

The Colonist.

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CONDITIONS IN RUSSIA.

Mr. Wildover Johnson writes to the Albany Review, of London, to give a picture of conditions in Russia. It is a terrible one. He speaks of "the endless procession of overcrowded trains bearing away to the great rubbish heap of Siberia the best blood, brain and spirit of the land." He tells of the countless numbers of homeless and famishing peasants, of burning villages and country houses, of thousands of foundlings that are thrown from the great Moscow hospital into the river that flows past its walls. He pictures the awful famishing, religious and political, that infests the land, and asks us to ponder over the tremendous waste of the elements of nationhood implied in these things. He says that so far from the autocracy having been weakened by the political events of the past three years, it has really been strengthened, for the Duma, instead of being a check to absolutism, has really proved its tool.

Mr. Johnson thinks that nothing can save the autocracy. The peasants have lost faith in the Czar and openly curse him, and in many parts of the country they are asserting control over their landlords and the officials as well. Bands of outlaws traverse the country. They are composed of deserters from the army and the ever-increasing number of the unemployed, creating numbers of the means of living, but their homes as well have resorted to robbery as the only means of getting a living. The peasants are clamoring to be armed that they may overthrow their oppressors. The outlaws issue proclamations, and drive out the officials and landlords. Mr. Johnson is not hopeful for the future, although he does not profess to know how many hours have yet to run before the dawn, but he says the struggle that has begun will continue until the children of the present generation achieve freedom.

A FREE TRADE CONGRESS.

Those who imagined that Mr. Asquith would content himself with a passive resistance to the tariff movement have learned the contrary. He not only proposed to lead the movement of the reformers, but to take part in an aggressive campaign. Next July there is to be a free trade congress in London, at which all of the leading nations will be represented, and the prime minister of the United Kingdom will be present. Mr. Asquith and Mr. Franklin Pierce, the latter representing the United States, will be the chief speakers. The congress will be held in London, and the aim of the congress will be to prove that the protective system tends to force capital and labor from natural and profitable into forced and unprofitable employments, artificially raises the cost of commodities, and feels the advantages accruing from the division of labor, reduces foreign trade and tends to isolate the country from the rest of the world; that free trade is the only system under which capital and labor find their most profitable fields for employment; that increased excess of imports over exports is a sign of British wealth and not of decay, and that the prosperous nations import more than they export, while, on the other hand, an excess of exports is a sure sign of indebtedness. It will be contended that just as the free trade system makes the United Kingdom to take the utmost possible advantage of periods of prosperity so it enables the country to meet all phases of reaction and adversity with less strain on her resources than any of the protected countries, and that any change in or modification of the commercial policy of the country would prove in the highest degree inexpedient and disastrous.

The American delegates will be invited to tell the British electors all about the free trade system that prevails between state and state, and along the two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, and of the very large tonnage which is required to meet the internal demand.

But the free traders are not to have their own way, for the tariff reformers are arranging for a series of rival meetings at which they will set forth their views. This is a very timely and doubtless profitable campaign, which inaugurated. Great interest will center around these rival demonstrations and their effect upon public opinion will be very closely watched. It is significant of the interest taken in fiscal matters in the United Kingdom that it is possible during the heat of summer to secure the presence in London of so many of the leaders of both the political parties as the conference and the counter demonstration will call for, if they are to be at all successful.

A TAX ON BACHELORS.

The city council of Columbia, Missouri, has imposed a tax of \$10 a year on every unmarried man resident in that city. The age limit is from thirty to fifty, the inference being that a young fellow ought to have until he is fifty to look around and that when a bachelor passes fifty no woman is likely to want to marry him. Prof. E. Elkins, of the state university, thinks the new law is just what it ought to be, although it will apply to himself and one hundred and nineteen other members of the faculty. He says: "It is one of my ideas of future city government, the regulation of marriage. Truly, no man in good health and mind should remain a bachelor. I only remain single because I have not found my affinity. There are ten dozen bachelors in Columbia, entirely unnecessary. There are twenty dozen handsome, frugal women here of marriageable age. None of them would suit me seems to be suited with me, for I would be glad to marry if I could find the right woman. Many of my bachelor friends would do likewise. All we need is the affinity."

Now to many people it will occur that if bachelors are to be taxed the law should take cognizance of the fact that many males are not amenable to the charms of the people of the male persuasion as some of the latter might desire, for there is not much comfort to the young man who wants to be married but cannot find a girl to

have him, to be secured by Dr. Elkins that in fifty years, from now every man will by the time he is twenty-one have discovered his affinity. The doctor is inclined not to trust too much to the affinity business, for he proposes to have a commission appointed to report on all people at the age of twenty-one and condemn to single blessedness those that are unfit to marry.

While it is admitted that several of the aldermen of Columbia have pretty much the same idea, it is denied emphatically that the city council has been actuated by any other object than to replenish the city finances.

