

TRUTH.

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TRUTH'S MUSINGS.

The unfortunate burning of the beautiful Erskine Presbyterian Church in this city on Sunday afternoon last has had, at least, the one good effect of giving additional evidence of the liberal and fraternal spirit now existing among many of the Protestant denominations. The next day after the fire there was a meeting of the official members and letters were read from six or seven sister churches, representing almost as many denominations, offering accommodation for worship to the Erskine congregation during their temporary homelessness. The offer of a small Methodist church on Elm street was accepted, and there Dr. Smith will minister to his people until Erskine can be rebuilt.

Sir John A. Macdonald did a very creditable thing for himself in frankly acknowledging in the debate on the Address in the House that he was in error in speaking as confidently as he did last year in regard to the worthlessness of the Provincial License Acts. Referring to the recent Privy Council judgment in the Hodges case he admits he was somewhat in error, and is not infallible anyway. There is only one man in the world that many suppose to be infallible, and when errors are made it is more creditable to frankly acknowledge them, though it may somewhat gall the "Old Adam" of our nature. Sir John does not now appear to care to stake his reputation on declaring either the Crooks Act or the McCarthy Act unconstitutional, and he takes grim satisfaction in challenging Mr. Blake to do so either. It looks as though good constitutional authorities are in a fog, even yet, in regard to the whole matter. The doubts are so grave, however, that it is not probable the Ottawa Government will take any decided steps towards the general enforcement of their new license law.

The Ottawa Government will probably find it a difficult matter to deal with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company at this session in a manner at once satisfactory to the country and to the company. It is quite evident that the Company is now in considerable straits for want of ready money, and its own bonds cannot be satisfactorily sold so as to command what may be required. The intention is evidently to call upon the country for assistance under the circumstances, and such a call must be met in some way. The feeling of the country is that the Company secured a capital bargain in the beginning and it ought to get through with that. One reason why many were content to give such a good bargain was that probably that would be the end of the whole matter. On the other hand the Company have, so far, very faithfully and honorably performed their part of the contract and the road has been push-

ed on towards completion much more rapidly than was expected, and the road has been built in a better manner. To withhold aid just now might involve a good deal of loss to the Dominion as well as to the Company and put back for years a great national work that it is desirable to have completed at the earliest practicable moment. To allow the gigantic work to come to a stand still for want of such aid as the government has it in its power to give would be open to serious censure, and on the other hand to give very much additional aid to such a good bargain would not be approved of. The difficulty must, however, be grappled with.

Probably a great reason why the Canadian Pacific is now urgently in need of aid is because so much of the available funds have been expended in purchasing up existing lines of road, to act as feeders, instead of paying exclusive attention to its own immediate work on the main line. Millions of dollars have gone in that way, and much of this money has been so expended as to make the Company a formidable rival to old established roads, and to make it a more powerful monopoly, possibly to the people's disadvantage in years to come. The people have more reason to deal cautiously with the Company because of the great danger of establishing an immense monopoly than on any other ground. If a new bargain has now to be made, or new terms agreed upon, it would be a wise thing on the part of the Government to secure a better guarantee to the people than now exists against the possibility of a grinding railway monopoly.

Canada has already had a good deal of experience in granting aid to railways. In almost every instance a good deal more money has been required in the end than was expected at the beginning. This was certainly the case in regard to the Grand Trunk, the Intercolonial, the Great Western, the Northern, and nearly every existing line of much importance now in existence in the country. Millions more were given in the shape of bonus schemes than was originally agreed upon, and millions of bonus were never repaid, nor is it now expected that they ever will be, but yet we have few shrewd business men to-day who are not well convinced that in the interests of the country the money was all expended, if these roads could not have been produced in some other way. Even should it now be found necessary to give considerable additional advantages to the C. P. R., it may be questioned if, in the long run, such an immense railway as is necessary to span Canada from ocean to ocean could have been otherwise procured so easily and so cheaply by the people.

