The Colonist.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 29, 1898.

AFTER DISARMAMENT.

The idea of a general disarmament is naturally very attractive, and we all hope to see effect given to it. Nevertheless the effects of such a policy, if carried out suddenly, would be very disorganizing to business. It is true that the armies and navies of the world cost an immense amount of money, every dollar of which, at the last analysis, comes out of the producing classes, but it is also true that every dollar of it finds its way, in the end, back to the producing classes. Soldiers must be fed, armed and clothed. Ships must be built, provisioned and maintained. These things put vast sums of money in circulation. It is true that thousands of soldiers and sailors are supported in lives of idleness, so far as the production of things of value goes; but if they were disbanded, there would be so many more persons added to the army of competitors, who are constantly striving for a living by producing the necessities and luxuries of life. This line of argument has its friends, and these claim that the maintenance of a standing army is really a very good thing for the taxpayers, just as it used to be claimed that the national debt of Great Britain was a source of prosperity. But the argument will not hold good. This will appear from a little consideration. Suppose it were proposed that a new class of non-producers should be called into existence by the state, to be supported by the taxes of the people, would anyone pretend that this would be a cause of prosperity? A negative answer will at once be given to this question. No one would have thought, if society were just being organized, that a country could be made richer by maintaining any considerable number of the population in idleness at the expense of the others. Therefore, though disarmament would be the means of obliterating many industries, and thereby throwing thousands of people out of employment, and though, in addition to rendering such employees competitors with men in other avocations, it would convert the hitherto non-producing sailors and soldiers into producers, and we may safely conclude that social and industrial conditions would be immensely bettered as the ultimate result.

The truth of the matter is that people have to work too hard—that is, the producing classes have to—because they must produce not only for themselves, but enough for those who produce nothing. If we could once get society adjusted upon right lines, it would be possible for all people to be comfortable without working half as hard as they now have to. When we use the expression "producing classes," we do not simply mean people who grow crops or make articles of some kinds, but the whole industrial community that is engaged in doing what promotes human welfare and happiness. The burden of maintaining the armies and navies of the world falls upon these people, and after disarmament they would find life much easier, when the first shock incident to so great a change had passed away.

These considerations have more of an academic than practical interest, and the only reason for mentioning them is that we have observed how the great majority of people like to have purely academic questions suggested for consideration. We do not for a moment imagine that any sudden disarmament will ever be attempted or proposed. The most that need be expected is that the policy of the great military nations may be altered and that, instead of striving year by year to increase their aggressive power, they will come to some mutual understanding to gradually reduce the number of men under arms, and the cost of maintaining them. There might also be an understanding whereby the European governments would be rendered safe in abandoning the policy of accumulating gold for war purposes. This is likely to be the first result of an understanding looking to disarmament. The amount of money, which during the last few years has gone into the military chests of Europe, is not known, but it is enormous. Although the production of gold has been increasing with unprecedented rapidity, there is no more of the metal available for circulation than formerly, and the explanation is that it is finding its way into the coffers of the great military governments. It is taken out of hiding in the mines and put into hiding again in imperial strongholds, and all the good the world gets out of it is what is derived from the labor employed, and the goods consumed in getting it. If the gold itself remained in the money market, the result would be an advance in prices, and a great stimulus to enterprise of every kind. If the proposal of the Czar shall result in nothing more than a cessation in the locking up of gold by the continental powers of Europe, the world will be greatly the gainer.

The officials of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company direct the attention of the Colonist to the fact that they have a comfortable set of waiting rooms in the same building as the ticket office, the men's room being downstairs and the ladies' room upstairs. They appreciate fully what the Colonist had in mind, namely, the advantage of a waiting room into which passengers could go directly on stepping out of the steamer, but they say that the arrangements of the wharf, which is not the property of the company, are such that it would be out of the question to provide such a room, and that they have done the best they could under the circumstances. We suggest to the officials of the company that if they would put up signs in conspicuous places on their boats, telling where the waiting rooms are, and also a conspicuous sign at the steamer landing, indicating the direction in which passengers should go to reach the rooms, they would confer a great favor upon the travelling public at a very small cost, and would do something towards alleviating the necessary inconvenience attending debarkation from a steamer upon such a small and inconveniently arranged wharf.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

We print to-day the evidence as far as it has been given before Chief Justice McColl, sitting as a royal commissioner to inquire into certain payments in connection with the parliament building.

