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The Strathroy and Western Counties Road.

The city of London was looking after its own interests in opposing the application of the Strathroy and Western Counties Railway Company for permission to extend its line from St. Thomas to Port Stanley. The extension would parallel the London and Port Stanley Railway for nine miles and necessarily compete with it for traffic between St. Thomas and Port Stanley, while the city of London, not being connected with the new system, would derive no advantage to offset the loss of traffic on its own line. The motives of this city in opposing the bill were frankly selfish, but none the less justifiable. There was a question of principle involved, and no reason why the railway committee of the Legislature should have voted on party lines. The explanation is that the city happened to be represented by a Conservative and the promoters of the bill by a Liberal, and each drummed up his party friends.

The Strathroy and Western Counties Railway Company is chartered to build a steam railway from Port Frank to St. Thomas. The project has existed on paper for a good many years, and it is safe to say, if the road is ever built, the promoters will not be so foolish as to parallel the London and Port Stanley Railway, if they can secure running rights over it. The Michigan Central enjoys a lease of the L. and P. S. R. tracks between London and St. Thomas, and a similar lease to the Strathroy and Western Counties Company, between St. Thomas and Port Stanley, at a profitable rate, would tend to compensate the city for any injury through competition.

However, the Strathroy and Western Counties Road may never be built. It has been in the air a long time.

The Telephone Question.

The Toronto Board of Control has voted to give a franchise to any telephone company which will accept the terms laid down by the city. The Bell Telephone Company will, of course, be given the preference, in order to avoid if possible the inconvenience of a dual system. In this city the council is debating whether to grant or refuse a charter to a new company. The latter offers \$1,000 a year to the city, and a somewhat cheaper service than telephone subscribers now enjoy. The Bell offers a bonus of \$2,500 a year, but will make no reduction of rates. The difference in the amounts which the two companies offer to pay into the civic treasury need not be taken into account. It is a trifle compared with the advantage of cheaper telephone rates. If the Bell Telephone Company would close down its local exchange in the event of a rival entering the field, it might be good policy to grant a competitive franchise, which would bring cheaper telephones, even though the new-comer had no long-distance connections. The Bell Telephone Company, however, has no idea of going out of business because of competition. By granting a franchise to a new company, the council will be compelling many citizens to subscribe for two telephones where one is now sufficient. This is the stumbling-block in the path of telephone competition.

The Bell Telephone Company has shown some of the vices of monopoly. There is reason to believe that its local rates in some communities, and its trunk line charges, are inordinately high. It has shown a none too scrupulous regard for the rights of municipalities. It has been deficient in enterprise, and has invited competition by its greed and unresponsiveness. There is a wide field, especially in the rural districts, which it has altogether neglected. It happens, however, that London has less complaint against the company than many sister municipalities. The rates here are comparatively low, and the plant and service are fairly good. Under these circumstances the city council has little or no option in the matter. The citizens do not want two telephone systems, and that ought to settle the question.

The Trans-Continental Road.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier laid the amended Grand Trunk Pacific contract before the House in an hour's speech, which was a marvel of lucid and concise exposition. He declared it to be his own judgment that the eastern division of the road was as necessary as the western, and held that it was possible to build a line between Winnipeg and Moncton with such gradients and curves as would permit the profitable transportation of cereals and all classes of freight. For three-fourths of the distance between Winnipeg and Quebec, he said, the line would run through a level plateau, in which the construction of a railway would be almost as feasible as over the prairies. Those who decried the character of the back country of Quebec and Ontario he described as the "wilful and blind victims of self-imposed prejudice."

The charge that the Government surrendered to every demand of the promoters for amendments to the original contract is refuted by the correspondence which the Premier laid on the table. The promoters asked that their deposit of \$5,000,000 be released when they had spent an equal amount on the road. The Government refused the request, and the deposit will stand as a guarantee of the completion of the western division, and the expenditure of \$20,000,000 in rolling stock.

The company objected to the provisions requiring them to pay the Government 2% for 41 years upon the cost of constructing the eastern division, and undertook to pay the working expenses and hand over to the Government a fixed portion of the net earnings. In other words, they wished the rental of the eastern division to be a charge on the profits of operating it. The Government would not accept this amendment and the original clause is maintained, by which the country is relieved of any financial responsibility for the eastern division seven years after its completion.

The company proposed that the Government should guarantee 75% of the cost of constructing the whole western division, or as an alternative, that the country should advance the money for the construction of the road, and take as security an issue of the bonds of the company for the whole construction of the road. The Government would not accept either of these propositions. It has undertaken to guarantee 75% of the cost of constructing the mountain section only, whatever the cost may be. If the bonds do not sell at par, the Government will make up the deficiency. The bonds for the prairie section will be guaranteed to the extent of only \$13,000 per mile. The Government will pay no interest on the prairie bonds, but will pay interest on the mountain bonds for seven years.

