The Colonist.

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ARREARS ON LAND SALES.

In the last issue of the Inland Sentinel, published at Kamloops, there is a letter from a settler making a bitter personal attack on the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works because that Department has taken the preliminary steps to carry out the provisions of the law in regard to the arrears due to the Government on sales of land. As the Hon. G. B. Martin represents the district in which the writer of the letter referred to may be supposed to live, it is possible that there may be some personal animus connected with the matter. We cannot but think so, because it would seem to be scarcely possible that anyone who has any knowledge of the Land Laws of the Province would write such a letter. In regard to some parts of it, the letter is so incoherent and disconnected that it is impossible to get at the meaning of the writer, references to loans and mortgages and mortgage companies being mixed up with comments on the Land Laws and strictures on the Chief Commissioner.

With those who are aware of the provisions of the Land Laws the statements contained in the letter will have no weight. But as there are many who are not in that position, the reckless and inaccurate statements in it may convey entirely erroneous ideas, both with regard to the provisions of the Land Laws and also to the manner in which the present Chief Commissioner is administering them. The dissemination of such inaccurate statements cannot but do harm, since they will foster the belief that the Provincial Laws in regard to the acquisition of land are harsh and unfavorable to settlers, whereas, in fact, they are extremely liberal, while in the administration of them the only fault has been that, in the past, the Land Department has been too indulgent with settlers who were in arrear with their payments.

The actual facts can be briefly stated. For years past there have been large numbers of pre-emptors and purchasers in arrears with the payments due on the lands taken up or bought by them. So lenient had the Land Department been that in some cases, we believe, the payments were ten or fifteen years in arrears. In consequence the amount overdue to the Government had become so large that in the session of 1895 the Legislature took action in regard to the matter. While desiring to afford every assistance to the settler and make the acquisition of his land as easy as possible, the Legislature realised that an end had to be put to the lax manner in which the amounts due on sales of land had been collected. In justice to those settlers who met their payments punctually, and to the general body of taxpayers who are compelled to pay their taxes, it was felt by members on both sides of the House that some definite action must be taken in regard to the arrears in the payments on land sales which had accumulated to such a large amount.

Although according to the law under which those in arrears had acquired their lands, nothing could have been said had the Legislature insisted upon summary steps being taken to collect the amounts overdue, nothing of the kind was done. On the contrary, recognizing the general commercial depression which then prevailed, the Legislature dealt with the subject in a manner very liberal and indulgent to the delinquents. They were to be allowed to pay the amount in "five equal annual instalments," the first instalment being due on December 31, 1895—about ten months after the passage of the Act—interest from the date of such Act to the time of payment of the instalment being charged at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum. In the same Act amendments were made to the existing law in regard to the terms on which land could be sold, with a view of requiring purchasers to observe, at least to some extent, contract conditions as they would be compelled to do were they made with private companies or individuals.

No reasonable person will find fault with the law as it now stands. There appear to be some people, however, who, because of the indulgence with which they have been treated in the past, seem to think that they should never be required to pay for their land. When it is stated that if the arrears due on sales of land were made up the government would receive a sum which would be equivalent to the capitalization of the whole tax on real property for a period of ten years, the importance of the matter will be understood. The majority of the settlers realizes that efforts must be made to meet these obligations, and no fault is found by them, either with the law or the manner in which it is administered. But from the letter to which we have referred, it is evident that there is a small class which, while seeking to shirk its just obligations, tries to create a false impression in regard to the action of the Land Department in endeavoring to carry out the law. It is necessary, therefore, to explain the situation and to point out that justice to the taxpayers in general requires that these delinquents shall comply with the reasonable conditions which the law imposes on them.

ENGLAND IN AFRICA.

Cecil Rhodes is in England. Whether or not he will ever be called upon to explain his connection and that of the chartered South African company with the Jameson raid seems at least open to doubt. An effort is being made in the American press to represent Rhodes as defying the imperial government and as only very thinly veiling his design to set up an independent republic in South Africa, but the wish is clearly the father to the thought in this instance. It is very evident, however, that the South African question is very far from being settled and it is difficult to see how it can be with anything short of British suzerainty over the whole regions south of the Zambesi; exclusive of German West Africa. This would involve the acquisition by Great Britain of the Portuguese territory which extends from the borders of Zululand north to the Zambesi and the extension of sovereign rights over the Orange Free State and the South African republic. It is not impossible that a plan for a South African federation might be formed, whereby these two independent states would retain their autonomy to a limited degree.

