

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR THE TARIFF: GROWING TREES  
IN NOVA SCOTIA: NEW METAPHORS IN POLITICAL PHILO-  
SOPHY: 3,758 JEAN VAL JEANS: LAMBS AND LARKS.

ACCORDING to newspaper reports, "the widely extended powers of the President to authorise revaluation of foreign invoices may render it unnecessary to retain abroad American experts who determine the production costs of exports to the United States." I quote from a Washington despatch to a Montreal newspaper.

I do not know how many Canadians who are not engaged in foreign trade know of this practice of "revaluating"—the word is American—foreign invoices. For a while, on the plea of meeting depreciated currencies, our own customs officials indulged in it. (In one Canadian city report had it that a customs clerk, who had never engaged in anything but perfumes, was set at "revaluating" invoices of cutlery.) It means simply that the customs official refuses to accept the invoice accompanying the goods, and "modifies" it as he sees fit. The modification, of course, is always upward. American officials have gone to the length of multiplying the total of the invoice by three, before assessing the *ad valorem* duty, 40%, or whatever it is.

The whole business shows the lengths of folly, hypocrisy and graft to which many a tariff advocate on this continent is prepared to go. I say graft advisedly, and I defend my use of the word, by inviting my readers to imagine an up-to-date American customs official questioning invoices addressed to large department stores, or large manufacturers. Importers such as these never have their toes stamped on. But an importer who cannot defend himself may have his entire business threatened over night; and if his commitments are seasonal, the tariff "adjustment" (which is always made without notice) may be sufficient to ruin him.

The hypocrisy of the thing appears in this. No one in business believes that under present conditions there is such a thing as "production costs" of any marketed commodity whatever. The value of a thing always was, even hundreds of years B. C., what you could get for it. But in an age like ours, when business conditions are so artificial, the cost of production bears no sort of proportion even to the wholesale selling price. (Of retail prices,

under a largely controlled system, it is better not to speak at all.) One great cause of this artificiality is the tariff itself. Patent rights—which no one, of course, would condemn—are another. Yet consider for a moment: What proportion of the wholesale selling price of a camera film is its production cost? What is the proportion to the selling price of many patent medicines? Advertising again, as it is practised on this continent, is an artificial swelling (on a scale but dimly realized by the purchasing public, or they would avoid the extravagantly advertised wares) of the selling price. Monopolies are an old story in human history, but if anyone thinks mention of them too old a story, let him recall the promptness with which bread prices were advanced recently in Canada, on the report of crop failures.

But, aside from all these things, which are basic in our present business, there are two further matters to be considered: the old law of supply and demand, which works out in two ways, and the new feature in Canadian and American business, that our tradesmen and makers want to "get rich quick". The law of supply and demand works out, I say, in two ways: one, the steady working which a man would understand from the reading of an economic text-book, one the spasmodic and jumpy working, which is more or less peculiar to our American way of doing things. We do things "fashionably",—or, to use an even better feminine word, according to "craze". And we have "crazes" not merely in women's hats and automobiles. We have crazes about land values, and even about staple articles of food. Now, crazes are fearfully expensive things. Not only must we pay extravagantly for the thing we want, merely because it is the fashion to have it—and that means it is scarce—but we must pay, in the prices of the things we buy, for the losses incurred in destroying the commodities we once wanted, and so had produced, and which we now decline. As for the scramble for wealth, one need not enlarge on that. It may be said that men have always engaged in business, surely, to make money. My point is that, whereas the Europeans—the Swiss manufacturer, the Dutch merchant, the British broker—calmly look forward to a life-time in trade, our business men are ambitious to work ten years, and then retire to California. Production costs on *their* invoices? No, indeed! A large buyer once complained to a Toronto manufacturer about the doubling of a price over-night, and asked "How do you arrive at your prices?" The manufacturer, who was something of a wag, replied blandly, "Our *regular* way is to find out the cost of material and labour, and then double, to make sure of the overhead. We then add the

telephone number and multiply by two. *But in this case* we discovered that no one but ourselves has any supply, so the price has *rocketed.*"

But just listen to these men complaining about their foreign competitors and foreign "dumping". Upon what is the foreign invoice based, they wish to know. What is the scientific cost of production? How cheap foreign labour is! (Ask any Canadian or American manufacturer to tell you honestly and privately how far he thinks labour costs are really significant in manufacturing.) The European industry is old and established! (Privately, Canadian manufacturers do not mean to be old and established.) Canadian workmen must be protected! (We hear this so often from manufacturers who seem to prefer workmen that are not Canadians at all.)

