

the low moral tone indicated by such revelations as those of the Panama scandal, on the other, tended to create distrust of the integrity and stability of the Republic?

The action of the New Brunswick judges in sentencing Mr. J. V. Ellis, a former member of the Dominion Parliament, to a fine of \$200 and a month's imprisonment, for an alleged contempt of court, committed six years ago, is one of so rare and peculiar a kind that it cannot fail to excite a good deal of comment. The events which led to the commission of the offence which is being thus tardily but severely punished, attracted much attention at the time, but will probably have faded into indistinctness in most minds after so many years. The offence of Mr. Ellis, who was and is the editor and proprietor of the *St. John Globe*, consisted of some criticisms which he made in the columns of that paper upon the action of Judge Tuck, of the Superior Court of New Brunswick, in issuing an injunction prohibiting the Queen's County judge from recounting the ballots in the case of a disputed election. The facts connected with that election and the proposed recount were so peculiar that they constitute an important part of the whole case. The difficulty arose out of the action of the returning officer in declaring elected the candidate who had received the minority of votes, on the technical ground that the candidate who had the majority had made his election deposit personally, instead of through his agent. We cannot at the moment recall the words in which Mr. Ellis criticised the action of Judge Tuck. They were no doubt severe. We do not suppose that the fact, which is now we think admitted, that the Judge's prohibition led to a manifest failure of justice, would be accepted as a plea of justification. An action for contempt of court was soon after commenced against Mr. Ellis, and has been continued ever since, with the result above stated. In the face of a prosecution so persistent and relentless, it behooves journalists to be careful how they comment upon the case. But probably we shall be safe in expressing the opinion, in which we feel sure that most of our readers will concur, that the court which finds it necessary to rely upon the rigid enforcement of a special law, of doubtful wisdom, instead of upon the strength of its own reasonings and the judicial dignity and impartiality of its own procedure, for the respect due to its authority, is probably taking the wrong way to attain its end. Mr. Ellis' counsel has given notice of appeal to the Privy Council.

How often a good cause is weakened by the use of a bad argument. Even the most eloquent advocate is in danger of making the mistake of attempting to prove too much and so shaking the faith of his hearers in regard to that which

he does actually prove. We have already pointed out that Mr. Laurier and other advocates of tariff reform have made this mistake in attributing the decline in farm values to the protective tariff. This tariff may, no doubt, be a contributory cause. It is pretty clear, for instance, that if our farmers, especially those near the border, could, by means of a reciprocity or mutual low tariff arrangement with their neighbors, get higher prices for their horses and cattle, eggs and poultry, etc., and at the same time procure, with a part of the money thus gained, implements for tilling their farms and corn for feeding their pigs, at lower rates than those at which they can now purchase the one or raise the other, they would reap a double benefit, and, as a consequence, the value of their farms would be increased. Yet it must be clear to every candid enquirer that the chief cause of the falling off in land values is the opening up of the fertile and almost illimitable prairie and other lands in the great West and North-West. By persistently pointing to the decline in the value of Ontario farms as one of the results of the National Policy, Mr. Laurier laid himself open to the sharp home-thrusts which Mr. Foster so skilfully and forcibly delivered in his speech at Elmira the other day.

Yet Mr. Foster's logic, great as was his advantage at this point, is scarcely less vulnerable than that of Mr. Laurier. Its weakness arises from the same cause—attempting to prove too much, to pile Pelion on Ossa. Mr. Foster, for instance, says: "Let Mr. Laurier have his free trade tomorrow, does your wheat quote one single cent higher in the markets of the world? I say No! It is a fact that great wheat lands have been opened to the world, where farming has taken place on an immense scale, that machinery has come in to do the work of thousands of men, and consequently the production of wheat has overreached the demand. Naturally the price of the article has fallen. He is a quack, and worse than a charlatan, that would make you believe that wheat has fallen merely because of the fiscal system that you happen to have in this country and which they happen to have in another country." But a slight analysis is necessary to show that what is genuine in this argument is much weakened by being mixed with what really counteracts its strength. It is perfectly obvious that free trade could not cause wheat to be quoted one cent higher in the world's markets. That, by the way, does not prove that freeing the channels of trade and thus giving easier access to intermediate distributing points might not raise the price by much more than a single cent to the Canadian producer. But does not Mr. Foster see that the argument from the introduction of machinery really tells both ways, for by enabling the Ontario farmer to lessen the cost of production it should counteract the tendency to

decline in the value of his farm. So, with still greater force, may it be said that the fact, if it be such, that while "the prices of farm products have fallen, the prices of every article that the farmer has to buy for his family have fallen as well," and that "they have even fallen several degrees more in per cent. than the market values of the articles produced by the farmer have fallen," cuts the ground from under his whole explanation of the cause of the decline in the value of farms. What can be clearer than that if, while the prices of the articles the farmer has to sell have fallen, the prices of those which he has to buy have fallen still more, he is really better off than he was before the decline, and that his farm should, consequently, be more instead of less valuable?

Thus it is that our statesmen, in their eagerness to make points, forget the relation of the various parts of their arguments, and counteract the force of one contention by the introduction of another. In one respect, and it is a broad and fundamental one, the reasoning of the tariff-reformers is the sounder. Mr. Foster says in effect: "The falling in price of almost every article you farmers produce is the result of causes beyond our control; but it is more than offset by the greater fall in price of almost everything you have to buy. The logical conclusion is, as we have said, that the farmer ought to be better off than ever before. But the average farmer knows well by hard experience, that he is not more prosperous, but far less prosperous than he used to be. We cannot blame him if with him the logic of tangible fact is stronger than that of the Finance Minister's eloquence. When in this mood he is met by Mr. Laurier and told that the real question with reference to the things he has to sell is not whether prices have fallen in the world's markets, but whether he is in any way prevented by a false fiscal policy from netting from their sale the highest price that the state of the world's markets makes possible; and that the real question with reference to the things which he has to buy is not whether they are so many per cent. cheaper than they used to be, but whether he is prevented by a false fiscal policy from obtaining them at as low a price as he otherwise might, the farmer can hardly be blamed if he cries out "That is so," and resolves to examine into the matter more closely and independently than he has ever before done, with a view to satisfy himself in regard to the correct answers to those two questions.

The Church Congress which held its sessions a week or two since in Birmingham was in some respects specially noteworthy. One of the marked features of the opening days was the presentation of an address of welcome on behalf of the Nonconformist ministers of the city, and the extremely cor-