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THE "BLACK CLOUD."

When the British premier, or any member of his government, desires to impress the public mind on any question of passing moment, or to give an intimation to any foreign power in a semi-diplomatic manner, the modern practice is to address his remarks to the members of some club, or from the platform at some meeting of constituents. In this way, the views of the government are placed before the world in a manner at once outspoken and effective. The country is thus taken into the confidence of the responsible executive. The foreign cabinets are given lessons in diplomacy apart from the devious devices of political intrigue. In the days of Talleyrand, the dark ways of diplomacy were concealed from the public gaze; the public were not suffered to know what was proceeding behind the veiled place. Most momentous devices were settled between ambassadors, at secret star-chamber gatherings, and until the hour had arrived for action nothing leaked out. Now all is changed in this respect. The enlightened public are invited to reflect over and discuss the startling problems that present themselves for solution. In this age of progress, of education, of electric communication, of newspaper influence, the old-fashioned methods are thrown to one side. The diplomacy of the world lies as it were on the surface.

Thus, Lord Salisbury, on Wednesday addressed an important gathering of the United Club at London on the topics of the hour, the war between Spain and the United States, the condition of affairs in China, the relations of the Empire with France, the Egyptian question. In the course of his remarks, but briefly cabled, the Premier of the Empire rightly said:—"There is a black cloud on the horizon, one that does not affect us personally but which evokes the deepest sorrow, and our earnest desire for its removal." The simile is most appropriate; his metaphor expresses precisely the speaker's allusion to the terrible war now raging between the States and Spain. But Lord Salisbury very carefully took occasion again to declare British neutrality in the struggle. Said he, "It is the war of two great states between whom we are neutral; watching this terrible war we are bound to abstain from expressing any preference or any judgment on either side." This renewed declaration of neutrality is well set forth; it serves to warn the American people that however desirous the two nations may be for the promotion of a feeling of common accord and friendship, that sentiment must not lead the government into any rash declarations of preference in the present struggle. To depart from the neutrality standpoint so very properly assumed by the British government would be but to precipitate a general war between the European Powers which should be avoided. Departure from the strictest "neutrality" on the part of Britain would be to invite the active interference of Russia, France, and Austria; to bind these countries in a league both offensive and defensive against the British Empire. These nations are just watching for such an opportunity; but the opportunity will be denied them. The Washington executive does not, however, quite relish Lord Salisbury's cool, non-committal attitude; it would have preferred that the Premier should, in a way, directly or indirectly have shown a preference to the United States. But this could not be.

In plain language, Lord Salisbury tells both the contestants to fight it out, while Britain looks on. In the ultimate settlement of the War and its results, Britain reserves herself. That time may be distant or more present, who shall say? Possessed of the latest diplomatic secrets, Salisbury doubtless sees that Spain is not alone in the struggle; that she has powerful backers who are not in evidence before the world is quite certain. While the nations play with the whole question of the entrance of the United States into the old world politics, they are waiting and watching as Lord Salisbury declares that England is doing. No nation desires to show its hand, and disclose the trumps it holds. Spain's stubborn resistance in Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines to American demands for instant surrender worries President McKinley and his cabinet. They and the Senate had imagined that at the first blast of the trumpet the battlements would fall and the American army would advance and occupy. This fond delusion is dispelled, and the war for conquest promises to be of lengthened duration.

And while the invasion of Cuba lasts, and while the fate of the Philippines trembles in the balance, what is Great Britain about? Her present role is vigorous preparation for all contingencies. The country is being rapidly awakened to the possibility of a combination against her. Hence, her navy is being put on a war footing; the government and private shipyards resound with the note of preparation. Fleets are prepared to take the ocean at short notice in addition to the five or six squadrons already stationed at various vantage places east and west. To be ready—aye, ready—is the watchword. It is announced that in a few days "the government will issue a ship-building programme involving the use of every available ship in the government and private dockyards;" that "a special act of parliament will be passed authorizing the acquisition of all the warships building in England for foreign powers, the strengthening of coal-

ing stations," etc. The naval reserve men are notified to be ready for immediate call. Lists of men now in the merchant service but suitable for engineering work aboard the fleet are prepared. If War were immediately certain the preparations being made for offense and defense could hardly be more energetic than they are; and all this without any fuss or excitement.

