

## THE HALIFAX FIRE DEPARTMENT.

The experience of years has proved the efficiency of the Halifax Fire Department, and its members can point with pardonable pride to the fact, that fires are so quickly subdued, and the average loss is so low, that insurance rates have been reduced. This is the more creditable when we remember that the department is a voluntary one, costing the city a mere song, in comparison with the paid departments of other cities; while its record for promptness and reliability is unrivalled. It is really remarkable, when one takes into consideration the inflammable materials which are so largely used in the buildings of this city, that the department has been able to cope so successfully with the fire fiend. A bird's-eye view of Halifax from the tower of the Brunswick street engine house would exemplify this, and one would imagine that a fire starting almost anywhere in the fire limits, would be bound to spread with the rapidity of lightning. But the department is ever on the alert, and at the first stroke of the fire alarm the doors of the engine houses are thrown open, the hose reels, only partly manned, are hauled out and started for the scene of the fire. Before it is reached, the different members rush in from all directions, and in almost less time than it takes to tell it, the hose is attached to the plug, and in the generality of cases, the fire is quenched before it has time to gain headway. The Union Protection Company, as fine a salvage corps as exists, is always on hand, not alone to save from damage by fire, but from the no less (generally more) serious damage by water. When we think of the hardships that a fireman has to endure, the getting-up at any hour of the night, be the weather foul or fair, his constant peril of life and limb, his being fairly frozen fast to the ladders from which he directs a freezing stream upon the roaring flames, his heroic efforts to save life, ending in too many cases in the loss of his own; when we think of the courage, coolness and skill he is called upon to display, we must come to the one conclusion, that a competent fireman possesses all the qualities of a true hero. The man is there, and if the hour ever arrives, he will never flinch from his duties. All honor then to the brave men who, without the chances of pay or reward, stand ready at all times to save their neighbors from loss, or the city from destruction.

A paid department may become very efficient, but its members must lose the *esprit de corps* that animates our volunteer department. They work for stated wages, and are not guided by the same high motives that actuate our firemen. In the one case, it is a band of citizens fighting to protect their homes and their properties; in the other, the men are too often only interested to the extent of the wages that they earn. May the day be long distant before it will be found necessary to replace our present department by a paid one.

The men take a deep interest in their engine houses, and a visit to them shows that the rooms have been artistically decorated, and that they are scrupulously clean. The weak point in the department is the want of one or two first-class steam fire engines. The ones now in use have done good work in their day, and it is time to discard them. They are likely to break down at any moment, and should a disastrous fire be the result, we should not care to be in the shoes of the officers who have refused to accede to the constant demands that have been made for a new engine. The Mayor, in his address, says:—"A first-class steam fire engine has been asked for, for several years, and must be forthcoming in due time. It is to be hoped that it will be furnished before its services will have been found by experience to be indispensable." We cordially join with him in his statement that "too much praise cannot be awarded to the Chairman and Board of Firewards for their supervision and direction. But more especially to the officers and members of the Union Engine Company, Union Protection Company, and Union Axe Company, the grateful thanks of the citizens of Halifax are due. Such labors as are performed by the united fire department of Halifax, deserve the unstinted praise of their fellow citizens. It is very satisfactory to know that the condition of the Fire Department, coupled with the abundant supply of water, has borne fruit in reduced insurance rates."

## INTERVIEWING.

For consummate cheek, commend us to, or rather preserve us from, the enterprising American reporter. He has reduced his business down to a science; and looking at it from that standpoint he pursues his calling with all the energy and ingenuity that such an avocation demands. We have heard of an enterprising Canadian scribe of this type who, upon hearing of the proposed marriage of a society belle, at once betook himself to her father's office, and began plying him with questions as to the birth place, family, means, and prospects, of his future son-in-law. In this instance, the only answer vouchsafed to the several interrogatories was—"That is a private affair." The reporter left the office disgusted, and showed his petty spleen by cutting down the description of the wedding, etc., to a three line item. But our reporters are miles behind their American cousins in the art of interviewing; and for the sake of domestic privacy and happiness, it is to be hoped that the art will become obsolete before they attain to any greater perfection in it. The following amusing illustration of the extent to which American reporters are willing to go, will make some of our readers smile. A reporter who has been representing a great New York daily at one of the fashionable watering-places on the New Jersey coast, has sailed miles ahead of his colleagues, by asking questions under unusual circumstances. A rumor came to the ears of the reporter that Governor Abbott was going to marry a beautiful and wealthy widow from Philadelphia. Having gained admission to the fair lady's presence, he instantly popped the question—of whether or not the report of her engagement was true. This is what took place:—

"Well, that is a curious question. It's so awfully absurd, and you are

such an absurd fellow," and the lady laughed as her flushes deepened. Still she was not offended.

