

"THOROUGHLY QUALIFIED."

"Col. Prior—Dr. Duncan is a gentleman thoroughly qualified to fill the position."

This paragraph occurs in the Hansard report of a brief discussion in the house on Tuesday of last week, and appeared in our Ottawa dispatch on Thursday. Col. Prior referred to the superintendency of quarantine at Williams Head, of which important post Dr. George H. Duncan, who had been acting superintendent since the death of Dr. Jones, was appointed by the Tupper government after it had been defeated at the polls. The point to which we wish especially to draw attention for a moment is the assertion of Col. Prior that Dr. Duncan is "thoroughly qualified."

We might ask, and in no hostile spirit, "who is Dr. Duncan?" Or, with a view of learning how much experience he has had as a medical man, or what has been his training in sanitary science, we might adopt the famous interrogations of Li and enquire of the "thoroughly qualified," "How old are you?" and "Did you study medicine before becoming a doctor?" If a Chinese statesman may thus catechise the head of the British Columbia judiciary, the editor of the Times might, without presuming too much, in the same way seek for information from the "thoroughly qualified" as to his fitness for the high office to which he aspires.

Investigation would probably show, should the "thoroughly qualified" decline to answer, that he is still a young man as far as age is concerned, and far from being old in experience or special knowledge. It would be found that he was neither better nor worse than the average physician is at his time of life, and that until he became health officer for Victoria he was unknown to fame as a sanitarian. His knowledge of therapeutics, in all probability, is complete—at least as complete as it can possibly be under the circumstances—for nowadays nearly all young physicians who have the brains to learn are well up in the theories of the colleges and the formulas prescribed for the cure of the manifold ills of mankind. But since the "thoroughly qualified" occupies an office designed to "prevent" rather than to "cure" disease, his success or ability in the latter direction need not be inquired into. Only as a "preventive officer" have we to deal with him, and so, with a view of eliciting the desired information—that is, as to the accuracy of Col. Prior's statement—we invite the "thoroughly qualified" to take the witness stand and answer these questions:

- 1. As city health officer did you open the door of the smallpox pest house and permit two voters, confined there under city regulations and by order of the mayor, to mix with the crowd at the polls on last general election day?
2. What was your reason, or what incentive had you for so acting?
3. If the incentive was the success of Earle and Prior, because they promised to secure the Williams Head office for you, or you expected they would do so, what would the incentive need to be when you are in charge at Williams Head, to induce you to liberate a ship with smallpox or yellow fever suspects before all the regulations had been complied with?

If the "thoroughly qualified" will answer these three questions to our satisfaction we promise him to withdraw our opposition to his appointment as superintendent of quarantine at Williams Head. We ask for no certificate of character, or of medical ability, or personal fitness, but simply for satisfactory proof of how in a similar position the "thoroughly qualified" acquitted himself of the high and responsible duties of guardian of the lives and health of the citizens of Victoria?

LETTING IN THE LIGHT.

In the house of commons yesterday the Hon. Mr. Davies, in reply to a question from Mr. McInnes, stated that on the 24th February last application was made for a subsidy for the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway extension, but no action had been taken in the matter. Victorians will remember that in the course of the late election campaign Col. Prior repeatedly said that action had been taken by the late government. At the first Conservative meeting, held at Cedar Hill, the colonel said, as reported in the Colonist:

"If the subsidies agreed upon could have been presented to the house there would have been found \$3,200 a mile for 100 miles of railway on the island and \$3,200 a mile for 25 miles on the Mainland, to the head of Butte Inlet. That was what was agreed to, and that was what would have been presented to the house had not Mr. Laurier notified Mr. Foster that the opposition would not allow a single money vote to pass. He asked them to remember this statement, for the items he mentioned will be found in the estimates presented when Sir Charles Tupper meets the house after the elections."

The next evening, speaking in the A. O. U. W. hall, Col. Prior returned to the subject, though somewhat varying his previous statement. The Colonist reported his remarks as follows:

"But when the subsidies had been agreed upon and were ready to be submitted, Mr. Laurier intimated to the finance minister that not a single money vote would be permitted to pass. In the face of that it would have been foolish to bring down the subsidies. If they had been presented, however, it would have been found that they contained \$3,200 a mile for 100 miles of railway on the island and \$3,200 a mile for a line from Butte Inlet northward."

"A Voice—What is the 100 miles on the island? Isn't it the E. & N.?"
"Col. Prior—Is not the E. & N. supposed to be part of the British Pacific scheme?"
"The Voice—No."
"Col. Prior—Perhaps this gentleman

knows more about it than Mr. Earle and I do, but we were amongst the original promoters and have been interested in the scheme from the beginning. The truth of Col. Prior's assertions can now be judged from Mr. Davies' reply to Mr. McInnes. It is plain that he was deliberately endeavoring to deceive the people in this matter, being ready to adopt any means, however despicable to secure election."

THE ST. CHARLES STREET SEWER.

The morning paper in its usual manner of vilifying the city council, prints the following: "When our contemporary sees the report of the proceedings of last night's session of the city council it will find to its surprise, no doubt, that the city engineer was not consulted about the matter. The blunder was the work of the city council, and it is not fair to fasten on the city engineer the blame that attaches to it. The city engineer, when he was consulted, disapproved of the scheme."

