OUR AUSTRALIAN LETTER

POLITICAL AND OTHER GOSSIP OF THE ANTIPODEAN COLONIES.

Threatened Dissolution of the New South Wales Government—Reciprocal Trade Relations Growing. Gloomy Outlook in Melbourne.

Sydney, N. S. W., Nov. 26.—Political movements in our purity House are somewhat exciting. The debate on the Premier's budget statement continues. Sir George Dibbs took up the running and was exceedingly moderate in tone. He, as a so-called protectionist, seemed extremely anxious that the Government should immediately proceed with tariff reform. Sir George strongly opposed the land tax proposals, but as these will be included in the same bill as the proposed income tax it is likely to cause a great split in the ranks of the land taxers, as the latter do not believe in the income tax. Even if the bill passes through the Legislative Assembly in the course of 12 months, the Upper House will be sure to slaughter it in many ways, if they don't throw it out. Sir Henry Parkes continued the debate, and severely criticised the Premier and his proposals, and said, however much he disliked the Opposition, pointing to the Government side, he disliked it the greater. This shows but too clearly that there is a serious split in the ranks of the free traders. You will remember in my letters of July and August, in the formation of the new Government, I said this would probably occur. However, it is just as well that the Premier should know his friends from his enemies. I would not be surprised to see by some cunning political engineering the defeat or resignation of the Government, that is, if the latter is sure of a dissolution and appeal to the people. A threatened dissolution may keep some of the professional political patriotic gentlemen(?) quiet, that is, they will go so far and no further, for pecuniary reasons well known to your readers and others.

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Stevenson's marriage was as romantic as any tale he ever told. Lloyd Osbourne, who assisted him in writing two of his stories, was the son of his wife by a former marriage, and when Mrs. Osbourne became Mrs. Stevenson she was recently divorced from her husband, Samuel C. Osbourne. She and Osbourne had been married in Indiana in 1858. Her maiden name was Vandergrift, and in 1861 the couple, with a son and daughter, started for Arizona with a few thousand dollars they had saved. Mr. Osbourne put his money in a mine, for which a few months later $100,000 was offered. Osbourne wished to sell, but his partner did not. They held on, and six months later the mine would not fetch a dollar. Osbourne, with his family, then went to San Francisco, and he so prospered as a court reporter that he sent his wife to Europe to educate the children. In Paris Mrs. Osbourne, just as well that the Premier should know his friends from his enemies, I would not be surprised to see by some cunning political engineering the defeat or resignation of the Government, that is, if the latter is sure of a dissolution and appeal to the people. A threatened dissolution may keep some of the professional political patriotic gentlemen(?) quiet, that is, they will go so far and no further, for pecuniary reasons well known to your readers and others.

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THE ASHFORD TRAGEDY.

EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE THE CORONER THIS AFTERNOON.

Little Mildred Bursts Out Crying After Identifying Her Father. Testimony of the Eldest Son. Spectators moved to Tears.

Coroner McGuigan resumed the inquest in the Ashford case at the city hall today. The jury comprized W. Melville, W. H. Goodwin, R. L. Valleen, Lewis Carter, J. Hunter and R. Parkes.

The prisoner George Fred. Ashford presented a haggard appearance and for a time shivered and trembled in a manner painful to witness. He later on pulled himself together and paid close attention to the evidence. The court room was crowded among those present being many ladies. Gov. Moresby was also in attendance, and assisted the coroner in conducting the examination.

