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EDWD. TROUT, MANAGER.

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TRADE WITH THE WEST INDIES.

The St. John Board of Trade requests the co-operation of the Boards of Trade of Halifax, Quebec, Montreal and Charlottetown. Boards of Trade in petitioning the Federal Government to take active steps towards securing reciprocity treaties with the British and Spanish West Indies, and the United States. Sir Charles Tupper has been reported as having been engaged in negotiating a treaty with Spain, with the object of securing for Canada a better share of the trade of Cuba and Porto Rico. But the American treaty appears to have been agreed upon first by the negotiators. It has, however, still to run the gauntlet of the United States Senate, and it is not at all certain of ratification when it gets there. About the Tupper treaty there is at present equal uncertainty. The St. John Board of Trade does well to support the movement that has been made on behalf of Canada for a treaty having reference to the trade of Cuba and Porto Rico. The wish expressed by it accords with the predetermined policy of the Canadian Government, Sir John Macdonald having stated in a letter to Mr. Solomon that if the annexation of Jamaica to Canada which Mr. Solomon proposed should fail—and for the time it has failed—some commercial arrangement ought to be made. The other Boards of Trade appealed to, have now to be heard from. That they will respond to the request of the St. John Board may be taken for granted.

THE FEDERAL BANK.

A correspondent calls attention to a misconstruction in our article of last week on the Federal Bank, of the language of Mr. Yarker's report with reference to cancelling shares. What Mr. Yarker said was: "I recommend the cancellation in full of the 5,000 shares, \$500,000, being part of the stock that has reverted to the bank (6,628 shares) because:

"1st. Its appearance as part of the paid up stock in our government statement is misleading," etc., etc.

He is referring, it seems, to the appearance in the Government returns, after Parliament ratifies them, of the altered figures of the bank's position, and does not intend to im-

pugn the accuracy of previous statements sent to Ottawa by former authorities of the Federal Bank. Considering that at the time when Mr. Yarker's report was read, the then latest Banking Return contained under the heading "capital paid-up," opposite the Federal Bank, the figures \$2,966,800, it was not at all unnatural to conclude that he meant to condemn the whole figures, which included the \$500,000 of which he spoke, as misleading. As regards the cancellation of the \$500,000, a remedy of his own, for the adoption of which he gives strong reasons, it is satisfactory to learn that he consulted the proper authorities before committing himself to the scheme.

Again, with respect to the Commercial Loan Company, objection is taken to our version of the legal opinion obtained as to its powers. The language of the report, it is true, is not "that the bank, could legally lend money on its own stock," through this intermediary, but that "the company was at least legally competent to advance upon bank stocks." This was evidently the only kindly thing Mr. Yarker would say of "the little machine," and then he sets determinedly to work to terminate its existence, a policy that every one will uphold. For, it will not be denied that, although the machinery of the Commercial Loan Co. was used, the money of the Federal Bank of Canada was lent.

It may not be out of place to suggest that a provision be inserted in the Banking Act to the effect that shares, of its own stock, reverting to a bank in the ordinary course of its business, should, within a given period—say twelve months—be offered *pro rata* to its other shareholders or sold.

THE SCOTT ACT CAMPAIGN.

The adoption of the Scott Act by one county after another shows a determination by the people of Canada in many places to try what can be done by local prohibition of the sale of intoxicating drink. They have become convinced that such a course is necessary and desirable. The hope is that the adoption of the Act will have the effect of putting a stop to, or at least greatly diminishing, the drinking of intoxicating liquors. The object is clear, but to what extent it will be attained by the method followed will be best told at future stock-taking of results. It is almost impossible that the effect should not be a diminution of drinking, though statistics may not clearly prove to what extent. Still, there are some tests that may be relied upon: the quantity of spirits that goes into a county under the Scott Act compared with what went into it before, and the number of convictions for drunkenness, prior to the adoption of the Scott Act and after would furnish valuable data. The convictions for drunkenness could easily be got at, but a reliable statement of the quantities of liquor would be hard to obtain.

The adoption of the Scott Act will not at once destroy the desire for drink; the desire will remain, but the difficulty of gratifying it may be increased. Drink may not be openly sold in hotels and saloons, at least not so generally as before; but much will depend upon the vigor with which the law is enforced; if special efforts are not

made to enforce it, liquor will be sold openly in the public rooms at hotels and taverns. If the public sale be suppressed, the traffic, whatever there is of it, will be carried on in secret places and by people who have not much regard for law of any kind. The quality of the stuff sold, under such circumstances, always deteriorates. In smuggling into a county the contraband article, it will be put up in the most concentrated form; and we need not say that form is spirit, unreduced by water. The water will be added afterward. The rule of smuggling is that very bulky articles which cannot be hid away do not enter the list of contrabands which the smuggler selects in plying his trade; and for the same reason beer, which carries its own water and cannot be separated from it, is too bulky to be hidden. The drinks will therefore be changed, and the change cannot be for the better. There will probably be, we predict, three changes: the drinks will be changed, the dispensers of them will be changed; the places where they are drunk will be changed; and every one of these changes is likely to be for the worse.

It may be that the difficulty of getting drink will counterbalance this trinity of evil, and that a balance of good results will stand at the credit of the Scott Act. This is the one chance of its diminishing the consumption of drinks. But to leave a balance of good result to the credit of the Scott Act, the diminution of the quantity would have to be very great; for secret drinking and the drinking of bad liquor, of spirit in any form, habitually, are nearly always attended with bad results. Secret drinking is not under the necessity of putting much restraint on itself; what is unseen is unknown, and the undivulged does not bring open disgrace. The habitual drinking of bad spirits is a fatal practice, which destroys energy, courage, will and life itself. Excessive use of spirits, even if pure, has bad results. The open drinking of light wine, all experience shows, is attended with very little evil; as between the secret drinking of bad spirits and the open drinking of light wine, the choice is easily made.

The Scott Act has in most cases been carried by large majorities; and where this happens it is fair to conclude that there is not any very strong current of public opinion against it. These conditions appear to be favorable to a strict enforcement of the law. But it is not impossible that under the smooth surface of appearances there is a stratum of opinion which does not reach the public eye. If there is very little active opposition to the enactment of the law, it does not follow that there may not be a strong passive resistance to its enforcement. The working of the ballot shows what a strong element of moral cowardice there is in the community; people will do in the secret of the ballot box what they never would think of doing under the eyes of their fellow-men. There are many who will not even appear to oppose the Scott Act and who yet wish to see it defeated in the execution. Others are apathetic when the election takes place, but are not in favor of the law, the organization, the speaking, the drumming up of voters, all the activities to which the agitation have given birth are on the side of the Scott Act.