The House of Commons, at Ottawa, is now setting a good example for the Ontario Legislature to follow in the matter of business expedition. Not one half the

usual amount of time has been unnecessarily frittered away on mere preliminaries as has often been the case at the opening of sessions. Within the first four business days of the session the debate to the address was all over, the most important yearly returns were in the hands of the members, such as the Trade and Navigation, the Inland Revenue and the Public Accounts, and some of the most important measures of the session, such as the Franchise Bill, were laid before the House. If the members are not, therefore, hard at work, it is not for want of subjects for study and information. This is just as it should be. When two hundred of the representative men of the Dominion get together for actual business it is annoying and disgusting to see them waste days and days in useless talk and unnecessary delay. Our Toronto Legislators will have to look to their laurels or they may appear to a disadvantage compared to Ottawa this year in regard to the matter of practical business expedition.

Petitions are being circulated and signed by the licensed liquor sellers throughout Ontario, praying the Provincial Legislature to extend the legal hours of liquor selling from 7 o'clock until 9 on Saturday nights. TRUTH is not at all in the secrets of the Provincial Government, or of the legislature, but it does not hesitate one moment to predict that no such amendment will be made. TRUTH further ventures to prophesy that whatever amendments may be made in our present license laws will be in the direction of increased stringency. Whoever observes the signs of the times cannot fail to note the progress of public opinion all the time towards narrowing in the bounds of the drink traffic as far as appears at all practicable. Whatever government or party, especially in Ontario, would undertake to relax the present restrictive liquor laws, would soon find that a most serious blunder had been committed. Political parties depend entirely for success on popular sympathy and support, and they do not find it safe to fly in the face of well established public opinion.

TRUTH's decided opinion is that the Licensed Victuallers may yet find they made a mistake in opening up the question of amending the license laws at all. It would be safer to let sleeping dogs lie, if they are found to be asleep or willing to lie still at all, in this matter. That increased hours of sale on Saturday nights tend to an increased amount of selling is just what the agitators in this case mean. The public understands well enough that increased selling means increased drinking, and therefore an increased amount of drunkenness, and that is just what the public wants to see avoided. Public opinion must take a material change of direction before it will consent to any backward movement in regard to

restrictive laws respecting the liquor traffic. It is not probable that the Ontario Government would relax these if they could, and it is not at all probable that they could if they would, in view of the state of feeling in the House and in the country.

It has been a common belief for some years past that the personal habits of a considerable number of the leading men in the Washington Congress are very intemperate. That some of them are downright drunkards, appears to be well understood. The worst of it is that things appear to be growing worse in this respect, notwithstanding the advancement of temperance views pretty generally. During the past few days facts have been laid bare, showing that though it has been a standing rule of the House that no intoxicating liquors shall be sold or supplied in the refreshment rooms within its precincts, yet members have all the time evaded the rule by calling for "cold tea," and having all the liquors they cared for supplied to them in tea cups. Such contemptible evasions are simply disgraceful. Years ago there was a similar state of things at Ottawa. The public was given to understand, by standing resolutions of the House, that no liquors were allowed to be sold in the Commons refreshment rooms, but a good many M.P.'s had appetites too strong to be controlled by self-respect and quite a brisk underhand trade went on. TRUTH sincerely hopes things are better managed there now. One thing is quite evident in regard to Ottawa, and that is a much larger proportion of the leading men, both in the Government and in the Opposition, are total abstainers.

Burnum, the great showman, is evidently a wise man as well as a "smart" one. He has now grown old and feels it is time to make the necessary arrangements for the disposal of his property when he is dead. It is said that he is estimated to be worth somewhere between ten and fifteen million dollars. As the estates of so many millionaires, especially in the United States, have been largely squandered in fighting in the law courts, Mr. Burnum has made his will, and allows its provisions to be well-known, at the same time having it carefully examined to see if there is any legal technicality in it. In order to avoid the possibility of the usual question being raised in regard to his being sane when the testament was executed, he caused himself to be examined by three doctors at the time, each of whom swore that he was sound of mind and body. With all these precautions, the chances are that the validity of his will may yet furnish rich paying cases for some smart Yankee lawyers. Tens of thousands of dollars of the great estate of the late A. T. Stewart has had to be expended to maintain the validity of his will.