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In an article which appeared in Tuesday morning's impression of this journal we hastily sketched a plan upon which it seemed to us expedient to remodel our County Court system. To-day we propose discussing at greater length the details of the scheme, with a view to show more clearly the benefit that may be expected to flow from it; not only to the public in the way of having their business more efficiently attended to, but also to the revenue. It will be remembered that we suggested that some of the County Court officers should be paid partly by fees, that is to say, a percentage on the fees collected. At the first blush this may appear objectionable; a little reflection, however, will convince anyone that no better method could be adopted for securing the collection by the officers of the Court of all fees that ought to be collected, and the consequent payment into the Colonial exchequer of the proportion payable to the Government Under the present system, we may say, without imputing anything more than carelessness, that returns that should be made for the protection of the public, as for instance in the case of Joint Stock Companies, and fees payable thereon to the holders office and other fees that might be exacted and ought to be, and returns thereof made, are overlooked, to the loss of the revenue. By giving the officers of the Court a direct pecuniary interest in the collection of the proper fees, according to all experience there will be but little probability of any being lost; but it may be said, by giving the officers of the Court a proportion of all fees they may collect you hold out a premium for extortion from unfortunate litigants. To obviate any such result we propose that eaah Deputy or District Registrar should make quarterly returns to the Registrar, and the Chief Clerk being paid partly by fees, would, out of respect to his own interest, scrutinize the returns very closely and see that fees returnable by the deputies and all other fees are paid; and the Chief Clerk in turn would be subject to the supervision of the Registrar, whose pay would be a fixed sum. Then again the County Judge, having also an interest in the fees, would direct the attention of the Registrar to his fees which should be collected, and the Chief Justice wouind exercise his surveillance over the whole. The double result of the system would thus be protection to the public from extortionate charges, and a security that all court fees, payable to the revenue, would be paid. The County Court Judges should occupy positions in every respect as independent as that of the chief judges of the Supreme Court. We do not speak of independence in declaring and administering the law. The controlling power of a superior jurisdiction is always a wholesome check; but we allude to their tenure of office. They should, like the other judges, hold office during good behaviour, and not be subject either to discharge or suspension, except under such circumstances as would justify the suspension or removal from office of one of the Supreme Judges. The Registrar and Chief Clerks should also hold office during good behaviour, and be liable to suspension or removal by the Governor only. To ensure uniformity in practice, the proceedings of the County Courts should be regulated by the judges, the Chief Justice being one; and the mode of conducting the business of the Court in its different offices should be regulated by the Registrars or any two of them, subject to the orders of the Judges or any two of them, as above. Each Registrar should be the head of his own Department, and, subject to the orders of the Judges or any two of them, have absolute control over his own office. If we had courts constituted in the manner we have indicated we would be in a position to introduce a much needed reform in the law as it affects the County Courts. Perhaps very few outside of the legal profession are aware of the mixed up, muddled state in which this portion of the law is. To draw attention to it, we republish to-day, a letter which appeared in our columns on the 23rd day of January last. It sufficiently ventilates the subject to render it unnecessary for us to dwell longer on the point. The truth is, no one but a lawyer can find his way through the labyrinthine mazes of the County Court law. The ordinary reader would soon become mystified by sections of Acts, old and new, repealed and unrepealed; some Acts are repealed in part, and frequently a highly unintelligible clause is inserted in our own ordinances to the effect that 'so much of a certain Act *as is applicable* to the Colony, shall be in force etc.' Without exception, the Acts introduced are English, to which no one but a lawyer is likely to have access. But if others could see and read them for themselves, the insurmountable difficulty would still exist, viz., what part is applicable to the Colony? and what part is not? We suspect that the framers of such concise and unintelligible Acts as we refer to had not a very clear idea themselves of what they wished to do, and hence adopted the vague language above quoted. There is clap trap about legislation as well as other things, and when members of the Council are bent upon doing something, but don't know what it is they want to reform, or how to do it, they generally wind up with a beautifully vague and mysterious clause like the above, or the words 'and otherwise.' These last are supposed to be very comprehensive, so comprehensive, indeed as to make up for any deficiencies in the context Now, the benefit that would result from our scheme is that we should then have proper persons to act as Courts of Justice, Sessions, Chairmen of Courts, that public convenience renders very necessary. To these Courts, which would consist of a Chairman and the other Justices then assembled, appeals would lie against the decisions of Magistrates. The Court should sit at least every three months. As to the outlying districts, we think the state of the country and its finances do not justify the retention of a number of Stipendiary salaried Magistrates. If one or two respectable and influential men were appointed Justices of the Peace in such places as it might be necessary to have Justices of the Peace, any cases that might arise would receive proper attention, and the Court may be put to no expense. These men, of course, would not be professional men; and if through ignorance of the law any mistake is made by them, the party aggrieved (if confirmed) shall have the right to make an application forthwith to the County Court Judge to be admitted to bail; and if such Judge be dissatisfied with the decision of the Magistrate, he shall have the power to release the prisoner on bail, conditional for his appearance at the ensuing Quarter Sessions. As to Victoria, her population and general importance render it necessary that a Stipendiary Magistrate should be stationed there. As the other towns increase in size and importance the same measure may be necessary for them; but in the present state of affairs it is simply nonsense and useless extravagance to supply them with paid magistrates. The Stipendiary Magistrate in Victoria, when stripped of his powers and duties as County Court Judges will still have his hands full in performing the duties pertaining to that office and acting as Superintendent of the Jail, as Coroner and as Police Commissioner. We close our observations on this scheme by admitting the great difficulty that our present form of Government lies in the way of making any reform, however much needed. No one can dispute the propriety of putting competent men on the bench, but the stumbling-block is the unwillingness to deprive existing Judges of their office. Private interests should not be too much considered in attempting to do something for the public good. Every good reform is made at the sacrifice of the interests of a few. Especially does this hold true in an English Crown Colony, which ever has been and ever will be the theatre of political speculation for all impoverished but influential office-hunters. When once such men get office—no matter how ill qualified they may be for it—there is no form of Government under which it is so difficult to remove them as the Government of a Crown Colony, and British Columbia is to all intents and purposes a Crown Colony. They cannot be got rid of without compensation. Well, be it so. Let the Government give them some money: give them some land, and let them go in peace. Let something be done to meet the requirements of the times—viz., increased efficiency in the public service and retrenchment in the expenditure. And although we have expressed our conviction that the office of Registrar should be held by a professional man—which opinion we still hold—yet to make provision for the present County Court Judges whose services would be dispensed with, we say let them have the option of such compensation as above mentioned, or the position of Court Registrars. Subsequent vacancies should be filled by professional men only.

