

The Colonist.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1898.

A SERIOUS QUESTION.

The information which comes from Quebec as to the probable decision of the conference upon the sealing and boundary questions, is very disquieting. It is stated, on what seems to be good authority, that the two questions will be grouped for the purpose of settlement, that the Canadian sealers will be compensated for their money losses, and that in consideration of the surrender, for all time to come, of the right to take seals in Behring Sea, the United States will consent to Canada exercising control of a port at the head of Lynn Canal. We are not surprised that the people of Victoria appear unanimously to condemn such an arrangement. Some of the sealers, however, are naturally suggesting themselves, as are as follows:

There is as much reason to believe that the head of Lynn Canal is in Canada as that it is in Alaska. Everyone in this province is so familiar with the phraseology of the treaty of 1825, that it need not be now quoted, but mention may be made of the fact that, in order to determine where the line ought to be drawn, both countries several years ago sent out commissioners. The United States having been in possession of all the coast north of the mouth of Portland Canal, the mere fact that a part of the duty of the commissioners was to secure evidence to decide whether this possession was sanctioned by the treaty, shows that the government of that country recognized the question as an open one. If the Washington government did not so consider it, the correspondence which led to the commissioners being appointed would somewhere disclose a determination on its part to insist upon the possession of the inlets as sine qua non in any negotiations. But we do not understand that such a position has ever been taken by the United States, and hence we feel warranted in saying that the right to the possession of the head of Lynn Canal is a matter which was recognized by both governments as involved in the determination of the boundary. A proper compensation for the relinquishment of the American claim there would be the relinquishment by Canada of a similar claim elsewhere, or the granting of some concession in regard to the transportation of goods down the Yukon to interior Alaska.

Any concession by the United States in respect to a right-of-way across territory in dispute on the Yukon-Alaska border, in addition to its being a relinquishment of something, which may already belong to Canada, may also only be a temporary concession. We all hope that the gold fields of the Yukon will be permanent producers, but they may not be. If the placers are exhausted, no one will care who owns the head of Lynn Canal, which would speedily recede to its original condition of desolation. On the other hand, the right to take seals on the high seas is a permanent one, and is likely to be as advantageous to the people of Canada a century from now as it is to-day. Why should we surrender what is ours in perpetuity by the law of nations, for what may only be a temporary advantage, to which we may already be entitled by treaty?

If the reports received state the whole agreement likely to be reached, it is the intention of the British commissioners to begin negotiations by a complete surrender of the Canadian case as to the boundary, and, having given it all away, to accept a little of it back again as a compensation for another surrender, namely, that of the right to take seals upon the high seas, which is the unquestioned birthright of every man.

This is a very serious matter, and we are strongly of the opinion that the people of British Columbia should let themselves be heard from in regard to it. A public meeting ought to be called to make strong representations on the subject. This is not a political question, or rather it is not a partisan question. It is something, which if done wrongly can not be set right by a change of government. The question is one of principle, and it will be ratified by a treaty, and this done the whole matter is closed and must remain closed. Therefore we urge that some action shall be at once taken. We understand that the provincial government have forwarded a memorial to the federal government dealing generally with the claims of the province in respect to the subjects dealt with by the conference. We suggest that this memorial shall be made public, so that the position taken may receive the support of the press and of public meetings.

THE COMMISSION AGAIN.

The Colonist has no expectation of being able to convince the Times that a Royal Commission to inquire into the acts of the Crown is unconstitutional. A simple statement of the proposition ought to carry conviction with it to any fair-minded person, who understands the principles of the constitution, and not mean the constitution act of British Columbia, but the British constitution according to which the government of this province is supposed to be carried on.

