

London Advertiser.

ESTABLISHED BY JOHN CAMERON IN 1853.
Managing Director
and Editor, John Cameron

London, Friday, July 8, 1898.

Public Men and Public Office.

Some of the Opposition newspapers express dissatisfaction at the fact that a few members of the House of Commons have been appointed to office, and that vacancies have hereby been created. On principle, there is no objection to the appointment to office of members of the House of Commons. The practice has always existed in the mother country. In fact, it is an admitted rule that a member of the legal profession is better qualified for the discharge of judicial duties by having been a member of the House of Commons. His views are broadened, and from the period of the revolution until today the law officers of the crown have been considered specially eligible for the position of chief justice of the common law courts, and of Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer, while these courts existed, and one who has served as a law officer of the crown in the House of Commons is also regarded as specially fitted for the discharge of the duties of Lord Chancellor.

We are quite aware that a cry was raised during last parliament by some members of the then Opposition that a member of the House of Commons should not be eligible for any office of emolument in the gift of the crown. This position was taken because it was said that offices in the gift of the Government had been promised to members of the House of Commons, who, nevertheless, were allowed to continue for several sessions after promises had been made, and so were really placemen of the Ministry. We speak of what is really in our personal knowledge when we say that those best qualified to form an opinion on the subject never concurred in that view. Their uniform contention was that the wrong was not in the elevation of the member, but in permitting him to believe that he would be appointed, and still allowing him to continue a member of the House of Commons.

There are many members of the House of Commons who do not aspire to seats in the Administration, who, nevertheless, are men of great industry, of weighty experience, and sound judgment; and to say that the training that these men have received for a long series of years in the House of Commons, instead of being a qualification, is to be a barrier to their promotion to the Senate is a most preposterous contention. One of the strong objections to the Presidential system of the United States is that when a man has served two terms in the chief executive office, he is regarded as no longer eligible, when, by experience, he could be of real service to his country. He is by an absurd usage, precluded from benefiting the public by his proved abilities.

Some things that have been said, both in and outside Parliament are equally preposterous. One of these is that a man who has for a series of years enjoyed the public confidence as a representative in the House of Commons is thereby rendered ineligible for appointment to the Second Chamber, where the public may still have the advantage of the experience which he has acquired in the work of legislation.

If the Government of Canada did not feel that they were supported by the opinion in what they are doing, they would not have taken the case of which some of their critics complain. If they supposed that the public confidence was being withdrawn, it is likely that constituencies would be opened by appointment to the bench or to the discharge of other official duties? Mr. M. C. Cameron served the public as a member of the House of Commons for more than a quarter of a century. Mr. James Lister has represented the riding of West Lambton since 1882. Mr. Langelier has served the country as a member of the House of Commons for upwards of 30 years. Many public servants were retired by the late Government who had served less than half that period of time.

Members of the House of Commons are, in election contests, frequently put to no inconsiderable expense. They certainly subordinate their private business to the public service, and we should be sorry, indeed, to see a rule laid down that would have the effect of preventing able public men from entering Parliament at all. They really able man who is elected to serve the public in the House of Commons is doing them a service, in most cases, to his own detriment, and we cannot

conceive of a greater misfortune befalling a country than that the senseless cry raised against men, who may have felt that the road to the highest political office is practically closed to them, and who are disposed, before they are rendered unfit for other service by advancing years, to withdraw from the arena of practical politics.

The Education of Agitation.

