The Colonist.

THURSDAY, JANUARY, 19, 1899.

THE CONTEST IN THE CITY.

The plea which will be made on behalf of the government candidates at the bye-election, soon to be held in this city, will be that it is desirable for Victoria to have candidates who have the ear of the government—the same appeal as was made to the voters of Cowichan and so promptly repelled by them. This is a plea which never ought to be made. It is a confession that the government of the day proposes to distribute its favors, not according to the claims of localities, but in proportion to the amount of political support given. This indecent view of the principle upon which the government of a country should be conducted will receive no different response in Victoria to that which met it in Cowichan.

We simply anticipate the formal announcement when we say that Messrs. Turner, Hall and McPhillips will again be candidates. They desire re-election, and their friends who supported them last year are prepared to do so again. It will, therefore, not be necessary to introduce the opposition candidates to the voters. The important thing to do is to make clear the nature of the issue upon which the people of this city will be asked to pronounce. The issue is one of great importance. It is not a local issue. There are certain local issues involved in the campaign, as in every campaign, and these must not be lost sight of, but the point upon which the people will be asked to speak chiefly is the constitutional one that has resulted in a change of government, and the events that have flowed therefrom. It is fortunate, in one view of the case, that an opportunity has been given to the people of Victoria to pronounce upon this great issue, while the facts are fresh in the public mind. Their verdict will go far towards settling the question permanently. If they shall resolve to send to the legislature gentlemen pledged to support the present government, they must be understood as giving their approval to the course taken by the Lieutenant-Governor in dismissing Mr. Turner and placing Mr. Semlin and his friends in office.

We wish to place the issue before the people in a strictly constitutional way. It has been said that the people of British Columbia will not arouse themselves to the consideration of a constitutional question and especially that the people of Victoria will not do so. We had evidence a few nights ago to the contrary, and believe that the same spirit, as found expression in the strong protest sent to the legislature and the Lieutenant-Governor then, will find expression anew in the triumphant return of Messrs. Turner, Hall and McPhillips. Approaching the question in this constitutional way, it must be premised that, although the action of the Lieutenant-Governor is in issue, he himself personally is not in issue. Mr. Semlin and his colleagues must, whether they will or not, take the full responsibility of what His Honor did. The government cannot shirk this issue in any way. They cannot say, as some of their friends do, that they found the province without an executive council and simply took the vacant offices. This is not according to the principles of responsible government. When they took office they took with it the obligation to defend the Lieutenant-Governor for the act which enabled him to offer the reigns of kovernment to them. The motto that "the king can do no wrong" applies. For the purposes of the present issue, Lieutenant-Govenor McInnes stands in precisely the same position as William IV stood when he dismissed the administration of Lord Melbourne. Sir Robert Peel not only was not consulted about the dismissal, but he was out of the country when it took place, and, although until he could get home again and take office the Duke of Wellington was the King's sole adviser, Sir Robert accepted fully the acts of the King and those done by the Duke. The King himself was not an issue before the people. It is a principle of the British constitution that the crown or its representatives cannot be in issue before the electorate. When the crown is a party to a struggle the result is revolution. The ministry must always bear the responsibility of everything done by virtue of the royal prerogative.

The way in which the government was formed, the character of its personnel, the manner in which it has carried on affairs and its policy as far as it has been outlined are all proper subjects for consideration by the voters of Victoria, and we shall have something to say about them during the campaign; but we have above indicated the true issue of the struggle. The people of Victoria will, we feel sure, arise to an appreciation of the question now to be decided. They are to be congratulated upon having the opportunity of deciding it, upon its having fallen to their lot to speak for constitutional government. We have no doubt that their answer will be one in condemnation of the extraordinary and dangerous procedure which the present government represents.

THE PLACER MINING BILL.

The government has accepted the Colonist's suggestion as to the amendment of the Placer Mining bill, so as to relieve companies engaged in hydraulic operations from its provisions. It would have done still better if it had exempted all corporations authorized to do business in British Columbia. The new provision is objectionable because it vests too much power in the governor-in-council. The Attorney-General, in speaking of the bill, when it was up for second reading, said that he did not favor the concentration of too much power in the hands of the executive, but his proposed amendment to the bill gives abnormal power to the government.

