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FREE PRESS SPECIAL AGENTS.

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THE SEAT FOR WINNIPEG.

It has been stated that Mr. Hugh J. Macdonald, member for Winnipeg, is desirous to give up his seat in Parliament, in order to devote his whole time to the pursuit of his profession. We trust that there is no truth in the rumor. There can be no doubt of the hearty and unanimous wish of the Liberal-Conservative party, so long victoriously led by his illustrious sire, the late Sir John Macdonald, that he should remain in the House. He is personally very popular, and is not only highly respected on account of his father's great historic record, but for the fine many qualities which he has inherited and the ability which he has given sufficient evidence of in his place in Parliament. That it would be a pity to lose his services in the Parliamentary ranks of the party, is a sentiment which we believe is entertained by all who recognize Mr. Macdonald's personal worth, and revere the memory of the great chieftain who has passed away. If it be true that Mr. Hugh Macdonald seriously contemplates retirement it will be the hope of all that he will see his way clear to reverse such decision, and continue the career of public usefulness which he has so well begun.

STREET RAILWAY NEGOTIATIONS.

A good deal of dissatisfaction is expressed in various quarters of the city and immediate suburbs that the full light of publicity is not thrown upon all the street railway negotiations now in progress. As the object of the Council should be primarily the welfare of the citizens rather than the aggrandisement of any close corporation, they owe it no less to themselves than to their constituents that everything should be conducted clearly and above board. It is complained of, that this is not being done.

The offer of the proposed Company (the Company on paper as opposed to the Company already in existence) was clear and distinct. So far no objection could be taken. It is the privilege of any body of men to propose to form a Company, whether they have any intention of actually doing so or not. This offer was met by the existing Company and accepted in strict accordance with the terms of their charter. Then came the hitch, and it is at this point that the interest of the average citizen begins.

It is of little consequence whether the vehicle in which he travels from point to point is owned by Mr. A. or Mr. B., or whether the motor be a horse, a mule or an electric current, and his purpose is served when he is conveyed to his destination as quickly and cheaply as possible with the least personal discomfort. It is clearly a matter of business all through, without the faintest trace of sentiment, and hence there is no matter for surprise in the announcement by Mr. Cronyn that his Company does not propose to abate one jot of the rights which were created by and exist under its charter. To take any other stand would be to proclaim himself incapable as a business man and unfit to be at the head of a corporation.

But another element arises in the proposal to substitute electricity for horse or mule power. On this point Mr. Cronyn announces himself as willing to meet the wishes of the citizens, as expressed by their representatives, and to substitute electricity as soon as possible, fitting out the main trunk line in time for the crowded traffic of the Western Fair week, and the rest of the system as soon thereafter as the necessary plant can be got into working order.

This is a matter of great moment to the workmen of London. The erection of the power house and its equipment alone would cause an expenditure close upon fifty thousand dollars, and if we take the figures of Hamilton as a basis, to equip the whole system, would cost about five times that sum, or a quarter of million of dollars. Trade is not so brisk in London that we can afford to disregard the advantages that would flow from the expenditure of such a sum, and it, therefore, behooves the Council to act quickly, or to give at once a good and satisfactory reason for the delay.

A gentleman in Scotland lately dismissed a clever but dishonest gardener. For the sake of his wife and family, however, he gave the man a character, and this is how he worded it: "I hereby certify that A. B. has been my gardener for over two years, and during that time he has got more out of my garden than any man I ever employed."

MARCH OF THE CHOLERA.

The cholera scourge is following along the very lines it pursued in 1832 and again in 1854. Another remarkable fact is noted. It is following the same geographical course of the grip, or the Russian influenza, which for three successive years has swept both hemispheres with its ravages. There is certainly enough in these facts to show the folly of indulging in a false sense of immunity from a visitation of the scourge in this country.

The present outbreak of cholera began its ravages in India last winter, from which it steadily pursued its way in Southern Asia bordering along the Indian Ocean. It appeared on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and entered South-eastern Russia, where it is now sweeping with frightful ravage through the famine-stricken districts of that Empire. Its dreaded march continues along the Volga, and the inhabitants of that thickly-settled region are seeking safety in flight from its approach. Its grim hand has already been laid on Moscow and St. Petersburg, and its talon fingers have reached the gay city of Paris, and the great British Metropolis.

Its advent upon our own shores is as certain as it is the fact that the sun will rise to-morrow. The question arises, Are we prepared for it?

