PROGRESS.

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TOO MANY FREE PASSES.

THE OPERA HOUSE STOCKHOLDERS DISCUSS THEM.

And Some Idea Is Given of How they Are Disposed Of—The Operations of the Company for the Year Did Not Pay—The Reason Why.

About forty stockholders of the St. John opera house company attended the adjourned meeting this week and listened to a verbal statement of the year's business from president and manager A. O. Skinner. The presentment was not a cheerful one, since the information showed that the company had gone behind in 1893. President Skinner seemed to shoulder all the responsibility for any lack of success during the year, and told those present that it was owing to his lack of judgment that the last engagement had been made. Nobody was to blame but himself. Though nothing was said in denial of this many of the stock holders were not half so ready to blame the president as he was to condemn himself. They know that about all of the energy in the opera house management rests in himself but apart from having a voice, and, perhaps a decisive voice, in the management, that he is but one of a committee appointed for that purpose.

In regard to the last engagement it was made with the idea that a light opera at the holiday season would draw. The result has proved otherwise and the business done was the lightest in the history of the house. Even the two big days, Christmas and New Years with their matinees did not bring up the average. The loss on the engagement had been about $1,200 which would probably be reduced by the success of the company in Halifax.

Mr. Skinner might have added that had the company been as well rehearsed and as smooth when it came to St. John as it was when it left for Halifax the houses would have been far better and the engagement less disastrous—if indeed, it would have been disastrous at all. There is no use in denying the fact that St. John has been too often simply a rehearsal town for other cities. Opera companies picked up at random in New York, no matter how good individuals they are, cannot work together and present two or three different operas a week at such short notice. The experience of the past has proved this. Then as PROGRESS has always contended, it would be far better to advertise a performance simply as it is, and not as it was intended to be. The last engagement was announced curiously, artists promised who never appeared at all and a "New York orchestra" billed to appear that did not appear at all. Harrison's orchestra has done good service before in the same direction and no doubt will again—it would have been just as much of an attraction as a small New York orchestra, but even with so competent a leader as Mr. Intropodi, the members of the very best orchestra cannot get into working order at a day's notice.

There was some talk about an auditor who would look over the books—in fact the president asked for the appointment of a committee to look over the accounts and finally Messrs Ferguson and Olive were appointed. A good many thought that a regular auditor would do the work thoroughly, quickly and systematically and that it might be well to employ one but no practical suggestion to that end was made. A committee similar to this was appointed two or three years ago for the same purpose but never got to work. The task was too great and the committee composed of men too much engaged in their own business to give the time the work required. The affairs of the company are no doubt in more presentable shape now than they were then, but still the work is for a regular accountant who will give the stockholders a statement in due form and perhaps make some suggestion that would be valuable to the company's book keeping.

The election of officers returned President Skinner unanimously, and in thanking them for their confidence he said that it was not his custom to retire from a post of responsibility when affairs where not in a thoroughly satisfactory condition. Mr. A. H. Bell was elected first vice-president, and Mr. J. F. Dockrill second vice, with Messrs. R. A. Payne, John Mitchell, J. L. Carleton, G. A. Hetherington, R. F. Quigley, Jas. McKinney, jr., and Frank Munroe as directors.

Dr. Godsoe raised a question that was discussed a good deal—that of free passes. He wanted to know where all of them came from, who gave them out and whether they had any rule for the purpose. In this connection he mentioned the fact that he had seen passes in the hands of persons who he thought had no right to them. He was not speaking in the character of an objector but asked for information since when he took stock in the company he did so with the understanding that there should be no free passes given. The answer of the president was that each newspaper received four passes the first night—this was hardly correct, but was a slip, no doubt—and two for each of the following nights of the engagement. Then there were the American dramatic papers, perhaps some four or five, the representatives of which each received passes. Eight big showboards were another drain upon the pass book, to say nothing of 250 lithographs hung in windows, a privilege which in many cases had to be paid for in this fashion.

Mr. Skinner also explained that the managers of the shows that came here also gave away passes and perhaps those Mr. Godsoe saw came from that source.

Notwithstanding this explanation there was much discussion over the matter. Mr. Godsoe still contended that there should be some understanding about the matter. Either that there should be no free passes apart from the legitimate ones or that if they were given for the purpose of making the appearance of a full house, that the stockholders should distribute them. He preferred that every stockholder should pay his way but if any favors of this sort were given the stockholders should know something about it. He suggested that the passes should be signed by two persons, the president and vice president, but it was pointed out that this would be a difficult matter.

