

THE DAILY MAIL

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MONDAY, MAY 22, 1916

MR. BLAIR'S LETTER.

The letter of Mr. H. M. Blair, ex-secretary of the Public Works Department, published on Saturday, was a document of more than passing interest. In this letter Mr. Blair makes the very serious charge that Premier Clarke wanted him to play sick and offered to have his salary forwarded to him regularly if he would go away until the trouble blew over. This is a matter which calls for an explanation from the Premier. It will be recalled that a few days before the Royal Commission met to investigate the Dugal charges, Mr. Willard H. Berry, superintendent of scalers, the man named by Mr. Dugal as toll taker, emigrated to the United States and did not return until the enquiry was completed. Mr. J. Kidd Flemming, the then Premier, was asked to sign a telegram requesting him to return and give evidence, but flatly refused to do so. Premier Clarke, then Attorney General, although he knew that Berry was in a position to give very important testimony on the timbers land charges, made no effort to have him brought back to the Province. It was to this disgraceful incident that Mr. Blair had reference when he used the words, "I am no Bill Berry," in reply to the Premier's proposal that he make himself scarce for a time. He was fully justified in treating the Premier's proposal with contempt. Berry's action in quitting the country when he did was equivalent to an admission that he had been engaged in crooked work. Mr. Blair preferred to stand his ground, and for this he is to be commended.

It seems that Col. Guthrie, M. P. P., acted as a messenger for the Premier in the negotiations with Mr. Blair, and was present with the latter at a special meeting of the Government called to deal with the case. Col. Guthrie and Mr. Blair are close personal friends, and it is pretty well known that the junior member for York did all in his power to prevent Mr. Blair from being dismissed. It is safe to say that Mr. Blair would have no desire to place Col. Guthrie in a false position, so therefore when he says that the Colonel delivered the Premier's message to him and can verify what he says in regard to the proposal to play sick, it rather looks as if he has the matter pretty well clinched. A denial from the Premier will be equivalent to a repudiation of Col. Guthrie.

Mr. Blair in his letter gives a very frank statement of the whole case, and we believe that he is telling nothing that is not the truth. Indeed, so far as the Government is concerned there is no occasion for any man when speaking or writing about it to resort to falsehood. No person knows this better than Mr. Blair, and he would not take the risk of weakening his case by making statements which lack the elements of truth. He has certainly put it up squarely to Premier Clarke, and an explanation from the latter will be eagerly awaited by the general public.

Whatever may be said by Premier Clarke or Government newspapers in reply to Mr. Blair's epistle, here is one passage from it of a personal nature which will scarcely be called in question:

"I do not care for the opinion of some of the people, yet I realize that during the eight years I was in the employ of the present Government I did many things in their interests which, knowing what I do at the present time, I would not undertake on any consideration. I realize now that they used me for their own interests and I made the great mistake of being too rabid a party man, and submitted to be used for their purposes."

It will not be necessary for Mr. Blair to call any witnesses to establish the truth of the statement above quoted. Every person who has taken an interest in York county politics during the past eight or nine years can vouch for the truth of what he says. Mr. Blair was appointed to office by Hon. J. D. Hazen as a reward for party service, and had the support of all the members for York. He did not cease to be a partizan after entering the employ of the Government. The Premier and all the members of the Government were aware of this, but made no effort to check him so long as they felt that he was serving their interests. He took an active part in the collection of party funds. He was permitted to leave his office and work at the polls on election day. Premier Hazen permitted him to do this at the time of the Morehouse-Burden by-election in York in 1911, and Premier Flemming allowed him to go forth and work for Colonel Guthrie at the York by-election in 1914. As a matter of fact he practically took charge of this campaign for

the Local Government party. He helped to raise the big fund used in that campaign in the interests of "purity" and was actually one of the endorers, and subsequently became one of the martyrs, of the justly celebrated "big note," the proceeds of which went into the election pot. Time and time again The Mail called attention to his political activities and protested against an official of the Government playing the roll of a bitter partizan. Every member of the Government knew all about it, but instead of censuring him they actually commended him for what he had done. He was called a smart, brainy fellow, and on several occasions was rewarded by a substantial increase in his salary. When he wanted to take a holiday trip to the United States no obstacles were placed in his way, and he did about as he pleased. As he puts it in his letter, the members of the Government "used him for their own interests" and he might have added, "rewarded him at the public expense." They compelled him to take his official life in his hands, which meant that with a change of government his position would not have been worth five cents to him. Realizing that he could expect no quarter from opponents when a change occurred, it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Blair, following the example of Premier Flemming, tried to make some provision for the future. There was a difference, however, in the two cases. Flemming acquired some shares of stock in a Maine Power Company and claimed that he paid for them. Blair secured a block of stock in an Ottawa mushroom company and was honest enough to admit that he got it for nothing. Incidentally it might be stated that the leading spirit in each company was doing business with the New Brunswick government at the time the stock was acquired. Mr. Blair's statement to Premier Clarke, "I am not like Flemming," was correct except in the sense that each was compelled to give up a good job in the public service, although it was not on account of a stock transaction that Flemming lost his job.

