

The Colonist.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 1898.

THAT INTERVIEW.

The Times professes to give the facts relating to the interview with the Lieutenant-Governor published in the Colonist of the 9th inst. It says: The facts about that "interview," or "those interviews," as the Colonist would have it, are these: On the 8th inst., a member of the Colonist staff, who is also secretary of the B. C. Rifle Association, called upon His Honor, who, as is well known, is an enthusiastic rifle man, in relation to the selection of a captain for the Ottawa rifle team. The Colonist reporter was at Government House ostensibly on business connected with the rifle association, but he casually asked the Lieutenant-Governor if he had anything to say as to the dismissal. The Lieutenant-Governor replied that he had nothing to say, but the Colonist had nothing to say as to the dismissal. That was all; that was the basis of the Colonist's "interview." There was no second interview two days after, or at any time after, and it is the foregoing remark of His Honor the Colonist "worked up" into an "interview" and commented upon, editorially, as an "extraordinary act on the part of the Lieutenant-Governor." Malevolence, meanness and falsehood could go no farther in the attempt to injure the object of their animosity. The Lieutenant-Governor cannot enter into a discussion with the Colonist as to the alleged "interview," or he would put the Colonist right very quickly. The glaring inconsistency of which our morning contentment can be guilty is shown by the editorial remark this morning: "His Honor did perfectly right in granting an interview with a reporter. Perhaps this member, after commenting editorially: "It was an extraordinary act of His Honor to grant an interview with a reporter." There was, to start with, no "interview;" just a surreptitious remark smuggled in by a reporter during a consultation upon another matter altogether; a plain answer, incapable of any other interpretation than the simple statement bore upon its face. The Colonist, editorial comments, ditto, ditto. There is the whole thing in a nutshell, and the people can judge for themselves whether there is any danger of the noble line of Annanias falling for want of heirs made in this portion of the "Times" columns. But the Lieutenant-Governor should take a lenient view of the Colonist, for it hath fallen upon the Colonist and neither from the present posture of affairs nor from the omens of the times to come can it gather any comfort for its chastened soul. Perhaps this may explain the Colonist's remark this morning that British Columbia governments are not long lived. Fifteen years is a fairly long life for any government, but if the Colonist is content to pass that as short we have no grumble, for we predict without hesitation that will be full fifteen years before the party "represented" by the Colonist will be in a position to give the "Times" any more again and necessary in the interests of the people to "turn it down."

The actual facts of the case are as follows: On the evening of August 8th Mr. C. H. Gibbons, city editor of the Colonist, in pursuance of an engagement made by telephone, went to Government House to see the Lieutenant-Governor. He first met the private secretary and had a short conversation with him. He was then shown into a room, where the Lieutenant-Governor was seated, with a gentleman, whose name we have not permission to use. That gentleman at once rose and offered to retire. The Lieutenant-Governor said there was no necessity of his doing so, and Mr. Gibbons said that all he had to ask he could as well ask before the visitor as not, and the visitor remained. And Mr. Gibbons had a conversation with the Lieutenant-Governor, and the interview published on the morning of August 9th was the result. On the evening of August 9th—that is, on the evening after Mr. Gibbons' interview was published, Mr. Taylor, night editor of the Colonist, received a telephonic message asking him to go to Government House on Rifle Association business. He went up and saw the Governor on that business, and then referred to the interview published in the Colonist, and asked him "if he wished to make any addition or explanation," to which the Governor replied in substance that he had said "I" he wanted to, but there was a statement in what the Colonist had printed, which he did not specify, which "was rather stronger than what he had said, but he did not wish to say anything about it."