POLITICAL GOSSIP

To judge from those Eastern papers which are near enough to the Capital to be able to get long daily stories of what is transpiring around Ottawa, there is plenty of political gossip going nowadays. In one sense the readers of Western papers are the gainers by not having the opportunity of perusing these diurnal screeds, which are neither consistent with themselves nor with each other, but the principle that where there is much smoke there is probably some fire, we seem warranted in inferring that there is a good deal of hard thinking being done in high places. Some time ago, when every one was talking about a dissolution, the Colonist said that the Premier had come until Sir Wilfrid Laurier had had time to perfect a new platform. The Toronto World-Ottawa Impartial says that the Premier is going to get the session through in some way, reorganizing the Cabinet, frame a new policy and go to the people, and adds: "He is credited with having two or three rather striking shafts in his quiver which he will shoot when he thinks the time is ripe and the bow well strung." The World is an independent paper, with very decided Conservative leanings. It is about as strongly opposed to the present Administration as any one else in the country. Sir Wilfrid Laurier permits his political opponents to make the issues for the campaign, which cannot now be very long postponed, he will surprise those who know him best.

Another story is that the premier is opposed to the introduction of the closure during this session. The strongest advocate for such a step is the Manitoba Free Press, which is largely owned by one of the most decided Conservatives of Mr. Clifford Sifton. It is not by any means impossible that the Premier would like to see the Opposition ventilate everything that they can think of, and if in so doing they punch a few more holes in the record of the Minister of the Interior, possibly Sir Wilfrid would not lie awake at night shuddering. He may also be not disappointed to find many good reasons as possible for suggesting that some of his colleagues shall resign their resignations in his hands, so that he may appear before the people as an Apostle of Political Purity.

It is said that after the elections the Conservatives will be in a position to win, to provide for closure, and doubtless, if the Conservatives win, they also will be obliged to make some proposals for the proper regulation of Parliamentary debates, which in Canada only are permitted to be carried on almost without limitation.

The gossips are awaiting the Ontario and Quebec elections, which take place tomorrow. While it is a foregone conclusion that the former province will go Conservative and the latter Liberal, some people believe that the set of the tide of public opinion may be so strong to some extent by the gains or losses of the two parties. We do not think that these will be a safe guide, unless the changes are very marked. The Conservatives practically left Quebec by default at the last provincial election, and the Liberal government, which the Ross government is hardly likely to be repeated. We shall be surprised if the Conservatives do not make gains in Quebec and the Liberals in Ontario. Yet doubtless those who understand the several constituencies may be able to draw useful conclusions, while those who have to take a general view of the case will be unable to do so with much exactness. Under any circumstances, a provincial election is not a very safe guide as to what will be the result of a Dominion election. Nevertheless it is possible that the results of Monday's voting may have an important bearing upon the plans of the Dominion government.

MOTORING.

While the public attention is concentrated to some extent upon the prosecution of those persons who exceed the statutory speed limit in their motor cars, it may be advisable to invite some attention to the subject on the other hand, an excessive speed is not objectionable. Speed is of itself fast, and when he has a fine bit of road before him, with no one in sight, and the road is clear, and the horse enjoys it, and so does the horse. So does anyone else who happens to be looking on. The horse can strike a 30 gait, but if the road is clear, and the horse is under control, the driver can be charged with disorderly driving. In a narrow thoroughfare or on a crowded street, eight or nine miles an hour might properly be deemed disorderly or reckless driving. Not many people are good judges of speed. A smart little four-year-old boy can run fifty yards at the rate of eight miles an hour. Now does it not seem absurd to legislate that no one shall run a motor within a city any faster than a four-year-old boy can run. After the same time there are occasions when a motor going in a public street at the rate of eight miles an hour would be dangerous to the public. Much depends upon the time and place. It seems unreasonable that a motorist should have to crawl along at Dallas road at eight miles an hour, while out of town, on a narrower road, he may go faster. While the law is as it is, it is not enforced, and all motorists ought to aid in its enforcement, but it ought to be changed, so that disorderly or reckless motoring shall be punishable, no matter what the speed.

