

plainant was told that the matter had been referred to the engineer's office, and that the inspector had been given to understand that the contractor was "all right" and to shut his eyes to the facts. The inspector practically has a choice between passing the work or resigning his position.

It is quite evident that it is difficult for a city, ruled by vote-made aldermen, to get good service in any of its departments. The same difficulty applies to the federal and the provincial governments and to such bodies as the Transcontinental Railway Commission. It is also true that private corporations find similar difficulties and are occasionally cheated. It does seem, however, as if municipalities and governments are more badly treated in this respect than private companies and corporations. If the private company finds it is being cheated, it at once raises a row and proceeds to stop the process; if a municipality or a government finds it out, it buries its head in the sand and refuses to admit or rectify the errors. It is a strange feature of our public life, that no public administrator is willing to admit that the public have been cheated or to help to punish the offenders.

From these unsatisfactory features of public administration, one is almost forced to the conclusion that most municipalities and governments have more ambition than ability. Of course, it should be their aim to increase their ability rather than to curb their ambition.

AN UNWARRANTED CHARGE

MR. HARRY J. LANDAHL, vice-president of the Dawson Board of Trade, recently made a tour in Eastern Canada. He returned to Vancouver to make the statement that the Eastern Canada press "showed a feeling of jealousy" by refusing favourably to mention British Columbia and the Yukon. If this were the first time such a charge had been made it might safely be overlooked, but such is not the case. There have been many instances of the same kind.

Mr. Landahl's mistake is due to mistaking local for national papers. The ordinary local weekly or small daily has little room for news other than what concerns the particular district in which it circulates. The larger dailies, the trade papers and the periodicals publish just as much news from the West as from the East, population and importance considered. The "Canadian Courier," for example, has published just as many photographs and articles from the West as it has from the East. In fact, it has been criticised for devoting too much attention to these new portions of Canada. There are other publications which have done equally well in this respect.

AN EYE - WITNESS' STORY

By A TRAVELLING CORRESPONDENT

Fernie, B.C., August 4, 1908.—Enclosed please find photographs—the first taken in Fernie after the fire; also a few paragraphs which you may find useful.

Fernie makes a weird picture at night. The fires on the hills show only smoke in the daytime, but the night reveals the flame—hundreds of little bonfires as of an army encamped around. Some wrecked cars are blazing brightly and the ruins glow here and there.

They tell wonderful stories of the wind. Fifty miles an hour is their lowest estimate. John B— was lifted off his feet and flung heavily on his back. Huge boards were seen flying through the air. Four hours saw the city swept clean. Fernie is the safest town in the pass. There is little left to burn.

In the neighbouring towns the people are liable to break into panic at any time. I saw an instance this morning. I went down to Coal Creek—about six miles from Fernie, and a veritable fire-trap. The smoke lay heavily in the valley, completely hiding the mountains. Some light-brain came up crying out that French Camp was on fire, that everybody would have to get out in five minutes. Then there was a scurry. Children were hurriedly dressed, bags packed and the migration commenced. The miners caught the panic and swarmed out of the mines, every man running for all his might. But the rumour was unfounded. the women dragged their children home again.

Perhaps thirty houses are left standing in Fernie, including the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company's office building. From here all work is directed. Cars of provisions had been hurried in at once. Tents were run up and open-air kitchens started before the Coal Company's office. A fine meal awaits every man who will work. I would like to get a picture of Mayor Tuttle, in his khaki trousers and looking as if he hadn't slept a wink, calling out from the office steps: "Ten men wanted to unload a car of flour." There are many men singing the mayor's praises to-day.

None will forget the night spent at Hosmer. They had flour there in front of the flames, and the fire threatened to sweep the town as it had swept Fernie. The heat was so intense that they had to put the women and children into the coke ovens. And then there was

The best answer to Mr. Landahl is an editorial in the Edmonton *Bulletin* of August 1st. It is headed "Canada's Commercial Conditions Depend on the Western Crop," and says: "Readers of eastern papers cannot but have been struck with the lively interest those journals are manifesting in our growing grain. The weather conditions of the central provinces are subjects of their daily enquiry. Special writers are touring the plains and sending back letters filled with first-hand information. . . . In short, anything and everything about the Western grain fields is considered good news matter to-day by papers published in our most distant provinces."

LORD ROBERTS' RECESSIONAL

THE change of dates which finally resulted in Lord Roberts' cancelling his visit to Toronto and the West brought a cloud of disappointment which has the proverbial silver lining. It has occurred to several far-sighted citizens that Lord Roberts' prostration by heat will be an excellent advertisement for the much-maligned Canadian climate. Who will dare to throw snow in Johnny Canuck's face when it is notorious that the Hero of Kandahar, who wrote *Forty-One Years in India*, simply flung up his hands and fled from the scorching plains and hills of this Dominion? No triumphal procession through Toronto's flagged avenues, no receptions in the far West could ever do for Canada what the collapse of the great "Bobs" may accomplish. They will speak in Calcutta with bated breath of the warmth of the Canadian July. In the harbours of Australia they will learn how the veteran from the Orient quailed before the torrid ardour of the St. Lawrence. On the South African veldt they will wonder how Canadians manage to get a breath of air during the heated term. English visitors who cross the Atlantic during the summer will bring fans instead of the old-time furs and will ring for cool drinks as soon as they reach the Chateau. Imperialist Toronto will put its souvenir banners away in sadness but may comfort herself with the thought that the Canadian climate is vindicated at last. Several authorities have been unkind enough to suggest that it was the Toronto programme for his entertainment which sent Lord Roberts' temperature away, away up and inspired the final postponement. Of a surety, the announcement of a dinner of eighty covers, to be held in the Legislative Buildings, was enough to daunt almost any hero. It remains for us to cherish the hope that Lord Roberts will come again—say, in some brown October—and that Toronto will prepare a less exuberant list of "attractions" for his attendance.

the dynamite to think of. Tons of dynamite were stored in the town. A strange scene—hysterical women, crying children and the minister on the station platform kneeling among a kneeling crowd, praying God to change the wind. Others hustled dynamite into the river.

Those who have homes left in Fernie are coming back. The women go about their housework as usual—only they have more to feed. Men sleep on the floors, on the verandahs, on the lawns. There is lots of work to be done. The ruins have not been searched yet and the loss of life is not known, though it is not expected to be very heavy; fourteen is the present total. The C. P. R. soon had their track cleared, but it will be some months before the Great Northern is running through. All their bridges are down.

The people of Fernie—those that are left—take it very philosophically. What is more, they are confident of the future of the town. We can lay it out on a better plan, they say. They said that before the last fire, two years ago, and they straightened and widened their streets and put up beautiful buildings. Fernie looked a city.

But it will be hard to keep the lumber business there. The mills have been cleaned out too often and then, too, the timber is going—going up in smoke. The Elk River Lumber Company have lost 10,000,000 feet of lumber in their Fernie yards.

It rests with the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company to make or mar the town. They had notices out yesterday that work in the mines would be resumed to-day.

From the windows of the Coal Company's office I look up Mount Fernie. The morning's smoke has lifted, but half way up the mountain the fire is blazing fiercely, sending up clouds of smoke—white smoke with a brown heart. And smoke lies heavy over the east towards Michel, which, latest report says, the fire has caught. The tents look businesslike with their various labels—"Inquire here," "Medical Supply Tent," "Correspondence," and there is a long tent for the miners—"Miners' Tent." The stoves and the serving tables are still in the open and the men eat sitting on the ground much after the fashion of a Sunday-School picnic.

R. W. HART.