

The Colonist.

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1899.

A PROTEST.

We do not know who was responsible for the statement made on Deadman's Island that if the men did not cease cutting timber in 30 minutes the officers would shoot them down, but we wish to enter an emphatic protest against this being regarded as a lawful threat. We know that in the Western states an idea prevails that an officer of the law has a right to shoot persons who venture to disobey his orders. In consequence of this men have been killed, when the only offense against the law of which they had been guilty was something punishable by a trivial fine. "The gun" is not a process known to British law, and we object most strongly to anything calculated to give a contrary impression.

A question was raised in the Maritime provinces some years ago as to the right of penitentiary guards to shoot an escaping prisoner, who ran away one day when at work with some others outside of the penitentiary grounds. Fortunately, the man was not hit, but the question was raised as to the right of a guard to endeavor to shoot him. There was no legal decision on the point, for the matter did not come into court, but the best opinion was that the guard had no right to sentence the escaping prisoner to death, and inflict the penalty with his own hands.

We are far from saying that cases do not arise where an officer is justified in using force, even to the extent of causing the death of a person under arrest or seeking to avoid arrest; but we do say that every other expedient ought first to be exhausted. But some will say that unless the officer making the arrests at Deadman's Island had been authorized to shoot he would have been unable to stop the work. Let that be granted. It would have been his duty in such a case to withdraw and return with sufficient force to render resistance useless. What is the Posse Comitatus for if not to overawe those who propose to resist the execution of the process of the courts. But we shall not argue the matter any further. Our only desire is to enter an emphatic protest against the introduction of "gun law" into British Columbia.

MR. MARTIN'S POSITION.

Even Attorney-General Martin himself must feel that he has made a very serious blunder in the Deadman's Island affair, and it is said that in politics a blunder is worse than a crime. When the Colonist drew Mr. Martin's attention to his anomalous position it was met with the curtest possible reply, and more than one of the newspapers which support him expressed the view that "the Colonist had even then" been treated much better than it deserved. We are not now concerned specially with any differences which may exist between Mr. Martin and his colleagues, nor with the manner in which he and Mr. Cotton will settle their differences before the electors of Vancouver. Our business is with Mr. Martin, the first law officer of the crown in British Columbia, the person to whom the people of this province look first for the protection of their rights. It is immaterial that he is now acting on behalf of the province, and displaying an amount of zeal suggestive of a desire to cover up his previous actions. If he had done his duty in the first place all the unpleasantness attending Mr. Ladgate's arrest would never have occurred.

It was clearly Mr. Martin's duty as attorney-general, when he heard that the Dominion government had granted Mr. Ladgate a lease, to inquire as to the rights of the province to the premises. We suppose there was not a man in the province, professional or layman, who gave the subject a moment's serious consideration, without the question arising in his mind as to how the Dominion obtained any right to deal with the matter at all. It was certainly Mr. Martin's business to think of this. That is the sort of work he is paid for. Instead of this, we find him championing the claims of the Dominion lessee, and either fully abstaining or wholly neglecting to examine into the rights of the province, leaving his duty in this regard to be performed by one of his colleagues, who is not a lawyer. We have him, even after the right of the province has been asserted in spite of his neglect, continuing to act against the interests of the province, until he found himself forced to choose between doing his duty and resigning his office. Then we see him taking the most extreme course known to the law, and his officers threatening to constitute themselves judges, jurors and executioners, and shoot down anyone who refused to obey his orders in his new capacity.

We ask the people of British Columbia if their interests can be regarded as safe in the hands of such a man. We say without fear of successful contradiction that this Deadman's Island affair shows Mr. Martin to be unfit to be entrusted with the responsible position of attorney-general. His conduct in this regard is the culmination of a series of extraordinary acts, exhibiting such recklessness, wrong-headedness and disregard of public opinion that his continuance in office is a grave scandal. His arbitrary conduct towards the whole public service, his usurpation of the discretion vested in the ancient and honorable office of coroner, his interference with the provincial police in defiance of all the lessons taught by the experience of years, his hasty and blundering legislation, his coarse, vulgar and tyrannical

conduct toward members of the legislature, and his utter disregard of public opinion stamp him as a dangerous man, whose presence in a government is a source of peril to the best interests of the province.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Scarcely a letter appears in the Colonist in regard to either of the proposed improvements now attracting public attention but some one asks why the writer did not sign his name. We think it would be well if every one who writes on these subjects would append his signature to his letter for publication. It is really the only fair plan. We have in mind one letter, the writer of which was as wholly independent of the project which he advocated as any can be, whose interests, indeed, lie wholly in another direction. His letter was criticized because it was said to have been inspired by the promoters of one of the projects. This is apt to be the case with all anonymous writers, so that justice is done to the writers as well as to the promoters. Some people hesitate about writing over their own signatures, because they are not property holders. This is not a valid reason. It is a most absurd notion to suppose that the only people who are interested in the proposed improvements are the property holders, or that the only persons whose opinions are of value are those who happen to own a piece of land. We urge that all letters be over the names of the writers, but we do not wish to be understood as declining to publish any that are not.

