

OUR OTTAWA LETTER

Mackenzie and Mann Contract, Its Critics and Its Prospects of Passing Parliament.

The Curious Sternaman Case—British Columbia's Exceptionally Bad Fortune.

Ottawa, Jan. 31.—The contract the government have entered into with Messrs. Mackenzie & Mann to build the Telegraph Creek and Teslin Lake railway has been well received by the press. All the leading newspapers in the east support, or, at any rate, criticize, the agreement, which has yet to be ratified by parliament, in a manner of which neither of the parties to it can in any way complain. One or two newspapers, inspired by parties who are interested in proposed American transportation companies, have condemned the contract on the ground that the bargain is too good for the contractors. Sir Charles Tupper is strongly in favor of it, and there is no doubt that it will pass parliament with a very large majority. The Tory newspapers that are opposing it know this and are therefore calling upon the Senate to throw it out the same as it did the Drummond County railway agreement. The fact, however, that Sir Charles Tupper is in favor of the railway may temper different reactions. If the government had not decided upon an all-Canadian route the cost of the enterprise would, of course, have been very much less in the way of the land grant, and there would have been no necessity for a monopoly clause, but there has been enough trouble at the American boundary line already without Canada putting itself still further in the hands of her neighbors. In fact the all-Canadian route is the greatest feature of the bargain. If we are to have any trouble at Fort Wrangel then a port further south and wholly within Canadian territory must be reached by the railway. Meantime if any trouble arises about transshipment at Fort Wrangel it will have to be done at Port Simpson. From that point the river boats will be able to navigate all the way to the terminus if the railway is not built, and some of his colleagues spent a couple of weeks at the capital endeavoring to get a balance of some seven or eight hundred thousand dollars paid over to his province. Recently Premier Murray of Nova Scotia, along with Attorney-General Longley and another member of his cabinet visited Ottawa and presented claims extending back for some 15 years to the extent of \$600,000. These claims are in connection with the Eastern Extension railway. No sooner had the Nova Scotian ministers got through than Premier Warburton of Prince Edward Island arrived on the scene. He is also looking for some assistance to his province. After him came Premier Emmerson of New Brunswick, and Hon. Mr. Tweedie on a similar mission. As far as Ontario and Quebec are concerned the disputed accounts between these two provinces and the Dominion are now the subjects of arbitration. SLAETOWN.

Canadian Klondike Official Guide.

Messrs. Matthews, Northrup & Co., of Buffalo, N. Y., says that they have been awarded the publication and copyright of the Canadian Klondike official guide for the United States. Mr. Rose says the book will contain a great deal of information besides Mr. Ogilvie's report, and will include a large number of maps, plans and illustrations. It will be published simultaneously in Canada and the United States, and will make its appearance early in February. Hon. Mr. Mulock, postmaster-general, has appointed a commission to make a report on the working of his department at headquarters in Ottawa with a view of reducing the staff and making other changes in the interest of economy and efficiency. The commission is composed of J. L. McDougall, auditor-general; J. M. Courtney, deputy minister of finance; and Dr. Coulter, deputy postmaster-general. It is understood that Mr. Mulock has refused to act in the commission. The other two commissioners, however, are at work and expect to have the report ready in a few weeks.

The Prohibition Question.

The Dominion government have now under consideration a question that their political opponents hope may in the end defeat them—the question of prohibition. At the Liberal convention in 1893 a resolution was passed pledging the Liberal party to take a plebiscite on the subject when they came into power. A plebiscite bill would have been brought up in the House of Commons last session but for the fact that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was absent in England representing Canada at the Diamond Jubilee. Several temperance delegations waited on the premier and every member of the government last session and they were told that the only reason for legislation not being introduced was that the premier had to leave for Britain. The delegations asked that nothing but the bare question, whether the liquor should be placed on the ballot paper. On the other hand the liquor men maintained that as prohibition would necessitate direct taxation this question should also be submitted along with the one in regard to prohibition. Between the temperance men on the one side and the liquor men on the other there is a large class of the community who think that the whole bill which would be necessary to carry out prohibition, providing it was adopted by the people, should also be submitted to a vote. This class maintain that if the temperance people are in earnest in what they want they should not be frightened to put the whole matter squarely before the people and not merely the simple question "Are You in Favor of Prohibition?" Parliament has already declared several times that it was in favor of prohibition, if it could be carried out, but parliament was never ready to pass a prohibitory liquor bill. There are many strong temperance men like Principal Grant of Kingston who are opposed to prohibition, since, in their opinion it would mean taking a step backwards as was the case with the Scott Act, or local option law, which was in force in a number of counties throughout the Dominion in respect to the Scott Act in Ontario, the temperance people were so much disgusted with the results of its operation that they were the very first to vote for the law being revoked when the opportunity came. The general impression is that the government will merely submit to the people the question "Are you in favor of prohibition?" If this be done then the Conservatives will vote almost solidly "yes," and the result will be that the prohibition bill, because the cabinet is pledged to do so should a majority of the replies be in the negative. All the provinces except Quebec are likely to vote in favor of prohibition. In Quebec there will be a large minority against it. Then the question will arise whether the government will coerce Quebec to accept a prohibition measure or refuse to bring in a bill.