So much for that side of the case. The folly of it appears, of course, not in huge-tariff advocates. They pursue their own benefit. The folly is seen in the society which allows itself to be exploited by their selfish interests. One of the authors of the recently published memorial essays to Clark, the eminent American economist, assures us that the interest charges on farm mortgages in the United States are greatly in excess of the largest annual reparation payments ever demanded from Germany. However accurate this computation may be, it is notorious that the tariff exploitation of the American farmer has gone to great lengths. The prices of his own products, of course,—cotton, maize, fruit, vegetables, and even wool, hides and meat—could hardly be protected at all, by any tariff ever devised. This is partly because of the nature of things: his cotton, for example, is so largely grown for export that the world price determines his price; partly from political exigencies: it is easy to lobby against a tariff on such raw materials as wool and hides. Yet when the farmers' situation becomes so difficult that the politicians must pay heed to it, and promise a "Farm Relief Bill", this is made the occasion to demand vociferously a still higher tariff on manufactures!

The case of Canadian voters who support a huge tariff is even more plain and palpable. American trade is largely self-contained. Before the War the gross foreign trade of the United States never amounted to 10% of the total American trade. Hence a mischievous interference with the foreign trade of the country hurt only a small fraction of American prosperity. But geography alone prevents Canada having the bulk of its trade internal. (Let some of our young economists work out, for Canada and the United States, the old economic rule, that the profit of trade varies in-

versely as the radius over which it is conducted.) And, leaving out economic technicalities for the moment, do we not all realise that our recent large exports of food products and minerals have been a great feature in our post-war prosperity? And that every one who demands higher tariffs on imports is an impediment to our exports?

To come back to the Americans. It would need an Herodotus to deal with the moral aspect of their *hybris*. Fancy the feelings of a French manufacturer, who is requested to throw open his plant and his books to a corps of American "experts", who have come to deal with his "production costs"! *Nom de Lafayette!* "But our records show that you export such and such amounts to our country." *Mais, Messieurs, a quoi bon?* "We are not satisfied with your invoices"!

I do not exaggerate; the thing has happened. One French manufacturer even found that one of the clerks in his employment was a spy, retailing information to the "experts"!

---

I HAVE been holidaying in Nova Scotia, struck as always by the excellence of the people, and the poverty of the country. Nothing has pleased me so much as to be mistaken, on one occasion, for a native of the province. I hasten to add that the mistake was made by a man who looked too well-fed to have much perception. He was grossly fat; I think his ancestry was Jewish; and he purred to me in a thick voice about the advantages to Nova Scotia of the new "boat" between New York and Yarmouth. "It'll get yuh known, yuh know. Moravuss'll come. An blieve me we felluhs spenda lotta money. We might invest some, too. Damn poor country fa' that. But yuh neva cun tell. And its notta bad place fa' tourists. Different, yuh know." A real Nova Scotian, I suppose, would have thrown him into the sea, with his money in his pockets. But I am always amused at his type; nor was it for me to interfere with the prosperity of the province. Was I not a tourist myself?

I trust that what follows will not be interpreted as "advice to Nova Scotia". My notion, if correct, applies to New Brunswick and many other parts of Canada as well. But, though I have often thought of it elsewhere, it struck me with especial force this summer, not only because of the geography, but because of the political good sense of the people I talked with. There is nothing new in my idea. It has long been practised in other countries.



