

SOME CRITICISMS.

The organ of the Opposition naively remarks that "Mr. Laurier naturally does not feel obliged to supply his hearers with intelligence." No one imagines that the leader of the Liberals possesses any such power. What Mr. Laurier does is to presume on the want of intelligence of his hearers. He takes for granted that they have not intelligence enough to distinguish between declamation and argument, between a definite statement and an ambiguous expression. It is somewhat unfortunate for the Times that the weakness of the Opposition leader on the trade question and his shiftness on the school question have been remarked by the most able journalists both of the West and the East. Our readers have seen what the Winnipeg Now-Wester thinks of the position which Mr. Laurier takes on the trade question, and the following are part of the Montreal Gazette's comments on that gentleman's Winnipeg utterances on the same subject:

Mr. Laurier is held by his friends to be a master of words, but sometimes words obtain mastery over him. In his great speech at Winnipeg he summed up the policy of the Liberal party as consisting in "freedom in religion, thought, speech, action, trade and commercial life." This sounds well, but what does it mean, and wherein does it distinguish the Liberal party from any other body of men? What relation has this declaration to the live questions of Dominion politics? In Canada, to-day a man can believe as he likes, think as he likes, speak as he likes, so as he likes, and like, repeat as he likes, so as he likes, always presuming, of course, that he keeps within the limits of the law. The laws of Canada give as much freedom as those of any other country, and with respect to religion, thought, speech and action, Mr. Laurier proposes no change. The greatest part of the programme of the Liberal party turns out, on examination, to be more verbal surplusage than anything else. It is a phrase, but it means nothing. When it has been dissolved in the crucible of common sense all that remains on the most generous allowance, is the term "freedom of trade." Now what does this resolve amount to? As a phrase it sounds well, but what does it mean? Free trade in its absolute sense does not exist in any civilized country. Every government has some sort of a tariff. It lays to the merchandise a tax, and such and such commodities, you must pay such and such duties. The British Government, from which the Liberals profess to take their ideas, imposes duties on tea, coffee, wine, spirits and tobacco, and failing to obtain sufficient revenue from those imports, makes up the deficiency by death duties and income tax. Is this the "free trade" Mr. Laurier proposes for Canada? Every country has a tariff, and the manner of raising it is a very fitting matter of discussion; but on this point Mr. Laurier has not a word to say.

We need not remind our readers that the Gazette is admitted to be one of the ablest newspapers of Eastern Canada. Of course our neighbor, in its country-dwelling style, can condemn these newspapers for their "stupidity." But live journals that are in the foremost rank in the Dominion have not attained the position they occupy by displays of stupidity. They are not stupid, but discerning and sagacious. They have no difficulty in seeing, as all intelligent men must see, that Mr. Laurier occupies as untenable a position to-day on the trade question as he and his party did not long ago when they made first, commercial union with the United States, and afterwards unrestricted reciprocity the main feature of their policy. Then protectionist America was their trade "ideal." They would assimilate the tariff of Canada with that of the United States and treat Old England as one of the outside barbarians. To-day having boxed the whole tariff compass, the Liberals have made English free trade their ideal. But it must be remembered that it is to continue an ideal no one can tell how long. In the meantime customs duties must contribute as large a proportion to the revenue as they do now. The truth is that when it comes down to particulars Mr. Laurier is on the trade question completely at sea. It is only when he gives trouble some details a wide berth and deals in safe generalities, that he gives his readers the flashes of eloquence for which he is celebrated. But eloquence does not go far in purely business matters.

OUR STAND.

The Times writes us on the result of the Waterworks by-law election. The Times is welcome to its view. We are fully convinced that all that we said on the subject were perfectly right, and if the vote had been five times as large as it was, we would not dream of taking back a single sentence that appeared in our columns on the subject. Our contention was that the Corporation are not justified in expending so large a sum as \$150,000 on the Elk Lake works and watershed, without first getting an opinion on the whole subject of the water supply from a competent authority. We know that we took the proper stand, and we are quite satisfied that the day is not far distant when the majority of the rate-payers, and even the Times itself, will be constrained to admit that this was the case.

It seems altogether impossible for our contemporary to consider any question on its merits. The habit has of dragging into a discussion false and irrelevant issues appears to be inveterate. It says "they" ("the people") declared plainly on the one hand that they were satisfied with the Council's plan, and on the other hand that they wanted no business partnership with the Esquimaux Waterworks Company, whose plan was so plainly seen in the opposition to the by-law."

