

New Westminster seeks relief from a temporary embarrassment, caused by the late serious fire, and a bill is before the Legislature of British Columbia for that purpose. The city owes, on sixteen loans, \$953,000, which was used, among other purposes, to establish an electric light system and waterworks. None of the bonds fall due till 1989, and in the meantime the pressure for the payment of interest is to be met by utilizing the sinking fund, to the credit of which stands \$72,000. This is on the assumption that the amount thus taken can easily be restored before the time of payment. The consent of all the bondholders that can be reached has been obtained, a necessary step and one in the absence of which justification for the measure would be wanting. The amount at the credit of the sinking fund will not go very far, so, with the same consent, temporary bonds for interest to the extent of three-fifths of the amount for five years, are to be issued in payment of the interest, the balance being payable in cash. These bonds are to bear five per cent. interest. This ruinous though necessary payment of interest on interest is limited to ten years; if prolonged it would prove fatal. Besides this power is to be taken to issue \$200,000 improvement debentures, payable by instalments on and after the year 1919. The financial steering of the city will require to be controlled by a steady hand.

A crisis in the relations of Great Britain to Afghanistan has occurred. The Ameer, Abdur-Rahman, was placed on the throne by Great Britain, and has ever since been her pensioner. He agreed, from the start, to have no relations with Russia, and he has now broken his promise by agreeing to permit the Russian Government to construct a railway from Cabul to Peshawar or Candahar, which would form the means of invading India, long contemplated by Russia, and for the execution of which numerous plans have been drawn up, at different times, by Russian officers. In consequence of the Ameer's breach of faith, Sir Salter Pyne, the chief European adviser of the Ameer, will no longer reside at the court of Cabul. He had been on a visit to Calcutta and had got as far as Peshawar, on his way back to the Ameer's capital, when news of the hostile arrangement caused him to discontinue his journey. The Ameer, in bad health and almost at his last gasp, falls a prey to Russian intrigue. When the end comes, Russia has a pretender, now in her pay, who will claim the throne, Iskander, under her auspices. At whatever cost, the building of a Russian Government railway to the frontier of British India will have to be prevented. In a precisely similar case, Great Britain has just acted with the greatest promptitude. The Sultan of Oman, who is under British protection, granted a coaling station to the French, in Persian Gulf; when Lord Curzon, Governor-General of India, heard of this, he dispatched a force of three war vessels, and under threat of bombardment, procured the revocation of the grant. The identity of method is that both Russia and France dealt surreptitiously with vassals of Great Britain. This first official act of Lord Curzon since he was appointed Governor-General of India is to procure the revocation of the grant made by the Sultan of Oman; and it may be taken as an earnest of the advice he will be likely to give in the case of Afghanistan.

TORONTO HARBOR.

To a deputation who waited on the Minister of Public Works to urge certain improvements in the Toronto harbor, M. Tarte gave a favorable answer, in effect promising to do what he could to have put into the estimates a sum, say half a million, more or less, as necessity may show, to deepen

the entrances to the harbor and to divert the river Don through the marsh so as to prevent the silting up of the port. This improvement will be done as part of a general scheme, in which money will be spent on many other harbors, chiefly in the east. The assumed necessity for the improvement of Toronto harbor is the approaching completion of the canals to a depth of 14 feet; it will be necessary that vessels of that draught should be able to enter the harbor of Toronto. That is the assumption, and one speaker added that this is the only harbor of refuge on Lake Ontario, a statement that possibly may not go unchallenged. Toronto harbor is scarcely deep enough, in most places, for vessels drawing 14 feet of water; and it would be useless to make the entrances deeper than the other parts. It used to be imagined that any required depth could be got there by dredging; in 1828, Captain Richardson made the broad statement that the rock was 200 feet down below the surface of the water. Recent examination, for waterworks purposes, shows that it is in fact not far below the surface.

Of the marsh through which the river Don is to be made to flow but little is known. It is probable that the rock there is much lower than in the harbor. This probability rests upon some known facts, with reasonable inferences therefrom. The Grand Trunk Railway bridge is only a few yards from the mouth of the Don, as that river was originally. When that bridge was built, coffer dams were put down to a depth of 70 feet, without reaching rock, and the bridge had to be made to rest on planks. If the water had gouged out the rock to that depth, at this point, it is probable that the depth would continue to be considerably farther south, at least at the point in which the channel flowed.

That the talus of the Tom Moore's "Blue Hills of Old Toronto" on which the city is built, formerly extended farther to the south, we know from the wearing away of the cliffs of Scarboro Heights, on the east, and of the lower banks, at Parkdale, and through this talus the river had a longer course, probably extending the deep channel into part of the present marsh.

The sand-bar in front was in this case formed in accordance with a physical law which a French engineer has fully established, namely, that bars form only in the front of rivers, both sides of which, at their mouths end at the same point, and that where the land extends on one side farther than on the other, no bar can form. This bar was besides on the neutral line on which the travelling beach material, which according to Sir Richard Bonycastle, R.N., moves in masses of hundreds of tons, had a tendency to settle. This obstruction growing with time formed a bog, the depth of which it may be important to ascertain. If the depth be great, would it be easier to obtain harbor space by clearing the marsh than by blasting the rock farther west? Might not the new mouth of the Don form a better entrance for shipping than the present eastern gap?

Mr. Tarte stated, during the interview with the deputation, that the works on the eastern gap rest on quick-sand. If this be so, the discovery may prove serious.

In some way, greater depth of water will be necessary, after the completion of the canals deepening, and this whether Toronto is to become a link in the great chain of grain travel to the ocean or not. Mr. Tarte is right in saying that our water system must be taken as a whole; and when this is said more than the internal water communication must be taken into account. In estimating the cost of freight for Europe, ocean as well as inland freight must be looked to. And it is not sufficient that