

PROGRESS.

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CAPITAL'S SENSATION.

The Failure of Messrs. Black, Bliss and Nealis Causes Lots of Talk in Fredericton.

There has been no little excitement in Fredericton this week and the excitement has not been confined only to the Celestial City. When an announcement is made that such a well known firm as Black, Bliss & Nealis has gone to the wall it is no wonder that there is a stir. It is perhaps not too much to say that considering all things no names stood better in the capital city than Black Bliss & Nealis. On account of their individual popularity and the big estates and corporations the firm represented to say nothing of the various positions each of the firm held as officers of trust, it seemed impossible for the ordinary citizens to feel that the well known office of Black, Bliss & Nealis was anything but prosperous and even today in spite of all circumstances, in spite of all rumors and in spite of all difficulties there are not a few who believe that the firm has placed itself in an awkward, disagreeable and unnecessary situation. Too much pride must have its fall. There was no more popular man walked the streets of Fredericton than John Black, no man was a harder worker than he. As Secretary Treasurer of the county of York he filled the position in a manner that called forth praise from even those most bitterly opposed to him in politics and then to use a common saying the name of John Black on the back of any paper was as good as gold in any bank and friends as well as enemies took every advantage of it. Yes, not a few of those who are loudest today in condemnation of those now in misfortune were the foremost in asking and receiving help. They took every advantage in seeking aid from an individual whose greatest fault was his big heartedness. It is no exaggeration to say that John Black's friends at the present time express the belief that had the man been as good a friend to himself as he had been to others a different story would be told today. There are rumors and stories of all kinds afloat. The departure of John Black from the city was and is the foundation of many reports. People have taken it for granted that affairs must be in a desperate state when he has found it necessary to leave. But it is just here that the difficulty arises to explain why he did leave. As account after account is gone into, affairs appear even more than satisfactory, in fact not a few parties find out that they even received interest in advance. One man early in the week when he heard of the crisis, became almost a raving lunatic. He had given the firm \$2000 to invest and they had misappropriated it. It was a terrible case of hardship and defalcation and everyone had the story, and condemnation knew no limits; yet when affairs were looked into the money was found as safe as could be. If it had been wrongly used some slight excuse might have been offered, on account of the great carelessness on the part of the client.

PROGRESS does not know now just exactly how matters stand, nor does anyone else. There were large sums in the bank on behalf of the county, and of course they were all gone, but it was a surprise how every cent was accounted for, and the system and regularity shown in which the books were kept. It was a great disappointment to some that nothing wrong could be found.

It was the estates that had suffered was the next report. There was the O'Dell estate, the Fenety estate and numerous other estates, had got it very much in the neck, to use a common expression. Investigation soon brought out the fact that these estates had not a single cent. The more things were investigated the more the result became apparent that it was the banks that were the real losers, and it is wonderful to listen to the sympathy being extended on all sides to these institutions. The popularity of banks in Fredericton cannot be estimated, that is, judging popularity from the number of people that are pleased in seeing banks stuck. PROGRESS has made a search into matters as far as possible. It must be confessed that there is much darkness, and the only one that can let in any light is John Black himself. His friends who have stood by him in years, express but the one opinion, that he has made a mistake. They all claim that had they had

the least idea of the difficulties under which he labored they would have come willingly to his assistance. He was not that kind of a man, however. He had pride in his name and his worries he kept to himself, and so his unselfishness bore to the end and kept every financial secret from his very closest friends. John Black had lived nearly fifty years in Fredericton, the son of a clergyman, he lived a most exemplary life. By perseverance he worked hard for his education, and his genial manner, his wonderful push and kindness to relatives and friends put him in the front rank. His life was that of a true christian, and he soon became a leader among men. Then the crisis came slowly but surely. He and his firm were the guardians of many funds. First came the Fisher crash by which so many lost their money and persons began to get suspicious of everyone else. But excuses were made and the Vanwart Bros. were the examples of everything that was correct. Then it came, the Vanwarts went to smash and then of course the rumor became general that no one was solid among the lawyers. People became more than excited and the law office of Black Bliss & Nealis soon resembled a bank that was about to fail. But in spite of all rumors and difficulties they weathered the storm. It was hard but it was done, then Mr. Duffy a well-known lawyer followed in the career of the Vanwarts and just at the time that Black Bliss & Nealis were getting public confidence restored that had been so much shaken by the Fishers and Vanwarts failures Mr. Duffy became the notorious man as a defaulter. The burden came on the leading conveyancing firm in Fredericton and the burden was heavy. The name however was a prestige, the way business was attended to and the high reputation of the individual members of the firm served Black, Bliss & Nealis during the bitterest days and the days were bitter. They were gloomy and bad ones for lawyers especially lawyers who had much money to handle. But Fredericton was not to be outdone. St. John's legal fraternity began to follow some of Vanwarts and Fishers careers and so the remaining lawyers began to get a still further dose and Black Bliss & Nealis under stress of circumstance began on the downhill road. Still no one knew it, certainly the banks did not and the bar's always know it all or they think they do. So the day of reckoning approached and the climax came. Mr. Black and Mr. Nealis left Fredericton apparently ill and business had to be neglected. The banks became suspicious and they began to crowd as the saying is, and when banks that give so many privileges very suddenly begin to be harsh trouble is soon to follow and so it was with Black Bliss & Nealis and paper commenced going to protest and the curtain fell. It was given out that Black had left for England. But there is no one living today who knows where he is. Mr. Nealis was but a nominal partner and he departed for Boston. He did not attempt to conceal his movements and if it will be any satisfaction to anyone he has left behind him his Boston address. On Mr. Bliss the burden has fallen very heavily. During the past two or three weeks he has been a great sufferer from sore eyes, and contrary to doctors orders he has gone daily to the office to meet the vast multitude. His action in this respect is praiseworthy and has made him many friends. The indebtedness of the firm will probably amount to \$30,000, but as said before it is only guess work as time only will reveal how matters stand. That affairs are in a desperate condition is taken for granted but it does not appear as yet that there has been any wrong doing, that is any great defalcations. The banks were deceived no doubt but the banks cannot allege deception as an excuse for it is their business to know the financial standing of parties. There are a number of individuals who will lose heavy as endorsers of papers and the banks will now demand immediate payment. In some cases they may get it in others they will not be so fortunate. The remaining lawyers in Fredericton cannot but feel the blow and people cannot be found fault with for becoming

