

REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

Are We All Robbers?

BECAUSE the annual crop of honey in Ontario will show a falling-off amounting to a million pounds, the executive of the Ontario Bee-Keepers' Association will advance the price of honey. Are the bee keepers robbers? Why should they put up the price and make the consumer pay more simply because the crop is smaller than usual? Has the consumer no rights?

Small fruits are scarce in Ontario, and the fruit grower puts up the price. The consumer must pay more for his cherries, raspberries, gooseberries, tomatoes, pears and peaches. Are the fruit growers robbers?

The crop of wheat the world over is not too large. In Canada it will be excellent. Yet the Canadian farmer puts up the price and makes the Canadian consumer pay more because wheat is scarce in Russia, France and Germany? Is the Canadian farmer a robber?

The number of expert carpenters needed in several of the large cities is large. The carpenters know that and up goes the price of carpenters. Again the consumer of carpenter work must pay the increased cost. Is the carpenter a robber?

The makers of rubber goods find a huge demand for their goods and raw rubber is hard to get. Up goes the price of rubber goods. The consumer of rubber goods, the wearer of rubber shoes and so on, must pay. Is the rubber manufacturer a robber?

The demand for good industrial stocks is large and the broker, the financier and the merger-man discover that. Up go the price of industrial stocks. Instead of paying \$90 a share for certain stocks, the investor who is the consumer in the case must pay \$120. Are the brokers and financiers robbers?

The banker and the merchant think the farmer is a robber if he puts up the price of his products and the farmer comes back and says that the banker and the merchant and the manufacturer are robbers because they have a protective tariff to keep up the price of their wares. Are we all robbers, or are none of us robbers? Isn't it rather the result of a competitive system which none of us may avoid?

The state robs us by making us pay more for bad government than we should pay for good. There is really robbery, because there is no competition. The city robs us when it makes us pay more for bad water than we should pay for good water. There is real robbery, because we are compelled to buy from the city. The telephone company robs us when it makes us pay an exorbitant price for a service which we must take or go without. There is no competition in telephones. But when there is competition there can be no robbery.

The farmer who declares that the manufacturer robs him and the manufacturer who declares that the farmer robs him are either fools or liars. And this includes the *Toronto Weekly Sun*, the *Grain-Growers' Guide*, and the other respectable agricultural papers which are trying to carry reciprocity by setting the farmer against the manufacturer. If reciprocity can survive such miserable arguments and such miserable methods on its behalf, then it deserves to win.

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Well Done, Mr. Lemieux.

SOME critics have hinted that Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux is fond of travelling and fond of meeting the "big people" of the world. Perhaps so. But of all the departments of government in this country, none seems to be administered with greater care, greater thoroughness, and greater efficiency than the Post Office of Canada. Furthermore, there was never a period in which greater reforms have been undertaken and worked out with less fuss and feathers than during the Lemieux regime. Remember, also, Mr. Lemieux followed Sir William Mulock, one of the finest administrators that ever drew an inadequate salary on Parliament Hill.

Within the last fortnight, Mr. Lemieux announced an early reduction in cable rates. Twenty-five cents, the present general rate, for urgent messages; twelve cents for non-urgent messages; and six cents for press messages. This has been offered to the British and Canadian Postmasters-General, but they hope to do better. If the present companies will not give further reductions, then a British-owned cable will be built from Canada to Great Britain.

During the same period, Mr. Lemieux has announced that a new parcels post system is being considered and that if the country merchants did not object too strongly it might be adopted. Such a system is sorely needed to make the express companies more reasonable. There should be competition, and the post office alone is in a position to give it. The express companies perform an admirable public service, but they have not shown that sweet reasonableness which makes public utility corporations popular.

As for the country merchant, his fear is groundless. Interurban railways were once thought to seal the doom of the country merchant along these lines. Everybody would go into the city to shop. Instead of killing the country merchant, it doubled his business. The customer has no account in the city, and the country merchant has, therefore, the country merchant telephones in his order and the goods are ready for the customer in a few hours. It would be the same with a parcels post.

If Mr. Lemieux will push these two reforms a little faster even, he will find a solid public opinion behind him.

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Naughty Premier Fisher.

PREMIER FISHER says there is no British Empire—now what do you make of that? It makes one want to lean a weary head on a tired hand and wonder if thinking is worth while. "We are not an Empire; we are a loose association of five nations." Alas and alack! Shades of Cecil Rhodes and Richard Seddon!

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Next week we shall begin a new serial story. This time it is a Canadian story by a Canadian writer. As its background it will have Cobalt and the new mining country. As its theme it will have a modern phase of the struggle between good and evil in love and life as it came to one young college graduate.

It is well that Premier Fisher has gone home to Australia by the other route. If he had been passing through Canada when this news leaked out, he might have been throttled by Colonel Sam Hughes, or Colonel Denison, or even by Premier Roblin. I feel quite certain Mr. Borden would not have attempted to do him bodily harm, but I am convinced that the others would. The fact that Premier Fisher is an ex-miner and stands six feet clear would have made no difference.

