

The Colonist.

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CHRISTMAS. We often hear that in these days people have grown cold and selfish.

Every faculty of the mind as well as every energy of the body is taxed to the utmost in order to obtain the necessities, the comforts, or, it may be, the luxuries which we have learned to look upon as indispensable to our existence.

There is little time for thought and still less for sentiment. To get work and to do it well absorbs our attention to the exclusion of every other interest and almost every feeling.

Thus we feel ourselves, and so we judge others. Life has lost its enthusiasm and we perform our duties faithfully, indeed, but without the zest which makes work a pleasure or the love which lightens labor.

So sometimes we think, but are we right in taking this gloomy view of the lives of ourselves and our neighbors? Have there not been around us for the past week incontrovertible evidences that love and sympathy and friendly interest in others fill to overflowing the hearts of the men, women and children of our city?

Last week the scholars brought, many of them not of their abundance, gifts for the children poorer than themselves. The different benevolent societies have been filling the cupboards of those who were without the means of purchasing for themselves the little luxuries suitable to the season, and the wealthy have given needed help to those institutions where the sick and homeless are cared for.

One has only to watch the little groups who crowd the stores to see that the tastes and wishes of others have been carefully studied, and that there is no selfishness in the eager gladness with which each buyer seizes upon some peculiarly suitable present, anticipating the delighted surprise of the loved one for whom it is intended.

One notes, too, the careful anxiety of many a one to see that all are remembered and the ingenuity which, with very small means, finds something that will give pleasure.

How the children hug the treasures they are bringing home for father, mother or baby brothers and sisters, as if they were afraid they could not keep their secret close enough. The news-carrier goes from door to door laden with kind messages and thoughtful gifts which have crossed sea and land to remind us that after all love and memory can overcome time and distance.

So much is apparent to anyone who has eyes to notice what is going on around him, but gentle kindness and delicate tact which relieves want without seeming to recognize it, the sympathy which tenderly strives to bring comfort and hope to the bereaved and broken-hearted, the helping hand stretched out to the erring and sinful, are among the deeds done in secret by many a follower of Him who was never deaf to the cry nor blind to the sign of distress.

Then if we visit the homes and watch and listen to the children we shall feel that not only the spirit of kindness of sympathy and love are abroad in the city, but that mirth and joy have not yet departed from amongst us.

We think there are very few Canadians who will feel anything but resentment at the arrogant proposals of the Chronicle. If the advantages to be derived from commercial union were tenfold greater than they are, Canada might well hesitate to accept them at the hands of a neighbor who would use the power she had obtained to entrap her into a union which she did not wish to enter.

Canadians have no desire to have thrust upon them the many and difficult problems which the United States have to solve. Their own path may be steep and the road rough, but their way is

ARBITRATION.

A great step has been taken toward the civilization of the world when two great nations have decided to agree to submit to arbitration all questions in dispute between them as they arise.

This Great Britain and the United States are about to do. When one thinks of it this solution of the matter seems so reasonable and so just that it is a wonder it was not arrived at long ago.

Why is it more rational for two nations to go to war over a number of square miles of territory than for two men to fight about a few yards of land? Yet the nation which gains the coveted district or province by the sacrifice of thousands of brave men is honored and praised while the man who, by the exercise of brute strength, attempts to take what he cannot prove he has a right to is looked upon in every civilized country as a dangerous scoundrel.

Why should right and justice rule the individual while the nation is free to do whatever it has the power to perform? That nations have at length learned that their honor does not require them to resent every insult or to avenge every injury, but that they can depend on the mutual honor on good faith of each other to make restitution when an impartial judge has decided what is due the injured party, is a long step in the direction of higher national morality. It is only to be expected that nations like individuals will sometimes grumble at the decision of the judge, but if they submit to that decision their ill-temper will be set down to the weakness of human nature, and the world may congratulate itself that the miseries, the crimes and the horrors of war have been averted.

So far as England and the United States are concerned arbitration has passed beyond its experimental stage. These nations have tried both ways of settling controversies, and it is no wonder that the leaders of public opinion in both countries have come to see that the just and peaceable way is the better.

There have been five questions in dispute between these two great nations which have been left to the decision of arbitrators.

The first concerned the claims arising from the war of 1812, which was referred to the Czar. This was settled to the satisfaction of all parties. The frontier dispute between Maine and New Brunswick was the next matter of controversy between the two countries.

In this case the King of Holland was chosen arbiter and gave his decision in 1831, though the matter was not finally settled until 1842, eleven years later. Then came the famous dispute regarding the Alabama claims, which was submitted to the Geneva arbitration and settled in 1872. In the same year the San Juan dispute was decided in favor of the United States by three experts appointed by the Emperor of Germany, who had been chosen as arbiter.

The last case was, as everyone knows, that concerning the seal fisheries in Behring sea, settled by the Paris arbitration. To this may be added the Venezuela boundary dispute, which is just about to be settled.

