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### THE MONTREAL ARSON CASES.

It is now a month or more since the arrest of eight citizens of Montreal charged with arson or complicity therein. Haynes, Jenkins and Clarke were the first arrested in connection with the Boyd-Gillies and other fires. The latter two of the trio turned Queen's evidence when the case was heard in *enquete*. Then came further arrests which startled the community. William Thomas, John Beiser, Adolphe Sassville and Edwin Richardson were taken up. Two others managed to escape, but efforts are still being made to capture them.

The confession of one of the business men, named Edwin Richardson, made in the presence of a detective and a lawyer in the office of Judge Sicotte, is a piece of evidence calculated to startle the coolest of citizens. This man, who bore a good reputation, being popular and industrious, testified that in 1893 he went into the business of making fur ornaments and trimmings, having for a short time a partner named Castle. After Castle left him Richardson had to do his own cutting, and so engaged Arthur Bullen to work for him. It was found "hard to make ends meet," and this difficulty Richardson confessed to Bullen. In a short time John Beiser came to Richardson and asked how much he would sell his business for. The reply was \$1,500, and it was then agreed that Beiser should have half the sum he secured over and above this sum. What follows of his testimony is well worth being given in full:

In reply to a question I told him I was well insured, and he replied that it would be quite easy to fix things. He asked me to get a duplicate key made, and this I did and gave it to him. The next thing I knew he and Bullen brought down to my premises a lot of worthless scrap stock. Bullen then removed to his own house a quantity of silk cord. The next move was to place a leaden cup, the works of a clock and a quantity of acids.

On the Sunday morning of the fire I went down to the store and found everything gone. I shortly afterwards got \$2,225 insurance. Beiser came to me and asked for a share of the plunder. I gave him four one hundred dollar bills. He said I would have to settle with Bullen. When the latter came to me I gave him \$50 and the silk cord which he had taken to his house.

After this some little time Beiser sent me the books of my business with the covers torn off. I shortly afterwards destroyed them.

This, it will be agreed, is rather interesting reading. But it is stated that there is in possession of the Crown evidence with respect to other fires which is nearly as circumstantial and conclusive. The testimony is such as leads to the opinion that the schemes were "worked" from New York. Therefore as soon as the prisoners are arraigned a commission will be applied for, which shall visit New York and probe matters. This being granted the trials will likely be postponed to the next term of Queen's Bench. Those who are acquainted with the circumstances are loud in praise of Detective Carpenter for what he has done towards unearthing this rascally series of swindles. According to the *Herald* reporter, sub-chief Beckingham, of the fire brigade, attributes the freedom from fires which Montreal has recently enjoyed largely to the arrest of this nest of fire-bugs.

### A PRESSING DUTY.

No more important duty confronts the municipal authorities of Toronto than that of economy, in expenditure. The debt of the city is eighteen million dollars, and it should be reduced year by year. Goldwin Smith has rendered a public service in procuring and publishing in several city papers a statement of the financial condition of Toronto. This statement shows, from the treasurer's report for 1894, that the city's bonded debt is \$16,674,811, after allowing for all sinking fund, cash and investments. Besides this the city has liabilities of over \$2,000,000, of which at least \$1,224,500 is already awaiting liquidation by the sale of authorized debentures in the hands of the treasurer, so that the debt is really about \$18,000,000.

Here is a burden of say \$94 upon every citizen, old or young; and it is time that the individual citizen realized that this burden is excessive, and must be lessened. The voter in particular should take care that he gives his vote only to intelligent men, who, as councillors, will make civic economy and the reduction of the debt first planks in their election platform. We have a city debt nine times as large as Detroit, five times as large as Milwaukee, and two and a half times as large as the average of the fifty chief cities of the United States. We even exceed Cincinnati, which ranks among the highest debt-burdened cities of the neighboring republic, at \$84 per capita.

A good beginning has been made this year by reductions amounting to half a million dollars. Of this the largest item is for local improvement purposes, viz., \$270,000; general purposes, \$197,000; railway expenditure, \$48,000; total reduction, \$515,000. Why not reduce the debt every year by half a million. We are spending but a moderate amount this year on local improvements, namely, \$119,000 for street paving, and \$57,000 for sidewalks of concrete and of wood, while on sewers we shall spend less than \$1,200. We are getting along and can get along for some years without spending a cent on laying out new streets or grading them, or in such lavish folly as prevailed during the boom times, and which was described in a series of articles in our columns last summer. Let every department of the city be conducted with the utmost economy consistent with the public safety.

### FIRES IN 1895.

It is something to be thankful for, that the fire waste in the United States and Canada shows a decline thus far this year as compared with several previous years. According to the tables compiled by the *New York Journal of Commerce and Bulletin*, the fire losses for nine months ended with September, were respectively, \$121,000,000 in 1893; \$98,000,000 in 1894, and \$96,000,000 in 1895. Losses by months appear in the following table:

|                 | 1893.         | 1894.        | 1895.        |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| January .....   | \$17,958,400  | \$10,568,400 | \$11,895,600 |
| February .....  | 9,919,900     | 11,297,600   | 12,360,200   |
| March .....     | 16,662,350    | 9,147,100    | 14,239,800   |
| April .....     | 14,669,900    | 11,540,000   | 11,018,150   |
| May .....       | 10,427,100    | 10,777,800   | 7,761,350    |
| June .....      | 16,344,950    | 8,282,300    | 9,223,000    |
| July .....      | 12,118,700    | 16,307,000   | 9,085,000    |
| August .....    | 13,222,700    | 10,432,800   | 9,929,000    |
| September ..... | 10,508,700    | 10,149,900   | 10,766,300   |
| Totals.....     | \$121,832,700 | \$98,502,900 | \$96,278,400 |

It will be seen that the year 1895 thus far shows a slightly lower loss than the same period of 1894, and a very marked improvement over the first nine months of 1893. The reduction is all the more gratifying when the increase in property values is considered.

During September there were 212 fires of a greater destructiveness than \$10,000 each. The journal quoted