The Colonist.

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THE SEMI-WEEKLY COLONIST

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THE INCREASE IN ROYALTY.

There is no breach of good faith with the lumbermen in the increase of the royalty on timber from 50 cents to 75 cents. Every man who took out a timber license under the new low and every holder of timber leases knew that an increase might be looked for at any time. Over and over again it has been stated in the newspapers supporting the government that such an increase was probable. One of the arguments against the government at the last election was that it had tied its hands in regard to the public domain by parting with so large an area as has recently been put under license. To this the answer was made that every licensee took his area knowing that both royalty and rental were subject to increase. There are objections to the increase of rental, because it might be considered as tantamount to a violation of the law providing for the renewal of the license, although the government has the legal right to make an increase; but no such claim can be made against an increase in the royalty. The only question to be considered is whether the condition of the lumber trade is such as to warrant the advance. No one will contend that for the next twenty-one years the royalty on timber must remain at the same figure that it has stood at for the last quarter of a century. Yet if it is a breach to increase it now, it would be just as much a breach of faith to do so ten or fifteen years from now. We do not think that it can be successfully contended that the present status of the lumber industry does not warrant a higher royalty than was paid in 1884, and this the whole question at issue. We can understand that lumbermen are desirous of getting as low a rate of royalty as possible, and no fault can be found with them for exerting themselves to accomplish that purpose. They may be able to give reasons which will lead the government to alter its policy, although we hardly think they can do so; but they cannot make the claim that they have been treated in bad faith.

THE SWETTENHAM INCIDENT.

There seems unfortunately to be very little reason to doubt that a grave injustice was done an excellent public servant, when Sir Alexander Swettenham, late governor of Jamaica, was required to apologize to Admiral Davis of the United States navy for his letter written at the time of the earthquake. It seems that the governor was notified by the Colonial Office that he must apologize; he replied that he would do so, but that with his apology there would go forward his resignation. He was asked not to resign, but insisted upon doing so. As the facts have been developed it appears that the letter was a private communication between personal friends and was never intended to be published; but some newspaper man got hold of it, and the story being too good to keep, it was given to the world. At first sight nearly every one thought that Sir Alexander had made a grave mistake, not so much because he had needlessly offended an officer of a friendly nation, but because he had refused assistance of which the people of Kingston were in sore need. As a matter of fact Admiral Davis made a great, although well-intended blunder. He had no business at all to land an armed force, and it is said that the United States government was preparing to apologize for his action when the apology from the governor arrived. This may not be quite accurate, for unfortunately it has for some time been impossible to accept implicitly statements which appear in the British press, so bitter are they against their opponents, but there is no doubt that Governor Swettenham was wholly in the right, although he may not have been very happy in his manner of asking Admiral Davis to withdraw his sailors. His mistake seems to have been that he acted personally instead of officially, but surely this was excusable in view of the great pressure upon him at the time. There is no doubt that he was greatly misjudged. The news came through United States sources, and was received at a time when every one was wondering just how severely the people of Kingston had suffered. The Colonist among the rest of the Canadian papers thought he had shown exceedingly bad judgment. But something better might have been expected from the Imperial government. A very unpleasant feature of the case is the statement made by Mr. Winston Churchill in the House of Commons. He said that Sir Alexander asked to be retired on account of age, but this proves, to put it mildly, somewhat inexact. Now that the whole story is told, it looks as if Mr. Churchill had been in a very great hurry to make a favorable impression upon the United States government.

THE STATUS OF CANADA.

The Outlook, one of the prominent London weeklies, says that more Canadians share the views of Judge Longley, of Nova Scotia, who said recently that the time had come for Canada to exist as a separate nation, than care to so express themselves. We do not believe it. We are far from believing that any considerable number of Canadians look forward to the independence of the country. It is probably true that thousands of people in the Dominion are not quite satisfied with the present status of Canada, but they look for a larger measure of autonomy within the Empire and not for independence out of it. The whole drift of public sentiment is in that direction, although no one seems to have any idea how what every one desires can be brought about.

