

Weekly Colonist

FRIDAY, MARCH 1st, 1899.

IGNORANT OR UNSCRUPULOUS?

The Leader of the Opposition should take his organ in hand and give it a few lessons on the functions of Lieutenant-Governors under responsible government. The ignorance it displays on the subject is really phenomenal. There is not, we feel quite certain, another newspaper in Canada, Conservative or Liberal, Grit or Tory, that has so little respect for constitutional government and the rights of the people as to invite the interference of the Governor in a trivial dispute between settlers respecting right of way. In fact the organ of the Opposition in this matter of the Saanich land dispute is utterly absurd and so opposed to the elementary principles of responsible government as to be a reproach not only to the party whose views and policy it is supposed to express, but to the intelligence of the press of the province. When it is known in the other provinces of the Dominion that there is a newspaper in British Columbia so densely ignorant or so unscrupulously factious as to invoke the authority of the Lieut.-Governor to settle a road dispute between three or four settlers, they will naturally conclude that the newspaper men of the province must be sadly in need of some one to instruct them in the first principles of constitutional government. Intelligent men will also conclude that the Opposition must be greatly wanting in either knowledge or self-respect when it does not restrain its organ from representing its members as desirous of depriving representative government of its powers and privileges. They can see, if the Times cannot, that if the Governor were to arrogate to himself the powers which the organ of the Opposition in this province claims for him the representatives of the people and those with whom they entrust, the executive power would become mere puppets.

If this Saanich matter is of such very great importance, why does not the Leader of the Opposition bring it up in the Legislative Assembly and make the Government's action upon it the ground of a resolution expressing want of confidence in the Administration? He does not do this because he very well knows that by doing so he would make a laughing-stock of himself. Yet this would be the constitutional course to pursue. He would thus get the opinion of the representatives of the people of the whole province on the subject. But the Liberal organ ignores the representatives of the people, or rather treats them with contempt, and wants the Lieut.-Governor to take action in the matter without giving the Legislative Assembly an opportunity to express an opinion upon it. We feel humiliated in having to treat this matter seriously. The stand which the Times has taken is so utterly absurd, so completely opposed to both the theory and practice of constitutional government as to make serious comment upon it appear to be unnecessary. We have in this matter, however, chosen the least offensive of the two alternatives given by the wise man with respect to answering persons of a certain class.

We have said very little about the merits of this dispute, because they are of small importance compared with the principle of appeal to the Lieut.-Governor, dragged into it by some of the disputants and encouraged for factious purposes by the organ of the Opposition, and it is fair to presume, by the members of the Opposition themselves. But it is really a case of the very weakest kind. A Saanich settler or two want more road accommodation than they enjoy, and they want it at the expense of their immediate neighbors. The Government has not seen fit to grant these requests because by doing it would do an injustice to others who have a right to be considered. This is the whole case in two sentences. We said that successive Chief Commissioners had refused to give Mr. McHugh what he asked for so persistently. The Times affirmed that we were wrong, for Mr. Smith had promised to grant the late Mr. McHugh's request. In proof of this it reproduces a letter from Mr. John, in which that gentleman informed Mr. McHugh that Mr. Smith had promised to re-open the part of the old Saanich road which Commissioner Walkem had closed. But it will be observed that it was not re-opened. The reason is given by Mr. John in his letter that appeared in Sunday's issue. When explanations were made it was found that the road which Mr. McHugh wanted to re-open was not the old Saanich road but a road through Mr. Reay's property which had never been a public road at all, and this is the road about which the present agitation is being made. So we were strictly accurate in what we said, and Mr. Gore's representations were proved by Mr. John to be correct. Mr. Reay's property is, it appears, badly cut up by roads, and the Chief Commissioners did not see that they were justified in cutting it up still further to please Mr. McHugh. But our readers must see that the dispute is not one that the Lieutenant-Governor has anything to do with. If this precedent were allowed the responsible head of the Lands and Works Department would be stripped of all authority and the Governor would be at the mercy of every litigious land owner and every irresponsible malignant crank in the country, who happened to think that his claims are of paramount importance and should be allowed no matter at what loss to others.

AN OPEN CONFESSION.

It is said that an "open confession is good for the soul." This may be, but the organ of the Opposition made a confession a day or two ago which cannot be good for its soul, for, as everyone knows, it has no soul, but which could not have been good for its reputation or for that of the Opposition, whose exponent it is. Referring to the debate on well-boring it made the following very singular admis-

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THE EASTERN BLIZZARD.

Continuation of the Cold Weather in the Northwest—Two Persons Frozen to Death. CHICAGO, Feb. 23.—The weather all over the northwest continues very cold. In Northern Iowa the thermometer ranges from 10 to 16 below. Near Loup City, Neb., two persons were frozen to death. In the upper peninsula of Michigan the storm is very severe. The wind blows 50 miles an hour and the temperature is 25 to 35 below. The railroads and country roads are blocked.

TORONTO, Feb. 23.—The weather is described as fall and slender, with blue eyes and auburn hair, decidedly beautiful and of striking presence. Although equal in manner and appearance to the titled ladies whom rumors had assigned to the Prince as a probable consort, she is of very humble origin. Her mother was a peasant woman of the Tyrol. Through the daughter's exertions the old lady was established as keeper of a pension at Presburg. In effect, the Prince seems to have made a very sensible choice and to have married into a very respectable family. The news of the marriage caused a great sensation in Darmstadt. The Prince's mother is frantic with grief over the marriage.

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb. 23.—The weather throughout Manitoba is 18 to 40 below; at Winnipeg, 20 to 30 below. New York, Feb. 23.—To-day was the coldest of the season in this state, the temperature ranging from 20 to 40 below. CHICAGO, Feb. 23.—The thermometer marked 11 below this morning.

AMERICAN NEWS.

Fatal Explosion in a Squib Factory—All the Inmates of the Building Killed. The Gas Wells of Pittsburg to Be Illuminated in Honor of President Harrison. The New States of the Union—The First Flag Raised with Four Additional Stars.

Explosion at a Squib Factory. PLYMOUTH, Pa., Feb. 25.—A frightful accident occurred at the squib factory of Mr. Powell in this city. Several kegs of powder exploded, followed by a second explosion. Eighty-four girls were employed in the building, but all but nine were killed. The explosion was caused by a defective fuse. The gas wells of Pittsburg are to be illuminated in honor of President Harrison. The new states of the Union will have four additional stars.

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THE INDIAN TITLE.

TO THE EDITOR.—Not many persons, I imagine, will contend that the Indians within the borders of the United States have a stronger or better title to the soil than those in British Columbia have. Eminent American jurists hold with the opinion of four United States judges, and have been founded the law of England on the subject of "The Indian Title"—which vests all right and title in the discovering or conquering power. Neither will it be contended that the treatment of Indians in the past by the United States government has been as just and humane as it has been under British rule. The title to the soil is a matter of satisfaction to all lovers of fair