'I'm afloat!'—The wreck of the Delaware floated at midnight on Wednesday, the 'camels' bearing their part of the service admirably. Yesterday the Enterprise towed the bark into Esquimalt, where she will be repaired.

Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

This Society met yesterday in Smith's Hall, W F Tolmie, Esq, in the Chair. Among the other gentlemen present we observed Messrs Robert Burnaby, J D Pemberton, H Jackson, J Fell, J P Davies, W S S Green, A Watson, James Lowe, H C Bales, J Clayton and Mr Portway.

Dr Tolmie, in taking the Chair, said that the Society was instituted in 1861, and continued until 1865, when there was a collapse, as there was of many other quite as important objects. The Society was revived, however, and last year there was a very successful Show. The President strongly advocated the formation of a Farmer's Club, where the farmers might meet for an interchange of ideas. He did not think there was any use in writing anonymous letters to the papers reflecting upon the Society; at the same time the Society would be glad to hear any suggestions that might be offered by any one.

The Treasurer (Mr Burnaby) read a statement of the receipts and expenditures for 1868, and produced the vouchers therefor. The accounts show a balance on hand of $106 06. The report was passed unanimously.

The Secretary read the prize list for the ensuing Show, which amounts to $889 50,—not including $100 donated by the Governor.

The President suggested that a prize be offered for the best preserved Salmon in tins. Carried.

Mr Davies moved that a prize be added for the best Island made plough and harrow. Carried.

Mr Jackson moved that a prize be given for the best fanning-mill made on the Island. Carried.

Mr Fell—That a liberal premium be offered for the best firkin of butter made on the Island, weighing not less than 80lbs. Carried.

Mr Clayton—That a prize be given for the finest collection of plants on exhibition. Carried.

J P Davies—That a prize be given for the best pair of ladies' shoes and gentlemens' boots made on the Island of Island leather.

A long discussion ensued on this motion as to the propriety of introducing manufactured articles not strictly for agricultural use. The motion was finally carried.

Mr Green—That a prize be offered for the best 100 flower pots and bricks made on the Island. Carried.

Mr Pemberton—That for the best drain tiles a prize be given. Carried.

A suggestion was here made that no prize be awarded for any articles not placed on exhibition unless there were two or more competitors. After a long discussion it was decided to leave the matter entirely to the discretion of the Committee.

Mr Burnaby said he had a proposition to make which he believed would increase the interest taken in the exhibitions of the Society, and would stimulate us to greater exertions by increasing the competition, besides cultivating a good feeling with our neighbors. He would therefore move 'that the prizes offered by this Society, with the exception of those for Colonial productions [marked special in the list] be open to the competition of the residents of Puget Sound and other ports of Washington Territory.'

Mr Fell seconded the resolution.

Mr Portway thought the Colony too young to compete with Washington Territory.

The President—Even if we are, let us have the benefit of the experience and knowledge of our neighbors [hear.]