The foregoing statement is literally true, and can be established, not only by the evidence of Messrs. Gibbons and Taylor, but by other proof, if necessary. It has never been the misfortune of the Colonist to have to deal with so gross a case of lying as that above quoted from the Times, and we confess to be at a loss for words to characterize it. To illustrate the total disregard which the Times has for the truth, reference may be made to its alleged quotations from the Colonist in the above extract. One would infer from it that the Colonist claimed to have had "another interview two days after" the first. What the Colonist said was that "when another member of the Colonist staff had a conversation with him, he referred to the interview, etc." Care was taken not to describe Mr. Taylor's call upon the Lieutenant-Governor as an interview, for it was not. When he started for Government House, Mr. Gibbons asked him to see if the Lieutenant-Governor wished to say anything more, but as His Honor did not, there was no interview, or attempt at one. Again, the Times alleges that the Colonist said editorially that "it was an extraordinary act of His Honor to grant an interview with a reporter." We find no such statement, or anything resembling it, in the Colonist. The Colonist was mistaken in saying that Mr. Taylor saw the Governor two days after Mr. Gibbons. It was the next day. But it is an odd saying, and a true one, that liars should have long memories.

On August 11th, the Times published an alleged interview with the Private Secretary. In that interview the Private Secretary is represented as saying: "His Honor had nothing to say for publication and anything which had been published purporting to be an interview with him was dignifying a single remark made in the presence of others, with a name it did not deserve. He had seen a reporter for a moment, one having stood at the door of the room in which His Honor was conversing with two gentlemen, and told the Governor that Mr. Turner said the letter received by him was not a dismissal, to which His Honor replied that, although courteous, the letter could have no other construction." This only bears out the account of the interview given by Mr. Gibbons, although it is not correct when it represents that he stood at the door while the Lieutenant-Governor was talking with two other gentlemen. Mr. Gibbons was invited into the room, asked to take a seat, did so, and conversed with the Lieutenant-Governor for some little time. We do not believe that the Times correctly reported what the Private Secretary said. What the Times now says about the reporter calling on Mr. Rifle Association business is wholly incompatible with what on August 11th it represented the Private Secretary as saying.

The Times gives its falsehood wholly away while telling it. Referring to Mr. Taylor's visit to Government House, it says that he asked the Governor "if he had anything further to say." This is perfectly correct. Mr. Taylor asked if the Colonist had already printed an interview with His Honor. What could the word "further" mean, unless it referred to something already said? In reply to Mr. Taylor's question, the Lieutenant-Governor replied, according to the statement of the Times, that he had not, and that the Colonist had made too strong what had been said, an expression which would mean nothing at all, if the Lieutenant-Governor, as the Times now alleges. These are very nearly the exact words used by the Lieutenant-Governor, as was stated in the Colonist yesterday, and as is set out above. The lie of the Times is a very clumsy one, but is quite characteristic.

The object of the Times in printing these falsehoods is, if possible, to get the Colonist to lay them at the door of the Lieutenant-Governor, and thereby strengthen the efforts which the political parties surrounding it are making to get Lieutenant-Governor McInnes's official seal. But the Colonist does not hold the Lieutenant-Governor responsible in any way for them. They are the invention, the clumsy and despicable invention of a dumsy and despicable newspaper.

LET THE CORRESPONDENCE BE PRINTED.

We think we demonstrated very clearly yesterday that the one of our correspondents who had written a letter to the Lieutenant-Governor, and thereby warranted the late ministers in making public all the facts leading up to their dismissal, and we know that we have given all the grounds upon which the Lieutenant-Governor acted. But notwithstanding this knowledge, it is desirable that the correspondence should be made public, and to avoid wrangling over a side issue, it ought to be printed with the consent of the Government. It is not desirable that little men and little newspapers should have any excuse to distract attention by raising a row over a point in official etiquette, when a great question touching the very essence of responsible government is to be decided.

We are glad that the matter has reached that stage when the retention of the correspondence from the public, if it is retained, is not only involuntarily but directly chargeable to the new government. As we have already shown, the Lieutenant-Governor has made no attempt to conceal anything. If he is open to any criticism at all on this point it is because he has been more outspoken than is customary. The responsibility for concealment rests with his present advisers. The News-Advertiser, which not only speaks the sentiments of the Finance Minister, but obtains its political editorials directly from his pen, has expressly declared that it rests wholly with the present advisers of the Lieutenant-Governor to say whether or not the correspondence shall be published at any time. This is a matter of such extreme importance, not only in the present connection, but as establishing a precedent for the guidance of future lieutenant-governors and ministers, that it is worthy of being discussed at considerable detail.