There was some argument over the by-laws of which the stockholders were for the main part ignorant. A suggestion that they be amended and printed was made, but it was stated that there were no funds to print them.

JUDGES MADE OUT VOUCHERS,

And Both Drew Their Hundred, But One of Them Refunded the Amount.

There is an interesting story in circulation on the streets in connection with two of the Judges of our supreme court. It is not very often that a particular member of the bench gets left, as the saying is, but from the facts as related by one who should know, that distinguished gentleman on this occasion was certainly outdone.

By the law as prescribed in the Equity act, regular sittings of this court are held in only two counties in the province, namely St. John and York, and it is enacted in the same act that when it is necessary to hold sittings in any other county, a session may be held in any county by first publishing a notice of such in the Royal Gazette.

Now it so happened that on the same day the court was to hold a session for York at Fredericton. A sitting of the court for the county of Wesmorland had been announced in the Royal Gazette to be held at Moncton. It was quite evident then that it was entirely impossible for the equity judge to be at both places on one and the same day. His honor then was placed in a kind of dilemma. What was he to do? It is said that he very much preferred going to Moncton, and it also reported that with each special session of the equity court there is a fee attached of $100, but no one for a moment would accuse the judge of preferring Moncton on that account.

As the story is told it seems that his Honor did finally decide on taking the trip to Moncton and so accordingly he sent word to Fredericton saying in substance that as he had to go to Moncton it would be impossible for him to attend at the capital. At length Tuesday came, but something turned up and even on that day the Judge could not possibly leave for Moncton, but he was equal to the occasion. At this very time another Judge was holding the circuit court in the eastern section of the province and it reports are to be relied on it is said that to the latter a telegram was sent from St. John asking him to hold this equity sitting at Moncton.

Now, the circuit judge is a very obliging official, and so it did not take long for him to decide how to act. He opened the equity sitting at Moncton, but business was quite slim, and after a short session the court was adjourned sine die. This was all very well—the Judge had done his work nobly, and so when he arrived in St. John he made out his vouchers, as it is said is customary in such cases, presented these to the bank and received $100. The equity judge found later that he could leave the city, and so, not wishing to impose too much on his brother judge, proceeded to Moncton to continue the session of the equity court. He must have been a little surprised on arriving at that town to find that the court had been adjourned sine die. But there was nothing left for him to do, and so he returned to St. John.

Reaching this city his vouchers were made out and presented to the bank, and he in turn received $100. Thus far everybody was happy and no one but the country was poorer for the above transactions. The Dominion government, however, became puzzled but it did not take it long to solve the difficulty with the result it is said that word was sent down from Ottawa informing the last judge who had drawn out the $100 that this amount would have to be at once refunded. The amount was refunded, and so the little affair only cost the country one hundred dollars after all.

HE RAN HIS OWN COURT.

CORONER WEEKS AND HIS WAY OF HOLDING AN INQUEST.

He Might Have Been More Impressive Had he Been More Sober—Drinks Between Depositions—His Commission From the Queen Direct.

HALIFAX, Jan. 11.—By the flooding of the Lyman-Kaye gold mine at Montague, the lives of four miners were lost. The cause of the accident was that the management did not know the extent of an adjoining old and abandoned workings which were filled with water. The miners ignorant of their danger, ran a tunnel east and west, following the lode, till at last the new and old mines were connected, and a tremendous body of water poured into the new mine filling it in a few minutes, and drowning four of the eight men at work. When the last shot was fired there was only a couple of feet between the new mine and the abandoned mine, filled as it was with water, whereas Mr. Woodhouse thought there was 100 feet of separating wall.

Coroner Weeks promptly announced he would hold an inquest. It was perfectly right he should. Indignation was great against Managing Director Woodhouse and his assistant, Clancy. A searching inquiry was needed to lay the blame for the disaster on the proper shoulders. Coroner Weeks swore in a jury and fixed day and hour for holding the inquest. Counsel was engaged to appear on behalf of the relatives of the miners, the management, and the provincial government.

The hour for the inquest arrived and jury, counsel and witnesses were on hand.

Coroner Weeks was not,—but he appeared upon the scene an hour late—and he was to put it mildly not sober. That the coroner was intoxicated was evident to every man on the the jury and every spectator. And Coroner Weeks was not only in that condition when he began the inquest, but he left the court room frequently to indulge further in "fire-water." He emptied his flask between witnesses.

