

The Colonist

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1895.

LAURIER'S LONG EXPECTED SPEECH.

The Montreal Star, of the 23rd, contains a full report of Mr. Laurier's long expected speech. The Canadian elector who takes up that speech expecting to see in it something relative to the policy of the Liberal party clearer and more definite than he had read before will be disappointed. Mr. Laurier is as indefinite as ever he was. He does not say as much about English free trade as he said in former speeches. A tariff for revenue only is what he chiefly insists on, but what that tariff is to be, as far as Mr. Laurier's latest utterance is concerned, still a mystery. He condemns the policy of the present Government, but what he would put in place of it, if he had the power, no one seems to know, Mr. Laurier himself included.

The policy of the Liberal party is included in the following programme which he read shortly after he commenced his speech. Here it is:

- First—Condemnation of the fiscal policy of the Conservative government, together with their declaration of the policy of the Liberal party on the same subject.
Second—Reciprocity of trade with our neighbors.
Third—Repression of corruption and malfeasance in office.
Fourth—Economy in the administration of public affairs.
Fifth—The right and duty of parliament to investigate all corruption and malfeasance in office.
Sixth—The selling of public lands to actual settlers and not to speculators.
Seventh—The franchise—the equitable distribution of parliamentary representation.
Eighth—Temperance.

This, Mr. Laurier said, is "the whole programme of the Liberal party." We do not think that the most enthusiastic Liberal in the country will venture to say that it contains a single definite statement. Leaving out the first paragraph it might be adopted by any political party in the Dominion. The highest Tory in the land as well as the most radical of the Liberals, might without the slightest inconsistency subscribe to seven of the eight articles of Mr. Laurier's political creed. We observe that one of the most vigorous of the newspapers of Ontario somewhat coarsely—but not by any means inappropriately—stigmatizes articles 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 as "pure guff, meaning nothing whatever." It is the first article to which we must look for the policy of the Liberals. This, as expounded by Mr. Laurier, does not seem to be very significant. "The Liberal party," said Mr. Laurier, "believes in free trade on broad lines such as exist in Great Britain, and their immediate object is a revenue tariff—a tariff to be derived from customs, but which will levy no duties except for purposes of revenue; a tariff which will neither hurt nor favor any class to the prejudice or favor of anybody; a tariff whose aim and purpose will be to derive the maximum benefit from the minimum taxation."

These expressions must sound familiar to British Columbians. Mr. Laurier gave utterance to some that resembled them very closely in the Market hall of this city. What intelligent Victorians wanted to know then, and what intelligent Victorians must want to know now, is what is this wonderful tariff to be like; what commodities will it tax, and what commodities will it exempt from taxation. For, be it observed, the Liberal revenue is to be chiefly derived from customs duties. This tariff must yield the twenty millions or so that will be required for the purposes of government. It is also observable that Mr. Laurier prudently abstains from promising any extraordinary measure of retrenchment. This would not be popular in Montreal, of all places in the Dominion. The Montrealeers admire a generous Government, and they would not long tolerate one that established a policy of scruple.

Mr. Laurier did not waste any of his precious time in proving to his audience how his determination to raise a revenue from duties on imports is consistent with his professions of admiration for British free trade and his ambition to introduce the British system into this Dominion. He did, however, assure his hearers that his policy would not make the direct taxes which are part of the British system necessary. The intelligent Englishman will be apt to conclude that a British free trade system which depends almost wholly on taxes on imports for a revenue, and which carefully excludes the income tax and other direct taxes, will be something like the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet carefully cut out.

There was, we cheerfully admit, something new in Mr. Laurier's Montreal speech, but the new part related almost altogether to Montreal. He, in the first place, told the Montreal Conservatives in a rather roundabout way that they had accepted Protection as a policy not because they were convinced of its soundness, but because they admitted and believed in Sir John A. Macdonald, and since Sir John A. has gone the way of all flesh the reason for their political faith has also disappeared. This was certainly not complimentary to Montreal Conservatives, many of whom are far better able to judge of the tendency and consequences of a fiscal policy than is the Hon. Wilfred Laurier.