Very little annoyance, we have heard, has been caused by the new law in regard to motoring in Comox. Certainly there seemed to be good grounds for the complaint made by the writer. But the people of Comox have the respect to keep their interesting district free from visitors in motors. They have a right to go there, and they will go. In such localities a law regulating, not the speed, but the manner of driving motors, would be exceedingly useful. But like many other things, this matter cannot be satisfactorily regulated by statute. Very much depends upon the man who is handling the machine. If he is properly respectful of the rights of others he will give very little annoyance. We remember the name of a gentleman who was one of the first to use a motor in Victoria. We shall not mention it, but he does not crave publicity. When he first went on the roads with his motor every horse in the country was afraid of it, but he was considerate of the rights of others, probably because his

love of speed never got the better of his decent instincts. No one ever had any trouble with him. He would go out of his way to do anything in his power to avoid frightening a horse. He probably never will know how many people, especially ladies, rose up and called him blessed in the main. In his favorite way on the highway without giving annoyance or alarm to others. We wish we could mention his name, there are others just like him, only now that most horses hereabouts pay no attention to motors, they have no opportunity to exhibit the same degree of consideration, and just here we wish to say of Victoria motorists in general that they respect the rights of others. But we want to emphasize the necessity of observing in country districts the utmost caution so as to prevent accidents. After a few years there will not be the same need of care as there is now. There was a time when every horse in the country regarded a bicycle as his deadliest enemy, but now none so poor as to show reverence.

THE STANDARD OF EMPIRE.

The first number of the Standard of Empire is at hand. It far exceeds what Mr. A. J. Dawson, its promoter, led us to expect when he addressed the Canadian Club in Victoria. It contains an admirable publication. It consists of 28 pages, each a little shorter and wider than the Standard, a half narrower than a page of the Colonist, of which about one-third are devoted to the Standard of Empire. The Standard is a collection of the various parts of the Empire or of businesses carried on within the Empire. No advertisement is to be received without the Empire will be received on any terms. This admirable weekly is sent free to every subscriber in the London and the Standard to its own subscribers. It contains news from all parts of the Empire, and its summary of the news will consider it a welcome visitor to thousands of homes of Britons beyond the seas. In addition to the news features of the weekly there are editorial and signed articles on imperial questions, all of great interest.

The Standard of Empire has a great work before it, and its promoter and editor is splendidly equipped for what he has undertaken. There is nothing anything just like it and as a result of fact, it is only very recently that anything like it has been possible. Its influence in the Empire will be a reality of sentiment, based upon a better understanding of each other, between Britons of different climes. The Standard of Empire is a cordial welcome to its new contemporary and congratulates it upon its initial number.

THE MEXICAN SCAVENGE

Captain Worsnop was present at a meeting of the Council of the Board of Trade yesterday and there was some conversation in regard to the Canadian-Mexican line of which he is the manager. As the meetings of the Council are not open to the press, we are without a full report of what occurred, but it is understood that Captain Worsnop made representations in regard to the proposed extension of the line of the Canadian-Mexican line of which he is the manager. As the meetings of the Council are not open to the press, we are without a full report of what occurred, but it is understood that Captain Worsnop made representations in regard to the proposed extension of the line of the Canadian-Mexican line of which he is the manager. As the meetings of the Council are not open to the press, we are without a full report of what occurred, but it is understood that Captain Worsnop made representations in regard to the proposed extension of the line of the Canadian-Mexican line of which he is the manager.

Who is responsible for the condition of things in Parliament, which has so greatly embarrassed the administration of the public service? We think that only one just answer can be given to this question, and that is, the responsibility rests upon Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the leader of the House, the leader of the government, and the leader of a party numerically strong enough to carry out whatever it determines to do. No one withholds from the Premier that need of praise which his unquestioned ability entitles him to receive. No one denies that at times he has displayed unexpected firmness. Neither do we see how any one can deny that he has failed to exercise control over the policy of his government, the conduct of the several ministers and the tactics of his followers, which the

country had a right to expect. We cannot go so far as the Manitoba Free Press, the leading Liberal paper of the West, which charges him with weakness because he has failed to exercise the force of a "brute" majority and force business through the House. All weakness lies in lack of control. As the First Minister he ought never to have consented to the introduction of the proposed amendment to the British North America Act. As First Minister he should have insisted upon a better showing being made by the various departments. As First Minister he should have seen that measures promised in the early days of Parliament were brought down in reasonable time. As First Minister, one who is claimed by his friends to rank with the great statesmen of his time, and who undoubtedly has played a very conspicuous part in the history of the country, he ought to have exhibited that control of the affairs of the country, which would have rendered it impossible for an Opposition, however critical or unreasonable it might be, to dare to occupy the time of the House with a discussion of scandals. It is all very well to say that the Opposition is responsible for these interminable discussions. Members of the Opposition have some sagacity; they have some ideas how their course of action is approached by the country; and they would not be so foolish as to persevere in a policy of extended criticism. It is not the business of the Opposition, if there were not some justification for it, to obstruct and legitimate criticism, and unless the Conservatives have been forced into a position of feeling justified in an ungracious course, they have been compelled to take, public opinion would have been forced to abandon it. The truth is that the Opposition is in the right, possibly not in all details, for it cannot deny the facts, but in the large majority of instances, there is great reason for its attitude. There are grave scandals that ought to be exposed. The power of the Opposition has been abused. The public money has been squandered. There has been gross laxity, and downright dishonesty in some of the least important departments. If these things were not so, the Opposition case would long ago have been abandoned. 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