Before the farce of taking evidence began, Lawyer MacInnes called attention to the illegal composition of the jury, three of them being workmen in the mine. The lawyer's only satisfaction was to hear the intoxicated coroner shout at him: "Sit down, I say, I won't hear you," and, on Mr. MacInnes persisting to press his point, the threat was hurled at him: "If you don't sit down I'll arrest you."

Director Woodhouse was called, and after one or two questions and replies, Mr. McInnes ventured to examine the witness. This time the coroner glanced at the lawyer and said: "If you worry this inquest any more I'll have you arrested and taken home."

Coroner Weeks was taking few or no notes, though pretending to write fully, and when one of the parties interested suggested to him that some one should be engaged to take down the evidence, the coroner refused, and laid down the maxim that "he never allowed another man to mix his whiskey."

The "inquest" was becoming such a screaming farce, and the coroner's conduct so unbearable, that one of the counsel turned to the jury and said: "This man is unfit to hold an inquest, and I will report him to the government. Do you bear me out?" The jurors replied: "We will," whilst Coroner Weeks gave the lawyer his opinion of him in eight words: "I am fit enough to shut your mug." That was enough for Lawyer MacInnes, and he left the court, whether from fear or disgust did not appear, for the Coroner shouted after him that he was above the paltry local government, for he represented Queen Victoria direct.

When witness Miller was on the stand a juryman tried to get him to say whether, as a practical miner, he did not think there should be another means of escape than by the single shaft which existed. Coroner Weeks ordered the witness not to answer, saying the question was one for an engineer and not for a miner, who knew nothing about it. Then the battle of words was transferred to counsel and coroner. Finally the intoxicated coroner, for the twentieth time, threatened with dramatic emphasis, to arrest any one before him, who dared to say the proceedings of his august court were not regular. That ended the matter, and the coroner took the opportunity to retire long enough to get another drink, as he had already several times done.

The spectacle of a drunken coroner holding an inquest on four dead miners, with a jury composed half and half of relatives of the deceased and employees of the mine, was continued for some time longer.

At last the coroner left the jury to themselves to prepare their verdict. They found that the wholesale drowning was the result of an accident, and they recommended that means be taken to secure accurate plans of all old workings. The inquest was useless in throwing a single ray of light upon the tragedy or its cause.

A long step has been taken towards hushing up the affair, so far as an examination into the capability of the management or the mines department is concerned. The brief testimony of mine inspector Gilpin is lamentably unsatisfactory. For instance, in answer to a question at the "inquest," he said that not having examined the mine he could not say whether the accident might have been avoided or not, and the reason he had not gone into the mine, he subsequently stated, was that it was not in a fit condition for him to descend. Such an easy-going inspector as that might be improved upon.

Lawyer MacInnes informed Coroner Weeks that he would report his conduct to the government. That he has done so is not known, but Mr. Jones, who appeared on behalf of the attorney-general, stated the case to Hon. J. W Longley, so that the government is officially aware of what took place on that memorable afternoon at Montague. Whether any action will be taken by the government or legislature remains to be seen. The scandal should not end where it now stands.

MINISTERS AND PEOPLE.

Lively Times In Sussex Over the Scott Act Enforcement.

There have been rather lively times at Sussex and vicinity the present week, and the week to come promises to be full of excitement at that town. The trouble was this, a difficulty as to whether the prayer meetings should be turned into temperance meetings or not.

The mischief has been brewing for some time. The Scott act violaters are being prosecuted and certain of the clergy favor this prosecution, while there are others who are not so desperately temperate.

On Tuesday night last one of the regular union prayer meetings was announced in the baptist church and on that evening all denominations, and both Scott Act and Anti-Scott Act devotees, attended. All went smoothly for half an hour, when several of the clergy decided that the remaining half hour of the meeting could be better devoted to temperance than to prayer and so announced.

Then Revs. Crisp, Hubley and Sutherland, with about a dozen followers, arose, shook the dust from their feet and left the meeting.

Then Thomas Roach took the chair, and resolutions were passed supporting William Saunders in his crusade against Patrick Doherty, a liquor seller. Doherty had been summoned as a violator of the Scott Act, and had not appeared at court on the day appointed. Saunders swore that he had served the summons on Doherty as by law directed, but it afterwards appeared that it was Doherty's brother who was served. Saunders was then arrested on Doherty's complaint for perjury, and is now on trial. The half-hour thus surreptiously taken from the time of prayer was for the purpose of expressing sympathy for Saunders.

Then to help along the case the temperance party agreed in their own minds that Justice Morrison was not the impartial and law abiding and preserving judge that he had sworn to be and so they decided to hurl a resolution at him, and it was done as follows:

"Whereas, the prejudice of the said Justice Morrison was so manifest that he was charged in open court with being in the conspiracy to prosecute Saunders.

