims of St. John were fully considered.

Then the competition of the United States line will have to be borne in mind. The Canadian line will have to offer as many advantages to the traveler as the best American line. In that case the shorter sea voyage will give Halifax a considerable advantage over New York. The New York Mail and Express, discussing an article in the North American Review on a fast Atlantic steamship service, attaches much importance to the shortening of the sea voyage. It says:— But there is more than the comfort and convenience of individual passengers and business men dependent upon the consummation of some such plan as that evoked by Mr. Corbin. Expert marine authorities have come to the conclusion that the limit of speed in steamship travel, when combined with safety and comfort, is nearly reached. Nothing but racing machines, they say, will make the trip between the present termini in much less than six days. The only other way to shorten the trip is to diminish the length of the water route. British lines can do this by establishing a terminus at Halifax, connecting with fast trains to Boston and New York, and diverting both passenger and freight traffic by the subsidized Canadian Pacific to all the lake ports, the Pacific Coast and the Orient. This would require a subsidy, and Great Britain is liberal in subsidies, as is shown by the fact that in recently awarding the Irish mail contract it raised the annual subsidy to £100,000 for a decrease of one-half hour in time between Kingstown and Holyhead.

The only way to prevent the establishment of such an all-British route is for the United States to promote and secure a through direct route which will put the London mails in New York and on the Pacific Coast in less time than can be done by any Canadian route. It would appear that this can be best accomplished by the adoption of Mr. Corbin's Montreal route. Canada is offering to pledge many times more money to obtain this advantage than would be required from the United States to secure and make permanent the intercontinental mail and passenger traffic.

The project of Mr. Corbin, therefore, becomes one of national importance. If Canada makes the most of its geographical position, it is hard to see how Americans, with all their ingenuity and enterprise, can compete successfully with a Canadian fast line.

Mr. E. F. Sharrow's Easter Gift won the Lancashire handi-cup and one thousand sovereigns at Manchester yesterday, Laodamia running second and Medica third.

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