

REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

Our Imperial Minister

MUCH better it is to term Mr. Foster our imperial minister than to use cheap and nasty, even if historical, phrases like "The Wandering Jew." Mr. Foster has been touched by the great problem of 860 odd millions of yellow and brown people facing 150 millions of Anglo-Saxons and Latins on the Pacific. He cannot therefore tarry with us long. He is again to take his luggage—mark the word—and start for dear old Lunnun, where men talk in kingdoms and empires, not in constituencies and bye-elections. We wish him a merry Christmas and further oratorical honours.

Snow, Ice and Character

WHEN speaking recently—not at Smith's Falls—Mr. Foster spoke of the effect of our snow, our frost and our ice upon national character. Because we have cold days in January and February we are an active, robust and virile people. Further, we are ambitious. We have abundant restless energy. And to crown these qualities, "our strong national feeling is worth more than all our other resources."

Yet despite these remarks, he cannot stay with us to decide whether there shall be a town clock in Berlin, Ont., an armoury at Kinloss, or a sawdust wharf at St.-Mary's-By-The-Sea. These things seem trivial to one who has seen the larger world. But let Mr. Foster remember that, though he goes to shudder and shiver in the London fog, we will still be developing under the benign influence of the frost and ice and snow which make for strong character.

The Naughty Stock-market

SIR THOMAS SHAUGHNESSY must have been grieved last week. The stock-market was unjustly cantankerous. When he gave Sir George Paish the honour of cabling over the world that there was "something doing," C. P. R. stock went up. Next day, the announcement came out about the division of ten millions of dollars among the shareholders, on the condition that they put up forty million in cash—and the stock dropped, dropped, and fell.

Seldom has the stock market made such an exhibition of itself. Berlin sold, London sold, New York sold—and why no one knows. The London Times spoke unkindly, but in its usual rounded phrases; the Toronto Globe talked of melons a la Farmer Maclean, and the less informed journals whispered their usual nothings, but still the mystery deepened.

Yes, the stock market behaved badly. Its conduct all year has been questionable, but this was the wearisomest blow of all. Perhaps the European investors were disappointed in the size of the melon. In the meantime there is naught but to chronicle the event.

Safety in Theatres

MUCH trouble seems to be in the air in connection with public safety in Toronto's theatres. The Royal Alexandra and two or three of the newer theatres seemed to be prepared to meet a fire or a panic, but most of the others are under the ban of the authorities. A fortnight ago, the Mayor ordered special firemen to be present each evening in three or four of the principal houses. Now it is announced that sterner measures are to be taken unless two of them are fixed up promptly.

There is a story behind this which will probably come out later, as stories have a habit of doing. But the lesson seems to be that theatre managers of to-day are as careless of their patrons' safety as they are of their patrons' morals. Every city council should make its fire chief report once a month on the safety of its theatres. Such eternal vigilance alone will prevent a repetition of some of the horrors which have occurred in Spain and the United States.

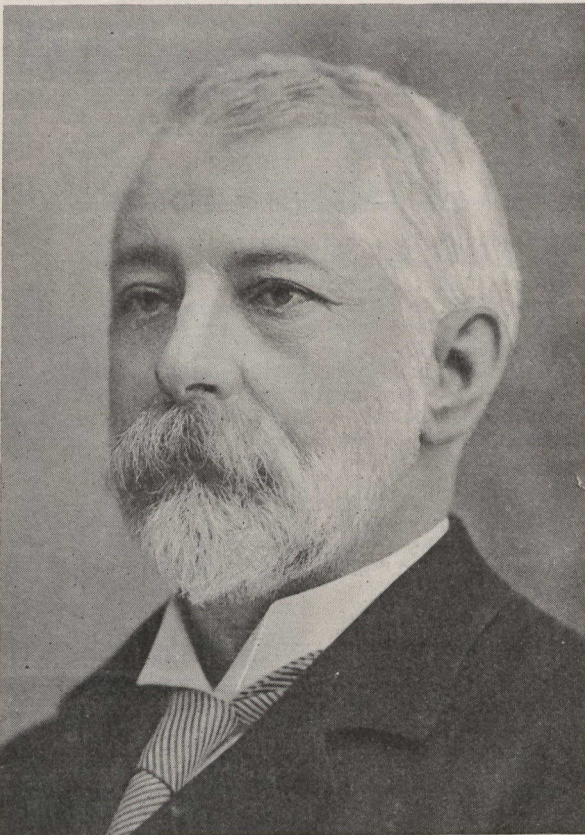
Municipal Rulers

CURIOUS how careless people are as to the quality of the men whom they send to their city councils. The story is told that in Toronto, recently, one hundred prominent business

men were canvassed by a citizens' committee to run as alderman and ninety-nine of them refused. Curious, too, the answer that most of them are said to have given—they would not endure the carping criticism of the newspapers.

To the average business man, the criticism of the press is hard to bear. As members of the legislature or parliament, a decent citizen has some chance because his own party press may be counted on to laud him and defend him. But the alderman has no party press to stand by him. He must be prepared for the crudest and cruelest kind of assaults. This at least is the opinion of the Toronto business men.