Our position briefly is this: What the ministry does the Crown does, and for the Crown to appoint a commission to inquire into what it has done is a constitutional absurdity. Moreover the payment of money by order-in-council is a matter for which the government is directly responsible to the legislature, which has its own way of obtaining all the information it needs and is the sole judge under the constitution of the propriety of such payments. Hence the interference by the Crown by a special and unusual method to inquire into the cir-

cumstances of such payments is unconstitutional. This position is not only warranted by sense and constitutional and parliamentary procedure, but it has the sanction of so eminent an authority as Mr. Gladstone. There would simply be no end of Royal Commissions, if every ministry appointed them to investigate the ministerial acts of their predecessors and the legislature would soon find itself shorn of its most important functions. An additional element in this case is that the legislature has already passed upon the action of the government in the premises. Surely it cannot be constitutional for the Crown to challenge the action of the legislature in regard to an expenditure of money.

The Times seems wholly to have misconceived the object of the Colonist in referring to the right of witnesses under certain circumstances to refuse to divulge information in their possession. Are we to understand it as desiring to say that a Royal Commission can override the established principles of British law and compel an attorney to reveal the confidential communications of his client?

TEMPERANCE REFORM.

Rudyard Kipling has become a prohibitionist, although one would never think so from his writings. He states his position in his own peculiar way. He says he likes a drink occasionally and regards it as a very good thing, but so much harm comes from the public exposure of intemperate men that he is willing to be put to a great deal of inconvenience in getting his own liquor, in order that the growing generation of boys and girls may be kept from acquiring drinking habits. Kipling has a remarkable faculty of getting to the bottom of things, and in thus drawing attention to the evil resulting from the exposure of drinking habits by young people of both sexes, he sounds what ought to be the keynote of a new reform. The young lives that are being ruined by the drink habit are innumerable.

The tremendous setback, which prohibition received in the plebiscite, will be productive of an immense amount of good if it will convince social reformers of the necessity for greater activity in the field of moral suasion and of the folly of expecting too much from legal enactment. In the older provinces the people are only too familiar with the destruction wrought among young people by intemperance. The history of every city and town shows how the positions of honor, trust and responsibility rarely remain in the same families for two generations, and the drink habit accounts for it. The sons and, too often in these later days, the daughters of prosperous citizens fall a prey to intemperance and the places which they ought to have filled in business, politics and society, are occupied by others. Instead of the results of successful industry, capacity and study being transmitted from one generation to another, they are lost through dissipation, and thus society is in a constant struggle against its own destructive influences.

In this new and wonderful province, where new communities composed of new men are being built up, every effort ought to be put forward to prevent the drink habit from working the same harm here as it has worked in the East. The type of manhood, which finds its way to these new countries is generally rugged and it can stand a great deal. But on the rugged types the pace will tell after a time. It seems, therefore, that the work of temperance reform ought to engage a great deal of attention. It is of all reforms one in which the strong ought to stand ready to help the weak. Because one man can drink in moderation it does not follow that another can, and Kipling's idea should be carried into effect, although it cannot be applied at present, as he suggested, by means of a prohibitory law.

ABOUT CONCATENATIONS.

A Colonist reader asks if we have encountered the expression, "unfortunate concatenation of circumstances." We have not. We find no authority in the dictionary for the adjective "unfortunate," although there seems to be no reason why, for the sake of emphasis, or to avoid tautology, the prefix "un-" might not be used before most adjectives. As fortuitous means accidental, unfortunate would mean pre-arranged or intentional. Concatenation is a good word, sanctioned by usage as old as the days of Ben Jonson, who speaks of "the concatenation of truth," thereby meaning that all truth is linked together, a profound philosophical principle, which now modern observation seems fully to justify. We think the expression first above quoted was used in mistake for one attributed to the illustrious Dr. Johnson, who explained his failure to be present according to an appointment by saying he was "prevented by an unforeseen concatenation of circumstances."

Ben Jonson's idea that all truth is interlinked is of inestimable value, and if it were properly understood, would do much toward smoothing away the dividing lines between classes, creeds and parties. The so-called conflict of religion and science is due to the failure to remember that all truth is harmonious. Bricity long ago coined an Eleventh Commandment, "Thou shalt Not Investigate," and made disobedience to it the most deadly of all sins.