Anyone who examined the Council's scheme with an eye to considerations of common sense and common prudence, would

have asked, immediately what warrant has the Council for believing that the improvements they propose will be sufficient to give the city an ample and a permanent water supply? One hundred and fifty thousand dollars is a great deal too much money to expend on a work of this kind without having something like an assurance that the ratepayers will get the worth of their money. This practical consideration would have occurred to discreet men if they had never heard of the Esquimaux Waterworks Company. To disregard it seems to us to be recklessness, which in men wishing to do what is right is simply incompetence. Properly considered, our proposal to consult a competent authority before expending large sums of money on the Elk Lake water supply was the proper and only effective way of frustrating any scheme that the Esquimaux Waterworks Company may have entertained for if a first class hydraulic engineer should pronounce the supply from Elk Lake sufficient for the present and the future requirements of the city, no one would again think of Goldstream in connection with Victoria's water supply. If, on the other hand, the authority would decide that Elk Lake cannot yield the city of Victoria as much water as it needs when its population increases, those who have the good of the city at heart would feel relieved to find that there is an available source of supply at hand. So far from being jealous of the Esquimaux Waterworks Company, intelligent and prudent men would be glad to see that what it has done has, in the event of Elk Lake failing the city, assured them a plentiful supply of good water, with pressure enough to relieve them of any anxiety they may feel with respect to danger from fire. We are surprised that the Times would persist to the foolish prejudice against the Esquimaux Waterworks Company, for it must know that the City would not resort to its supply until its authorities were satisfied that that from Elk Lake is insufficient and inadequate, and in that case it must surely see that the citizens of Victoria are more fortunate in being able to get their water supplied, as far as water is concerned, from the company's works.

SOME EFFECTS OF SUNLIGHT.

It is found that microbes, like other evil things, love darkness rather than light. Investigators have discovered that sunlight deprives some microbes of their deadly powers. They have also found that these singular organisms increase much more rapidly in the night than in the day. Their power of reproduction is truly marvellous. One micro-organism at the end of twenty-four hours will have produced five millions, and in forty-eight hours, when the conditions are favorable, the increase will get up into figures quite inconceivable. The sun's action on microbes was observed some years ago. It was found that certain liquids capable of undergoing putrefaction kept sweet when exposed to the sun's rays; but if left in the dark were quickly tainted.

The cholera bacillus when exposed to the sun becomes innocuous. Experiments have been made by eminent biologists which are likely to prove serviceable in the treatment of cholera. We take the following account of them from the New York Times:

Some investigations which have been made during the present year by Dr. Palermo, of Naples, have brought to light facts regarding cholera which are of great hygienic interest. Dr. Koch's bacillus, which is almost universally believed to produce Asiatic cholera in man, will destroy the guinea pig subjected to its operation in about eighteen hours. Dr. Palermo found that when he protected the cholera bacilli from the sun they killed guinea pigs in the usual time, but that if he exposed these germs to the sun's rays they produced no evil results upon the animals. The microbes, however, had not been destroyed; they had merely been deprived of their disease-producing powers. That the microbe was not destroyed, but merely changed, was an important circumstance. It was found that the guinea pigs which had survived inoculation with the sunshine-exposed bacilli were proof against the disease. It had very much the action of vaccination in smallpox.

SHORT, BUT NOT SWEET.

The platform of the Colorado Populists has at least one good quality. It is short. The policy of that party is expressed in exactly one hundred and fifty words. The leading plank of this platform is a declaration in favor of the free coinage of silver in the ratio of 16 to 1. Free coinage has still a large support in the United States. It is said that many of the Southern States are strongly in its favor, and if, in the next Congress, parties are almost evenly balanced, the Senators from the silver States will be able to get pretty much any legislation they favor. Thus, the cause of free coinage is not so desperate as it appears to many.

One of the planks is a strong protest against issuing Government bonds in time of peace. But if the Government gets out of money and is not able to pay its current expenses, how is it to get on without borrowing, and if it borrows it must give the note of hand for the sum borrowed. The only alternative to this is the manufacture of irredeemable Treasury notes. But if the United States should be reduced to the extremity of issuing irredeemable paper money, what becomes of its credit, and what will become of the business interests which are, as was seen less than a year ago, in the closest connection with the public credit? The mere suspicion that the Government could not meet its obligations in hard cash played the very mischief with the business of the whole country from Florida to Maine and from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

It will be remembered that the Government then possessed silver enough, in fact a great deal more than it knew what to do with. The proposal to coin that silver freely intensified the panic, and the people did not feel safe until a step was put to even a partial coinage of silver. But the

Colorado politicians have apparently forgotten that an issue of gold bonds relieved the stringency and put business into something like good shape again.

The short platform of the Populists is long enough to contain a demand for the initiative and referendum. These devices for handing over work that now belongs to the legislatures to the people at the polls have become quite popular with the radicals of a good many countries in these days. We find them incorporated in the policy of the Opposition in this Province.

