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Current Topics.

The Behring Sea Damages.

It is pleasing to see the better class of journals in the United States taking honourable ground in regard to the obligation of the nation to pay the amount of damages agreed on between the respective Governments concerned in the Behring Sea matter. *The Outlook*, after stating the case very fairly, and pointing out that the agreement to pay a lump sum of \$425,000 in full settlement of all demands was proposed by their own Government, "after a thorough examination by both Governments," and that the award requires that the amount agreed on "shall be promptly paid," concludes as follows:

"As has been well said, 'In the eye of public law this claim is just as valid now as any part of the national debt, and a repudiation of it would be as bad as repudiation of a portion of the debt held by foreigners.' In other words, if there is a difference of opinion on this question in Congress, it will be a difference of opinion on the question whether we shall pay our debts or not; we refuse to believe that Congress will hold two opinions on that question."

Canadian
Copyright.

The announcement is made in cable despatches that in spite of the strong pleas put in by the late Sir John Thompson, endorsed by Mr. J. D. Edgar, a prominent member of the Opposition, the Canadian Copyright Bill of 1889 is not likely to receive the royal assent. This is much to be regretted on many accounts, but chiefly because it is sure to cause dangerous friction between the Mother Country and Canada. Our Parliament cannot reasonably be expected to recede from a position which it has deliberately and repeatedly taken, and it will certainly not do so. It would be better, however, in order to put an end to uncertainty, that Her Majesty should be advised to either assent to the bill at once or declare that she cannot see her way clear to do so. Very soon the Canadian parliament must, in self-respect, take some action to terminate a state of indecision what has now lasted nearly

six years. What can be done? If protests and arguments are of no avail in hastening a decision of some kind, parliament can and should re-enact the bill of 1889 without any purpose of awaiting Her Majesty's assent, and allow it to go into force unless the British Government take the responsibility of disallowing it within the two years provided for in the British North America Act. It is quite unlikely that the Act would be disallowed, and it could not under such circumstances be hung up as it now is. The present course is dangerous to the relations between the two countries; the course above suggested would have the merit of bringing the question to an issue, and it would probably secure a settlement of it favourable to the Canadian view.

Those Fire
Engines.

The city is to be congratulated upon the fact that its citizens in general and the members of the Council in particular seem at last to be aroused to the necessity of taking immediate steps to equip the fire brigade for its arduous work. It is easy, of course, to be wise after the event, as it is convenient to have official scape-goats to bear the sins of short-sightedness and neglect, of which every intelligent citizen has been really in some measure guilty, for every such citizen knew, or should have known, that there was positively no means at the command of our brave and skilful firemen by which a stream of water could be thrown above the third story of any of our loftier buildings. This fact was demonstrated at the test made on Monday. Such a fact brands us all, as citizens in general, as weakly and culpably lax in permitting such a state of things to exist for a day, and brands the Council, whose special business it is to think about such things, in a very special manner, as guilty of unpardonable neglect of duty. We have reason to blush that we, as citizens, should have had to be cudgelled into motion by two disastrous fires, on the one hand, and the threatened action of insurance companies, on the other, before we were ready to use our cudgels in turn upon our delinquent Councillors. The repeated urging of the matter upon the attention of Council and citizens by the Chief of the fire department, takes away all excuse from all concerned. Let all hasten to bring forth fruits meet for the deep repentance all must feel.

Newspaper
Ethics.

Commenting on some remarks on the above subject in a recent number of this journal, the *Montreal Herald*, after pointing out the indefiniteness of those remarks, proceeds to lay down "the fact" in reference to the matter. As to the indefiniteness, when the reader bears in mind that our express object was to induce journalists generally, and the members of the Press Association in particular, to consider the question and do something, if possible, towards setting up an ethical standard for conscientious journalists, he can judge whether it was for us to attempt to formulate the code required in advance of the discussion we invited. If we succeeded in suggesting several matters in regard to which more definite ethical principles were desirable, we did not wholly fail in the modest purpose we had in view. Meanwhile, as the *Herald* has kindly undertaken to do the thing which we did not feel called upon to attempt, we cannot, perhaps, better further our object