

Prominent Topics.

Civic Reform. The Council of the Montreal Board of Trade has issued for signature a petition to the Quebec Government asking for a radical reform in the system of civic administration. The petition sets forth that, "in the opinion of your petitioners: the administration of the city would be greatly improved, and the interests of the citizens better served, were all expenditures of money, execution of works, and general management supervised by a board of commissioners, and were each ward represented by but one alderman, the council as at present constituted, with two aldermen for each of the 21 wards, being too unwieldy a body to properly and expeditiously discharge the work of governing the city;

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that, at the approaching session of the Legislature of this province, your Government will introduce and further legislation providing as follows:—

1. For the creation of a board of five commissioners, of which the mayor shall be chairman, the other four commissioners to be elected by the electorate at large at the same time and in the same manner as the election for mayor.

2. For the reduction of the number of aldermen in the city of Montreal to one for each ward."

The preamble of this petition is admirable, but its conclusions are open to question. A board elected by the popular vote would be no better than the City Council. Montreal is not like most cities, and it is impossible to imagine that an election of the kind would be satisfactory. Our idea is that there should be at least three commissioners, whose positions (subject to removal for cause) should be permanent. Or they might be removable on a two-thirds vote of the whole Council. It might be as well perhaps, to have the mayor and some other official, members of the commission. The commissioners might be appointed, one by the Board of Trade, one by the Chambre de Commerce and one by the City Council, or some other authority. Nobody will object to the reduction of the number of aldermen.

Dominion Iron & Steel and Dominion Coal.

Mr. James Ross officially endorses the announcement that the Coal Company has made a formal offer to reinstate the Steel Company in the enjoyment of the contract, for the termination of which it was awarded damages of a large, but as yet uncertain amount, by the judgment of the Privy Council. This is a masterly move on the part of the Coal Company. It will leave the damages to be reserved simply for losses already incurred. The offer reopens the whole subject and leaves the matter in anything but a satisfactory condition. THE CHRONICLE re-iterated from time to time, that this was not a matter that could be settled by the courts, and it was evidently correct.

Canadian Immigration.

There is some practical significance in the fact that in the year ending March 31, 1908, which included at least three months of general depression, the number of immigrants into Canada actually increased by 39,767 over the previous year; the total reaching 262,460. These figures are rather belated in getting before Parliament and since the

period referred to there has been a considerable falling off; but the general colonization agent of the Dominion Government, Mr. C. W. Speers, expresses the opinion that the present year is going to be a record year for Canadian immigration.

Edward the Peace-Maker.

War clouds seem to vanish before the sunny smile of King Edward like the morning mists before the dawn. At the opening of the Imperial Parliament His Majesty fatally wounded if he did not actually kill the war scare, by saying in the speech from the throne: "I was much impressed and gratified at the warmth of the public reception to the Queen and myself by all classes of the community. It afforded me great pleasure to meet the Emperor of Germany, and I feel confident that the expressions of cordial welcome with which we were greeted in Berlin will tend to strengthen those amicable feelings between the two countries that are essential to their mutual welfare and the maintenance of peace."

Reference was made two weeks ago to the resolution of the Montreal Board of Trade calling attention to the alleged

fact that British "tramp" steamers kept away from the St. Lawrence, owing to the premium extra charged on them by British marine insurance companies when plying this route. Those introducing the resolution were of the opinion that, while there had been noticeable revival in general tramp steamer business during 1908, nearly every one of these craft flew foreign flags. THE CHRONICLE is now informed that, so far as grain cargoes were concerned, of the seventeen tramp steamers sailing from Montreal last season, ten with a gross tonnage of 34,701 (out of a total gross tonnage of 60,188), flew the British flag.

The Day of Rest.

The Imperial Sunday Alliance, of England, has issued a pronouncement on the question of a weekly day of rest, which is of considerable importance and influence, because it is signed by the heads of the Anglican, Non-Conformist, and Roman Catholic churches. The memorandum indicates that there is a general demand in the United Kingdom for one day's rest in seven, which is partly, but by no means wholly religious in inception.

The Manitoba Budget.

The Hon. Hugh Armstrong, the new Provincial Treasurer of Manitoba, in presenting his budget to the Legislature was able to show a surplus of \$356,788.81; the revenue for the last year being \$2,891,582.75 and the expenditure \$2,534,793.94. One of the most gratifying features of the budget is the Treasurer's announcement that the Government expects to be able to make a material reduction in the cost of telephones.

The Toronto Episcopal Election.

It is said that the election of the new bishop for the diocese of Toronto promises to be like that for Montreal, a close one. It is to be hoped that Toronto may have learned something from Montreal's experience; the most important lesson of which is the wisdom of the church keeping its little difficulties and differences out of the newspapers.