

PROMINENT TOPICS.

The outbreak of typhoid in Westmount has yet to be accounted for. The water now supplied is not perfect, but it is as pure as what has been supplied the householders for many years, during a period when the average health of this suburb was very high. Water, therefore, seems not to be responsible for the epidemic. The next object of suspicion is the town's drainage system. This should be thoroughly investigated. Westmount has been developing rapidly in recent years, under such conditions as, in other localities, have caused an abnormal extent of sickness to prevail. Building houses before the street on which they are situated has been provided with sewers, is a common practice in new towns and in the suburbs of cities. Such haste in providing residences before the essentials of health have been provided, has in other municipalities, caused outbreaks of scarletina, typhoid, scarlet and other fevers which have severely punished such precipitancy.

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It is made quite a mystery, though transparent enough, that rural, or semi-rural settlements are often fever gardens, where the crop ripens all the year round. To such rural places city people resort for health, where they are frequently invalidated, owing to defective sanitation. It is a common, but a fatal mistake for governing bodies to neglect drainage and sewerage because their locality is so naturally healthy.

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It is worthy of enquiry whether the appalling epidemic of typhoid, etc., at Butler, in the United States, where over 2,000 victims were prostrated, out of 12,000 inhabitants, has caused a transmission of disease to distant places. Contagion being spread to points hundreds of miles away from the place where a fever is raging, is well known to have occurred.

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The press dispatches relative to the dispute between Russia and Japan are too contradictory, and their variations are made too rapidly for them to have emanated from authentic sources. News, dated 13th inst., comes from Berlin, that "the Foreign Office has received intelligence which, for the first time since the controversy arose, has caused the Government to believe that the situation is extremely tense," or critical. Other news from Paris, of the same date as that from Berlin, reports that "France and Great Britain are contemplating a joint offer of their good offices to Japan and Russia, which diplomatists believe will probably be successful."

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Now, if France and Great Britain are only "contemplating" a joint offer of their good offices to Russia and Japan, there cannot, in the judgment of

those powers, be any immediate prospect of war, that is, the situation cannot be "extremely tense," as the Berlin dispatch says. Who shall decide when the diplomats at Paris differ widely from the Government authorities at Berlin? There can hardly be a doubt that Great Britain has been using its good offices to restrain both the Japanese and Russians, as it is so obviously the interest of Great Britain to have the world's peace maintained, especially in the far East, where a conflict would develop conditions that could hardly fail to drag the old country in as a belligerent. France, too, has grave interests that would be imperilled by a war between Japan and Russia, as such a conflict would almost inevitably involve China and throw that Empire into tumult.

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What the Russian case is against Japan, and vice versa, has never been clearly stated. We know definitely what caused the Crimean War, the Franco-German, the South African; but these two powers, Russia and Japan, seem to be squaring up to each other in a mutually threatening attitude without the onlookers distinctly knowing what they severally desire, what, in a word, they are quarrelling about. Neither of them has taken any action that, on ordinary principles, may be regarded as a cause of war. Suspicion of Russia's designs seems to be Japan's provocation, which is very natural in view of Russia's record, and Russia's provocation seems to be the determination of Japan to resist what it regards as that grasping Empire's threatened aggression. The affair seems eminently one for arbitration, which we trust will be arranged by the good offices of Great Britain and France.

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The Bank of British North America has opened a branch at Calgary, N.W.T., under the temporary management of Mr. A. D. Severs.

CALENDARS, 1904.

The managers of the companies who have favoured us with Calendars for 1904, have our thanks for the courtesy and good wishes for a prosperous year.

THE NEWS, St. John's, P.Q., has issued a plain serviceable calendar.

THE NATIONAL LIFE, of Ireland's date card is neat to business-like.

THE MASSACHUSETTS' MUTUAL ACCIDENT ASSOCIATION, Boston, U.S., sends a most useful date card.

THE UNION MUTUAL resets its familiar lighthouse scene, with new lettering. A strong effect is produced.

THE ASSURANCE COMPANY OF MOUNT-ROYAL'S card is adorned by a photo of the Maisonneuve Monument.

THE CANADA ACCIDENT ASSURANCE COMPANY, shows an effect in illumination, that is quite striking, though simple. The lettering is particularly bright and effective.