TESTS FOR TIMBER.

One branch of the work of the Department of Agriculture at Washington consists of the "timber tests" or investigations made into the character of timber trees. These timber tests have, it appears, employed the largest share of the expenditure of funds as well as of the attention devoted to any particular work. The object of these tests as described by Dr. Fernow, the chief of the division, is twofold, namely, first to find out in what relation the mechanical properties of timber stand to its structure and physical conditions, and thereby to find for practice means of judging mechanical properties from a simple microscopic or macroscopic examination, and secondly to find out in what relation structure, physical conditions and mechanical properties stand to the conditions under which the tree is grown, and thereby to obtain knowledge for the forest grower as to the kinds of timber which will yield the best results in given soil and climatic conditions. Of course the testing of the timbers appears to the public eye as the most conspicuous part of the work, and the more careful determination of average values expressing the strength of wood materials is looked for eagerly by architects, engineers, builders and other users and consumers of wood.

THE MONEY ISSUES IN THE UNITED STATES.

Besides the free silver advocates in the United States there is another class of money reformers or money cranks who wish to enact that gold and silver shall no longer be a legal tender, but Government paper currency shall take their place. This is the fiat money party who claim it is one of the functions of government to furnish sufficient money for all the people of the country. There are a number of strong advocates for this measure as might be expected amongst those mechanics who may be burdened with heavy mortgages. The farmers there and elsewhere imagine that all the Government has to do is to turn out paper money, greenbacks, by the sheaf and make everybody rich, and if not rich at least lend money to those in need of it at a low rate of interest.

The Patrons of Industry here who are asking the Mowat Government for a loan are making equally as absurd a demand as the Alliance party are doing in the United States, who are now agitating for cheap Government paper money. It is not the province of any Government to furnish money for its people. In fact, it is quite the opposite, as all kinds of nations depend upon the people to supply them with funds. All nations are supported by the levying and collecting of taxes, either from their own people or from people who seek to get into their markets with foreign goods.

The great mistake that is made by people, both in the United States and here also is about Governments lending money to banks. If they lend money to banks they say, why not to farmers? The Government of the United States never lent a dollar to the National banks, and of course here we have not any. The Government simply furnishes National banks with blank bills. These blank bills are not money; they cannot be used as such, and they must first be signed by the officers of the bank. Then they become the promissory notes of the bank, and not of the United States Government.

The greater part of the United States currency that is afloat in Canada is merely the notes of these National banks, and not of the United States; and Canadians should consider this point as they run as great a risk in accepting these notes as do the Americans in accepting our bank bills. These U. S. National bank bills are not a legal tender for debts on the other side. But the banks issuing them are compelled to redeem them on presentation in money, which is a legal tender. In order to protect the people who take National bank bills as money, and to secure people against loss, the National bank, before it can secure its bills, is compelled to purchase United States bonds and deposit them in the Treasury of the United States, \$100 of such bonds for every \$90 of blank bills received; and then if the National bank fails to redeem its bills when signed and issued, the Government sells the bonds which it holds, which really belong to the bank, and with the proceeds arising from the sale of the bonds, redeems the

ills of the bank. And thus redemption of the bank bills and bonds has finally to be done with gold.

To enact that there shall be no longer any currency made from gold and silver would be simply to make these articles of barter the same as wheat, barley, oats, corn or potatoes, and we would go back to the dark ages when there was no money, or such a scarcity of it that nothing had any fixed or certain value. We now have in gold a standard of values. Sterling silver, .7125 fine, has since 1873 fluctuated in the London market from 41 to 59 pence per ounce troy; while sterling gold .9168 fine since the time of King George I. (1717), has remained without change at the same mint price, £3 17s 10½d per ounce, and is the basis of all operations of barter or purchases of commodities and of all negotiations and exchanges between parties at home and abroad. Silver money in England, on account of its fluctuating value and bulk, is only a legal tender for 40 shillings, and it serves only as an auxiliary to complete payments or to pay small purchases. Gold having a fixed value, and silver an ever-fluctuating market price, it is impossible that together both can serve as a basis for a circulating currency in any country.

So the claims of the money reformers in the United States, whether free silver, bi-metalism or unlimited paper issue appear to be equally fallacious and absurd; and it is equally so to suppose that any nation should be required to supply money to private individuals for their private business as is being asked by a large number both in this country and the United States.

CURRENT TOPICS.

