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TELEGRAPH POLES.

It must be confessed that we have no love for the unsightly poles with which our streets are being disfigured by the telegraph and telephone companies. They have been done away with in New York by the adoption of the underground cable system, and we do not blame Hon. Mr. de Cosmos and others for the opposition they have shown to them in the city. We, however, perfectly realize the difficulties in the way of placing the wires in the rock that underlies our public streets. We think, therefore, that the least the electric wire companies can do is, as far as possible, to cable their wires, even though they should be carried overhead. This would naturally decrease the unsightliness of the existing network which is continually growing larger and more dense.

At the same time, while not being desirous of standing in the way of any improvements, we would suggest that permits be not given in such a way as have enabled the N. E. L. & T. Co. here and some of the companies in San Francisco and Montreal to snap their fingers at the instructions of the municipal authorities. In this connection, we observe that recently the Montreal city council, after a long debate, voted by 21 to 12 to give the Merchants Telephone Company the privilege of putting up its poles in the streets, imposing no condition except that it shall allow other companies to use the poles if they choose to pay the price it may ask. This is a surrender which, in our opinion, the commercial capital of Canada will be fore very long have occasion to rue.

BENEFITS OF COMPETITION.

They say that competition is the life of trade, and experience has amply demonstrated the truth of the statement. We fully anticipate that the comparatively fast time of the Australian steamship Mowera will be much reduced by the close competition that is certain to arise between the San Francisco and the British Columbia lines of steamers to the antipodes; moreover, that freight and passenger rates will be, to at least some extent, reduced, and that in every way a better service will be given. Mr. Spreckels, finding that he has not matters entirely in his own hands, is likely to introduce needed improvements that are certain to be met by his rivals. We note, too, that since the Intercolonial Railway has been run more on business than to serve political engineers, it has been a comparative financial

success, and is forcing the Canadian Pacific people to toe the mark.

Some time back, the managers of that road talked of a 72-hour service for cars of fruit between St. John, N. B., and Montreal. That was the best they were disposed to do, but under the rule of Hon. John Costigan, the Intercolonial Railway took a car and landed it in Montreal in 48 hours. The Canadian Pacific Railway then took a car down to St. John in 38 hours, and besides fastened a car to an express train, laying it in St. John in 22 hours from Montreal. A fast service for the future is promised. If only the Canadian Pacific had closer competition, we should speedily have much faster time made and in every way a better and cheaper service given across the continent. Recent transcontinental World's Fair cuts have astonished the natives, but the trouble is that this cutting only lasts for a short time and then the grounds arise for the same old dissatisfaction.

PROGRESS OF MONTREAL.

In celebration of the semi centennial of the establishment of the Montreal Board of Trade that important body has recently moved into larger premises and of a much more extensive and at the same time elegant description in which, among other important and influential companies, the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific Railway concerns occupy extensive and well appointed offices. The *Canadian Trade Review* in connection with the event published a special number in which it reviews the progress of the commerce of Montreal and demonstrates the advances which it has made from the earliest days. The issue is well got up and gives a considerable number of the facts in admirable shape from the time when in 1611 a trading post was established by Champlain in Custom House Square, in whose vicinity is still St. Anne's public market, around which, in various directions, is done a large proportion of the commerce of the city. At the present time it is stated that, besides tramp steamers, Montreal is the Canadian terminus of half a dozen important steamship lines and has a coast and interior service of a very complete nature.

The following observation occurs which will be specially satisfactory to our readers: "The exports and imports of this city exceed those of the whole of Ontario, Toronto included, and greatly exceed the total imports of all the other provinces combined. In the amount of ocean shipping to and from Montreal annually, she is surpassed only by Victoria, B. C., which is on the ocean shore, but in point of vessels no Canadian port can equal Montreal, which speaks well for the improvements which have been made in the St. Lawrence." There are eight banks with headquarters in Montreal, and eight or nine others which have branches there, while the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific railways are among its most prominent institutions—four separate roads in addition using the Grand Trunk as a means of reaching the city. The facts published are of a very instructive and interesting character, the lesson derivable from them for Victoria and Vancouver being "Go thou and do likewise."

THE ARBITRATION.

We have not yet been able to make up our minds that the sealing arbitration now in progress in Paris will result in any satisfactory outcome. Great Britain, as the case has been well summarized, wants the High Commissioners to find that the seizures were made by authority of the United States; that they were made on the high seas for alleged breaches of the United States laws; and that they were made without right of jurisdiction recognized by international law. The United States ask the tribunal to find that the seizures took place under authority of the United States, over ten miles from any shore, but that it does not pass upon the fact of how many of the vessels seized were owned wholly or in part by British subjects and American citizens, and that cognizance be not taken of the value of the vessels and their contents.

Moreover, while the United States ask that pelagic sealing be practically prohibited in the Pacific ocean, the British counsel hold that the reference does not cover a claim of this kind. All the world is wondering what can be the possible outcome of this method of settling international disputes, particularly as the present appears to be the last court of resort, as the result will have an important bearing on the question of international arbitrations in the future. The arbitrators have before them not only a very important task but one which is involved in difficulties of the gravest character. It might be, however, that, in this case, should there be no direct result the gravity of the issues may induce the adoption of such a policy by the chief parties as shall lead to an unwritten understanding that shall prevent the principal dangers from being incurred, and will stave off at least the evil day of which our American neighbors profess to have so great a fear. From the point of view of dollars and cents, the cost of Behring's Sea patrol and of the arbitration itself may well be supposed to have about eaten up the value of the entire seal herd.

THE SALMON PACK.

The New York *Bulletin*, on the subject of canned salmon, remarks that the outlook is more perplexing than usual at this season of the year. It is remarked on as a suggestive fact that the British Columbia pack, this season, will be limited only by the supply of fish, cans and labor, and that not only will the Alaska pack meet with keen competition from the Columbia River, but that it will encounter vigorous opposition in the foreign markets. Spot stocks of ordinary goods seem to be just a trifle heavier than it was estimated some time ago that they would be at the middle of May, and an air of mystery is assumed by the Alaska canners combine that by no means promises confidence as to the future.

NOTABLE instances of the folly of people neglecting to carry an adequate amount of fire insurance have recently occurred. Among them is the case of the Villa Maria Convent near Montreal, the largest institution of the kind on the continent. Over one million dollars worth of property went up in smoke, the entire insurance being \$101,750.