

It is in the power of a municipal organization, such as the Union which has visited this city, to accomplish much for the benefit of the public and the elevation and improvement of civic government by resisting vicious legislation and promoting such as is likely to be beneficial to municipalities and the country at large. Some of the proposals laid before the conference were impracticable, and some had not been sufficiently digested, which had in them the germ of what is desirable. It would be well to prepare the business to be presented at future meetings so as to avoid overlapping, and the expenditure of time on questions lacking in interest, or practicability or likelihood of ever coming to any definite issue. We certainly can commend the delegates for the lightning-like rapidity with which they heard and disposed of a number of propositions. The conference will do much good by drawing public attention to civic affairs, and the needs which exist of reform in municipal legislation and procedure.

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Municipal affairs ought to be conducted on the same strictly business principles as those of a commercial enterprise. The credit of a city or town depends upon the extent and nature of its assets and its income, and the reputation of its management. Defects in any of these essentials to sound credit are not likely to be remedied by making the well-governed municipality a guarantor of the securities of one that has weakened its credit by mismanagement. It is more in the public interest for each municipality to be the creator and supporter of its own financial position without any artificial props being placed to shore it up when weak. Municipal rulers should realize that upon them rests the entire responsibility of local civic credit, as this, as a rule, is an effective curb upon loose and wasteful expenditures and a restraint upon vicious financing.

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At the closing session of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, Mayor Howland, Toronto, was re-elected president, and Mayor Lighthall, of Westmount, secretary-treasurer. The mayor of Montreal, of Ottawa, of Halifax, of St. John, of Winnipeg, of Victoria, and of Charlottetown were each elected vice-president for their several provinces. The delegates were the recipients of social hospitalities which they highly appreciated and formally recognized. The place of next meeting was left to the executive committee.

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The office of the Canadian Bank of Commerce at Skagway, Alaska, was attacked on 15th inst., by a burglar who threw a dynamite bomb at the teller which exploded and killed the thief. The clerks escaped injury but the building was damaged and about \$1,000 of gold dust was lost.

An official statement issued by the British Government on 16th inst. gives the gross national debt as \$3,842,216,930, which is an increase of \$313,597,540 due to the costs of the war in South Africa. Assuming these figures to be correct, the addition made to the debt is within a small sum of one-half the amount of debt contracted during the American war that began in 1775 and ended 1784. The present British debt, according to above figures, is about \$100,000,000 less than it was in 1836, and about 20 millions less than in 1875. It is really amazing how rapidly the United Kingdom recovers after vast expenditures that would seriously embarrass other nations. Had not the South African war broken out which has added \$313,597,540 to the national debt of Great Britain, there would have been such an enlargement of the capital seeking investments as would have brought down the price of money to a very low figure, as was anticipated before the war. Should peace continue and the course of trade run smoothly, money will accumulate rapidly and investments be in active demand.

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A grave rupture is reported to have occurred between the Boer generals and Mr. Kruger and his factotum, Dr. Leyds, of unsavory repute. For Botha, DeWet, Delary and their comrades in arms we cannot but feel some respect; they fought with a determination worthy a better cause. It is a pity they cannot take a dignified course by leaving the fugitive Kruger and his mischief-making secretary to themselves. But, probably the generals wish to have some of the money handed back which President Kruger is charged with having carried away. That money, alleged to be a million sterling, ought to be accounted for before the generals go on a begging tour, and more, it would be interesting to know how the deposits stand in the South African banks. Those who have been there believe that the Boers have very large sums still on deposit in banks.

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Few cities could show such a magnificent trio of buildings in course of erection as can now be witnessed in Montreal. The Board of Trade structure is really a noble edifice which is worthy of a site where its size and proportions could be judged. The new office building of the Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance Company, and that of the Guardian Fire and Life Assurance Company, are being rapidly raised, and as each architectural feature is developed their handsome appearance becomes more and more emphasized. When these structures are complete they will add even to the magnificence of the street architecture of Montreal, which, in this respect, ranks very high, and there will be a group of insurance office buildings within hailing distance of each other on St. James street in this city that will challenge comparison with any similar group in the world.