In connection with the present aspect of the temperance movement important questions have been raised as to the relation of sentiment to law, and as to how far it is correct to say that any particular law has an educating force. It would perhaps be more correct to say that the agitation which precedes the enactment of a law, and the effort to maintain it are educational in their effect. Thoughtful men agree that it is worse than useless to place a law on the statute book which is likely to be a dead letter or to be the subject of wholesale evasion. Such law-making as that is either useless tinkering or it is a thing that breeds contempt for law. There are certain fundamental laws the observance of which is absolutely necessary not only to the well-being but to the very existence of society. If reckless men were allowed to plunder and slay, or if there were laxity in dealing with the thief and murderer, the very foundations of social order would be threatened. But there are other laws of relative worth and expediency that must be proportioned to public sentiment, and to gain the law without the public opinion to enforce it is like having a machine without steam. A law which is too far above public sentiment may not only fail to educate, it may even provoke a reaction which is in proportion to the amount of coercion required to enforce it. But healthful agitation must, by its very nature, educate the public conscience, and lead men to think out the important questions of civic privilege and duty. However much majorities may show a disposition to tyrannical haste and impatience of discussion, such agitation implies the right and duty of each individual citizen to canvass the question and form an honest conviction. Without discussing the English bishop's paradoxical statement that he would rather see his countrymen free than sober, we must admit that freedom is essential to the highest forms of virtue, and to the kind of soberness that is most prized. Unless a man gives his deep, strong conviction, his opinion is not worth anything, and his vote may be a delusion and a snare. No great moral reform can be real and lasting that is the result of a mere snatch vote, and that expresses a moment of emotion without fighting energy and staying power. Some of us may be disposed to be too critical and to spend out strength balancing conflicting probabilities when we should be striking a strong blow for righteousness, but that which pertains to the life of the nation and is not merely for today or tomorrow demands our most earnest thought. A great question of social life is of necessity complex. We do well to consider the meaning of a vote. It involves not merely a passive willingness to be prohibited, but a readiness to support the law without fee or reward, simply from the solemn sense of a citizen's right and duty. So long as we are content to wink the eye and shrug the shoulder when laws are broken, which are meant to guard the weakness of youth, and brace the moral life of society, no great advance can be made. There is room for heroic action and true patriotism in the everyday life of society, which may be as important as the more brilliant display of these qualities on the roaring battlefield. At any rate, thoughtfulness is always in place, and the effort to discriminate between that which is our personal duty or ideal, and that which we may fairly demand from our fellow-citizen—between that which belongs to the sphere of individual conscience and that which is the legitimate province of church courts; between the nature of a vote from a temporary or party standpoint, and its deep religious significance to the Christian citizen—all this kind of mental exercise, in so far as it is not captious quibbling or mere academic discussion, but the pursuit of social righteousness, must have a beneficial influence on the individual thinker and the community.

Mr. Davin compares Sir Charles Tupper to Moses, but if we recollect aright Moses never reached the promised land. The Conservative party is more in need of a Joshua.

A British army engineer writes to the Montreal Witness that Capt.-Gen. Blanco, whom he knew in Spain, is of Scotch descent. Perhaps the Americans are wise in deciding to attack Blanco last of all.

The Oldest Living Canadian Author.

Mrs. Catharine Parr Traill, of Lakefield, Peterborough county, Ontario, now in her 97th year, is not only the oldest living author in the British Empire, having maintained a life of literary activity for over 80 years, 66 of which have been spent in this province. She is one of the celebrated Strickland sisters, two of whom were the authors of "The Queens of England," in twelve volumes, and "The Queens of Scotland," in eight. Another sister, Susanna, was well known as Mrs. Moodie, the author of "Roughing It in the Bush."

Mrs. Traill's first literary work, a collection of stories, "The Swiss Herd Boy," was written in her father's home in Suffolk, England, and published in 1817; her last—two books, entitled, respectively, "Pearls and Pebbles, Notes of an Old Naturalist," and "Cot and Cradle Stories," went through the press of Wm. Briggs & Co., Toronto, in 1894 and 1895. The titles of some of her other books are: "Afar in the Forest," "Canadian Crusoes," "A Guide for Female Emigrants," "Rambles in Canadian Forests," and "Studies of Plant Life in Canada."

In 1832 she married Capt. Traill, an Arcadian, with whom, in the same year, she came to Canada, and settled on a bush farm in Peterborough. Since then her life has been a busy one, not unlike that of other pioneers, save that she devoted to literary work every moment which she could snatch from the ordinary and peculiar duties devolving upon immigrants in those early, difficult years.

Two years before her husband's death (which took place in 1859) their buildings, books, manuscripts, etc., were totally destroyed by fire. After her husband's death her small income was supplemented by the proceeds of sales of botanical collections, which she sent to the old country, and in recognition of her literary work, she obtained, through Lady Charlotte Greville and Lord Palmerston, a single grant of a hundred pounds. Readers and admirers of her work will regret to learn that the death of the gentleman with whom most of her principal sum was intrusted for investment has revealed a very disastrous state of affairs.