CURRENT COMMENT.

The situation in the Philippines leads the Revelstoke Herald to remark that Spain did a pretty good stroke of business when she sold that "bunch of belligerency" for \$20,000,000.

The Columbian recommends Deadman's Island as a health resort to Mr. Tarte. We doubt its advantages in this line. That island is likely to prove mightily unhealthy for politicians.

The Kootenay Mail thinks the first step towards securing better treatment for British Columbia is to get a representative for Kootenay in parliament. Well, as this is not likely to be done this year, will not our contemporary take up the financial aspect of the matter? This is the chief thing to be discussed now.

The Spokesman-Review thinks that Spokane is to be the metropolis of the Northwest, and gives as the chief factor in bringing about such a result the immense mining area tributary to it. The greater part of the area so described is in British Columbia. We are not envious of Spokane's future, but at the same time would like to see Canadians bestir themselves so as to hold the trade of their own country.

The Kootenaiian says that June 12th will see many of the mines of that district closed down because of the operation of the eight-hour law, which it says is "an infringement of private rights and liberties, and a treacherous attack upon those who have in good faith invested money in mines." Our contemporary thinks there should be an immediate dissolution of the legislature. If the legislature is to be dissolved every time the legislation permitted by the present government is found unworkable or injurious to the country, we will have elections once a week.

The Nelson Miner thinks the conduct of Mr. Martin in the Deadman's Island matter "if not scandalous is too perilously close to it to be satisfactory to the people whom Mr. Martin as minister is supposed to serve." The Miner then refers to Mr. Pooley's connection with an E. & N. lawsuit, and while admitting that it does not know if there was any impropriety in this, says that the discussion shows how much better it would be if the ministers would devote themselves to the public duties they are paid to perform. But it so happens that Mr. Pooley was not at the time paid to perform any public duties. He was an unsalaried member of the Executive, and no one will pretend that he ought to have given up his private practice.

The withdrawal of Thomas B. Reed from politics will have an important influence upon the United States House of Representatives. Mr. Reed was Speaker of that body for three terms, and he succeeded in centering in his office a degree of authority quite unlike that ever enjoyed by any of his predecessors, and radically different to that exercised by the Speakers of British legislatures. In the latter, the Speaker is supposed to be strictly a non-partisan presiding officer. He is the nominee of the party in power, but is supposed to know no distinction between parties in the exercise of his duties, and the cases are exceptional where he disappoints what is expected of him in this regard. Mr. Reed, however, converted the Speakership into a partisan office, and virtually made it the seat of a party dictator. A man of great ability and impressive presence, he was able to do this to a degree which those who are only accustomed to the parliamentary customs of the British Empire can hardly appreciate.

Referring to the concession for the erection of a grand stand in Beacon Hill park for the benefit of those desiring to sit down during the fireworks display on the Twenty-Fourth, it may be well to mention that grave doubt exists as to the right of the City Council to give any such permission or the right of the holder of the privilege to collect any charge from persons occupying the stand.

THE HARBOR SCHEME.

We are not much impressed with the prospect of determining much of value regarding the bottom of Victoria harbor by an expenditure of \$250. We make no objection to the outlay, but seriously suppose any one would expect any investigation, costing so small an amount, to establish anything. Those who have recommended the outlay doubtless have their own ideas as to what can be learned in this way, and we repeat that the Colonist does not wish to be understood as saying anything against it. Our only point is that such an investigation cannot be anything like conclusive, owing to the irregular nature of the rock formation in this part of the harbor. If the rock beneath the surface is anything like the outcroppings, only a very elaborate series of boring can give anything resembling a correct approximation of what will be disclosed when the harbor is drained.

Is not the first thing to be ascertained the relation in which the Dominion government will stand towards the harbor? Mr. Sorby is to go to Ottawa in a few days, we understand, unless the absence of Mr. Tarte from the capital renders a postponement of the trip advisable. Very much will depend upon the manner in which his project is received there. If it meets with a favorable reception, doubtless one of the first things which the government would direct would be an examination of the harbor for the purposes of deciding upon the feasibility of the scheme and its probable cost. We think matters should be brought to a head in this regard at the earliest possible date. It is not proposed that the city shall undertake it irrespective of anything the Dominion may do. Therefore the citizens ought to know as soon as possible whether the Dominion will do anything and if so what. If Mr. Sorby meets with a negative response, we may dismiss the scheme for the present from consideration. For this reason we think that even if Mr. Tarte's absence may be regarded as a difficulty in the way, Mr. Sorby ought to go to the capital, unless he is advised that his trip at this time would be altogether useless.

