

The CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS is published by THE BURLAND-DESBARATS LITHOGRAPHIC AND PUBLISHING COMPANY on the following conditions:—\$4.00 per annum in advance, \$4.50 if not paid strictly in advance, \$3.00 for clergymen, school-teachers and post-masters in advance.

All remittances and business communications to be addressed to G. B. BURLAND, General Manager.

All literary correspondence, contributions, &c., to be addressed to the Editor.

When an answer is required stamps for return postage must be enclosed.

City subscribers are requested to report at once to this office, either personally or by postal card, any irregularity in the delivery of their papers.

ONLY ONE.

All we ask of each subscriber of the

CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS

is that he will procure us **ONE** additional subscriber. This can be easily done, and it will go far towards increasing the efficiency of the journal. We are doing our best to put forth a paper creditable to the country, and our friends should make it a point to assist us. Remember that the Dominion should support at least one illustrated paper. Remember too that the "NEWS" is the only purely literary paper in the country. We invite our friends to examine carefully the present number of the paper and judge for themselves of our efforts in their behalf.

L'OPINION PUBLIQUE.

Such is the title of an illustrated paper, written in French, and published from the offices of this Company. It is now in the seventh year of its existence and has prospered from the beginning, but since the month of January of this year, special efforts have been made to improve it, both pictorially and editorially, and the result has been of the most satisfactory nature. It is in the hands of two or three of the best known and most graceful writers of the Province of Quebec, who have, besides, the inappreciable advantage of assistance from the first pens in Quebec, Ottawa, Montreal, Three Rivers, and elsewhere. The literary movement among the French Canadians has never been so pronounced as it is at present, and most of us have really no idea of the variety, abundance, and general excellence of French Canadian literature. We feel therefore justified in calling attention to this fact among our English-speaking friends throughout the Dominion. The knowledge of French is almost a social and commercial necessity in Canada, while in the circle of polite education it cannot be omitted. Hence the English-speaking people of Canada, who wish to learn the language, or improve their acquaintance with it, cannot do better than subscribe to this beautiful weekly, which will furnish them with choice reading, written in good French, and edited with a single view to the entertainment of the fireside. The form of the paper is a large quarto, the size of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS, containing twelve pages of matter—four devoted to illustrations and eight to letterpress. The price of subscription is only \$3.00 in advance. Colleges, convents, academies, schools, and public institutions are particularly invited to give the paper a trial and they may rely upon being treated with due consideration. For further particulars apply to the office of the Burland-Desbarats Lithographic Company, 5 Bleury Street, Montreal.

CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, March 31st, 1877.

PUBLIC CONTRACTS.

Our City Fathers in Council, are, like individuals, liable to be affected in their deliberations by good and bad times. When times are prosperous they are prepared to enlarge their hearts, and supply us with a new mansion as their office, and a park for their own and our recreation, and many other things that are not small. When the good times take to themselves wings and fly away, a gravity falls upon them, and they are prepared, on the old proverb, to take care of the pennies, feeling sure that the pounds will take care of themselves. But, unfortunately, the old proverb is much like the wisdom of our forefathers, for we have found that it is much better to take care of the pounds

and exercise a lighter supervision over the pennies. The situation may be grave, but it is not terrible, and perhaps we may glean some wisdom from it which may serve well in the future.

The first lesson is this, that our City Councils should be conservative bodies in the true sense of that term, should not be carried away by popular enthusiasm, but, like a fly, should keep on their steady movement, equal to the average of times, and regulate, rather than be regulated by, the state of things outside of their deliberative halls. If this be accepted, then they should not be thrown into unseemly emotions even by depression. They may, however, then, as at other times, think quietly over matters, and aim at improvement, not simply economy, but every other good thing for which we look up to them.

