

The Colonist.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1895.

ENCOURAGE THE HOME PRODUCER.

A month or so ago a movement was set on foot in Seattle to encourage the consumption of home-manufactured and home-grown commodities. Householders and others signed an agreement to give preference to home-made goods. This was a praiseworthy movement, and it would be well for British Columbia if a similar one were set on foot in this Province. The country being new and its industries struggling hard to maintain an existence, it is only right that its inhabitants, whenever they can do so without incurring serious loss, should give those industries a helping hand. If British Columbians do not aid British Columbian industries, who can be expected to give them a lift?

A great deal can be done in this way by Government, by corporations and by individuals. If the Government's officials, when supplies of one kind and another are wanted and work to be done, would look around them and see if home-made goods and home-produced material could not be procured at pretty nearly the same rates and of as good quality as those of foreign manufacture and foreign production, they would do much to foster home industries. If the Corporations of Victoria and other cities acted in the same way they would, without doing those whom they represented and for whom they were acting the slightest injury, confer a very considerable benefit on men and women in British Columbia who are trying in the face of difficulties and discouragements to establish industries in the Province and to develop its resources.

Individuals can do much more in this direction than even governments and corporations. If every housekeeper, let his or her means be great or small, kept continually in view the encouragement of the home producer it would be astonishing what an impetus would be given to home industries. Many, we are glad to be able to say, do this already, notably the late Premier of the Province and present Chief Justice. He, we are told, in all his dealings, whether official or private, makes a point of preferring the products of the province to those produced elsewhere. In this he acted the part of a true and a judicious friend of British Columbia. If the inhabitants of the province generally acted on this principle there would be fewer complaints among the home producers and those who have money to spend would have the satisfaction of knowing that the greater part of their expenditure went to increase the prosperity of the Province.

A GREAT IMPROPRIETY.

The scene in the Court House in Vancouver when the verdict of "not guilty" was returned in the Smith murder case was not creditable to the citizens of that city. We are not surprised that the judge was indignant and expressed his feelings emphatically when, amid the noisy plaudits of the spectators, the prisoner offered to shake hands with the jury that had acquitted him. Such scenes in a Court of Justice, under any circumstances, are to be deplored, but the circumstances of this case were such that the community has little cause to rejoice that such a man as Smith has shown himself to be should have reason to feel that he has with him the sympathy of respectable, law-abiding members of society. It is but reasonable to conclude that the liberated man left the Court feeling himself quite a hero. He will very likely be proud of what he has done, and it will not be at all surprising if some other man of the same type, believing that he has been wronged in the same way that Smith was, will take the law in his own hands and murder, it may be, an innocent and unoffending man.

The administration of law, particularly in criminal cases, should always be serious and impressive, and the decorum of a Court of Justice should invariably be strictly observed. Appearances are more important than most people imagine. When crime in a Court of Justice is treated with levity, and when a mixed audience sees a criminal applauded, many of those who compose it will be led to think lightly of crime and many perhaps may envy the prisoner who, at the moment of acquittal, is apparently honored by men whose approbation they highly value. We trust that most of those who in a moment of excitement were surprised into expressing pleasure at the acquittal of Smith will by this time be ashamed of what they have done and will be ready to admit that the exhibition was most unseemly and calculated to have a pernicious influence.

A BURLESQUE.

It is greatly to be regretted that the members of the City Council have so little respect for the citizens whom they are supposed to represent as to make the Council Chamber a place of amusement for men and boys who want to have an hour's fun without paying anything for admittance. It is evident that the audience in the City Hall on Thursday night expected a little diversion, and they were not disappointed. The whole performance appears to have been a complete burlesque on the proceedings of city councils. If some of the members of the Corporation had been paid handsomely for making the office of City Councillor appear ridiculous in the eyes of the public they could not have done the work more effectively than they did. As actors, their performance was highly creditable, showing that they possessed no small degree of histrionic talent. As a meeting of men having serious business to transact their behavior was simply disgraceful. It is humiliating to think that the men to whom the citizens of Victoria have entrusted the management of

their civic affairs have not a higher sense of duty and more respect for their office and themselves than to make their meeting an exhibition for the amusement of the crowd. The audience, we infer, from the demonstrations that they made, heartily enjoyed the amusement prepared for them by the Councillors, but what was fun for them ought to be death for the performers in their official capacity.