The Sternaman Case.

The government were pretty nearly reaching that point in the case of Mrs. Sternaman in which the late government found themselves when they failed to agree in the Shortis case, thereby throwing the whole responsibility on the Governor-General and permitting the matter to become a public scandal. The present government avoided this by the alternative of a new trial. There was not sufficient doubt in the Sternaman case to allow continuation still there was enough doubt surrounding it to cause the administration to hesitate before allowing the law to take its course. In capital cases the cabinet no doubt thought that as a doubt of her guilt existed it was best to err on the safe side and therefore ordered execution. But for the fact of her sex it is pretty certain Mrs. Sternaman would have been hanged. Falling short of either commutation or execution a new trial was granted, by the executive, for the first time in the history of the Dominion. Until 1892, when a clause permitting this was put in the Criminal Code, it was possible for the executive to give a new trial, the law was allowed to take its course, the condemned was sent to prison for life. This clause was taken from the Criminal Code and was put there at the instance of Justice Stevenson, who tried Mrs. Maybrick. The present minister of justice in Canada is not an admirer of the clause, but while it remains on the statute book of the Dominion administration is sure to be taken of it. The likelihood is that the section will be repealed some day, because Canadians do not approve of too many appeals on new trials in such cases. It is not probable that the new trial will be held at Garsden. Mr. Sternaman's counsel in Buffalo, like Mr. German on the Canadian side, received no pay for the services rendered the unfortunate woman. Her friends will no doubt see to it that some pecuniary assistance is provided for the new trial.

British Columbia's Misfortune.

In all the provinces excepting British Columbia Liberal governments are in power. Nearly all have had outstanding claims against the Dominion for the past 15 or 20 years. It has been said that because the provincial governments were Liberal and the Dominion government Conservative the latter failed to give due consideration to these claims. At any rate a large number of them are still unpaid. Now that the Liberal government is in power at Ottawa the provincial governments are looking to their accounts being met by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Last session of parliament Premier Crookshank of Manitoba and one of two of his colleagues spent a couple of weeks at the capital endeavoring to get a balance of some seven or eight hundred thousand dollars paid over to his province. Recently Premier Murray of Nova Scotia, along with Attorney-General Longley and another member of his cabinet visited Ottawa and presented claims extending back for some 15 years to the extent of \$600,000. These claims are in connection with the Eastern Extension railway. No sooner had the Nova Scotian ministers got through than Premier Warburton of Prince Edward Island arrived on the scene. He is also looking for some assistance to his province. After him came Premier Emmerson of New Brunswick, and Hon. Mr. Tweedie on a similar mission. As far as Ontario and Quebec are concerned the disputed accounts between these two provinces and the Dominion are now the subjects of arbitration. SLAETOWN.

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Mr. Balfour Explains Great Britain's Position as to the Chinese Situation.

Russian Ambition for Exclusive Rights in Port Arthur To Be Effectually Checked.