There is a marvellous concatenation in the events which make up the lives of men and of nations, so much so that no incident stands alone and without relation to what went before or what shall follow after. Let anyone honestly review his own life, and he will be sur-

prised to see how important some of the apparently trivial incidents were. There is a song which says:

"How very easily things go wrong—
A sigh too much or a kiss too long—
And the world is never the same again."

A pebble on a mountain top diverts the course of a tiny rivulet, and causes it to find its way into the Pacific Ocean, where almost perennial summer reigns, when otherwise it would have found its way north to the frozen Arctic. Hence it would seem to follow that there are no such things as trifles, which are perhaps not true, only we are not always able to distinguish them at the time.

The maintenance of the French language and the customs of Paris in Quebec has had a very marked effect upon the history of British North America, and will doubtless, for all time to come, influence the progress of Canada. After the results of the country to England, Governor Murray wisely endeavored to introduce the laws and language of England, and his efforts seemed likely to be crowned with success. When the English ministry was asked to restore the conditions existing before the capture of Quebec, Governor Murray and some representatives of the Quebec French people went to London to protest. A good deal of evidence had been taken in favor of the restoration, but it so happened that on the only afternoon left to hear the protesting delegates, Lady North had a garden party, and so Governor Murray and his associates were not heard. In a discussion after the first "Quebec Act" in the House of Commons, it was distinctly charged by Charles James Fox, and not responsible for the perpetration of the French laws and language in Quebec, for if the House had been put in possession of the information which Governor Murray and his associates were prepared to give, the Quebec Act never would have been passed. As it was, it had a narrow escape. When we think of the importance of this apparently trivial link in the concatenation of incidents making up Canadian history, we are reminded that Alexander the Great died, and the history of the East underwent a change, because he ate too heartily of a favorite dish, and that Napoleon was ill all day at Waterloo, and, some say, thereby lost the battle, because he made too hearty a meal of something—mushrooms, if we remember rightly.

So the great and the small, the weak and the mighty, the good and the bad, are all concatenated together, and no one yet has discovered a link which could not be described by the unusual adjective, "unfortunate." Mere chance seems to play a leading part in the history of the world, when you come to think of it you will see that even the toss of a penny is governed by fixed laws, and it would be possible always to predict which side would come upmost if we knew everything that influenced it. But we do not know everything, and if we did, we rarely have time to calculate the results.

Hence we must trust to chance in nine cases out of ten. Our part seems at the time to be right. If we do this, there is no reason to reproach ourselves because of the results.

In brief, M. de Rougemont's story is that in 1893 he left his home in France to become a pearl fisher in the Indies. His vessel was carried away by a storm and wrecked on a small island off the northern coast of Australia, he being cast ashore with only a dog for a companion. He lived for some time without human associates, but at length a storm drove a raft ashore and on the raft were some Australian natives, with whom he lived for some months. His whole party ultimately making their way to the mainland. Here he married first a young girl, but on the second day of his honeymoon exchanged her for another man's wife. He lived with this woman until her death, which was upwards of twenty-five years later. For the first time, what seems at the time to be right, if we do this, there is no reason to reproach ourselves because of the results.

Incidental but very interesting features of his adventures were the finding of vast numbers of pearls, which he buried, the discovery of extremely rich alluvial and quartz deposits of gold, and the exploration of a very extensive, but wholly unoccupied, region of high fertility in what has been hitherto supposed to be a desert. Some of the incidents of his adventures are of such a nature as would hardly be looked for anywhere except on the stage or in one of Clark Russell's sea stories, and it is these which lead the critics to suggest that he is simply an impostor. On the other hand, he stands the most rigid cross-examinations by the best-informed seamen of the world, and which he buried, the discovery of extremely rich alluvial and quartz deposits of gold, and the exploration of a very extensive, but wholly unoccupied, region of high fertility in what has been hitherto supposed to be a desert. 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