

The Colonist.

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THE QUEEN'S PRIZE. The ambition of Canadian riflemen for the past quarter of a century was attained yesterday, when Private T. H. Hayhurst won the crowning honor of the National Rifle Association meeting at Bisley—Her Majesty the Queen's magnificent prize of £250 and the Gold Medal and Gold Badge awarded by the Association in token of the victory.

NOT QUITE KILLED. It is a mistake to conclude that because Lord Ripon, the Liberal Secretary of State for the Colonies, did not approve of the trade policy outlined by the Ottawa Conference, preferential trade had received its "quietus."

THE OPPOSITION'S POWER. The wonderfully clever politicians of the Opposition when ridiculed for the sharp practice and elusive tactics of their leader on the school question say with affected innocence, "What can he do? He is in a minority, and any proposition that he may make will be sure to be voted down."

Government up or to embarrass it without committing himself or anyone else to any course of action with respect to it. The Hon. Mr. Foster, in his speech in reply to Mr. Laurier, showed very clearly that the leader of the Opposition had it in his power to do a great deal for any course which he favored and really desired to promote. He said:— "The government's work for five years is all before him (the Leader of the Opposition), and yet, when he comes to regret that the government is dealing with the Manitoba question in a manner not demanded by the best interests of the country, he has no suggestion in his resolution or speech as to what would be the manner best adapted, demanded by the best interests of the country. Not the least. (Cheers.) My hon. friend reached to the height of twice moving the adjournment of the house to defeat the government. (Laughter.) But to-day he reached a still higher place, and he moved a resolution, which every man who is opposed in the least particular to any step the government has taken, or who is opposed in the least to having a single ray of light on the matter, could vote for. I challenge my hon. friend to put a motion before the house laying down a definite, plain policy in substitution for the policy of this Government and ask this house to support it. My hon. friend says that something must be done, and done at once. He is in a position to do it. The jurisdiction is vested in this house. My hon. friend can introduce his measure, and submit the same to the house for its adoption, and this house has jurisdiction to make it law. (Cheers.) If he and his party have any plan they can put in the shape of legislation, and this Parliament is in a position to pass upon that legislation. (Renewed cheers.) Has he done that? Will he do it? Will he give even a suggestion of it? My hon. friend has not. He has not. He has not. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have put our position plainly and clearly before this house and have taken our stand on it. Has the hon. gentleman done the same? It is not creditable to the leader of the Opposition and to those with whom he is associated that they had not a word to say in reply to the challenge of the Minister of Finance. We do not believe that a parallel can be found in the parliamentary history of any country to the course which the Opposition have seen fit to pursue with regard to this very important question of the Manitoba schools. When have an Opposition on a question of vital importance, a question which has agitated the country in which it was raised, deliberately refrained from any expression of opinion on its merits and contented themselves with pursuing a tricky policy of worry and annoyance, having the defeat of the Government and not the settlement of the question as their sole aim? Mr. Laurier has by his tactics done infinite harm to the Liberals of this Dominion. He has degraded their party to the very low level of a petty faction whose leaders have no other object than their own profit and aggrandizement. The welfare of the country is clearly a matter of very little importance to them. This the earnest men in Parliament of both sides see very clearly. Although there are many Conservatives from Ontario, Quebec and the other provinces who do not approve of the policy of the Government, Mr. Laurier has not been able, so far as we have been informed, to attach one of them to his party. Even Mr. McCarthy and Col. O'Brien take good care to keep clear of the Grits. Would this have been the case if Mr. Laurier had clearly defined his position on the school question, if he had taken one side or the other, or if he had pointed out a practicable middle course? Certainly not. If he had been earnest and sincere in any course Mr. Laurier would have made converts. But it was seen that the Opposition had no policy and that no one could tell—not even Mr. Laurier himself—what policy they proposed to adopt. The dissatisfied Conservatives were no doubt disgusted with the shuffling, the insincerity, the trickiness and the want of earnestness displayed by the Grits, and their contempt for them was increased rather than diminished. It was Mr. Laurier's own fault that he was defeated in every division. His tactics were such that the members, whether English or French, Protestant or Catholic, who were displeased with the Government could place no faith in him.

