

that the contest between the Government of the United States and the importers has terminated, but it has lasted a considerable time, and has led many to think that, if the sliding scale be maintained, the color test of the Dutch standard ought to be abandoned.

QUEBEC.

If we say, *re* Quebec, "Let the dead past bury its dead," and to avoid angry discussions concerning the "I told you so's," it should certainly be on the condition that its people "act in the living present," in the adoption of such measures as will prevent the possibility of conflagrations hereafter. The forms which that action should take have been the subject of so very much talk and correspondence as to lead to the surmise that all will end in talk instead of in sensible work; therefore it is that consideration and suggestion are in order until the safety of the future is reasonably assured.

To take the matters of reform in the order of their immediate practicability, we are actually led to the burnt district, where we see opportunity to prevent the erection of wooden buildings; unless this is done the rest is hopeless. There seems a fair chance for the enforcement of the by-law, which is properly drawn for the purpose, but we see at the same time a present opportunity for the widening of the streets in this district; if this is now neglected or delayed until buildings are erected on the present lines, it becomes a matter of great expense and loss, whereas, if it is done now, the improvement would nullify the expense. The present narrow streets make travelling extremely dangerous and laborious; and next come the building of tanks and re-arrangement of the water service therein.

So much for the burnt district; now for general matters. It appears that, at the time of the recent fire, there was a tank containing sufficient water to supply a fire engine for more than an hour, estimate over one hundred feet above the level of the building in which the fire commenced, and about one thousand feet distant from it; and there was a steam fire engine, but neither engineer nor horses. The firemen at the station are three, one aged sixty-five years, another aged fifty-seven, and the other is a young man active enough, but all three devoid of training or experience; consequently, the spread of the fire may be set down to incompetence rather than to want of means for its extinction, and, therefore, one of the very first things to be done is the appointment of a competent chief,

who, having experience and ability himself, and, being in command of a properly selected and properly-paid corps of firemen, will drill them into such efficiency as will cause the prompt and sensible use of such means as are at their command at the time.

The source of the city's water supply is unfailing and inexhaustible; the present supply is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of the city, but its mode of distribution is defective, and it is not sufficient for fire purposes, as, when a fire occurs, the full supply and the whole pressure is required to be instantly available, the more especially as the heavy winds to which Quebec is peculiarly exposed are apt to cause the fires to spread unless instantly attended to. There are three means of improving the present water supply without extraordinary expense: for instance, the present force of firemen is 32 men, all told, which include the chief and his assistant and seven men, who run from a fire, and not to it, for the purpose of turning on and off the water. If, where the water enters the city, valves were placed, the turning of which would let the water into different portions of the city, and a man were there who would obey the orders of the Chief in turning the supply on to the necessary district, he could receive his orders as part of the fire-alarm system; the second is the building of more tanks, so as to have an available supply during the time necessary for obtaining the full supply; the third is the utilizing of the ditches belonging to the fortifications as reservoirs for a system which would either communicate with the present pipes of certain districts, so as to afford a continuous supply from the present principal main, or be supplied by an independent main, or be used for fire purposes only. The next matter for reform is one in which common honesty should induce the co-operation of all classes for its adoption, viz., that all property benefited or protected by the water supply shall equitably contribute to its cost and maintenance,—any exceptions or exemptions are simply dishonest and should at once be abolished.

We must, however, remember not to lose sight of those portions of the city other than the burnt district, as well as all other places where similar conditions exist, because it is useless to heap up appliances for the extinguishment of fires if we allow the means of causing fires to exist in such proportions as to render conflagrations probable. Opposite the Merchants Exchange in Quebec is a wholesale grocery in a first-class building: surrounded by similar buildings or isolated

it would be safe, but almost immediately behind it is a large wooden flour shed, and a very few feet distant from its *window side* is an immense old wooden building, the burning of which would almost inevitably destroy this first-class risk. This is not an exceptional case, as, wherever you find a good building, it is like a sheep amidst a pack of wolves; and, unless these wooden buildings are covered with fire-proof material and sub-divided by brick walls, there will always be extraordinary fire risk in every part of Quebec.

That presence of mind and perseverance would have enabled the chief of the fire brigade in Quebec to preserve from destruction much of the property now burnt is evidenced by the success of Mr. Hetherington in preserving his premises, although the buildings on the side thereof were destroyed. The Chief must blush whenever he passes these buildings, as Mr. Hetherington is a plain, unpretending, sensible man who utilized the means at his disposal, as the Chief did not.

The remaining feature for consideration is the inducement to action. Let us see what that is at present. A large portion of the property is exempt from taxation, its proprietors, except on the score of common honesty, have no inducement for reform. Every good building can get insurance at very low rates. It is not likely that the present rates would be reduced if everything necessary to safety were supplied, nor is it likely that any difficulty will be experienced in procuring insurance at the present low rates; if at all, very little attention is paid to exposure of locality in computing rates, consequently these people have no inducement to reform. Then we have the poorer class, to whom, in so far as they are innocent of its cause, a conflagration is a misfortune; for these the purse of charity is opened so promptly and so widely that their latter end is more comfortable than their first, and thus little as we would deprecate the efforts and the sacrifices of the charitably-disposed, we find that these have no inducement to reform either. The true sufferers are the fire insurance companies, they suffer patiently and continuously; they are so modest that the word "must" is never heard amongst them, or reform would be inaugurated and maintained, therefore it is that having "sung our little song" we wait the next conflagration and its lessons, which nobody will learn and nobody will apply—and we nearly had it at St. Sauveur, another suburb, on Tuesday last.

The contract for building a new cotton factory at Chambly, Que., has been awarded,