"Resolved, etc., the said Justice Morrison is not a person fit to be entrusted with the administration of justice."

Wednesday night, the ministers who had dissented got in their chance. A union prayer meeting was held and the Rev. Messrs Grant, Erb and Nobles attended. But Rev. Messrs Crisp, Hubley and Sutherland decided that the meeting was theirs and so they occupied the time, the temperance clergymen not getting an opportunity to speak or exhort, greatly to their own dismay and that of their friends. It is feared that the week of prayer, especially at Sussex, might have been more beneficially improved. Several exciting events are promised for next week.

To Investigate the Police Court.

HALIFAX, Jan. 11.—About two months ago PROGRESS called attention to the administration of justice in the city police court, or rather to the inability of Stipendiary Motton to further perform his duties. The condition of affairs is not improved. Notwithstanding that fact PROGRESS is the only newspaper that has yet dared to tell the truth. At Tuesday night's meeting of the city council a letter was received from one Sarah Smith, who threatened an action against the city to recover $4 which Mr. Motton had illegally imposed upon her as a fine in the police court. The aldermen had to take some notice of the letter, and it afforded them a chance, in referring it to a committee for investigation, to couple with the order to do so a hint to look into the conduct of affairs in the police court.

Quite a Work of Art

The calendar issued by Manchester, Robertson & Allison, is very artistic. It is in the form of a miniature folding screen, has beautiful colored illustrations of the season, and is in every way worthy of the house it represents.

LIKE A VARIETY SHOW.

FEATURES OF THE SHATFORD CASE NOT IN THE EVIDENCE.

Big Success of the Sensational Social Drama—Large and Interested Audiences—Judge Tuck Comments on Law and Morals—The End.

While the opera house people have been putting their money into a hole in the ground, during the last year, the snug little variety show in the upper floor of the Palmer Building has had crowded houses from first to last. The financial results of the season just closed are not yet announced nor will they be known until the lawyers have their grand final of addition, multiplication and taxation. "For further particulars see small bills."

One thing is assured, however, and it is that the business end of the show will not lose money by the season's operations, thought it is to be feared that the leading actors in this interesting social drama will meet the frequent luck of those who walk the stage, in being out of pocket by their engagement. If to be known is as good as to be lucky, however, none of them have any reason to complain.

The wonderful freedom enjoyed in this country can be only fully appreciated when it is understood that in some counties, England and France for instance, a rigid censorship is observed in regard to what is put upon the stage, and thus the public are taught to be virtuous and happy, even though they do miss lots of fun. There is nothing of the kind in this country, or the reading of some of the affidavits in the sensational social drama of "The Shatford case" would have been hedged around with as many barriers to the public as are erected when somebody is hanged by due process of law.

The show went on, however, and was literally much more of a "howling" success than the promoters had anticipated. The audience never failed to come to time, and the results never failed to come up to their expectations. They were not the kind of audiences that usually fill the parquette and dress circle of the Opera House, nor were they altogether such as are found in the gallery when the sensational drama is on the boards. There were not enough boys among them for that. They were just such a crowd, on the whole, as may be found outside the barrier in the circuit court when there is a criminal case on. The Idle Sons of Rest sent a large delegation.

The apartment in which the show was given will probably hold a hundred people and a writing table, when the audience is stevedored properly. A few more might be crowded in, but in that case the judge, counsel and actors would either have to take seats on the table or stand with their arms held close to their sides. Outside of the chamber is the law library, which will hold a good many more, who can see little of the show, but can hear almost everything if the lawyers speak loud enough, as they usually did in this case.

The ceilings are low, and the windows cannot be raised or lowered. When the judge's chambers were located there the supposition was that only the limited few who were affected by the usually dreary platitudes of lawyers would ever attend. When the place became packed with a miscellaneous mob, many of whom were in evidence to the senses as opponents of water for internal or external use, hot was only one of the least descriptive terms of the state of the atmosphere.

The precaution suggested by one man, to avoid poisoning, was to take three drinks of whiskey before going there and keep a piece of chewing tobacco in the mouth during the proceedings. This idea found favor, judging by some of the indications.

Judge Tuck stood the ordeal well, though there must have been times when, as a matter of personal comfort he would have been glad to exchange seats with his brother Ritchie in the King street Pantatechnicon. He was never too hot or too tired to tell the counsel on both sides that he agreed with them in their interpretation of the law, and sometimes he interpolated his own views as sort of parentheses, from which anybody would know in a moment just what the law was and what it was not. "Law taught while you wait," might have been inscribed over the door of the chamber with perfect propriety.