The "Black Cloud" at present covers Spain and the States, but like the storm cloud may spread over Britain and her colonies. Suddenly, like the thunder-bolt, the lurid war-lightning may flash across the political horizon. Britain may be involved in a tremendous struggle for national existence before the present troubles terminate. But, to avert such a catastrophe the true wisdom is preparation. Great Britain must be in a position to "defy the world as once she did" with or without the United States. She must defy—not threaten—the united navies of Russia and France, and even of Germany on every ocean. Her "meteor flag" must be displayed everywhere so as to strike terror into her enemies by land or sea. So shall the "black cloud" disperse over her and her dominions if the storm shall arise. In the meantime, Lord Salisbury declares for continued neutrality, a condition that refrains from aiding or interfering between belligerents.

Public Buildings.

Montreal Gazette.

None of the Liberal protests in Opposition commanded more general sympathy than that against the erection of public buildings which were not called for by public requirements. Unfortunately Liberal practice in this respect by no means accords with Liberal professions. Unnecessary public buildings are still erected, but in different constituencies. Parliament at the session just closed passed a vote for a building at Kentville, N.S., which is to cost \$18,000; the population of Kentville at the last census was 2,526, and its postal revenue is under \$5,000 a year, but it is in the constituency of the Minister of Militia, Liverpool, N. S., is also to have a public building, to cost \$15,000 or \$16,000; its population is 2,465, and its postal revenue a little over \$2,000, but it is in the constituency of the Minister of Finance. Another favored place is Woodstock, Ont., where the expenditure will be nearer \$50,000; it is in the constituency of Mr. Sutherland, the chief Liberal whip. Every householder knows that when a man takes a house too big for his income, the expense does not end with the high rent he has to pay; and so it is with public buildings. Items for maintenance, caretaker, repairs, etc., appear in the estimate year by year, and excite no comment; what is the use of grumbling? The building is there, and has to be looked after. But if the money were simply sunk, and the town in time developed sufficiently to make use of the public buildings, the case would not be so bad; but often the votes for these public works is scandalously wasted. The Liberals have not had much time to make a record in this respect, but they have lost such opportunities as they had. When Mr. Tarte became Minister of Public Works, a post office was being erected at Arranpior on the Ottawa River. A month or two after he took office, Mr. Tarte dismissed a practical builder who was in charge of the job as clerk of the works, and appointed a dry goods clerk who had made himself exceedingly useful to the Liberal party. Since that time the building has been drawing \$2 a day, including Sundays, although no work was done in the winter. He did not give up his position in the dry goods store, and was sometimes away for a week at a time, buying bankrupt stock. He paid a visit to the work when it was convenient, and did not worry himself, for he understood that the \$2 a day was paid for political services, although it came out of the public treasury. The upshot was that the builder put on material taken from a pile of cull lumber that had been thrown out to rot, and as a result the post office, although a new building, is already in need of repairs.

Much Mr. Tarte admitted, though he said the statement that the building was falling to pieces was an exaggeration. When the Conservatives put up costly public buildings, they at least saw that the contractor did good work. The present Government "out Herods Herod." The damages to the Western Block at Ottawa, caused by last year's fire, first estimated by the department at \$25,000, have now crept up to \$200,000. During the last election campaign men were simply tumbling over one another in their eagerness to get out of each other's way. But the work still drags on. It is too useful a job, both to the minister and the men employed for them to allow it to be brought to a conclusion, and the people of Ottawa confidently expect it to go on till the eve of the next general election. Mr. Tarte himself, with charming frankness, said: "I employed a great number of men. I was surprised myself at the length of time occupied." But it is all part of the great Laurier scheme to make Ottawa the Washington of the North. On the same basis a greenhouse 150 feet by 22 costs at Ottawa \$10,000, and to repair a summer house, which could be built from start to finish for \$500, costs \$100 more than that amount. The Government object to criticism of such votes as these as descending to petty details, and if on the whole they showed a desire to economize the objection might be justified; but they do not, as the greatly increased totals of expenditure prove. Take the estimates as a whole or take them in detail, they show that the present Government, pledged to the reduction of expenditure and the strictest economy by the most solemn vows, has been the most wasteful and extravagant administration that ever held the reins of power in the Dominion.

A Long-drawn Farce.

Sarnia Canadian.

It is now 124 days since two of Mr. Hardy's Ministers were rejected by their constituents. But they did not bow to the decision of their employers—they have treated the people that sent them to the Legislature at the previous election with the utmost contempt by continuing to discharge the duties of their respective departments, drawing their salaries and snapping their fingers at the men who refused to elect them. Each of the two Ministers has drawn \$1,358 to which they have no legal right. As honest men they should return it to the Provincial treasury. How long does Premier Hardy intend to keep up the farce?

THE PHILIPPINE NATIVES.

An English Traveller Says They Are "An Incomprehensible Race," and Tells Why.

