

## Prominent Topics.

### Montreal's Assessment.

The total assessed value of real estate in Montreal this year is \$638,081,015, of which amount \$505,390,451 is available for taxation and \$132,690,565 is exempt. This shows an increase in the gross assessment of \$136,183,390 over last year and in the net assessment of \$124,242,245. The valuation of exempted properties has advanced from \$120,119,419 in 1911 to \$132,690,565 in 1912.

It is rumoured that the United Fruit Company is to be prosecuted for violation of the Sherman Law. The directors know nothing of the Attorney-General's intention and say that they do not believe that proceedings are intended. A New York financial journal says, "United Fruit is entirely an operating concern. It handles distribution of fruit in the United States through a legally separate entity, the Fruit Dispatch Company, but every share of that company is owned by United Fruit Company. Fruit Dispatch Company was formed after United Fruit was organized, and is simply a distributing aid. Further, United Fruit handles a product which must be sold immediately on arrival. The company cannot regulate prices and does not attempt to. Prices are governed entirely by the factors of demand and supply. United Fruit has pursued a policy of "live and let live" as respects competition. It has not attempted to interfere with or injure competitors."

The case for the company would be stronger without the last clause. If anybody will try to ship a few bunches of bananas from the British West Indies to the United States or Canada, they will soon find out what the "live and let live" policy amounts to. West Indian fruit growers claim that they are absolutely at the mercy of the Atlantic Fruit monopoly. Whether that comes within the sphere of American law is another question. We are inclined to think it does not. So far as Canada is concerned a state aided and regulated line of steamships will probably solve the problem very shortly.

### War and Rumors of War.

There is an old story of a prisoner who had just been arrested, sending for his lawyer and explaining to him the nature of his alleged offence. "Oh," said the man of law, "they can't put you in jail for that." "But I am in jail," persisted the unfortunate client obstinately. According to some very high authorities war between any of the great powers of Europe is impossible. The New York Evening Post quotes a London dispatch which reads: "Hopes are entertained that there will be no war; but the future is difficult to define, and it would seem that the course of events of late has been

more in the direction of hostilities than of peace." Again: "The majority of the Powers will meet with a sincere desire for peace, but the hopes of a pacific result are not very sanguinely entertained on the Stock Exchange," because, "since Turkish power in Europe will henceforth be reduced to a minimum, each of the leading Powers is naturally desirous, and perceives very keenly the necessity, of looking after its own interests."

Then the Post adds: "These dispatches bear date, however, not of November, 1912, but of February, 1878, when the diplomatic situation, with the Russian army encamped at the gates of Constantinople, was quite as hopeless as it is to-day. While the stock markets were shivering at that time, the diplomatists were quietly talking things over. There was not war between the Powers and the Russian army never entered Constantinople."

The Wall Street Journal under the heading "A Reason for not Expecting War" proves that war is a financial impossibility. It says "London is the free discount market of the world. If London stopped discounting for even a few months, she would draw gold from the rest of the world at the rate of \$200,000,000 a month. Like France, she loans money to all the world. But she loans on early maturing bills. It might be possible to starve her population; but no combination of the Powers could bankrupt London. In the event of war, Paris alone could bankrupt Germany in a week. No war could disturb the credit of the Bank of France; but the German Reichsbank would inevitably go down in the smash. All Germany's capital is in her own shop. She is doing a great business, and, quite properly, a great part of it on borrowed money. But if her loans were called, she must put up the shutters." The inference drawn is that Germany cannot allow Austria to fight.

About the most that can be said is that the situation looks no worse than it has looked for some weeks and that it is still critical.

Several of the banks have this week been calling loans in Montreal. One of the Toronto institutions is reported to have called no less than \$800,000 yesterday, making a total for that particular bank of \$1,000,000 since the beginning of the week. Other banks have been calling in smaller but substantial amounts. It is likely, according to statements made by the banks, that money will continue tight until the turn of the month. From Toronto, it is stated that considerable difficulty is being experienced with the placing of loans on realty, owing to the demands now being made upon the different institutions. The lateness of the season in the West is said to be partly responsible for the strain in this connection.