UNCHANGED. Those who expected that before the session closed Mr. Laurier would give a clear and definite opinion on the Manitoba school question must be disappointed. He has made three motions of want of confidence. He has censured and condemned the course which the Government is pursuing; he has talked around and around the question, but he has not yet committed himself or his party in any statement he has made regarding it. He made his great speech on that subject on Monday, the 15th inst. Before we had seen even a telegraphic summary of that speech we ventured the statement that "it was as vague and as non-committal as the others he had previously delivered on the same subject." This is what a writer who had most probably heard the speech delivered says about it:— Mr. Laurier made a singularly characteristic and singularly ineffectual speech yesterday afternoon on his motion condemning the government for its treatment of the school question. Did he wish to state his own views? On the contrary, he anxiously avoided committing himself to any clear opinion of the main issue. Did he desire to show that there were differences among the followers of the government in regard to the action to be taken? Was this his purpose in delivering a discourse to which his friends and colleagues, Mr. Tarte, on the one side, and Mr. Martin, on the other, listened with countenances equally expressive of admiration and approval? The motion was pointless, the speech weak. It was a tale told by a courteous and agreeable speaker, full of well-turned phrases and smoothly rounded sentences, signifying nothing. His author reminded one of an expert swordman fencing with a shadow, making sharp cuts and desperate lunges in the air. This criticism of Mr. Laurier's speech is taken from the leading article of the Ottawa Daily Citizen. That it is just there can be no doubt. It shows that Mr. Laurier kept up his policy of dodging to the last. The course he has pursued on this school question has been utterly contemptible, and he will find to his sorrow, if we do not very greatly mistake, that this is the opinion that men of both parties and all shades of opinion have formed of it.

A PRUDENT OMISSION. Our contemporary the Times says that Mr. Laurier's motion with regard to the Manitoba school question "spoke quite plainly, as might have been expected, against the idea of Parliament coercing the province," but very prudently forgets to quote the "motion." We will reproduce the motion in order that our readers may see how "plainly" it protests against coercing the province. Here it is:— "This House regrets the failure of the Government to deal with the Manitoba school question in a manner demanded by the best interests of the country, and is of the opinion that the ministerial declarations in regard to the question are calculated to promote dangerous agitation amongst the Canadian people." This motion is a very good example of Mr. Laurier's skill in saying something which, when closely examined, really means nothing. There is, in the first place, not a word in the resolution that has the slightest bearing on coercion. Mr. Laurier says that the Government has not dealt with the Manitoba school question in a manner demanded by the best interests of the country, but in what respect it fails he does not say. "Demanded by the best interests of the country" is a very nice sounding phrase, but what does it mean? Neither in the resolution itself nor in the speech upon it which he delivered does Mr. Laurier speak plainly as to what would be in the best interests of the country. We have not such a poor opinion of our contemporary's discernment as to suppose for a moment that it does not see the utter emptiness of this part of Mr. Laurier's motion. Then the Leader of the Grits regrets that the ministerial declarations are calculated to promote dangerous agitation amongst the people. There is nothing, plain or otherwise, in this about coercion. It is somewhat singular that no one in the House of Commons understood the motion as our contemporary understands it. Mr. Foster, in speaking to it in the House of Commons, said:— "I challenge him (Mr. Laurier) and his lieutenants to get up to-day and say what they are in favor of on this question. They dare not do it. They put motions which are colorless; they dodge every motion which is definite; the thing they do not want to do is to put themselves on record. They have been skulking through this House and through this country without giving the least information to the people as to where they stand, looking only and hoping only for profit to themselves and power to themselves through the disintegration which may come to their opponents." This is strong language, but it is nothing more than the simple and the undeniable truth. Mr. Laurier in his costly motion condemned nothing plainly, neither did he advocate anything plainly, he was merely beating about the bush trying to convince simple people that he was in earnest and had something to say worth hearing. Our contemporary has not yet answered the question which we put to it the other day,—"Is noninterference the policy of the Opposition?" for the very best of reasons. Mr. Laurier has not yet let the world know what his policy is—if he has a policy, which is questionable.