We do not think it advisable to make any comments at this time, and will reserve what we have to say until all the witnesses have been examined. The public will agree with us that this is a much better plan than keeping up a running comment. The investigation is in the nature of a proceeding in court, and comment ought to be deferred until it is at an end, unless for some unforeseen reason it may appear desirable to say something during the progress of the investigation.

In the meantime all we ask is that before any conclusions are drawn from the evidence unfavorable to Mr. Turner and his ministry, the public will wait until both sides have been heard.

YUKON ADMINISTRATION.

The demand made by the Colonist for an investigation into the Yukon scandals is attracting much attention in the East, and we believe the reason is to be found in the moderateness and circumstantiality of the allegations made by us. Throughout this whole matter the idea of the Colonist has been to avoid employing the language of exaggeration or the circulation of charges without having at least a prima facie case upon which to rest them. There was no desire on our part to make a political point, except so far as this necessarily followed from ascertained facts. Our principal desire was and is to see that the law is rightly administered in the Yukon and that no scandal attached to the fair name of Canada.

We do not believe there is a man in British Columbia who would not rejoice to see every good reason for complaining of the administration removed and every other alleged reason shown to be without foundation. No one here values party success so highly that he desires to see the country misgoverned or misrepresented in order to secure it. Friends and opponents of the government alike wish to see the dark record from the Yukon cleared up, and if it shall be shown on reliable evidence that there never was any just cause of complaint, there will be profound feeling of satisfaction in all ranks. It is hardly likely that such a result will be reached, for where there is so much smoke there must be some fire; but the truth ought to be made known and what is wrong should be righted and the guilty should be punished.

It is proper to say in this connection that the disposition of the people of British Columbia was to accord to Mr. Sifton every consideration in his difficult and unusual task. He himself saw abundant evidence of this when he was here last year. The general desire was to help him, and there was a sort of tacit understanding that he should not be criticized until his policy had had a chance to bear fruit. That those people, who have been most closely in touch with the affairs of the Yukon, have been grievously disappointed by the manner in which Mr. Sifton has discharged his responsibility in that regard, is only too evident. The same observation holds good in regard to every branch of Yukon administration and policy. The universal feeling is that the government has badly bungled in practically everything it has done. In the matter of railway communication, in respect to the purchasing and forwarding of supplies, in the collection of duties at the outset, in the making and enforcement of regulations for the government of mining—in all these things there has been serious disappointment and even great loss to business interests, and the complaints that have been made have been very moderate indeed. Neither Mr. Sifton nor his colleagues have the least reason to complain of the treatment accorded them by the press and people of British Columbia, and they will make a very serious mistake if they disregard the demand now put forward for a thorough investigation into the charges of maladministration.

NEWS AND PLEASURE TELEPHONES.

A Hungarian genius has perfected what he calls "The News and Pleasure Telephone." The affair differs very little from the ordinary telephone, except that messages can only be sent one way over it. There is a central office with connections with subscribers. For each day a programme is issued, when there are any special features on; otherwise the regular programme for the day suffices. The service begins at 8 a.m., when the substance of the news reports of the night are sent out. This is followed by the stock reports and so on during the day. In the evening connection is made with some theatre or opera house or perhaps with several, and selections from plays or operas are given. The receiver which the subscriber has consists of two little discs which fit closely against the ears and are attached to a long wire, resembling that used in connection with the phonograph. The apparatus is so perfect that the music of a opera has been transmitted by it perfectly upwards of three hundred miles. The great success attending its use in the city, where it was invented, has led to its introduction into London, and present indications are that it will come into even more general use than existing telephones, to which, it is said, it can be adapted so as not to interfere with their use as at present.

Speaking of this invention, or, more strictly speaking, this adaptation of the telephone, one writer says that it is impossible to fix the limit of its application. One special use of it was exemplified in the case of the Prince of Wales, when he was confined to his bed by his broken knee-cap. The pleasure telephone will become a feature of all hospitals, and will be a source of untold comfort to convalescent patients. It can be employed in connection with churches, so that invalids can hear the sermons and music in their own homes without leaving their beds. As distance seems to be no obstacle to the transmission of sounds over the wire, we may one day be able to sit in our parlors in Victoria and hear the budget speech delivered at Ottawa or the playing of the National Anthem at the opening of parliament. This wonderful machine suggests that we are living on the edge of most wonderful conditions.

