

The Weekly British Colonist

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Victoria under the Stars and Stripes

The cause of Annexation has ever found few disciples outside of this city. There are two reasons for this. It is Victoria that must be chiefly affected by the change. Leaving entirely out of sight those relics of barbarism, loyalty and patriotism, it becomes almost a matter of comparative indifference to the Mainland. True, they might have to exchange Judge Begbie for Judge Lynch; they would have to pay more than double of what they do now and more than three times of what they would have to do under the Canadian tariff, upon everything of foreign growth or manufacture; they would have to contribute, in the form of stamp, income and other oppressive inland revenue taxes, their full quota of the crushing debt piled up by a war in which they had neither airt nor part; their country would be flooded with live stock and the various productions of the adjacent Territory, against which protection would be impossible; they would have to enter the 'Lobby' at Washington and purchase dearly the smallest chance of Federal patronage. Yet these considerations, important as they are in the aggregate, dwindle into insignificance when compared with those involved in the case of Victoria. The second reason why Annexation has confined to this single community consists in the fact that here is to be found the principal American population, the element out of which the party is chiefly formed. But, taking a purely business view of the subject, let us consider a few of those matters in respect of which Victoria will be more affected by Annexation than the Mainland part of the colony—that is in addition to those already mentioned disadvantages in which this community would, of course, have to share in common with those residing on the continent; and, perhaps, in a higher degree, on account of accessibility and contiguity. And here the salient points have already been so well and forcibly presented by a correspondent that little more than amplification can be expected from me. It has been well said that with Annexation all hope of the presence of a fleet in these waters would be utterly and forever extinguished. Let us reflect for a moment upon the full import of this consideration. The people of Victoria have become accustomed to the presence of the fleet that probably nothing but the loss of it would enable them fully to realize the magnitude of its advantages. Our correspondent has intimated that it is already lost; but the assertion must have been made without due reflection. So far from this being the case, there is every reason for expecting that Equilmait will be more formally and permanently than ever the headquarters of the British Naval force on the Pacific. There is certainly no reason why it should not be secured as such under Confederation. The more material advantages of the presence of the fleet may, with every regard to moderation, be estimated at a million dollars a year. It would take considerable lobbying at Washington to procure the annual expenditure, in this community of an equal amount of Federal gold, and even then part of it would have been drawn from our own pockets, which is not the case with British gold. Let the merchants and tradespeople of Victoria be deprived of the Naval authorities, and they would indeed have occasion to complain of 'quittances.' But there are other advantages which flow from the presence of the fleet. It gives national prestige to the place, lends to society, and tends to make Victoria additionally attractive as a place of residence. But it is when the question comes to be viewed from a purely commercial and maritime standpoint that the most serious consequences present themselves to the thoughtful mind. Assuming for our present purpose that the Stars and Stripes wave over this city, do we believe that any one of the transcontinental railways will find a terminus on Puget Sound? Is there that profound thinker in the East and in the West, prefer to believe the seat of commerce for the American Pacific will be. Is there to be found in this community a man so blind as not to see that the terminus of intercolonial railway communication and the consequent establishment of the seat of American commerce on Puget Sound are conditions synonymous with the extinction of American Victoria as a commercial and maritime centre? To British Victoria, with a free port, or a liberal and enlightened commercial policy, these conditions would prove beneficial rather than hurtful. But let us look at our position as an American town, apart from this exceptional development on Puget Sound. Why is it that, in spite of our own stupid commercial restrictions and American obstructions and jealous antipathies, we still attract an inconsiderable foreign trade?

Simply and solely because Victoria is British, and English and French goods can be introduced here under a tariff averaging considerably less than one-half of that which prevails in the United States. Make Victoria American; extend to it the same tariff, the same taxes and commercial conditions which prevail on Puget Sound, and what possible reason could exist for people coming from there to here? None whatever. Even our own Mainland trade would then find greater attractions on Puget Sound than here. But a trade, important now, would be capable of indefinite expansion under more favorable conditions. Under Confederation, with a free port, or even with the Canadian tariff, this city must forever be without a commercial rival North of San Francisco; and it would ultimately even dispute the palm with the Bay City? To give an idea of the difference between the Canadian and American tariffs it may be stated that we quote from a reliable Eastern authority: 'The United States tariff averages 48 per cent, while that of the Dominion averages but 15 per cent. But there are other grounds upon which the balance of the consequences of Annexation would be equally against us. As an important province of the Dominion, this colony would be the sole representative of a great and powerful European nation, as well as of the younger nation on the Pacific, commanding, as it does, a truly proud position as the sole possessor of coal stores, good fishing grounds, good harbors, and the key of the true Northwest Passage. But deprive it of its national identity and prestige, and it at once becomes one of many small and struggling American communities on a coast line extending from Sitka to Mexico, with every one of which it will have to elbow its way in Washington 'Lobby' and in a general commercial scramble. Are our people prepared for all this? Are they willing to sell their birthrights for so doubtful a heritage? These are only a few crude thoughts which have casually presented themselves to the mind of the writer, and are stated more with a view of eliciting discussion than with the hope of carrying conviction; and we should be glad to see some sober arguments advanced by those who profess to think that Annexation would prove beneficial to British Columbia.