In most things Canada is now absolutely independent. It is true that theoretically the Imperial Parliament has jurisdiction over the Dominion, but that jurisdiction is a good deal like what has been said of the power of the sovereign to refuse to assent to a bill passed by Parliament—it is allowed to exist upon the understanding that it shall never be exercised. There is not the slightest probability that any attempt will ever be made to pass a law in London to apply to Canada except with the full consent of the Canadian people, constitutionally expressed through their own parliament. This is an anomalous and wholly unprecedented state of things, and a century ago would have been considered as impossible. The manner in which colonial independence has been evolved without any suggestion of separation of the Colonies from the Mother Country warrants the belief that the problems presented by existing conditions and the very natural desire of the Colonies for the fullest possible control over everything relating to themselves may be worked out, if only we possess our souls in patience and wait until questions arise before we try to solve them. It is always unwise to jump before you get to the stile, and we think we have observed a very great endency to do that sort of thing among the people who discuss the future relations of the various parts of the Empire to each other.

CANADA AND THE NAVY.

The Navy League is going to ask the Colonial Conference for the establishment of a colonial naval militia composed of officers and men engaged in the mercantile marine. This seems a very valuable suggestion and one that will be of immensely greater value to the Empire than the building of a warship or two. The greatest source of strength which any nation can have is the possession of trained men, and it is possible for the outlying portions of the Empire to furnish these in a very considerable number.

This question in one form or another has occupied the attention of the Victoria branch of the Navy League, and it has been repeatedly urged by that body upon the attention of the Dominion government. When Mr. Prefontaine visited Victoria, he was interviewed on the subject and he expressed himself as very heartily in favor of the establishment here of a branch of the Naval Reserve, which is not very different from the proposal to be made to the Conference. After leaving this part of Canada, Mr. Prefontaine spoke on several occasions in favor of such a step, and there is little doubt that, if he had lived, he would have by the present time have been able to advance the project very considerably. As we understand the matter, his successor, Mr. Brodeur, who has gone to London, with the Premier, has also expressed himself as favorable to something of the kind being done. We are therefore quite hopeful that the memorial of the Navy League will be productive of good results.

PARLIAMENTARY DECENCY

The people of Canada will read with profound regret the accounts of certain proceedings in the House of Commons, during which members hurled charges across the House at each other, couched in language utterly out of keeping with such a chamber. There was a time when the Canadian House of Commons ranked with that of the United Kingdom, of which it used to be said that it was the first gentlemen's club in Europe, but unhappily that day seems to have past. As Sir Wilfrid Laurier said the other day, there are men in that assembly who are not fit to be allowed in the presence of gentlemen. Of Sir Wilfrid himself and of Mr. R. L. Borden it is impossible to speak in too high praise, so far as their instincts and demeanor go. They would ornament any body of gentlemen in the world. Happily also there are very many men on both sides of the House concerning whom only words of approval can be said, but there is a distinctly ill-bred element, and it sits both on the right and the left of Mr. Speaker.

It is idle to attempt to disguise the fact that the presence of such men in the House of Commons not only lessens the respect in which that body is held by the public, but actually impairs its usefulness. No legislative body, in which the scenes and language at times are such as one might look for in a brothel, can be regarded as a deliberative assembly. Deliberation is impossible when disgraceful epithets are being hurled across the floor, and when more than half the House is wondering from day to day what new species of slander or brutality is going to be witnessed next. The public will lose all confidence in such a body.

It seems to us that the leaders of the two parties owe a duty to themselves, to the House of Commons and to the country in this regard. It is to stamp out all parliamentary indecency. We grant that the existence of facts which make such exhibitions of vulgarity possible is more to be regretted than the disgraceful scenes, and this brings us to another point, which is that both political parties ought to take steps to purge themselves of men of the stamp so disreputably prominent of late. It is not enough to preserve parliamentary decency. The party leaders should exert their influence with their supporters to prevent the nomination of men, who in the first place so conduct themselves that their actions will not stand examination, and in the second place hasten when elected to violate every canon of parliamentary behavior.

THE BUDGET DEBATE

We think that the members of the legislature deserve very warm congratulations upon the budget debate, not so much because of the political side of it as because of the manner in which the resources and possibilities of the various sections of the province were presented and the feeling of hopefulness and confidence, which seemed to inspire every one. We have not had nearly enough of this sort of discussion in the House, and the Colonist hopes that it will have the pleasure of reporting more like it. The members of the legislature are doing excellent work when they are setting forth in a plain, straight-forward manner what they know about the constituencies represented by them. One thing which British Columbia needs more than anything else is information about the little known parts of its vast area, and probably, taking them as a body, the members of the legislature possess more useful knowledge of this kind than any other people. They are in a position to learn things, which do not come under the notice of others. Therefore when they speak, especially as we know that they feel the responsibility which attaches to their representative positions, the public may feel satisfied that they are getting the very best information available. Moreover the frequent presentation of interesting facts bearing upon the possible development of the province begets a lively interest in it not only on the part of the government and members of the legislature, but among the people at large. The Colonist hopes that the members of the House will take other opportunities during the present session to give expression to their views on this very important subject.