British South Africa now extends from the Cape to the southern portion of Lake Tanganyiki, or through 28 degrees of latitude; that is, it forms an area something like 2,600 miles in length from north to south. British East Africa extends as far into the interior as the longitude of Lake Tanganyiki, but is separated from the lake by a portion of German East Africa, the distance across German territory to the lake being about 200 miles. The Congo Free State also borders on the lake, and when it becomes necessary the British government will probably find no insuperable difficulty in obtaining a right of way from its South African domain to its possessions in East Africa. Now, British East Africa includes in a vague sort of way the whole of the Nile valley above a point four or five hundred miles higher up than Khartoum, and in the course of a very few months an Egyptian army, very largely aided by a British force, will advance up the Nile as far as Khartoum. It is hardly likely that Great Britain will conquer equatorial Africa simply to hand it over to Egypt. We may expect the forthcoming campaign to result in the extension of the British sphere of influence from British East Africa far enough north to encompass Abyssinia and reach the Red sea. This seems likely to be the outcome of the operations of 1897; whereby it will come about that the British flag will fly over a belt of territory extending from the Cape to the Red sea, with the exception of about 400 miles, where the territory of the Congo Free State intervenes.

The problem presented by West Equatorial Africa is more difficult. France, by reason of her possession of Algeria, claims a belt of territory extending across the Sahara to the Upper Niger, and would clearly like to extend her sovereignty all the way to the Gulf of Guinea, on the shore of which she already has a small piece of territory. But Great Britain is on the ground, and fortune has favored her so far that in the interests of humanity it has been found necessary to reduce a number of the native princes to vassalage. An expedition having for its object the conquest of Nupe in the lower Niger valley is now in progress, and we may hear at any time of the acquisition by Great Britain of all the region from the borders of Dahomey on the West to Lake Tchad on the East, thus cutting off the French from any chance of extending their possessions further South than they now reach. If this is accomplished there will remain an area, occupied by independent tribes and about a thousand miles wide, separating the British sphere of influence in West Equatorial Africa from British East Africa, and this gap would probably before long fall under the same control.

Thus it appears that the general tendency of the movements now on foot in Africa is towards the establishment of British power in Africa in the form of a huge territorial cross, the foot of which will rest on the Cape, and the top of which will be on the Red Sea, if not on the Mediterranean; one arm will reach the Indian Ocean at Mombassa and the other the Atlantic on the Guinea Coast. This cross will mean the salvation of the Dark Continent from slavery.

A PLEA FOR ENTHUSIASM.

Every man, woman and child in British Columbia ought to resolve that come what will, differ as they may on politics or anything else, they will stand shoulder to shoulder and work for the advancement of our magnificent province. That is the main plank in the COLONIST's platform. We have within the borders of this province a vast area, which for the diversity and immensity of its resources stands without a peer. These are strong words, but their employment is warranted.

No room for doubt exists about British Columbia's gold field being the most extensive in the world.

Our province has to all appearances as extensive and as rich deposits of silver as are anywhere to be found.

We have probably more merchantable timber than is to be found in one continuous body in any other country, except possibly Siberia, whose resources in this respect are yet unknown and are not available.

Our fisheries are unrivalled.

Our farming and grazing lands are very extensive.

Our coal mines are among the greatest in the world.

Our deposits of iron ore are large and valuable.

The geographical relation of the province to Asia makes its position in a commercial sense commanding.

Here is an interesting fact about our province which may surprise those who do not refer to the map in connection with their reading: Victoria, the most southerly point in this province, is only one and a half degrees north of the Russian city of Odessa on the Black Sea, while the northern boundary of the province, if prolonged would pass through St. Petersburg. In other words, the greater part of Russia's one hundred millions of people live in the latitude of British Columbia. This highly important fact ought not to be lost sight of, especially when we remember that while the steppes of Russia are exposed to the cold winds from the Polar regions, concerning whose effect in winter the story of the Crimean war bears bitter testimony, this province receives the full benefit of the genial atmospheric currents which have their origin over the China Sea.

