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Canadian Illustrated News.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 1874.

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MISSION.

Mr. EDGAR's mission to British Columbia has proved a decided failure. We confess we should have been considerably astonished had it turned out otherwise. The whole business has been characterized by an amount of bungling which leads us to look forward to the verification in this instance of the old saying; *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*. Throughout there have been mis-statements and mis-understandings which could lead to only one result, ignominious failure. Mr. EDGAR has returned in the unenviable character of a baffled diplomat who owes not a little of his want of success to his own want of tact. The British Columbians have allowed the valuable advantages offered them to slip through their fingers, and have to thank their own obstinacy, in great measure, for their loss. Mr. MACKENZIE has added nothing to his reputation for penetration and sagacity; and as he took the conduct of the whole matter into his own hands, he is not in a position to lay any of the blame upon his colleagues. Of course the inevitable rule in such cases is true in this. No one of the responsible parties is willing for one instant to admit that he acted with anything but the most consummate tact and skill. The British Columbians hold Mr. MACKENZIE and his envoy answerable for the failure of the negotiations. Mr. MACKENZIE and his supporters lay all the blame at the door of the British Columbians. And, as is once more the rule in such cases,

there is right and wrong on both sides. We are aware that we stand almost alone in this view of the case. Party journals, according to their inveterate practice, have contented themselves with merely sifting the evidence in so far as it exculpates their side, and have proceeded to sum up against their opponents. A careful review of the facts of the matter should give a different result.

In February last Mr. EDGAR was sent to British Columbia to confer with the Local Administration of that Province upon certain public questions with which it was concerned, and especially upon that of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He took with him a letter from Mr. MACKENZIE introducing him to the British Columbian Premier, Mr. WALKER. As much rests upon this letter, we quote the passage relating to Mr. EDGAR in full. "Allow me," Mr. MACKENZIE wrote, "to introduce Mr. JAMES D. EDGAR, of Toronto, who visits your Province on public business for the Government. Mr. EDGAR will confer with yourself and other members of the Government of Columbia on the questions lately agitating the public mind in Columbia, and will be glad to receive your views regarding the policy of the Government on the construction of the Railway. But for the meeting of Parliament in four weeks, some member of the Government would have visited your Province, but Mr. EDGAR as a public man is well known here and fully understands the questions he will discuss with you." On the 8th May Mr. EDGAR presented the proposals of the Dominion Government, but, (we quote from the Government organ at Ottawa) "in accordance with the instructions from Ottawa he proposed much more." So far, good. But unfortunately Mr. EDGAR had no credentials beyond Mr. MACKENZIE's letter, already quoted. On receipt of this Mr. WALKER appears to have jumped at the conclusion that Mr. EDGAR was desirous of making some definite arrangement, and accordingly asked for his credentials. He replied as follows: "In reply to your request that I should submit your proposals for a change in the railway clause of the Terms of Union, to the Local Administration for their consideration and acceptance, I have the honour to inform you that I am not in the position to advise His Excellency the Lieut-Governor in Council to treat such proposals officially, nor can I tender such advice until I shall be informed that you have been specially accredited to act in the matter as the agent of the General Government, and that they will consider your acts or negotiations in the matter binding upon them."

Now all that Mr. MACKENZIE stated in his letter was that Mr. EDGAR was authorized to "confer" (not to conclude); to "receive your views," (not to make any definite arrangement.) So far it is evident that on Mr. WALKER lies the greater part of the blame. He had totally misconstrued the terms of the Premier's letter. It was all nonsense to talk about Mr. EDGAR's acts or negotiations being binding upon the Dominion Government, when he had no power to do anything beyond to confer with the British Columbia Cabinet and to receive their views. At this step, however, Mr. EDGAR shows his unfitness for the mission he had undertaken. Instead of displaying the coolness and tact that are indispensable to the successful diplomat, he flies into a passion, and writes an indignant letter to the British Columbian Premier. Mr. WALKER replies, with a courtesy and coolness that contrast strangely with the Canadian envoy's heat. He says: "Mr. MACKENZIE in an 'unofficial—and in his only—letter to me respecting your visit has expressly narrowed and confined the object of your mission to the holding of a personal interview with my colleagues and myself in order that our views regarding the policy of the Government on the construction of the railway' should be ascertained without tedious and possibly unsatisfactory correspondence." "I quote his words. These things having been done, the special aim desired, I may be permitted to think, has been attained by Mr. MACKENZIE."

