

There has been about enough strife and bickering between the Chairman of the "Board of Works" and the City Engineer lately to last a year. The people are tired of it. The taxes are heavy, and nothing has as yet been done to show a return. No new sidewalks; no new roads; no talk about block pavement; nothing said about the work of reclaiming the island, which is fast destroying the harbour; in fact, utter inaction. The streets, though some of them are vastly superior to what they were two months ago, are dirty and offensive; and as far as local improvements of any sort are concerned, either contemplated or commenced, the city might almost as well have no Council at all.

I think I never saw Exhibition buildings worse arranged than those of Toronto. There is no sort of symmetry of arrangement; the buildings hide each other and appear to have been thrown into their present position on purpose to confuse. I cannot see that so many large exhibitions in Ontario during the year are beneficial; every county has its fair; and gives its premiums; if one great central exhibition were to be held in the same place every year, offering generous prizes for agricultural implements and products, and doing away with band competition, and horse racing, bicycle and children racing, the thing would have a tendency to benefit the community, and would encourage emulation, of which there is a great lack.

Still another manufacturer wishes to move his workshops and stores to Toronto. I would much prefer he stopped where he is; this moving of forces creates a false activity; one place is made lively at the expense of the other, business in general being not at all improved. There are several villages around Toronto almost depopulated within the last five years through this cause.

In common with a very large number of citizens I hope the curious report that J. Beverly Robinson is to be appointed Lieutenant Governor of Ontario is unfounded; not that I know anything particular against the "city solicitor" but I certainly never heard anything in his favour.

There appears to be a possibility of Mayor Beatty becoming a candidate for west Toronto. Mr. Beatty, though this is his second year of office, does not fill the position very happily; this however is no reason why he should not become a candidate for member of Parliament, for I am strongly of the opinion he would make a much better M. P. than Mayor.

The question has been pertinently asked "why are incompetent men almost invariably placed in responsible government positions?" There is some talk of placing a lawyer to fill the office of Collector of Customs for the Port of Toronto. A lawyer no doubt is a very good man in his way; but, as a rule, a man who is constantly dabbling in law, whose office is to practice at the bar, is of no service to fill a responsible position other than the vocation he has been studying for. Surely the lesson the government ought to have learned through the late defalcations should be a warning in placing men in authority who know next to nothing about the positions they are supposed to occupy. If report be true the Toronto Custom House collectorship is soon to be supplied by a man whose experience in financial matters is of the most meagre description.

The Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway wants money. All railways always want money, but they do not always get it. And yet this Company does a good business; the traffic is considerable in both passengers and freight. The Company not only wants money but demands it, threatening the villages and corporations with closing the line unless the bonuses in large amounts are forthcoming. The villages are powerless; the line is constructed; it would be ruination to the villages to close the line, and so they dumbly comply and hand over the bonus. I trust when the appeal is made to Toronto (if they try it again) for help, the cry will be unheeded; and, judging from past experience, such is likely to be the case, both as regards the request and the refusal.

Queen City.

## TRADE—FINANCE—STATISTICS.

In accordance with the promise already announced, an increased space in the SPECTATOR is devoted to commercial news, and it shall be steadily kept in view to "nothing extenuate, nor ought to set down in malice." Our intention is, in "plain, unvarnished" words, to review from week to week the trade of the Dominion, and place on record items of interest, especially giving prominence to the commerce of the Port of Montreal. We shall put all figures we may give in as concise a form as possible; nevertheless, we shall aim at rendering them so intelligible that "he who runs may read."

The question of making Montreal a Free Port has been very freely discussed of late, and it looks as if we were to be deluged with pamphlets on this important subject. The name Free Port is rather a misnomer—it should be Free Harbour. There can be no doubt that it is very important that shipping should be attracted here as much as possible—as the harbour is closed for at least five months in the year to sea-going vessels—which doubtless makes the wharfage charges, &c, heavier than if the harbour were open the whole year. In other countries commercial improvements of an important character are under the control of the Government, and are not left to the care of a single municipality; and it is a pity that political consideration should be allowed to enter into the question as to whether the Harbour Debt and Lake St. Peter deepening should be assumed by the Government. Steamship and other ocean freight requires a certain amount of handling here furnishing employment to many and cheapening rates of freight on shipments to foreign countries, and this should be developed to the utmost extent. On the contrary, through winter-freights on the Grand Trunk pass here in winter on their way to Portland without any *direct* benefit to any class, though they tend indirectly to benefit the country. The lowering or entire removal of harbour dues will necessarily cheapen goods, and will therefore benefit all importers in Ontario or elsewhere. For some time past large quantities of goods for Ontario have been seen by the writer at Albany—and in the middle of summer. This should not be, and anything which will tend to obviate this state of things cannot fail to benefit the country at large. This is, therefore, a national question, and must and will be considered as such. All political, personal or local jealousies must be frowned down.

Business in the harbour still continues active, and if the present improvement continues we may look for a very satisfactory record at the close of the season of navigation. The shipment of cattle promises to form an important item in our trade; the numbers from the opening of navigation to 5th instant, per Messrs. R. Reford & Co.'s lines of steamers alone, are—

	Cattle.	Sheep.
To Glasgow .....	1154	....
" London .....	721	540
" Bristol .....	416	670
" Southampton .....	90	....
Total .....	2381	1210

During the past week the "Buenos Ayrean" left port with the following heavy cargo: 86,126 bushels grain, 6,621 sacks flour, 1,300 barrels flour, 2,204 bags oatmeal, 3,207 sacks oatmeal, 1,108 pkgs butter and cheese, 394 head cattle, and 847 sheep. The "Buenos Ayrean" has the largest capacity of any ocean steamer that ever left the port.

Some attention is at present being directed towards the San Blas route. This route has hitherto received the least notice from explorers, for the reason that the chief idea has been to find a low depression in the Cordilleras, which at the same time would afford a sufficient water supply at the summit level to maintain a lock canal; and it also was held that only a short tunnel was admissible. A canal by the San Blas route would be only one-sixth of the length of that by Nicaragua and about one-half of the Panama, being only  $24\frac{1}{4}$  miles of actual cutting, and five miles of river navigation in the bayous, which at high water has a depth of thirty feet. There would, however, be tunnelling for seven miles, of which about half a million cubic yards would have to be removed at a cost of ten dollars a yard, while the remainder at two dollars and a half per cubic yard would raise the cost of the whole tunnel to sixty-five millions of dollars,—this would give a tunnel on the scale of 168 feet high and 100 feet wide. The seventeen miles of open cutting, largely in earth, on the San Blas route, need only be compared with an equal length on any one of the other routes; of this length all but six miles will vary from the sea level up to forty feet above it. It is stated that the whole work could be completed as quickly as on the other routes, and that American engineers consider the San Blas route the only feasible sea-level route. Such a canal would be entirely free from flooding rivers, and would only require one barrier to keep back the tide on the Pacific side, which would not involve the niceties and dangers of lift-locks, and by means of which the canal could be readily cleared from silt. Moreover, the harbours at both ends of the proposed San Blas Canal are, we are assured, better than can be found, or perhaps made, on any of the other routes.