

The organization of this Department was at once a matter of labour and responsibility. The Assessment commissioner and his staff, (for names of latter see App. 1874 p. 55, of whom Mr. Maughan, the present worthy commissioner and Mr. Unwin and Mr. Mallon, are still in connection with the Department) worked in entire harmony, not only in regard to the outdoor work, but in preparing tables still in use, for measuring and valuing buildings, and in holding board meetings, generally at night, for revising the work, and equalizing the assessments with regard to its equitable application to the entire area of the City. The first return of the Board was made in 1873 showed an increase of fourteen millions. (See App. 1873 p. 243)—The rapid increase since, now reaching \$114,000,000 is a matter of public record.—(For the Statute Law legalizing this system of assessment see Municipal Act, cap. 184, sec. 255, R. S. O. 1888, p. 1833.)

#### CITY TREASURER.

In 1874 Mr. Harman, not without a feeling of some regret at leaving the Assessment Department which he had organized as above, and the work of which had come to be one of absorbing interest, on the retirement of the late A. T. McCord, Esq., City Treasurer, was appointed as his successor, and the following remarks briefly relate to the administration of that department.

1. On his appointment as Treasurer, he found a bank overdraft of over \$700,000, a sum of large magnitude as it related to the volume of city business then transacted, and he merely passing alludes to a most perplexing discussion which followed with the City Bankers as to meeting the City's further financial requirements until taxes came in—a state of affairs which required no small effort and management to surmount, and into the details of which it is now unnecessary to enter.

2. This was caused, it is almost unnecessary to say, by the system then prevailing of the assessment, commenced in February according to the law as then existing, not being perfected before the month of August; the Estimates not being passed before September or later; and the taxes not being payable until November.

3. This necessarily required a large item to cover interest to the banks for interim advances.

4. The Treasurer proposed as a remedy the system of making the assessment in the fall of the year preceding that in which it was to take effect. He himself drafted the amendments to the Acts of Parliament, which, becoming law, revolutionized, it may be said, the dilatory system so long prevailing; and which, from having been first made applicable to cities only, was subsequently extended until it now almost universally governs the assessment system throughout the Province. (See Assessment Act, cap. 193, sec. 52, R. S. O. 1888, p. 2106.)

5. This new system was based on the further principle of endeavoring to make the collection of revenue "keep pace" with expenditure, hence an entire payment of taxes following an early assessment was not required, and this led to the Treasurer's further suggestion of a divisional system of payment of taxes, which has likewise become a law of general adaptation, has been attended with a result of unequalled success, and has been accompanied by the universal approval of the taxpayers. The amendments to the Acts of Parliament to accomplish this end were likewise prepared personally by the Treasurer, as well as the By-laws and arithmetical details required to give effect to the same. (See Assessment Act, cap. 193, sec. 53, R. S. O. 1888, p. 2107.)

6. In the matter of an early collection of revenue, another proposition of the Treasurer was to apply to the Legislature for *permissive* power to strike, at an early period of the year, not as a rule, but as an exception, should unavoidable circumstances require delay in introducing the estimates, an "interim rate of taxation" to be limited to say four mills on the dollar and collected not later than the month of April, and subsequently regarded after the passage of the estimates as the first instalment of divisional taxation for the year, but while the proposition was twice reported on favorably by the Executive Committee (see Report No. 50 App., page 1095, 1886, and Report No. 37 App., page 1147, 1887, in which Reports the scheme is fully explained), it was not subsequently included in the items recommended by the Committee on Legislation, and is therefore included in these Reminiscences as a *proposition* only.

7. The working out the details of the plan of reconstruction of the City debt, in 1879 again\* matured by ex-Alderman Turner, which formed the subject of able, matured and exhaustive debate in the Council, under his leadership as Chairman of the Executive Committee, with the subsequent preparation and negotiation of the immediate and subsequent large issues of new Consolidated Loan Debentures, devolved upon the Treasurer, and were successfully carried out while the rate at which our debentures now rule, as compared with that prevailing when he assumed office, cannot be but a matter of congratulation, as regards the high credit of the City based on the increased and increasing value of property owned by the City, independently of the large assessment of property for purposes of taxation alluded to in a previous paragraph. For the details alluded to above of the consolidation of the debt, see Reports 56 and 62 of the Executive Committee, App. pp. 763 and 856 of 1878, and the Consolidation Act of 1879, 42 Vic. c. 75.

8. The annual volume of business transacted in the Departments since 1874, including the Water Works accounts, brought in in 1877, and transactions incident to the annexation of new territory, shows an increase of several hundred per cent.; while the General and Local Improvement Debenture debt, standing on the 1st January, 1874, at \$2,797,717, has expanded to the figure of \$8,333,277 for the General Debt and \$1,561,347 for the Local Improvement Debt on the 31st December, 1887, with prospective issues of \$1,000,000 for General, and \$750,000 or more for Local Improvement Expenditure.

9. In the matter of the Local Improvement Debt and its rapid expansion as above, it became a matter of financial requirement that a new departure should be made as to the mode of issuing Local Improvement Debentures; the prevailing system being that for the cost of each Local Improvement great or small, an individual issue of Debentures should be made, thus, referring at a glance to the items of this expenditure for 1877, will be found the items \$230.07, \$3,525.01, \$620.68, \$460.02, \$931.33, and so, on extending over hundreds of items, requiring separate issues of debentures in each case. To remedy this the treasurer drafted and the legislature granted the following amendments to the Municipal Act. (See cap. 184, sec. 409, R. S. O. 1888, p. 1881.)

\* Ex-Alderman Turner matured the plan of the previous consolidation in 1871.