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Topics of the Day

WHEN the Ross Rifle was about to be issued to the Canadian Militia, it was tested by a committee of experts and found satisfactory. When it got into the hands of those who were to use it, the verdict was contradictory. Finally one or two courageous officers got up and announced that it had several weaknesses. Sir Frederick Borden was deeply pained to make the discovery, and quite properly so. It is surprising, however, that his own sense of fitness did not arouse his suspicions. There were many things in connection with the whole transaction which might have led him to greater alertness. One might use stronger language, but this will do for the present.

After the recent discussion in Parliament and further investigation, it has been decided to call in the Ross Rifles that have been issued and remodel them. The old Lee-Enfields and the old Winchesters are being sent out again to the R.N.W.M. Police. Canada's first experiment in making her own rifles has been a failure. A great deal of money has been lost—by the people. Other results may follow.

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Negotiations between the Western miners and the operators continued all last week. An agreement was reached and submitted to a referendum of the men. It increased wages somewhat and was to a considerable extent a victory for the working-man. It was also a victory for the indefatigable and industrious Deputy-Minister of Labour. The result of the referendum was a majority of favourable votes, and it only remained for the leaders on both sides to sign the document.

The public interest is not in the details, but in the result. So long as coal is forthcoming they care little what wages are received by the men or what dividends are earned by the operators. They want coal and want the business of the country to go on smoothly and without interruption. In this they exhibit the general foolishness of the public. It does not realise how much depends upon the discussion of the question of ownership of coal mines and the proper system of government control of the production and distribution of public necessities. It does not realise that in time of industrial peace the consumer should prepare for war. Indifference on the part of the people is fatal to the general welfare.

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The Sovereign Bank has been reorganised. It has a new president and a new general manager. Mr. Stewart is to go abroad to recuperate. The newspapers have showed marked constraint in discussing details so as not to alarm the public. There probably was nothing really alarming, but a bank does not change its president and its general manager without a reason.

The Sovereign Bank has a record of progress unequalled. No other bank ever rose to such prominence so quickly. Mr. Stewart introduced methods which were unusual, but which brought him quick returns. For this he must be praised. In the rush of investing several millions of dollars, and in tens of thousands of accounts, there may have been some errors of judgment. It is likely that there were. Every banker makes them. Nevertheless, the record which Mr. Stewart made stands to his credit, and a change of ownership in the bank can scarcely take that away from him. The new officers are tried men, and will undoubtedly add to the prestige of the institution.

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It looks as if speculation in Western lands is likely to become less popular this year. For five years it has been most profitable, and the prices have in many cases gone beyond all reason. Land in Edmonton is selling higher than in Toronto. The former has 11,000 inhabitants; the latter 300,000. A recession is due. The banks will

arrest the progress by refusing to lend any more money, and the West was never so short of capital, in comparison to its needs, as it is to-day. Unless all signs fail, Western lands will be cheaper in many cases two years from to-day than at the present moment.

A smart young man went up to a Western town recently and started buying and selling lots, dealing only with real estate agents. He wandered backward and forward among them, selling a lot here, buying one there. Like the gypsy, he always got something to "boot." In a few weeks, he cleaned up ten thousand dollars and headed back to the East. He played with the fire, but managed to get away before he was burned.

Not that the West will stop its progress, of course—only speculation will be hampered. Genuine expansion and development will proceed as usual. The high prices of to-day simply mean that the future is being heavily discounted.

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Sydney, Nova Scotia, is excited over the proposed test of that port as a point for the landing of mails from Europe. On May 10th, the Virginian outward bound will receive her mails from a tender running out from Sydney. On May 15th, the Victorian, inward bound, will deliver the British mails to a tender running in to Sydney, when fast trains will rush it forward to Montreal. The experiment will be watched with interest. If Sydney displaces Rimouski for early spring and late fall mail deliveries, it will be a decidedly interesting achievement. Of course, when the boats travel via Belle Isle, there will be no chance of Sydney being a factor in the postal game.

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The Montreal Canine Association, which holds its show on May 15th, 16th and 17th, has a great list of honorary patrons. These include His Excellency Earl Grey, His Honour Sir Louis Jette, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Lord Strathcona and His Worship Mayor Ekers. Mr. W. C. Tinley is honorary president and there are seven honorary vice-presidents. The interest in the "dog" in Montreal seems to be pretty well spread over all classes of the community.

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The Manufacturers Life, which has now grown to be a very large organisation, is losing its present manager. Mr. Junkin has done well for his company and incidentally has amassed enough to keep him comfortable without the strenuous work which is involved in the management of such an important institution.

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The Sterling Bank has just closed its first year and seems to have done remarkably well. It has gathered into its service some able and capable men, and should in time reach the first rank of the banking company.



The Rideau River in Flood.

Photograph of the Main Street in Janesville, near Ottawa, by Eugene Ryan