Then the Opposition leader, although he admitted that, during the last seventeen years, the city of Montreal had greatly increased in wealth and population, denied that this progress was in any way owing to the policy of Protection which had prevailed during that period. If under the Liberal regime a city had prospered and increased in population, Mr. Laurier and his fellow-Liberals would, without hesitation or question, attribute the prosperity and the in-

crease to the benign and stimulating influence of the Liberal policy. But, according to Mr. Laurier, neither Protection nor Conservatism is entitled to the least credit for anything.

Then the Liberal leader changed his ground and maintained that if Montreal's population had increased it was at the expense of the country. Montreal's increase, he said, was 39 per cent., but the increase of the whole country was during the ten years previous to 1891 only 11 per cent., consequently, under Protection, Montreal's increase was at the expense of the country. We almost expected to see in this part of the speech the good old couplet that antediluvian obstructives used to quote a hundred years or so ago when they contemplated the rapid increase of the population of cities.

"It fares the land to hastening ill a prey Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

But does not Mr. Laurier know that this disproportionate growth of cities is to-day the complaint of many good people in free trade England. The cry is the people are deserting the cities and flocking to the towns, and Tory Squires unhesitatingly attribute this evil to the baneful influence of free trade. And then we have the old, very old story about the exodus. Twenty years ago this lament was made: "Canadians are leaving their own country and are helping to enrich and strengthen a foreign country." But Canada has prospered in spite of the drain on its population and will, no doubt, continue to prosper.

The Liberal leader's Montreal speech, we believe, has been disappointing to his own followers. It was not an "epoch-making" speech. Very far from it. It was, as nearly all Mr. Laurier's speeches are, a very clever and well delivered stump speech, which people applauded while they listened to it, but when they had time and opportunity for reflection they wondered what could have possessed them to be so foolish.

THE MANITOBA CASE.

The decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Manitoba school case is one of very great importance. The question has attracted a great deal of attention, and is one in which many feel a deep interest. It is considered by many to affect not only Manitoba, but other provinces of the Dominion. As the rights of religious bodies are involved in it, it is to be feared that the matter will not be so calmly and dispassionately considered as its merits and its importance deserve.

It should be remembered that the question decided by the committee of the Privy Council is wholly one of law—the interpretation to be given to parts of the British North America Act, 1867, which is the Constitution of the Dominion, and to sections and sub-sections of the Manitoba Act, 1870, which is the Constitution of the Province of Manitoba.

As there will no doubt be a great deal said and written about the Manitoba school question in the near future, it may be as well to recall to the remembrance of our readers some of the leading facts connected with the now celebrated Manitoba School controversy.

In 1890 the Legislature of that province passed a law establishing a system of non-sectarian common school education. The Roman Catholics of the province considered themselves aggrieved by this legislation. They do not approve of what has been called "godless education." They believe that religion should be taught in the schools and their consciences will not allow them to send their children to schools in which the religion they believe in is not taught. They look upon it as a hardship to be forced by law to pay for the maintenance of schools to which they cannot in conscience send their children. Such a law, they say, compels them either to do violence to their conscience by sending their children to schools in which religion is not taught or to support schools of which they do not approve out of their own pockets. It is not fair, they contend, for the law of the country, which ought to treat all alike, to place any denomination of Christians in this position. There are also Protestants in Manitoba who hold the same views as to education, and who complain in the same way.

Most people know that the British North America Act places limitations on the power of provincial legislatures to make laws with respect to education. The minority of any province which had separate schools established by law previous to its entrance into the confederation is entitled to retain them. In this the Manitoba Act differs slightly from the British America Act. Sub-section (1) of Section 22 of the Manitoba Act, reads as follows:

"Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools, which any class of persons have by law or practice in the Province at the Union."

