

### Aldermen as Public Benefactors.

A writer in the *Contemporary Review* discussing the question of municipal ownership of public franchises, says:

"Municipal work attracts the most capable business-men in every town. It is just the men who are at the head of their trades and callings who are found most active in serving their fellow citizens. The town councillors are thoroughly representative of the life and business interests of the community which they serve. One could tell what was the predominating industry of a town from the occupation of the councillors. I find, for instance, that the great manufacturing centre of Birmingham has on its city council forty manufacturers and tradesmen associated with the metal and jewellery trades (brass founders, nail manufacturers, ironmasters, manufacturing jewellers, etc.,) fifteen professional men (chiefly solicitors and doctors,) ten shopkeepers and merchants and six gentlemen. The gentlemen will be found, as a rule, to be retired manufacturers or tradesmen. Burnley is a centre of the cotton industry; we, therefore, find cotton manufacturers strongly represented on its council. Half the members are manufacturers and tradesmen, fifteen are shopkeepers and merchants, six are professional men, and three are described as gentlemen. Every phase of the commerce of Manchester has its representatives on the city council. Hull is a great shipping centre; we naturally find, therefore, that the largest class on the town council are connected with the shipping. On the Huddersfield town council one would expect to see a large number of manufacturers, and I find that half the number are manufacturers and tradesmen. The staple of Sheffield stands out well in all its branches on the city council. There are steel manufacturers, spade and shovel makers, directors of steel manufacturing companies, cutlery manufacturers, saw-makers, managers of steel works, steel workers, metal spinners, silver stampers and moulders. An enquiry into the occupations of councillors in other towns brings out the same conclusion—that the council draws from all classes pretty much in proportion to their interests in the community."

The business men of these English towns evidently recognize the importance, from a business point of view of having civic affairs properly administered, and although many of them have great business enterprises of their own to look after they do not begrudge the time spent in attending meetings of the city council.

In Canada there is not the same readiness on the part of successful business-men to serve on municipal councils, and the natural consequence is that the cost of municipal government is greater and the administration of affairs less effective than in England.

It would be a good thing for this country if the business men of our cities and towns would take a more active interest in the administration of civic affairs.

A good alderman may be as great a public benefactor as a man who gives large amounts of money to public institutions. Assuming that money can be borrowed by a city at three-and-a-half per cent. interest, if ten aldermen, working together, can, by their united influence, effect a permanent saving of \$35,000 annually without reducing the efficiency of public service, it is equivalent to jointly giving the city a million dollars, or one hundred thousand dollars each. A permanent saving of \$35,000 annually may seem a trifling matter, but it is equivalent to a gift of \$10,000. Even if the saving is not permanent, it is equivalent to giving the use of \$10,000 for so long a period as the saving continues.

However, there is no merit in cutting down civic expenditures by failing to produce good pavements, clean streets, pure water, parks and other public conveniences. For such economy, or rather parsimony, citizens have no reason to feel grateful to aldermen, but when granting a franchise, awarding a contract or carrying out any civic undertaking, an alderman's influence is so exercised as to permanently save the city \$350 annually, it is equivalent to a gift of \$10,000, and the alderman deserves to be honored by the citizens accordingly.

### Oiled Roads a Success.

Much has been said of late as to the use of crude petroleum in the making of permanent roadways. The idea originated in the oil regions of Pennsylvania, but it is in California that the experiment has been tried with success. In the southern part of the State it is said the problem of good roads has been solved by the application of oil. A recent letter to the *New York Evening Post* states that there are now nearly a hundred miles of road in the several counties which have been so treated in this manner, and so pronounced in every instance, and so particular has been the success of the trial that there is no doubt that nearly a thousand miles will be put under contract for the treatment during the coming year.

On all of the main highways in Los Angeles county oil-coating is now supplied. Many of them have but patches of it, half a mile or a mile in extent, the oil being used upon it to test the effect it will have upon earths of different character, and upon roads of varying qualities. It has been found that where the road had an even, hard foundation, smooth and clear of ruts, and about two inches of dust on the surface, upon this road the oil is a complete success, and gives a surface as polished, clean and clear as an asphalt street. Where the soil is clayey though the surface is rutty, it will maintain the hard character of the ground, allay the dust, and prevent further decay by resisting the formation of mud, the oily and impervious ground holding the water in the ruts until it dries out, preserving the earth beneath from becoming saturated with it. One hundred barrels of

oil per mile, spread over an area eighteen feet in width, will put a road in condition along the extent of the oiled surface, and give an excellent roadway adequate for ordinary traffic. The oil is put on in three applications; the first at the rate of sixty barrels per mile, and the two subsequent treatments at the rate of twenty barrels per mile each. Great care must be taken in delivering the oil. It should be hot when discharged, and poured upon a hot surface, so that the work of the oil sprinkling is confined to the heat of the day. The oil cannot be poured on indiscriminately, but must be drilled into the dust as wheat is drilled into land prepared to receive it. If it is not so applied, the oil will lie in splotches, run together, and so make a very imperfect success, either as a job of sprinkling or as an oiled surface. In order to meet the requirements a machine has been devised. A big tank mounted on four wheels, drags a sort of tender-box supported by two wheels, into which is run from the tank supplies of oil. This box has a furnace beneath it which heats the oil, and attached to it is a drag, looking somewhat like a hay rake. A number of curved rods or fingers go out from the bottom, and these are drawn through the dust and along the road. They mark little furrows in the dust and into these furrows, through a series of pipes, is discharged the oil. A second finger, or sort of thumb arrangement, fixed farther back, turns the dust over the oiled furrow, and the surface is then left to absorb, a process which requires about an hour to effect. A roller is then drawn over the oiled width, and thus the first treatment is completed.

Contracts for the three treatments are taken at from \$205 to \$270 per mile, according to the price of oil and the character of the surface to be worked. But even at this rate the cost is not over six cents per running foot of the eighteen-foot width, and of this sum, under the general regulations, the county pays one-third, and the property owners on the road on each side pay each one-third. Under this arrangement it would cost an owner \$2 to put in condition the road in front of one hundred feet of land, and this is about what it now costs him to have the road sprinkled with water throughout the dry season. One saturation will keep the road in good repair during the year succeeding the first three treatments, and this application requires about twenty barrels to the mile. Its cost to the adjacent owners of land is about forty cents per hundred feet of road, and there is maintained a most excellent driveway.

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The movement for good roads is extending. A letter has been received from the secretary of the board of trade of Edmonton, Alberta Territory, for information on the subject. There is no part of Canada where good roads are more needed than in our great Northwest.