THE ONTARIO BIRTH RATE.

Ontario is disturbed over the fact that its birth rate is apparently the lowest in the world. The registration shows the number of births to be 20.7 per 1,000 population, which is nearly 2 lower than that of France, hitherto supposed to be the minimum. No one is quite certain how to account for it, and the general disposition is to lay the blame upon the registration, but this will hardly account for the great difference between that favored province and Great Britain, where the rate is 30. In Hungary it is 40, and in some parts of Russia 50. The importance of the matter cannot be overstated, for so low a birth rate means the decay of one of the finest samples of the Anglo-Saxon race.

It is true that as a rule a low birth rate is associated with a high civilization. According to modern ideas children require very much greater care than a mother can bestow upon a very numerous progeny, and hence the disposition is to limit the size of families. There is said to be a definite relation between the price of wheat and the number of marriages, the number increasing as the price goes down. This applies to Great Britain and some other European countries, and not of course to those which export wheat. But it can hardly be successfully claimed that poverty implies small families. Possibly large families may cause poverty, but be this as it may, it is a fact that those races which seem to have the hardest struggle for existence have the most children. We are not sure that there is not a scientific explanation for this. Plants grown at the northern limit of their successful cultivation produce more seeds than those grown further south. Northern plants yield a greater profusion of seed than tropical plants, and northern animals are more prolific than those indigenous to equatorial regions. There seems to be a rule in nature that the greater the struggle for existence the greater the effort which nature puts forth to prevent the extinction of species. Thus, too, we find that immorality increases in times of plague. There appears to be a law in nature which must be looked to in these matters. If this is so, instead of laments over increased immorality as the possible cause of a decreasing birth rate, it is necessary to educate people as to the necessity of raising families. In Great Britain, where the conditions of life are generally easy, the birth rate maintains a fairly high position, and this is because British matrons consider it to be their duties to raise families. The perpetuation of the family is a part of the British instinct. In education along this line Ontario will find the solution of what must be admitted to be a very serious problem.

AN INTEROCEANIC CANAL.

The Nicaragua canal project is not so popular as it was, while the Panama project scheme is gaining in the estimation of those who are able to form an opinion upon such matters. R. G. Ward, C.E., of New York, is thus quoted:

The Panama canal is about 45 miles long, and has natural, accessible, deep-water ports at both ends. If built with the lock system it will have rock foundation on which the locks may be constructed, while the maximum level of the canal can be cut down to less than 100 feet. Should funds be obtainable to warrant the outlay, the canal, in fact, may be cut to the sea level. On the other hand the Nicaragua route, which is 180 miles long, has neither the natural nor accessible ports at either end, and must necessarily be built on the lock system with a maximum level exceeding 100 feet. It is without rock foundation, for most of its locks and for some of its enormous dams, upon the stability of which the feasibility of construction is largely conditioned.

Mr. Ward thinks that the Panama canal can be built in ten years at a cost of $100,000,000. There are undoubtedly many things in favor of this route. The existence of good natural harbors at both termini, the fact that no locks would be necessary, and the comparative shortness of the artificial waterway would combine to make this route immeasurably superior to the more northern one. The preference of certain Americans for the latter was probably due more to the fact that a powerful syndicate owned certain concessions there and were able to make their influence felt. Mr. Ward's opinion corroborates the position always taken by De Lesseps.

We fancy that one result of the new position taken among nations by the United States will be the early construction of a trans-Isthmian canal, and it is by no means unlikely that an international agreement may be arrived at for the ownership and protection of the waterway. Capital for its construction would be at once forthcoming if the several governments interested could come to an understanding on the subject. It is improbable that the United States will care to engage in the enterprise alone, for the reason that France has certain interests to be guarded, and there very probably would be serious objection upon the part of European nations to the sole ownership by any country of a canal of such immense importance to the commerce of the world.

CHARGES PREFERRED.