Under our institutions the people are the last court of resort on all constitutional questions. The courts of justice have nothing to do with these. Parliament only disposes of them temporarily. The people alone are competent to determine them finally. The sooner, therefore, his representative has just such rights, and no others as the people are content that he shall exercise.

The ordinary way in which disputed questions on this point are settled is by the vote of the people at a general election; but other means have been at times found necessary. It took an executioner's axe to convince the Sturats that the people had some rights which they were bound to respect, but even then they learned the lesson so badly that it was necessary to send for William of Orange to instruct the last of that house, and every one else, that in British realms the people are the masters, that kings reign but do not govern. We do not cut off the heads of intractable rulers now-days, and only rarely has it been found necessary to talk rebellion; but it must

not be forgotten that there is one inherent right in every British subject, a right of which he cannot be deprived by any power, namely the divine right of resistance. There are men living yet who learned what this means at the feet of such great champions as Baldwin, Lafontaine, Howe and Wilmot, and this province needs the inspiration which animated those fathers of responsible government in Canada.

We have said that the people are the last court of resort for the settlement of constitutional questions. This is apt to be forgotten for the reason that, if a lieutenant-governor does anything that seems unwarranted, there at once springs up a demand for his removal, and people look to Ottawa for that redress which they have in their own hands. It is perfectly proper to bring up the conduct of a lieutenant-governor by means of a resolution of the federal parliament; but this is not only the sole way of doing so, but it is the least satisfactory way. It leaves a question of local politics, something touching the people of a single province, at the mercy of a party majority in parliament, which majority may be made up wholly of members from other provinces. For example, supposing the late action of Lieutenant-Governor McInnes is brought up in parliament and is made a party question, a matter specially touching the welfare of the people of this province, and absolutely out of academic interest to any of the other provinces, would be disposed of chiefly by the vote of Quebec. Moreover, any action which the federal ministry might take would not remedy the wrong done. It would only prevent a repetition of it, just as the decapitation of Charles I. prevented him from doing any more mischief. A wrong has been done to the people of British Columbia, and the people of British Columbia must redress that wrong in the constitutional way—that is at the ballot box.

The right of the people to settle these matters does not rest on theory alone. In the case of Governor James Burton of New Brunswick, a memorial was laid at the foot of the throne complaining that he had violated constitutional usage; but it was never considered, for the reason that at the elections, which followed after the forced dissolution, the people endorsed the act of the governor. Here is a precedent which establishes the proposition that the governor will not investigate the constitutionality of an act, if the people have endorsed it. In view of the fact that the people of British Columbia should be informed, in the most definite manner possible, of the reasons which led up to the dismissal of the late minister, so that they can intelligently pronounce upon them. It is obvious that if the contentions of the News-Advertiser is correct and the correspondence between the Lieutenant-Governor and his late advisers can only be made public by permission of his present advisers, it might never be made public at all. It is true that some one might make a hammer and a pound or two of spikes. The man should take the hammer and the spikes and walk along the plank side of the project, and fastening down the planks which are loose. The Colonist saw a lady going home the other day with about three yards of lace dragging behind her. It was doubtless a case of a projecting nail and a pretty petticoat. It was certainly a case for indignation at the city authorities on the part of the lady. On another occasion I saw a young fellow, driving down the spikes which his companion stepped upon the end of a loose plank. The Recording Angel has stopped registering the profanity of the male sex caused by torn boots and ugly tumblers. The hour for this reform has come. Where is the man? Likewise where are the hammer and the spikes?

Eastern papers of both sides of politics express the hope that the reports of maladministration in the Yukon are grossly exaggerated. We most sincerely hope they are, but believe that the statements printed in the Colonist over the signature of H. S. White may be relied upon implicitly. In his private letters Mr. White says that he understates the case.