"There is no necessity for us to say that we will or will not take part in any of England's wars." Surely these are the words of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, not of the Premier of Australia. Yet one hesitates to believe that even Sir Wilfrid would be quite so frank. Mr. Bourassa might, but he counts not.

Perhaps when he gets back home and gets a note from some of our ardent imperialists, Premier Fisher may repudiate this interview which Mr. Stead secured for his once great publication. It seems incredible, at this critical juncture in the affairs of the "Empire," and just when a general election is imminent in Canada, that Mr. Fisher could have been so brutally "unpatriotic." Yet the despatch appeared in the *Mail and Empire* and other reputable imperialist newspapers. One doesn't know what to think.

It may be that Premier Fisher merely intended to distinguish between loyalty and imperialism, and to make it clear that he could be a good Britisher without sacrificing his standing as a good Australian. But he has certainly out-lauriered Laurier.

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New Brunswick Joins the Others

AFTER the last day of September in this year of grace, the pulpwood policy of New Brunswick will be the same as that of Ontario and Quebec. The United States may put pulp logs on

the free list if it so desires. It may confer with Mr. Fielding and Mr. Paterson about getting our pulp logs if it wishes. It may offer all sorts of reciprocity in exchange. Yet after that date, not a pulp log cut on the crown lands of the three great spruce provinces will be exported.

This is a proper "conservation" policy. We had the policy in Ontario long before President Roosevelt told us what to call it. His naming of it helped it perhaps. His and other support made it popular enough for Premier Gouin, of Quebec, and now has given it sufficient vogue for recognition at the hands of Premier Hazen. Save nature's endowment and manufacture your own product at home—is a policy to which every Canadian will subscribe in the matter of pulp wood. With regard to wheat, barley, vegetables and fruit there may be room for two opinions, because our supplies of these are annual. Pulp logs, on the other hand, are harvested only once in fifty years. Destroy the present supply, and there may never be another.

The United States papermakers have our sympathy. They love their country, and it is not pleasant to be forced to get up and move to another country. We hope they will not feel it too keenly, and we assure them of a hearty welcome. Our advice to them is to come over before it is too late.

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The Lords Are Beaten.

AFTER a strenuous battle lasting three years and involving two general elections, the House of Lords must yield its veto power. It may revise, it may suggest, it may consult, it may temporise, but when the British House of Commons says "Yea" three times, the matter is settled. It will now be almost as useless as the Canada Senate, and both bodies will be in strong contrast with the Senate of the United States, which is probably the most powerful second chamber in the world of nations. The battle ended when Mr. Asquith, on Friday of last week, sent a polite note to Mr. Balfour and told him that the King had agreed to create the peers necessary to overcome all opposition to "The Parliament Bill."

Divine Right of Kings as a doctrine passed away; the birthright of peers must also pass away. A new House of Lords, in which brains, achievement and influence alone will count, must come into existence. It may be more dangerous and even more conservative than its predecessor, but it will not be founded upon a principle which is opposed to modern democratic ideas. Cromwell was a dictator and cried, "Take away that bauble"; Asquith and Lloyd-George are his modern counter-parts. Cromwell succeeded because the people were behind him; Asquith and his colleagues are undoubtedly in the same position.

King George has been wiser than the Peers. He has yielded gracefully without sacrifice of prestige. The peerage has lost and monarchy has gained. The King has again admitted that he is a constitutional monarch enthroned to do the will of his people.

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The Final Act of Reciprocity.

THAT delightful international drama, entitled "Reciprocity," is almost concluded. In Act 1, at Washington, last April, the international troupe introduced the play with considerable skill and artistic ability. The work of President Taft in this portion of the play was exceedingly well done, showing that he had profited much by expert advice and advance training. Mr. Fielding seemed a little in need of experience and coaching, but performed well, making only one or two slight slips.

In Act II, the scenes were laid wholly in Washington, with Congress supplying a goodly number of strolling players. The act was lacking in brisk action and was therefore somewhat tedious. Nevertheless most of the actors played their parts so earnestly and conscientiously that the general effect was impressive. The last scene of this Act closed on Wednesday, when President Taft spectacularly signed the tariff reform bill which he has carried through Congress at the point of the "personal influence" bayonet.

The third and final Act will be played in Canada. The chief parts will be taken by Mr. Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier. While it would be unfair to describe it in advance, we are unofficially informed that the denouement will be satisfactory to both "stars." The Liberal majority in the House of Commons may be decreased sufficiently to allow Mr. Borden to claim a moral victory. The reduction, however, will not be sufficient to prevent the triumph of Sir Wilfrid and reciprocity. Thus both actors and their friends will be fully satisfied and the dignity and honour of the nation will again be saved by a noble band of 220 heroes.