It was Mr. Blair's political activities which got him in bad with men of both political parties in York. When a split occurred in his own party it became necessary for him to take sides and he lined up with the McLeod wing. He incurred the bitter hostility of Mr. Pinder, who was constantly on his trail, looking for a chance to entrap him. Other members, including Harry Woods, Dr. Price and A. R. Slipp, joined in the chase, and they finally got him. Mr. Blair is the victim of the vicious political system which has grown up in this province during the past eight years. He acted as a sort of gunman for knavish politicians who compelled him to do things which a public official should not have been allowed to do. He is a man of energy and ability and although he was a good official, the thought suggests itself that if he had served the province as faithfully as he served the political party to which he belonged, he would not have been deprived of his position. Mr. Blair may have his faults, but he stands better in the public estimation today than do the men who first used him to serve their ends and then drove him from his position in the public service.

Many people are wondering what connection the Nova Scotia Construction Company, the successful tenderers for the Valley Railway, had with the patriotic potato transaction.

Most of the "boys" who figured in Valley Railway contracts in the palm days of Kidd Flemming, have been promised a look-in on the new contract.

ON THE SIDE.

Even yet it's early for Bilberies.

First be sure you're right—then stop talking about it.

If you want to plant onions, now is the time to be on the scent.

In Germany they are killing storks for food; some newspaper editors in this country are eating crow.

It used to take more than a threatened libel suit to make a newspaper withdraw a statement.

Perhaps you have noticed that one can't always jump at conclusions without taking a tumble.

Spring housecleaning is a way women have of preparing for fall housecleaning.

The Mormons feel that they have the best facilities for taking care of the war widows.

There is already plenty of material among provincial politicians for a branch of the Independent Order of Down and Outers.

One of these women is your wife: Some clean house every spring whether the house needs it or not, and some clean house twice a day.

Mr. W. H. Poupore, of Montreal, is in the city.

Mr. G. E. Neville, of Montreal, is at the Queen.

RUSSIANS JOIN FORCES WITH BRITISH

A Force of Cavalry Reaches the Tigris After an Adventurous Ride

(Canadian Press.) London, May 21.—A force of Russian cavalry has joined the British army on the Tigris, in Mesopotamia.

An official communication, issued tonight, concerning the situation along the Tigris, follows:

"General Lake reports that on the 19th the enemy vacated the Bethaessa advanced position on the right bank of the Tigris. Gen. Gorringer, following up the enemy, attacked and carried the Dujailam redoubt. The enemy is still holding the Sannayat position on the left bank of the river.

"A force of Russian cavalry has joined General Gorringer after a bold and adventurous ride."

Last Hope of Turks.

Geneva, May 21, via Paris.—The Constantinople correspondent of the Tribune says that Field Marshal Liman Von Sanders is assembling a strong force of Turks at Sivas, in Asiatic Turkey, to oppose the advance of the Russians. The Turks are equipped abundantly with artillery.

The correspondent also says that Turkey has called out recruits of the ages of 17 and 18.

Naval Battle May be Going on

(Canadian Press.)

London, May 22.—Reports from Kalmar, in Sweden, on the Baltic, as forwarded from Copenhagen to the Exchange Telegraph Co., state that a violent cannonade was heard last night and that it was said a battle is in progress between German and Russian warships.



Gen. Joffre

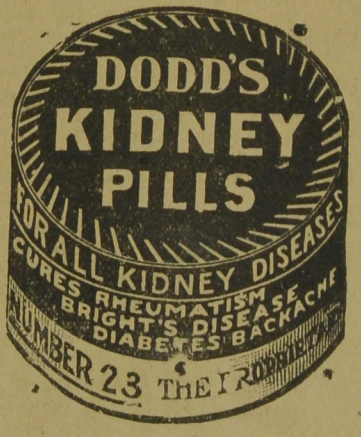
ST. PAUL'S PASTOR

(Continued from page 8.)

the position of chaplain of the New Brunswick Legislature.

On Sunday morning next the Presbyterians will conduct a farewell service in the Auld Kirk, the historic edifice which is soon to be removed from its present site to give way to the new building to be provided by the estate of Donald Fraser.

Dr. Smith will preach his farewell sermon on Sunday, June 24.



Hon. George J. Clarke, of St. Stephen, is at the Barker House.

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