Asking for the initiative and referendum is an admission that representative government is a failure. Such a request takes for granted that the people who have neither the time nor the inclination to give their attention to public affairs and to the close study of the measures that are required by the general welfare, can do the work of legislation better than men of presumed intelligence, chosen by the people especially for that purpose. Complaints are made under our present system that too much of the legislation of countries is hasty and ill considered. How would it be if the people at the polls had the power of rejecting acts passed by the Legislature, and of requiring the Legislature to enact laws which they had vetoed? A state in which any demagogue who, by the meanest and most dishonest means, had become temporarily popular could get passed such laws as suited him and the crowd who shouted for him would, we think, soon be in a very bad way.

In the cantons of Switzerland where the population is small and the people generally highly intelligent, the referendum might not for a time do much harm, but in larger communities where the unintelligent and the violent bear a much greater proportion to the whole population than they do in that country, we believe that it would work most injuriously. The plebiscite of which we hear so much in connection with prohibition is a form of initiative. We do not think that it has worked very satisfactorily so far, and we are inclined to believe that a further experience of it will not commend it to intelligent citizens. So far it has no authority. It is used merely as a device to enable clever politicians to stave off the consideration of embarrassing subjects, but if it were incorporated into the constitution as the Populist politicians demand, it would have exactly the opposite effect.

THE U. S. ELECTIONS.

It is generally supposed that the Republicans in the November elections will carry all before them. But dispassionate and clear-headed observers are by no means sure that this will be the case. The Democrats were under a cloud a little while ago, but the passage of the tariff act and the good consequences that are expected to follow its enactment will, it is believed, bring them into favor again. A good deal of feeling has been made about the Republican victories in Maine and Vermont, but as these are Republican States the bragging is very much like the old cry of the Dutch "taking Holland." One element of the situation makes calculations comparatively simple. It is admitted by the Republicans that the South is solid for the Democrats. That party have in the present House 129 members and it is considered safe to reckon upon the Southern contingent being just as strong in the next House. New York and several of the Eastern and Western states will return some Democratic members.

After making an elaborate calculation the Argonaut, which is strongly Republican, comes to the conclusion that the Republican party must secure 172 members from 220 Congressional districts in the North and West, or three to one. "To put it differently," it continues, "the Republicans must elect seventy-five per cent. of all the Congressmen to be elected in the Northern and Western States. From this it will be seen that the Republican party has a task before it, but none the less we hope and believe that in the next House of Representatives the Republicans will have a good working majority."

The Populists are the uncertain element of the election. The Republicans believe that their influence is on the wane, and that they will gain what the Populists lose. But the Populists themselves are very far indeed from admitting that they are playing a losing game. They boast that their party is stronger now than ever it was, and that in the November elections they will give a good account of themselves.

As far as we have seen the Democrats are very quiet. They are not indulging in sanguine forecasts. They evidently realize that if they are to hold their own in the next Congress they must work hard and do some vigorous fighting. From the calculations of their opponents it is easily seen that they have no reason to be disheartened. If they do only moderately well they will be able to command a majority in the House of Representatives.

With regard to the Senate the Argonaut appears to be pretty confident. It makes very elaborate calculations, and apparently arrives at the conclusion that the Republicans will be victorious. It winds up by saying: "In all these States the Republicans are confident of electing successors to the Senators whose terms expire this year. If they succeed, the Senate will have a Republican majority unless the Democratic and Populist Senators should combine and make a mongrel majority." Partisan forecasts must, of course, be taken with a great deal of allowance, for all know by experience how difficult it is for the best informed men, who have a deep interest in finding out, if possible, what is to be the result of an election, to arrive at anything like exact, or even reliable, conclusions. The result is often a surprise to even the coolest and the most experienced political calculators.

THE NAINAIMO RECEPTION.

The Times on Thursday estimated our Nainaimo correspondent's description of Mr. Laurier's reception in that city as "entirely false and misleading." We think it but fair to that gentleman, whom we have invariably found to be reliable, to reproduce what he has to say to our contemporary's criticism—a criticism, it must be remembered, written without a personal knowledge of the facts connected with the reception. Our correspondent writes:

NAINAIMO, Sept. 14.—The Times editorially states that your correspondent's brief report of the Laurier party's visit to this city is "ridiculously false; a distortion of the facts for partisan purposes." The truth is that the report contained too many "facts," and was more than enough couched in the exact language used by several of the Victorians who accompanied Mr. Laurier, in speaking of the reception. On that occasion there was not the slightest manifestation of enthusiasm. It was, in fact, an incontestable fact that the Laurier party was not attended by a single representative man, with the exception of the Police Magistrate. Another fact cannot be gainsaid, but it is more than enough couched in the exact language used by several of the Victorians who accompanied Mr. Laurier, in speaking of the reception. On that occasion there was not the slightest manifestation of enthusiasm. 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