suspicious. The history of Fredericton lawyers is a spicy one. The capital was the home of Wilmot and Fisher, brilliant men. So the place has had the best examples of all classes of men. Those who were always good, those who were good and went astray, and those who were always bad. Yes, the story of self made men is interesting.

WILD CAT MINING SCHEMES.

A King Street Merchant Has His Say About Some of Them.

A King street merchant writes to PROGRESS regarding the boom in mining shares and he characterizes many of the propositions before the public at the present time as "wild cat schemes."

"Not long ago he says "I read in the New York Herald, that a certain promoter sold mining shares in New York city, in every quarter at \$2.00 a share, and in a little while the unusual monthly dividend of 10 per cent would come around, and so great was the demand from all parts of the Globe, that the post office authorities took the trouble to investigate, and before they got through they exposed one promoter and his friends the Directorate divided nearly one million dollars."

Referring more particularly to the mining properties placed before the people of St. John he speaks of one in particular, which quoting from an upper province paper, "is paying dividends and not a shovel of earth has as yet been taken out of the ground." Speaking from his own experience he adds: "In the last twenty years, I have put nearly \$7000.00 in mining schemes, and in going over my books find that I have received some \$200.00 in dividends, so merely write to advise all not to touch mining propositions, unless they have explicit confidence in the Directorate, and even then to be very careful."

My last and final investment was in a minus property, which stock I am told was all sold in St. John, and the price being in the reach of every one, it had a wide course, and I am told from good authority, that thousands of people hold shares. On making enquiries about this prospect, I find it is worthless, and have every reason to believe that fraud is connected with it, and the promoters should be called to task but as I have passed this with my other investments to profit and loss account, I trust that my past experience will be the means of correcting likely investes." PROGRESS does not give the names of the mines in which this gentleman says he has been interested for the reason that he does not furnish us with adequate proof of his assertions, but the subject of his letter is printed for what it is worth.

Cheaper Coal.

The Philadelphia and Reading Company has issued a circular announcing a reduction in the price of anthracite coal of 50 cents per ton for the sizes most in demand. The new schedule makes prices at tide-water as follows: Broken sizes, hard white ash, per ton, \$3.75; egg, \$4; stove, \$4.15, and chestnut, \$4.15.

This is good news to the citizens, but better news would be that our local dealers are making their prices accordingly.

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- PAGES 5, 6, 7, and 8.—Social happenings from all over the provinces.
- PAGE 9.—No Dread of Death—A celebrated doctor speaks of the last hours. Boers with Buffalo Bill—The noted showman has a new feature.
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- PAGE 16.—"Swanson"—A bright story of adventure. Births, marriages and deaths of the week.

VOLUNTARY EVIDENCE.

The Sackville Man's Brother-in-Law Convicted the Jury of His Guilt.

John C. Best is a Sackville man, and quite recently was arrested, tried and found guilty in Massachusetts of murdering his employer. He pleaded not guilty to the charge and there were many people who believed in his innocence. The trial lasted many days and the greatest surprise was manifested when Best's brother in law, Stiles, came forward and voluntarily gave the evidence that had most weight with the jury. He repeated a conversation that he had had with the prisoner and this seemed to convince the jury that there was no doubt of the guilt of Best. It is now said that Stiles wife, the sister of Best is dying, and that the cause of her illness was the shock the evidence of her husband against her brother gave her.

In spite of this the Advertiser of Boston which concluding that Best is probably guilty has some strong comments upon the evidence in the following article.