There may, and, no doubt will, in the future, arise cases where the honor of a nation is so wounded that no compensation or no apology can avert war; but it is a great comfort to be able to feel that the reason must be grave indeed that will cause England and the United States to engage in a struggle, which must result in terrible loss to both, and can bring no compensating gain to either.

TOO HIGH A PRICE.

There is a good deal of talk just now about a reciprocity treaty between Canada and the United States. Everyone acknowledges that such a treaty would be of great advantage to this country, but almost all are agreed that the freest commercial intercourse with our neighbors across the line would be bought at too great a price if, to gain it, we were compelled to sever our connection with England and surrender our political, as well as our commercial independence.

Yet this is what the San Francisco Chronicle, in an article in its issue of the 17th inst., states would be the condition and the result of commercial union. It says:

It is not to be supposed, of course, that the United States would consent to have the customs frontier between the two countries wiped out unless Canada would agree to levy the same duties upon the products of all the rest of the world that are now imposed by that country.

After showing that Canada would in such circumstances virtually be, come part of the United States the Chronicle goes on to show how she could be forced actually to take her place as a member of the Union:—

Any time that the United States might want Canada it could get it by holding out the alternative of annexation or a return to the old custom house system under a higher scale of duties.

We think there are very few Canadians who will feel anything but resentment at the arrogant proposals of the Chronicle. If the advantages to be derived from commercial union were tenfold greater than they are, Canada might well hesitate to accept them at the hands of a neighbor who would use the power she had obtained to entrap her into a union which she did not wish to enter.

Canadians have no desire to have thrust upon them the many and difficult problems which the United States have to solve. Their own path may be steep and the road rough, but their way is

clear compared to that which lies before the statesmen of the neighboring republic.

THE SPANISH COLONIES.

The war in Cuba still continues. Whether Maceo's death—if it has really occurred—will make the conquest of the island easier or not does not yet appear. In the meantime Spain is drained of her resources to put down the rebellion in the Philippine Islands.

These islands contain a much larger population than Cuba, and if the rebels are anything like as resolute as the Cubans are it will be very hard, if not impossible, to conquer them. It is officially stated that twenty-five thousand Spanish troops are on their way to the Philippines, and though this is not a large army still the cost of sending them such a long distance, and of providing for their support is a heavy tax on a country which for the last two years has had to spend men and money in the so far fruitless attempt to put down an insurrection in another distant colony.

It is thought that both Japan and Russia would like to obtain possession of the Philippines, but whether Spain would be any more willing to part with her troublesome possession in the East than she is to grant self-government to her rebellious colony in the West is doubtful. The Philippines have for some years, instead of yielding a revenue to Spain, been a source of expense to her. But the Spaniards have shown of late that though they are cruel and tyrannical, they can be self-denying and generous when they think the honor of their country is concerned.

CHINESE POLITICS.

China is a paradise of boodlers. Every official from the highest to the lowest is bound to make all he can, fairly or unfairly, out of his office. Li Hung Chang is the prince of boodlers as well as of other things. When he was adjudged, after his return from Europe and America, to distribute among the court officials and others no less a sum than eight millions of taels, or one million pounds sterling, it might be thought that he was a ruined man, but he was nothing of the kind. He was, to all appearance, as well off after he had paid this immense fine as he was before it was imposed. Li had been fifty years in public life, and he had used his opportunities of amassing wealth wisely. This is what a Chinese censor said about Li in the official gazette:

The brothers Li have grown wealthy from the proceeds of several tens of years of vice-regal power, and the money spent by them to purchase official rank for their sons and nephews, but as grains from well-filled granaries or as drops from the ocean's expanse. . . .

If we bring Li to the side and compare the two, we notice the immense wealth, the power and influence of the sons of the Li and Ts'en clans (Ts'en was another offender), and then look at the more industrious Ts'o, it would not take much shrewdness or far-sightedness to judge who has been the more honest to the throne and the greater patriot to the country.

This denunciation of Li in the official organ of the Government does not appear to have discomfited Li Hung Chang very much. He had the money and could stand the abuse. Robert Haye Douglas in the Nineteenth Century, in an article on some Peking Politicians, says:

Such being the condition of affairs in China we may well despair of the future of the empire. The whole system of administration is rotten to the core, for there is no sign or symptom of any effort towards progressive reforms. Ninety-nine out of every hundred Mandarins are wedded by long habit and by personal interest to the existing system. A few men, doubtless, are conscious of a better way, but it will be a mistake to suppose from their rare enlightened sentiments that there is any disposition to throw off the trammels of corruption and wrong which have enwrapped the country for so many centuries. The whole weight of the nation is in the opposite scale, and the efforts of the infinitesimally small minority of would-be reformers cannot seriously affect the enduring outline of the national polity, than the successive forests of beech and fir can determine the shape of the everlasting hills from which they spring."

EDITORIAL NOTE.

