

THE ECHO.

A JOURNAL FOR THE PROGRESSIVE WORKMAN, AND FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

Vol. 1.—No. 8.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1890.

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PRAIRIE PHILOSOPHY.

Contributed to the Westminster
Review by Wm. Trant.

The absence of keen party strife is fortunate for the inhabitant of the prairie. He is not troubled with the pamphleteer and the agitator. He is not constantly assured that his country is going to pieces, and must go to pieces unless A. be driven out of office and B. driven in. Above all, he is spared the infliction of the platform orator. I know of nothing more distressing in England than the all-pervading influence of the platform. Cheap newspapers have long ago spared the mass of Englishmen the trouble of studying at first hand for themselves, and they are content with the slipshod knowledge supplied them by the penny and halfpenny press, which, bad as it is, is, as J. Stuart Mill once said, better than nothing. Fluent speeches from glib orators now save him the trouble of thinking; and any facile tongue that can wrap round an epigram is alas! now sufficient to stamp a man as a statesman. "The eloquent man who lies," base as Carlyle says he is, is pretty certain to be sent to St. Stephen's to legislate and speedily to become "one of the leaders of the people." Let us hope that this is but the natural process of evolution to higher things, and is a condition that will soon pass away. On the prairie, "words, idle words," count for nothing. The settler in his shanty, quietly smoking before his stove, while winter winds are cold without, at any rate does his own reading and thinking, and platform platitudes have no "staying powers" with him.

Perhaps another reason that the settler takes so little interest in politics is that he requires no laws for his governance, and therefore has little interest in law-making. The unwritten law of the prairie is stronger than the statute law of the Dominion. It is recognized how few laws are required for those who live in peace and concord. There

is no stealing on the prairie of Northwest Canada. On the other hand, each man assists his neighbor in the preservation of his property. So long as a man fences his crops with a cattle-proof fence, he need not fear any molestation from man or beast. His neighbor's cattle, sheep or ponies may stray all over his farm at their own sweet will. What of that? His own cattle, sheep and ponies return the compliment to his neighbors. No man has more right than another to cut hay on the unsettled portions of the prairie, or, more correctly, no man has any right to do so without permission. But it is done, and the particular parts a man has cut are respected in the following year (should he desire to cut them again) as rigidly as if he had the whole statute book at his back. A man may cut logs ten miles from his home, and no one will appropriate them. Matters that would give rise to a Chance suit in the old country cause no disturbance in a settlement. If there be no water on my own land I help myself at my neighbor's well. "He would be a shabby fellow who would deny a man a drop of water," I once heard said when this freedom was remarked upon. From this it is seen how few laws the world would require if all people were as honest as the prairie settler; how little governing people require who govern themselves. Crimes are the parents of laws, and where there is no crime there need be no law. In India there are crimes unknown in England, which has, therefore, no words in its language to describe them, no laws on its statute books to punish them; and similarly, if all the world were as free from sin as the prairie our language and our law books would be all the purer. The economic aspect of the question, too, strikes one on the prairie with greater force than it does those who live under ordinary influences. If the people who live in towns were as those who live on the prairie, if men and nations were like us (and why should they not be?) there would be no need of policemen, or judges, or jails, or that costly paraphernalia intended to reform criminals, and which succeeds in making them; there would be no need of infantry or ironclads, battalions or bayonets; there would be "no fighting men abroad nor weeping maids at home." Nay, for that matter, there would be no need of a House of Commons. What mysterious influence is this that make men, as soon as they congregate together, begin at once to hate each other?

