

THE LAW OF LIBEL.

Many long-suffering newspaper men will be glad to know that Hon. Mr. Harcourt has at present before the Ontario Legislature a bill respecting the law of libel, which is represented as calculated to protect newspapers from the personal spleen of opponents, and also from irresponsible parties who want to levy blackmail. It also allows newspapers to join as parties to the defence persons who supply them with the information complained of. The leader of the Opposition, Mr. Meredith, supported the Bill, at the same time deprecating what he termed guttersnipe journalism. As far as we understand it, we are in favor of such a measure as the one proposed, the law of libel in the different provinces of the Dominion being unnecessarily hard on the journalist who in almost nine cases out of ten when he offends against the law is victimized by some one into whose statements unfortunately for him he has not been able to make full inquiries. The law in the case of libel may almost be said to presuppose the journalist to be guilty till he has proven himself to be innocent. We wish to see the press made as free as possible; we do not ask for license; but, as it is under the present system, it is possible for people to hurry an editor into the courts for the mere purpose of closing his mouth, which is most effectually done by the heavy bills of costs that it is possible to pile up in connection with preliminary proceedings.

SEALING MATTERS.

An Imperial order renewing the agreement with Russia for a neutral zone round the Commander Islands has been gazetted. Hon. C. H. Tupper has announced that the damages due to Canadian sealers for unwarranted seizures would be fixed as soon as the means of assessing the damages were provided. He also said that though he had seen in the press that the British Columbia sealers intended holding a meeting to protest against the conditions of the award, he did not believe that such a meeting had been held. As a matter of fact the largest sealing fleet known on the British coast had gone to sea this season. The fleet was the same as last year, and this was the largest in the history of Canadian seal fishing. Master "Charlie" Tupper is a trifle "too fresh" at times. Some of his statements are not warranted by the facts. The possibility that it should have been said both in the Imperial parliament and at Ottawa that no claims had been made on behalf of British Columbia sealers for damages done them in the last three or four years shows, too, that he and his department have been wilfully neglectful of their duty, or have by "inadvertence" pigeon-holed the representations that have time and again been made to them on this subject. It should be a positive condition of Canada's being bound by any engagements entered into between Great Britain and Russia and Great Britain and the United States, that a settlement of the sealers' claims be first considered and adjusted. If this be not the case, of what use is it to be British subjects?

Time and again for the mere sake of Imperial policy have we been seriously disadvantaged, and what have we received but neglect and rebuff?

OPPOSITION TRADE POLICY.

Gradual free trade seems to be the policy into which the Liberal party have at last subsided. It was at one time free trade pure and adulterated, whose praises they were accustomed to sing. Then came, on the part of what was then known as the Parti National of Quebec, certain demands for modified protection to local industries; but this did not meet with the views of Sir Richard Cartwright, who persisted in a tariff for revenue only, with a leaning towards free trade on the British jugg-handled principle of giving everything to others and securing no equivalent concession in return. It was a case of all give. Then, as an offset to the National Policy, all they were disposed to offer was unrestricted reciprocity, and, this failing, Mr. Laurier has recently come out with a declaration that the policy of his party when it gets into power will be one of gradual free trade. So far, so good; but the public may rest assured that it will be the same old jug with only one handle, and that to be used by outsiders to the detriment of our own industrial and other interests. However, the Liberals, no matter what their talk, do not seem to think that, however it may be susceptible of modification in detail, the principles of the tariff will be changed for years to come.

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

THE Boundary Commissioners both of Canada and the United States are on the way to the scene of their labors, and, as past experience has shown—will be materially aided by the use of phototopography.

It is to be noted, and we do so with great pleasure, that the debentures of the city of Vancouver have recently been marketed at the good price of 102.56, which speaks well for the estimation in which the paper of the Terminal City is regarded by financiers.

THE tests of the Marine Railway which has been inaugurated at Esquimalt have been highly satisfactory and those connected with it express confidence that it will be the means of materially reducing the delays and expenditures incidental to treatment at the graving dock. Two representative vessels have already been handled, the work having been accomplished satisfactorily and expeditiously.

THE Behring Sea Bill has passed the United States Congress and has received the President's sanction, while its British counterpart is almost in as forward a condition. Still, however, it is to be hoped, there will have been such conditions to its passage arranged as shall prevent the possibility of official outrages being perpetrated upon sealers, as many people here know to their sorrow were the experiences of the past.

At a meeting recently held in Toronto, steps were taken by a number of gentlemen interested in mining, towards the formation of a Dominion association to cover the different branches of the industry. In Quebec and Nova Scotia there is considerable talk about federating and there is little doubt that the movement will be a successful one. Those who are concerned in the business in this Province would no doubt be advantaged by the departure.

THE Victoria City Health Officers did well, on the arrival here of the steamer Mogul to, as it were, ignore the certificate of good health given by the quarantine officer and subject her Asiatic passengers to a course of baths and disinfection at the suspect station. We cannot do too much to provide against small-pox and other Oriental diseases with which we are not unfrequently brought into contact by the arrival of vessels from countries where they almost always prevail to a greater or less extent.

WE observe that the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association of New York, is again in the courts, the Imperial Bank having secured from the court at Toronto an order for the examination of President Harper and others of its officers. The bank holds a policy of \$10,000 on the life of John Black, of Fergus, who died in Liverpool in August, 1892. The company say he committed suicide and refuse to pay. The bank is bound to make the Mutual Reserve cash up, if there be any possibility of compelling this would-be recalcitrant to carry out its obligations.

It is worthy of note that the establishment of the Canadian Australian steamship line has proved to have been beneficial although it is not yet a year since it was inaugurated. In 1892, the exports from Canada to New South Wales—principally undressed lumber—amounted to £10,655. They reached during 1893, £33,706, while the imports from New South Wales to Canada, which in 1892 totalled £37, were in 1893, £8,374. And these are the figures from only one of the colonies. How much the expansion of trade with the other political divisions of the Australian continent and with all the islands of the seas will amount to, it is impossible to say; but they will no doubt prove to have been considerable.

MR. BRACKMAN, of the well known Brackman & Ker Milling Co., who has recently returned from Honolulu, has formed the idea that before long the Hawaiian Islands will be large consumers of British Columbia products, while sugar, coffee and sisal growing are becoming important branches of industrial development. There is no rope or twine, that we are aware of, made in this Province, and, did we obtain sisal from Hawaii, an industry of large proportions might be established among us. In this connection, we observe—though we are not in the vicinity of the great Canadian wheat fields—that the North Western Cordage Company, of St. Paul, Minn., proposes, if sufficient inducements are offered, to start at Winnipeg a binding twine and rope factory with \$50,000 capital and a capacity of 12,000 pounds of binding twine per day.