

MAY MOVING IN MONTREAL

Once a year Montreal is treated to a spectacle which reminds people of the Middle Ages. This is the annual May moving day, a survival of some medieval law which was put on the statute books by landlords, and which has never been removed. Last year some 29,000 moved the 1st May. The inconvenience, trouble, extra work and expense incidental to such a wholesale migration is far more easily imagined than described. For weeks before and after, public utility corporations, such as the light and power companies, gas companies, waterworks department, Bell Telephone Company and others catering to the public service, are worked to death. The task of installing 29,000 meters, making new connections, taking out, moving and installing thousands of telephones and all the other work following in the wake of this antiquated custom, puts a tremendous drain upon the business interests of the city. The moving companies forced to do all the work inside a few days, charge prohibitive prices, and even then are forced to work day and night. Altogether, the custom is an absurd one, and the law which compels its observance, should be erased from the statute books.

The custom is the result of a law which compels people renting houses to take a yearly rental. The year begins and ends on the 1st of May. The advantage is entirely with the landlord, and he for the most part absolutely refuses to rent his house for any period less than one year. In other cities, it is customary to rent a house by the month, or if necessary by the year, but a man is allowed to have his lease commence at the beginning, the middle or at any other period of the month mutually agreeable to himself and his landlord, and the lease can be terminated at a month's notice by either party. This is a much more sensible law than the one which is in force in Quebec, but unless the tenants and the labouring people generally in this city, reorganize and protest, the present condition of affairs is likely to continue. It is a most unjust law, and works great hardships to the poor people who are forced to submit to the dictates of arbitrary landlords. It is certainly time that this law was abolished.

ATLANTIC OCEAN TRAVEL WAR

Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, the stalwart President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, has not still to win his spurs on the field of diplomacy. On more than one occasion, both at home and abroad, he has exercised his knowledge, strength and suavity with such timeliness and judgment as to carry out the policy he and his directors had agreed upon, despite extreme opposition. When he left for Europe a little time back, it was fully understood that his visit had to do with the threatened Atlantic rate war, brought about by the arrangement, effected by Mr. Bosworth, one of his Vice-Presidents, with the Austro-Hungarian Government.

The simple sounding agreement between the C. P.

R. and the administration of the Dual Monarchy regarding the transport of immigrants from Trieste to this port assumed portentous dimensions, when it came to be considered by the several steamship companies which had agreed to what was really a rather loose arrangement among themselves, regarding steerage passage rates. The C.P.R. had never agreed to any "zone of activity" agreement with other lines, which shut her out of the Adriatic. Probably it was never imagined that a Canadian passenger steamer would poke her nose into a Danubian or Adriatic port, much less that a regularly recurrent service would be attempted by a Canadian line. It has been manifested in more than one corner of the world that the Canadian Pacific is "a big thing," rather given to doing the unexpected in a big way. And the fast growing trade between this country and Austro-Hungary, had turned the attention of its management in that direction. The company already runs railroad cars of its own design and build upon Austrian lines, and has achieved a not inconsiderable popularity there, as a completely up-to-date and thoroughly reliable organization. It may be taken for granted that the C.P.R. never undertook to move steerage passengers from Trieste to Montreal at prices which did not yield a fair return. At least it would greatly surprise the friends of the company in Canada to learn that any such policy as could not pay, received the sanction of the President and Directors.

Of course, when the opposing companies endeavoured to make the C.P.R. drop its contract with the Austrian people by competitively reducing passenger rates, Sir Thomas was bound, as a good sportsman, to meet the "bluff," if such it was. But his way of settling the fight they inaugurated was along the higher, but less spectacular lines of diplomatic agreement. A series of conferences has been in progress, and the points of controversy have been threshed out until differences could be met and disposed of, one after another. There had really been no actual infringement of previous agreements, when the C.P.R. consented to inaugurate its Trieste-Montreal service, though readjustment of the services performed by the different companies will no doubt be effected in the interests of peace. The C.P.R. can afford to give as well as take, and the Austro-Hungary business will be worth some minor sacrifices.

It will very probably be found that when Sir Thomas Shaughnessy returns to Canada just after the middle of the present month, he will have effected a settlement favourable to his great company, to Canada, and also to peace on the Atlantic.

—The Canadian Pacific Railway Bill for the construction of a number of branch lines in the West and for a branch in Ontario has passed the House. The Bill authorizes the construction of a line from the Kleinburg-Sudbury branch between Bolton Junction and Palgrave, through Peel and Halton, to a point near Campbellville, on the Ontario and Quebec Railway.