The words "or practice" are not in the British North America Act. As the Catholics of Manitoba considered that they had at the Union "by practice" if not by law, denominational schools, they contended the constitutionality of the Manitoba School Act of 1870. The Manitoba courts decided that the law was valid. An appeal was taken to the Supreme Court of Canada, and that court, consisting of five judges, unanimously decided that the law was ultra vires. The case was then taken to England, and the Judicial Committee held that the Manitoba School Act of 1870 was valid.

It was then considered by most people that the Manitoba school question was settled once for all. But that was not the opinion of Archbishop Tache and the leaders and advisers of the Roman Catholics of Manitoba. They believed that the British North America Act provided that, under certain circumstances, the minority which felt aggrieved by the legislation of the majority, in the matter of religious education,

had a right to appeal to the Governor-General in Council, and they consequently sent petitions to Ottawa. Here again the decision depended upon the way in which the law should be authoritatively interpreted. The Government considered it best to give an authoritative decision on the subject of the petitions. A case was consequently made out and submitted to the Supreme Court of Canada. The petitioners rested their case on the following sub-section of section 93 of the British North America Act, and sub-sections 2 and 3 of the Manitoba Act of 1870. It may be well to place them in parallel columns:

B. N. A. Act, Sub-section 9 of Sec. 93. When in any Province a system of separate or distinct schools exists by law at the Union or is thereafter established by the Legislature of that Province, no such law shall be so amended or altered as to give effect to any provision or provisions of this section or of any other Act of the Dominion in relation to education.

Manitoba Act, 1870, Sub-section 2. Sec. 92. An appeal shall lie to the Governor-General in Council from any Act of the Legislature of that Province which purports to give effect to any provision or provisions of this section or of any other Act of the Dominion in relation to education.

Sub-section 3. In case any such provision of law as from time to time seems to the Governor-General in Council to be in violation of the provisions of this section or of any other Act of the Dominion is not made, or in case any decision of the Governor-General in Council on any application for the enforcement of this section is not duly executed by the proper provincial authority in that behalf then, and in every such case, as far as the circumstances of the case may require, the Parliament of Canada may make remedial laws for the due execution of the provisions of this section and of any other Act of the Dominion in relation to education.

A series of six questions involving all the points requiring interpretation and elucidation were drawn up. The questions were in due time considered by the Supreme Court, and judgments were delivered at considerable length. The answers given were favorable to the contention of the memorialists. For instance, the answer "Yes" was given to the first question, which was as follows: Is the appeal referred to in the said sub-section 2 of the Manitoba Act, 1870, by such an appeal as is admissible by sub-section 3 of section 93, of the British North America Act, 1867, or by sub-section 2 of section 93 of the Manitoba Act, etc.?

An affirmative answer was also given to the second question: Are the grounds set forth in the petitions and memorials such as may be the subject of appeal under the authority of the sub-sections above referred to, or either of them?

The Manitoba case was afterwards submitted to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, with the result seen in our telegrams of yesterday and to-day.

The question so far has been merely a legal one. The powers of the Provincial governments have been clearly defined by the courts. It now remains to be seen what political action will be taken on the question. It is one, as all must see, that requires the most careful handling. Rashness and indiscretion on the part of the Government may be followed by the most serious results. It is to be hoped that the leading men of the Dominion will enter upon the consideration of the question with the determination to treat all denominations fairly.

THE TRUSTEES' REPORT.

The Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria School District for the year ending 31st December, 1894, has been placed on our table. The report has been carefully drawn up and shows the condition of the schools as regards attendance and accommodation. The average daily attendance at all the schools during the year has been 1,727.81; the number on the rolls has been 2,004. This shows a daily average of absentees—we must not call them truants—of 277. This is about 13.7 per cent., which we think too high an average. This shows that a good many children are kept from school by their parents on trivial grounds, or that the truancy is abnormally large. The Trustees object to this absenteeism for a reason which every one must admit to be substantial. Here it is in their own words: "As the Government grant of ten dollars per pupil is based on the number actually present, it is readily seen that these 277 absentees have been the direct cause of a loss in money to the city, during the year, of \$2,770, besides the greater loss to the pupils themselves by the breaks thus made in the progressive course of studies."

