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D. M. CARLEY EDITOR

L. G. HENDERSON BUSINESS MANAGER.

Office—No. 77 Johnson Street.

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THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

By the time THE COMMERCIAL JOURNAL reaches its readers the Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the municipal affairs of the city of Victoria will have begun its work. From what can be gathered there is now a greater disposition on behalf of some of the more irate members of the City Council to co-operate with the Commission so as to secure the best results from the investigation. There is reason to hope and expect that it will be productive of increased economies and more efficiency in the public service. There are some apparent duplications in office. For instance, there are a number of engineers and surveyors employed in charge of various works. Why should there not be one chief engineer instead of so many minor magnates? There are those who advocate placing all the city operations under the control of commissioners. Such a system has been found to work well elsewhere. Why should it not answer here? Two or three reliable independent men would, it is said, carry on matters much better than a body of elective aldermen who, in the nature of things, must have axes to grind, if it be only for the purpose of securing their own re-election.

THE LAW OF LIBEL.

The law of libel has undergone many changes of late years, and, from the publishers' point of view, these changes have been for the better. There was a time in the history of the English courts, and, perhaps we need not get so far away from Canada for that matter, when, if a man knew of corruption and bribery, he must keep his mouth shut; there was a time when, if a man saw another commit a crime, he could be sued for libel. To-day, things are different. The newspaper of to-day is an indispensable institution, and if the papers of this city were stopped, they would resemble a lot of electric cars sleeping on the street without power. It is the bounden duty of the paper to be the guardian of public purity. The press is always justified in protecting the public by stating facts, even if they work to the great disadvantage of dishonorable, tricky and deceitful men. Newspapers are not to be shut up by threats of libel suits. They may make mistakes, sometimes, errors of judgment, in printing matter of a personal character which is not based upon sufficient evidence; but every first-class paper is

always ready to make reparation for any possible injury to reputation by a public disavowal of intent to injure, and by retracting statements demonstrably wrong. In many cases where a libel suit has been instituted, it has been shown to have been worked up by a lawyer of no standing, who cared naught for the reputation of his client, but rather to enrich himself. If the publisher retaliated, he could, no doubt, very often show that the libel was the outcome of persistent attempts to blackmail. The law of libel in British Columbia is quite liberal in comparison to previous laws, but there is much yet to be done before it will guarantee the publisher immunity from designing men, who take this means of showing the world that they have really a reputation that could be injured.

SELLING TO CONSUMERS.

Hardware, as the name implies, is the recognized authority on hardware throughout Canada, and is published at Toronto, Ont. But the paper is not devoted exclusively to that branch of trade. Scarcely an issue comes to hand that does not contain something of interest to men in every branch of trade. The last number of that journal contains a lengthy article touching the practice of some wholesalers of selling direct to consumers. Hardware asserts that there are some wholesale dealers who adhere both strictly to the letter and the spirit of the rule to sell only to retailers, but that there are others who consider that the principle of this rule is upheld so long as the only exceptions from it are in favor of employees, very intimate friends, and people they have other than business connections with. There probably could not be much said against that view of the matter, if the exceptions admitted were few. A wholesaler, like any other man, ought to have some latitude or discretion in the management of his own business. But the exclusion of everybody except retailers from its list of customers is a creditable thing to any house which enforces it.

Hardware cites the instance of one firm that has decided to make this an inflexible and invariable practice, and says it is purely a recognition of the rights of the retailer and a desire to avoid any seeming violation of those rights which has led the house in question to adopt this rule. So thoroughly is the principle carried out that members of the firm even have to buy their supplies from retailers. Thus there is no ground for suspicion that faith is broken with the trade. Such a method is the only one to put a stop to business between wholesalers and consumers.

It is right to say something from the point of view of the employees. The travelers, the office men, the warehouse men, no doubt have been taught by usage to look upon their standing as privileged customers of the firm as part of their remuneration. It pieces out the stipulated salary very considerably to add to it the discount of retailers' profits on the goods they consume in a year. To take that suddenly off is to reduce salaries in effect. It means twice the retailers' profits to them, for instead of having those profits on a year's bill added to their stated salaries, they are to have them taken off. A time-established

custom like that of regarding employees as retailers ought not to be revoked without compensation to the employees in the form of increased pay.

There are wholesale houses in the trade which are engaged in other commercial or industrial activities as well. Employees or associates in these other relations, as well as wholesalers in other departments of trade, are apt to expect favors that will make them independent of the retailer. An instance of a house that finds such claims as these embarrassing on account of a good reciprocal spirit on the other side, has also come under our notice. This house sends for some retailer who deals with it and is near the would-be preferred customer, and asks this retailer to deliver the goods as ordered, and take the margin. The retailer sends his delivery wagon to the warehouse, brings the goods to the man who ordered them and gets his profit the same as if he made the sale. Here the wholesale house gives a profit it does not get itself. It charges the customer the wholesale price and charges itself the retail price. The same house has been known to make the sale as ordered, deliver at its own expense, and forward the margin of profit to one of its customers who locally would be entitled to the order. This is scrupulous dealing. Is it appreciated always? A generous man cannot fail to be grateful for such treatment, but all men are not generous.

HON. MR. CHAPLEAU.

This gentleman, who apparently thinks himself the man of destiny, the Hon. J. A. Chapleau, has again been, it would appear, showing both his teeth and his heels. He thinks he is the destined political leader from the province of Quebec, and, as such, ought to have the pick of the portfolios in the cabinet. His chief, Hon. Mr. Abbott, also a Quebec man, does not appear to look upon matters in that way, and hesitates what to do. He has before him the record of the Secretary of State in the province of Quebec when Minister of Railways, and appears disinclined to allow him another opportunity. Besides, the department of the Secretary of State has not, during the recent investigations, come out altogether clean. Mr. Chapleau will do well to wait or he may have to go.

THE WORLD'S FAIR.

The newspapers in the east, both in the United States and Eastern Canada, are strongly advocating the necessity of something being done towards an adequate display of the products of the Dominion at the approaching World's Fair at Chicago. There is yet ample time to do something handsome, and British Columbia should not be behind the sister provinces or, indeed, any of the States similarly situated, in making herself known and felt. This Province can well afford to go considerably out of the ordinary way to show what she is and what she can produce. Her fishery and lumber products, particularly, have long been among the most notable features of many Canadian displays, and there can be no mistake about it that, if our producers only try, they can go at least one better at Chicago than ever they have done before.