AN UNLIKELY STORY.

All sorts of rumors are in circulation about the reconstruction of the Government. One of them is that Chief Justice Meredith will resign his position on the Bench to become Premier of the Dominion. This is a most unlikely story, yet it is believed by many. This is how the Ottawa Citizen deals with this rumor:

Some of our Toronto contemporaries are again canvassing the name of Chief Justice Meredith as a desirable addition to the Dominion cabinet. A year and a half ago the electorate had the opportunity of making him Premier of Ontario, but they chose not to do so. We should like to have seen him come to Ottawa in default of success in the Provincial arena; but, instead of this, he was placed upon the Bench. And once having taken his seat there he should never again take part in politics.

The theory of those who are now discussing him is that the Dominion Government is in danger of being beaten in Ontario, and that the Chief Justice would bring sufficient strength to it as to avert disaster. We do not accept the assumption of probable defeat. Admitting it, however, for the sake of argument to be true, the remedy appears to us worse than the disease. The success of the present Opposition is undesirable; but it is of far more importance that the judiciary should be free from the suspicion of partisanship than that any set of men should retain office.

To enjoy this immunity it is essential that when a man ascends the Bench he shall be considered as having abandoned political forever.

The Toronto Times, it appears, has been chiefly instrumental in spreading the report that the Hon. William Ralph Meredith, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas for Ontario, might, could, would or should step down from the Bench to enter the Federal ministry. In giving the appearance of probability to this sensational piece of news the World acted most injudiciously. We do not believe that there was any more solid foundation for it than the desire of a few Conservatives who allowed their imagination to get the better of their judgment. Mr. Meredith makes an excellent judge. He enjoys the confidence of the men of Ontario of all parties, creeds and classes. He has done yeoman's service for the Conservative party and he nobly deserves the honors, the privileges and the immunities of his present position; and it is not likely that there are any number of influential Conservatives in the Dominion who would think seriously of asking him to leave the restful position in which he has just been placed again to take upon himself the labors, the responsibilities and the cares of a political leader.

THE NICARAGUA CANAL.

There is again talk of constructing the Nicaragua Canal by private enterprise. The American politicians are so dilatory, so jealous of each other and so devoted to the interests of railway companies and other corporations, that they cannot be induced to give this great enterprise the national aid that it requires and which it is evidently the interest of the United States to give. Yet as soon as there is any serious talk of building the Canal independently of the United States Government American newspapers set up a cry that the Canal when constructed must be under the control of the United States. The dog-in-the-manger attitude assumed by many of these papers is well illustrated by the following extract from the San Francisco Call:

The connection of the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans is by far the most important measure now under the consideration of the American people. The completion of the canal will open the way from one ocean to another not only to merchant vessels, but to vessels of war. Should a hostile fleet ever out American communication between the two oceans the Pacific coast would be at the mercy of the power in control of such fleet. American vessels of war, destined to pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast or from the Pacific to the Atlantic would be compelled to take the Cape Horn route, while our enemies would steam through the canal in fewer days than the Cape Horn route would require months. The proposition to make the canal neutral territory may be classed with other altruistic schemes. When war comes nations strike where the blow will be the most effective. This generation has seen England in full possession of the Suez Canal in spite of treaties. Self-preservation is as clearly the first law of nations as of men. With thousands of miles of coast on each side of the continent the United States should permit the opening of the canal only on condition that she should control it. In times of peace it should be open to all nations on equal terms; in times of war it should be held to the exclusive use of the nation whose territory occupies the central portion of both shores. A canal built in part with foreign capital cannot be so held without confiscating property rights. Even with such confiscation it might be impossible to so fortify the canal that a hostile fleet could not pass through it. Another purpose of the canal is to create a standard of transportation charges. This could be entrusted to no private corporation.

If absolute control of the Nicaragua Canal is so necessary to the United States, why in the name of common sense does not the United States undertake not only to construct it, but to get possession of the territory through which it is to run? On no other condition than this will the nations of the world permit the United States to have complete control of the Canal in time of war.

If the Canal were constructed as a merely commercial enterprise with money contributed by the capitalists of all nations, it would be easy to make international arrangements with respect to its navigation at all times—in times of war as well as in times of peace. If the canal is not to be built until the nations of the world consent to place it completely under the control of the United

States, the probability is that it will never be constructed. If our exacting and jealous neighbors dilly-dally much longer with the project, or if they assume the attitude with respect to it foreshadowed by our San Francisco contemporary, the Panama Canal project will be revived and carried out in spite of the opposition of domineering Americans.

