

**The
Public
Health.**

Regardless of requests for silence from citizens who apparently value the commercial reputation of Montreal above the health of its people, we intend to continue the note of warning sounded in every issue of THE CHRONICLE published during the present month. Signs of the presence of a foul and loathsome disease being in our midst are not wanting, and no good citizen of the Canadian metropolis will fail to support the demand for every precaution which vigilance, and the expenditure of public money, if necessary, can obtain for the preservation of the public health. There may, as some assert, be no good reason for alarm or anxiety at present, but we cannot so soon forget the unheeded warnings of fifteen years ago. The dreaded smallpox found us then unprepared, and, despite all the assurances that the medical skill and hospital arrangements now at the service of the city in any similar visitation are sufficient for any emergency, we would like to have a report from a special committee of the Council and Board of Health that such is the case. When we recall the fact that during the outbreak of smallpox in 1885 about 2,500 children died of the disease, even the charge that we are intentionally and needlessly exciting alarm and filling our readers with anxiety will not silence us. We reiterate our firm belief, that there is enough in the present state of affairs to warrant apprehensions of danger, and for the sake of the commercial and maritime interests of the city the most vigorous and uncompromising methods to stamp out even the symptoms of disease are necessary. We repeat our previous words of caution: "It is the imperative duty of those entrusted with the administration of civic affairs and the care and preservation of the public health, to make it almost impossible for careless and uncleanly people to neglect with impunity the ordinary precautions for the preservation of healthy conditions of living. We want accumulation of dirt when discovered in out of the way places, where disease germs might find congenial soil to propagate, removed, and all foul spots cleansed by gangs of scavengers. It is useless to plead the lack of funds wherewith to keep the City of Montreal clean and wholesome. If requisite and necessary, recourse can be had to the reserve fund which is intended for use in case of need. The citizens of Montreal will not listen to any excuses from those entrusted with the care of the public health if there is any neglect of proper precaution. We must not be classed among the dirty peoples of the earth." And again we urge upon the authorities to take the necessary precautions. Effective measures should be adopted. We would suggest in this connection that the Health Committee consult with the Provincial Board of Health, and some of our leading physicians connected with the hospitals. If

they do this perhaps their eyes will be opened. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. An energetic and capable assistant to Dr. Laberge should be immediately appointed—one having the same qualifications which serve to make Dr. Pelletier so useful to the Provincial Board of Health. There must be no foolish trifling or irresolution in dealing with this vitally important matter.

IRON AS A TRADE BAROMETER.

One of the most generally accepted maxims of commerce is that iron is the most reliable of trade barometers. An increased consumption of iron and steel is the earliest sign of trade having commenced to improve, and when the tide turns iron and steel are the first to show a decreased demand.

There have been exceptions to this, as there are to most rules, but it is usually so reliable that, when the iron trade begins to decline, the situation calls for grave consideration, so that a sound judgment may be found as to whether the iron barometer falling indicates a merely temporary depression, or, the coming in of a prolonged period of bad weather. What then are the facts of the day in this connection? The production of the American furnaces and their number in blast on 1st July, 1898-9, 1900 was as below:

July 1st, 1898.	July 1st, 1899.	July 1st, 1900.
No.	No.	No.
Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
185	237	284
216,311	263,363	283,413

This shows how large was the development of the productive capacity in the last two years. The total output of the furnaces last year was over 15 millions of tons. As it takes five tons of raw materials to produce one ton of pig iron, we can judge what an enormous amount of freight was carried by railways and water courses to feed the smelting furnaces. On the 1st February last the production reached its maximum. There were then 296 furnaces in blast with an output of 298,014 tons. Since then there has been a steady decrease, furnaces have been shut down and they are now being put out of blast to an extent that is exciting general observation and enquiry as to what it portends. That the production was outrunning demand is shown by the stocks of pig iron at the furnaces; on the 1st February last there were 148,336 tons; on April 1st, 197,532 tons; May 1st, 241,077 tons; and July 1st, 421,038 tons.

One leading line of pig iron has declined from \$19.50 to \$16.75, and another from \$20.75 to \$16.00. Usually the prices of iron and steel are fixed by a combination of makers, as is done in England at the Ironmasters' quarterly meetings, but recently this custom gave way under the pressure of competition, and to-day it is "every man for himself," to get what he can for his products. A drop of from \$3 to \$5 per ton on an output of fifteen millions of tons is a serious blow to the prosperity of the trade; it means a movement to reduce wages; to secure lower freight rates; and competition for contracts that will press very hard