We are not one of them, and can therefore choose our subject for reflection, and this time it shall be contracts. There were once what were called good old times, when there were no contracts and no contractors. In those days men were kind and paid wages, and every man felt a pride in the quality of his work, the cost being matter that concerned none of them. A new era came, the era of estimates, specifications, and contracts. It promised wonderful advantages in the way of economy. But as one of our great philosophers says, "we never make a change, in order to accomplish a certain object, without discovering that we have produced a multitude of other effects which we did not foresee."

So it has been in this case. Master mechanics were interested at once, not in the good quality of their work, but in its cheapness, and the men, who formerly were most esteemed for the excellence of their handicraft, fell in the scale compared to those who could do most. Then came competition between contractor and contractor, until good workmanship and good materials were impossible, and so accustomed did the world become to bad work and bad materials, that good things were out of date.

But this was not enough. It was necessary to introduce trickery and deception, and to train the men to trickery and deception. An antidote to this was sought in the vigilance of architects and engineers, and the appointment of inspectors. Surely by this time, things were rightly balanced by opposing forces. But no. Inspectors were influenced or bribed, and sad to say, architects and engineers were suspected of collusion. But collusion was exceptional, and contractors were often driven to their wits' end after a low tender, and all the "scamping" possible; and again they struck a vein in extra works, and in suits for damages whenever precluded.

See then what a multitude of unexpected effects have followed the invention of the contract system; still, we have not finished. We have drawn a moral picture with continually deepening shadows, but have said nothing about letting contracts. The popular opinion upon letting contracts is a rigid one. It is said that if our City Fathers do not accept the lowest tender, there is room for enquiry, nay, even for suspicion of something that cannot be defined. But the public are not experts in contract letting, and lack that experience which practise gives. Are they aware that when contractors have competed until prices have become so low, that even those who rely on influencing inspectors, and scamping the work, and trumping up extras, are driven to despair, they meet and coalesce, sit at the same table to adjust their tenders, and quietly await the result? The lowest tender is a profitable one, so profitable that the winner can afford to pay to all the others a fair share of his profits. This so far is the end of the demoralization. But demoralized as contractors and contractors' workmen are by the system which promised nothing but good, there are differences in degree. There are many able men who shun contracts altogether, and

some who are contractors, who deeply regret that they are unable to supply good materials, and do work well and honestly, as that is impossible for the prices paid. A skilled and watchful architect and engineer discovers such men, sees that they need only a fair encouragement to restore the execution of work—a stage back towards the good old times.

Thus, first of all, by care in the appointment of chief officers, and by allowing them to explain freely and fully to a Board of City Councillors the manner in which such and such men show a strong disposition to do their best, contractors of the better kind can be found, distinct from those who are bent upon deception and fraud from the very badness of their nature.

Let the public then neither judge nor condemn too hastily when the lowest tender is not accepted. The great object to be attained is moral character, as well as skill in all contractors, for there is no specification that was ever written by engineer or lawyer, nor any number of inspectors, that will successfully counterpoise the tricks and schemes of a contractor who is skilled in arts of deception. The most costly of all methods of executing public works is to accept a tender that is too low, relying upon specifications and inspection, soon to be followed by defective work, extra work, foreclosure, reletting, and lawsuits.

SANITARY BOARDS.

The health of cities is a subject that largely and worthily attracts public attention at the present time. We are anxious to be freed from epidemics, and live with continually improving health. Those who contribute to this end are worthy of all honor. But one must distinguish between those who get up statistics of disease and those who point out the way to render a city more fit to live in. If we were utterly ignorant of the causes of disease, our initial step should be to collect statistics of every kind that might chance to throw some light on the obscurity of the subject. To illustrate what we mean by utterly ignorant, we may mention a case. In France, as in other countries, an impression existed among the people that the different conditions of the moon had some influence on lunatics. There was no knowledge wherewith to refute this, and the Government resorted to statistics. The officers of all Lunatic Asylums were ordered to make notes of the effects, if any, which the moon produced, and from these notes when collected it was found that there was no effect.