In this matter, as in every other, the Colonist holds that the legislature should declare what the terms are upon which all persons can procure rights within this province, and leave nothing for the executive but the routine work of receiving and examining applications and granting the necessary permits. It does not at all favor the system of passing legislation increasing the power of the executive, by giving it the right to say that one person may and another may not enjoy the privileges, which the legislature intended should be general. What we hoped to see, and all we hoped to see, was legislation which would prevent aliens, who buy their supplies abroad and spend their earnings abroad, from taking up our placer mines to the exclusion of our own people. If we had supposed that the government would seek to prevent corporations, backed up by foreign capital, from developing our gold fields, except under such conditions as might commend themselves to the government for the time being, we would have joined with those who opposed any interference with the law.

It is also proposed to debar aliens of any right to acquire claims after the passage of the act, even although they have taken out licenses before its passage. This is unfair. While the law stands as it is, aliens have the right to acquire certain privileges under it, and to take these away would be highly unjust. A free miner's certificate, granted at any time before the assent by the Lieutenant-Governor to the bill, should be good in the hands of an alien as long as the certificate is entitled to run. Otherwise every dollar taken for such certificates will be so much money obtained under false pretences.

NEWSPAPER LIBELS.

The Ottawa Citizen has just emerged triumphantly from a libel suit, brought by a man, who was described by a headline as having "kept a fence." The item over which this line was placed was not in any way objectionable, because it simply stated some facts that had been brought out in connection with a criminal charge; but the plaintiff in the suit contended that the head-line was libelous, because it stated a fact not supported by evidence. The defendant got a verdict, and the editorial reference to it highly compliments the judge, who tried the case, upon his appreciation of the difficulties of always avoiding technical libels in printing news.

In every community there are a lot of people who have a keen nose for libels, but as a rule they are not very particular about avoiding libellous publications concerning other people. No respectable newspaper wishes to libel any one, and if by chance something is printed which gives offence in that way, the paper regrets it quite as much as any one else, and this quite apart from any pecuniary or other responsibility attaching to the matter. The constant aim of editors is to avoid the appearance in their papers of matter to which exception can be taken on this ground. They do not always succeed, for it is a physical impossibility for any person to scrutinize every line which may be printed, before it appears. In view of the haste with which matter must be got ready for a daily paper, the wonder is that more infringements of the law of libel do not occur. The rarity of libel suits is the best testimony to the care exercised, which would be impossible if every man on a newspaper staff did not regard it as his duty to see that nothing appeared that is in any way calculated to violate the law.

Mr. McBride's resolution in regard to the fishery troubles on the Fraser is a good one, and he has done well to bring it forward. The Colonist during the last session of the house made the point that there was some doubt as to the advisability of the legislature forwarding resolutions to the government on subjects not directly within its province. Nevertheless a full discussion of the question involved is desirable, even if it is thought advisable to withdraw the resolution. The discussion will show the Ottawa authorities how the members feel on the matter, which is after all what is needed.

The next time you are in the Victoria theatre watch how a joke of a rather subtle nature affects the house. Victoria audiences see all jokes. Some kinds catch the attention of the "gods" at once and are greeted with a roar of applause, but the more subtle are met first by a ripple of laughter down stairs, which gradually mounts upwards until the gallery takes it up. This is one of the funny things about an amusing play or opera. There are other funny things not down on the bills. There is the young girl who is inclined to take everything seriously, the young man who thinks he is really the most conspicuous thing in the house, the young person who becomes wrapt in admiration, and above and beyond all the small boy who sees the fun of everything and laughs until his merry face looks as if it never would come straight again. There never was anything on any stage as good as the latter. If he does not warm your heart, you are no longer fit for this world.

Will correspondents kindly bear in mind that brevity is even more than the soul of wit? We fear we shall have to make it the sine qua non of admission to the columns of the Colonist. It is a source of pleasure to any newspaper to find that the interest, taken by its readers in the matters discussed in its columns, is such as to lead them to contribute their views, and when correspondence has been invited, publication of their letters cannot be very well refused, even if it encroaches on space needed for the news of the day. We must ask our friends to make their letters as short as possible, and think we will have to say ranted in cutting down letters which to them that hereafter we will feel war- appear to be too long. Editorial and local matter has to be treated in that way, and telegrams have frequently to be summarized; so if we have to cut down a correspondent's letter, he will know that he is only receiving the same treatment as other people.