Officer Crawford was the first witness. He told of having been alarmed by the boy Fred. He got his revolver and went to the house of Ashford. He met a little girl. She was barefooted and lightly clothed and shivering from cold. She said: "Please, sir, I am shot, too!" He noticed that she was bleeding. She said pa had gone into the woods. He went in the house and hurried up-stairs. The two boys and the girl followed closely behind him. He found the room on the right hand of the hall full of smoke, and smelling of burned powder. There was a large pool of blood on the floor. There was blood on the bedclothes and the bed was in disorder. Mrs. Ashford was lying on her right side. Blood was running from beside her ear. She was breathing. The child lay on the inside of the bed with her face toward the wall. One of the children said: "Oh! baby is dead." "But," said the witness, "your mother is not dead. Do you know of any woman who is in the habit of visiting her?" They mentioned Mrs. Thomas, to whose house witness went. He knocked but got no answer. He returned to the Ashford house, and there met officer Butler. He told Butler the particulars and asked if he knew of anyone who could be got to look after Mrs. Ashford. He then left Butler in charge, warning him to look out for Ashford, as he might return. The boy Freddie had said that Ashford had loaded his revolver before leaving the house. Witness then went to J. Fox's house, woke him up and told him the particulars. Mr. Fox agreed to go over with his wife to look after Mrs. Ashford. Witness then went to the Backnard Castle and got the use of their telephone. It was then 25 minutes to 7 o'clock. He rang up the police station. Chief McLaren and Dr. Bell-Irving. He went back to the Ashford house, and on going up-stairs found Mrs Ashford dead. The child was still warm. He went to raise it from the bed and it gave one sigh and died. There was a wound like that of a bullet in the forehead. When he first went to the room some of the bed-clothing was on fire. After he had seen that Violet was dead witness turned his attention to Mildred and found a lump where she was shot. He found the letter published in The World, in the room. He found some cartridges, 32 calibre, but no empty shells. He found the empty Scotch whisky bottle (produced) on the kitchen table. In the bed-room the pillow was lying on the floor.

Dr. Bell-Irving told of being telephoned for at about 6 o'clock on Saturday morning last by officer Crawford to go to a house on the corner of Campbell avenue. He went to the house and on a bed up-stairs found the bodies of a woman and child. Both had evidently just died. Blood was still issuing from the wounds. The child had been shot through the forehead and the woman twice through the left side of the abdomen. He thought that had a scalp wound. He made a post mortem examination on the body of the woman. One bullet had entered the bottom of the left ear and passing through the neck had gone into the mouth. The other bullet went through the side of the ear, through the skull and into the brain, being the cause of death. He produced the bullet. Revolver produced would carry the bullet found in the wound. (This was the revolver found on prisoner). Judging from the size of the wound, the child was shot with the same-sized bullet. The bodies were well nourished, and there were no other signs of disease.

After hearing this evidence read Dr. Bell-Irving added that all the shots must have been fired at close range.

Poor little Mildred was the next witness. She was brought into court by Miss Macfie, lady superintendent of the hospital, who staid beside her while she told her story. She said: I am nine years old. I lived on Keefer street. My father's name is Fred. I remember last Saturday morning. I was in bed when I heard that morning. I saw father shoot mother and Violet. It was 6 in the morning. I was in bed with them. There was a light in the room. I was lying by the wall and Violet in the middle. Father came into the room. He said: "Who is going down to light the fire?" Mother said: "Send Fred down." Fred is my big brother. He slept in another room. The boys jumped up and started down-stairs. Mother then turned and father shot her. I heard the bang. After father shot I saw him load the revolver. I saw him lean over and shoot Violet. He then shot me. After he shot me he loaded the revolver at the lamp and ran after the boys. She was asked if she recognized her father and when she turned and looked at him, she said: "Yes, that is the man," and then burst into crying and it was decided not to continue her examination any further. Having been soothed, her examination was read over to her and she signed it very neatly. Several others in court, it may be said, cried in sympathy with her.

