



THE "CENT" INVADES B.C.

THEY say that the humble "cent" has reached the Pacific Coast. It was bound to roll there, sooner or later; but its coming must have been observed with sad eyes by the lordly British Columbians who have hitherto known nothing less in value than five cents. They would not have gone far astray if they had half-masted their flags on the first day of its recognition in the marts of trade. I see that some people speak of it as if it were a good thing—as if the British Columbians would now be more careful with their money—as if it might teach them thrift and economy. But this is the trite morality of failure. It is wholly a bad thing, and marks a decided descent in the scale of comfort, of prosperity and of human happiness. You can judge the standard of living of a country with remarkable accuracy by the size of its lowest fractional currency. The smallest coin in Canada is the "cent." The smallest coin in England is the farthing. That just about measures the difference between the lowest degrees of poverty in the two countries.

GO to Italy, and you find the "centesimi," which is the fifth part of one cent. You have dropped another degree in the scale. And the climate of Italy permits life to exist on terms which would be impossible in foggy England. Go to Syria, and you seem to buy worn copper coins by the handful. It is the fraction to which it pays poverty to divide its coinage, that marks the depths to which penury has sunk. We in the East have been accustomed to regard British Columbia as almost wasteful in its disregard of any differences in values below five cents; but the Italian has the same feeling with regard to us who care nothing for values below one cent. It is all relative; and I am frankly sorry to hear that the poor man in our glorious Province by the Pacific has begun to count his "coppers." The rich man, I know, has done nothing of the sort. The subscribers to the COURIER in that happy land may not even have noticed the invasion by the squalid immigrant from the pinching East. But it is the poor man who counts—in both senses of the word.

WE of the affluent classes—I can venture to strut this way under cover of a *nom de plume*—may imagine that a change like this does not affect us. We are not consciously poorer. We do not feel under any new necessity to "count our pennies." So we experience a mildly pleasurable movement of pity for "the poor"—the well-behaved and properly bathed poor, of course—who may be worse off now that their minimum of expenditure has dropped. There are few emotions—let us remark in passing—more enjoyable than purely altruistic pity. Pity reminds you so pointedly of your better condition—it adds a flavour to your enjoyments—it puts you in an attitude of being thankful for your blessings, which is exceedingly virtuous—it makes you think that you have been more deserving in some fashion which you have been too modest to note—and then the very fact that you feel pity is virtuous. So you emerge from a movement of pity literally exuding virtue and smacking your lips virtuously over your own deserved advantages; and enjoying yourself hugely.

BUT that was a digression. Let us get back to our "red cent." We were saying that the "cent" was for the poor man—not for us. Now that is a colossal mistake. We of the affluent classes ride on the backs of the poor. When they sink lower, so do we. We may not get down to reckoning up our cents; but even the roof of a house sinks when the foundations do. Lloyd-George made a very shrewd remark some time ago to the leaders of organized labour in England. He told them that they could not hope to better their position permanently, even if they "struck" ever so hard, as long as the agricultural labourer was in the pitiable condition he is. The moment they raised themselves a bit and let a little air in between their lowest ranks and the dead level of the "farm hand," that "farm hand" would swarm into the cities to occupy the empty space and drag them all back again. In economics, as in architecture, it

makes a lot of difference to the upper stories how high the basement is.

BRITISH COLUMBIA has been fighting Asiatic immigration, tooth and nail, for the reason—chiefly—that the Asiatic labourer will press down the standard of living. And in rolls the greasy "cent" over the barrier of the Rockies, and does the same thing—though not to anything like the same extent, of course. Yet there are people so stupid as to say that it will do British Columbia good—that they ought to be thankful to be taught thrift. What they ought to have done was to put a \$500 import tax on every "cent." They should have kept out the "copper" quite as jealously as the Chinaman. While they have been watching "the yellow peril," the bronze peril has arrived. It is too late now to keep back the flood. The unfortunate feature of the situation is that their defences were carried not by outside assault—but by internal treachery. The "cent" did not batter at their walls.

It was their own people who hungered for the "cent," and smuggled it in through the postern gate.