THE OPPOSITION.

The present legislature compares very favorably indeed with any of its predecessors, and we think it will be admitted that there never has been in any house in British Columbia a better lot of men associated together politically than those who sit on the left of the Speaker. In business standing and experience they occupy an excellent position before their fellow-citizens. We think it may be safely assumed that, when the Victoria election is over the representation of the city will be the same as it was when the house opened, and in speaking of the opposition we propose to consider Messrs. Turner, Hall and McPhillips as forming a part of it. The party has for its leader Mr. Turner, a gentleman of long political experience and great familiarity with the finances of the province. He is the head of one of the largest business houses in British Columbia with branches in different parts of the province. He is undoubtedly a representative British Columbia business man. As a political speaker, Mr. Turner is always clear and forcible. He makes his meaning plain and while advancing no pretensions to oratory, he is a speaker, who is always listened to with attention and interest. When he rises to address the chair the house and galleries listen with the greatest attention. In Col. Baker the opposition has a gentleman who has wide familiarity with affairs, a politician of experience, a minister who prided himself justly on his devotion to his work, and a business man of large interests. He is the pioneer of South East Kootenay, in one sense, and has been closely identified with the growth and development of that interesting portion of the province. In addressing the house he is very pleasing and forcible. He is undoubtedly the most scholarly speaker in the legislature and quite as ready a debater as any. The legal fraternity is represented by Messrs. Pooley, Eberts, Helmcken, McBride and McPhillips, and they are excellent types of the learned profession to which they belong. They all have a high standing at the bar, are all good speakers and make a very formidable team in debate. It is hardly necessary to do more than mention Messrs. Dunsmuir and Bryden. Their association with some of the largest business enterprises in British Columbia is known to every one. They are both first class business men. Mr. Bryden does not speak very frequently, but when he does what he says is directly to the point and very clearly expressed. The house listens to him, because it knows that he never speaks unless he has something to say that is worth hearing. Mr. Dunsmuir has not as yet taken part in the debates. His experience has hitherto been in the field of action and not in that of debate. Mr. Hall is a thorough British Columbian identified with some of its most important industries. He has not yet spoken in the house. Messrs. Smith and Ellison will be admitted to be excellent types of the energetic business men of the interior. They are not much given to speech-making, but in what they have to say exhibit that sound common sense, which has characterized them in their private affairs. Messrs. Booth and Robertson are good representatives of the agricultural class. The latter has hardly got his legislative legs under him yet, but will take an active part in the proceedings of the house in good time. Mr. Booth is one of our best parliamentarians, a convincing speaker, whose chief fault is that he does not occupy the attention of the house as often as he might with advantage to the business of the country. Capt. Irving represents the transportation interests, one of the most important industries of the province. He will be recognized as entitled to speak with authority on such subjects. As a speaker he makes no pretensions, but is always able to give his views. He shows marked signs of improvement in this respect this session. Mr. Clifford is a mercantile and mining man specially, and among the new members it is safe to say that no one has made a more favorable impression than he. He is an excellent speaker, and bids fair to be one of the best debaters in the house.

We think this very moderate estimate of the opposition in the house shows it to be a body of men in whom the country will have every confidence, when in a short time they come into power. There are many excellent members on the other side of the house, but it is no disparagement to them to say that in point of interest in and identification with British Columbia, experience in public affairs and debating talent, the weight is on the left of the Speaker. We ask the people of British Columbia to read over the above names carefully and say if they would not feel quite safe to entrust any interest in their hands. It will be impossible to keep such a party out of power. It is a thoroughly representative British Columbia party, a party which has been identified with the progress of the past, and has everything to gain from the adoption of a progressive policy in the future. It will likely be reinforced by the representative to be elected in North East Kootenay. Our advices are that the district will return an opposition supporter, for the people are already disgusted with the policy dictated by Mr. Martin. If so and if Victoria does not disappoint every expectation and returns its old members, the beginning of the end of the present regime will come at once. The government cannot last out the session if Victoria and North East Kootenay return the same verdict as they did last summer.

MR. HENDERSON.