That J. C. Best killed G. E. Bailey is true, in all human probability, and beyond a reasonable doubt. Judge Sherman, in commending the services of the jury which brought in last Thursday night to the court in Salem that verdict, "Guilty of murder in the first degree," expressed a sentiment which finds an echo in the breasts of good citizens of the Commonwealth with a near approach to unanimity. There are differences of opinion, and rational and ethical grounds for those differences, regarding the conduct of one of the state's witnesses, whose information, gained from the prisoner under circumstances that many regard as binding the witness to the most sacred confidence, was voluntarily offered to the prosecution and indisputably contributed more than anything else to the prisoner's conviction. But that the verdict was just, there is, we repeat, no reasonable doubt. The jury, at any rate, did its duty faithfully. So did the presiding justices. So did the prosecution attorneys; who, whatever may be their personal opinions concerning the conduct of their star witness, considered from an ethical standpoint, were themselves clearly justified in making the most of the proof offered to them.

The public welfare is promoted in a very noteworthy degree by the promptness and completeness with which this atrocious crime, committed in North Saugus, has been ferreted out, and its perpetrator placed in a legal situation which is nearly certain to be followed, in due time, by his exemplary punishment.

We wish we could extend this line of remark so far as to endorse all those optimistic expressions made by Atty-Gen. Knowlton in his masterly summing up for the state, and by others who have commented upon the trial since its conclusion; to the effect that murder cannot be concealed; that however shrewdly the slayer of his fellowman plans to hide the crime, he is sure to leave a loophole by which his guilt will be discovered; that the arm of the law is long enough and strong enough to reach the most cunning murderer, etc.

But the truth is that in the prompt detection, arrest, indictment and conviction of the murderer of G. E. Bailey, there has been presented an instance of retributive justice which derives no small part of its noteworthiness from the fact of its being rather an exception to the rule than an instance in the ordinary course of events. Statistics show that but a small fraction of the murders committed annually in the United States are followed by the punishment of the murderers. In a majority of cases the murderers are not even tried for their crimes. Of those who are tried, fewer than one half in number are convicted, a considerable portion escape the final penalty, by one means or another.

Even in New England, where, on the whole, penal laws are enforced better than anywhere else in the Union, the deplorable truth is, nevertheless, that murder very often goes unpunished. A great many instances might be cited in proof of this statement, without entering far into ancient history. Within the past 10 years a number of murders have been committed in New England that remain unsolved mysteries. Sometimes not even sufficient evidence of guilt has been found to justify arrests. In

other instances arrests have been made, but indictments refused. In still other instances, as in that of the exceptionally atrocious murder of Mr. and Mrs. Borden, the only persons against whom any tangible proofs could be found have been tried and acquitted. In the case of the murder Miss Deltina Davis, the only person whom there was so much as reason to suspect of the crime was tried and convicted; but the conviction was set aside on a legal technicality, and at the second trial no conviction was secured.

What this case of J. C. Best proves is not at all that, even in Massachusetts, "murder will out," nor that, as Daniel Webster said, "there is no escape from confession but suicide, and suicide is confession;" but rather, that whoever commits murder in Massachusetts incurs very serious risk. For this much safeguard to human life in our Commonwealth, let us all be duly thankful.

His Memory Was Good.

A few days ago a gentleman who is well known in Charlotte county and who lives at the sbiretown there was in the city and meeting some good friends was put up at the Union Club. While there he was introduced to a commission merchant, who is also a member, and his title, which, by the way, is Count, was given him. "A Count," said the commission merchant, "why you look more like a Maine lumberman." This flash of rudeness was not resented and everything apparently passed off very quietly, but a day or so later the gentlemen met again and a friend not knowing that they had been introduced attempted to make them acquainted. The commission merchant, said with a cordial smile that he had the pleasure of meeting the Count before and recalled the introduction at the Club. With the most impassive stare the gentleman with the title said there must some mistake, it was quite impossible that they had met before and he significantly added "I always remember a gentleman once having met him."

A Fake Business.

The Toronto Publishing Co., published a very enticing advertisement in a number of papers sometime ago, and offered \$200 to the successful competitor in a jumbled word contest, the condition of which was that once having sent in the answer, which could be written out in about five minutes the successful applicant should send in fifty cents for a paper called the Welcome Visitor. This is on the same basis as the Queen contest of years ago, with the exception that the Queen people carried out their promises fairly well. A gentleman of this city, whose little daughter took an interest in the contest sent the fifty cents when she was notified that her answer was correct and a few days ago received from the dead letter office his letter asking why he had not received either paper or answer from the publishers. PROGRESS is glad to be able, with the assistance of Mr. Quinlan who is the gentleman referred to above, to warn its readers against sending any money to this concern.

Nothing But Rumors.

Rumors! rumors! rumors! nothing but rumors! That may in effect sum up the gossip of the week in the city. It is hard to understand in whose interest certain stories are started or why they are started, but the fact remains the same nevertheless that the names of a number of very well known people have been bandied about the streets this week, apparently without warrant or excuse. Dame gossip placed one man in the asylum, and the same old lady divorced two or three couples and sent another woman out of town. Perhaps there was more truth than rumor in the last one, but even that has not been placed upon such a basis that it could be said to be authorized.

Congratulations to Mr. Johnstone.

The many friends of Mr. John M. Johnston of this city will join in hearty congratulations to him upon his marriage to Miss Pike in Calais on Tuesday. Mr. Johnston is so well known here and so popular with his many friends that both and his bride will be gladly welcomed when they visit St. John.