

PROMINENT TOPICS.

Since last week excitement has run high and subsided over the civic elections in this city, more especial interest having been aroused over the mayoralty. Municipal annals have no record of such a mixed affair. During some days the situation changed several times. According to an established custom it was the turn of an English speaking citizen to be Mayor, "turn and turn about" between French Canadian and British being the wise rule: The Mayor, Mr. Prefontaine, was, however, understood to be a candidate, as his supporters had organized a committee, but being absent in Europe it was difficult to consult him. The French press expressed a wish to see the rule maintained, but those who objected to the Mayor being re-elected brought out another French Canadian candidate, Dr. Lachapelle, whose friends were very sanguine of success. While the discussion was in progress an exceptionally strong requisition signed by a large body of the most influential British citizens was presented to Mr. R. Wilson-Smith, urging him to stand as candidate for the Mayor's chair. To all the strong pressure of requisitions, meetings, private deputations, Mr. Wilson-Smith repeatedly gave one unwavering answer, which was, that he would only accept the office if tendered him without a contest. Meantime another English speaking candidate had been secured. Then the Mayor was announced to have withdrawn on condition that the other French candidate also withdraw, which he did in order to leave the course open for the election of Mr. Wilson-Smith without a contest. Whether the Mayor had or had not withdrawn, or whether he could, would, or should withdraw, were questions hotly debated and carried even to a law court. All this turmoil went on until a few days before election day, the 1st inst. At length, under great pressure, Mr. Wilson-Smith was induced to allow his name to be used as a candidate when only three days were left for organization and work. The result was he received a decided majority in the six wards in the city where the British predominate, but, in each of the French wards he had a minority. Having so emphatically and so repeatedly and up to so late a date refused to enter upon a contest, a large mass of voters, who would otherwise have given him their votes, had promised them to another candidate who had thoroughly canvassed the electors. Legal proceedings have been commenced to annul the election on the ground that Mr. Prefontaine's name was withdrawn without authority.

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Toronto has evidently a larger population than the Census gives, as is proved by a new directory which shows a population of at least 250,000, instead of 207,971 as in the Census. The fire insurance in force in Toronto at end of 1901 is estimated at \$75,000,000. There are fewer vacant houses in the Queen City than there have been for many years.

The memorandum submitted by the Government of Holland to the British Government, offering their friendly offices in order to bring about an end of the Boer war has been published along with the reply of the Marquis of Lansdowne. The Dutch memorandum is a peculiar form of document, such as contravenes the rules of diplomacy. It declares that the Boers in the field are wholly "separated out from the rest of the world," and that Mr. Kruger and his wily friend, Dr. Leyds "do not know the state of affairs in Africa." Ignorance in their case is bliss, for, if they knew the facts, they would have a fit of despair. The Holland Government proposes to send delegates to interview the Boers in South Africa, who would have to be granted the protection of the British forces. The proposal proves to what straits the Boers have been reduced, they are practically prisoners, as they cannot hold any communication with the man who claims to be President of their country, nor with any outsiders. The British reply is very courteous, but very cruel, for the bare recital of the facts must be heart-breaking to the Kruger party. It is pointed out that, if the Boers have any proposals to make, their course is open for them to do so directly. Lord Lansdowne points out that there is no evidence of the Boers in Holland having any influence over the Boers in South Africa, or any voice in their councils.

The following passage would read like their death-warrant to Mr. Kruger and Dr. Leyds, as they are politely informed that they are persons of no account in the estimation of the British authorities.

"His Majesty's Government, on the other hand, understood that all the powers of government, including those of negotiation, were now completely vested in Mr. Steyn for the Boers of the Orange River Colony, and Mr. Schalk-Burger for those of the Transvaal. If this is so it is evident that the quickest and most satisfactory means of arranging a settlement would be by direct communication between the leaders of the Boer forces in South Africa and the commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces, who has already been instructed to forward immediately any offers he may receive, for the consideration of His Majesty's Government.

"In these circumstances His Majesty's Government have decided that, if the Boer leaders should desire to enter into negotiations for the purpose of bringing the war to an end, these negotiations must take place, not in Europe, but in South Africa."

The quiet, courteous, but firm dignity of Lord Lansdowne's reply to the Government of Holland has delighted all parties in Great Britain, even the pro-Boers admit its reasonableness.

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A topic of great prominence this week is the snow-storm of 1st, 2nd and 3rd inst., during which two feet of snow fell, which, owing to a continuous gale