

TORONTO AND ABOUT.

I have never yet had the good fortune to live in a city having such a disregard of its shipping interest as Toronto, where the carrying trade of our vessels forms so large a portion of our commercial prosperity. I desire to call attention more particularly to the fact of our inability to provide accommodation of any sort for disabled vessels. Perhaps there is no city on the Continent that sees so much contention and discussion with so little accomplishment. Ten or twelve years ago a Company was about to be formed to build dry docks at the river Humber, or near the entrance of the proposed chimerical Huron and Ontario Ship Canal. Much talk and comment occurred amongst the citizens over the undertaking at the time; the success of the affair was assured. Who could doubt it? A large dividend was sure to be reaped by the adventurers, and the city was to be incalculably profited thereby; but the scheme fell through, and nothing more has been heard of the wonderful Company to the present day. Again, and later, a vague rumour, which appeared to increase to certainty, that a Company had actually been formed to dredge and build a dry dock at the island, startled the natives; but history records that beyond the rumour the public at large felt no advantage from the proposed speculation. And now it was understood that operations would commence immediately on the Don Flats, if only the City Fathers came down handsomely and helped by bonus or exemption a *bona fide* Company really incorporated. But, alas! the indifference of the City Fathers was deplorable; no bonus was forthcoming, and the really incorporated Company came and went in a flash. Later, Joseph Gearing, or more correctly Alderman Gearing, with others decided upon constructing a dry dock between the worthy Alderman's wharf and his neighbours' at the foot of Frederick street. This was final; there could be no mistake about it, Toronto was to have the necessary convenience of a dry dock after all—hurrah! But "man proposes," &c. Joseph Gearing a few weeks afterwards made a compromise with his creditors, and the wharves at the foot of Frederick street will never enclose a dry dock. Last year a new idea was sprung upon the credulous. By means of *caissons*, or sunk cribs, or something of the sort—nobody appeared to know anything about the matter—we were at last to see the accomplishment of our aspirations. Months, however, passed, and still our steamboats, our yachts and sailing vessels, for the slightest damage done to keels or elsewhere, were towed across the lake to Port Dalhousie, a port one-tenth as large as the Provincial capital, or down the lake to Ogdensburg. Up to the present time all our attempts to obtain dry docks have proved futile; we are apparently as far off as ever. There is one hope, however; there appears to be a legitimate Company formed for the above purpose of building dry docks in Toronto, a good Company, a Company not likely to get into financial difficulties, and this competent Company is prepared to go on with the work *now*, provided they (the Company) are exempt from taxation for five years or so, and as the City Council at a late meeting saw fit to grant the exemption, there is a prospect at least of seeing this much-talked-of hospital for disabled ships constructed.

But what we want to know about the affair is this: why should the poor pay heavy taxes, for the taxes are heavy, to put money in the hands of wealthy capitalists? What reasons, in the name of common sense, can these influential corporation and companies put forward in favour of exemption from taxation? I must confess I can see none. If on the other hand the company is poor, why should the ratepayers be forced to give their aid in this way without any shadow of return? I have as much right to demand a bonus from my neighbour when I build a fine house adjoining his vacant lot, on the ground that his property is improved by the erection, as these companies have in demanding exemption from taxation until such time as these manufactories, or what you will, are in good paying order. A precedent has been adopted in this exemption that is pernicious and unjust.

The Central Committee discussion is but another example and proof of the fact that the Ontario system of Education is not all it is famous for. Is it right for Inspectors of Public Schools and Public School Examiners, who are instructed to authorize text books, to

compile text books themselves, which although not really authorized, are nevertheless used as the basis and ground of examination by them? Although a great deal that has been said by party journals is nothing but what the *Globe* says "wholesale mud flinging," yet it cannot be denied that the principle is infamous which permits an Inspector or Examiner to receive a royalty for such a publication.

With the exception of Buffalo I presume there is no city on the Continent that takes such an interest in Niagara Falls as Toronto. Two or three excursion boats leave Toronto every day for Niagara, while on holidays the accommodation of all the boats combined is scarcely sufficient for the demand; hence we feel more than a passing interest in the proposed International Park. No doubt Senator Campbell and Allan, and Messrs. J. B. Plumb and A. Desjardins members of the House of Commons, forming the Canadian Commission to act in concert with the authorities of New York State, will do all in their power to see that the undertaking so far as Canada is concerned shall be a success, yet it appears the whole scheme is very likely to fall to the ground. The commission is tardy: there should be no delay, for presently such difficulties may arise, through this procrastination, as to effectually stay the entire proposal. Already, as the New York *Herald* intimates, the people of that state are becoming sceptical of the whole affair.

At a meeting of interested persons lately, the subject of foresting was broached, with a view to find out how far we are indebted for the remarkable change in our climate about Toronto, produced within the last decade, to the demolition of our forests. The subject is one for the local legislature to deal with, and is of infinite importance. Twenty years ago the fall of snow in Ontario and especially about Toronto was enormous and continuous throughout the winter. But with the decline of the forests a remarkable change has taken place in the climate, instead of snow, we have rain; instead of Arctic cold, we have British moisture. The meteorological report of Ontario for the last twenty years shows this change to be gradual but sure, and in a direct ratio to the devastation of the forests. This is important and the local legislature might well take the subject in hand and discountenance the indiscriminate destruction of our trees, and encourage the preservation and planting of trees in certain portions of the Province.

As I mentioned in last week's SPECTATOR, the Sunday Island traffic has proved to be a snare. Last Friday the Managers of the Young Men's Christian Association adopted the following resolution: "Whereas the Board of this association having been informed by its Tract Committee that the hands employed on the ferry boats complain of being compelled to work on the Lord's Day, desire to enter a strong protest against all such Sunday traffic, and against all that in any way directly or indirectly, leads to the violation of God's law, or aids and abets a cause whereby our fellow-citizens men are deprived of needed physical rest, or attendance on the more needed means of grace." I cannot see how those Rev. gentlemen who countenanced these Sunday pleasure boats, can reconcile the traffic with the command "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

Now when it is too late, the Civic Committee propose to make all the six railway lines entering Toronto have a converging point at Union Station. It is not at all likely that any sort of amicable arrangement can be made with the several lines, as all of them have their own stations erected at great expense, and although this accommodation might be desirable it is by no means necessary. Our Civic Committee and other Municipal Committees are constantly attempting something impossible. I believe the citizens as a body would rather just at present see the streets put into something like repair, or made permanent, than witness any other municipal revolution. In driving beyond the several railway tracks at the new Reformatory last Saturday, on the principal street of the city, the wheels of my phaeton sank two feet in the mud, and this sort of road for half a mile. Where are our aldermen who went to Chicago lately to copy their block pavement?

Queen City.