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*Wyld & Darling Bros.,*

Importers, 13 Front-st. West,

TORONTO.

## THE MONETARY TIMES, AND TRADE REVIEW.

TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY MAY 25, 1877

### CHECKS ON MUNICIPAL EXPENDITURE.

The progressive increase in the rate of municipal taxes, in cities and towns, has at length aroused public attention, and the necessity of placing some checks on headlong expenditure is generally recognized. In the City Council of Toronto, Alderman Beaty has framed a by-law for this purpose. Heretofore there have been ten committees, all of which spent money in a very loose way. The practice was to spend the year's revenue, and often more than its revenue, before the estimates were passed. The passing of the estimates thus became, in fact, though not in name, a vote of indemnity, which covered up the acts and delinquencies of the several committees, some of which had invariably acted in contravention of the municipal law. This year, the estimates were passed when about four months of the year had gone. This is an improvement. And it is followed up by Alderman Beaty's by-law, which imposes a salutary check on expenditure. In the first place, the number of committees which are entrusted with the expenditure of money is reduced from ten to five: (1). An Executive Committee which has the supervision of finance, (2) A Committee on Works, (3) on Fire, Water and Gas. (4) on Property. (5) on Markets and Health.

As the Executive Committee is entrusted with important powers its constitution becomes a matter of primary interest. It is

to consist of the Mayor and an Alderman from each ward, to be named by the Council. The ward representation which seems to have been forced on the author of the by-law, is objectionable, as it may lead to bargaining for wards of the log-rolling order; though perhaps the danger is not very great, and it would have been impossible to get the measure of municipal reform which this by-law contains without this arrangement.

All specific expenditures proposed by any other committee will come under review of the Executive Committee, which may interpose its veto; in which case the particular expenditure may still be authorized by the Council on a vote of two-thirds. This check on the Executive Committee will tend to prevent an arbitrary exercise of its power. Any proposal which may command the approval of two-thirds of the Council, must, as a general thing, be reasonable. Municipal Rings have been known to wield even a greater power than that; and something might, in some possible conjuncture, be done by a party political taint in the Council. The operation of the measure will be closely watched. Perhaps if a repeated overriding of the veto of the Executive Committee were made to work some change in the constitution of that body, the effect in creating a greater interest in the working of the municipal machinery, might be beneficial. But it will be time enough to consider this afterwards. In the meantime, it will be desirable to regard the Executive Committee as a salutary check, not as an arbitrary obstruction.

The term Executive Committee is, perhaps, somewhat of a misnomer; it is more strictly speaking a Committee on Finance. The ministerial work will still be in the hands of the other committees. But they will be under the check of the Executive Committee and of the Council. Hitherto committees have largely exceeded the appropriations, which it has been usual to grant, in the first instance, in the form of a vote of credit, by placing certain sums at their disposal. This crying abuse which which was responsible for much of the increase in the rate of the taxes, called for a decided remedy. Once in every month the Executive Committee is to lay before the Council a report of contracts entered into, with other necessary particulars, including the estimated cost, and the actual expenditure up to date. This will prevent the repetition of the monstrous anomaly of the Council being surprised by finding the appropriation largely exceeded near the end of the year; an excess which, so far from having authorized, it did not even suspect.

This instalment of municipal reform goes

about as far as present experience can carry us. After a while, we shall doubtless see farther than is possible at present, and other steps in the same direction may be taken. Though Toronto makes the first move, there are other cities which will be only too ready to profit by the benefit of her experience should the present by-law bear the promised fruit.

### THE MONTREAL FIRE.

The Montreal jury whose duty it was to investigate the causes which led to the loss of eleven lives at the recent fire in that city, rendered their verdict on the 14th instant. They find, as was unavoidable, that the immediate cause of death was the fall of the northern gable wall of the burning building; but as to the origin of the fire, no satisfactory evidence has been reached. Nothing transpired to indicate anyone "as having either motive for or interest in the destruction of the buildings." The watchman, Paquette, states that he found a small pile of wood on fire in the second story, that he threw six buckets of water on it without extinguishing it, but finding it still spreading he got excited and gave no alarm either to the neighbours or the fire brigade. He remained, in fact, within the burning building for a whole hour without once calling for help.

We cannot understand why this man, through whose conduct the jury find that the flames obtained such headway as to be beyond control, is to be allowed to go free. It is difficult to account for his inaction, unless we suppose him insane; if insane, he should be sent to an asylum; if not, there should be some means of punishment found. But if such a creature be permitted to be at large, might he not act in the same way under like circumstances again and lead again to loss of life? The censure passed upon him he richly deserves, but he deserves more than censure.

The premises consisted of two connected buildings, the rear one a hundred feet by twenty-six, three stories high, built on pickets, and cased with four inches of brick on one side and one end; the front one with stone foundation, wooden front and rear, and brick gables twelve inches in thickness. These buildings constituted the workshops and warehouse of the Oil Cabinet & Novelty Co., whose manufactures and stock on hand were mostly of wood, and whose business involved the keeping on the premises of turpentine, paint, varnish, sawdust, shavings, and other inflammable or combustible material. In fact, the place was what insurance men term an extra hazardous risk, requiring the utmost pre-