What is apparently reliable information comes from Dawson City to the effect that the day following the arrival of Commissioner Ogilvie at that place specific charges were laid agains the management of the Gold Commissioner's office. This incident furnishes the best possible proof of the estimation in which Mr. Ogilvie is held, and of how very little confidence the people of Dawson had in his predecessor.

If this news proves to be correct Mr. Sifton will have an opportunity of showing that he appreciates his duty towards the country and towards the people who relying upon the reputation of Canada for just administration of the laws, have ventured their all in the quest for wealth in the remotest corner of the Dominion.

We present a forecast of the vote on the plebiscite, and it is quite different to what we expected it would be when inquiries were instituted. Nearly every one has hitherto placed British Columbia in the anti-prohibition column, but there is a very good chance of an affirmative majority for the plebiscite. In most of the localities where the negative will prevail, the majority is likely to be light, while in such places as the lower Fraser valley and Okanagan there will be large prohibition majorities, so that the smaller majorities in the other places may be fully offset. Many persons will be surprised at the conclusion reached by Colonist reporters as to the result in this city, but unless there is considerable change in public interest during the next few days, there will be quite a strong probability that the affirmative side may have a small majority. The vote throughout the province is likely to be light, and the result will not be decisive one way or the other.

Colonist readers will recall that this paper some time ago, and on more than one occasion, directed the attention of the Dominion government to the fact that the steamers carrying supplies up the Yukon were not likely to reach their destination, and urged that a fresh lot of goods should be sent in by way of the head of the river. This advice was as a matter of course disregarded. The latest news from Dawson gives proof that the suggestion was timely, because it appears that supplies for the winter were being then bought at Dawson by the military authorities, the steamers having been stuck on their way up by reason of the lowness of the water and the scarcity of fuel. The latter consideration will have a highly important bearing upon the future navigation of the lower Yukon.

We do not print "An Englishwoman's" letter, and one reason is that she makes a mistake in the latter part of it. The person who suggested that the language of Rule Britannia should be altered was not one of the American peace commissioners, but Sir William Marriot, who is a Q.C., and a privy councillor. Concerning our correspondent's strictures upon the American people, it is right to say that there is only too much foundation for them, but it would be a mistake to publish anything likely to operate against the growing good will between the two nations. As to the ability of Great Britain to hold her own, while no reasonable doubt can exist in any one's mind on that score, our correspondent has read the papers to very little purpose if she has not seen that things are shaping so as to bring the United States and the British Empire into harmony.

We print an interview which Hon. Joseph Martin gave in Winnipeg. It is noteworthy for several things. Mr. Martin again mentions his doubt as to the majority of the new government in the house. He tells the public that some sweeping reforms are to be inaugurated and that he is going to attempt something that will check the competition of Chinese labor. A very significant part of this interview is Mr. Martin's remark about the Yukon scandals. He thinks there ought to be a thorough investigation. Possibly this will convince the partizan press that the Colonist has simply been doing its duty in urging such a course upon the government.

How many people live in Victoria? The Colonist has made an effort to throw some light upon this question, and the results are presented in another column of to-day's paper. The basis upon which the estimate is made is given, and everyone, if so disposed, can do a little calculating for himself. The conclusion seems warranted that the population is nearer 30,000 than 25,000, and it is fair to say that strangers, who have an opportunity afforded them of seeing the whole city, usually put the population at about 30,000.

A Rossland paper remarks that a bank official there is laid up with inflammatory rheumatism and adds: "He is greatly missed as one of the judges of the horse races." Evidently Rossland is progressing when it thus places pleasure before business.

Current Comment

THE BASHI-BAZOUKS.