There is only one factory in Russia for the manufacture of playing cards. It has a monopoly of the business and belongs to the Foundling Hospital. It is figured that there are 30,000,000 people in Russia who play cards, and to supply the demand this factory puts out 6,000,000 packs of cards annually.

It is the wanton extravagance of the people that oppresses them, not the enactments of Parliament. If a young man starts out on a system of lavish expenditure, paying enormous prices in cash for every flimsy ornament he sees, he will come to poverty just as sure as he is born. That is just what our people have been doing with their patrimony.

A Washington girl has a peculiar weakness. It is whistling. To save her life she can't help whistling while walking on the street or riding in a carriage. She is known far and near as "the whistling girl," and it must be confessed her whistling is pleasant to the ear. Gems from the operas, snatches of late songs, and popular airs till from her lips in an unceasing stream.

The buoys in Gedney's channel, at the entrance of the New York harbor, are supposed to be the only ones in the world lighted by electricity. They have now been in use since 1888, and mark a channel 1,000 feet wide and 6,000 feet long. Up to 1888 the channel was practically closed at night, but now it is in night use, the lighted buoys making its navigation thoroughly safe.

The first experiment of the coal from the Sour's holds has been made at Winnipeg. The tests so far have been eminently satisfactory. The coal burns without much flame, but gives out a very powerful heat. It is distinctly a clean coal, and there is very little dust about it; it burns a white ash, and a comparative absence of soot promises to become one of its recommendations.

These are glorious times for the man whose legs are not as slightly as they are sturdy. He need no longer look like a cruller in trousers, as a sharp young lady remarked on giving her first impressions of a cowboy. His tailor has found a way out of the trouble by sewing a strip of strong tape tightly to the inside seam of the trouser legs. This keeps them always straight and trim and prevents that painful sagging at the inside of the knee which has ruined the society prospects of numberless young men.

From Algiers comes the news of a tragic affair. Two young men, formerly of Berlin, named Gustav Robert and Karl Schwartz, were foolish enough to enlist in the French Legion. They were sent to Algiers and so ill-treated that they deserted. They were captured at Oran and court-martialed. The court martial sentenced them to be shot, a severe and unusual penalty for desertion in time of peace, and inflicted, it is believed, on account of the prejudice against them as Germans. They died bravely, calling out as the order was given to fire, "Down with France! Long live Germany!" The news of the affair has aroused a strong anti-French feeling in Berlin.

Sir Herbert Maxwell declares that "there is more good wine made at the present than in any former period of the world's history, but relatively, to those who can afford it, there is many times less." In other words, the supply is excellent, but the management of it is bad. "For one cellar fifty years ago there are fifty or a hundred now owned by liberal if unimpaired persons, who pour wine of high price and good vintage without stint before it has reached maturity. It may be safely asserted that three-parts of the wine is consumed before age has developed its virtue." But equally to be avoided, according to Sir Herbert Maxwell, is the host who thinks that all old wine must be good, and inflicts on you Madeira which has been twice round the Cape, and "is worth now a guinea a glass," but "faded, alas! into an acid liquid that is hard to imagine ever flowed from the veins of the vine." Or, perhaps, a flask of Stygian hue is circulated; "20 port, my boy; precious little of that going nowadays," and you are bound to fill and refill your glass, wondering while at the Panagruelian palates of the Georgian bucks who were wont to slake their thirst with what suggests to your degenerate taste a compound of Harvey sauce and treacle.

"The latest craze in Boston is the compound oxygen drunk," said N. W. Floyd, of Springfield, Mass. "There are a half dozen establishments in the hub that are doing a rushing business in catering to this form of dissipation. They are patronized exclusively by men and women of highest social position, the women outnumbering the men. The sensation produced by the inhalation of the compound oxygen is described by those who have tried it as ecstatic. There is nothing known to the science of medicine or pharmacy that equals its delights. Big quaffs of it that fill the lungs' air cells are said to set all the nerves of the body a-tingle and the brain in a delicious whirl. The effect lasts all the way from five minutes to an hour, according to the person, and is said to have no apparently deleterious results, except a peculiar mental collapse, from which the dissipation doesn't recover for several hours." While under the strange influence of the stuff one feels completely lost to the world and oblivious to everything terrestrial. That is the reason it is called the compound oxygen drunk.

Caterpillars from six inches to a foot long are common in the vicinity of the Darling river, Australia. The natives twist them together and boil them in kangaroo grease, which is said to make a palatable dish.

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