

ment is peculiarly adapted to remove. As one looks up a long straight street, afforested with poles, and reflects that there is nearly always a long straight lane behind, or, if there is not a lane there is a vacancy in which, where the back-lots meet in a fence, the poles may be run without being in anyone's way, and where nobody is likely to object to their being run, it really seems as if an agitation to have all poles placed at the back instead of in the streets is worth attending to, because there could be some result.*

The Plumbers' Combine.

It is desirable to record exactly the method of procedure of this conspiracy, and it cannot be done

better than in the following extract from a leading article in the *Toronto News*. "The process, as it has been explained in the Police Court, was very simple, and may be put briefly as follows: When tenders were called for, those who wanted to bid met and went over the specifications, figured out the work and wrote the amount of their tenders. All the prices were then averaged, and the one who was nearest to the average of the whole was given the contract at a figure agreed upon among themselves, the others being compelled to tender higher, on pain of being expelled from the association. To the cost of the work there was added five per cent. for distribution among the members of the association, and from fifteen to twenty five per cent. extra profit for bonuses to those who had tendered." An example given in Court, that of a small job, merely a residence, shows that "fourteen men got \$15 each on the plumbing contract, and the same number got \$10 each on the heating contract. This is a total of \$350 which was divided among the tenderers, for which no value was given. Nor does this seem to represent all the overcharge. The association had to get five per cent., and the man who did the work received somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty per cent. more than a fair profit." And the experience of this house owner "was, that of every man who has build a house in Toronto within the past three years." In the case of a dwelling house the ruthlessness of the mode of procedure comes home to us more than where greater sums are involved; but, the figures in large work are striking. In the case of the E. & S. Currie building, where the tender was \$6,000 for plumbing and steamfitting, the subsequent execution of the work by a Philadelphia firm for \$4,200, which included railway expenses and hotel bills for their workmen, convicts the combine of an overcharge of about thirty per cent. There was an American architect employed in this case, and the combine did not get their money; but, in the case of the building for the School of Practical Science, Toronto, where an addition of \$2,000 was made to the tender, for distribution among the plumbers, they got their money and have got it now. It is this cool proceeding of sitting round a table and dividing money exacted from a building owner, over and above the cost of his work and an exorbitant profit, that has appealed so much to the imagination of the public; but the sum extracted from the pockets of the public, merely by the exaction of an excessive profit was really the more serious con-

sideration from a financial point of view. It meant something over half a million. The *News* makes it, on a fair estimate of the amount of work done, about \$664,000. The five per cent. levy on the same work would amount to \$166,000; in all \$830,000 in a year "filched from the pockets of the citizens."

The secret of the power to work these exactions was the unity of the three branches of trade concerned in plumbing and heating—the master plumbers; the supply men, and the workmen. To quote the *News* again: "The three parties concerned in performing a contract for plumbing were organized to rob the fourth party—the customer. . . The supply houses deliberately bound themselves by formal agreement 'not to sell to the general public plumbing goods, hot water or gas fittings. The plumbers' union at the other end, co-operated with the master plumbers by refusing to allow their members to work for an employer who was denounced by the association." The members of the association bound themselves together by an oath to hold to the regulations of the association and to keep them secret. They may not have known that the oath was illegal or that their operations were illegal, but they seem to have been fully aware that their hand was against every man and that every man's hand ought to be against them. That they stepped unthinkingly over the border that separates the legal from the illegal does not say much for the condition of our business world, nor for the state of mind engendered by the exaltation of push and hustle as the truest attributes of manliness. We should not let the extent of their takings blind us to the realization of the truth that the whole proceeding was a wretched piece of boy's work at the bottom; something to make one feel ashamed.

THE LATE MR. J. W. HOPKINS.

Mr. John W. Hopkins, who died at his residence in Westmount, on Dec. 11, in his eighty-first year, was conspicuous among the older generation of Montreal architects, and was the first President of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects. He came from England to Montreal, in 1852, at the age of 27. He was the son of John William Hopkins, an officer in the commissariat; and the grandson of John Hopkins, a naval officer of some celebrity, who was in command of the revenue cutters on the west coast of England and was presented with a silver mounted cutlass, by the customs commissioners under King George III., in recognition of his services.

Mr. Hopkins was the architect of the Montreal Custom House, the Harbour Commissioners' office, and many of the large mercantile buildings in the city. He also built a number of residences, and was the designer of the St. James Club house, and one of the early members of the Club.

Besides his membership of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, Mr. Hopkins was a Royal Canadian Academician, a life member of the Mechanics' Institute, a charter member of the Montreal Gymnasium, a life member of the Art Gallery, a governor of Verdun Hospital, a member of St. Paul's Masonic Lodge, a captain in the 5th Battalion Light Infantry (now the 5th Royal Scots) and a justice of the peace.

His wife survives him. He leaves six children—five sons and one daughter.

*As we go to press the newspapers give a list of 24 new streets or lengths of street, in Toronto, that are to have poles erected and wires strung on them. This would make a good opening to test the feasibility of putting the poles behind.