A COLONIAL ZOLLVEREIN

An April 6th, Mr. R. S. B. O'Brian, of Nanaimo, wrote the Colonist a letter, which was printed yesterday, in which he suggested a Colonial zollverein providing for free trade between the colonies and a high tariff against all the world, including the United Kingdom. On April 9th the London Standard published a suggestion to the same effect. If Mr. O'Brian's letter had been received by the Colonist a little sooner, he would have been entitled to the credit of being the first person to publish a recommendation of this kind.

The idea of a colonial zollverein is attractive at first sight and may be found practicable, but there are many difficulties in the way. We do not think that Canadians generally would take kindly to the suggestion that the outlying parts of the Empire should endeavor to coerce the Mother Country to adopt their theories of trade. Such a step, instead of having a tendency to consolidate the Empire, would have the contrary effect. If a colonial zollverein, with a British preference were possible, we think that every person in the Dominion would hold up both hands for it; but anything less than this would, it seems to us, be a very poor return to the Mother Country for the many benefits we have received from British connection. There is at least one obstacle in the way of this, namely the fact that under "the most favored nation clause" in British commercial treaties it might prove very difficult to bring about an arrangement, which would not create embarrassment. If the difficulty, which presents itself in this way could be overcome, we think that some such arrangement between the outlying parts of the Empire could be reached, although not without some difficulty.

We again urge the advisability of hastening slowly in the work of Empire-building. We also urge that it be absolutely divorced from either British or colonial party politics. We protest as strongly as we know how against the exploiting of the Imperial sentiment by any one for party advantage. We should be British subjects, citizens of the Empire first, and Conservatives or Liberals, Free Traders or Protectionists afterwards. The commercial relations of the United Kingdom are of supreme importance to that country. A large population living in a small area, having close trade and financial relations with every country in the world, must necessarily take into account matters, which are of no particular moment to the people of the sparsely settled colonies, whose principal theatre of activity is in the development of the natural wealth of their almost illimitable domains. If we attempt to coerce the Mother Country in fiscal matters, we will at once find a very large section of the people of that country arrayed against us, and the first serious rift in the Imperial fabric will be made. In Canada we have had protection for nearly thirty years and have prospered under it. Naturally we are in favor of a fiscal policy of that nature, even those of us who call ourselves free traders are so in name only; because whatever our convictions may be, we know that free trade in Canada is impossible for a long time to come. But we should not be too wise in our own conceit. We doubtless know what is best for ourselves, but we may not be able to tell the people of the United Kingdom what is best for them. We ought to give them credit for at least as great sagacity as we claim for ourselves. We cannot fail to recognize that, although we have not in Canada always fared as well as we might at the hands of British diplomacy, we have enjoyed an enormous advantage at practically, no cost to ourselves, from the protection afforded by the British flag. We would be ungrateful if we made the first use of our growing importance to put pressure upon the Mother Country to compel the adoption of a policy, which her people do not appear to favor. We would also be following a course beset with danger to the Empire. If we decide upon treating the Mother Country as a foreign nation, we can have no reason to complain if the treatment is returned in kind. Hence we hope the advocates of a colonial zollverein will go a little slow, and will not consider any proposal of the kind, which does not carry with it a British preference. To our way of thinking, it would be an exceedingly poor Imperialism, which had for its corner stone discrimination against the great Imperial Mother.

LORD CROMER.

The resignation of Lord Cromer from his post of consul-general and British agent in Egypt was announced yesterday in the Imperial House of Commons. Evelyn Baring, first earl of Cromer, is one of those remarkable men, with a genius for government, such as no other race than our own seems to produce in modern times. He retires from the public service in the 66th year of his age, which is comparatively young as British public men go. The reason of his retirement is the state of his health, which seems to have broken down. This is greatly to be regretted, because his retirement has come at a time, when his experience would be invaluable at Cairo. Lord Cromer has represented the British government in Egypt since 1883, but he had been connected with the government of that country as Commissioner of the Public Debt and Comptroller of the Revenue for several years before that time. He took the responsible position, which he has just given up, shortly after the retirement of the French from the joint control of Egypt, and he has had far more to do with the development of that country than any other individual. His strong common sense won him the confidence of Tewfik Pasha, who was Khedive at the time of his appointment, and the present occupant of the khedival throne, Abbas Hilmy Pasha, has always extended to him the fullest confidence. Lord Cromer took charge in Egypt at the time when the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmet, was in the height of his power in the Soudan, which was one of the most critical periods in the modern history of the country. He found the country depressed and in financial straits. He brought order out of chaos and gave the land a new impetus. Among the permanent physical monuments to his genius is the great dam at Assouan, which is of such immense value to the Nile valley from the point of view of productiveness.