I mention this because to my mind herein lies some compensation for what is called "roughing it." It is pleasant to think that your surroundings, though clad in corduroy, are friends who wish you no harm, and certainly do you none; just as it is better for the son of the noble to be surrounded with the educated sons of tinkers rather than with uneducated ones—a fact that the opponents of free education have not grasped. It is always an important matter with whom we associate, and a ragged but honest emigrant is infinitely better than a well-dressed scamp. And what is "roughing it?" I fear it is indefinable, because its signification is different under different conditions. When I was in the Indian jungle, living in a tent, I was told I was roughing it, not withstanding a multitude of servants attended to my every want, from brushing my hair to brushing my boots. When I was in the West of Ireland, twenty miles from fresh meat, ten miles from bread, and five miles from milk, that seemed to me like "roughing it." On the prairie I take the phrase to mean, doing everything for one's self. A servant in the Indian sense is unknown. A man either shaves himself or goes unshaven, he either cleans his boots or they go uncleaned; he laces them or they go unlaced. The effect is different upon different individuals. I have known young fellows, tenderly nurtured at home, educated for a profession, who begin "baching it" (short for "bacheloring it") quite cheerily, but who day by day have sunk lower and lower as regards domestic comforts. Tired with a day's farming, a young fellow hurries over the preparation of his meals, and "scamps" the tidying of his bed-corner. Then he will neglect to clean his shanty, often he will omit ordinary ablutions (who never missed his bath at home); does not repair what is torn or broken, forgets to "wash-up," until at last his person becomes unseemly, his habits slovenly, his home not only untidy but so that when you leave it you carry away living proofs of your visit. On the other

hand, there are house-proud ones with whom the contrary obtains. Clean and neat in appearance, the shanty tidy and bright, with portraits from home gracing its walls, the cooking utensils as bright as those in their fathers' kitchens, the food properly cooked, and the whole house in smiles. I know two clergymen of the Church of England (two together can always "bach" better than one by himself) who are their own chambermaids, washerwomen and cooks, whose dwelling no tidy housewife could improve, where there is a place for everything and everything in its place, and all is as neat and natty as Dawin's cabin on the Beagle. And these gentlemen, too, drive thirty or forty miles to conduct a service in a shanty, often enough sleeping at night on a haystack. This is "roughing it" in the Northwest. It may be different in Kansas or Texas, where the men are desperadoes, and the land is the land of the slouched hat, broad belt and revolvers. With us in the Great Lone Land there are no revolvers, and there is no conventional dress, which is regulated entirely by the climate, as indeed it must be. When ice is two inches thick at 7 a.m., and the thermometer shows 105° in the shade at 11 a.m. (the same day), one must dress accordingly. In the morning, therefore, we look like Esquimaux and feel like icicles; at noon we discard every article of clothing we can. Au reste, the actual necessity of offering hospitality to the wayfarer either by day or night, and the consequent ease with which it is demanded, have an appearance of swashbuckling to the stranger. But a six months' experience of the prairies will show any one that as regards costume, personal embellishments, or apparent swagger, however it may at first seem, there is nothing artificial, and the person one meets is what he seems to be and says he is; and he cannot, as in towns, assume a position though he have it not.

Are there, then, no drawbacks to your country? Will naturally ask those who have followed me thus far. Indeed there are. The long and severe winter of nearly half a year is the chief of them. No one can realize what week after week with the thermometer always below zero really is until he have experienced it. It is the period of rest and relaxation it is true, but most of every evening is passed crouched before an almost red-hot stove. It is then one longs to call a cab and drive to see Irving in one of his marvellous impersonations, or to hear the ravishing strains of Lohengrin. It is then one regrets that the National Gallery, or the Louvre, or some of our great libraries are so far off. All these have become pleasures of the imagination. Above all, it is then we long for the old familiar faces, and yearn for the pleasant chat with kindred souls. Absence does indeed make the heart grow fonder; and he would be really depraved who could be hard-hearted on the prairie. But even this great drawback is not without its compensation. The farmer knows that the frost, which locks up the land for months, is making a tilth that will save him and his horses much labor, and has much to do with producing a wheat whose rare and rich quality is unknown on lands that are one half the year arid desert and the other half dismal swamp. He knows, too, and rejoices, that the dry air can be no home for bacteria, bacilli, micrococci, and other pests of town life; and that should any of these perchance enter his body, his very surroundings, according to a great scientist, have made his system invulnerable against their attacks. For these and all other mercies attending upon even "forty below zero," we are, though inconvenienced, yet extremely grateful.