THE RESULT OF FREE TRADE.

The Marquis of Salisbury, in the speech which he delivered at Watford, made it very clear that free trade has not been in Great Britain anything like an unqualified success. He reminded his hearers that the apprehensions of protectionists which the advocates of free trade laughed at as groundless have proved only too well founded. His Lordship said among other things:

I remember the contempt which was poured then upon the idea that the repeal of the Corn Laws would injure English agriculture. Now you see the lowering of prices, which is the result of free trade, has almost killed agriculture in several counties of this country. I do not, of course, I cannot, condemn those who passed free trade; they were right in the principle which they supported; but they should have thought a little more of the burdens under which land was laboring, and should have lightened the weight of these burdens when it could have been done with ease. I cannot expect the Liberal-Unionist friends around me to sympathize with the feelings with which I look back to this old protectionist struggle. I know we were wrong in what we said, but we had a truth at the bottom of the fears we expressed, and this generation is finding out that it has not been so smooth as the prophets of that day told us it would be.

No doubt the Premier, in deference to the convictions of a large number of his supporters, spoke guardedly of the opposition given by the agricultural classes to free trade. But he nevertheless took care to remind his hearers that the evils which the protectionists feared have come upon the British farmer. The language which he used in describing the present condition of agriculture in Great Britain is very strong, but it is certainly not any stronger than the facts warrant. British statesmen are most careful about what they say in their public utterances. They are studiously moderate in their language and are not given to overstatement. What they say is in almost every particular rather within than beyond the truth. When an English public man in Lord Salisbury's position uses the word "ruin" when speaking of the farmers of England, and describes their present condition as "fearful," we may be sure that their case is very serious indeed. This he does in the following passage from his Watford speech:

Speaking in this room, I cannot forget that the greatest evil with which we have to deal is the most terrible drawback to the prosperity of our country—the fearful condition in which agriculture now stands. (Cheers.) I have already mentioned that in several counties, or at least in many parts of them, agriculture seems on the point of disappearing; and the land is going out of cultivation. The ruin which is afflicting us has in some degree affected all the agricultural classes. The landlord has suffered first, and most acutely. The farmer suffers next, and his suffering has been terrible and most lamentable. The laborer has hitherto been spared, but I see from the reports which appear in the newspapers and blue-books that in many parts of the country laborers have in this year been dismissed, and have gone to swell the unemployed population in the towns. The laborer suffers last, because the loss of him is felt first; but it is a great mistake to think, as I fancy some agricultural theorists do, that so long as the land mainly affects the landlord it is the landlord's business only, and no one else need have any fear. I think there is something to be said even for the down-trodden laborer. If the laborer has to go, agriculture cannot be carried on for a day. If the farmer makes no profit, agriculture will not be carried on after a year or two years. But if the landlord loses his rent, at first you only note the fact, in a public point of view, by the decrease of his expenditure in the country. But as time goes on buildings wear out; drains wear out; improvements are wanted; and if the landlord's part—the really only a payment for the outlay of capital—has already disappeared, further improvements cannot be maintained, and English agriculture must sink far below the high position which it has maintained. (Hear, hear.) I think, therefore, that we have a very inadequate estimate of our business, and I feel that, for the sake of agriculture, we are equally interested in all members of the agricultural classes. For the laborer, the farmer and the landlord these last years have been years of threatening and increasing ruin, and we must do all that we can to mitigate, at all events, that ruin.

That British farmers after fifty years of free trade should be, according to the testimony of the Prime Minister, on the brink of ruin is proof enough that that policy has not been so beneficial to the country as its advocates in Canada and elsewhere would have the people believe; but when this "fearful condition" can be traced directly to the operation of the free trade policy the blindness or the inaneity of those who recommend free trade as a remedy for all the evils with which a country may be afflicted is as clear as the sun at noon-day. How, after the experience of fifty years of free trade in Great Britain, Canadian politicians can recommend it as a policy peculiarly favorable to agriculture, passes all comprehension. If fifty years of free trade has made the condition of the British farmer "fearful," how is the same policy going to make the Canadian farmer prosperous?