London, Feb. 5.—It is probable that but little further reliable information regarding China will be obtainable until the ministers have a chance to round on their assistants during the course of the debate in parliament on the address in reply to the speech from the throne. Great Britain had never demanded that Tai-Lin-Wan be made a treaty port. It was merely one of the suggested constituents of a bargain, and if it should be withdrawn, it can only be because it is a barrier to the negotiations for a loan. The object of the condition was to checkmate any scheme for the transformation of Port Arthur into a closed Russian port, and the object was equally secured by exacting from Russia and China together, a suitable pledge from them in that regard before the execution of Port Hamilton, and this will probably be the up-shot. The semi-official statements point thereto, notably the specific assurance early in the week in regard to the temporary nature of the Russian tenures of Port Arthur, which was accompanied by the friendly assurance that Great Britain is not bound to Japan by any warlike relations. In short, there is every reason to believe that Great Britain does not intend to recede an inch from the position which has been taken by Messrs. Balfour, Chamberlain and Hicks-Beach, in the Marquis of Salisbury's name.

A Government Opponent's Views.

Mr. Henry Norman, a bitter opponent of the government, writes in the Daily Chronicle that it would be unfair to criticize the Marquis of Salisbury so long as he maintains the treaty of Tientsin, of 1858, and adds that his demand was irresistible. At last the people of the United States have learned that we are not land-grabbers, gold-seizers, or monopoly hunters which some of the Western senators and Irish politicians represent us. They have realized that our aims are theirs, and that we want their free access to the great untouched markets of the far East. They desire commerce, untrammelled by the jealousies, military and political, of Continental nations. This is precisely what we are ready to fight for, we are ready to fight for them, Japan, who will fight Russia some day, as surely as to-morrow's sun rises, is, by necessity, on our side. The Germans, in spite of the political intrigues of their government, are also with us, and sooner or later France will be with us, as she has been for some time past. The hour has arrived to settle permanently the Chinese question with Russia. The British were never before so aroused, and should we yield, we shall lose the chance for standing, shoulder to shoulder, with the other nations of the world. We should wait quietly until Lord Salisbury tells us how the game is going on, and when he has spoken, the country should know what to say and do.

Mr. Gerald Balfour's Speech.

The following are the principal passages from the speech made last night at Leeds by Mr. Balfour, a short report of which was published in the "Rumors and suspicions have been given currency to the effect that the government is finching from the firm position it had taken on the Chinese question; that it was abandoning the principle to which it has given public utterance, and that the brave words of the ministers were only a preparation to surrender or retreat. I can say with confidence that these rumors, which have been accepted in quarters where one might have thought more confidence would have been shown in the wisdom and courage of Her Majesty's advisers, are without foundation. (Loud cheers.) It is not true that the government has, in the smallest particular, departed from its declared policy in the far East, or that there is any influence of pressure from any other power, yielded any of our just claims. The considerations which govern that policy have been stated clearly to the public by more than one cabinet minister. To those declarations the government adheres."

TO CLOSE ALL COLLEGES.

Vienna, Feb. 7.—The government has decided to close all colleges to-day and keep them closed until March 21st, when the students will be compelled to sign an agreement to observe the discipline of the army regulations. This is the severest measure of its kind which has been put in application since 1848.

FIGHTING IN THESSALY.

Turkish Troops Burn Four Villages—Situation Ominous. Athens, Feb. 7.—Sanguinary conflicts continue between the Turkish troops and the peasants in Thessaly. It is reported that the Turks have occupied several villages and that 100 persons have been killed.

Much in Little

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The Sternaman Case. The government were pretty nearly reaching that point in the case of Mrs. Sternaman in which the late government found themselves when they failed to agree in the Shortis case, thereby throwing the whole responsibility on the Governor-General and permitting the matter to become a public scandal. The present government avoided this by the alternative of a new trial. There was not sufficient doubt in the Sternaman case to allow continuation still there was enough doubt surrounding it to cause the administration to hesitate before allowing the law to take its course. In capital cases the cabinet no doubt thought that as a doubt of her guilt existed it was best to err on the safe side and therefore ordered execution. But for the fact of her sex it is pretty certain Mrs. Sternaman would have been hanged. Falling short of either commutation or execution a new trial was granted, by the executive, for the first time in the history of the Dominion. Until 1892, when a clause permitting this was put in the Criminal Code, it was possible for the executive to give a new trial, the law was allowed to take its course, the condemned was sent to prison for life. This clause was taken from the Criminal Code and was put there at the instance of Justice Stevenson, who tried Mrs. Maybrick. The present minister of justice in Canada