Here it will be seen that Mr. WALKER changes his ground slightly. But he still goes on to ask "for your official authority for appearing in the role of an agent contracting for the Dominion of Canada." We utterly fail to see what was the necessity for this. Just as we are unable to understand the object of Mr. EDGAR's blustering letter. The latter had received and fulfilled his mission. Mr. WALKER expressly states as much. The views of the Cabinet had been ascertained "without tedious and possibly unsatisfactory correspondence." It was not for Mr. EDGAR to judge, in the face of the snubbing he received, whether the "views" communicated to him were satisfactory or not. The information required once obtained, it was his business to make up his report and go home. In the same way it was none of Mr. WALKER's business, after he had recognized, and complied with the terms of, the Canadian Premier's letter, to persist in harping on the subject of the official authority of the Canadian envoy. The business of the mission was concluded—though not as satisfactorily as would have been desired;

and there was no necessity either for Mr. EDGAR to vent his ill-humour in peevish letters, or for Mr. WALKER to blazon abroad his distaste for Confederation by assuming the authoritative airs of a parish beadle.

As for Mr. MACKENZIE's share in these transactions, we are unable to see how he is to be held blameless. Even the *Globe* itself, though it has never chronicled any false step on the part of the Premier, will not attempt to make us believe that he is infallible and impeccable. Assuming as he did the sole conduct of the matter he is personally responsible for his envoy's mistakes. But altogether apart from this there are certain points on which Mr. MACKENZIE, and Mr. MACKENZIE alone, is to blame. In the first place the selection of Mr. EDGAR as envoy to the Pacific throws little credit on the Premier's powers of discernment. The appointment was evidently made on purely political grounds, without any regard for the fitness of the appointee. With the mere fact of the political nature of the appointment, we have, as things go, no fault to find. But we venture to submit that there are among Mr. MACKENZIE's deserving supporters many men of greater ability than Mr. EDGAR, who would have fulfilled the delicate mission to British Columbia in a manner creditable alike to themselves and to their employers, and satisfactory both to the country at large and the Province in particular. Again, why did Mr. MACKENZIE omit to furnish his commissioner with credentials from the proper department? Taking into consideration the character and object of the mission this was, perhaps, not absolutely necessary. But knowing, as he did, the peculiar difficulties that had to be overcome, it was his duty to employ every means in his power to bring about a harmonious agreement. The British Columbians have already been once bitten in their dealings with Ottawa, and it is only natural that they should be more than usually cautious in treating with the Dominion authorities. Foreseeing this the Premier was, in our opinion, guilty of a huge blunder when he sent off Mr. EDGAR unfurnished with the proper official documents. Once more why does Mr. MACKENZIE arrogate to himself the powers of other departments than that immediately under his charge? To be Premier is not to be the entire Cabinet. Mr. MACKENZIE, great as he unquestionably is, is not yet in a position to say, "L'État c'est moi." A story is told of HANDEL that he once ordered dinner for six at a coffee house, and at the appointed hour turned up alone. The waiter hesitated to serve up the banquet, and on being asked the reason for the delay replied that he was waiting for the company. Serve up the dinner at once, shouted the maestro in a rage, "I am de company!" We fear Mr. MACKENZIE's indulgence of his appetite for power will serve him the same trick the musician's appetite played with him. It will give him indigestion.

Mr. Legge in his interesting report of the preliminary explorations made by him on the shores of Georgian Bay and eastwards, for railway connection with the cities of Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec, took occasion to give some slight indication of several sites which will probably before long be considered suitable for important towns and cities. As this country has seen under the Upper Canada compact, now passed away and almost forgotten, quite enough of the practice of forestalling occupancy of public emplacements of this nature, we would invite the attention of the authorities of Ontario, in which these sites principally occur, and who we do not for a moment suppose have any besides public-spirited intentions in regard to them, to the desirability of determining the exact location of these lake and terminal cities, by communication with the railway surveyors, and in due time of having the city lots disposed of by public auction, with the usual stipulations for duties of settlement. We have a vision of cities with wide, handsome streets, and plenty of commerce to keep the life in them, where now the mink and beaver have things all to themselves.

We have no intention to go into a discussion of the proposed Reciprocity Treaty in advance of positive information supplied by Government, but if it be true that the Americans are unwilling to yield to us a share of their coasting trade, it cannot be amiss to suggest that we, too, must hold firmly to our rights in this matter. In any scheme of reciprocity mutual concessions must, of course, be made, but Canada need show no undue eagerness in that direction. Our present inferiority to the Americans in population, extent of commerce, and development of resources should not be made an argument of weakness in the negotiation. Rather should that circumstance incite us to a spirit of independence and proud reliance on ourselves. The experience of the abrogation of the Treaty of 1854 ought never to be forgotten.

The hot weather has come at last, and we find traces of its effects in the editorial columns of the newspapers. Timely topics are scarce, and the heavy political writer is