The comments which the London Daily News makes upon Lord Salisbury's speech show how it is understood by intelligent men in Great Britain. That paper says:

The prime minister of this country is, in principle, a Protectionist. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the declaration which Lord Salisbury upon this subject at Watford. For the first time, if not since 1846, at least since 1853, we have from the responsible Head of Her Majesty's Government, speaking with the full knowledge that his speech would be read throughout the civilized world, a distinct and definite declaration of Free Trade. It is true that Lord Salisbury's words are wanting in definiteness and courage. But his unwillingly will not save him. He referred to the "melancholy hue" of the period which witnessed the repeal of the Corn Laws. He

declared that lowering the price of bread has "almost ruined agriculture in several counties." But he adds, referring to the Protectionists of half a century ago, when he was a boy, "I know we were wrong in what we said." Now we put it to Lord Salisbury in language as plain as we can use, Does he believe in Protection or does he believe in Free Trade? We ask the question purely for form's sake, because Lord Salisbury's opening remarks show that he is a Protectionist. Why then does he act upon his principles? Why does not Lord Salisbury reimpose the Corn Laws? Their reimposition would at once raise the price of agricultural produce, and nothing else will.

A MIDDLE COURSE.

As the date set for the opening of the Dominion Parliament draws near thoughtful people in Manitoba are considering what course is best to be pursued with respect to the school question. The Free Press seems to think that a favorable reply to the remedial order and the communication afterwards sent from Ottawa to the Provincial Government is out of the question. The Government of the Province cannot recede from the position it has taken, but the Free Press seems to think that a compromise is possible that may be accepted by the minority, and may be satisfactory to those who sympathize with them. It says on the situation:

But as affecting the well-being of Manitoba, to say nothing of the Dominion at large, the adoption is fraught with possibilities that no friend of Manitoba or Canada can contemplate with indifference. It means continued strife between the Province and the Dominion, which, beyond incidental advantages to a political party which circumstances for the time may place in a position to enjoy, it is difficult to see what benefits the Province will derive. If there is no alternative consistent with our self-respect as a Province, then nothing remains but to let events take their course.

But there is an alternative. After the Province has made its final reply to the Dominion Government, declining to be governed by its remedial order, it is then free to call the Legislature and submit its answer, which that body will doubtless approve. Legislation might then be introduced embodying any provisions the Legislature might be willing to concede to the Roman Catholics without affecting provincial control of education in the direction indicated by the opinion of the Privy Council. These provisions might not fully satisfy the claims of the minority; they probably would not meet the requirements of the remedial order. But they would place Manitoba in the position of paying some regard to the opinion of the highest court in the Empire; and they would take the wind out of the sails of the contemplated legislation at Ottawa.

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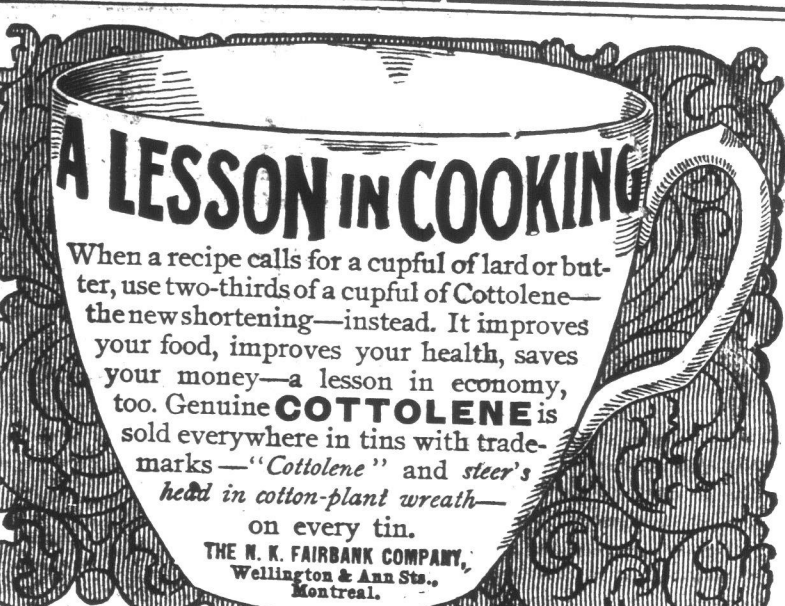
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