Judging from an account of an English traveller who has made a careful study of Philippine affairs, the natives of the islands, that is, the domesticated natives, are difficult people to deal with. Before beginning his studies of the native character he questioned a parish priest who had been living among the natives for more than forty years. The priest declared the islanders were an absolutely incomprehensible race, to whom no known rules of civilization or savagery had the smallest application. Here is the result of the Englishman's personal investigations:—

"They are absolutely unreliable; they will serve you faithfully for twenty years, and then commit some such horrible crime as delivering over your house and family to brigands. They are patient, sober, and even honest servants usually, but at any moment they may break out and, joining a band of robbers, pillage your house. If you tax them with crime they are not abashed, but disclaim all responsibility, answering, 'Senor, my head was hot,' which they consider sufficient excuse."

"They will never confess to a misdeed voluntarily. They will submit to a beating without a murmur if they think it is deserved, and bear no malice; but if they consider the punishment unjust they will seek the first opportunity of revenging themselves. They never forgive and never forget an injury, but they cherish no memory of kindness. Generosity they regard as a weakness. If you give them anything unsought they consider you a fool and treat you accordingly. They are always asking favors, though never directly. Borrowing they think no shame, but they never repudiate their debts. On the other hand, they never pay back voluntarily, and if taxed with their dishonesty look surprised and say, 'Senor, you never asked for it.'"

"If you pay a man 20 cents for a service he will be contented; if you pay him 30 cents he will grumble. They have no words for 'thank you' in their language, nor concept of what the phrase implies. They have no notion of charity, never helping one another except in the case of relatives, but they acknowledge even the remotest of relationships. If treated badly they make good servants and never grumble; if treated kindly they are lost and go to the bad. They never stick to an occupation, but are ready to turn their hands to anything. They are jacks-of-all-trades, and know of none. They are brave against equals if led by superiors, but a real or fancied superiority in the foe causes them to abandon all hope."

"They do not know the meaning of hospitality. They will do what you tell them if you tell them often enough, but they will never do anything of their own accord. They will answer questions, but never volunteer information. They will let your horse die for lack of corn and never tell you that the supply has given out. They are confirmed liars, and show only surprise when found out. They are good husbands, though intensely jealous; but they do not worry about the conduct of their daughters or even their wives previous to marriage. They have no ambition and no ideas of order or economy, but in the matter of cleanliness they are superior to all the inhabitants of the Far East save the Japanese."

Lister on Lister.

Montreal Gazette.

"The evil aimed at by my hon. friend from York is a decided evil, and if it is possible to get at it this House should cure it." With these words Mr. Lister, M. P., now a judge, endorsed in the session of 1896 Mr. Mulock's bill to prevent a member of Parliament, or a man who had been a member of Parliament, from accepting a place of emolument at the hands of the Government. Mr. Mulock had introduced the bill by a statement that its object was to better secure the independence of Parliament. It had been to him, he said, a painful thing to have witnessed, what struck at the very root of our representative system, gentlemen occupying seats in the House of Commons who, everybody knew, had the promises of positions of emolument made to them, who continued to sit long after they had ceased to be independent, and who were compelled to vote as mere puppets of the Government or else forfeit these positions of emolument. The fact, he went on, that an office can be dangled before members of the House of Commons had a great influence. If the Government of the day could dangle public offices before their followers, and induce a few to aspire to these positions, instead of representing their constituents, and exercising an unbiased judgment and a wholesome influence upon the administration of the day, they became mere parasites upon the administration, and ceased to voice the opinions of their constituents. More than that, went on Mr. Mulock, not only did they do all this that was shameful, but, more as men, they lost their character, they became corrupting agencies amongst their own ranks, and so even a small percentage of persons in that position were likely to impair the independence of the whole body. And after Mr. Mulock had thus characterized the office-seeking parliamentarian and his work, Mr. Lister rose, and declared that the evil aimed at by his hon. friend's bill was a decided evil, and if it was possible to get at it at all, the House should cure it. And now we have this same Mr. Mulock sitting as a member of a Government which appoints this same Mr. Lister, M. P., to a judgeship. The two of them may be judged by their own words.

Gibson and Dryden.

Guelph Herald.

Conservative journals have been contenting themselves, so far, with poking fun at the standing members of the Government at Toronto, Messrs. Gibson and Dryden. It is probably not commendable that such an outrage on public decency should be made the subject of lightsome witticisms. When we realize that we are being governed by a Government that no longer has any substantial existence—that a cheap oligarchy persists in ruling, in spite of the verdict recorded at the polls—we should be disposed to outbursts of indignation rather than mirth.