Fred. Ashford, son of the accused, aged 15, was the next witness. He remembered his father shooting on Saturday morning. He was shooting witness' mother and sisters Violet and Mildred. Witness was lighting the fire down stairs, when he heard reports of a revolver. He ran upstairs, and saw his father loading the revolver in his mother's room. He asked his father what he had done. His father did not answer, but pointed the revolver at him. He rushed down stairs, jumping over the bannister. His father followed. Witness got into a hole under the next house. His father came near the hole and then went into the shed, and out into the lane. He was muttering to himself. Witness said that his father had been laid off his work. His father had been seven days ill after that. One day his father went out and got two bottles of whisky. He kept up that for the week preceding the murder. He was always in a bad temper when drinking. His father was all right when he was sober. Witness thought that he had heard three shots that morning. He never saw the revolver or cartridges in the house before. He did not know when his father brought the revolver. His father came home about 7:30 p. m. on Friday. He had a parcel which he said he would not show till he had done some writing. His father was drunk, when he came home that night. He had a bottle nearly full of Scotch whisky with him. When his father called him to go and light the fire he seemed to be not right. He was not in his right mind after drinking. His orders as to the fire were given as usual. Witness recognized his father's handwriting on letters produced. Witness went to bed about 9:30 on Friday night. He did not know when his father went to bed. There was no quarrel that he heard that night between his mother and father. His father was bad-tempered when drinking. Witness was just starting in to light the fire when he heard the shots fired. His father shook him up with his left hand that morning, and at the same time kept his right hand behind his back.

Geo. Munro, expressman, said that Ashford told him last Thursday that he had got a legacy in the old country that would guarantee him $1.15 forever, and so fixed that he could will it to whoever he liked. He said that he would not have to starve that winter. He said that he had left his work at the local sheds and would not go back. Ashford also said that his family would never be left to starve on the streets. Witness and Ashford went and had a drink. Ashford seemed excited, but witness thought that it was over the money. There was nothing very radically wrong. Ashford might have been drinking a little but not much.

Sergeant Heywood examined as to the interest of Ashford and as to the finding of certain bullets in the bed. He also identified the revolver as the one found on Ashford.

This closed the evidence.

It has leaked out that certain papers have been found among Ashford's effects which show that although he joined the army under that name, that is not his right one. He is the son of wealthy parents who reside in England, and graduated from the University of Cambridge.

ASHFORD'S STATEMENT.

On being asked if he had anything to say Ashford spoke as follows: I remember buying a revolver and cartridges one day last week. When he took them home his wife asked if they were a present for her father. He said yes. She asked what they were. He said to her to never mind, that he would take her over to Capilano and she would see when her father opened it. He then asked for a glass of milk and took some whisky with it. His concluding words were as follows: "I took a wine-glass full of the whisky. I took three or four more during the night. I gave the boys orders to put on a fire in the cook stove and the parlor stove between 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. After the last drink I took I went to bed and do not remember anything more until I found myself in charge of the police. What time that was I cannot say."

After the prisoner's statement had been read over to him he said that to the best of his knowledge and belief it was correct. He could not recollect any more.

The jury then retired and deliberated for about 15 minutes, returning with the verdict of wilful murder. The prisoner showed very little concern when this was read over to him.

The prisoner was then arraigned before Police Magistrate, Jordan and formally charged with the murder of his wife and daughter. This done he was remanded for eight days. He was then taken over to the Provincial jail at New Westminster, where there are better facilities for caring for such cases as his than there are in the city lock-up.

A KING OF CRIMINALS.

The Startling Career of H. W. Mudgett, Alias H. H. Holmes.