At present there is much talk of re-forestation in Canada. Individual owners of land in Quebec and Ontario are engaged in it, and the province of Ontario has taken it in hand on a great scale. But re-forestation should not be a subject for discussion only. It is not something to be left to a government department merely. Nor can it be done effectively by individuals alone. Sir Wilfrid Laurier sometimes spoke as though it would have to be accompanied by a political awakening of Canadians; and, the more one thinks of it, the more he appears to have been right. Now, Nova Scotians, having escaped the catastrophe of immigration, disciplined as they are by bitter experience in the follies of our tariff, are not so dead to political ideas as Canadians further West. I am convinced that re-forestation could begin in Nova Scotia with great benefits to the wealth of the province, and with political effects of incalculable advantage to the country at large. Canadians, as a people, have given away the wealth of the country to private interests, that have been not only selfish, but extremely short-sighted. The only book I know of, which has attempted to deal with this aspect of our history, is forbidden the Canadian mails.

The country I saw this summer is all hilly, and rocky. Agriculture, and even dairying, is unsuccessfully attempted over much of it. But the fact is that nine-tenths of the whole area is fit for nothing but the growing of trees. In spite of shockingly wasteful cutting and frequent forest fires, trees do persist in growing on it. Spruce crops up on the hilly slopes even where hay is mown; where it is given a little protection by shrubs and older trees, it grows prodigiously. In nothing else is Nature lavish. But in this respect her gifts are scorned, neglected or destroyed. And not only is great potential wealth wasted, but its waste is making human habitation of any sort almost impossible. The soil in the so-called hay-fields washes thinner every year; fuel, once so abundant, is no longer; timber is fearfully expensive; the pastures are overstocked with beasts, as other farming grows less lucrative and fishing less profitable; and, what is more, there is no proper water supply. As trees and soil on the upper slopes are destroyed, the springs dry up. For the first time in Eastern Canada, I have seen cattle actually suffering for lack of water.

Now, the remedy for all this is so simple, and lies so close at hand, that even the wayfaring man, though a fool and a tourist, understands it. It requires no "government action". It requires no capital. It requires no importation of experts. But it does require a little co-operation—such as appears in many features of

Nova Scotian life; and it requires a little prudence and common sense.

Suppose the authorities of a village or a township laid their heads together on this matter. They have known one another for generations; they know every "rise" of ground, and every valley in the neighbourhood. They know the cheapness of scrub forest land and pasture on the upper hill-sides and stony heights. Suppose they buy a tract of this for the community, and fence it. That could be done on a thirty-year bond issue at a negligible charge on the tax-rate, and for the bond issue the land itself would be ample security. The forestry department of the province, and the forestry faculties of many Canadian universities, would be overjoyed to give them advice at this juncture, and later, when they felt advice was needed. But there is enough woodlore and woodcraft in almost every Nova Scotian community to render scientific advice unnecessary at any early stage. Over much of the fenced tract no planting would be necessary. It would be found that almost everywhere spruce, and in many places ash, birch, beech and maple, are year after year sowing themselves. In some fortunate spots there is even white pine reappearing! Very often only thinning, and a little foresight in terracing a steep slope, would be necessary. On bare spots a barrow or two of earth from lower down is all that would be needed to encourage natural sowing. For years the chief occupation of the village owners would be merely precautionary. Keep the sheep out; cut down the choking alders; let no timber be cut, whatever the temptation; above all, let no one strike a match, within or without the enclosure, in such a way as to risk a fire. Co-operative village labour (not *corvee* rotating labour) a few days in the year, and occasional talks to the children in the local school, by the minister, the doctor, or the reeve, will be all that will be necessary.

In ten years' time this mixture of precaution and salutary neglect will have transformed the village or township wood-lot. It will begin to look like an investment. The pride of its public owners will be great. The thinnings, and the clearing of underbrush, will have begun to supply fuel to the nearest neighbours, who will be glad to remove the *debris*. If the tract has been well chosen in the first place, and is sufficiently large, it may already appear that a regular forester is necessary. But by this time the increase in the stand of timber will justify a slight increase in the public expenditure, and the community will almost certainly contain a woodsman, part of whose time can be secured cheaply. (The public ownership of the enterprise will obviate the jobbery