"But is it true?" was asked.

"Well I don't know," was the answer, slowly, accompanied by another flush. "It is such an odd question to ask a lady. Of course the Governor and I are good friends, but I cannot tell you—oh, I think you had better see my lawyers, Abbett and Fuller of New York. I leave all my affairs in their hands."

"Will you not kindly set at rest the rumor which connects your name with Gov. Abbett's in a matrimonial sense?" insinuated the reporter.

"Oh you gentlemen of the press are so persistent—but I hope you won't publish my name. Now don't, won't you?"

"May I not congratulate you on your approaching wedding?"

"Well, I think you had better see my lawyers," was the merry answer, accompanied by a charming blush and graceful bow of dismissal. "I will say that I must not commit myself, pro or con. Now, I'll have to bid you good day," and blushing and smiling Mrs. Sharpsteen floated gracefully away.

We think most of our readers will come to the same conclusion arrived at by the beautiful widow—that it was an odd question to ask a lady.

## OUR PARTY PRESS.

Philology teaches us that almost our whole stock of abusive epithets, that tainted vocabulary which enables a man to hurl indignities at his fellow, has descended to us from those early feudal times when men gave themselves up to the coarsest and most brutal passions. Such terms as villainy, revelry, jugglery, riddry and their cognates are the blossoms of that age of darkness and violence. Since then only a few distinctively opprobrious terms have been added to the language; but the stock already on hand, coupled with the elasticity of meaning in some others of our words, has until recently proved sufficient for even the most abusive. Though the ploughshare has not been beaten into a sword, it often serves as a cudgel. At this late day, however, in the progressive nineteenth century, the exigencies of political warfare seem to require more effective weapons than those which have been blunted by use. It is now generally agreed that mud is the most telling as well as the most appropriate missile available to the politician of this continent. For glib tongued abusiveness and ready inventiveness, the American party hack is simply above competition.

It is a matter of regret and shame that, in the political contest through which Canada has just passed, the party press on both sides should have manifested so strong a disposition to stir up the mud at the bottom. Undignified and extravagant language, and wholesale misrepresentation of facts, were the order of the day. No one who took the trouble to read the so-called despatches to the different papers concerning nomination day, could fail to notice the sameness of tone which pervaded them all,—a sameness which suggested the idea that the despatches to any one paper were all in a great measure the work of one pen. And the same is true of the other events of the campaign. With such a political press, it is almost impossible to learn the real truth about political matters, and we cannot wonder that so large a proportion of the masses are simply led by the noses. The whole power of the party press has been for weeks turned upon the characters and motives of our public men; and if only a twentieth of the accusations made were true, we should stand disgraced in the eyes of the outside world. The dignified, candid, respectful discussion of public questions which one finds in the English and Continental journals has no place in the columns of our party organs. One article is headed Boodle, another is about Boodlers, and a third enlightens us on the subject of Boodleism. We are doubtless only waiting for an opportunity to import from the mire of American journalism the equally elegant and respectful term "Mugwump."

Papers of such low literary taste and such dignified tone ought to be tabooed by society and excluded from the household of every self-respecting man. Then we might hope for an improvement. In the meantime we must blush and bear the taunts of outsiders at the low tone of our political journals.

Perhaps there is not the remotest corner or little inlet of the minute blood vessels of the body, says the *Scientific American*, that does not feel some wavelet from the great convulsion produced by hearty laughter shaking the central man. The blood moves more lively; probably its chemical, electrical or vital conditions are distinctly modified. It conveys a different impression to all the organs of the body, as it visits them on that particular mystic journey, when the man is laughing, from what it does at other times. And thus it is that a good laugh lengthens a man's life by conveying a distinct and additional stimulus to the vital forces. The time may come when physicians, attending more closely than they do now to the innumerable subtle influences which the soul exerts upon its tenement of clay, shall prescribe to the torpid patient, "so many peals of laughter to be undergone at such and such a time," just as they do that far more objectionable prescription,—a pill, or an electric or galvanic shock.

The consumption of paper and the volume of its manufacture are sometimes taken as standards of civilization. The United States has 884 paper mills and 1,106 paper machines; Germany has 809 mills and 891 machines; France, 420 mills and 525 machines; England, 361 mills, 541 machines; Scotland, 69 mills, 98 machines; Ireland, 13 mills, 13 machines; Russia, 133 mills, 137 machines; and Austria, 220 mills, 270 machines. The average annual production of paper in all countries is estimated at 2,800,000 tons—a quantity which fairly entitles the present age to be called the age of paper.