There are few who have not heard of H. H. Holmes, all round swindler and expert crook. Many other frauds are daily exposed in the daily press, but this one is receiving much attention at the present time. Perchance you have spent an hour or two with Sherlock Holmes, the wonderful creation brought forth by Dr. A. Conan Doyle, who is at present in Canada—Sherlock Holmes, the man who disentangled more mysterious knots than all the Scotland Yard detectives put together. But Sherlock Holmes of the imagination is not as profoundly interesting as is H. H. Holmes, his opposite, at present an inmate of the Philadelphia jail. H. H. Holmes, swindler, ghoul, incendiary, perchance murderer, is undoubtedly one of the most daring and most eccentric criminals of our time. Herman W. Mudgett, subsequently known as H. H. Howard and H. H. Holmes, was born a short distance from Gilmanton, N. H. When but 16 years of age he taught a country school in Gilmartin, and began to save money to study medicine at Burlington, Vt. Just about this time he met a handsome young woman named Clara Lovering, fell in love and was married. Soon afterwards the couple left Burlington, where Mudgett had started his career as a medical student and removed to Ann Arbor, Mich., where he intended to take his degree. After living for a time at his wife's expense Mudgett formed an intimate acquaintance with a fellow-student who seemed to take considerable interest in insurance frauds. When the collegiate term was over the two men went to Chicago, where Mudgett's friend was insured for $12,500. Some time later the couple procured a corpse and sent it to Connecticut, where it was "planted" in a secluded spot near the sea shore, and in due time identified by Mudgett as that of his friend. The insurance company paid the face value of the policy to the conspirators, and the two young friends went back to the university with $6,000 apiece. The successful issue of that swindle made Mudgett known from that time on as Holmes, a confirmed criminal. His accomplice, later on, turned over a new leaf, and is practicing medicine in New York city. After graduating from the university Holmes had charge of a department in the Norristown, Pa., insane asylum for six months. Later he was clerk in a Philadelphia drug store. But he could not forget the success of his first venture in crime. One day he resigned his position and went back to Chicago. His first wife and boy had since returned to New Hampshire. He assumed the name of H. H. Howard, hunted up his medical friend, who was then located in Chicago, and before a year had passed the two conspirators had succeeded in another insurance company out of $10,000. With the money secured by this operation he purchased a drug store and entered into various swindling schemes, out of which he claims to have made $30,000. On October 18th Chief of Police Harrigan, of St. Louis, received a note from Marion C. Hedgspeth, the Glendale train robber, in which was given an outline of the plan hatched by Holmes and Pitzel to rob the Pullman company. During one of his eccentric visits to jails and prisons Holmes had met Hedgspeth and explained to him his manner of swindling insurance companies. The train robber gave Holmes the name of an attorney who, he thought, might be willing to manage a crooked piece of work, and in return was promised a reward of $500. This reward Holmes never paid, and to secure revenge the train robber "squealed." Holmes was arrested on the charge of conspiracy, but may be tried for murder, as there is some reason to suppose that Pitzel was killed by his accomplice, although Holmes claims the body found in the Callowhill street house was a corpse shipped to Philadelphia from New York. Much that is horrible will, no doubt, be brought out at his trial. The crimes confessed by himself are swindling schemes to the amount of $150,000 or $200,000. The crimes of which he is suspected are the murders of Annie Williams, B. F. Pitzel, and Alice, Nellie and Howard Pitzel. Holmes is a nervy man, but he will need all his nerve to clear himself from these terrible suspicions.

BOWELL'S HISTORY.

Reviewed by Sir Richard Cartwright at a Banquet.

The annual banquet of the Toronto Young Liberals was held a few evenings ago, at which Sir Richard Cartwright was the speaker of the evening. After dwelling on the continued growth of the public debt under Conservative mismanagement, he said that he believed the general election would be held immediately. There was no doubt, he said, the Conservative party was doomed, but to bring this about it was imperative that there should be no division in the ranks of those opposed to the Government. The election could be won only by a united effort. Speaking of Hon. Mr. Bowell as the new leader, Sir Richard said he had been spoken of as a very highly respectable gentleman, but he recalled the fact that he was the same gentleman who engineered the gerrymander of 1882, and who introduced the resolution disallowing the charges made against Sir Adolphe Caron, and virtually making Caron the judge in his own case. He did not know, on the whole, said Sir Richard in a bantering tone, that he would not prefer Caron himself as a leader. He, at least, had the courage of his convictions. Sir Richard closed by remarking that he had been asked to state the special thing to which he thought the Young Liberals should devote themselves to. He believed their efforts should be devoted to instilling into the minds of the people of Canada a determination to get rid of boodlers, whether in municipal or national affairs.

