

The Chronicle

Banking, Insurance & Finance.

ESTABLISHED JANUARY, 1881

R. WILSON-SMITH, Proprietor

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

Vol. XXIX. No 10.

MONTREAL, MARCH 5, 1909.

Single Copy - 10¢
Annual Subscription, \$2.00

REDUCTION IN UNEMPLOYMENT. **T**HE "funny column" and the "want ad page" of Toronto newspapers alike indicate improvement in Canadian labour conditions, as compared with a year ago. During the winter of 1907-8 appeals for "Shacktown" relief funds encroached upon the space of the joke editor—who, to keep his hand in, wrote circumstantial directions for obtaining a winter's fuel supply by requisitioning a neighbour's ash barrel and besprinkling its contents with five cents worth of oxalic acid.

But the fun-maker has once more come out into the open. On the editorial page of the Toronto Daily Star he gives:

PUBLIC NOTICE.

To the Unemployed and Lazy in Toronto.

In the course of which announcement he goes on to explain that he has developed a beautifully mild sample of small-pox, and is prepared to supply the infection—for a consideration—to any who want six weeks of solid comfort with all they can eat. This offer, he points out, should be especially appreciated by married men with large families dependent on them and who are constitutionally averse to work. While such would have to go to the Swiss Cottage Hospital, they would find the food good and abundant, and could recruit up and be in fine fettle for dodging work during the coming summer. Though the family would be quarantined, they would be supplied with all the necessities of life, fuel furnished, and rent paid by the municipality, while canvassers and collectors of all kinds would be rigidly excluded from the premises.

FROM JEST TO EARNEST. **A** YEAR ago, even the most professional of humorists would have hesitated to make light of Toronto unemployment—then, for the most part, involuntary. But recent non-response to snow-shovelling offers, on the part of hundreds of out-of-works, has aroused more than a suspicion as to somewhat general malingering. Not that cases of genuine poverty are not to be found; but the problem is scarcely so acute as awhile ago, either in Toronto or throughout Canada generally. Restrict-

ed immigration, and not a little emigration, has served to relieve matters. Also, to quote the Dominion Labour Gazette for February, "the tendency towards a general increase in industrial and trade activity noted during the previous three months was continued during January, though no pronounced or far-reaching change occurred in any particular branch or locality."

To turn "from jest to earnest." The Toronto Globe points out that a fair indication of industrial conditions is to be found in the "Mechanics Wanted" column of a daily newspaper. During the extreme depression of a year ago, the demand for mechanics fell far below the normal. On March 2, 1908, there were calls for only 26 mechanics in the columns of The Globe. On the same day this year there were exactly double that number, and the 52 men wanted were of almost all trades. The demand for unskilled labour is still sluggish, but with the coming of spring the great works of railway construction to be launched should bring somewhat of sunshine to the laborer as well as to the mechanic.

INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

COMPARED either with Germany or Great Britain—or with the United States—Canada assuredly suffered less from unemployment of workers during 1908. True (as measured by foreign commerce, bank clearings and railroad earnings) trade conditions in Canada showed more contraction than those of Great Britain. But in the Old Land—in fact, in all old lands—there is a large marginal body of population that any industrial recession tends to draw into the "submerged tenth." Then, too, ill-advised strikes added greatly to the ranks of the unemployed. Happily, conditions began to improve towards the year-end, and the Board of Trade Labour Gazette states that employment generally in January was slightly better than in December. The trade unions reporting to the board showed 8.7 per cent. of unemployed as compared with 9.5 per cent. at the end of October, 1908. That conditions are still far from normal, however, is evident from the fact that the percentage at the close of October, 1907, was but 4.2 per cent.