

THE FUTURE OF MONTREAL AND TORONTO.

THE crowding of masses of people into large cities is one of the features of our modern civilization which has reached a remarkable development, especially on the continent of America. The great cities of the American Union illustrate this. It may be regarded as an outcome of the co-operative principle, taken in its wide and general, and not in its narrow and special, sense. Improvements in machinery and discoveries in the arts have been direct results of this living in communities. The struggle for life and these improvements and discoveries have brought the necessities and comforts and luxuries of life within the reach of the many at an almost infinitely smaller expenditure of labor than was formerly demanded. This has carried good and evil in its train. It has enabled some to accumulate enormous fortunes and with the means at their command to monopolize, corner, and cheat the world at pleasure, but it has also placed in the hands of more honorable men the means to develop the resources of nature, and forward, especially on this continent, the onward march of civilization. These improvements and discoveries with the greater ease of earning a living, have enabled many to choose their own *habitat* who would otherwise have been chained to the soil, and who naturally gravitate into the gregarious habits of citizens of large centres of wealth, industry and thought. These are some of the influences that must, in the near future, swell the population and add to the prosperity of Montreal and Toronto as well as the other cities of the Dominion. But whatever our hopes as to the future may be, Canada has no reason to feel ashamed of the progress, so far, of her two great cities. It is true that wiseacres from the western city have dinned into our ears from time to time that the glory of Montreal is passing away and that Toronto is coming to the front and must, ere long, distance her older neighbour. Those special champions of the west hang their hopes on slender threads at times. When a Montreal establishment or two of long standing open a branch office or warehouse in Toronto these gentlemen herald the fact to the world as an unmistakable sign of the immediate downfall of the ancient city. Let us be comforted, however. That Toronto has greatly prospered in recent years is seen in her increased population and customs returns, but that she has prospered at the expense of Montreal or that she is likely to do so not in accordance with fact. The advantages she possesses are peculiar to it and largely the result of her own rise. Her so-called Esplanade, with horse shrieking and rushing to and fro all hours of the day and night, extends the whole length of her harbor—a region which but a few years ago was crested to bull-rushes and desolation ways branching out at every

conceivable angle into a fair and fertile land—her immense manufacturing establishments—are all monuments of her native energy rather than the result of any splendid natural endowments such as Montreal possesses. These mark her citizens as worthy descendants of the hardy pioneers who first subdued the primal desolation of her now fair surroundings. The census of 1881 shows that the population of the city increased in a decade over 40 per cent., a rate only equalled in the increase of one other city in the Dominion. But Toronto has lessons to learn that she will do well to consider. She will have to pick her steps daintily at the present juncture. She has, whether rightly or wrongly, been credited with more prudence in the conduct of her business than Montreal. She will require all the prudence at her command. Her merchants were not so reckless as were many in Montreal in 1874 and 1875, and other periods of inflation. Hence the depressions that followed these periods, though as gloomy to the eye, were not as deadly in their results in Toronto as in Montreal.

GET A BOOKKEEPER.

BUT is Montreal immaculate? Hardly. Look at her civic management and the rate of taxation. What have we in return for the extravagant rates inflicted on us? City Hall defalcations, embezzlements going on for years, an inefficient system of audit. Nothing done about it that the public can see except a "notis" neatly printed on a card, that any civic employé found drunk on the premises shall be dismissed by His Worship the Mayor. Here is a solemn mockery. Is a long-enduring public to infer that our highly-paid officials are in the habit of attending to their duties in a state of "obfuscation" from too much wine or some stronger compound? If so, it explains the mysterious defalcations going on systematically for years that we hear so much about. Our City Fathers are no doubt awfully in earnest, but they will not mend matters much by issuing notices against excessive drinking in office hours, or on the premises. The only remedy is to be careful about whom they employ, to take none but sober men in the first instance, and, above all things, to get a good bookkeeper. If it is true, as is reported, that the late defaulter was constantly or even frequently drunk in the office, that fact should have made it clear to the most unsophisticated intellect that he could not have been in a fit state to attend to his important duties, and no good nature or favoritism should have permitted him to be retained in office. But it is the merest farce to issue a "notice" against drunkenness when all the world knows that the regulation will not be carried out. Get a bookkeeper. What further delinquencies might be discovered by a rigid system of account-keeping we know not; but our citizens should insist upon an efficient public service, no matter where the shoe pinches.

THE MONTREAL POST-OFFICE.

PUBLIC patience in connection with the Montreal Post-Office seems at last to be exhausted, as it well may be. The local press, of all shades of opinion, has come out in one general outburst of protest and indignation. The latest of a series of bold robberies within the Post-office itself gave the signal for this explosion, and in commenting on it the whole institution has had to undergo a thorough journalistic overhauling. How has it been possible, it is well asked, for such a series of robberies as from time to time of late have been exposed to have gone on so long without their existence having even been suspected? With hundreds of letters and thousands of dollars tampered with or stolen, on account of some of which many complaints and enquiries must surely have been made, was no additional vigilance aroused? It would really seem not, and it is hard to make the public believe that this is a state of things worthy of the principal post-office in the Dominion. The general practical working of this great institution is now also taken exception to. The time occupied in sorting the mails is worthy of a petty village, and this goes on before 9 A.M., generally now remain unsteadily on from bad to worse. Mails, the delivery of which might once be counted sorted till 11, or later, and have done for weeks past. The Post-Office is opened, too, intolerably late for an active business community much of whose work is compressed into the summer and autumn months. Long before 8 A.M. an impatient crowd is waiting for the doors to open so that access to the boxes may be obtained. Why should not the doors be opened at 7 A.M., leaving the delivery-wickets arrangements as they are? Again, why should not the doors of the Post-Office be open and accessible to the public on Sundays till 1 P.M. at least? There is no difficulty in effecting this in the country parishes—why should there be here, where postal accommodation is so much more necessary? Many come into the city to church just in time to be too late to reach the Post-Office, and our silly urban rule keeps them from receiving their letters till next day. In the United States, even in unimportant places, those offices in which there are boxes remain open till sunset on Sundays. Why should they not here, or till 1 P.M. at least? There need be no detention of clerks, delivery or other. These could still continue to leave at 10 A.M. Nor would it be hard on the janitor, who lives in the building, and would simply be required to lock up at 1 P.M. instead of 10 A.M. In a word, the local post-office people have got to wake up to the fact—which seems to have escaped them—that Montreal is a great city, not a petty hamlet. We are getting just about the accommodations appropriate to the latter, and are becoming very generally restive under it. At the same time, and as a matter of the merest justice, we are bound to acknowledge the great courtesy and extreme desire of the