Considerations of this character all calculated to arouse enthusiasm over the future of this province; they are calculated to inspire any man with a laudable ambition to aid in the realization of these matchless possibilities; they make the issues of personal politics seem mean and paltry.

The day will come when the wonderful promise of these things will be realized; but the COLONIST wants them to be realized as much as possible when those of us who are now living can have some of the advantages. "What's all the world to a man when his wife's a widow," says the old saying, and precious little good it will do us to-day to know that our posterity will doubtless see this province assume commercial and industrial proportions as imperial as its area. Prosperity and the development of our wealth are good things. Let us have our share of them. No matter how much we may enjoy them, there will be plenty left for those who come after us.

Therefore let us all enter upon a united campaign for provincial development with enthusiasm. Let us all uphold the provincial government in what it may feel able to recommend in this line. Let us all use our influence with the Dominion government to secure the recognition to which our province is entitled and the welfare of Canada demands it should receive. Let sectional jealousies be forgotten and the only rivalry be to see who can do the most to advance the interests of all.

Do you say that this is the language of enthusiasm? Well so it is, and that's just the way we feel.

FARMERS AND THE HOME MARKET.

The suggestion made by the COLONIST a few days ago in regard to farmers and the local market touched on the question of co-operation. Mr. Watson Clarke, of Victoria, in his admirable paper, read before the Dairymen's Association, spoke of one phase of the matter. We quote:

Look at the fine market hall, which at the present time is a white elephant to our city authorities, its income barely paying for the man to attend to it. I am sure the city would be only too glad to rent it at a nominal rent. Now, if the farmers would combine and rent this place they would have every opportunity of placing everything they grow direct before the consumers, and on this point we might be able to turn to a profit what has hitherto been a loss. I think you will all agree with me that the small losses of one thing or another which under present conditions cannot be helped, could by having a market of your own be turned into a very nice profit—I mean all kinds of small articles which will not pay to take to town separately, which could be easily sent in under combination rules, for you can all see that if one wagon could collect and take articles say from ten different places instead of hitching up ten teams there must be considerable saving. Our friends the fruitgrowers did try to make a start of something of the kind, and I was sorry to see they did not go on with it; at any rate I consider it a subject we might all take into consideration and discuss, and if it is considered worth while, why let us combine at once.

This is a matter of very great interest. A good country market is an excellent thing both for producers and consumers, as those who have resided in Eastern Canadian cities can testify. There is another matter that may be mentioned in this connection, namely, that the consumers might with advantage discriminate as far as possible in favor of domestic produce, but there is this, however, to be said, namely, that the local producers have a duty devolving upon them not to be overlooked. A very common complaint is that local farm produce is not as well put up as the imported. Looks count for much. Take a well-packed box of fruit and a poorly packed box, the former will sell the more readily even though its quality is not better than the latter. This is true of butter, of vegetables, of anything in fact that a farmer has to sell. The first appeal to a customer is through the eye.

What we would like to see inaugurated is a movement by producers and consumers to work in harmony; but to make such a movement a success there must be complete co-operation. The mere fact that a thing is produced in this province ought not to be relied upon as a reason for its purchase by our home people. It ought to be at least as good as the imported article, and we strongly urge that it should also be as well put up.

IN one of the letters written by Mr. Beckles Willson to the London Daily Mail is an interview with Mayor Robertson, of St. John, N.B., in which that gentleman is represented as complaining bitterly of Lord Ashburton for surrendering Portland, Me., to the Americans. Our recollection of the British claim, which the Ashburton treaty disposed of, is that it did not extend as far south as Portland, but followed the highlands which cross Maine a little north of the line of the Canadian Pacific. The wool was badly pulled over Ashburton's eyes, but not as badly as Mayor Robertson claims. The famous "red line" on the map which Daniel Webster kept carefully in his pocket during all the negotiations, for fear the British commissioners should get a sight of it, ran a very considerable distance north of Portland.

THE action of the Mayor in withdrawing the permit to the Chinese to set off firecrackers was prompt, and we regret to have to say very timely. Our regret is that a young life should have been crushed out to make the necessity for such an order apparent. No possible fault can be found with the Mayor, in issuing the permit in the first instance, and he is to be commended for his instant action in the premises, when it had been so sadly demonstrated that the practice was dangerous to life. The recommendation of the Coroner's Jury in regard to the use of firecrackers in the public streets ought to be acted on.