Mr. Henderson has made a speech. It was one of those things that had been better left unsaid. When he spoke about "the blighting friendship" of the late government having been the hardest thing he had to contend with, the memory of some of his hearers must have gone to the Macedonian cry, which went up from New Westminster during the campaign. "Come over and help us" was dinned into the ears of the government party day after day. Mr. Henderson knows perfectly well, and what is more he knows that every one else knows perfectly well, that he never would have been elected if it had not been for the friendship of the late government. He knows, and he also knows that every one else knows, that he promised to support the late government. He knows, and he knows that every one else knows, that after the election he approached the late government as a supporter. He knows, and he knows that every one else knows, that if the Turner government had remained in power he would have been their ardent supporter to-day. He denies that it was the prospect of relief to New Westminster that caused him to go back upon his friends. So he is even without that excuse. If he had had the manliness to stand in his place in the house and say that although he had intended to support the Turner administration, his constituency had been treated so well by the present government that he felt he ought to give them his vote, his position would not have been wholly indefensible. But he is without ever this semblance of an excuse. He is like a small boy caught in his neighbor's orchard. He denies the first thing with which he is charged, without stopping to think if it would not be well to admit it, and if he might not properly admit it. Mr. Henderson has written himself down as an unreliable ingrate, who does not even know how to invent a decent excuse for his apostasy. He has dug his own political grave.

THE MAYOR'S MESSAGE.

In his message read to the city council on Monday night, Mayor Redfern accepted the result of the elections as an endorsement "by the people of Victoria of the preliminary platform laid down by the Committee of Fifty and as a declaration for the advancement of the moral and material advancement of the city of Victoria." This is very well stated, and it is a matter of great gratification to be able to direct attention to it. We have every faith that the council will strengthen the hands of the mayor in endeavoring to give effect to these principles.

The system proposed by His Worship for street improvement has our unqualified endorsement. It is a good, practical, business-like suggestion, and if acted upon will give the city as good streets in the business portion as are to be found in any other city on the Coast.

Without endorsing Mr. Sorby's scheme the mayor advocates harbor improvement, and recommends that particular plan to the careful and early consideration of the people of the city. In this connection the new bridges naturally come up for treatment, and although nothing definite is promised except in regard to Rock Bay bridge, it is evident that His Worship has a thorough grasp of this important matter, and that the council, under his guidance, will be able to deal with it intelligently.

The observations in regard to the waterworks and the Point Ellice bridge suits call for no comment. The suggestions in reference to the public library and the cemetery are timely, and we hope will be accepted by the council. In connection with the cemetery, the matter of the Old Men's home comes up, because the land upon which the building stands will shortly be needed for cemetery purposes. The mayor thinks it desirable to provide a general almshouse, where men and women can be kept. This would probably be found the cheapest plan, and we do not think it is open to any objection. It is the plan most generally adopted.

The message devotes a paragraph to the fire department. The suggestions are tentative in their nature. We think the citizens would approve of some considerable changes in this department. Our own view is in favor of a full staff of paid men. The reason is that in combatting fires, the first few minutes are all important, so it is desirable that the whole force should be available at any moment. We are also inclined to the opinion that the department should be better distributed.

The mayor wants a new system of heating the city hall. If he had also asked for enough paint to make the exterior parts of the building look a little fresher, he would not have made a mistake. He also would like to see an exhibition held in this city this year. The Colonist seconds the motion.

An important change is announced in regard to the street committee, which is hereafter to consist of the whole council. We commend this change. Under the old system the small committee practically had charge of the whole work on the streets, and the city engineer did little more than carry out its wishes. Under the new system, the responsibility will rest upon the engineer, and the council as a committee will simply act upon his recommendations. As the mayor says, this is a step in the direction of making the council legislative rather than executive.

We congratulate the mayor upon his message, and the city upon the promise it gives of a year of progress.

Surely the Seattle Times is better informed than its editorial reference to the Placer Mining bill indicates. It surely knows that British Columbia has no power to pass an act applying to the Northwest Territory. Why is it that the average United States newspaper is so profoundly ignorant of the affairs of any country except its own? The lack of knowledge of Canada displayed in the United States press is simply astounding. We may inform the Times that British Columbia has no more jurisdiction over the Northwest Territory than over the state of Washington.

If the present negotiations for reciprocity fail, we hope no Canadian government will think of approaching the United States with a suggestion looking to such an arrangement. The time is not far distant when that country will want the products of Canada badly enough to reduce the duties on them without receiving any equivalent. We have the cards, and all that is necessary is for us to play a strong and patient game and we are sure to win.

