

agreeable. Another large street, Bathurst, is in the same predicament, the overflowing of cellars and basements being no unusual thing. Murray Street has a creek flowing through its drain; this creek taps the country for four miles, and a 15-inch pipe is supposed to convey away all the water that comes from this back country. The good citizens of Toronto who happen to possess basements to their dwelling-houses or stores are in a constant dread of heavy rain and spring thaws. The number of lawsuits the city has been called upon to defend through the evil effects of bad drainage is legion. I believe I speak the truth when I say that if such a fever as that which devastated New Orleans and Memphis should show itself in Toronto, the bad drainage of the city would but make the scourge a tithe better than that of those Southern cities.

All the sewage water of the city is emptied into the reservoir, for the Toronto Bay is the reservoir of the city practically, from which 80,000 people procure their water supply, and to which they send their sewage water. The silent indignation of the good people of Toronto should be seen to be appreciated; having voted away \$2,000,000 on Water Works, Torontonians generally feel rather sore when the water rate comes due.

I am happy to say a number of the aldermen are taking their usual vacation at the expense of the city this week. Ostensibly they enjoy themselves on the pretence of ascertaining the durability and efficiency of the roadways of the American cities, to which cities they have now taken their uninterrupted way. I thoroughly hope and trust they will have as good a time as their predecessors on the same errand from the same city have had in previous years—long life to them! Seriously—what a waste of civic money is consummated every year through this same means! A new fire engine in Oswego is to be inspected—a patent hook and ladder at Niagara is for sale cheap; Aldermen T— and L— get a holiday thereby. Every year this same question of block pavement requires that half a dozen aldermen must see into the merits of the different permanent roadways of Chicago, Detroit and New York. What a farce! As if the report of last year would not suffice for this. The matter would not be so far fetched if there were any chance of the people benefitting by the trip; but as the streets of Toronto are not likely to be improved this year through the agency of block pavement, the indignation felt in private circles is very appreciable.

Will the people of Toronto never learn a lesson of wisdom? The sad experience of St. John in their disastrous conflagration ought to have been a warning to us in the erection of our frame structures. Such scandalous house-building as is found in Toronto is not to be met with again in Canada. It is to be hoped the fire in Hull may have a tendency to work a reform. To-day I examined carefully a row of houses now being erected on Clarence Square, and I can confidently say the workmanship was not good enough for a barn; and yet the City Commissioner passes such houses, and winks at the unworkmanlike manner of their construction; windows two and three inches out of plumb; walls bulging out; wooden window-sills of the worst description; slightly built roofs, the timbers of which are scarcely large enough for a hen-house; bad drainage, and bad mortar in the walls, the chief ingredient of which is sand not half sharp enough. These evils carried to excess are but examples of the nefarious character of Toronto's terraces. In last week's letter I called attention to the manner of building houses in Toronto; this week I renew the attack, for the evil is not a local affair—it affects the welfare of the Province. If a fire were once to get a good start in Toronto, the disaster of St. John would be doubly repeated in the capital of the Province of Ontario. It is said the city of New York, for the size of its buildings, is the worst built city in the Union. Perhaps so, the walls of their warehouses are not the most substantial I have seen; but Toronto, for the size of the place, is worse built than New York. It does not require any very great memory to call to mind warehouses caving in before completed, church towers cracking and walls of colleges blown out; and how many houses and stores have been condemned on account of the shameful manner of their construction? I can at this juncture number many such.

Queen City.

IN THE HOUSE.

OTTAWA, April 27.

