Hawaiian Gazette

EST MODUS IN REBUS.

TUESDAY, : : JANUARY 8, 1889.

DIPLOMATIC PRECEDENCE.

The dismissal of Lord Sackville by President Cleveland produces, owing to the peculiar rules of diplomatic precedence which prevail at Washington, a rather curious result. Precedence in the diplomatic corps is determined on all official occasions at the American Capital, by length of service. In the Courts of Europe it is regulated by the official rank of the diplomatic representative, Ambassadors always going first, then Envoys, and last Ministers Resident. Lord Sackville stood fifth on the list at Washington. His dismissal sends his successor and all his official household to the foot of the line. Under the system there prevailing it has happened that for some time past the representative of the little black Republic of Hayti has been the dean of the diplomatic corps. Thus Hayti, perhaps the most feeble Government in the whole civilized world and one of the poorest, will, through its representative, stand first on the list of official honors at Washington, while Great Britain, the most powerful and richest, comes in at the tail end.

IGNORANCE PERHAPS.

"A Workingman" in Thursday night's Bulletin speaks of Hawaiian Cabinet Ministers as "sitting in their offices and drawing their salaries—leaving the departmental duties to be performed by such men as are at present placed over some of the bureaus, such as Public Works, etc."

This seems rather cool in view of the fact that the Minister of the Interior, accompanied by the Superintendent of Public Works, has just returned from a three weeks' official tour on the island of Hawaii, looking after roads, bridges, public buildings and similar matters. The concluding sentence of the communication from which the above quotation is made is too absurd for serious notice, except as a specimen of the recklessness of statement in which a certain class of writers are in the habit of indulging. The merits and demerits of the present Ministry are matters about which people may honestly differ, but the idea of a revolution or a popular uprising to compel their resignations is simply rubbish.

BACK-BITERS.

What a thoroughly congenial sport is this same back-biting to a certain class of minds. Not that we have any such minds just here. Oh, dear no. Our little country is singularly blest in that respect. No one ever says any ill of his neighbor. No one, when his fellow man sins, rushes out proclaiming that sin. There are no coteries here to which by centripetal force all the garbage of gossip naturally rushes, to be shot forth from the filthy cesspool of ill tongues by centrifugal force and sent broadcast over the land. There are no ghouls sitting on the carcase of a broken reputation and cheering every luscious bit of scandal, adding, may be, a touch or two from their own foul imaginings, so as to make the morsel more savory to the initiated palate. Oh, no! We all live so sweetly together as turtle doves, we try to help the lame dog over a stile and we never even whisper a word against our neighbor. But in some other country where they do these wicked things, where backbiting and so forth are the favorite crimes of the people, what a pity it is that an occasional resort is not made to some of the methods of summary punishment formerly used to put a stop to such things. Much might be done by the people of the country we are speaking of. We do not think one-half of them are as venomous as their speech would make them appear. We believe that half of the evil stories are but told through thoughtlessness. A little more care in ascertaining a story to be a fact before repeating it, would save many a sore heart. But for the back-biting ghoul we would have no pity. He or she should be shunned as a moral leper, and were the ghoul so treated he or she would soon retire into private life, instead of flaunting it before every one and violating the sanctity of every home.

As we have said, fortunate is Hawaii not to possess such monsters. If it did we might feel disposed to preach a little sermon. It is that other country, you know.

THE PUNCHBOWL ROAD AGAIN.

We are not disposed to quarrel with the Bulletin's proposition that the keeping in good repair of so important a thoroughfare as Beretania street should take precedence of the road up Punchbowl. We presume that the Beretania street work is already provided for. That street is now in as good condition as its average state for the past five years. With the large amount of traffic upon it, it can never be kept in good condition by the use of soft stone. It requires the same hard macadam which King street is now receiving as fast as the little engine can haul it. We do not know the Government's intentions, but judging from the many miles of finished road it has newly created in this district during the past year, we presume that Beretania street will receive similar attention as soon as the requisite material can be supplied. That is a question of time and not of money. The same remarks apply to other public work of a similar character.