The Pacific Railroad—New Arrangements. On the 1st inst. a new and reduced tariff of fares on the overland railroad went into effect. The rates are now, first class fare to Chicago and St. Louis, \$118; to New York, \$140; to New Orleans, \$160; to Philadelphia, \$138; to Boston, \$143. The second class fares are: To Chicago and St. Louis, \$92; to Philadelphia, \$110; to Baltimore, \$109; and to New York, \$110. All payable in greenbacks. The separate emigrant train has been done away with, and instead a second class car will accompany the through daily express train. Delays occasionally occurred by the special emigrant trains, passengers being frequently ten days in reaching New York. Now they will go through as quickly as the first class passengers.

The Education Board.—The Municipal By-law levying a tax of \$2 on each male adult resident in Victoria School District, received the sanction of His Excellency the Governor on the 27th inst. and will come into force in fourteen days hereafter. It is rumored that less than \$500 will be appropriated in the estimates for school purposes in this district. Five hundred dollars, however, is the largest sum that can legally be taken from the general revenue, and applied to the purposes of education in any one district. The school tax will produce about \$1500. Will \$2000 be sufficient to pay the working expenses of the establishment, and the salaries of three teachers? We should say, decidedly no!

The Direct General Memorial.—The Government has returned an answer to the memorial asking for the establishment of direct steam communication with San Francisco. While recognizing the necessity for frequent and cheap communication, Government meets the petitioners with the old excuse—no money. The reply, however, states that should the Hudson Bay or any other company of capitalists desire to establish a line of steamships, Government would be happy to entertain any proposition they might have to make.

There is good authority for saying that the negotiations for reopening the Alabama claims question will not be definitely settled until the assembling of the British Parliament in February, it being uncertain whether the British Ministry would be sustained by Parliament in committing itself to any definite course of change of policy expressed in the past. An expression is desired from that body before the Ministry formally agrees to the propositions made by Minister Motley.

ASSAULT UPON A WOMAN.

—J. Kennedy was brought before the Police Magistrate yesterday on a charge of assaulting a squaw brutally. A witness said the woman was badly injured, and the Magistrate remanded the prisoner until Monday. Mr Courtney applied to have Kennedy admitted to bail, which was taken into consideration.

A CARD TO THE PUBLIC.

My attention has been called to a copy of a paper published in New Westminster, containing what purports to be the report of a speech delivered by me at a public meeting held at that city, on Wednesday evening. Had the matter been confined to the obscure sheet in which it originated I should not have noticed it—but as a local print has, with singular avidity, availed itself of the so-called report, it may be proper to offer a few words of explanation.

Annexation and Confederation.

—Victoria, 27th January, 1870. Editor British Colonist.—Mr. J. D. Pemberton appears in your columns as an open advocate for Annexation, in opposition to Confederation, and apart from any selfish motives, let us endeavor to ascertain which system promises the most benefits to those including to make permanent homes in British Columbia. Under Annexation, we should become a Territory of the United States, for until we attain a sufficiently large population we cannot become a State of the Union, whether under civil law, like Washington Territory, or under military law, like Alaska, remains to be proved. If under civil law, we shall be enabled to send a delegate to Congress who will have no vote upon national questions; and if under military law that boon will not be allowed. We have peculiar proof of how much Congress has done for Washington Territory, and even Mr. Seward's policy, Alaska, does not seem to be much more highly favored. We often hear of the large increase in our population which we would receive were we annexed. Even granting that we had a temporary excitement, would not the reaction which would naturally follow, the increase of population without any employment, be injurious to those who remained in the country, but I consider that it is very mythical, this large rush of population. We hear so much about it, true, our coal mines and forests might be more fully developed in the course of time, but under Reciprocity the same would occur. You may depend, the centre of attraction for commerce and population on this North Pacific, if all American, will eventually be on the Mainland, near the Terminus of the North Pacific Railroad, and the only salvation of this Victoria, as a business centre depends upon a railroad terminating on the Mainland, at such a point as will make Equilmait the head of ocean navigation. Will a railroad terminating at Seattle do this? You know it would not—but if a Canadian Pacific Railroad terminated at Bute Inlet of the Lower Fraser, Victoria and Equilmait, not being

Union with the States or with Canada?