THE INDIAN RESERVE. It appears that the Indians on the Songhees Reserve have not sufficient energy to cut down the thistles growing on their land. Those thistles are an emblem of the Reserve itself in its present condition. It is of little use to its owners, and it is a nuisance to those living in its neighborhood. Allowing that tract of land to remain in the possession of those who can never make a proper use of it is not beneficial to the members of the Songhees tribe, while it is a gross and a manifest injustice to the city of Victoria. We cannot see how the true friends of the Indians can desire that this piece of land of which it is utterly impossible for them to make a proper use, should remain in their possession, and it is evident that intelligent citizens of Victoria must see that allowing the Reserve to remain in its present condition is a serious obstacle to the progress and the prosperity of the city. Permitting the Indians to remain on land in almost every respect unsuited to them is the reverse of kindness. Its situation near the city exposes them to temptations which many of them are unable to resist, and the consequence is that the longer they remain on it the less disposed are those who survive to lead lives suitable to their condition and to their advancement in civilization. The reserve in its present condition is a blot on the landscape and a standing reproach to the city. It presents an obstacle to progress and improvement that cannot be surmounted by either public or private enterprise and energy. If that land was not in possession of the Indians it would, long ere this, have been used for profitable purposes, and would have been improved in such a way as to add to the beauty and the prosperity of the city. But if the Indians are allowed to retain it until A. D. 3000 it will then be in even a worse condition than it is at present. Other and more noxious weeds than thistles will be allowed to grow upon it, exercising a baneful influence upon all who may be so unfortunate as to live in its neighborhood. Those who have an enlightened regard for the welfare of the Indians themselves should advocate their removal to a more suitable situation. Justice does not require that this handful of Indians should be allowed to continue in possession of the land to the disadvantage of the whole community. It must be remembered that the Indians do not own the land in the same sense as white settlers and citizens own land. They have only the use of it. They cannot dispose of a single foot of it without the consent of the Government. If the land were divided among the members of the tribe to be theirs to sell or otherwise dispose of as they should see fit, very much would be done towards removing the bar to improvement. But it is contended that they are not fit to be trusted with the fee simple of the property. Very well. Surely it can readily be seen that if they are not fit to own the land they are not fit to occupy it when their occupation does them harm rather than good, and is besides an injury to the community. Removing them to a situation better suited to their habits can be no injustice to them, while it will be a manifest advantage to the citizens of Victoria. We do not desire that the members of the Songhees tribe shall be in any respect injured by any change that may be made. On the contrary we believe that their removal could be effected in such a way that they and their children after them would be greatly benefited by the change.

It is a matter of very considerable importance to Victoria as well as to the Indians and should not be for a moment lost sight of by the Provincial Government, the Corporation of the city, and the citizens themselves. The land is too valuable from every point of view to remain in the possession of those who cannot or will not even keep down the thistles that grow upon it. Agent—This house cost \$10,000 to build. You can have it for \$3,000 spot cash. Why, it's insured for six thousand.

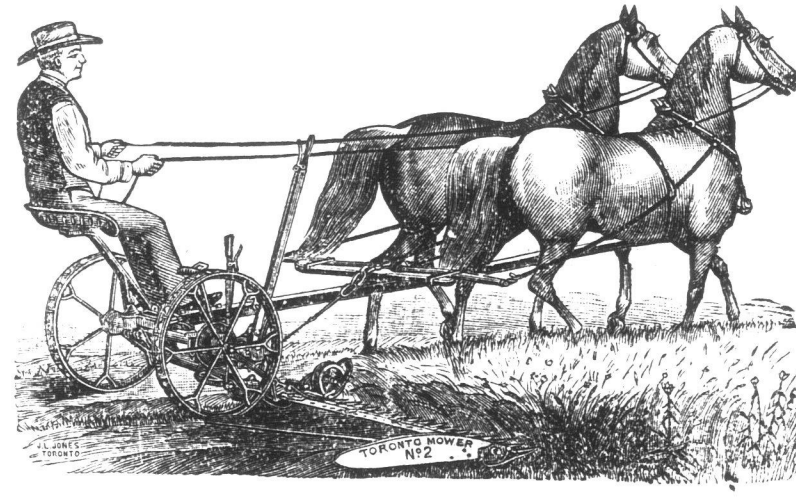
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