

against any overthrow of the principle that individual merit is greater than money in the national service; which is so conspicuously true in Lord Strathcona's case.

DEMONSTRATIVE FEEBLENESS.

The Ontario Government has been wrestling mightily with a peck of small trouble over the granting of a concession to mine on the right of way, north and south of Cobalt, by the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway Commission. Premier Whitney last spring announced the terms on which the mineral alongside the Government railroad could be mined. The Railway Commission advertised for tenders on the Whitney minimum terms. No bids were made; and the Commission privately sold the concession to an Ottawa syndicate for \$50,000 cash, and a flat rate of 25 per cent. of the value of mineral extracted after paying operating expenses.

In the syndicate were the son of Railway Commissioner Murphy, of Ottawa; and the business partner of the same Commissioner. Opposition newspapers condemned this private arrangement; which, like all acts of the Commission, was subject to the veto of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. The Government advised the Commission to withdraw from the bargain, and advertise afresh. Everybody said that the Government had done the right thing. But a disagreeable element was introduced into the case by the assertion of a disappointed concessionaire that members of the Government, in conference with the concessionaires, had offered that even if the tender of some other party were \$10,000 higher than that of himself and friends, the lease would remain in the same hands. Of course, the acting Premier and his colleagues denied the accuracy of this version of the conference; though they admitted suggesting that a trifling disadvantage in the bid of the Ottawa people might not militate against them.

Into the merits of the controversy as between the Government, its newspaper enemies, and the balked Ottawa concessionaires, it would be profitless to enter here. But as is always the case when public administrators get into a business trouble, general conditions and principles are concerned of vital importance to and economical conduct of public affairs. The Ontario Government is probably the most eminent on this continent for lusty honesty and freedom from outside influences. There is nothing pharisaical about its probity. The Premier himself exhibits occasionally a tendency to exult in his independence and straight walking. But even his robustness of integrity has nothing repellant about it, because it is simply the obvious implementing of professions made in opposition.

Mr. Whitney is in England, enjoying for the first time contact with the Mother of Parliaments, observing the defects of Imperial rule at headquarters, and qualifying himself for an expert on socio-political problems by communing with men like General Booth. The colleagues whom he left behind are as honest as himself. They may not be quite as shrewd; or quite as independent. If they were, they surely would not have committed the curious blunder which has distinguished their handling of the Temiskaming mining lease.

Wherein they have shown weakness they have perhaps not done very differently from what Provincial Governments elsewhere would have done. They have only failed to recognize that the day has come when strong men can really afford to be strong in a strong country, and to discriminate between storms that arise, pass over, and leave no permanent trace; and those disturbances of the political atmosphere which have amazing potentialities for the next appeal to the ballot box. There are times when ministers of the

Crown do well to be conciliatory—or to appear to be conciliatory. There are other times—and they occur more frequently than most ministers suspect—when they can with perfect safety and fitting propriety, tell an importunist who looks formidable, but is not, to go to blazes.

Why on earth the cabinet of the Province of Ontario should have held intimate converse with an Ottawa company promoter is surely beyond the comprehension of any man accustomed to deal with the everyday affairs of a considerable business. The Cabinet has a very proper right to review the conduct of the Commissioners who owe their appointment to it. The Temiskaming Railway Commission of three is the board of directors responsible for the proper conduct of that enterprise. The delegation of responsibility in such a case must be large; and only rarely interfered with from above. The commissioners must be wisely selected, given the complete confidence of the Government; and, except when they depart from some fundamental principle of administration, the Government must be to their faults a little blind.

The Commission blundered badly in selling the concession to the Ottawa syndicate without advertising a second time for tenders. Such a blunder is, in itself, almost incredible. When it is proved that the favored parties are closely associated with one of the Commissioners in other affairs, the proceeding is so suspicious to partizan eyes, that it is quite impossible to perceive how men like Mr. Cecil B. Smith and Mr. Englehart could have dreamed for a moment that it would be permitted to stand when once the facts were known. In a manly letter Mr. Smith has joined the newspaper controversialists. His time is valuable. His letter has cost much more than the re-advertising of the lease would have done. No little parsimony in the advertisement world surely ever cost so much as this classic instance of false economy. That such a shortsighted method was originally adopted would create doubt as to whether the men appointed to look after a railroad which is primarily a colonization enterprise, understand the first essentials in dealing with a public enterprise, were it not that there is a peculiar "kittleness" in publicly-owned business which it is extremely hard always to appreciate. Fourparlers between the Government and its Commission lasted several days—a further proof of lack of understanding of disagreeable situation.

The Railway Commission had put itself into so ridiculous a posture, that anybody but a member of the Government would have seen that re-advertisement was inevitable. The acting Premier need only have stated that conclusion to the Commission, and left it to make its peace with a sensitive public, which could have been done immediately and frankly without a tinge of the humiliating experience which has followed the clumsy way of doing things. The Commissioners, faced with a clear, sharp issue, would have had too much sense to make it a matter of their life or death as public servants. If they had chosen resignation rather than revision, the choice would have been its only, but its sufficient justification. There was no need to make a public display of the hurrying to and fro, the anxious protests of the Ottawa syndicate, and least of all the attendance at a Cabinet council of Mr. Dickson. In inviting him to see the Cabinet, Mr. Smith was detracting from the dignity of the Commission. The Cabinet, in seeing him was, with sublime ingenuousness, putting in pickle a rod for its own back. Some of the Cabinet are lawyers. They ought to have known that such a discussion on such a subject would provoke a conflict of assertions. There is no wisdom in a multiplication of disputants. But they saw Mr. Dickson, with the result that next day the acting Premier, the Provincial Treasurer, and goodness knows how many other Cabinet ministers, were found excitedly denying in the public press, the ex-parte

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statements of a company

From all points of trivial piece of business reputation for ordinary mission; and exposes a ment administrative judicial to the reputation. There is too much obvious favor of this section of of the Crown. Political opinion; statesmen sell their jobs, they must getting public opinion Worthy public opinion

The feeble favoritism lease has been handed over; and most of all men who fail to distinguish feeble things strongly from strong things strongly.

CHANCES

Manufacturers can even though their eyes The Dominion Government Preston, the retiring Co Europe, on a peripatetic trade with the countries Preston's ability and strength the United Kingdom and eminently fit him for his more than merely superior which has been carried the Minister of Agriculture countries. The field is of view, more difficult to

Mr. MacLean, the C Tokyo regrets that Canada adequately displayed prospectus; and calls for a paign. Every piece of makes you wish for a with them. The exportable increase since bought \$15,000,000 worth of the purchases of Though there is no ports, Japan in 1905 spent British Empire than in 1904 cent. The United Kingdom The enlargement of Australia is an important part of States are increasing the The Harriman interests large White Star boats for ern service.

It is worthy of note is discouraging foreign investments, unless they are Bank (Nippon Kogyo, Government; and is pursuing the ultimate intention of capitalists to a total amount of \$82,500,000, for commercial promote trade abroad. Government lends 20,000,000 Bank at 2 per cent. The real property in Japan Japanese are quite ready want to keep very close arrangements—a national easy to quarrel.

But, though you manifest commercial patriotism, manifestations of it.