In view of the growth in Egypt of a feeling in favor of a greater share being taken by the natives in the government of their own country, the retirement of Lord Cromer may have an international importance. He has lately warned the British people of certain dangers which seem to lie in their way, and we have reproduced in the Colonist what he said. In this connection the following from the London Times of March 25th will be read with great interest. It shows how Egypt looks to the eyes of a man, who has been the political pupil of the distinguished Englishman:

M. Rene Puaux, the special correspondent of the Temps, who recently left for Egypt, sends that paper an account of an interview he has had with the Khedive. His Highness said that the necessities of a peculiar political situation had for a long time compelled him to refrain from giving public expression to his views on the affairs of his country. But as M. Puaux told him that his silence might be misconstrued abroad and as he himself was aware that in Egypt it was interpreted in various ways he would avail himself of the opportunity for making known his opinions and ideas.

The Khedive then dwelt on his own and his subjects' passionate love of their country, which they never left for good. In the absence of philosophy, of historical science, they had instinctive patriotism. "This conservative people is a people of progress. I have followed its development day by day, surprised at the prodigious facility wherewith it assimilates itself to European culture. . . . I have seen in our factories the most intricate machines handled by Egyptians. The engineers who took me round observed, not without pride, that the entire personnel consisted of natives who had been trained in a few weeks. That intelligence has found application in the development of modern civilization in Egypt. . . . The day is approaching when the Egyptian peasant will be the equal of the peasant of the most civilized country. The finances have recovered stability. The confidence of Europe has come back to us in such a measure that Cairo and Alexandria are two of the most important financial centres of the world. International concern for the Egyptian debt being henceforth at an end, it is time to devote all our efforts not only towards the material welfare of the population, but towards the satisfaction of their intellectual and moral requirements. For my part I have no more serious preoccupation than that."

The Khedive went on to say:

"It is quite wrong to allege that the national claims assume the form of an anti-foreign and fanatical movement. I emphatically deny it. Tolerance is one of the greatest laws of our religion; the Koran teaches us to respect all the prophets, whether those of the Christians or those of the Jews. We are all profoundly attached to our religion and faithful to its teachings. Believe me I have travelled a great deal and if all men followed the moral precepts of their religion with the same scruplousness as the Musulmans there would be less wickedness in the world. I say so less to glorifty our race than to answer the charges of fanaticism, which revolt us. It has been stated that I aspired to the restoration of my personal power, to exercise it in Oriental fashion, to return to the methods of despotism and the dissipation of certain of my predecessors. I may tell you in reply that my whole education was in Europe, and that there I understood the necessity of the co-operation of the nation with the Sovereign of the administration and good of the country. Despotism would be too heavy a task for my shoulders, and, moreover, if all my thoughts only tended to that satisfaction of my personal vanity the fifteen years of my reign would only have been one long and intolerable period of suffering. But I am conscious of having labored with all my strength for the good of the country, and that is what made me take courage in difficult times. I always set my personality on one side and I have but one line of political conduct, only one—namely, to work in agreement with anybody for the good of the country. I never opposed measures which I believed to be useful to Egypt and I never refused advice."

The Khedive also spoke to M. Puaux of his desire to push the Egyptian railroads more and more towards the west, developing Egyptian interests in the direction of Tripoli and thus personally contributing to a plan of vast importance—namely, the Trans-African railway, which would one day unite Tangier with Cairo. On taking leave of M. Puaux the Khedive said:

"Tell the French to come to Egypt in large numbers. We do not forget what they have been for us, and we are fond of them all the time." M. Puaux puts the words "all the time" in italics.

If the newspaper men concerned in the libel suits instituted by Mr. Emmerson are correct in what they say, the trials will be something quite without parallel in the history of Canada. They allege that over five hundred witnesses will be called, and among them will be Sir Wilfrid Laurier. It is also said that the editor of the Fredericton Gleaner, which was the first paper to publish the alleged libel, will be proceeded against criminally.

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