

PROMINENT TOPICS.

The advent of Winter this week with its accompaniments of navigation closing, roadways fit for neither wheels nor sleighs, sidewalks dangerous, street accidents, labourers thrown out of work, with other minor phenomena of the early days of King Frost's regime. For several of these troubles there is no immediate remedy. Others, however, are easily avoidable or curable, avoidable by foresight, curable by putting the law in force.

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As to dangerous sidewalks, with the inevitable result of street accidents, they could be avoided by taking timely precautions. It is quite amusing to note that municipal officials of the police class are always taken by surprise when Winter arrives. One would think his visits were usually an uncertain number of years apart to judge by the utter unpreparedness for his coming usual in civic circles. After a month or more of Winter has passed the Police Department will discover there is need for its taking such action as the law calls for and the necessity of the season demands. A spasm of energy will be shown, by-laws will be enforced, negligent citizens penalized, innocent, over-sanguine pedestrians will rejoice at their safety being provided for, then, after a week's doing the right thing the police will relapse into indifference, and, so far as they are concerned, city by-laws with citizens' complaints and needs,

"May a' gae tapsalteerie, O!"

The fit of energy is over for the season.

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Already, on the tenth day since snow appeared, three persons have broken their legs owing to the non-enforcement of the City By-law relating to slippery sidewalks. No notice of there being such a law has been given to the citizens, as was done in years gone by at the approach of Winter. Numbers of falls have taken place that may have painful consequences. If the city is sued for damages for accidents up to date, a sum will have to be paid as the result of only ten days non-observance of duty by the Police Department that would pay the wages of a strong force of sidewalk snow-shovellers for the whole winter season. An interesting rule of three sum is: If ten days' neglect of the sidewalks costs three broken legs, and damages of a large sum against the city, what will result from four months' neglect? Perhaps a solution could be worked out by the arithmetical members of the City Council; meanwhile Chief Legault, who has done several highly creditable things that look as though he were not the slave of official tradition or routine, by organizing and carrying out a plan for keeping our sidewalks safe, as the by-law contemplates being done in Winter, would earn public gratitude and save his salary several times over before Spring.

Mayor Howland, G.C.B., Toronto, is heading a movement to abolish the Ward system. We wish him luck, but doubt his agitation proving successful. Were Wards abolished, and all the aldermen voted upon by the entire city electorate, there might be a higher class of candidates for municipal honours, but this is by no means the certain result of enlarging the electoral boundaries. Has not Toronto had more than one Mayor, elected by the whole city, whose election was deplored by all the better elements in that city? Were that city, or any large one, thrown open for aldermanic candidates most of them would be unknown to the great majority of the ratepayers. Even under the Ward system the candidates are usually very little known to the constituents, and the qualifications for making effective appeals to the voters by meetings in various sections of a city are not those that are most valuable in an alderman. The Ward system has serious evils. It renders a broad civic policy, one designed to serve the whole city, as a municipal unit, almost impossible; it develops log-rolling, sectionalism, corrupt arrangements, and lowers the whole tone and prestige of municipal service. But its roots run deep, and will prove as hard to destroy as those of a pine stump.

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The Montreal Terminal Railway, that operates a line from the east boundary of the city to Bout de l'Isle, after a very prolonged fight for the right to run cars into the city, seems on the eve of being granted the use of certain streets to gain access to the centre of the city. The manager, Mr. Mularky, whatever may be thought of his plans, must be admired for the indomitable persistence he has shown in his efforts to gain his point. The street railway service needs no further extension; it is more than ample for the city's needs, it is a model of good management. Whatever rights, then, are given to a new company to use our streets ought to be most carefully guarded so as not to duplicate to any extent, or compete with, the present service, which deserves every privilege it owns. The service of the new line acquired by the Montreal Street Railway Co., that runs round the Mountain, is demonstrating the great advantage to the public of having city and suburban lines under one management.

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Advices from a private source tell of the appointment of a young man to a highly important position as inspector for a prominent fire insurance company in a large city in England. He is believed to be the youngest person who ever held the office. His father, an insurance official, had his son given a thorough training in a technical college. He was then placed in an architect's office for a year, and studied chemistry also with a professional tutor. After a year's drill in an insurance office he was promoted to the position of Inspector shortly after coming of age, and his success is assured.