—Having read your two able articles which followed my letter of the 21st, I claim from your courtesy the usual privilege of reply. You say our common sense has been open to the free and fair discussion of the subject in question, and I can assure the more readily believe myself mistaken in this, that your shafts were probably directed against the ridiculous mode of handling, rather than against the object in view.

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Mr Pemberton's Second Letter.

In consideration of the number and ability of those who have entered the arena of discussion, it may, perhaps be as well that the question of Annexation should be left to some extent in the hands of correspondents; but, inasmuch as Mr Pemberton's second letter is, in a sense, a reply to previous editorial articles, it may be permitted us to point out one or two inaccuracies contained in it. Mr Pemberton (unintentionally, we are sure) to some extent confounds what we said about Lord Granville's dispatch with the allusion to words spoken by another Minister of the Crown. We never claimed for the dispatch that it conveyed a guaranteed regard to the railway, or anything approaching to it. We have not the advantage of knowing what amount of respect Mr Pemberton entertained for his grandmother, any more than we are aware of her literary abilities; but we venture to think that when he drags that venerable lady into the controversy, in order to get a left-handed slap at the Colonial Minister, he acts without the good taste by which his writings are usually characterized. Besides, in designating the dispatch as 'judged' he is scarcely in accord with public sentiment; most persons having been led to regard it as a clear, able and statesmanlike document. On the subject of Imperial guarantees and the feasibility of our railway route we must be excused if we still prefer the evidence of facts and official utterances to the vague assertions of a member of the House of Commons, who might be as ignorant about the subject-matter of his discourse as he probably was respecting the engineering difficulties to railway construction presented by the moon's surface. It was doubtless an easy matter for Mr Aytoun to characterize the scheme for the Canadian Pacific Railway as 'one of the wildest dreams that ever entered into the brain of a railway engineer.' It is by no means beyond the bounds of probability that the scheme for the construction of the still more difficult American railway now in successful operation was similarly denounced, as every great scheme has been. Whenever there is a great enterprise about to be undertaken there is never wanting an Aytoun or a Pemberton to ridicule it; yet such people don't quite stop the wheels of progress. We must confess surprise, however, that Mr Pemberton, himself an engineer, should prefer the mere assertion of a member of the House of Commons to the opinions of practical engineers and other scientific gentlemen who have reported on the route from personal observation. Surely the opinion of Lord Milton alone is entitled to far more weight upon this subject than that of Mr Aytoun can possibly be. But how is it, may we ask, that Mr Pemberton's views have experienced such a reception since 1860? In his interesting little book of that date we find him describing, in glowing terms, the proud position occupied by Vancouver Island as the 'half-way house' for English commerce with Asia and Australia—the sole outlet on the Pacific to the true Northwest passage. His learned successor soon to disregard the opinion of such men as Captain Palliser, Dr Hector, Professor Hind, and even Dr Ross—the gentleman to whom is dedicated his book—upon the practicability of overland communication through British territory? In the little book referred to Mr Pemberton not only falls in with the theory of the practicability of an overland route on the north of the 49th parallel, but he agrees with scientific authority in representing it as immensely superior to any possible route south of that line. Where is Cato now? Mr Pemberton appears to think that we are perfectly content to seek the imperial guarantee for a railway loan 'after Confederation'; but, although we do not doubt that it can be obtained as a sequence, a reference to book files will show that we urged upon the people to seek it as a condition. We cannot very easily discover the fitness of Mr Pemberton's allusions to the difficulties experienced in the matters of steam communication and population. It is quite true that the 'wiring and sealing' process would be exploded by Annexation; but would it transform an unseaworthy tub into a floating palace, or cause population to flow hither? Are we to believe that the hoisting of the Stars and Stripes is to be the talismanic signal for a rush of hitherto restrained population and capital and steamboats? How would this belief harmonize with the new theory laid down in Mr Pemberton's first letter, viz, that national distinctions are but relics of barbarism; that the less civilized a nation, the more clanlike it is, and that all such exact lines of demarcation are becoming perceptibly fainter under the combined influences of education, the press, electricity and steam?