

May an authoritative decision as to the extent of the jurisdiction of the Provincial Legislatures in the matter of prohibition; to provide machinery before the close of the present session for gauging public opinion and sentiment in regard to it; and in case the Legislature is found to have the power, and a large majority of the people to be deliberately and unequivocally in favour of it, to proceed to enact a prohibitory law, the advocates of prohibition ought to be pretty well satisfied with the progress made. That it would be the worst of bad policies for the Legislature to pass and for the temperance societies to attempt to enforce a prohibitory law, while there are very serious doubts as to its constitutionality, seems so nearly self-evident that the wonder is that any true friend of prohibition can be found to advocate such a course. That it would be equally unwise, even were the jurisdiction of the Legislature unquestioned, to pass a stringent measure of prohibition without having first ascertained that its enforcement would be sustained overwhelmingly by the moral sentiment of the country, seems almost equally evident. The latter question is one which can hardly be decided in any other way than by a popular vote. Certainly it can be decided in no other way so satisfactorily or so promptly. No one can suppose that the temperance conventions, composed of the active temperance organizations and workers of the Province, can be relied on as tests of popular feeling. While it may be that a prohibitory law could not properly be classed as sumptuary legislation, but is founded on principles radically different, it is certain that many who would find themselves suddenly deprived by law of an article of diet to which they had all their lives been accustomed would so regard it, and feel that their personal rights and liberties had been grossly infringed upon. Under such circumstances nothing short of the firm conviction and will of a very large majority could either enforce or justify such legislation. If the friends of prohibition are wise, they will, it seems to us, hasten to take the Government at its word and see that they are fully committed to the course proposed while they are in the mood for it.

Without doubt the most serious hindrance to full success in working out the principles of self-government on which we so much pride ourselves in this democratic hemisphere is the ever-present tendency to corruption in municipal politics. We can scarcely turn our eyes in any direction in which a struggle more or less vigorous is not taking place between the agencies of organized corruption and the forces which are being marshalled to rescue the civic offices from the cliques which have prostituted them for their own selfish and dishonest purposes. From the facts which are now and then being brought to the notice of the public there is a good reason to

hope that the historian of the future may be able to point to the last decade of the nineteenth century as the memorable period in which there was a great moral uprising of good citizens all over the northern part of this continent, and a general purgation of municipal as well as of national politics. Among Canadian cities Montreal has probably achieved a bad pre-eminence in civic corruption and mismanagement. We noted some time since the organization in that city of an Electoral Purity Association, formed for the express purpose of fighting, in the interests of the citizens, the battle of pure civic elections and honest civic administration. Our readers will be pleased to know that this society still survives under the new and more euphonious name of the "Volunteer Electoral League," and that it is perfecting its plans for a strenuous campaign at the next elections, at which, under the new legislation, all the members of the Council will retire at once instead of one-third of them as hitherto. This league, though numerically feeble, claims to have been the means of securing the election of one good man by acclamation, at the last election, as well as of defeating many attempts at fraud at the five polls which its members were able to bring within the sphere of their operations.

The mode of working of the League, as described in a recent article in one of the city papers, is very simple. Their workers propose to make a thorough canvass of a ward, seeing every voter and getting a personal description of him so as to secure for him his vote. This will enable them to prevent "telegraphing." Then they desire to raise a fund which will put them in a position to professionally revise and watch the voters' lists, mainly with a view to disenfranchising the graveyards. Another of the special duties which the members of the League will set before themselves will be "To elect honest men by honourable means and punish infractions of the election law." To this end they will endeavour to collect evidence of any violation of this law which may occur, and prosecute the violators most rigorously. Very wisely they will refrain, save under very exceptional circumstances, from putting candidates of their own in the field. In their annual report they say on this point:—

"First and foremost is the difficulty of securing suitable candidates. Really desirable men are rarely anxious for civic honours. Great pressure needs oftentimes to be brought to bear to make them recognize their duty in this respect. This League must early set in motion the proper machinery to induce desirable men to accept nomination. It is wholly foreign to the intention of this organization to force any candidates of its own upon the citizens. Only in the event of conspicuous failure on the part of citizens to bring out desirable opposition to aldermen who have flagrantly betrayed their trust or neglected the city's interests, will the League put any nominations in the field."

The next civic election will give the

League an excellent opportunity to try its power. Its operations, so far as it conforms to the pure and patriotic standard it has set up for itself, will be watched with sympathetic interest by the people of other cities as well as of its own.

THE WATER PROBLEM.

Toronto is at the present moment face to face with a very grave state of affairs touching her water supply. This is, of course, but the repetition of a very familiar fact, one that is pressed upon our attention almost daily by the discussions in the City Council and Committees as well as by the City newspapers. But the fact of its familiarity does not lessen its seriousness, as every citizen learns in the most practical manner as often as he turns his water-tap and sees the discoloured and repulsive fluid which pours forth. There is, it is happily true, good reason to believe that the deep discoloration which has so often appeared during the last few weeks is not caused by the admixture of sewage from our famous cess-pool, but by the stirring up of mud and sand by the storms, in the shallow waters beyond the Island. This is consoling, though it does not make the potion any the more tempting or palatable. It is re-assuring to know that this evil is removed in a large measure as often as the calm succeeds the storm, and that it may, perhaps, be wholly removed as soon as the connection can be re-established with the deep-water intake.

But the mud and sand are the smallest part of the evil. Such ingredients, however undesirable, are harmless in comparison with the sewage abomination, and no possible arrangement at the point of intake can save us from the horrible danger to which we are constantly exposed from the admixture of a certain percentage of the unspeakably foul liquid of the Bay with every gill of water used for domestic purposes in our houses. The danger is ever-present, imminent. The remedy must be speedily found and applied, or our civic Council and all its officials must stand convicted of fatal negligence or incapacity. The necessity for immediate action clearly indicates that all the larger and more ambitious schemes, such as would require years for their completion, must be set aside in the present emergency. The one pressing problem demanding immediate solution is how can the leakage of the filthy and poisonous bay-water into the conduit be prevented.

To this problem the City Engineer, upon whose shoulders the responsibility immediately rests, and whose ability and energy we have as yet seen no reason to question, is no doubt applying himself with all his powers. He will do well, however, to continue to take the citizens into his confidence. There is one of the many methods which have been proposed for overcoming the dif-