

Sir Wilfrid Laurier was an honoured guest at a banquet in honour of the Colonial Premiers given by the National Liberal Club, London, on the 15th inst., where he responded to the toast, "Our Guests." He declared his conviction that Imperial Free Trade is impracticable, owing, as was explained in this journal, to there being such a diversity of interests in the colonies and the mother country. The fiscal system, not only of Great Britain but of all the self-governing colonies, and largely also of those governed directly by the Crown, is based upon a tariff that imposes duties on imports. To establish Imperial Free Trade every tariff would have to be abolished throughout the British Empire, or cancelled, so far as imports were concerned, from any part of the Empire. Such a revolution is too radical to be regarded as a serious proposition. The sacrifice of revenue it would entail would have to be made up by direct taxation, and to direct taxation the colonies have shown a decided objection. Free Trade throughout the Empire, applicable only to Imperial products and manufacturers, could only be established by reciprocal concessions. But such concessions would have to be, to a large extent, equivalent. No colony or colonies, for instance, could reasonably ask Canada to sacrifice, say, a million dollars of duties in consideration of being granted concessions of duties amounting to a tenth of that sum, nor could colonies expect us to give their products free entry when they have no free market to offer for our goods. There might, however, as we have said before, be in each colony and in Great Britain some degree of Imperial preferential treatment for British goods, not necessarily the same rate throughout the Empire, but some concession might be arranged for the purpose of recognizing fiscally the unity of the Empire.

The new postal regulation by which double rates are charged for mail matter to and from the Yukon is not one in harmony with modern ideas or the post office policy of the chief countries in the world. It is indeed a step backward to the time when postal rates varied according to the distance letters were carried. It is quite obvious that the mail service to and from the Yukon is more costly than elsewhere, just as it is more costly to carry a letter from Montreal to Vancouver than from the Post Office in this city to another point a few streets distant, yet for the letter to British Columbia only 2 cents are charged which is the rate imposed on a letter carried only a hundred yards, or assorted into a box in the same Post Office as it is posted at. The modern system is based on the principle that the postal service is a national service, that a letter

rate is not fixed proportionately to its cost, but as one in a vast mass the aggregate cost of distributing which is averaged and the rate fixed accordingly, so as, as far as possible, to leave the Post Office Department neither a gainer of profit nor a loser by its services. The cost of the Yukon mail matter thus thrown into the total cost of the service for all Canada would raise the average per letter by an inappreciable fraction. The new regulation should be reconsidered.

New York papers, even the most reliable, published a cable report on the 12th that an agreement had been arrived at between the Cunard line and the Morgan syndicate, which was to be signed in London on the 17th inst. The officials of the Cunard line on this side deny all knowledge of this arrangement, and do not regard it as authentic. The marvel is, who invents these rumours, and why do respectable journals allow their columns to be used for spreading canards, in plain English, falsehoods. Hardly a daily paper is now issued which is without some denial of news published the day before, or earlier. It is to be feared that what is mere speculation, guessing, is cabled, or telegraphed, as news, and, for the sake of brevity, words are omitted from messages which if left in would show that a mere gossip probability is being sent, instead of an ascertained fact.

The most important question of the day is, "what will the harvest be?" The Manitoba estimates are most favourable. The wheat fields comprise 2,039,940 acres, compared with 2,011,385 in 1901, and 1,457,396 in 1900. The area sown with oats covers 725,060 acres, barley, 329,790 acres, flax, 41,200; in potatoes there has been a decrease from 24,429 acres last year to 22,005 acres this season. There are now 3,189,015 acres under crop in Manitoba, an increase of over 30 per cent. since 1900. In other Provinces the prospects are favourable for an average crop, so the harvest income of Canada this year bids fair to be some millions in excess of 1901.

The latest news from the coal mining districts is that the strike is entering upon its last stage. The workers in soft coal mines are being urged to strike, but they are expected to decline, and it would cause no surprise were a sufficient force of the anthracite miners who now are idling to go back to work in a few days. Were this to occur the back bone of the strike would be broken and the output of coal would soon assume normal proportions. The great labour organizations have already received a damaging blow. They have