This evil of absenteeism is, in large cities, met by the appointment of truant officers who keep an eye on youngsters seen on the streets and have authority to inquire into the cause of their absence from school. But the Trustees of Victoria do not recommend the appointment of truant officers. What they want as a remedy for this evil and also as an assistance to them in the performance of these duties is a City School Inspector. Such an official, they say, as "general adviser and confidential agent" of the Board is a very pressing necessity. When it is considered that there are under the control of the Board eight separate schools with about two thousand pupils in attendance, giving employment to forty-eight teachers, all of whom are practically without oversight, as far as the trustees are concerned, it is obvious that better results would be obtained if the services of a competent person could be relied upon whose duty and interest would ensure a faithful report on the condition and progress of the pupils and the efficiency or otherwise of the teachers.

As it is part of the duty of the Trustees, and by no means the least important part, to engage and discharge teachers, it is absolutely necessary that they should know how

each of these teachers does his or her work. It is impossible for them to acquire this knowledge by visiting the schools now and then on show days. Besides, before one can pronounce authoritatively on the capabilities and performances of a teacher he must have some knowledge of the art of teaching and of the difficulties which each particular teacher has had to encounter. It must be clear, then, that in order to enable the Trustees to do a very important part of their duty faithfully and fairly they must have expert assistance. And the expert must be obliged to give that assistance when it is required. Clearly, then, their request for a City Inspector is a reasonable one and shows that the trustees have an intelligent idea of the nature of the duties they are required to perform and of the responsibilities devolving upon them.

The question of teachers' salaries has evidently been seriously considered by the Trustees. They approach the matter cautiously and tentatively. They appear to think a reduction may possibly be made without impairing the general efficiency of the schools. The paragraph on this subject closes with this sentence: "In this important matter it would be well if the views of those interested, both as teachers and taxpayers, could be made known." It will not, we think, be very hard to guess what the teachers will have to say to the proposal, and it seems to us that all intelligent taxpayers will say that the teacher who does his or her work faithfully and efficiently deserves to be fairly remunerated. There are very few out of the teacher's profession who have any idea of the demands which teaching makes on the mental and physical powers of those who belong to it. Teaching is very hard work. Some persons who have had no experience speak of "the short hours" as if the teacher could legitimately, during the hours in which he is not actually teaching, engage in some other occupation. But this is a serious mistake. The hours are quite long enough for the nervous energy of the strongest man or woman. The teacher who does his professional duty honestly during school hours and after school hours as much work to do as any man can perform in justice to himself and to his pupils. This of course applies to women as well as to men. Short as the hours seem to be, we say without fear of contradiction that teaching in a public school is as hard work as either man or woman can engage in.

The gross cost of maintaining the city schools for the year was \$49,318.62. The sum was made up from the following sources: Government allowance, \$10 per pupil..... \$116,413.20 Provincial Revenue Tax (net)..... 11,362.92 The City of Victoria..... 21,542.60 The Trustees have built two handsome schoolhouses, out of which appear in the Report. They have done all the work connected with these schools for the \$85,000 loan and have \$12,231.93 to the good. The schools are commodious and well equipped, and are a credit to the city. The Trustees have proved themselves to be good administrators, and they have done the ordinary work of their office well.

REDUCED TAXATION.