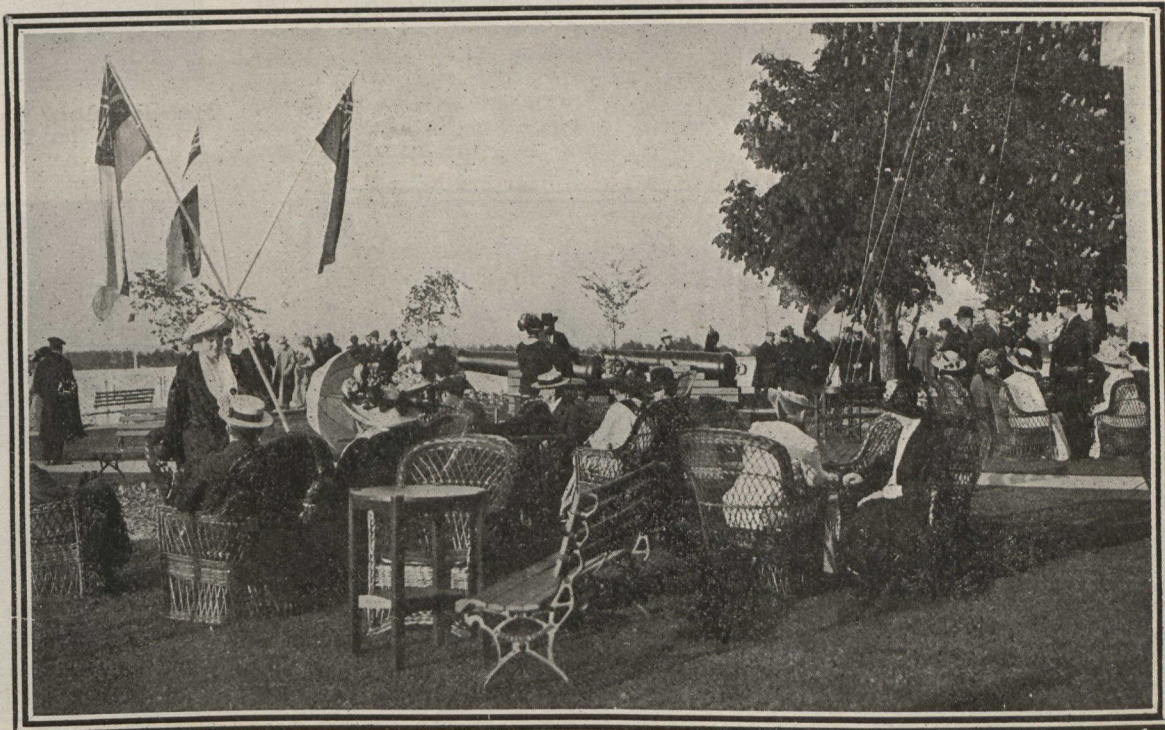
THEY have got the "cent" because they needed it. If they could not have imported it, they would have coined it. Trade and commerce had come down to splitting five-cent values; and they simply had to have the coin. There is no blinking the fact—or its causes—or its consequences. Still, you will say, they are no worse off than the Eastern Canadians have been all along. Admitted. But they have been better off. There's the rub. Eastern Canadians are perfectly happy because they have never known anything better. They have grown up on "pennies." They cut their teeth on them. They would feel lost without them. They would feel, at any rate, tremendously cheated if they had to leave a store without two cents which were coming to them because there were no such things to be had. So the Eastern standard of living has not changed. At least, not for this reason. I do not think, however, that any one of us who has visited some sections of our Eastern cities recently can hide from ourselves the fact that the "submerged tenth" of our population has sunk deeper into the mud. We have something very like "slums" to-day in the European sense—a ghastly growth we were free from until not so long ago. We have people to whom the "cent" is a larger coin than it was to any of us in the past.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Great Waterways Engineers at Toronto



Members of the International Congress of Navigation in One of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club's Fleet.



Brilliant Scene on the Lawn of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club in Honour of the Eminent Engineers. Photographs by Pringle & Booth.