The company complained of the paragraph in which, if they failed to meet their interest obligations within three years after these were due, the Government should exercise the right and powers of creditors by foreclosure. The company also asked that they be liable only for the net profit of the road, instead of the interest on the bonds. To this the Government would not assent, but finally allowed the company five years of grace in which to pay the interest on the bonds of the western division; and if the company defaulted for the whole five years the road should be put into the hands of a receiver, and the earnings divided between the Government and the Grand Trunk Railway Company in the proportions of 75% and 25% respectively.

These examples are sufficient to show that the Government has not been "held up" by the Grand Trunk directorate. The leader of the Opposition asks why changes were permitted when the original contract was extorted by the Government, and the House prohibited from amending it in any essential feature. The answer is that the Grand Trunk directors found that the scheme could not be financed successfully unless the contract was modified.

Mr. Borden proposes as an alternative policy the immediate construction and control by the Dominion of lines of railway in the west; the extension of the Intercolonial to the Georgian Bay and thence to Winnipeg, and the exploration and survey of the country between Winnipeg and Quebec, "with a view to the future construction of such lines of railway as may be found in the public interest." This proposition, which is radically different from the one submitted by Mr. Borden six months ago, when he made no mention of public ownership of railways in the west, will be discussed in these columns later on.

Yesterday's Toronto Star spoke of "Mr. Adam Kick of London." The member for London certainly has a kick coming.

Mr. John S. McClelland, of St. Catharines, a city official and a man of education and standing, solemnly avers that the world is flat. No doubt it feels that way in St. Catharines.

A Toronto professor tells the Ontario teachers' convention that wealth is not the chief end of man. The same thing has been said once or twice before. It might be remarked also that it is not the usual end of man.

The Toronto News says that London is one of the most desirable residential cities in Ontario, and it cannot understand why Mr. Texas Burdell should have desired to leave it. Perhaps we can explain Mr. Burdell's conduct. He had reason to fear that he would be sent to Toronto.

The Attorney-General of Ontario suggested a tax on the "unearned increment" of land values just to hear what the law-makers had to say about it. The theory was too subtle for some of them, and after they had registered their objections he withdrew it with the remark that the principle might be heard from in the future. There is not the slightest doubt about that.

Chicago has voted overwhelmingly for municipal ownership of the street railways. The sentiment must be pretty strong or the street railway companies pretty unpopular when the people of Chicago would intrust this undertaking to the class of aldermen they elect.

The American newspapers are throttled by the paper trust, which has raised the price of paper \$14 per ton since it began to get in its work under the shelter of a tariff. The newspapers are a unit in protesting the duty on wood pulp or paper be reduced, but they are being squeezed by the very tariff system which most of them uphold. Journals which argue in favor of taxing everything in sight except their own material, are entitled to no sympathy when they are robbed by the monopolies which they help to create.

ADVICE TO BACHELORS.
 [London Daily Mail.]

In his Lenten address on "Courtship" to young men, Rev. Paul Ball, of St. Ann's Church, Manchester, elaborated Punch's immortal advice in the following "don'ts":

Don't marry early; such marriages seldom turn out well.

Don't believe in love at first sight; it rarely carries real judgment.

Don't be misled by the mere love of

sentiment, which begins in sonnets and ends in curses.
 Don't choose the partner of your life from outward appearance, which is apt to wear off, sometimes to wash off.

THIS WORLD'S ALL A FLEETING SHOW.
 [Thomas Moore.]

This world is all a fleeting show.
 For man's illusion gives
 The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
 The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
 The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
 There's nothing true but heaven.

And false the light on glory's plume,
 As fading hues of even;
 And love, and hope, and beauty's bloom,
 Are blossoms gathered from the tomb—
 There's nothing bright but heaven.

Poor wanderers of a stormy day!
 From wave to wave we're driven;
 And fancy's flash and reason's ray
 Serve but to light the troubled way—
 There's nothing calm but heaven.

AN AID TO CONVERSATION.
 [Philadelphia Press.]

McJigger—There isn't a man in town who can keep the conversational ball rolling like our friend Gayrake.

Thingumbob—Nonsense! He never says anything worth listening to!

McJigger—No, but he does a lot of things worth talking about.

ALIENS.
 [London Outlook.]

Some must take and others pay.
 Some until the judgment day
 Thus the world's unchanging way
 Since the world began.

Men there are who never sleep
 Warm, red wine of fellowship,
 Fearing let the world be left
 While another drains it dry,
 Gaily uses, gaily breaks
 The world's unchanging way
 Since the world began.

Men there are with songs unsung,
 Strains that never escape the tongue;
 Broken aims and broken dreams
 Hidden from the careless eye;
 Secret, passionate, deep enshrined,
 Undeveloped, they stand hid,
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