A SUBSTANTIAL GAIN.

"I was very weak and hardly able to walk. My blood was thin, and I was as pale as death. Being told about Hood's Sarsaparilla, I began taking it, and in a few months I had gained 20 pounds in weight. I kept on with it until I was as well as ever." Arthur Mills, Dresden, Ontario.

HOOD'S PILLS cure nausea, headache.

The Colonist is quite ready to give a reason why it thinks the charge made by the Times—that the Turner government connived at the violation of the act to secure the independence of the legislature—and that is that if any evidence of such a thing were in existence it would have been brought to light long ago.

The New Brunswick local elections are to be brought on in February. The contest will be more on federal lines than on any previous occasion. There are sixteen constituencies in New Brunswick, electing we think, 46 members. In seven of those electing fifteen members the fight will be on straight party lines. In two others, electing ten representatives, the fight may be on those lines largely. In the others federal issues are likely to be disregarded. This statement of the case may be regarded as correct at the present writing.

The arrival at Vancouver of a gold brick from the Dorothy Morton mine is of special interest because it is the most conspicuous evidence that the Coast mines are coming to the front as producers.

One of the longest paragraphs in the report of Attorney-General Martin's Tuesday night speech, as reported in the Times, is devoted to his definition of Victoria's position. It is a very fine paragraph, reads beautifully and means nothing. Mr. Martin believes in the maxim that language was given to us to conceal our thoughts. There is only one intelligible observation in the paragraph, that is intelligible as a definition of this city's position, and that is that Victoria has heretofore taken a wrong view of its relations to the rest of the province. The history of British Columbia shows that every project calculated to advance the welfare of every part of the province always found strong support in Victoria, and that most of them originated here. It pleases Mr. Martin to seek to make it appear that Victoria has been sectional, and it pleased those who support his government to applaud such a sentiment. But it is not a true sentiment, and the people of Victoria at large do not endorse it, as Mr. Martin will learn when the coming election is over and Messrs. Turner, Hall and McPhillips take their seats in the house.

If the legislature of British Columbia should pass a resolution in regard to any legislation before the legislature of Washington, our neighbors would get in a fine frenzy over it. Not that we at all object to what the Washington assembly has done. They have the right to make any representations that suit their fancy, and they should be received with perfect courtesy, and—pigeon-holed, unless they have more to recommend them than those passed at Olympia on Tuesday. These were based on the misstatement that Canadians have the same right to mine in the United States as aliens have in Canada. This is not the case. Moreover, the act of congress referred to only applies to territories, and the British Columbia bill does not apply to territories.

The Province is quite wrong about the Placer Mines bill, when it says that the government at Ottawa has nothing to do with it. The Governor-General can disallow the bill the day after it is assented to, if he sees fit. It is just as well to be right about matters of that kind.

Taking chances in business matters is bad policy. Taking chances with your health is the next thing to suicide. Don't let a little illness have its own way until it gets stronger than yourself. Stamp it out now. ABBEY'S EFFERVESCENT SALT will do it. It's daily use regulates health—cures and prevents disease. All druggists sell this standard English preparation at 60c a large bottle; trial size, 25c.

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BORN.

ELKINGTON—At Oak Park, Quamichan, January 7th, the wife of W. H. Elkington, of a son.

KNOWLES—On the 13th, the wife of R. E. Knowles, a son.

PALMER—On Friday Jan. 13th, to the wife of R. M. Palmer, Provincial Fruit Inspector, a daughter.

DIED.

CULLIN—In this city, on the 10th inst., at the family residence, 5 Princess street, James Bay, Wm. Cullin, in the 73rd year of his age.

WHITE—At Gorge road, on January 10th, Dorothy Belle, youngest daughter of Edward and L. M. White, aged 13 years.

DRAUT—On the 12th inst., John Nicholas Draut, aged 64 years, and a native of Frankfort-on-Main, Germany.

M'CONNELL—In this city, on the 14th inst., at the family residence, 38 Michigan street, James Bay, Mrs. J. W. McConnell, in the 54 year of her age.

SPRINKLING—On the 16th inst., William Sprinkling, aged 60 years, a native of London, England.

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