

Dialogue between Mrs. Britannia and John Bull upon Colonial Affairs.

[By J.H.]

Mrs. Britannia:—"I am much alarmed, my dear John, at the news which has reached me, viz.—that all the tenants on our Southern Estates have "gone bung." What about all the cash we have lent them?"

John Bull:—"The money, dear madam, is quite safe, so don't be the least alarmed."

Mrs. B.—"But I feel very uneasy about the interest."

J. B.—"The interest and principal are quite safe, madam, because the money we lent them has been expended in the improvement of our estates by the building of fine towns, and the construction of docks and railways."

Mrs. B.—"I really can't help feeling very uneasy about our big loans and the interest on them."

J. B.—"If you will just be patient, I shall endeavour to explain how matters stand. It is this way. You see the money which we have advanced from time to time has been nearly all paid back in the shape of interest and commissions; whilst we have made large sums out of the enormous profits on the Brummagem goods we've palmed off on them. So, dear madam, when the figures are totted up it will be found that nearly all the principal has been repaid, and we still hold their bills for both principal and interest, and at the same time our estates have been improved to a very considerable extent."

Mrs. B.—"My dear John, you evidently manage financial matters very nicely. But I should so much like you to explain fully all about those bills you say we hold. I notice, by the way, that they are always *renewing* and *converting* them. Don't you think it would be much better to convert those bills into gold?"

J. B.—"Certainly not. And for this very simple reason— that we can make "a pot of money" out of those bills by those very renewals, and by converting loans into consols. By such means we (like the thimble-rigger) are enabled to be profitably employed by turning the proverbial 'penny.'"

Mrs. B.—"You are assuredly a very clever, good soul, John; and undoubtedly a great financier; in fact a perfect oracle in money matters. But, dear John, I don't like to have too many of those bills on hand. I understand Colonials call floating-bills—"kite flying," and if they do not exercise much care, they may get 'up in a balloon' and be flying through the air."

J. B.—"You need have no fear on that score, for I hold those bills, and you may bet your bottom dollar I've got them in a safe place."

Mrs. B.—"Well, it's a great consolation to know that you have made everything so secure. Now, dear John, there's another little matter to which I'd like to refer. I allude to those nice little baubles commonly called K's.C.M.G., which some Colonial individuals prize so highly. Tell me; does the Prince when negotiating in this connection deal in bills or cash?"

J. B.—"Oh! cash certainly. He's 'too fly' to be had by any Colonials, or marvellous city financier; and he takes very good care that those bauble hunters 'ante up' the spondoolicks right down fair and square."

Mrs. B.—"Dear good John, we are so very grateful for all your studied care and solicitude for our pecuniary welfare. I sincerely wish we could dispose of a few more K's.C.M.G."

J. B.—"Ah! There's a big line yet to be done in the bauble business, I can assure you, madam; for our estates are literally swarming with a host of upstarts, who are prepared to make any monetary sacrifice for the gee-gaw. Verily they are getting common enough; but the cry is 'still they come,' and as the demand for these Imperial Trifles is on the increase, we'll have to slap another five thousand into the scale, and make it ten thousand, with the determination to closely watch the market and raise the tariff accordingly."

Mrs. B.—"Well done, John. It's a splendid idea. And in

view of the fact that the great hankering after our decorations (H) is becoming so wide-spread, as our blue ribbon is getting short, we had better get in another supply."

J. B.—"I have already sent an order to Manchester for ten yards at 2d. a yard, which will be sufficient to furnish the requisite badges for at least one thousand Knights of the Order!"

Mrs. B.—"And above all things, dear John, don't forget the labour members in the Upper House in New Zealand. You must instruct our Figure Head out there to present each of them with a "Bit of Blue." It will keep their mouths shut, and make them loyal to the roots of their hair, for a very trifling outlay."

J. B.—"My dear madam, permit me to assure you that we've got the right man in the right place. He knows how to work the oracle. He invites them to spend an evening now and again at his house."

Mrs. B.—"Is it possible! Tell me, dear John, do the wives of the before mentioned customers accompany their husbands on such occasions?"

J. B.—"Of course they do, and a fine figure they cut and no mistake."

Mrs. B.—"What a terrible ordeal for the poor Figure Head's better half. I do really sympathise with her in such trying circumstances. It must indeed be a great shock to her refined sensibilities to rub shoulders with coarse vulgarity."

J. B.—"Oh yes. It is very trying indeed; but then, madam, it pays to do it. Why a pen'orth of blue ribbon, a ha'penny bun with a mug of tea, works wonders on their loyalty. Do you know, dear madam, that those people after being regaled with stale buns and tea, would shed the last drop of their blood for us?"

Mrs. B.—"God bless you, John, you are surely a rock of sense. There is just one more question I'd like to ask you. I hear that pensioners out in our New Zealand estates are being paid out of loans, and moreover, they are educating their young brats out of the same funds also. Now, I learn that those young brats are showing strong signs of disloyalty, and I'm afraid they'll be a source of much trouble in the future."

J. B.—"Leave that to us. We are preparing for these young shavers. We have sent out a fox to make soldiers of some of them, and they will probably be called upon some of these days to shoot the turbulent coveys."

Mrs. B.—"A capital idea. Make them slaughter each other."

J. B.—"This is exactly what we do in Ireland, and in fact throughout our vast dominions. Our motto has always been:—"Devide and Govern." But you know the Bit of Blue Ribbon, with the Bun and Tea Scuffle, is our cure for disloyalty. If that won't "gee," we'll get up a Religious Row, and soon settle their hash by trotting out the fox and his brigade with the powder."

Mrs. B.—"How about marvellous Melbourne, New South Wales, and our other estates in the Sunny South?"

J. B.—"Oh! they're all doing nicely. We apply the same remedies to each of them, viz.—buns, tea, and the little Bit of Blue. We have done amazingly out of those chaps, with the usual result—a big pot of money. Of course, as you already know, we get all their gold, mutton, wool, and big dollops of butter, and besides every penny they can scrape together comes home to us through many channels."

Mrs. B.—"My darling John; you are really very clever."

J. B.—"And with regard to the duties which our Figure Head has to perform, why, my dear madam, he has nothing to do but spend his time touring the Colonies at the expense of the taxpayers. If at any time the States Coach gets out of gear, the Figure Head simply steps down, and shunts the whole responsibility on to the shoulders of his advisors." (Wise Figure Head!)

Mrs. B.—"Well, dear John; I fear I have wearied you, but to tell you the truth I feel quite happy now having heard your lucid explanation of the affairs of our South Sea Estates. Come and have a drop of something to soothe your busy brain. We will have another chat, by and by."