Hon. Joseph Martin, M. P. for Winnipeg, also spoke, predicting success for the Liberals at the next election, and declaring that the great Northwest would this time do its duty. The recent visit there of Mr. Laurier proved this. Hon. Geo. W. Ross also spoke.

MINERS WITHOUT COAL.

Massillon, O., Dec. 29.—Miners are reported out of house coal to-day, and there is not enough fuel above ground to keep the pumps going. Operators must soon buy outside coal to prevent the destruction of their property. The weather may be the chief factor in the deplorable situation unless it moderates.

INDUSTRIAL VANCOUVER.

ITS SHIPPING AND MANUFACTURING STATISTICAL RECORD FOR 1894.

Gratifying Progress Made Notwithstanding the Depression in Trade — Encouraging Reports from Shippers and Manufacturers Throughout the City.

DESPITE the general depression of the closing year the industrial enterprises of Vancouver appear to be holding their own. This is encouraging, especially in view of the fact that the industries of this Province suffer from market limitations more than those of any of the sister Provinces. The tariff wall is doubly odious here, as from the geographical position of British Columbia the natural channel for her trade is north and south, not east and west. To offset this, however, Vancouver has excellent shipping facilities and indirectly transcontinental railway competition. The following statistics secured by a World representative will serve to illustrate the amount of shipping at this port. These figures deal with the fiscal year ending June 30, 1894:

ARRIVED.

Flag	No. Vessels.	Tonnage
British	70	107,492
United States	202	186,832
Norwegian and Swedish	2	2,548
German	4	4,810
Nicaragua	1	694
	284	307,654

DEPARTED.

Flag.	No. Vessels.	Tonnage
British	74	103,742
United States	194	185,492
Norwegian and Swedish	3	4,023
Nicaragua	1	694
Hawaiian	1	839
Chilian	4	4,363
	279	301,257

The statistics for the coasting trade shipping for this port for the same period are:

ARRIVED.

Flag	No. Vessels.	Tonnage
British steamers	2,029	447,503
British sailing ves	72	30,053
	2,101	477,556

DEPARTED.

Flag.	No. Vessels.	Tonnage
British steamers	2,064	434,588
British sailing ves	85	30,118
	2,149	464,706

Vancouver has the most direct communication with the Japanese and Chinese markets of any city on the Pacific coast in the medium of the C. P. S.S. company's line of Empresses, run in connection with the C. P. R. transcontinental train service, and through the medium of feeders has also the advantage of the Northern Pacific SS. Co.'s service to the same points. The establishment of these ocean services have been of immense advantage to the commerce of Vancouver.

The subsidizing of the Canadian-Australian service has also contributed to the material progress of this city in the way of opening up new markets for the products of Vancouver and those of the Province, as well as diverting travel from its old channels, and now it is through Canada and this Province. This Australian trade, though almost insignificant at first, has grown into quite respectable proportions, with the balance altogether in favor of the Dominion. There is reason to believe, however, that if the Government, which subsidized this line for the purpose of promoting trade and commerce between the Dominion and Australia—will act consistently, and remove some of the barriers to the trade it desires to foster, the exports of Australia to this country will be largely augmented. Frozen mutton is among the chief of Australia's exports. The result of Australia's trial shipments of this commodity had the effect of forcing the local market, which had always been considered high, down to normal quotations, but the Canadian trade so militated again the trade that it has fallen off. In view of the fact that the bulk of the mutton supply of the Province is down originally from the State of Oregon, it might not be too much to expect the Dominion Government to discriminate in favor of Australia in this connection. It would greatly benefit the trade, which a heavy subsidy has already committed the Canadian Government to acknowledging as in the interests of the commerce of the Dominion.