We think the Bulletin would hardly be willing to carry out to its logical results, the assumption that all necessaries must be satisfied before luxuries are indulged in. Neither this Government nor our private citizens ever have or ever can postpone all luxuries until necessaries are supplied. If they did, no luxuries would ever be supplied. What is the Band but a luxury? The lofty, spacious rooms of the Government house are largely luxuries. The Palace is a luxury that cost some $500,000, and ever so much more to keep up. Kapiolani Park, Thomas Square and Emma Square are pure luxuries, costing more annually to maintain than the entire cost of the road up Punchbowl. Meantime the town has plenty of disreputable sidewalks, unopened streets, and streets to be widened, graded and macadamized. It always will have more or less of them. There will always be a large number of things crying for money, of the sort which the Bulletin calls necessaries. We shall never see the time when there are no roads which need macadamizing, or bridges to be built or repaired for the convenience and safety of business traffic, or school houses, court houses and jails to be constructed, or rotting wharves to be renewed. So to carry out logically the Bulletin's position, all expenditures on Band, Palace, Squares and fifty other matters of luxury, should be cut off, and kept cut off.

Now this kind of talk is not reasonable or tenable. We have got to use common sense, and allow ourselves a great many things that contribute to the cheer of body and mind, even though we are under no absolute or even urgent necessity for possessing them. In fact, outside of very narrow limits, this matter of necessity is mainly relative. A telephone is a necessity to us now; it was once a luxury we hardly felt justified in indulging in. Four-fifths of our water supply is really for purposes of luxury. Nobody actually needs to keep up a spacious green lawn. But it is a very nice thing to have, and we should all cry out upon the Government if it did not keep expending twenty or thirty thousand dollars every year or two to enlarge our luxurious water works.

Now we ask the small expenditure of $8,000 for a road to a tract of one hundred acres of lovely park in the heart of the city, which is now a great deal more inaccessible than if it was an island outside the bell buoy. In the center of the city, and absolutely no road to it! Think of it! One hundred acres of delightful area, environed by twenty-two hundred more of rocky ridge and slope, and we are told that a road just to open up this great central tract is a luxury, and must not be thought of at present. Why, if there were another twenty acres within a mile of the Post Office, without a street touching any part of it, we think the Bulletin would cry out against a Government that did not supply such an absolute necessity. The very marshes of Kewalo have roads through them, while our magnificent and wonderful Puowaina lies neglected by our unappreciative citizens. We foresee only one trouble. As soon as the $8,000 is spent and the people begin to drive up and taste the beauty and glory of the new park everybody will be clamoring for further expenditures.

After all, and independently of the above considerations, there seems to be one simple and sufficient answer to all the objections that have been raised. The decision as to what public works shall be undertaken, and the amount which may be expended on them rests with the Legislature. That body after very full discussions, on several occasions, authorized the road and appropriated the money. Even if the road is not built, this money cannot, under the law, be made available for other purposes. Even if we forego the Punchbowl luxury, so called, we shall not thereby get a single additional bridge, or another yard of good street, or be able to hire so much as one more school teacher. So we go in for a ride up Punchbowl.

THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNOR.

We give below the text of the objections made by the Queensland Ministry to the appointment of Sir H. A. Blake as Governor of that Colony. It is a matter of very little consequence to the people of this country, but a somewhat voluminous discussion of the subject having appeared in the Bulletin, it may not be amiss to give the actual facts. The funniest feature of the controversy, as it has appeared here, is the attempt of "A. B." to deny that he said or implied that the Queenslanders objected to Sir H. A. Blake because of his humble origin. That writer must have a curious idea of the meaning of words, or an abounding faith in the obtuseness of his readers.

In reply to a request from the Home Government through the Secretary of State for the Colonies, for the reasons of the Queensland Government in objecting to the appointment, the following reply was sent by cable:

"Referring to your telegram of the 12th of November, my Ministry consider—

"1. That Sir H. A. Blake is not known in Australia as a gentleman who has administered responsible government with discretion and success.

"2. That the importance of the colony entitles it to a Governor of proved ability and discretion in the administration of responsible government.

"3. That his experience of responsible government is confined to one year's service in Newfoundland.

"4. That his previous experience is in their opinion a disqualification for the office of Governor of Queensland.

"5. That the expressed disapproval of his appointment when announced was spontaneous, immediate and general.

"6. That this disapproval was more strongly accentuated because the appointment followed closely upon a constitutional crisis where rigid adherence to the exercise of the prerogative came into direct antagonism with responsible government, when the former had to give way.