The organ of the Opposition is obliged tacitly to admit that the customs duties in the aggregate are less now than they were a few years ago, but it says that it is not fair to take the imports as a whole as data on which to calculate the weight of the burden of customs taxation. If this is not a fair way we should like to know what is. According to our contemporary when the government took from that burden the three millions or so that had been yielded by the sugar duties, leaving the rest of the tariff exactly as it was, it would be unfair to claim that any deficiency which the abolition of those duties caused in the revenue was due to the reduction that had been made. We are surprised that our contemporary should argue in this way. The fact is, the only fair way by which the incidence of the customs taxation can be measured is to take the average rate of duty on all imports free as well as dutiable.

The following extract from an article on federal taxation in the Montreal Gazette, of the 21st, is well worth studying in this connection: In the first place, we have to take the actual amount of customs revenue collected by the Government, which for the last six years has been: 1889..... \$2,784,623 1890..... \$2,500,621 1891..... \$2,404,008 1892..... 2,341,717 1893..... 2,343,000 1894..... 19,279,822

These figures reveal a most substantial reduction in the amount of customs duties collected, due to the remission of taxation made in 1891, when the sugar duties were abolished, and a levy of no less than three millions annually abandoned by the Government. It will be said, however, that twenty years ago the amount of revenue collected from customs duties was very much less than now, that is only reached \$13,045,000 in 1872, \$16,361,000 in 1875, and \$12,333,000 in 1878, and these figures are constantly contrasted with the collections of a recent period in order to convey the idea that the rate of taxation has been enormously increased under the present fiscal system. No conclusion could well be more fallacious, for the amount of revenue collected from customs duties was very much less than now, that is only reached \$13,045,000 in 1872, \$16,361,000 in 1875, and \$12,333,000 in 1878, and these figures are constantly contrasted with the collections of a recent period in order to convey the idea that the rate of taxation has been enormously increased under the present fiscal system. No conclusion could well be more fallacious, for the amount of revenue collected from customs duties was very much less than now, that is only reached \$13,045,000 in 1872, \$16,361,000 in 1875, and \$12,333,000 in 1878, and these figures are constantly contrasted with the collections of a recent period in order to convey the idea that the rate of taxation has been enormously increased under the present fiscal system.

FOOLISH PREDICTIONS.

It is said that it is never too late to mend. If that is true there may be some hope that if the organ of the Opposition will come down to the foolishness and the fatuity of bragging about the strength of its party and about the certainty of its being elevated to power at the next general election. Any one who has a particle of common sense knows perfectly well that there is no one in or about the Times office who can tell what is to happen in the political world of this Dominion during the next three months, or even the next three weeks. The event in politics often disappoints and disconcerts the most sagacious and far-seeing of politicians. The careful calculations of the best-informed may be by the occurrence of some unforeseen event or some apparent accident be completely ruined. What then are the guesses of a shallow electioneering schemer worth—guesses which are made to keep some wavering electors up to the mark, or to undermine the faith of a few undecided opponents in the success of their party? The confidence which our contemporary affects just now is simply absurd. It cannot have the slightest notion what the effect that the introduction of the Manitoba school question will have on the relative position of parties in the country. That it will have an effect, and a serious effect, any one who has a head on his shoulders must see. That Mr. Laurier has been of this opinion could have been seen by the very cautious way in which he treated that question on his speech-making tour. If he considered it a very stinkish question while it was before the Privy Council for decision, it is certain that he will regard it still more stinkish now that it has been decided, and has become in Dominion politics what it is the fashion to call a burning question. There are, or we are very greatly mistaken, other Liberal politicians besides Mr. Laurier who, since the decision of the Committee of the Privy Council has been proclaimed, feel themselves in a "very awkward position indeed."

WAB IMPROBABLE.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31.—It is understood that a preliminary agreement has been reached by the Mexican and Guatemalan representatives in Washington for the settlement of the boundary dispute by arbitration which needs only the approval of the two governments to become effective, and no doubt is entertained that President Diaz will give his approval to the plan which has already received the adherence of President Barrios. Full confidence was expressed in official circles that war is now out of the question and that the quarrel will be permanently ended by an entirely amicable agreement which will be memorable alike to Guatemala and Mexico.