Then, too, the judge uttered a great many moral axioms which, if collated, would be as practical and possibly poetical as the proverbial philosophy of the late lamented Martin Farquhar Tupper. These were usually in the way of ejaculatory assent to dicta of counsel regarding the moral law, but occasionally a proposition was advanced in contravention of some principle pleaded. An instance of the latter was when his honor asserted that attendance at church was no criterion of moral worth. Some of the best men in St. John never went to church, he said, and some of the precious bad ones always attended. Nobody called for "names" at this stage.

After one of the sessions, somebody congratulated the judge on having a really more social assembly than is found at the police court, because in the latter applause and laughter are prohibited, while in chambers, apparently, they are not. As a whole, however, the judge thought they kept wonderful order.

"Perhaps they are afraid your honor will commit them for contempt," was suggested.

"Oh, no, no. That's not it. They are afraid I will clear the court and that they will miss something," was the rejoinder.

For hard swearing, amounting in some cases to admitted perjury, the Shatford case easily beats the record in social sensational dramas in this part of the world. The moral status of Mr. Charles Campbell, for instance, can only be determined by knowledge of him apart from the evidence adduced. It has been sworn positively that he was guilty of gross and habitual immorality, and as positively asserted, from the same source, that he was not. The public can take their choice, and they may put to his credit that a man of such moral reputation as Archdeacon Brigstocke has sworn that he considers Mr. Campbell to be a "good churchman."

It is, however, most unfortunate for Mr. Campbell and the ladies in the case that all the dreadful things which have been said the horrible mire that has been waded through, would not have been public property had not the first shot been fired from their side. When Jefferson Davis Shatford, emulating the example of the man for whom he was named, donned woman's garments and fled, a year or so ago, he did not propose to return and create a disturbance in the family. It was thought apparently, that nothing could induce him to come back. He came in a hurry, however, and when he was least wanted or expected.

In the too little read play of Henry VIII is the advice, "Heat not a furnace for thy foe so hot that it doth singe thyself." The first charge of immorality and general cussedness comes from Mrs. Shatford's side of the case. Mr. Shatford met fire with fire, and he has given the public a great deal more to talk about than the other side has given against him. Finally the court has given him the custody of the children.

It would be easy to draw a picture of the appearance and actions of the contending parties during the proceedings in court. They were a study in themselves, apart from the evidence. Let the curtain fall here, however, unless they again raise it.

BACKED BY THE DEPARTMENT

A Bold Soldier Talks of Declaring War Against "Progress."

HALIFAX, Jan. 12.—Sometime ago, PROGRESS published a Halifax letter which gave an account of some of the alleged deeds or misdeeds of Lieut. MacGowan, of the Royal Artillery.

This was after Lieut. MacGowan had left for England whither he went on a two months leave of absence. Lieut. MacGowan since reaching the other side, has received an appointment as Adjutant of volunteers in the county of Norfolk. He will be located near Sandringham, the seat of the Prince of Wales.

Lieut. MacGowan was directed by the war department to bring a libel suit against PROGRESS for the publication of the article referred to and the matter is in the hands of a Halifax law firm.

[This would be an excellent advertisement for any newspaper, and when the war department and Lieut. McGowan are ready PROGRESS will also be prepared. It the details of half of the escapades of this precocious officer were printed there would not be room enough in a page of PROGRESS for them. What a picnic such a suit would be!]

Halifax Citizens Want Reform.

The Halifax Citizens Reform Association has formulated a scheme of reform in civic government. A statement is being made that Recorder MacCoy had a hand in framing the plan. That cannot surely be, and people hardly think it likely, for the story goes that when the draft left MacCoy's hands to go to Senator Parker for finishing touches and supervision there was a clause that the Recorder should perform the combined duties of his office and the stipendiary magistrates, for $3,200 per annum. When the bill had been printed by the Senator the salary for the new post was found by the public to be only $2,400. No one who knows Mr. MacCoy credits the story.

Won One Suit and Settled the Other.

PROGRESS did a partial injustice to Mr. Peters in its account of the city court suit in which he was plaintiff and Mr. A. H. Bell defendant, inasmuch as there were two suits instead of one, and in the first Mr. Peters obtained judgment, while in the second Mr. Bell's contra account was allowed with certain items—which Mr. Peters claimed were incorrect—thrown out. Mr. Bell paid the costs of the court, and the matter was settled at the suggestion of the magistrate.