Nothing can be further from the truth than this. The whole scheme, from beginning to end, is the work of the city engineer. We have made careful enquiry into the facts and can vouch for the accuracy of the following: The property owners of St. Charles street and vicinity were confronted with a nuisance resulting from the discharge of sewage matter into an open drain on St. Charles street. One of their number waited on Mayor Beaven and suggested that they, the said property owners, would contribute one-third of the cost and the provincial government one-third, if the city council would also contribute one-third to abate the nuisance by constructing a proper sewer. The mayor consulted Mr. Wilmot, who suggested the St. Charles street plan, and made an estimate of the cost. Mayor Beaven then laid the matter before the sewerage committee, who seeing no objection to the proposed arrangement reported to the council and advised its adoption. Neither the mayor, sewerage committee, nor the aldermen had the slightest intimation that the city engineer disapproved of it. Neither does the city engineer appear to object to the plan, either from an engineering or a sanitary standpoint, but only because he fears possible litigation.

There is not any doubt but that the proposed scheme would have been the best temporary way out of the present difficulty. The alternative scheme of the Colonist requires, as we said before, that sewage matter should run up hill. Alderman Tiarks' suggestion to take it through Belcher street is undoubtedly a better solution, but its cost would far exceed the funds at the disposal of the city council, even supposing the property owners and the government would be willing to double this contribution. Under the circumstances, however, it may have been better for the council to retrace its steps, although a much needed piece of sewerage work will have to remain in abeyance, but only malignant spite can possibly charge the city fathers with being responsible for any mistake that may have arisen.

STATUTE REVISION.

After a few days' serious consideration the government organ condescends to take notice of the criticism ament statute revision that appeared in the columns of the Wellington Enterprise. Its method of meeting that criticism is eminently characteristic of the organ. Instead of attempting to show that the Enterprise's reflections were not justified, that its condemnation of the government was not well founded, the Colonist starts off with the assumption that the Enterprise article was written by an outsider. He is described as "an individual who evidently opines that the emolument pertaining to the revision of the statutes might have been more acceptably bestowed." He is also said to be "an ass in lion's skin," and is the recipient of other compliments at the Colonist's hands, it appears to us that if the Enterprise chooses to follow the Colonist's example and go behind the anonymity of the press it need not do a large amount of guessing before it lights upon the identity of the Colonist writer who has been so seriously stirred up by its attack. It might describe him as an individual who thought that the Colonist's own powers of vituperation were not equal to the occasion, and therefore kindly tendered the use of his, which were cultivated by many years' vigorous exercise in the political field. But with the "slanging match" by the Enterprise and the Colonist the public is not concerned, as it is in the nature of a family quarrel. The public must be concerned, however, to know whether the accusations made by the Enterprise in regard to statute revision are met by the government's champion. The only attempt to meet them with anything like directness appears in the following paragraph:

"It is perhaps unnecessary to say anything further with respect to the cause of complaint itself. The significant references to parliamentary matters, and party secrets, though small in themselves, indicate the author; and to do that is a sufficient reply to what may emanate from such a source. We understand, however, that already arrangements have been made for augmenting the commission; but whether or not its revision are met by the approval by the quondam editor of the Enterprise we shall probably learn shortly from himself under the same or a different guise. It is unlikely that he will be able to conceal his identity. He will still be the ass, though under a lion's skin."

This is very meagre information to lay before the public in reply to the Enterprise's challenge, and we take the liberty of doubting that abuse of the Enterprise writer will cover up the deficiency. There should be something more substantial than one vague statement and several uncomplimentary epithets. Direct answers to the following questions might afford the public a little solid information on the subject: 1. What money has been paid to any person for work in connection with the revision of the statutes since the estimates were passed at the last session of the legislature? 2. If such money was paid, to whom was it paid, and when? 3. What steps, if any, have been taken since the prorogation of the house to appoint additional commissioners to act in conjunction with the chief justice? 4. If any appointments have been made, who has been appointed, and at what remuneration? 5. If such appointments have been made, why have the particulars been kept concealed from the public? The election accounts of the Liberal and Conservative candidates in Victoria at the late general election, published to-day, prove either that Messrs. Earle and Prior "heat their way" through the campaign, or that their agents have not made correct statements to the returning officer. Either conclusion is a most unpleasant one. The election protest, however, may tell a different story.

Kootenay papers display remarkable unanimity in condemning the methods of the provincial government; there is hardly a journal worthy of notice in the whole district that finds a good word to say for them. The latest established, the Rossland Mining Review, offers the following very unflattering opinion in its first issue: "The land policy of the British Columbia government is enough to drive its enemies to assassination and its friends to suicide. First it made a poor mouth to the legislature, saying that the purchase law must be re-enacted because the province lacked revenue. And the purchase law was re-enacted. Then it proceeded to reserve all the land that anyone wants to buy, not for the purpose of retaining its most valuable asset in the treasury of the province, but for the purpose of handing it over to railway companies for considerations which figure nowhere in the public revenue; however largely they may bulk in the private ledgers of individuals. It was hoped by many that, after the translation of Hon. Forbes G. Vernon, nothing worse than incompetence was to be feared in the land department, and that some of the first elements of fair dealing would invade its tarnished precincts. But the leopard has not changed his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin. The land department of the British Columbia government remains the same, except that, if it were possible, its predations have become more brazen, its offencious more conspicuous than before."

A correspondent, "Ratepayer," yesterday made a statement about an alleged threat used by Mayor Beaven to Michael Conlin, while the latter was sanitary officer, that ought either to be substantiated or withdrawn. It is quite unlikely that the mayor would use his influence, either by moral suasion or official intimidation, to stop any city official from vindicating himself in a court of law who felt disposed to do so. To suggest that the mayor should choke off his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin, is a threat used by Mayor Beaven to Michael Conlin, while the latter was sanitary officer, that ought either to be substantiated or withdrawn. It is quite unlikely that the mayor would use his influence, either by moral suasion or official intimidation, to stop any city official from vindicating himself in a court of law who felt disposed to do so. 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