It was during the Crimean war that the British fleet became acquainted with the gentry known by the name of Bashi-Bazouks. Tommy Atkins, with his usual felicity in nomenclature, called them Bashful Bazouks, than which no twist of language could be more amusingly perverse. They were first brought from Asia and incorporated in the Turkish army by Mahomoud III., after the massacre of the Janissaries in 1826, and employed as irregular cavalry in subsequent wars with Russia to offset the Cossacks. In 1855 General Beatson formed a corps of them, which he tried to organize and discipline for service in the Crimea, on the European model, but with small success. Successive Sultans have employed them on the frontiers and at places where Islam and Christianity came into contact. Their ungovernable fanaticism, predatory habits, ferocity and recklessness has made their name a terror throughout Turkey, for they are often as great a nuisance to ordinary Turks as to Christians. In them Oriental scoundralism has its most extreme development. If there are human beings absolutely devoid of what we understand by the word conscience, they will be found among the Bashi-Bazouks. With them robbery and murder are instinctive. Wherever they may be there is sure to be trouble, and the fact that they have been employed as part of the Turkish garrison in Candia is in itself cause for suspicion of the Sultan's bad faith, for they have always been on hand whenever and wherever in the dark policy of the Porte bloody work was to be done.—Montreal Witness.

TRENT BRIDGE INQUEST.

The Times, taking the summary of the evidence contained in the verdict in the bridge inquest case as a basis, criticises the jury and conduct of the inquest. It is strangely illogical. Referring to the synopsis of the evidence, it declares: "It is no wonder the jury's labors were abortive." Then why blame the jury? They had nothing but the evidence to guide them, and those who have impartially read the evidence, will agree the jury could not have rendered, if honest, as they undoubtedly are, any other verdict. Again the Times quotes from the verdict: "There is no evidence to prove that the bridge was known to be unsafe by the Union Colliery Company," and then asks: "Did the jury exercise due diligence in searching into that? If they did not they seriously neglected their public duty." Now the Times knows full well that Mr. Barker, barrister of Nanaimo, was sent here by the Attorney-General to look after the public interest, and that he scraped up every particle of evidence he could find bearing upon the matter. He put upon the stand such witnesses as he thought knew anything about the case. In other words, the government managed the inquest—not the Turner government, but the new (Times) government, and having found not one particle of evidence reflecting on the company, the Times continues to throw dirt. Yes, let a commission be issued to enquire into the government management of the case, and while they are about it place the writer of the Times article on trial before a commission on lunacy.—Comox News.

WRONG-DOING BY AUTHORITY.

Mr. F. C. Wade, one of the Sifton officials, who has just returned from the Yukon, explains that he took up but one gold claim. He adds that on being appointed, "we were given special permission to stake claims on the Yukon." This brings the matter home to Mr. Sifton, and justifies Mr. Wade and Mr. McGregor in rushing up to Monte Cristo and seizing each a claim and holding it for an advance of $60,000. No doubt the other officials are protected by Mr. Sifton's permit. Of this permission granted by the minister little more can be said than that it was wholly improper. When a batch of ex-politicians is sent into the mining region at the public expense and on salary, with full permission to stake claims, we can scarcely expect pect that the legitimate miners who go at their own costs will be satisfied. Some very caustic comments are being made on the condition of affairs. The other day we printed the statement of Reuter's correspondent that miners doing business with the officials get along better by paying toll at the side door than by transacting business at the counter in the office. A singular addition to this story is made in the St. John Globe, published by Mr. Ellis, M. P. It is a letter from Dawson City, and reads thus:

"The administration here is rotten to the core. Every official is looking out for his own interests only, and if a miner without influence wants to find out anything, he has to grease somebody's dirty paw. One cannot even see the mining records, and find out what claims are or are not recorded, without bribery and corruption. There is the greatest satisfaction shown on all sides about the way things are run.

"A number of indignation meetings have been held, but they have not amounted to anything. The officials also use their knowledge illegally in staking claims on the richest creeks. I myself know of one case in which an official sent a man to stake a claim for him on Dominion creek, and when the claim turned out to be no good, he refused to pay the $100 promised for the job. Later on the same official got the same man to stake another claim on Eldorado, a bench claim, promising him $115 for doing it. The man staked the claim, but when the official told him to go and get his money for it, the man made excuses and is still holding the claim. So he got even. Of course, the claim was first made out in the man's own name, and was to be made over to the official's. This claim may prove to be a very good one, as it is in a good locality."