LEGALIZED VANDALISM. A correspondent writes to the Colonist concerning the destruction of a fine oak tree on one of the residence streets, which was cut down because an electric wire would otherwise have to run among the branches. As the city owns the electric light plant, this piece of vandalism was legal. It is not the more excusable. In other cities there is a heavy penalty upon those persons who cut down shade trees growing on the streets. Here it is a civic virtue to cut them down. It appears that the city administration is hostile to shade trees, and is by means of the law, and everything else which makes the town beautiful. The civic idea of beauty is a dreary street without a bit of foliage flanked by sidewalks three feet wide and out of repair, with a general assortment of stones of various sizes, old newspapers, empty oil cans, pieces of rotten wood taken out when sidewalks are repaired and, in winter, mud puddles of various dimensions ornamenting the roadway. Open ditches along the sidewalk, smelling like cesspools, with whirlwind clouds of dust in the air, further enhance the scenic effects. Then we tell each other as we wipe the dust out of our eyes, stumble over a broken piece of plank or hold our noses to keep out some stench, that the future of Victoria is a residential city, and there is nothing anywhere on this side of the planet half so beautiful. Victoria is unquestionably the most beautiful city in America, and the best of what man and the corporation have done to what God and Nature have provided. When you turn and look the other way—well, the least said about that is the best.

In regard to trees in the streets, we understand that an impression prevails in certain high circles that if every tree could be cut down. In some mysterious way trees are supposed to prevent the making of good streets, though why this consideration, if it were well-founded, should have any weight in Victoria, we are at a loss to know. Some opportunities for observation on this point have not led the Colonist to think that shade trees make bad streets. We have in mind a few cities, where there are beautiful rows of shade trees and yet excellent streets. The desirability of permitting shade trees to remain in business streets may be open to question; but there is no part of Victoria across James Bay or east of Douglas St., except the end of the extremely narrow streets, where shade trees would not be a great ornament and a positive advantage. Instead of cutting down shade trees, the city authorities ought to encourage property owners to set them out; but if this is too much to expect, let us hope there will be no more of such legalized vandalism as our correspondent complains of.

If it had passed it probably would not have come to anything, nevertheless Mr. Kellie's motion, made in the session of 1897, asking that the Yukon should be annexed to British Columbia, was right in principle. If the Yukon were in British Columbia the Klondike discoveries would have been published to the world as being in British Columbia, and this would have been connected with them in every one's mind. Furthermore, being in British Columbia, one would have imagined that they were in Alaska, and hence no one would have gone to American cities to outfit. Then the administration of the mining laws would have been more satisfactory, and the province would have had a handsome revenue. Mr. Kellie did not foresee all these things. He was endeavoring to build more wisely than he knew; but it is right to remind the public how very near to being a statesman the member for Kootenay came on that occasion. If he could have had his will the name of Kellie would have done splendidly for generations to come, with never a flicker.

One of the most important reforms that can be inaugurated in this city at the present time calls for a man, a hammer and a pound or two of spikes. The man should take the hammer and the spikes and walk along the plank side of the project, and fastening down the planks which are loose. The Colonist saw a lady going home the other day with about three yards of lace dragging behind her. It was doubtless a case of a projecting nail and a pretty petticoat. It was certainly a case for indignation at the city authorities on the part of the lady. On another occasion I saw a young fellow, driving down the spikes which his companion stepped upon the end of a loose plank. The Recording Angel has stopped registering the profanity of the male sex caused by torn boots and ugly tumblers. The hour for this reform has come. Where is the man? Likewise where are the hammer and the spikes?

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FREE GOVERNMENT AT STAKE. The Times admits that the Colonist has correctly given the reasons which influenced the Lieutenant-Governor in dismissing his ministers. We were quite aware that the reasons were correct, but it is especially satisfactory to receive corroboration, especially from a government organ. One of the reasons was the action of the government in regard to the Redistribution bill. Let us follow this admission to its logical conclusion. The Redistribution bill was introduced by a message from the Lieutenant-Governor, showing that he knew of its contents and approved of them; it was altered in the particular at the suggestion of the Lieutenant-Governor; it was passed by the government; it was assented to by the Lieutenant-Governor; an election was held under it, and the government was sustained, thereby showing that the people in the only manner known to the constitution approved of the bill. 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