There was a good deal of hard work done in the House during the last week. As the close of the session approaches, the time for rhetoric ceases and the period of practical debate comes on. The M.P.'s want to get home, or, perhaps, they remember that they have "itching palms" and long for their cheques as well as their *congés*. I noticed a nervousness in their demeanour, and they spoke to the point without making vain efforts at oratory, which so few of them are capable of successfully accomplishing. A few terse words were the most that the best of them said, and there was little laughter at the efforts made at wit by one or two who think themselves capable of making a *bon mot* now and again. Mr. Plumb was comparatively quiet, and Casey was less demonstrative, for he ceased his Jack-in-the-box performance, as if he understood that the House had grown weary of him. Casey writes pamphlets, but speaks as if he had no idea as to what he would accomplish. It is somewhat noticeable that neither the French nor the Irish members of the House give evidence of much speaking power. With the exception of Mr. Blake there is not an Irishman in the House worth listening to for ten minutes. Mr. Anglin speaks a good deal, and is somewhat ready, but he is weak and lacks the power which goes to make a ready debater. Mr. Costigan seldom opens his lips, and when he does he fails to command the attention of the House. Outside the House Mr. Costigan speaks well enough, inside he is, I fear, a failure. His best record is his honesty, and that no one doubts. In fact he is so honest that he has left himself poor, and some people would call that not the best policy, but I suppose it is. Among the French-Canadians there are Laurier, Girouard, Langevin and Vallé, while the English-speaking members have Sir John, Tupper, Tilley, Mackenzie, Cartwright, and a host of others. To be sure the French-Canadians speak at a disadvantage, but even in their own language they are more flowery than solid, more general than argumentative. Not that I expect the Irish to produce a McGee, or the French-Canadians a Cartier, but the present Parliament does not show either of these nationalities to ordinary advantage. During the past week this was as noticeable as it was during any part of the session.

Although a good deal of hard work was done, yet there was a great deal of such debate as proves the stuff that men are made of from time to time. Mr. Blake spoke often, and his sharp voice rang through the House, but it was devoid of volume. He always speaks with effect, but often without attracting the attention of the House. I noticed, too, during the week, that the members used their opera glasses less frequently than they did during the early part of the session. At first they idled a good deal of their time away in looking at the ladies, but the faces at last became familiar, and the glasses became very unused, and the occupants of the gallery were saved from being stared at by those who should know better. All these little things indicate the close of the session just as surely as the "probabilities" of Vennor may mean anything or nothing. I noticed, too, that the House was more noisy than ever. The members kept snapping their fingers for the pages more frequently than they were in the habit of doing. The practice is not a nice one, but it is tolerated. In the middle of some speech, when, perhaps, the House hangs upon the speaker's words, as a bee clings to a honeysuckle, a member will snap his fingers, causing a report which is heard in the remotest corner of the gallery. The member wanted a page to bring him a glass of water, or take a letter, or some other little attention which the House recognises without let or hindrance.

Even the Reporters' galleries bear a wearied look, and the men who fill them are evidently tired of their labours and want to go away again. Last night the House looked even drowsy. All the dash appeared to have left the members, the spectators and even the pages moved more lazily than usual. The library is less patronized, the reading-room less visited, and the whole atmosphere of the House bears a heavy and a tired appearance. The old bodies in the Senate sometimes visit the House in large numbers, and it is remarkable how little the people care whether they come or not. I never imagined that the Senate was thought so little about until I came and saw and heard for myself. Many of the members of the House of Commons spoke of the Senate with a smile, and predict that its days were numbered as it at present exists. It was only this morning that a member of the House, who is supposed to be in favour of the Senate as it is, told me that the feeling of the House was rapidly changing in favour of a change. But it was not an hour after until another member told me that the Senate could never be changed, and he said something about "bulwark of liberty," or some other phrase to the same effect.

Another thing I noticed is that the boasted "ventilation" of the House has proved a failure. At the earlier part of the session it was thought that the promised ventilation was a great improvement on last year, but experience has proved that the improvement has been slight. The heat at times has been so great that ladies have fainted in the galleries, and at others so cold that the reporters were allowed to wear their hats. This is sufficient to show you that the "ventilation" is still defective, and that there is plenty of room for improvement. There is another important fact which it is well to remember. It