

THE LATE DR. MACVICAR.

Montreal has been exceptionally favoured by having had citizens who devoted their wealth or their talents and business experience to the cause of education. From that ever memorable 22nd July, 1870, when the Right Hon. W. E. Forster, a Yorkshire manufacturer, succeeded in passing the first Act for establishing a national system of popular education, in spite of the strenuous opposition of politicians in the extreme wing of each party, there has been a development of the conviction that popular illiteracy is a reproach to a nation and a menace to its well-being, while an educated people are its strength and its honour. Montreal has a proud record in this respect as its best citizens have ever regarded it an honour to share in the management of the city's schools.

Distinguished amongst those was the late Rev. D. H. MacVicar, D.D., LL.D., who for long years was a Protestant School Commissioner and since 1879 was President of the Board. Having had the privilege of sitting with him for some years as a School Commissioner, we can testify to the eminent ability, sound judgment, broad-mindedness he ever displayed in the deliberations over which he so acceptably, so wisely presided. While very decided in his views, very strenuous in his efforts to win support for them from his colleagues, he was always fair, judicious and sympathetic in weighing those of other Commissioners. It was ever manifest that President MacVicar had only one object, he was enthusiastically bent upon making the schools under charge of the Commissioners as efficient as possible, with due regard to the interests of the rate-payers and of parents. His rank and his work in other spheres we leave others to record. His eminent services to popular education, which were given with a whole-souled earnestness and desire to advance the educational interests of this city, are entitled to public gratitude. The memory of the late Dr. MacVicar, as President of the Board of Protestant School Commissioners, will be held in high esteem for generations, for the more education is diffused the more it is enriched the more will be the honour paid to those who give their time and their talents to the promotion of national education.

INSURANCE AND TRADE.—How fire insurance protects trade is well illustrated by the notice given by Armour & Co., to the city authorities, Sioux City, that unless better fire protection is afforded the firm will not rebuild the premises burnt some weeks ago as the insurance companies will not issue policies on the buildings and plant under present conditions. It is now for the city to decide whether it will improve the fire protection service or lose this large establishment.

PROMINENT TOPICS.

The fuel question is uppermost as a general topic with every likelihood of being a gloomy one during the whole winter, to many indeed a distressing one. Yet Montreal is not so badly off as New York, where many citizens who have ample means are only able to secure supplies of coal by the day like their poorest neighbours. A dweller in Brooklyn writes: "We are all pigging together with the servants in the kitchen as we cannot obtain enough coal or wood to keep the furnace alive." Private letters from Toronto tell the same melancholy, indeed painful, story. Happily, business is prosperous and work plentiful or the coal famine would be a terrible calamity.

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The City Council has dealt with the supply of fuel for the poor with its characteristic slipshod, indecisive, unbusiness-like manner. Weeks ago the question came up in the Council and brave declarations were made respecting the measures about to be taken to obtain supplies of both wood and coal to be sold to the poor at moderate prices so as to prevent their scanty means being wasted by paying exorbitant figures and suffering from lack of fuel. After a display of fussy, back-boneless, indeterminate energy nothing was done by the City Council, as is usual when men are satisfied with airing their opinions instead of meeting a grave situation by practical work. When the air breathes of spring and the robins have returned we shall probably find that a civic fuel supply for the distressed poor has been secured or at least contracted for. Meanwhile, the suffering poor must get what comfort they can from reading reports of City Council meetings. It must be admitted that these are enough to make any citizen hot with indignation.

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If the old saying, "When things get to their worst they begin to mend," is true we shall have some attention paid ere long to the scandalous condition of the sidewalks in this city. In past seasons the civic by-law relating to these pathways has been much neglected, this year it has been wholly ignored by the police department. Possibly the present Chief of Police having been in office only a year or two has not yet learnt what by-laws he is responsible for enforcing. Years ago it was the custom to issue copies of the by-law relating to dangerous sidewalks. This practice has been most unwisely abandoned. Years ago it was customary for policemen to notify citizens that they were neglecting this by-law, now the police pick their way "gingerly" over dangerous places in apparent ignor-