The following shows that in India the bungling of long-winded, conceited city councillors can be put a stop to by the government when the health and comfort of the inhabitants of the city require its interference. Sir Alexander McKenzie, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, laid the first stone of the drainage extension works at Calcutta a short time ago. In reply to an address, he strongly criticized the inconsequent debates and unbusinesslike work of the corporation, and said that unless steps were taken to remedy the present appalling state of sanitation, the government would have to act without consulting the municipal authorities.

Dominion Rifle Range.

Ottawa, Dec. 23.—Hon. Mr. Borden, Minister of Militia, General Gascoigne, Adjutant-General Aylmer, Quartermaster-General Lake and others inspected the proposed site for the new rifle range for the Dominion matches in Nepean township east of the city yesterday afternoon. The government has now two available sites to look into. The other site is below Rockcliffe. If the new range is to be ready for next year's matches, no time can be lost. It is probable that Rideau range will have to be once more utilized.

LA PRAIRIE, Dec. 23.—The town water works were destroyed by fire to-day. Loss, \$4,000.

A ONE-SIDED STORY.

Something With Respect to Spain's Side of the Cuban Question.

(From the Mail-Empire.)

Of Spain's side of the Cuban question we hear nothing. Though there is a legion of war correspondents whose racey pencils keep the American press overlaid with fresh news from the shifting scenes of hostilities, they never have a redeeming act or fact to credit to the Loyalists. The instructions to these reporters appear to be to turn in news always flattering to the insurgents or derogatory to the Spaniards.

This, at all events, is the kind of stuff they provide. The wrongs that are supposed to have provoked the insurrection are kept steadily before the eyes of the civilized world; Weyler, if he is not in the forefront, is gratuitously exhibited there as a ruthless butcher; tales of Spanish barbarity are worked up and served up daily. On the other hand, we hear much of the devoted heroism of little bands of patriots, of Amazons fired with the sentiment of liberty, and such like. When the charge of improbability is made out of all this mass of stuff the residuum of fact left may be very small. Also in what is suppressed by American correspondents there may be a large and important body of fact in favor of Spain.

All information coming through American channels—and there is little leaks out through any other medium—is discolored by the self-interest of the United States. The jingoists, who appear to be enormously in the majority, can scarcely wait for a decent excuse to score on Cuba and annex it. Hence the supply of sensational and biased Cuban news furnished to and by the American press. Much of it is manufactured to order, and is part of the campaign which Spain's enemies are waging against her.

The story of Maceo's death is an example. That seems to have been an afterthought, and on the face of it bears but little trace of probability. Whether true or false, there can be no question that it was intended to kindle feeling against Spain in the United States, and, if possible, embroil the two countries. Undoubtedly much of the stuff is intended for mischief. However much Spain may be to blame for the trouble in which she is now involved, there are facts in her favor which ought to be admitted. It cannot be said that she always deserved a death ear to the islanders. When it is true the taxing power is exercised in Madrid, it must be remembered that Cuba is allowed to have a hand in it. In the cortes or parliament of Spain Cuba is represented by sixteen senators and thirty deputies. That these are not powerless to effect the course of fiscal legislation for their colony is shown by the fact that they were able to bring about the withdrawal of the retaliatory clauses of the tariff, which took effect against the United States after that country terminated the reciprocity treaty admitting Cuban sugar free. The Cubans found the discrimination very hurtful to themselves, and the mother country did not enforce it.

It is further to be remembered that the ministry of Sagasta went some distance to meet the demands of the Spaniards for home rule, inasmuch as it conceded that half the council of administration should be elected, and that some portion of the budget should be determined by that body. These concessions, though small, and subject to the veto of the governor, may have been thought sufficient for the present state of Cuba's development. Of the 1,600,000 people on the island only about 65 per cent. are white. It might be a mistake to give a large measure of self-government all at once.

In the New Review Mr. James Fitzmaurice-Kelly shows that the Cuban question is by no means what the purveyors of news to United States readers make it out to be. The sympathy thus aroused in favor of the belligerents is, in his view, misplaced. Spain, instead of holding too hard a hand over the island, has been, he considers, too yielding. He is convinced that no constitutional readjustments would allay the discontent, and that the time has not arrived for making any changes. "Cuba," he maintains, "is the spoiled child of Spain," and that, on the whole, the Mother Country has governed the island with rare benignity and wisdom. To give in to the insurgents would be, in his view, the abandonment of the island to the blacks.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24.—Christmas at the White House will be observed this year just as it has been in the past during the present administration. The day will be essentially a children's festival. To-night a big Christmas tree will be placed in the library and Mrs. Cleveland herself will superintend its trimming. Mrs. Cleveland daily remembered the employes by bestowing on each a fine turkey for to-morrow's dinner. A monster bird is now ready for the White House table. It came from Louisville, Ky., a few days ago and weighed fifty-seven pounds.

WINNIPEG, Dec. 23.—About twenty deputy returning officers, who officiated during the June election in the Macdonald constituency, were arrested to-day charged with tampering with the ballots. Many regard the arrests as a bluff gag by the Liberals.

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