

provincial license, and to conform to a new set of government (provincial) regulations. The main constitutional contention of the companies in these suits was that the insurance business came under the term "Regulation of Trade and Commerce," in the British North America Act, and was consequently a Dominion matter. The constitutional contention of the province was that insurance contracts came under the clause "Property and Civil Rights in the Province." The case went to the Privy Council and was decided against the companies, the judgment setting forth that "Their Lordships abstain, on the present occasion, from any attempt to define the limits of the authority of the Dominion Parliament in this direction. It is enough for the decision of the present case to say that, in their view, its authority to legislate for the regulation of Trade and Commerce does not comprehend the power to regulate, by legislation, the contracts of a particular business and trade, such as the business of fire insurance in a single province, and, therefore, that its legislative authority does not, in the present case, conflict or compete with the power over property and civil rights, assigned to the Legislature of Ontario."

The great constitutional point at issue was left undecided, and is still so, but the conflict of authority has been got around I can hardly say, "been got over," by a compromise, under which the Dominion does not interfere with Provincial Companies, while confining their business within the limits of their own province, and the provinces do not interfere, beyond the imposition of Provincial license fees, with companies licensed by the Dominion. So, we have the insurance business, and even individual insurance companies, paying taxes to both the Dominion and the Provincial Governments, and we have the Provincial Governments delegating to municipalities the right to tax the companies still further.

I do not propose to discuss the question as to whether your business is over-governed and over-taxed, for you know from experience far more about that than I do. You are all men of sufficient experience, judgment, public spirit and true patriotism to realize the justice of equitable taxation. You, who are masters in the art of insurance appreciate the importance of such institutions as the militia, quarantine, inspections of various kinds, light-house and buoy services, police forces and fire brigades, etc., etc. Such institutions constitute what may be fitly described as the country's system of national and municipal insurance, and are of direct value and importance to the insurance companies. And such institutions cannot be maintained without money. Even the Insurance Department at Ottawa, is not altogether a money-making device of the Government, maintained for the purpose of squeezing all the money possible out of the money bags of the Insurance Companies. The system of inspection, the exaction of deposits, the license fees, all serve as a protection to the public and to the companies themselves, and help to make assurance doubly sure.

If, as is often claimed, the exactions of the Dominion, Provincial and Municipal Governments bear too heavily upon your business, the history of the development of our Constitution,—in fact the Constitution itself,—hold out to you the hope that you will obtain the remedy in time.

You will have observed that the development of our Constitution, during many centuries, has progressed along clearly defined lines—the liberty of the subject, the protection of vested interests, the public good, the equal share of every citizen in the government of the country.

If insurance men, or business men generally, desire improvements in the system of government, or changes in the administration, it is their own fault if they do not secure them. The Constitution is framed so as to give us exactly what we desire, and determine to have in the way of legislation and administration so long as it is just. If, by this address, I have brought this fact to your attention, even for

a few minutes, I consider that I have not occupied your time in vain.

I have no patience with those who flatter themselves upon being practical business men, who are content to grumble at the iniquities of the laws governing them and to censure the men who represent them in public positions, and who, nevertheless, at election day, are too indifferent to go to the polls to cast their ballots. A country's Constitution may be a very model of statesmanship and political wisdom, as I believe ours is, but it must count for nothing without the men of light and leading in the country take a direct and lively interest in its application. The holding aloof of a very large proportion of the most influential business men of Canada from politics is not a hopeful sign. I wish business men would follow the example of Europeans rather than Americans, in this respect, and can assure them that the better class of Canadian politicians, especially the parliamentarians of experience, wish sincerely they would, for the keener the interest taken by the most active minds of commercial life in political affairs, the better for politics and for those politicians who really are in public life in the hope of being useful to their country and to their fellow-countrymen.

PART II.

CANADA—ITS COMMERCE.

BY MR. E. B. GREENSHIELDS, B.A., MONTREAL.

It is with diffidence that I make a short address this evening on the Commerce of Canada, a subject all important to Canadians. I feel very much honoured by being asked to speak, but I think I am a member of this honourable association, under a sort of false pretence, as I am not an insurance man. Had I the tact, agreeable manner and easy flow of language we find in the gentlemen connected with Life Assurance who pay us such pleasant visits, I might hope to treat this subject in a proper way. As it is, I must ask you to be lenient with me.

I understand the term "Commerce" not in its restricted sense, as referring only to the exchange of commodities, but rather as meaning all the products and business of the country, that is everything connected with, and that affects, its earning power.

The commerce of a country may be compared to the heart in the human system. It finds the health giving fluid in the fields, the mines, the factories, and by its mighty pulsations drives this stream of energizing power through every artery in the land, a circulation which nourishes and enriches wherever it goes. Those who are engaged in the affairs of the country represent the head and the brain. As long as the head sees that proper economic laws are followed so long does the giant heart of Commerce keep the whole system in perfect health. But if these laws be broken then follow ill-health and disease, and, if proper remedies be not applied, disaster. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to every citizen, that Commerce be governed by legislation suitable to its needs and wants, so that the wealth-giving products may be used to the fullest and wisest purpose.

It may not be considered an Irishism, if I begin by stating what was expected of this country before it had any commerce at all. You are all aware of the historic visit paid by Jacques Cartier to the top of Mont Royal. He hoped and believed that he saw before him in the West the direct road to China and all its treasures. This proved a truly prophetic anticipation. The dream has been realized, and now from the shining rails of the Canadian Pacific Railway is reflected the highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and over that road is carried not only the products of the East and of Europe, but also vast harvests of grain from Manitoba, minerals from the Kootenay, and gold from the Yukon; wealth