

Saturday Sunset

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CRISPY CRITIQUE ON CURRENT TOPICS

Stripped of the mediaeval verbiage with which all announcements of that character are embellished to lend effect and dignity, the statement in the *British Columbia Gazette* tells all and sundry that the legislative assembly will meet on Thursday, January 21, for the despatch of business, to what extent and of what character is not stated. "Treat, do, act and conclude upon those things which, in our legislature of the province of British Columbia by the common council of our said province may, by the favor of God, be ordained" is the technical way of expressing it. Briefly interpreted, this means that the legislative assembly, or to be more correct the premier and his lieutenant—should the positions be reversed!—will do the "ordaining."

It may be safely assumed that the programme for the entire session, which promises to be a short one, has already been formulated and that it will be rushed through, following precedent, with that undue haste which is characteristic of the bosses of the assembly. The lack of a real live opposition, capable of bringing those questions to the surface that at present are not handled in the manner to which their importance entitles them, and of making their presence felt in a way that would bring about a somewhat different condition of affairs in this province, reduces the proceedings in the provincial house to something in the nature of a farce minus even one of the redeeming features of that particular class of stage attractions. On the other hand there are many features which the assembly session and the farce have in common and which are too obvious to enumerate.

Premier McBride is nothing if not methodical. Attorney-General Bowser is a competent second fiddle, and, in the absence of the leader, has been known to out-Herod Herod. Unfortunately he is not the possessor of that suavity of manner, nor can he indulge in those plausible dialectics which have added lustre, of a kind, to Sir Richard. At the same time Mr. Bowser may be given credit for having more to say behind the scenes than he is in the habit of dilating upon before the curtain. As a matter of fact, even his friends in the councils of the province are uncharitable enough to say that his loquacity far exceeds his chief's plausibility. Be that as it may, the assumption is that both have dipped deeply into the political pie ament the policies that are to be outlined on January 21 and which, with an exception or two, are yet a state secret so far as the electors of British Columbia are concerned.

So much has been said on the land settlement policy of the Government—or, it would be more accurate to say the want of policy—even by ostensible supporters of the Conservative party in this province, that the idea appears to have suddenly dawned on the McBride-cum-Bowser aggregation, that the time is ripe for bringing into existence some scheme that will, for the time being, act as a sop to those who have a real and not a fancied grievance. There was ample opportunity and a favorable gathering of henchmen on the occasion of Mr. Bowser's recent visit to Vancouver for him to have thrown some light on a topic that is even more absorbing than the financial depression which at present exists. But "for ways that are dark and tricks that are vain" the Attorney-General has the slickest Oriental beaten hands down. To have sprung the trap right here in our midst would have been, in Mr. Bowser's opinion, an altogether unnecessary proceeding. The party in Vancouver have been well enough scourged to heel to have required any political medicine in the shape of a pronouncement on land settlement to compel it to toe the line. So, it may be stated with every confidence, was the Attorney-General's conception of things. Or was it that he was afraid to run the gauntlet?

Away, in the interior, he reckoned, the commotion would be less, the gatherings more docile—trust the road foremen and superintendents to see to that. Whatever the reason, the policy was expounded in districts where Mr. Bowser surmised there would be no rift in the lute. But despite the fact that he offered a sugar-coated pill there was not that unanimity which he anticipated. His reception was about as chilly, in not a few localities, as an Arctic night, though it was proclaimed trumpet-tongued by the Conservative press that the Attorney-General was received with open arms and that he was looked upon as the saviour of the province. But unprejudiced onlookers who are able to see most of the game have not hesitated to say that the Government's deathbed repentance on what is the most vital problem in British Columbia is one which will not be granted grace or find in the electorate, a father-confessor ready to grant absolution. To such a pass have things come in what should have been, in every respect, the premier province in the Dominion.

That they will propound some policy goes without saying, that it will not meet the exigencies of the times, nor will it act as the soporic they desire it to be, the Government must know. But at times like the present, when public feeling has been aroused to an extent hitherto unknown, the stern necessity faces them of assuming as bold a front as it is within their power and of baiting their hooks for the election that cannot be deferred much longer. Comes this land programme, then, with Mr. Bowser's assurance that it will fulfil all the requirements which the people have been demanding, in vain, so far. There is one thing certain, that, had the Liberal party in British Columbia refrained from continuing the

agitation which is now province-wide, in favor of the introduction of some scheme that would ameliorate conditions which have been brought about by the Government's apathy and culpable negligence, nothing would have been heard of a land policy. To attribute the credit, therefore, to the Liberals, is but rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's.

Major-General Sam Hughes' sleeping berth is responsible for injuring the gallant officer's parietal bone. We tremble to think what would have happened had it struck nearer, or on, the head.



"WELCOME, LITTLE STRANGER"

Could a Wallingford get an insight into some of the financial transactions in Vancouver recently, as exposed in court proceedings, he would sprint for the first train. Evidently Vancouver is no place for gentlemen of his cult to undertake operations. Unfortunately this city has had and has its own Wallingfords, who have long since graduated in the finer arts of tangoized finance. Disclosures in connection with the Dominion Trust Company and the Canadian Home Investment Company are sufficient to prove that more exacting and binding measures are urgently needed to protect the common dollar.

Little sympathy can be felt for the man who deliberately puts his head in the noose of the money-lending shark. Rapacious and grasping money-changers exact their toll to the last tittle. It is their business to fleece "suckers" and their victims have after-thoughts as a solace. But with companies which put on the garb of propriety and then misappropriate small savings of men and women, the great majority of whom are in no position to make sacrifices, surely the arm of the law cannot be too long. Broken trust in ordinary every-day transactions is of no smaller consequence, but broken trust in business should merit more than ordinary treatment.

