

might be said, observed the Premier, in concluding that this bill would be nugatory, but he hoped and believed it would not be so.

If ever a bill was damned with faint praise by its own father, surely it was the Minimum Wage Bill, the Audrey of parliamentary measures, introduced with the faint commendation, "A poor thing but mine own." The Opposition have said nothing worse about Mr. Asquith's bill than he himself has said. They couldn't. The Bill and the speech together really give colour to the extraordinary theory that the Government is riding for a fall; that it sees trouble ahead and is more than willing to hand over to the Unionists for solution, the whole bunch of troublesome problems it sees no possibility of solving itself. The chickens of diverse breeds sent out during the general election campaign are coming home to roost.

Meanwhile the people of Great Britain, including the strikers, are suffering privation and in consequence the strike may collapse at almost any time. The present situation in England needs moral courage to deal with it. A few weeks more of the present distress and the Government will have possibly something worse than broken windows to mend.

Montreal's Borrowing Power. The legislature has decided that in future Montreal's limit of borrowing power shall be 12 p.c. of the taxable valuation instead of 15 p.c. as heretofore. Since this has been frequently advocated in the columns of THE CHRONICLE, we are glad to find that the proposal has now been passed. It is a move in the right direction.

Property Qualification. The Legislative Council has struck out the clause in the Montreal Bill abolishing the property qualification for mayor and aldermen. The question comes up every time Montreal has a bill before the Legislature, that is to say every year. Why any man who has every other qualification for the office of mayor or alderman, including disinterestedness, should want to serve in either capacity, if he has not got enough money to buy the real estate qualification is a mystery. If he goes into the Council to make the money, that is at least intelligible, but he is a first class man to keep out.

Montreal and the Technical School. That the city should vote \$40,000 to the Technical School is not an unreasonable proposition and that the Legislature should authorise it to do so is not unreasonable, but that the Legislature should compel the City of Montreal to increase its grant to the Technical School or any other school by \$15,000, is an abuse of power of doubtful constitutionality. If the Legislature has the right to compel Montreal to subsidise the Technical School, it has the right to compel the city to give

money to any institution calling itself a school or college, and it is not difficult to imagine some very pretty complications arising.

A High Licence Tax.

What must be the record license tax is that paid by the Northwestern Mutual Life of Milwaukee to the State of Wisconsin. It amounts to \$482,193. This payment was made under protest. The annual protest was made on the ground that the tax is excessive and discriminatory, and that it is not valid. The Northwestern continues to say: "This protest has been made to prevent any implication that the company admits the legality or correctness of the amount of its gross income for the year ended December 31, 1911, upon which the above license fee for 1912 was computed, and to show that payment has been made, with the right reserved to bring suit against either the Commissioner or the Treasurer, or both, to test the validity of the law and to recover all or part of the tax paid." The 1910 annual report of the Wisconsin tax commission, which declared the above tax as excessive during that year, was referred to, and it was remarked in the protest that had the tax been collected under a bill recommended by that commission, but not passed by the legislature, it would have amounted to less than \$60,000, or one-eighth of the sum actually paid.

"No Smoking." In New York in 1910, there were 14,405 fires. Of these 3,240 were due to the careless handling of cigars, cigarettes and matches. In 1911, 3,332 New York fires were from the same cause. Thus fully 25 p.c. of all fires in New York during the last two years have resulted from the habit of smoking.

Fire Commissioner Johnson intends to change all this. To that end, he has had 35,000 "Smoking Prohibited" placards printed in several languages, to be hung up in factories and workshops, with the added caution "Under Penalty of Fine or Imprisonment or Both." Acting on a liberal opinion of the corporation counsel, the fire commissioner, in enforcing the prohibition of smoking, purposes to institute criminal proceedings to support his authority. To advertise thoroughly the crusade against carelessness with lighted matches, cigarettes and cigars, the fire commissioner has adopted the novel method of the "sandwich" fire engine. A large automobile fire engine was equipped on each side with large signboards on which the prohibitory notice was painted in red letters. As a publicity medium, this was an unqualified success.

The Triangle Waist fire with its appalling loss of life and the Equitable fire are both supposed to have originated with a careless smoker. That amiable idiot is not confined to New York; the fire records show that he is frequently in evidence in Canada. Wouldn't it be worth while to get on his track?