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Topics of the Day

AS has been intimated several times in this journal, wages have reached a turning point. Results of the recent strikes indicate that the usual and inevitable reaction is in sight. On Saturday last, 2,500 cotton operators on strike at Valleyfield went back to work, with an increase only for the mule spinners. It was a compromise decision, but the employers yielded little. The plumbers' strike in Toronto has lasted many weeks and the victory will be to the masters. And so the story goes.

The trades unions have had a long innings and wages have advanced tremendously, while the hours of labour have been lessened. It is now too expensive to manufacture for export, and industrial expansion is being checked. This is due to the present high level of wages combined with an increasing rate of interest. Relief must come from either of these points, and wages are just as likely to fall as the rate of interest. With lower wages, however, will come a general range of lower prices. Real estate is now cheaper in many places than at any time during the past twelve months.

Sir Thomas Shaughnessy has been talking to Sir Wilfrid Laurier concerning the All-Red route and faster steamers on the Atlantic. Sir Thomas hasn't told what passed between them, but it is quite likely that he intimated to the Premier that the steamship business had better be left on a commercial basis. In fact after the consultation, Sir Thomas intimated as much. Surely Canada has done enough bonusing to last one small nation a good long life-time. The present steamers are bonused by means of mail subsidies; but they have nearly outgrown their bonus stage and are working almost entirely on the basis of what they can earn. This is as it should be. Our steamship traffic has assumed proportions beyond the predictions of the last generation and is in no need of Ottawa aid.

British Columbia is getting warm on the Japanese question. The Dominion Government should act quickly if it intends to act at all. If the people of that province work themselves up into a first-rate frenzy over Oriental immigration, it will be difficult to appease them. As the agitation is led by a Liberal member of the House of Commons, the government has not the proud privilege of saying that it is the work of political agitators. This pleasure being denied to the government, it would be well to set some real machinery in motion.

People would be foolish to stop eating steel-rolled flour because of the statement of Mr. William Henry Battle that such flour causes appendicitis. It is probably

another case like that of the Ottawa doctor who said that a man's blindness was caused by too many cigarettes and it turned out that the patient never used them. The steel-appendicitis theory needs considerable further evidence to support it, before it is to be taken seriously. For the present people may safely dismiss it and go on eating bread as usual.

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Mr. Herbert C. Cox, who has been elected president of the Underwriters' Association of Canada, and first vice-president of the National Association of Life Underwriters of the United States, is a young man who has never courted publicity. Even in sporting circles he is not strikingly active. His business and his home life have engrossed his attention. As the son of Senator Cox it was natural that he should be prominent in the Canada Life Insurance Company; and, with his brother, he has taken a leading part in its affairs. His elevation to these high offices shows that he has by his ability won the esteem of his conferees in the life insurance field and proves him to be something more than the son of a rather famous father.

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The meetings of these two insurance associations in Toronto have attracted considerable attention. The members apparently desired publicity, and their remarks concerning the reformers and the legislators of North America were forcible and to the point. The net result seems to be that most of them admit that the profession needed reforming, but that it would be unwise to reform it out of existence. With this view of the situation, the general public will fully agree. Life insurance is one of the modern necessities, but like most other large activities, it is the better of a little regulation so as to keep the poorer members of the profession within a certain restricted circle.

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The Dominion Rifle Association is meeting this week at Ottawa and the increase in the number of entries indicates a continuation of the keen interest in rifle shooting which was aroused by the Boer War. The Government announces that new ranges are being purchased in the West and at one or two points in the East. The Department of Militia has not moved very fast in this matter as some military districts have been several years without ranges. A militia district without a rifle range is a waste of money, and a considerable amount of good money is being wasted every year in this way. In some cases, the neglect of this feature of military training on the part of the authorities is simply astounding.

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The rumour that Mr. Sifton has been offered the portfolio of Public Works is not surprising. Mr. Sifton is a strong man and the present government was never in greater need of men of his type.



Mr. H. C. Cox.