Now that the Laurier Government can show a million surplus, Tarte and Sifton will get more abuse than ever.

Zulus in the heart of Africa have risen against the British. This ought to be worth quite a lot of land.

If Uncle Sam is going into the real estate business he will be wise to confine himself to islands. There is less danger of a quarrel with neighbors over the line fence survey.

The councilors of Osgoode township, Carleton county, hasten to correct the report that they will allow no bicycles in the township. A resolution was passed forbidding wheelmen to use the sidewalks, but some was substituted "highways" for "sidewalks" in the resolution. The result was an explosion of ridicule and bicycle indignation all over the province. We are pleased to make the amende honorable to the legislators of Osgoode, and incidentally to let the public know they have sidewalks down there.

Hon. G. W. Ross' views on the Senate have been widely discussed. La Patrie, the leading French-Canadian Liberal daily, thinks Mr. Ross does not go far enough. It believes, with him, in a bicameral parliament, but it would have the senators elected by the Legislatures as in the United States, or by limited suffrage as in France. The co-existence of two responsible legislative bodies, says La Patrie, would be always a protection to the liberties of the public and of the minorities and a guarantee of good administration.

The Advertiser's test of the new fast mail delivery in London proved much more satisfactory than similar newspaper trials in Toronto and Hamilton. This is creditable to the local authorities. The system in every city will no doubt be made as effective as possible when the machinery gets in full working order. It has been a decided success wherever tried in other countries, and it will probably grow in favor here. Mr. Mulock's administration of his department has been marked by an enterprise and vigor that have earned general praise.

It is one of the freaks of fortune that Commodore Schley and Dewey get the real fighting and the glory, while their superior in rank, Admiral Sampson, gets little or none. At the outbreak of the war Dewey, at Hong Kong, was hardly thought of, and Schley's squadron was anchored for weeks at Hampton Roads as a coast defense. It was Sampson who was first sent to Cuban



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waters to engage the enemy, and who was hailed as a future Nelson. But Dewey annihilated one fleet and Schley bottled up and swallowed another, while Sampson has had to be content with target practice on a few forts.

There is a marked revulsion of feeling in the United States regarding the Cuban insurgents. Their courage and bush-whacking skill are not doubted but the army officials have found it hard to discipline them. Hard work, such as building roads and hauling supplies, they deem beneath their dignity as soldiers. It may be that their better qualities have been crushed out by years of oppression and savage warfare, but the fact remains that they are, in their present condition, incapable of self-government. The Americans have an easy excuse to relieve them of the duty.

CUBA'S PARTIALITY.

[Washington Star.] After all, Cuba is not nearly as unhealthful for Americans as it is for Spaniards.

MR. ROSS' VIEWS.

[Woodstock Sentinel-Review.] Mr. Ross has done good service in giving his views on senate reform. They make mighty interesting reading. His plan is not equal to ours. We aim at reforming the constitution of the body itself.

WORSE THAN WAR.

[Hamilton Herald.] War is terrible; and yet the destruction of the whole Spanish squadron off Santiago resulted in a smaller loss of life than was caused by the sinking of a French steamer after an accidental collision off Sable Island.

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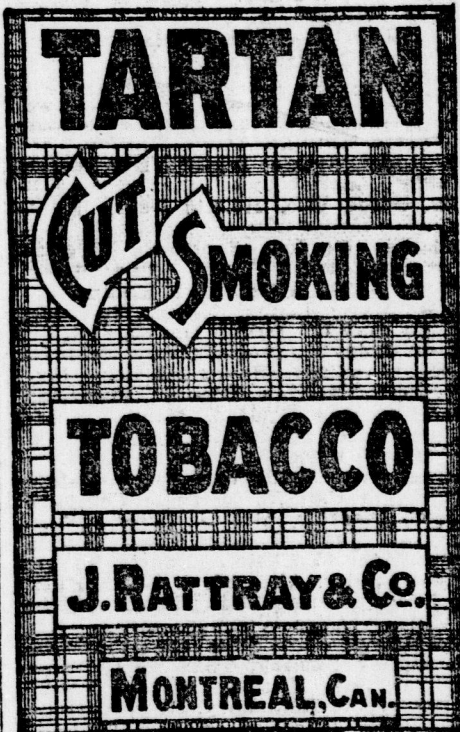
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