Nor is this unhappy state of affairs to be found in Toronto alone. It exists in other cities. The only relief seems to be to abandon voluntary civic



Hon. W. S. Fielding, ex-Minister of Finance, was given a banquet in Montreal last week on the occasion of his assuming the editorship of the Montreal Daily Telegraph. Speaking at the banquet Sir Wilfrid Laurier said that he wanted to see Mr. Fielding back in his customary place in Parliament, and that if Nova Scotia did not provide him with a seat, Montreal would.

rulers and go in for commission government. Commissioners, being elected for a long term of years, seem to escape much of the abuse which is the lot of the yearly-elected alderman. St. John and Lethbridge have already done this, and the mayor-elect of Edmonton is pledged to take a plebiscite on the question.

A Trying Position

GOVERNMENT journals are having a trying time just now discovering a way of handling the situation caused by the "free food" tariff which President Wilson has inaugurated. The lowering of the United States tariff has caused a big movement of foodstuffs, especially beef and mutton, from Canada to that country, with a corresponding rise in Canadian prices.

The Montreal Gazette has an Ottawa despatch, dated December 10th, which is headed, "Effect of the U. S. Tariff is Small." This despatch points out that the November index number of the Department of Labour is 138.4, as compared with 136.8 in October, and 136.6 in November of last year. The rise is not great, but, coming as it does on top of the high prices of foodstuffs which already prevailed in Canada, it adds to our difficulties.

A removal of the Canadian duties on beef, mutton, fruit, eggs, butter and vegetables would probably help some Canadian consumers. But that is not the whole case. It would mean lower prices

to certain producers. The Government must decide which is most entitled to consideration.

Then, again, as some of the Ministers are pointing out, Canada must produce more foodstuffs. The movement into the cities can be checked only by high prices and education. The cry, "Back to the Land," has had little effect as yet. Perhaps 1914 will tell a different tale.

A Costly President

SOMETIMES people look askance at the yearly salaries of railway presidents, especially when these amount to fifty thousand dollars or more. But the case of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railway shows that a good president is worth the price. A man by the name of Mellen was its president for some years, being nominated for the position by the late J. P. Morgan. The policy he inaugurated was most disastrous and the stock steadily declined from \$255, the high point, to \$68 a share, the price last week. The holders of the stock, presuming they held it during the whole period, thus lost a hundred million dollars!

Was it not this same Mellen who, as president of the Great Northern Railway, sold the Manitoba lines of that company and valuable terminals in Winnipeg to Mackenzie and Mann for about three millions of dollars? These lines and terminals are now worth probably ten times that sum.

So it would seem that a clever railway president is worth his hire.

Municipal Bonuses

ASKATCHEWAN has passed a law to prohibit municipalities granting to manufacturers a free site, the exemption from taxes for a period of years, the guaranteeing of industrial bonds, the subscription of stock, or the assessment of land below its real value. They are foolish enough to think that this will do away with the evil of bonusing industries. But they have yet to reckon with the special acts which all legislatures grant to favoured municipalities.

Still it is pleasant to know that the idea is gaining ground that a town or city which invests in its own industries is taking a chance with the rate-payers' money which is not justified by experience. There are dozens of towns in Ontario which have been almost ruined by such practices. The bonused industry usually has as its motto that "he who floats and runs away will live to float another day."

Montreal's Population

MONTREAL has no Canadian citizens, according to the census returns. Those of British origin, the newspapers gaily echo, are 26 per cent. of the population, and those of French origin, 63. Think of classing Canadians, whose ancestors came to this country one hundred years ago, or more, as British or French? Why not give the number of the native-born?

The total of "British" origin is given as 121,128; of "French" origin, 298,878; Jews, 27,948; Italians, 7,013; Germans, 2,502; and other nationalities smaller figures.

The religious count is interesting. The Roman Catholics number 355,796, out of a total population of 470,480. Anglicans come next, with 38,142; Jews, 27,622; Presbyterians, 23,777; Methodists, 10,791; mere Protestants, 4,696; Baptists, 3,146. That they are pretty religious people in the great city is shown by the fact that only 328 people ventured to declare that they had "no religion," and only 603 are "unspecified"—less than a thousand who have no label.

Bonusing Electric Railways

PEOPLE in rural communities should be careful in bonusing rural electric lines. Recently, in Western Ontario, several towns and townships gave bonds to a company to build an electric road for them. Two or three years later they woke up to find that the money had disappeared and there was no road—only a few miles of grading.

Down around Cornwall, there is another movement for an inter-county railway. It may be all right, but the municipalities would be well advised to pay over their money after the road is built and not before.

Around Perth and Smith's Falls there are two or three schemes of a similar nature. Perth would like to get back \$500 it spent on a survey.

So it goes. The smooth promoter finds the municipalities very gullible, and the Provincial Government sleeps on while the people are parted from their money. The man who thimble-rigs an individual is punished if caught; the man who separates a municipality from its wealth goes unscathed because there is no public prosecutor.