In the Peterborough Review is another letter from Dawson. This writer complains of the monopolies. A man cannot now pick up a stick of driftwood without paying toll to somebody. In other respects also, everything that can be done to close out the miner in favor of the capitalist has been done. In the recorder's office—the place where claims are officially recognized—the miner is at a disadvantage. He has to stand for days before receiving attention. The records are supposed to be for public inspection, but no one can get at them to find what claims are taken out and what claims are still open. A remarkable story is told of the opening of Dominion creek for location, and the writer characterizes it as "a horrible example of official crookedness." Claims had been entered, and some were contested. Thereupon notice was issued that the place would be open for relocation. There was a rush, and claims were staked. But when the miners returned to Dawson they were confronted with another notice, stating that if within 10 days of filing application, the original locator claimed the property, he was entitled to it. "This, coupled with the fact that a number of hangers-on of officialdom showed up on the creek, makes things look very shady." The result has been indignation meetings and appeals to the government. The St. John Globe's story of the person who was paid to stake out claims on Dominion creek for an official agrees with the suspicions voiced by the writer in the Peterborough Review. Apparently Mr. Sifton's permit to the officials to pick up gold claims is at the bottom of the trouble.—Toronto Mail and Empire.

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BY WAY OF VARIETY.

Battle-Scarred and Bottle-Scared.—In the United States the battle-scarred hero is receiving much attention, while in Canada the bottle-scared hero has the call.—Hamilton Spectator.

Will Visit Alphabet Lake.—The announcement is made that the Appalachian Club, of Boston, is about to make a pilgrimage to Lake Welo-k e nnebacoo kmolechunkamunkmooseluckmaguntic. If its name signifies anything the lake is hardly an attractive one.—Toronto Mail and Empire. The visitors might also take the advice of the New Brunswick poet:

"Oh, speak not of Magaguaiolc,
Or of beautiful Memeranccook,
But come where the Scoodoowobstpoels
Flows down to the Scoodoroobscook."

The Boot Is Sharpened.—Notice is hereby given to the party or parties who kicked in a door at a residence last Thursday night, that if it occurs again they will receive the necessary punishment.—Lillooet Prospector.

Col. Dennison's Interpretation.—Henry O'Brien, the much married man, of whom so much has been written of his trip to Winnipeg, etc., was to-day sentenced to five years in the penitentiary.

"I'm guilty," said he, "but I'll try and do better."

"Do better," exclaimed Col. Dennison. "The man must want to marry the whole population."—Manitoba Free Press.

The Voice of Innocence.—A little girl looking into the glass and studying her face said: "Auntie, did God make you?" And her auntie said, "Yes, my dear." "Well, did God make me?" "Why, certainly, my dear." And then the little girl looked from one to the other and said: "Well, I think He has been doing better work lately."—St. John (N. B.) Sun.

Beauty by the Carload.—John Lariner, who all alone travelled away from Kamloops, B.C., is struck with the grace and beauty, as well as the plentitude, of Toronto ladies. He would like to send a carload away, and is going to wait on the city council for that purpose.—Toronto World. Mr. Ladner believes that one cannot have too much of a good thing.

Impersonal Journalism.— A wild-eyed citizen was observed this morning hustling around for a boat and some one to accompany him over to the river. Thinking a big strike had been made, and scenting a sensation we sought further information to learn that all the excitement was due to his having left his pocket book, containing hundreds of dollars, more or less, on the bank of the river. We leave our readers to guess to whom this refers. Fred, you shouldn't be so careless.—Stikine River Journal.

In the Fashion.—The spoils system has spread to British Columbia. The Semlin-Martin government have only been in office a month, but they have already dismissed a number of capable officials, and filled their places with offensive partisans who worked for Mr. Martin and his friends at the last election. The Laurier government set an unhappy example in this respect, which their supporters in the provinces have been only too eager to follow.—Montreal Herald.

A Flourishing Order.—A new order has been started in Victoria with strong branches in Kamloops, Nanaimo and Vancouver, called the U. A. O. J., otherwise termed the United Ancient Order of Jobchasers. The order is particularly strong in Nanaimo, where the members of the third degree are termed roundheads. The most worshipful Grand Serene Jobchaser resides in Nanaimo, and is in constant daily communication with Hon. R. E. McKechnie, and William Wallace Burns McInnes. A popular refrain with the order is "There'll come a time some day." Those members who are able to read and write have signified their intention of purchasing the McInnes Ready Letter Writer, a handy work for any member of the order to possess.—Wellington Enterprise.

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