Mr Clayton thought the stock sent over for exhibition might find purchasers.

Mr Pemberton said the Government should be applied to to admit the articles sent over to the show free of duty.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Messrs Lowe, Burnaby, and the Hon Secretary [Mr Bales], were appointed a Committee to collect subscriptions, and the meeting then adjourned.

Death of 'Whiskey John.'—John Livermore, known for many years here as 'Whiskey John,' died yesterday at the Hospital of a dropsical complaint. Livermore was a native of the United States, aged about 50 years. He came to the Colony in 1858 from California, having been a hotelkeeper at Placerville, in that State, where he is said to have had respectable connections. During the ten years that he figured in this locality he must have served out fifty short terms of imprisonment for selling whiskey to Siwashes: Contemporaneous with John Butts and 'Liverpool Jack,' 'Whiskey John' excelled both as a salesman among the Indians, and has probably poisoned more natives than any other man, living or dead, on this northern coast. As an instance of retributive justice, we may state that Livermore has fallen a victim to the very vice he encouraged in his fellow-men—drunkenness. Death found him in a state of wretchedness. His end was miserable, and his departure hence is not regretted.

The Men Missing from Nanaimo.—A boat returned to Nanaimo after a search of seven days, but found no tidings of the three men who left for Burrard Inlet on New Year's Day. It is uncertain whether a boat has been found up the coast or not; the report that one had been found was given by the Indians.

Flybynights.—The two hobbledehoys, arrested by officer Cudlip on a charge of behaving in a disorderly manner in the public streets, were brought before the Magistrate yesterday for trial. The officer testified that he saw the two prisoners, with a number of other boys, looking in at the windows and knocking at the door of Mrs Nunn's house, when they saw the officer they took to their heels. Mrs Nunn complained of constant annoyance from the young scapegraces. The prisoners were fully recognized by the witness.

The Magistrate—(To one of the boys.) Are you guilty or not guilty?

Prisoner—I never tied no weights to the door.

Magistrate—I didn't ask you what you did. Are you guilty or not guilty?

Prisoner—(In the gentle accents of a sucking dove.) Guilty.

Magistrate—(To the other boy.) How do you plead?

Prisoner—Well, I was up there, but I never had nothink to do with it; I was passink at the time.

Magistrate—Then you're not guilty.

Prisoner—No, Sir.

The Officer—I noticed this young man in particular; he was one of the biggest boys there.

The prisoner was convicted. The employers of the lads gave them a good char acter.

Sergeant Bowden said there were frequent complaints brought to him of the illconduct of gangs of boys, who roamed through the streets at all hours of the night.

The Magistrate gave the lads some wholesome advice. He thought a good flogging would do them more good than any other punishment; but as he had not the power to order that to be done, for the protection of the public he felt it to be his duty to make an example of the boys in custody. He therefore ordered them to find two sureties in $25 each to be of good behaviour for six months; in default, to suffer 14 days' imprisonment.

Legislative Council.—Mr Walkem gave notice of motion yesterday for leave to bring in a Bill for the appointment of Commissioners to take affidavits in this Colony; a very good measure, and one that will save very heavy expenditure in cases where the witness would otherwise require to travel perhaps from one end of the Colony to the other. The Mineral Lands Bill again came before the House in Committee of the Whole, but the progress made was very small, only two clauses, with a variety of amendments, having passed. It was definitely settled, however, that a prospecting license should cover five thousand acres for a company of ten persons, with a right to an ultimate grant of two thousand five hundred acres. Liberal enough in all conscience! The subsequent discussion mainly rested upon the quantity of land to be granted to silver mining companies and those exploring for the baser metals other than coal. No definite conclusion was come to when the Committee rose. During the discussion the Attorney General remarked, 'I had drawn up the report of the Mineral Lands Committee as embodying the general views of the Committee as I understood them. I have since had reason to believe that it did not meet them in all respects Individual opinions (as must frequently happen with all honest enquiries into so complicated and important a matter) of course differed on specific points, but it was impossible to divide the report which embodied these general views. This report I submitted as it evinced in an unmistakeable manner the very liberal spirit with which the Government had entered into the great question of our Mineral Lands.' The Governor's message, No. 3, covered Ordinance for Supplies, which was read a first time. The Council then adjourned till 1 p m to-day.

'Half-breed' Whiskey Selling at Nanaimo.—An item which appeared in our issue of the 16th inst, as we said might probably be the case, would seem to misrepresent the statements of Capt Spalding, Magistrate at Nanaimo, in relation to the sale of spirits to half-breeds. It appears several complaints had been made to the Magistrate about whiskey, etc, being sold to half-breed *children from eight to ten years old*, the whiskey purchased being for Indians and Indian women living with white men. It was after these complaints that the Magistrate intimated to those holding liquor licenses that it was improper and unlawful to sell to children under a certain age, and that the occurrence of such cases as had been reported to him he was bound to notice, and if possible put a stop to them. We learn from a source of undoubted credibility that there is good ground for the interference of the Magistrate in this matter, and that his warning to those concerned is to be commended.