BRITISH imports from Canada increased 18.30 per cent. in 1896, but British exports to Canada fell off 61 per cent. This fact ought to set the tariff makers thinking. A country which buys an increasing amount of goods from us yearly, notwithstanding a decrease in our purchases from her, is one whose trade is worth cultivating above all others.

FRIENDS of Senator-elect Turner, of the state of Washington, and he has a good many in this province, will be interested to know that a report is in circulation in that state to the effect that the United States Senate will refuse to allow him to take his seat and will direct an investigation into the charges of bribery so freely made in connection with his election.

THE course of the Chinese residents of Victoria in presenting an address of condolence to Mrs. Auld because of the death of her son, the immediate cessation of their holiday celebration and their very liberal contribution to the burial expenses of the unfortunate lad will commend themselves to the community.

WE are inclined to think that the statements attributed to Dr. Selwyn, in regard to gold mining in Canada, hardly reflect his true opinions. Mr. Cuthbert in to-day's COLONIST shows that Dr. Selwyn a very short time ago held very different views from those which he is now represented as expressing.

THE CANADIAN PRESS.

THE RAILROAD SITUATION.

Everything indicates that the activity of three great transcontinental lines to secure a foothold in the Kootenays has reached a point that definite action may be expected any day. The key to the situation apparently is in the possession of the Corbin railway system. The road that secures it will at once obtain a hold in the Kootenays that will be difficult to duplicate, and even if that hold can be duplicated it can only be done after much loss of time and by the selection of less desirable routes. The company that can secure the Corbin system must contemplate the construction of the Crow's Nest Pass road, not only because that extension will open up an only partially developed but rich mining district, but because the great coal fields there will furnish an enormous volume of traffic.—Rossland Record.

THE DAY OF BETTER THINGS.

The assured feeling of confidence in the approach of a period of great progress and prosperity for Canada which inspires people at the present time with enterprise and energy has very sound causes in the discovery of new and rich mineral resources, the revival of good times for wheat growers and butter producers, and the fine prospect of the flow of a tide of capital and emigration to this country, partly as a result of these improved circumstances and partly owing to the fact that the United States is closing its doors to emigrants.—Montreal Witness.

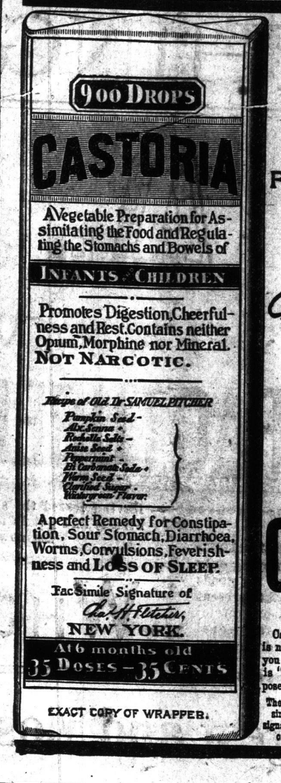
BY WAY OF VARIETY.

Mrs. Crimsonbeak (as her husband comes in late at night)—"What does the clock say, John?" Mr. Crimsonbeak (with difficulty)—"Nothing, madam, nothing. It's got sense enough to say nothing."—Yonkers Statesman.

"Doesn't your daughter dance?" inquired the hostess. The lady addressed looked around at the tall, anæmic girl leaning against the wall. "Not unless she's asked," she somewhat frigidly replied.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Old Friend—"Was that 'Richard III, Up-to-Date' you were playing in the West a farce?" Vernonbe Hamham (indignantly)—"No! We just couldn't raise any historic costume; but we all had dress suits, so we wore them."—Puck.

A Protest: First Politician—What does this mean? It says here the United States might use its offices to settle the trouble in Cuba. Second Politician—Use its offices? Say, some folks must think this country has offices to burn!—Puck.



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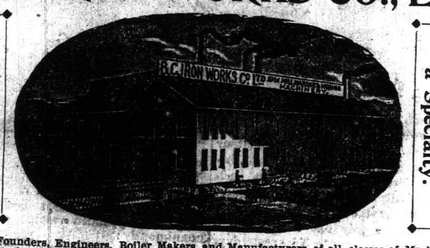

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