

Civic Board of Control. Another argument in favour of THE CHRONICLE'S contention that a so-called Board of Control to administer the civic affairs of Montreal is not likely to prove all that the fancy of the aldermen points it, may be found in the experience of the good city of Toronto. The *Gazette* of yesterday, very properly and wisely comments on the condition of things in the Queen city, as proving that men and not systems are wanted. It says:—

"Toronto has in or over its City Council a board of control, with functions akin to those proposed to be vested in the executive committee which the draft of the new Montreal charter says our City Council may appoint. At the last meeting of the Toronto Council Ald. Lamb said the board of control was an open door to corruption and should be done away with. Ald. Denison added that the board was an iniquity, and agreed that it should be abolished. From this it seems that systems are less important than men, and that that only is best which is best administered."

Surely no stronger argument can be advanced than this mournful admission of the civic rulers of Toronto to convince Montreal that three well-paid commissioners responsible to the citizens' representatives for the good management of every department is what we want—and wanting ought to have.

The Noggin, The Note, and The Norwegian. A paragraph peregrinating through the papers contains a story of the sea, old and yet ever new and simple and interesting always. It reads like a yarn told by an elderly sailor man, but is charming as a moving narrative of adventure. What matters it that the storm-tossed traveller is in this instance a bottle, which, for the sake of alliteration's artful aid, we have called "a noggin," a measure of something. Let us read the paragraph, and then speculate on this pretty Christmas story:

"On July 29th, 1897, while crossing on the SS. *Parisian*, Hon. A. W. Atwater and Mr. Edward Rawlings threw a bottle overboard, containing a note. News has come to hand from London that this bottle was found off Tusso, an island north of Tromso, Norway, towards the end of last July by a poor Norwegian fisherman. It proved a lucky catch for the finder, as the gentlemen who launched the bottle have each forwarded him one pound for a Xmas box."

Midsummer, mid-Atlantic, a mail-steamer, two merry men, and a small bottle. Such is the material for this ocean romance. Eighteen months later, after much drifting in calms, and wild tossing in storms, and possibly passing

"South, down the Cattegat, by Hjelm,
To Besser in Saro,"

the bottle is found by a poor Norwegian fisherman, who will shortly, let us hope, celebrate his "lucky catch" by a Yule-tide surrender to the maid *Ultruda*, to whom Hans, the blue-eyed Dane, can never return.

This Christmas story is pretty. Yet, the absence of some further particulars makes it disappointing. We are not informed what the bottle contained before

these well-known Montrealers flung it into the Atlantic. We are not told what in the shape of letter or advice was inflicted upon this poor Norwegian fisherman, when he, like the Montrealers, opened the bottle. When pondering upon the possibilities, we find ourselves thinking that perhaps, if the poor lone fisherman has had to read some mid-ocean drollery written in the smoking-room of an Atlantic liner, he deserves the Christmas box these generous Montrealers have dispatched across the wintry seas to Norway.

THE CITY OF MONTREAL.

A Retrograde Movement on Foot.—City Council Cannot Give Contract for more than one year.—Some Proposed New Taxes.

The decision of the City Council to call for tenders for the City scavenging for five years is one of the most retrograde steps that it has taken for many years. The contract system is rightly regarded as being responsible for a good deal of the extravagances into which the City has fallen, and the contract system in the health department has certainly been no exception to the general rule. Affairs at the City Hall are surely getting rather mixed. The aldermen appear to have decided upon adopting something like a system of responsible government, that is, to relegate their administrative functions to an executive board. Would it be possible to imagine any responsible government proposing such a radical and comprehensive scheme of taxation as is being adopted by the charter committee, and at the same time, committing itself to the re-adoption of the iniquitous contract system in a department which succeeded in getting rid of it at a large expenditure a few years ago. The only reason given by the Health Committee for this reactionary recommendation was the confession that it had not been able to run the scavenging as economically as expected. Ordinary business men would consider this an excellent reason for asking to be relieved of further responsibility in connection with the city scavenging, or even in connection with any civic affairs whatever, but scarcely for undertaking to bestow a contract for the scavenging for five years. If the administration of civic affairs is to be placed in the hands of commissioners, or of an executive, they should not be deprived for five years of the control of such an important department of the public service as the scavenging.

In the year 1893, the city decided that it could do its own scavenging at a less cost, and in a far more satisfactory manner, than it had been done under the contract system. The citizens remember the constant complaints which were made concerning the unsatisfactory way in which the work was previously executed. After its transfer to the city, and up to quite a recent period, the work was decidedly carried out more satisfactorily than previously, but chaos seems to reign this year. The scavenging should never have been placed under the control of the Health depart-