that goes with such appointments when made by a government.) Now will be the time for expert advice. Whether Norway pine or White should be planted; what sheltered slopes should be given over to hardwood; whether some of the large trees should be cut and sold; how many feet radius should be allowed for spruce trees, and how many for hemlock; and so on. Imagine the tract at the end of twenty-five years! The thirty-year bond issue will now appear a trifle, for the profits of the undertaking will have caught up to it. Employment will have been given in the village; the cost of fuel will have been kept down; and the community will have a possession of ever increasing value and general utility. If two or three adjoining townships embarked on such a venture, there would, in a generation or so, be a different story to tell about the scarcity of lumber. I do not mean to say, of course, that we should have deal boards again in that time, but the remedy would be in sight. Those who have seen even twenty-five year old plantations, which began with nothing, will know what I mean. But in thousands of parts of Nova Scotia the beginning would be made with a good sprinkling of trees from twenty to a hundred years old. It is, in fact, this very feature of the situation which emboldens me to be urgent, and to call public attention to it. I say, and I know, that it would be easy to compass this far-reaching reform now. But a generation from now it will be a very different matter.

As to the general improvement in the appearance of the country, the improvement of the soil, the improvement of the water supply, the increase in the number of game animals and birds—I leave all this to those writers who are accustomed to deal with our “natural resources”, and to write “tourist blurb.” I am not equal to it.

But the political and social effects of such a movement I think I see in advance. A society cannot live by its forests alone, nor is public ownership of forest land the political salvation of a people. *But to have in the midst of a community a living and growing object lesson in public thrift and co-operation, and of a political responsibility equally shared by every man, woman and child,* would have a very steadying effect on our life and our notions of citizenship. In North America, in many quarters, “citizenship” is equivalent to “an opportunity to make a living.” Certainly citizenship should mean, among other things, a living, and a decent living; but that is not the whole matter, and indeed it is only one of the material features of citizenship. In other places in North America citizenship is coming to mean the privilege of calling on a government, far away in Washington or Ottawa, to “set something

going." Local self-government, which is the very base and foundation of English responsible and representative government, is somehow being forgotten. A citizen appeals to his parliamentary representative, or gets up an agitation in the press, but he rarely thinks of talking matters over with his neighbours. This, by the way, is the very root of our educational difficulties in many parts of Canada. And, in general, the problems of government, and the problems of life, are for the most part local problems.

Now, in many parts of Canada, indeed, in most parts of it west of the Maritime Provinces, neighbours cannot do anything, *because there are no neighbours*. In our large cities, and in the West, men live together in a polyglot and ever fluctuating society, with no common outlook on life. But Nova Scotia, except in one portion of it, is still a community—and all things in politics and free government are possible to it.

---

THERE is nothing, perhaps, to stir the blood in such an experiment. About the really great accomplishments of our species we human beings are strangely and perversely dumb. To the mischief-makers we give chapters of history when dead, and ringing acclaim while they live. The little Alcibiades of our time—the phrase lumps together his glories and his imperfections—has recently been touring among us, uttering solemn warnings about the dangers of a healing policy in Egypt. I have no objection to the notoriety given him: I would give him and every other sort of mischief-maker complete freedom to speak; for there is no mischief so mischievous as the lack of freedom. But in the general chorus of admiration I humbly beg to remind a few Canadians that this is the man who, in Westminster, defended the shelling of Black Sea towns—Russian men, women and children—on the plea that “anyway, they were shells that were left over from the War.” But who knows, who cares to know, about the common sense and co-operation of nameless human beings who worked for the general weal during the same period? Consider the horrible posture of affairs just after the War, some of which has been caught in the pages of *A Short History of the World, 1918-1928*, by C. Delisle Burns. Millions of Russian orphans; one third of the whole surviving population of Serbia “known cases of tuberculosis.” Two years ago in Greece, and in many other parts of Europe, one could still see the wrecks of a destruction which no one on our continent—even the habitual visitor to our military hospitals—could even dream of. But the human ant-heap has survived, and, from a



distance at least, and to our oblique vision it may be, has cured most of its social ills. Has it done so by a mere blind and Stoic prayer:

*O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem.*

Or has there not been a great amount of intelligent and moral co-operation? True, if one thinks of such examples as Mr. Keynes's prophecies and exhortations on the one hand, and the endless chatter of the Daweses and the Youngs on the other, we would seem to have muddled through without much quality of head or heart. But if, with or without such a guide as Mr. Burns, one thinks over the past decade, one is reminded of innumerable half-intelligent strivings, at least, on the part of "*dieses so verehrte, und so verachtete Publikum.*" Even from the United States, which seems to most Europeans of both camps to be so blind, and so ignorant of world politics, there have gone forth hundreds of devoted nurses and doctors, saving lives here and lives there, attending to the water supply of a village, distributing seed corn, and so on: and these in turn were supported by the active efforts of tens of thousands at home. But this example, too, is comparatively spectacular. Other quite nameless and unrecorded efforts are what I have chiefly in mind.

---

**I**T will always be so: the disrupters and destroyers of civilisation, such as Alexander III of Macedon, will always be surnamed "the Great". But neither the writing nor the reading of history will "cultivate our garden". And, on the other hand, leave and liberty to cultivate our garden is a political affair. Individual effort is not enough. Every metaphor about politics and society leads to half-truth. Some ridiculous and double-headed metaphor should always be used, to remind the unwary of the difficulties in the phrase "social action". Could we say that society cultivates its garden with one hand, and holds a wolf by the ears with the other? And if that is not sufficiently ridiculous, and sufficiently illuminating, shall we go on to point out that the wolf is society itself?

Let us retreat, for a moment, from metaphor to the baldest prose, newspaper prose. We are told in our own newspapers that there have been serious revolts in many prisons in the United States. We wait for a fortnight or so, as always, for trans-Atlantic newspapers to give us the true inwardness of the situation, and we then discover that at the much headlined "Leavenworth, Kansas" prison there are 3758 prisoners, although the prison

"accommodates" only 2000. Also, that other Federal prisons are similarly over-crowded. That 4% of this increase is caused by violation of the Prohibition laws, and a much larger increase by violation of the anti-narcotic laws; but that the real cause of desperation in prisoners is that there has been "a drastic revision of the penal laws, in an attempt to cope with the recent crime wave". "In numerous cases parole has been abolished or curtailed, and sentences may no longer be reduced by good behaviour. The result is that the prisoners are desperate, and feel that they have little to lose in a break for liberty, no matter how hopeless."

*Les Miserables!* 3758 Jean Valjeans, in "accommodation for 2000", in the "respectable Middle West"! Do American children weep over this, as they used to weep over *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or is it just a thrill headline in their appalling newspapers? Do any of their writers invite them to think about the moral effects on the hundreds of gaolers necessary to feed or starve, tend or flog, these thousands of worse than slaves? A long-term prisoner becomes a beast, but never such a monster as a gaoler. Even those who have not read Plato know that. And where are these hundreds of gaolers in Leavenworth, these thousands of gaolers elsewhere, recruited? Are they hundred per centers or wops, white or black? Thou shalt not break *some* of the Ten Commandments, nor *any* of our Thousand and One Commandments. Two Thousand do. We increase the penalties. Nearly Four Thousand do! And this in a country where no college student can escape "Psychology"!

What sort of a garden, what sort of a wolf, have we here?

---

**WE** now have a "Lamb Week" in Canada. Wordsworth's famous poem, and Blake's, have been expurgated from the School Readers. Lamb's essay on "Roast Pig" is forbidden the mails, and a Canadian author has been engaged to forge into the works of Hogg a poem on Young Mutting. A sprig of mint is to be added to the Canadian coat of arms. All vegetarians are to be sent to gaol, without the option of a fine; for a second offence they will be detailed to the shambles to assist the butchers. By Act of Parliament many Biblical texts are altered or expunged; and *bleat* is henceforth to be spelled b-l-e-e-d. (Geo. V. XXXVII 201c.) As the schoolboy said, when he heard of Mr. Crowe, the new master: "What a lark"!

C. W. STANLEY.