It is now 117 days since the people voted Gibson and Dryden out of office. They were told by the electorate that their services were no longer required, that they had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. What have Gibson and Dryden done? Surrendered their portfolios like honorable men and asked Mr. Hardy to fill their places with Ministers who had the confidence

of the electorate? No. They have cringingly clung to the offices which the people asked them to vacate on the 1st of last March; they have done violence to the first principle of responsible government, and have made the administration at Toronto a by-word and reproach.

Gibson and Dryden have no more moral right to administer the affairs of their departments, or take one cent of the people's money, than have any two residents of this city. They were servants of the people, but the people discharged them. Premier Hardy, in allowing them to remain in office, is assuming the prerogatives of a czar in a country that is supposed to be blessed with responsible government. The spirit of ownership which years of office have generated in these men has once more asserted itself. The supremacy of the people is laughed at as an idle myth. The Hardys and the Gibsons and the Drydens are the masters.

LAKE SUPERIOR TIDES.

There is Also a Constant Supply of Fresh Water.

Lake Superior is the largest body of fresh water in the world. It is water of wonderful purity, which it holds, too; and some time, and in the not very distant future, either, the people who live in the large cities to the west and south will come to this lake to get the water for their homes. It will not be so remarkable an engineering feat to pipe the water of this lake, pure and sparkling and fresh, from its cold depths to these cities, which are now struggling with the question of their water supply and meeting all sorts of difficulties in their efforts to get water fit to drink.

At the very best the temperature varies through the winter and summer not more than six degrees. Winter and summer this great lake never changes to any appreciable extent, so that if you dip your finger tips in the blue surface on a day in July, or if you test it some day in early winter, when you have been out on some belated, ice-mailed fishing smack, or when you have gone out to watch the fishermen spearing their supplies through the thick ice in mid-January, you will find but a trifling difference in the temperature. Away down at the bottom, too, there is but little variation in the temperature, for it stands at nearly 40 degrees Fahrenheit at the bottom, and varies from 40 to 46 degrees winter and summer at the surface. The other lakes, though cold, are not in this respect like Superior.

The whole bottom of the lake is believed to be a strong rock basin, though it would seem that there must be great springs at the bottom to help keep up the enormous volume of water. From the north there is a large amount of water pouring into the lake year in and year out, the swift-rushing, narrow-banked Nipigon and other streams furnishing no small part of the supply. These streams in a large measure make up for the loss on the surface. One of the old lake captains, a bronzed, kindly-faced man, who had been for thirty-five years on the lakes, and had faced death many a time in the frightful storms which sometimes sweep across these beautiful bodies of water, told me as we were passing along near the north coast of Superior, with the headlands and inlets and glossy green bluffs of that most picturesque shore in full view, that the theory that the lake is slowly going down in size was true. He maintained that he could tell from certain landmarks along the shore, with which he is as familiar as he would be with the streets of his old Scottish birthplace, that the lake is slowly—very slowly—but surely receding. However, it will be some centuries yet before there will be any appreciable lessening of the great lakes, so that we need not be concerned.

Strange as it may seem, the lake has tides, too—well defined tides, discovered in 1860. It is what is called a self-registering tide, with a regular flux and reflux wave, caused, so the scientific men say, by the sun and moon. The average rise and fall every twenty-four hours is 1.14 foot; the maximum at new and full moon is 1.28 foot.—San Francisco Call.

Corn in Egypt.

Ottawa Citizen.

Sir Louis Davies' brother, Benjamin Davies, has been appointed immigration agent at St. Paul at a salary of \$1,500. Mr. Davies used to be a ranchman in Montana, but latterly has been living in Minnesota. The Minister of Marine will soon be as good to his relatives as his colleague, Mr. Sifton. Benjamin's portion is traditional, and Sir Louis, like Joseph, thinks that as long as there is "corn in Egypt" he should provide for him.

The city of Hamilton assessed the Bell Telephone Company for the prospective value of their plant in the city, and the action was upheld by the board of arbitrators. The company appealed, claiming that they should only be taxed for the abstract value. The appeal was allowed, the court holding that the company should only be assessed for the value of the poles and wires if taken down and sold.

On Wednesday a sad accident happened to Benjamin Blake, employed on the farm of David Condie, Smith's Falls. Mr. Blake went into the stable to tie up a large bull, when the animal tossed him in the air and then gored him in the abdomen. The infuriated animal was driven off with clubs. The injuries received proved fatal. Deceased was aged about 40.

The whole issue of \$75,000 Winnipeg school bonds has been purchased by A. T. Drummond, of Kingston.



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