

# The Canada Citizen

## AND TEMPERANCE HERALD.

A Journal devoted to the advocacy of Prohibition, and the promotion of social progress and moral Reform.

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## MEN, WOMEN, AND THINGS IN GENERAL.

The London Times has done good service by investigating the causes leading to greatly increased drunkenness during the past few years in Switzerland. The Federal Council of that country has issued a report which shows that of late the increase in the consumption of spirits has been much more rapid than the increase in the consumption of wines, and that the most rapid increase in each was during the period of prosperity which followed the Franco-German war. The Council attribute the increased consumption of alcohol to two causes: (1) to the introduction of free trade in alcoholic beverages, and the withdrawal from the Cantons of the power to limit the number of public houses; and (2) the commercial and agricultural prosperity above referred to. The former is described as the main cause, and just here comes in the instructiveness of the report. It goes to demonstrate the fact that an increase in the quantity of alcohol consumed will result from increased facilities for obtaining it, and, conversely, that the way to diminish consumption is to diminish the facilities. The federal constitution adopted in Switzerland in 1874 took away the power of local option and regulation previously vested in the governments of Cantons, and the experience of ten years show that the effect is disastrous. The Council's report reads very much like a plea for prohibition.

I had something to say last week about the views of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, President of the English Board of Trade, on the land question in Scotland and England. In one of his recent speeches he went further in the way of laying down a policy for himself and those for whom he speaks than he had ever gone before. He wished to go back to the "old type of multiplied freeholds in the land, and re-establish the peasants and yeomen, who were some of the most prosperous, the most independent, and the most comfortable classes in the community." In other words Mr. Chamberlain wishes to break up at least a portion of the large estates into small holdings, for the purpose of creating a peasant proprietary. The

object is a good one, for there can be no doubt that the divorce of the laborer from the soil he cultivates, and the aggregation of large areas of land in the hands of men who live by letting it out to others, create a social condition which produces national weakness and may lead to national disaster. The disaffection of the Irish people to the Government is chiefly due to their being deprived of all personal interest in the land, and the Scottish crofters are rapidly following their example. Nor will the English peasantry lag far behind. They are less mercurial in their temperament than their Irish fellow-citizens, but they can be aroused, and any movement amongst them will not easily be allayed. What chance would England have amongst nations if the mass of the people in the three kingdoms should lose not merely their feeling of loyalty to the crown but their feeling of patriotism for their country?

Good as Mr. Chamberlain's object is there is sure to be great difficulty in attaining it. Various plans have been suggested. The one advocated by Cobden, Bright, John Stuart Mill, and other Radicals of the past and passing generation is to abolish the laws of primogeniture and entail so as on the one hand to enable estates to be broken up by partition when the owner dies intestate, and on the other to prevent him from controlling the succession to it, as much as he can do at present, by his will. If these absurd legal relics of feudalism were removed out of the way, no doubt large estates would gradually dissolve through the operations of spendthrift heirs, family quarrels, and family settlements. The estates so broken up would come into the hands of smaller owners, and these would constitute the nucleus of a yeomanry such as Mr. Chamberlain wants to see. But this process is too slow for him. He wishes it to go on, but he advocates other and more questionable measures. He would authorize the new rural municipalities to acquire land for the purpose of providing small plots for laborers, the land to be acquired by expropriation at its "fair market value," or "the price which a willing purchaser would pay to a willing seller in the open market." This scheme opens up a long vista of entirely new legislation and administration—a vista down which the nation, even under the guidance of the Parliament elected under the new franchise, will for some time shrink from proceeding. In all probability primogeniture and entail will soon have to go, and steps may be taken to simplify the process of transferring land, so that it may pass readily and at little cost from seller to buyer. Beyond this nothing is likely to be done for a long time, and nothing ought to be done for the mere purpose of creating a peasant proprietary. If an English yeomanry worthy of the name is to be established, it must be the growth of time, and the first step towards it will be to clear the way by removing the feudal obstacles which at present keep the land in large masses. Perhaps time may show that nothing more is necessary.

We need in Canada, almost as much as they need in Britain, some simple and less costly mode of transferring land from seller to buyer and giving an unquestionable title with it. At present if a man wants to raise \$100 by way of loan on a piece of land he must pay the cost of searching his title to its ownership. This adds considerably to the expense of the loan, but that is not the worst feature of the case. If next year he wants to borrow another hundred dollars he must again pay for searching his title, and so on every time he borrows. In the name of common sense why should it be necessary to search a title every time a transfer or a conveyance takes place. Let the search be thoroughly made once for all, let the exact nature of the title be then recorded on a certificate, and let this certificate be indisputable evidence of the possessor's claim. This is the Torren's system in a nutshell, the only other feature of importance being a guarantee fund for the protection of those whose valid claims may have been overlooked in the search. With such a certificate of title the owner of a farm or a town lot might go to a loan society without the intervention of a lawyer, hand over his certificate of title as security and borrow money on it at the lowest rate of interest and without a cent of cost. The certificate being registered he would be as absolutely protected as now against loss of evidence of title, while he would be perfectly secure against old claims whether valid or merely trumped up.

The day is not far distant when this system will be universally prevalent. There is hope of its early introduction into the Northwest by the