Now here is the distinct use of statistics to begin to throw light where there is none. But we are by no means in this condition as to causes of disease or diminished vitality. It is not necessary to collect with precision the number of cases of small pox, typhoid and diphtheria as starting points that shall lead us into the dawn of knowledge. Such statistics are good at all times, to arouse our attention, and as milestones to mark our progress; but we should not wait till these things are done, and fancy that we are making progress.

We have a great deal of knowledge in the causes of ill health. Even in a country as yet unoccupied we know that the hills are better to live among, than the rich flat valleys however fertile; and that a gravelly hill is better than a clay hill. We know that in cities there should be good sewers, and good drains, and no stagnant ponds anywhere, and that there should be an ample supply of good water.

Now how are things in Montreal for instance? We have brick sewers in some streets that are pretty fair, but in others they are ill built and filthy. In a great many streets we have old wooden sewers that have a soddened mass of corruption lying in the bottom, while the planks are saturated to a like quality, and so too the ground that touches them. If we buried our dead in the centres of our streets the long line of coffins would be less harmful, for they would have no branches leading

into our houses. These noisome sewers receive numerous wooden drains somewhat of the same quality as themselves.

We know full well that this is injurious to health without any enumeration of deaths from any or all causes. We know that sewers should differ in size, but that none should be so small that men cannot clean them; and that all drains should be perfectly water tight from the beginning in the house to the junction with the sewer, and should be made of imperishable materials. We know also that bad air from sewers should not be allowed to enter dwellings.

It is within our knowledge also that decaying organic matter, whether animal or vegetable, is a source of disease, dirty domestic habits have largely to do with the health or ill health of the people. Inferior food and clothing caused by poverty, and all the irregularities growing out of dissipation have their influence. The increased skill, although advantageous to the wise, had its share in causing many to take gross liberties with their health, believing that if sick they may be cured.

We have all these items of knowledge wherewith to commence our work and should not be satisfied to run to and fro hunting up items of disease. Let us select some one of the evils that are rampant, and attack it boldly, and while so doing, collect statistics of the very evils that we know are breeding pestilence. If the garbage of the city is not better hunted up and removed this coming summer than it was last, we need not boast of our Board of Health. And by way of statistics of evil things let us know in what streets we have these horrible wooden sewers, and then let it be followed by a record of every building that has a wooden drain. If we are not willing to do such things for fear of exposing where the defects of our city lie, we may compose our minds and bear with what comes.

CIVIC ECONOMY.

It will be presumed by the public that our City Fathers are really in earnest in their desire to retrench, when they discover that the salaries of employees are being reduced. Many new brooms have done sweeping after the same fashion. Of all the methods of economizing this requires the least intellect and the least skill, and is the most doubtful in its effects. If the executive officers of the Corporation have been receiving too much, then it is a confession of error and want of wisdom in the past, and if some have been ill-selected, it is a confession of past indiscretion. Of course, errors should be corrected. There is an economy of a higher order, which is nearly always accompanied by increased salaries—it is the exercise of wisdom in the purchase of intellect and character. If the difference in men were simply that of muscle, or stature, or comeliness, it would be easy matter of choice, but it requires judges of no mean capacity to be experts in selecting men by their intellect and moral qualities. Men of the highest order in these two respects are worth to a city higher prices than employers in the open market. To judge of human nature and to select such men is almost the entire duty of City Councillors, and when they have done that duty well, the city is safe in all its departments. With faithful and able officers, properly respected and rewarded, all goes right, and the Councillors themselves occupy a position of ease and dignity. They should endeavour, therefore, to be experts in their own proper duty, for they can never hope to be in all the various departments in which their own officers are employed. Our representative system seeks only to send as delegates men who have proved themselves to possess tact, judgment, and character. They are not supposed to be able to pass in a competitive examination for every department whatever of the city's various works, although some may chance to be fit. What is wanted to produce a large economy is perhaps some change in the attitude of the City councillors themselves. If they try to do everything, or to guide