

THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

By the time THE COMMERCIAL JOURNAL reaches its readers the Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the municipal affairs of the city of Victoria will have begun its work. From what can be gathered there is now a greater disposition on behalf of some of the more irate members of the City Council to co-operate with the Commission so as to secure the best results from the investigation. There is reason to hope and expect that it will be productive of increased economies and more efficiency in the public service. There are some apparent duplications in office. For instance, there are a number of engineers and surveyors employed in charge of various works. Why should there not be one chief engineer instead of so many minor magnates? There are those who advocate placing all the city operations under the control of commissioners. Such a system has been found to work well elsewhere. Why should it not answer here? Two or three reliable independent men would, it is said, carry on matters much better than a body of elective aldermen who, in the nature of things, must have axes to grind, if it be only for the purpose of securing their own re-election. —British Columbia Commercial Journal.

THE LAW OF LIBEL.

The law of libel has undergone many changes of late years, and, from the publishers' point of view, these changes have been for the better. There was a time in the history of the English courts, and, perhaps we need not get so far away from Canada for that matter, when, if a man knew of corruption and bribery, he must keep his mouth shut; there was a time when, if a man saw another commit a crime, he could be sued for libel. To-day, things are different. The newspaper of to-day is an indispensable institution, and if the papers of this city were stopped, they would resemble a lot of electric cars sleeping on the street without power. It is the bounden duty of the paper to be the guardian of public purity. The press is always justified in protecting the public by stating facts, even if they work to the great disadvantage of dishonorable, tricky and deceitful men. Newspapers are not to be shut up by threats of libel suits. They may make mistakes, sometimes, errors of judgment, in printing matter of a personal character which is not based upon sufficient evidence; but every first-class paper is always ready to make reparation for any possible injury to reputation by a public disavowal of intent to injure, and by retracting statements demonstrably wrong. In many cases where a libel suit has been instituted, it has been shown to have been worked up by a lawyer of no standing, who cared naught for the reputation of his client, but rather to enrich himself. If the publisher retaliated, he could, no doubt, very often show that the libel was the outcome of persistent attempts to blackmail. The law of libel in British Columbia is quite liberal in comparison to previous laws, but there is much yet to be done before it will guarantee the publisher immunity from designing men, who take this means of showing the world that they have really a reputation that could be injured.

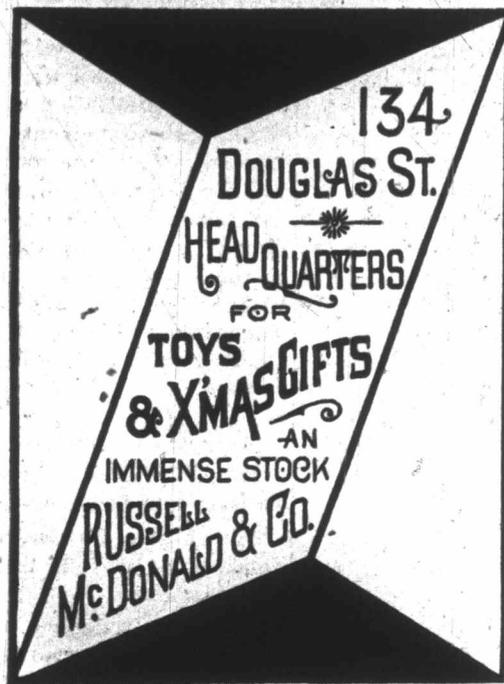
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