Perhaps the next important steamship service is that of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's weekly service between this port and San Francisco, at which the large carriers, Walla Walla, City of Pueblo and Umatilla, are employed. The service has been proven to be of great value to the merchants of Vancouver. This line also serves to some extent as a feeder of the C. P. R. for its eastern railway traffic. Another feeder employed by the C. P. R. is the SS. Signal, plying between Vancouver and Portland, which is employed chiefly in bringing up flour from Portland for shipment to Chinese markets. There is a rumor that this boat is shortly to be succeeded by that old, historical craft, the Haytian Republic, which, it is said, has been purchased outright by the C. P. R. and is to be operated by the railway company direct.

The Union Transit Company is the name of another concern which helps to swell the shipping of this port. This is a syndicate of Seattle and Tacoma merchants, whose desire to secure first-class transportation between this port and points on the Sound induced them to put on the steamship Utopia.

Coming down to the coasting trade, the Union Steamship Company, of this city, deserves attention next. This company has done much to build up the local trade of this port. It provides a daily service between Vancouver and Nanaimo, fully up to, if not ahead of, the demands of the trade. It was also the first company to put a regular service on between this port and northern coast points. The business has assumed considerable proportions, and now, as it not infrequently happens, when the company has taken the risk of demonstrating that there is something in the northern business, it is called upon to share it with a new competitor. In addition to a general towing business, the Union Company have two steam barges, which, to meet the emergencies of the trade, they have converted from coal carriers into halibut fishing boats. Of these, the Capilano is under charter to the American Fish Company, a syndicate of New York and Boston men. Under this charter the steamer has already made two trips, and on one of them established the biggest catch on record, securing something over 90,000 pounds of halibut. The second steamer, the Coquitlam, is under charter to a local company, composed chiefly of New Westminster men, and this company has also done well. The halibut fishing is practically a new business in this city, and gives promise now of establishing itself. In the initial stages of its growth the profits were seriously affected by the machinations of the eastern buyers forcing the price down too low. It is understood now that precautions have been taken against a repetition of this experience, and as there is a handsome margin between the market value and the cost of the halibut, it is to be expected that others will embark in the enterprise.

The two competitors of the Union Steamship Co. are the SS. City of Nanaimo, which makes a regular trip between, New Westminster, Nanaimo and Vancouver, and the S.S. Robert Dunsmuir, which has lately been put on the route between Vancouver and northern points, where it has already worked into a large share of the business offering between these points. The C. P. N. Co.'s steamers now make Vancouver a port of call, going and returning, as regards the northwest coast trade. Each of the steamers named are doing well, and as they are commanded by competent men the public are receiving an excellent service, whether it be from Vancouver to Nanaimo or up the coast.

THE TIMBER TRADE.

Although the past year has been a severe one on industries of all kinds, the timber business of Vancouver has held its own, as well as could be expected, and has even succeeded in getting timber, as well as manufactured goods, into new markets. The most powerful company in this industry is the British Columbia Mills Timber & Trading Company, operating two mills in this city. One of these, the Royal Cite mill, has a capacity of 45,000 feet of lumber per day, 75,000 shingles, 45,000 lath, 200 doors and 300 windows, as well as mouldings and all kinds of turned wood. This mill employs about 100 men when running to its full capacity. The product of the mill is largely exported, Ontario offering a demand for many of the products, including shingles and manufactured articles. The trade with Australia has been experimented with and gives some promise.

The second mill, known locally as the Hastings Mill, is a much larger concern, employing twice as many hands. The output in this mill is exclusively rough and dressed lumber, the trade being an export one.

Tait's saw mill is another concern, turning out rough and dressed lumber, having a capacity of about 15,000 feet per day, and furnishing employment for about 30 men.

A kindred industry to these is H. H. Spicer & Co.'s shingle mill. This firm employs some 35 men in the mill, which has a capacity of 200,000 shingles per day, and some 15 or 20 in the camps getting out shingle bolts.

Next is the mill of George Cassady & Co., manufacturing British Columbia cedar lumber and shingles, doors, sashes, etc. The capacity of the mill is from 10,000