Vancouver financial interests have been dealt a withering blow by the revelations of the last few weeks. Not only has local faith been ruthlessly shaken, but many of the most stable and solid institutions of the city will have many years in which to live out the record of the black sheep. Essentially a province which depends on outside capital for its

development the gravity of the situation is all the greater.

If the war has been responsible for nothing else but bringing to light financial institutions which should never in the first place have been allowed, the war will have at least accomplished something for the city and province. Some will, no doubt, suffer through the collapse of mismanaged institutions, but the purging will bring its benefits. The war is proving the real test of business. Shady proceedings may succeed in times of plenty, but will reach their tether in the pinch.

It must be consoling to those who have lost relatives at the front to know, on the word of H. H. Stevens, that war is preferable to peace. The martial experience of the member for Vancouver gives him the right to be quoted as an authority on the subject.

False Creek, about which we are hearing so much just now, is very much so from the ratepayers' point of view.

Peculiar, isn't it, that vessels have been captured on the high seas with cargoes of food for German warships on the Atlantic. Has the Dresden met a few colleagues?

Portland claims to have the finest harbor on the Pacific Coast. How's that, Mr. Carter-Cotton and your esteemed co-members of the board? Going to take it lying down?

Nineteen hundred and fifteen has dawned upon a year peculiarly distraught. To all outside appearances never was a year ushered into an atmosphere more troubled and discordant, nor with an outlook more shadowed by disorder. Humanity, after centuries of laborious toil to raise itself from barbarism to its present state of civilization, seems to be exhibiting the fact that its endeavors have been to little purpose—that it has done nothing more than thinly veneer itself with an exterior coating of refinement and polish, while at heart the brute instinct to kill and plunder remains as strong as ever. Besides the pathos of the slaughter of thousands daily, executed according to the just laws of war, there have been the uncalculated pillagings and looting with other atrocities quite worthy of the dark ages. By these tokens man is proving himself little ahead of his forest-ranging forefathers, who lived by the law that might was right; and that such propensities are being revealed in present-day mankind, is food for reflection and self-examination to find wherein the nations have failed.

The British nation prostrated itself before the throne of the Almighty in devout supplication for succor. Desirable as such supplication may be, such intercession will not save the situation unless there is something more behind the petitions. Germany is praying too, that she may walk over France, crush Russia into subjection and reach the dastardly throat of the English in a soul-satisfying throttle. Such conflicting petitions would seem to bring a difficulty in their granting, but of course each supplicant is sure that the other fellow is praying wrong, and that therefor his prayer will bear no weight. Kaiser Wilhelm tells us that he is in league with God; but it would seem that the god which he follows were one of blood and thunder, holding in his hands offerings of honor, wider dominion and a quitclaim to the property of all the surrounding countries.

Much has been written and spoken of the materiality of the present age, and although such a tendency toward material aims and pleasures has been deplored by religionists, little concern has been felt by the people generally so long as prosperity reigned and wealth grew and flourished. But now, with the disturbance of business interests, the check on commerce and the halt placed on the amassing of opulent abundance, humanity is in measure prepared to pause and adjust its value. No longer permitted to revel in smiling affluence, mankind will perhaps be willing to learn that it is not "that which a man hath that maketh the abundance of his possessions"—to quote in substance from the philosophies of the Good Book—but that rather there is a wealth to be found in a deeper mental life, in saner ideals and ambitions. And if mankind earns through the chastening of this period of war how to seek wisdom and pursue peace, rather than unsatisfying pleasures, this season of discord will not have been in vain.

In 1915 ships will continue to go down and men perish, cities be kindled and fields ravaged; but this unhappy struggle need not make pessimists, nor fill up the scoffers' seats with loud-voiced deriders, disclaiming the possibility of righteousness. Rather, this turmoil should lead humanity to a recognition of its own ignorance and weakness; and the fact that it yet has to build for itself a firmer foundation on which civilization may stand harmoniously. If something of this spirit stirs the hearts of the world at the beginning of this new year, then the outlook for 1915 is a bright one.

There is something resembling a lurid atmosphere these nights over Vancouver. Wonder if it can be the hot-air that is rising, like the fumes from Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now that we have commenced 1915 in real earnest, what is Vancouver going to do to attract trade here via the Panama Canal?

This civic campaign will go down in history as the one in which the greatest amount of mud was thrown by certain candidates.

The new Austrian marching song is entitled "It's a long, hard grade up to Belgrade." (Must not be sung in the United States navy.)

A Paris dressmaker who spent many years in Berlin declares that she saw a young German soldier attempt to murder the kaiser as he was stepping into the train. Another Iron Cross gone wrong.

Undoubtedly recent happenings call for higher ideals among some so-called business men and greater protection to the public by a Government which has done everything but show itself alive to the interests of the people. Vancouver and British Columbia business men are counted by the legion who conduct their business according to the fundamental principles of the code. Many of these men and many projects which deserve widespread support, however, must suffer from the piratical actions of others. Much of the battle which has been fought in the past of providing to the world the boundless possibilities of British Columbia to the investing public will have to be fought over again. If that fight can be resumed under conditions cleansed of many of its barnacles it will be undertaken with a willing hand, and a seemingly temporary check will soon be a matter of the past.

Yes, quite so, but what return has the city received from the appointment of an industrial commissioner?

If talking brings a man to the front, the major-general should have been there long ere this. He should be able to make a greater name for himself on the battlefields of Belgium than tub-thumping over Canada.

Don't run away with the idea that prosperity will come to British Columbia, like a bolt from the blue, when the war is over. A little mental and physical exertion will be required, though there are some persons who are waiting for the aforesaid prosperity, expecting it to fall like manna to the Israelites.