

proves of a system through which such outrages are not only possible but probable. Indeed, they are the natural outcome of the obnoxious means employed. The system which lends encouragement to moral depravity and even renders outrage upon the public possible, cannot be palliated in the public service, and the excuse that the end justifies the means is at best a very weak one. Surely the efficient management of the Customs Department does not call for the employment of means which open the doors to the commitment of dishonest acts, on the part of the officials, and if the interests of the Crown cannot be adequately protected in an honorable way, then those interests had better be allowed to suffer.

The late disgraceful developments, which have brought the entire Department into mistrust with the commercial community, are the direct outcome of the employment of questionable means in connection with the special agents' service. This branch of the service seems to be founded upon principles utterly at variance with honorable observances. The regulations are such as to render the agents more anxious for the spoils of office, than the efficiency of the service. In the Ayer's case it has been shown that disgraceful and contemptible means were resorted to in order to obtain plunder, to be divided among the officials. Vicious is too mild a word to apply to this system. More booty is the only incentive to action, no matter how dishonorable the means employed to obtain it. Under such a system it is almost possible, by a well-arranged intrigue with employes or others, to rob an innocent person. The incentive of obtaining two-thirds of the fine is enough to cause some men to resort to almost anything. It has been asserted that one agent cleared \$24,000 out of a season's operations. It is also said that agent Wolff, at Montreal, has derived an annual income of \$10,000 for the past three years, from his share of the plunder obtained from seizures, in addition to which he has had a salary of \$1,600 and traveling expenses. With this prospect of plunder in view, it will be seen how honest traders could be pestered and hampered by special agents and detectives, who work on the principle that every importer is as dishonorable as themselves. If these men are a necessary adjunct to the efficiency of the Customs service, by all means let the best men procurable be employed, at liberal salaries.

The booty system is a disgrace to the Department, and it should be thoroughly purged away.

THE BANQUET.

In a country so strongly partisan as Canada is generally believed to be, the banquet tendered to Mr. Robert Watson, M.P., by the citizens of Winnipeg, presented several remarkable features worthy of careful reflection. It has often been declared by men of broad and independent thought, that the extreme party feeling which prevails in Canada is the curse of the country, and is fast driving us toward national ruin. But the desert is not without its oases, and the spectacle of Thursday evening last would, to the independent mind, resemble one of those refreshing spots, which often prove such a haven of rest to the weary traveller over the burning sands. So in the heat and rancor of party strife, an occasion such as the Watson banquet, could not but prove a place of enjoyable rest from partisan bitterness. To the man of broad and liberal thought, it would prove a feast, and even to the diseased partisan it must have administered an allopathic dose. Surely no man, no matter how strongly partisan in sentiment, could have gone from the banquet hall as strongly partisan as when he came. The sharp edge must have received a grinding down at some point. Those who have had occasion to lament the bigotry of party feeling here, cannot but take a less pessimistic view of the situation now. A very few of the party whips and wire-pullers, who see that their occupations are fast passing from them, and that their "usefulness" is rapidly on the wane, were the only ones to attempt to throw cold water on the affair, but their vain spoutings had no more effect than the proverbial water thrown upon the duck's back. The party machine here has lost its influence with the intelligent public, and the impotent ravings of the "bosses" can well afford to be looked upon with a smile of disinterested nothingness.

The banquet itself was a magnificent success in every particular. Nothing like it has heretofore occurred in Winnipeg, nor perhaps for that matter in Canada. It was a tribute simply to honest worth, born of a desire to recognize, independent of party, the labors of Mr. Watson, in the interest of Manitoba's rights. Though returned as a Liberal, the people believed that he was actuated by honest purposes in working so arduously, and on every

occasion, against the hated monopoly. This feeling found vent in the demonstration and presentation to Mr. Watson on Thursday evening last, and what took place in Winnipeg was re-echoed to a great extent throughout the province, in the hearts of the people. The Conservatives of Winnipeg who took the leading part in the proceedings, and were mainly instrumental in bringing about the banquet, deserve the greatest praise for the independence of spirit shown. Their action is in strong contrast with that of the Conservative members from this province, at Ottawa, who sought to ignore Mr. Watson, and it is to be hoped it will be taken by these parties as a wholesome rebuke for the infinite littleness of soul which they displayed in this matter. The banquet should do much toward uniting the people of the province, in defence of our provincial rights.

THE RED RIVER VALLEY RAILWAY.

The road to the boundary is still the great matter of paramount interest to Manitobans. The most important move in connection with the project since our last review of the situation, was the turning of the first sod by Premier Norquay, on Saturday, July 2nd. On or about the same day it is said the Dominion Government disallowed the Act. The last statement is generally accepted as true, though official notice of the exercise of the veto power has not yet been made public. It is even thought in some circles that the Governor-General may refuse to veto the Act, notwithstanding the decision of Parliament and the Government. Be this as it may, it is now believed that the Dominion will rest with vetoing the Act, without resorting to extreme measures to prevent the building of the road. Indeed, public opinion has changed so rapidly in favor of Manitoba in the east of late, that it is doubtful if the Government dare resort to extreme measures. The local authorities claim that the veto will not interfere with their intentions, and that the road will be completed within the specified time. In the meantime the work goes steadily forward. The survey has been about completed, and a number of men have been employed clearing the road through the bush, along the first few miles of the line, before the prairie is reached. Grading will commence this week. A telegram from the contractor, dated from Toronto, stated that the rolling stock had been purchased and that the road would be completed before the specified time. The bonds have not yet been floated, but the local authorities claim that the necessary funds can be secured, the delay being caused from a desire to realize to the best advantage. With the Grand Trunk and the Northern Pacific railways both backing the scheme, there should be no insurmountable difficulties in the way of obtaining the funds, even with the opposition of the C.P.R. Co. and the Dominion Government.