On the Rocks.—Capt Clarke, of the Sir James Douglas, reports seeing the schooner Black Diamond, bound for Victoria with a cargo of Nanaimo coal, ashore yesterday in the Rapids and making water freely. A schooner had gone from Nanaimo to the assistance of the distressed vessel.

Municipal Council.

Tuesday, Jan. 26.

Council met at 7 p.m. Present—His Worship the Mayor and Councillors Gibbs, Allatt, McKay, Allsop and Gerow.

Communication in reply to Council's communication to the Governor, asking for the use of the chaingang, requesting that the application be made to the Surveyor General. Received and filed.

Communication from Chief Engineer of the Victoria Fire Department enclosing his report. The Chief reports all the apparatus ready for service; the cisterns require cleaning and two new ones should be built. The Department is $600 in debt and not a cent in hand. Since August four fires have occurred. The effective force is 136 men. The Deluge and Tiger houses need repairs, and the Hook and Ladder house should be removed to a more suitable locality. The purchase of 500 feet of hose is recommended. The annual expenses of the Department are $3000.

Two accounts—one for printing, $77, and one from Harrison & Co. for $4. Referred.

Mr Allatt, from the Street Committee, reported that three men were employed on the public streets; that Yates street had been repaired, and the Committee were about to commence on other thoroughfares. He applied for another man and the use of a dump-cart and horse. Application granted.

Account of $12 from McMillan & Co. was passed.

Council then adjourned till Tuesday next.

The Street Repairs.—The City Fathers are moving in earnest toward thoroughly repairing the streets. Men are employed t blast and break rock for that purpose. The Corporation, we also hear, have it in contemplation to close Waddington alley, if the owners refuse to render it passable. The streets and sidewalks will soon be placed in such a comple e state of repair as to render the city a point of attraction for visitors from abroad.

From Nanaimo.—The steamer Sir James Douglas, Capt Clarke, returned from Nanaimo yesterday, bringing a few passengers and a quantity of produce. The Douglas towed out the ship Shooting Star laden with 1000 tons of coal for San Francisco. The schooner Favorite sailed from Nanaimo for Sitka yesterday with 150 tons of coal for the United States Government.

Nova Scotia.

Halifax, Dec 18.—The *Chronicle* of this evening ridicules the reported 'better terms' to Nova Scotia. It says Canada could not, if she would, and would not if she could, grant such terms as would satisfy the people of Nova Scotia. This evening's *Citizen* (E M Macdonald's paper) has an article on the prospects of repeal. It takes up the record of each member of the new British Cabinet, and argues that all, except Mr Bright, have opposed the Nova Scotia petitions in the past. If Mr Bright was in the Colonial office, he might be able to do something; but, as President of the Board of Trade, he will not have the power to influence the Cabinet in favor of Nova Scotia. The writer thinks there are little hopes of success, but agrees with the *Chronicle*, to which he is replying, that the resolutions of the Assembly should be submitted to the new Cabinet. The *Citizen* does not commit itself to another delegation to England.

The Marseilles Poisoning Case.

A *cause celebre* is being at present tried at Aix, says the Pall Mall *Gazette* of the 7th, where widows Ville, Salvago and Gabriel are accused of having poisoned their husbands. Marie Magdeleine Florence Baptistine Olive Colombe Dye, widow, Gabriel's mother; Palmyre Palmyre Louise Flavol, her cousin; Fanny Lamberte, a fortune-teller; and Joye, a seller of herbs, stand at the bar as accomplices. The women accused of having administered poison had nothing much to complain of; their husbands do not appear to have treated them badly, but they all had lovers, of whom they were more or less jealous.

The first step of these misguided women was to have recourse to the fortune-teller, Lambete, who, divining their wishes, recommended them to Joye, who possessed a powder which would enable them to get rid of their husbands. After a little bargaining about the price this powder changed hands, and the unfortunate men who stood in the way of the profligacy of the accused widows were poisoned with belladona and arsenic. The widow Gabriel, on being asked by the judge if anyone beside Joye had encouraged her to poison her husband, replied that her cousin, Louise Flavol, knew all about it, and persuaded her to commit the crime, adding that, in order that she might succeed, she should offer a candle to the Virgin, and this she did. The Judge next asked what had passed between her and her mother after the murder? Widow Gabriel answered that her mother expressed a wish to get rid of her husband also, so she recommended Joye, and they went together to visit that person. It should be mentioned that widow Gabriel was a natural daughter of the woman Dye, and no relation to the intended victim.