"7. That it is impossible to make the appointment from an Imperial point of view alone, as a gentleman appointed simply as a conservator of Imperial interest can in no adequate sense be called Governor.

"8. That the Governor of a colony with responsible government, must work heartily and loyally for the interests of that colony when Imperial and Colonial interests clash, and the Governor's Ministers have always sought out and advised a course that would harmonise. The Colonial Legislature votes, and the colony pays the amount of the Governor's salary, and the fact of payment implies approval of the occupant of the office. My Ministry desires me also to point out that being asked now to give their specific reasons against the appointment shows that they were reasonable or right in seeking to express an opinion before the appointment was made."

It will be seen from the text of the above that there is not the shadow of a foundation for the statement which "A. B." first made and afterwards denied making.

It scarcely seems quite the proper thing that people should be allowed to start in at 12 o'clock on New Year's eve with fire crackers of all calibres, pistols, guns, bombs, bells and steam whistles, making night hideous for the quietly disposed, and preventing the possibility of sleep for the sick and nervous. The racket which commenced about midnight on Monday and continued for an indefinite time was of a kind that must be heard to be appreciated.

The increased facilities for getting about the town and vicinity afforded by the opening of the tramway form a very acceptable New Year's present to the people of Honolulu. Unlike most presents, the value of this one will probably increase with time and use.

A REPUBLICAN CONGRESS AND DUTIES ON SUGAR.

Before the close of the late session of Congress, the Senate, which is Republican, matured and passed a bill of their own, reforming the tariff according to Republican ideas. This was intended as a political offset to the Mills bill which had passed the lower House, where the Democrats have a majority, and which makes very extensive reductions and abolitions of duties, especially upon raw materials. One of the most notable differences in the two bills was in dealing with raw sugars. The Democratic House had left the present heavy duty untouched. The Republican Senate reduced it one half. The Democratic majority was composed mainly of Southerners who clung to protection for the heaviest southern staple requiring it. The Republican majority in the Senate being northern, cheerfully slaughtered the sugar interest, as the easiest way of securing a large reduction of revenue, which was the leading object sought in tariff reform.

Hawaii is profoundly interested in the issue of this matter. By the treaty of Reciprocity, which admits our raw sugars into the United States ports free of duty, we shall share with Louisiana in any loss of the protective duties on sugars. Should the Republican measure prevail, we shall suffer a loss of from twenty to thirty dollars a ton on the price of our sugars, or between two and three millions of dollars upon our yearly crop. We believe this to be a larger sum than the average profits hitherto realized by the owners of Hawaiian plantations. In so disastrous an event, much could no doubt be saved by pinching economy, and severe cutting of salaries and wages. Those plantations which possessed the best machinery and methods of cultivation might continue to pay a small profit. Others would succumb. The whole output would suffer heavy shrinkage carrying with it shrinkage of plantation values as well as of all property and business. What then are the probabilities, pro and con, of the proposed reduction of duties being carried into effect.

The next Congress is quite well assured to be Republican in the House as well as in the Senate. The majorities in both cases will be small, though sufficient to carry any Republican measure upon which that party is fully determined. It is by no means clear, however, that the party is keenly anxious for that reduction of revenue, which President Cleveland declared to be so necessary. If, however, they are so, then sugar presents a tempting object for sacrifice, since a reduction of one-half the duty would cut off about $23,000,000 of revenue, while the production thereby destroyed would be a comparatively small one. The Republicans, moreover, might enjoy the clamor to be raised by the anti-protection Southerners when an important interest of their own is attacked by their favorite theory of free-trade.

On the other hand, our sugar people will have an important ally in the incipient and very promising beet sugar interest, now just assuming prominence. There exists a lively hope that the States will ultimately supply the whole of their own consumption from this new source. Consistent protectionist principles must require this infant enterprise to be well fostered by high duties. California members may be expected to insist upon it. Another strong hope is in the invariable efficiency of a powerful minority to prevail against a small majority in any matter where the latter are somewhat indifferent and the former are determined. The Southern minority will do their utmost to save the sugar interest. Their Northern Democratic allies will help them. They will have the aid of California Republican members. They can always trade off a few votes on other items with Northern Republican members having some local manufacture to protect.

On the whole, therefore, we think Hawaii may continue to feel reasonably secure in her present advantages. Certainly the present danger is less formidable than the peril which we safely weathered not long ago, of losing our Treaty altogether.

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