It is then, I take it, the absence of all restraint, the freedom from all that is conventional, that gives the great charm to life on the prairie. A man can do what he pleases; he serves no one, or as he would express it, he is his own "boss." He is a king, and himself is his subject. He can work when he likes or be idle when he likes. There is none to interfere with him. His work, too, is not monotonous. All ploughing and no sowing would make Jack a dull boy; but ploughing and harrowing, sowing and mowing, milking and cheese making, and all the multitudinous operations of farming, spiced now and again with a little trading all combined, constitute a life sufficiently varied for very many to prefer it to the humdrum of an English existence, notwithstanding its luxuries, comforts and advantages.

THE MAYORALTY.

PUBLIC MEETING IN THE WEBER HALL.

Dr. Guerin Chosen Candidate—
"People's Jimmy" Nowhere

A public meeting, called by advertisement, was held in the Weber Hall, James street, on Tuesday evening. Mr. Wm. T. Costigan, commissioner, was called upon to preside, and P. A. Duffey acted as secretary. Although the attendance was not very large, there was considerable enthusiasm shown by those present.

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, referred to the understanding that had been arrived at as to the nationality of the occupant of the Civic throne and impressed upon hearers that it was now time that an Roman Catholic gentleman should occupy that high position. The present incumbent was French and represented the French Canadian element. The present incumbent was French and represented the French Canadian element. The present incumbent was French and represented the French Canadian element.

Dr. Bazin said there was one thing that must protest against, and that was to twaddle about its being a man's turn, because he happened to be an Englishman, an Irishman or a Frenchman. It was the Montrealers were getting rid of the incumbent and party feeling. What was wanted was a good, honest Canadian gentleman for the position, no matter what was his nationality.

The following gentlemen were then named:

Senator Murphy by Mr. Timothy Trant.

Dr. Guerin by Mr. Adolph Friedlander.
Hon. James McShane by Mr. Wm. Wilkie.

Mr. Darlington, in a vigorous speech, pronounced self-nominated candidates for the position of Mayor. He had been pulled through the dirt of a protested election and afterwards whitewashed. He alluded to Mr. McShane who was not the kind of Mayor he wanted. I have no doubt, said Mr. McShane is a very good man to make a Mayor, but a man who would get discharged because they did not want him is not the kind of a Mayor he would add dignity to the city or increase the money or welfare. I say, away with nominated men!

Mr. Wm. Keys thought that Dr. Guerin would make a good Mayor, and he would be glad to see him in the Civic chair. A speaker had been told that Mayor Guerin would run against no man except Mr. McShane. No one, he was sure, would run against Mr. Guerin for that. A man who had been charged with such corruption as Mr. McShane was the last man the people should want for that position.

At this point Mr. Wilkie addressed the Trades and Labor Council of the meeting in favor of Dr. Guerin, who strenuously denied by several members that body.

Mr. O'Connor repeated the charge against the Trades and Labor Council, and Senator Murphy's name, as it was understood that he had already refused.

Mr. Bernard Feeney said he was a citizen and a voter, and objected to the withdrawal of the Senator's name. O'Connor took back his statement meeting was packed.

Mr. O'Connor declined to do so, and withdrew Mr. Murphy's name.

An open ballot was then taken in 38 voting for Dr. Guerin and 12 for Mr. McShane, a number of those declining to vote.

A deputation consisting of Mr. Costigan, P. A. Duffey and C. J. Guerin was then appointed to interview Dr. Guerin and tender him the nomination of the meeting adjourned.

The deputation waited upon the following day and were welcomed by that gentleman, who intimated his acceptance, and he is therefore field. We understand that the papers are now in circulation and largely signed.