

What of the
Future?

The City Council deserve credit for their promptness and foresight in taking steps to have all citizens supplied with pure water for drinking purposes. Commendable foresight is also shown in making special provision for supplying it liberally to the public schools. Nor can we doubt that every school teacher will take special pains to impress upon the children under his care the danger that will attend the neglect to observe the cautions, which should be repeated from day to day, so long as necessary, against drinking the water from the pipes. It is earnestly hoped that by the adoption of this wise method the city authorities may be able to forestall and ward off, to a very great extent, the threatened evil. The special thanks of all citizens are due to the people of the Junction for their kind and generous offer to give during the emergency, so large a quantity of pure water for free distribution. The proposed method of distribution by means of water carts, which is of course the only one available, will be found laborious and expensive, but it is due to all concerned that it be kept up faithfully, regardless of expense, so long as the circumstances may render it necessary. In this arrangement the first step demanded by the crisis has been promptly taken. The second is, it is equally obvious, to repair the damage, so far as practicable, with all possible speed. This is being done and no doubt will be done, whether the process prove to be longer or shorter. But the third step, the substitution of a new and safe system for the future—what about that? Will both Council and citizens prove equal to the occasion? The demands upon them will be large. The providing of the necessary funds will be all the more difficult because of the large outlay necessary for repairing the old conduit for temporary use. Should this be effected so satisfactorily as to give us again an abundance of fairly pure water for the time being, the city fathers will be once more in the presence of the great temptation under which they have already fallen, with results so disastrous—the temptation to postpone the necessary action. We note that a meeting of the council will probably have been called before these lines go to press. There is reason to hope that some definite and immediate action will have been agreed on at that meeting not only for the immediate present but for the long future. If those responsible for such action move energetically and strike while the iron is hot; it is hardly conceivable that the ratepayers will any longer demur. [Since the above was written we were glad to learn that the Council has decided to submit to the vote of the citizens a by-law to provide the funds for the carrying out of the tunnel project.]

Are Governments
Mere "Flies on
the Wheel"?

"We hear it occasionally argued," says The Globe, "that a government should do something to cheapen telegraphic communication or freight transportation between certain points. The task is beyond the power of governments. Only the mechanical inventors can assist in that direction. Governments can merely transfer the cost from those who are directly benefited to those who are not." That brief passage must surely have crept into The Globe's editorial columns in the absence of the supervising editor. Has the government of Great Britain done nothing to cheapen telegraphic communication? It is possible, though scarcely probable, that The Globe means to condemn not only the building of railways by governments, but even the aiding of any railway by a bonus from the public treasury. No doubt a plausible argument could be built up in support of that view. But passing that, The Globe would not surely have governments refuse utterly to grant the charters, with powers of expropriation, etc., without which it would be impossible to build any railway or canal. But all such concessions tend,

in the nature of things, in the direction of monopoly. Even if rival lines of railway are constructed, the inevitable combination almost certainly follows, to prevent the cheapening of freight and passenger rates to their proper competitive level. The same rule holds good with regard to telegraph lines. There is, perhaps, nothing in respect to which our popular governments are more short-sighted, or more weak-kneed, than in their failure to enact and enforce proper and just conditions, in the bestowal of all such charters, to safeguard the people against the exaction of unnecessarily high rates, for the enrichment of the corporations owning these great machines for facilitating communication and transportation. In a word, we hold it to be demonstrable, so far as such a matter admits of demonstration, that one of the most necessary and useful functions of a government in these days should be to guard the means of transportation and inter-communication so as to cheapen these processes as fast as increase of mechanical facilities on the one hand, and of the volume of business on the other, makes it possible. It is by no means to the credit of governments that the public who use the telegraphs, railroads, etc., should so often be compelled to pay interest on stocks watered to exorbitant dimensions, as well as to contribute to make individuals and corporations inordinately wealthy. A city council is simply a government on a small scale. What the city council of Toronto has done for the cheapening of street car transportation within the city limits should be done, and will one day be done, on a much larger scale, by the provincial and national governments, within their respective spheres.

The Central American
Federation.

A movement of considerable interest and importance is that now going on in certain of the States of Central America, looking to the ultimate federation of all the Central American republics. Nicaragua and Honduras are taking the lead. These two countries have been having a boundary dispute. This is now, it is said, to be submitted to a joint commission. If this fails to effect a settlement, the question is to be left to Spain, as arbitrator. Meanwhile the two countries have just concluded an offensive and defensive alliance. The Literary Digest quotes from the Estrella, Panama, some of the sections of the treaty, from which it appears that the high contracting parties will no longer consider as foreign the other Central American States, and that "they will labour constantly to maintain family bonds and the greatest cordiality in their relations, making common cause in case of war or difficulties with foreign countries, and mediating in their international relations." It is further stipulated that "the high contracting parties shall act jointly in matters of foreign policy, and endeavour to bring about the same uniformity and harmony with the other governments of Central America. There shall be a uniform postal tariff, joint diplomatic representation, and laws common to all. Concessions to foreign railroad and steamboat companies are to be made jointly by the contracting governments." This treaty is to be submitted to the consideration of the other States, as a temporary agreement to be subscribed to "until they shall be incorporated into a single nation." There seems some reason to expect that the proposed union will meet with favour. It may become a fact accomplished in the near future. Nothing but good, so far as we can see, should result from such a union, if it can be effected. The sense of strength should add dignity and a weightier sense of responsibility to the Government of the united countries, and give them a place and influence in the family of nations.

Liberty an Aid
to Law.

The facts published in a paragraph in our last number concerning the steady decrease of crime in England, compared with its increase in most other European countries, suggest material for a profitable study of causes and effects in this department