

The Canada Citizen

AND TEMPERANCE HERALD.

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TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH, 1885.

This number is sent to many friends whose names are not yet on our subscription list. Will they kindly aid our enterprise by forwarding their dollars and addresses? It is desirable to subscribe early, as we propose making every number well worth preserving for future reference and use.

MEN, WOMEN, AND THINGS IN GENERAL.

"Hear both sides," is sound advice, and on this principle I ask attention to the recent utterances of two men who happen just now to enjoy a good deal of social prominence. Mr. Ross Winans, a citizen of the United States, having become very wealthy, determined to enjoy the life of an aristocrat in Scotland, and to this end leased a large estate near Kintail. Sheep-farming is the staple industry of that picturesque locality, and one of the crofters named McRae, persisted in pasturing his pet lamb in Mr. Winans' deer forest. To this the millionaire objected, and he took steps to prevent the obstinate crofter from exercising this privilege. The decision of the Court was against him, however, and he had some thousands of dollars of costs to pay. Here is his version of the matter to an interviewer:

"If you will allow me I will state the damage the pet lamb has done. I took Kintail with the right to use it either as a deer forest or to keep sheep upon it. I intended to use it as a deer forest. This is the first case that has arisen upon the matter, and I want to settle the question and nip it in the bud. If I get one pet lamb, I may have a hundred, but without the pet lamb the cotters would do a certain amount of harm. What I desire is to get rid of the cottages and their inhabitants. I shan't leave a stone unturned until I get rid of them."

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a prominent member of Mr. Gladstone's Government, and recognized leader of the advanced Liberals, in a public address a few days ago, made use of the following language:

"What are the rights of property? Is it a right of property which permits a foreign speculator to come to this country and lay waste 200 miles of territory in Scotland for the gratification of his love of sport, and to chase from the lands which their fathers tilled long before this intruder was ever heard of, the wretched peasants who were convicted of the crime of keeping a pet lamb within the sacred precincts of a deer forest?"

A few years—scarcely more than a few months ago such language would have startled the whole civilized world, and shocked the greater part of it; now it is listened to without excitement of any kind even when the

speaker is a prominent adviser of the Queen of England. So rapidly does public opinion move in these latter days on social questions. Mr. Chamberlain, it need hardly be added, was very severe on the game laws, which protect the rich in amusements carried even to barbarous excess, and send to jail "men who are made criminals by this legislation though they have committed no moral offence."

Coming to this side of the Atlantic we find the United States Congress engaged in considering the expediency of enacting a law to prevent English lords and capitalists from acquiring large tracts of land as a means of investing their capital, and the feeling in favour of imposing a similar restriction in Canada is rapidly growing. The policy of keeping the land for the tiller of the soil, and withdrawing it from the clutch of the mere speculator will sooner or later prevail, and the sooner the better for the future of both Canada and the United States. Some of Mr. Chamberlain's remarks in the course of the speech above quoted, may serve as a warning on this point:—

Is it an essential condition of private ownership in land that the agricultural laborers of this country, alone of civilized countries, should be entirely divorced from the soil they till; that they should be driven into towns to compete with you for work, and to lower the rate of wages; and that alike in town and country the laboring population should be huddled into dwellings unfit for man or beast, where the conditions of common decency are impossible, and where they lead directly to disease, intemperance, and crime?

It is not in England only that the laboring classes live on poor fare, and are badly housed. We have too much of both kinds of hardship in all our large cities in America, and the evil is so great as to be well worth the attention of Governments. If the class who live by their brains form the apex of the social pyramid, just as certainly its base is formed of the class who live by the sweat of their brows, and it is in the last degree undesirable that the latter should be left to ferment in a condition of chronic and increasing discontent. That the laborer is placed under disabilities by a legal and social system over which he has very little control, and which he did little or nothing to shape, is clear to every thoughtful observer. Whether that system can be modified so as to relieve him without injuring anybody else, is a question well worthy of consideration. What he needs is not protection so much as freedom; and careful inquiry into the operation of time honored laws, traditions, and customs might show unexpected ways in which obstacles could be removed from his path, and burdens from his shoulders. If the Hon. Oliver Mowat wishes to secure the goodwill of the working classes—and their goodwill is worth something to a Government—he should make a move in this direction, as he did with beneficial results to his Government as well as to the country, when he appointed the Agricultural Commission some years ago.

There was very little said in the debate on the address in the Legislative Assembly about the extension of the franchise in Ontario, and what was said was not all satisfactory. Mr. Meredith avowed his willingness to assist the Government in enlarging the electorate, and blamed them for not extending the franchise to the sons of mechanics as they did to farmers' sons a few years ago. It is difficult to see how the electorate can be made much more comprehensive that it now is without doing away with property qualification, basing the franchise on residence and registration, and giving it to every man over a certain age who is not a lunatic, a convicted criminal, or a pauper in receipt of public charity. To this it must soon come, and the step is now so short that it might as well be taken at once as at twice.

Mr. Awrey, who moved the address, avowed his dislike of woman suffrage. It would probably be difficult for him to give any other reason for this feeling than mere prejudice. So far as women have been entrusted with the franchise in Ontario they have used it well. No harm has been done by allowing them to vote at school meetings and for the election of school trustees. Three years ago they were given the right to vote on municipal money by-laws, and no harm came of it. Last session they were placed in possession of the municipal franchise—that is, those of them who are widows or spinsters. In several parts of the Province they turned out and voted at the late municipal elections, and there is no reason to assert that they did not cast their votes as wisely and as disinterestedly a