THE TIDE OF IMMIGRATION.

A very strong tide of immigration is now setting towards Canada. We could wish that a greater proportion of the new-comers were from the Mother Country, but people are not emigrating from the United Kingdom in the same numbers as formerly. Canada has so vast an area that if we were to decide upon waiting until its unoccupied land could be settled by English-speaking folk, many generations would elapse before any proportionately notable progress could be made. We think, however, that if there is to be assisted immigration, it should be confined to people of our own nationality. To extend aid to enable people from Continental Europe to come to Canada is likely to result in our obtaining inferior representatives of the several races.

Immigration into the United States not only led to the great increase of the population, but also of the national wealth, for nearly every immigrant brought some means with him. This will always be the case with unassisted immigration, except of course those people who come out in the hope of getting work in the cities or the various mining sections. Canada does not need any immigration of this kind, for the labor market is already well supplied, any deficiency arising from time to time being readily made up from those who come to the country unassisted. Now that the tide has set in our direction, we may reasonably expect it to continue, and to include people of some means, that is to say with enough added to give them a start in their new homes. This is the class needed, and so that they come we ought not to be particular as to whence they come. Every facility ought to be put in the way of desirable immigrants from all parts of the world, but government aid ought, we repeat, to be confined to those of our own nationality.

Some fear is expressed that Canada may not be able to assimilate the heterogeneous mass which is likely to come to her shores, but we have little fear on this score. It will take a little longer to do this with such people as Galicians and Doukhobors than it does with Scandinavians, for the latter are of the same blood and almost the same traditions as ourselves, but we do not despair of seeing even the races mentioned becoming in a short time thoroughly Canadian. It is an experiment, but one that can hardly be avoided, for we have come to a stage in our history when it will not be necessary much longer to persuade people to come to Canada.

There is a class of immigrants of whom we may expect more and more from year to year, namely, people from the farming communities of the Western States. Many of these are native-born Americans and from American families, but a very considerable proportion will be of Scandinavian origin. The latter will adapt themselves to Canadian conditions with wonderful celerity. As a rule, they have a keen sense for politics, and they will be quick to learn the excellence of our institutions. They will make valuable citizens, and none will be more loyal. Throughout the Western States there are hundreds of thousands of Scandinavians and their descendants, who will not hesitate to change their allegiance if they think they can secure homes under the British flag. There is also likely to be a considerable addition to our population from the ranks of what are called native Americans. This will be caused by the shortage of good land available for homesteading. These people will be desirable immigrants. It is quite a mistake to suppose, as some

do, that they will favor the annexation of Canada to the United States. With some little experience among American settlers in Canada, we have failed to observe any special feeling in that direction. The American experiment in popular government has not been such an unalloyed success that every one who has experienced its workings is enamored of it. The native American would not be long in Canada without finding out that under British institutions life, liberty and property are as safe as in the United States, that popular government is as truly worked out here as there, and that there is really more individual independence.

So we are prepared to welcome immigrants no matter whence they come, so long as they are of a nationality which conforms to our civilization, our social customs and our political ideas.

DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE.

Occasionally we find the defence of the Empire discussed in British and Colonial newspapers, and there is considerable divergence of opinion as to the part the Colonies ought to take in bearing the burden. It has been pointed out that the example of Cape Colony is open to a serious and fundamental objection. The Cape has undertaken to give a certain sum of money every year, but if this plan were generally adopted and the several portions of the Empire were to agree to pay a certain proportion of the expense of maintaining the Imperial armament every year, and were not to have a voice in its expenditure, the case would be one of taxation without representation, which is foreign to the Imperial system as now understood. It is wholly right that each portion of the Empire ought to bear a part of the cost of protection from foreign foes, and we believe the several portions of the Empire should be agreed to pay a certain proportion of the expense of maintaining the Imperial armament every year, and were not to have a voice in its expenditure, the case would be one of taxation without representation, which is foreign to the Imperial system as now understood. It is wholly right that each portion of the Empire ought to bear a part of the cost of protection from foreign foes, and we believe the several portions of the Empire should be agreed to pay a certain proportion of the expense of maintaining the Imperial armament every year, and were not to have a voice in its expenditure, the case would be one of taxation without representation, which is foreign to the Imperial system as now understood. 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