COATCOOK, JAN. 31.—A fire was discovered in Webster's hardware store early this morning, and spread to the sixteen adjoining buildings. The damage is \$75,000; insurance, \$40,000.

FARMS, JAN. 31.—The chamber passed the amnesty bill this evening.

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LEVI STRAUSS & CO'S COPPER RIVETED OVERALLS AND SPRING BOTTOM PANTS EVERY PAIR GUARANTEED. ADDRESS SAN FRANCISCO CAL.

It is not the Leader of the Liberal party alone who will have to declare himself on that question definitely if there is to be a general election, but every one of his parliamentary colleagues and followers. They will all have to face the music or step down and out. There is no blotting that out. And knowing this the Times is foolish enough to crow about the result of a general election!

SHORT-SIGHTED.

The way in which the organ of the Opposition deals with the latest phase of the Manitoba school question, is characteristic. It looks at it from a party standpoint, and can only consider what effect the decision will have on Sir M. Bowell and his colleagues. It evidently could not see far enough to discern that the necessity of coming to a decision on the subject at a speaking out plainly with respect to it, will be much more embarrassing to the Hon. Mr. Laurier than it will be to the Conservative leader. Our contemporary surely must have observed how very carefully Mr. Laurier in his speeches kept clear of that very delicate subject. He never mentioned it when it was possible to avoid it. There is not, we venture to say, the remotest allusion to that very troublesome topic in his very pretty Montreal speech. He is not deficient in tact, and he saw how difficult it would be to speak on that subject to an English-speaking Montreal audience in such a way as to win a cheer, and plaudits of all kinds as what the Liberal Leader dearly loves. The Manitoba school question is one with which he cannot afford to triffl or to temporize. He must before long speak out plainly. He is, to use the words of our contemporary, on that question in "a very awkward position indeed." Whatever position he takes and whatever words he utters he will be sure to offend many whose support he strongly desires to retain. Pretty phrases and well turned sentences, meaning little or nothing, will not avail him in the least when speaking on this question. Both his friends and his opponents will require him to speak definitely and forcibly on this question. If there is a stormy time ahead, as we fear there is, the gentle and amoral Liberal Leader will, we fear, be badly damaged.

B. O. AMBROUSOUS GRAVELS.

We beg to direct attention to the extracts from a paper recently read before the Mining Association of Montreal on the Auriferous Gravels of British Columbia, by Mr. Hobson, mining engineer. Mr. Hobson is an expert in hydraulic mining. It is asserted that he knows as much about auriferous gravels and how to get the gold out of them as any man on this continent. He is at present engaged by the Canadian Pacific Company, and has been making observations on the gravel deposits of the Cariboo country and elsewhere. He considers that the auriferous gravels of British Columbia are richer and of greater extent than those of California. He says: "The auriferous deposits of California remaining unworked are estimated at 2,108,875,000 cubic yards. The gold tenure of these gravels varies from one to thirty cents per cubic yard and the amount of gold is estimated about \$500,000,000. I have seen in British Columbia, included in the Yale, Lillooet and Cariboo districts, three times the area of auriferous deposits that are known to exist in the whole of California. The British Columbia gravels that I have examined and which may be considered available for hydraulic working yielded results varying from one cent to \$1.50 per cubic yard and as a whole average richer than any I have seen in California."

THE VICTORIA

Other appropriate social arrangements of the committee M.P.P., who of the list present, Mr. also in attendance for the first business It was decided that the settlement of the boundary dispute by arbitration which needs only the approval of the two governments to become effective, and no doubt is entertained that President Diaz will give his approval to the plan which has already received the adherence of President Barrios. Full confidence was expressed in official circles that war is now out of the question and that the quarrel will be permanently ended by an entirely amicable agreement which will be memorable alike to Guatemala and Mexico.

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FROM THE T.D.

Victoria vital statistics, 22; and

Many business terminated at 4 o'clock yesterday the grand ball of the hostesses.

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