

Montreal Civic Elections.

The approaching civic elections are perhaps the most important ever held in Montreal. For good or ill they will mark a radical change in our system of civic administration. Whether the change will be for the better or for the worse depends much upon the way in which the electors mark their ballots. The old system was fruitful in mischief, which, let us hope, the new experiment will tend at least to minimize. The great curse of the old system was patronage, for which there should be no room and no excuse in the new system. There are tried men in the corporation who are entitled by their records to every consideration from the electors, and whom it would be a mistake to displace, to make room for new men; and also there are others who have been tried and found guilty. Nothing can relieve the electors from their own share of responsibility. No satisfactory substitute for an honest and capable man in public office has yet been discovered. Forms of government vary and, no doubt, some forms are better than others, but as Pope says:

"For forms of government let fools contest
 What'e'er is best administered is best."

Everything will still depend upon the character and capacity of the men chosen to govern.

British Elections.

It is impossible to withhold a tribute of admiration for the magnificent nerve of men like Messrs. Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in claiming that the result of the elections in Great Britain is a great triumph for the Liberal Party and a glorious vindication of its whole policy, budget, free trade, reform of the Lords, and all. If they can make this claim when their old majority of about 330 has been practically wiped out, what could they not claim if they had saved half their majority? The right honourable gentlemen are whistling to keep up their courage and the courage of their following. Compromise and coalition are imminent, and preferential trade is within measurable distance. Another general election is also in sight; and about the result there is not much room for doubt. The tumult of the radical and socialist element will dwindle to a calm, and even the German invasion may be unavoidably postponed in the face of a united United Kingdom on guard.

The Paris Floods.

Of all the freaks of nature in recent years, the floods in France are the most surprising and the most disastrous. In Paris alone the damage is estimated at \$200,000,000 and the consequent death roll can only be wildly guessed at. That the old theory or superstition of the Halley comet being a harbinger of disaster should be revived, is not under the circumstances surprising.

The Webbwood Disaster.

The awful railway disaster at Webbwood is one of the worst, if not the worst in the history of Canada. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, judging by experience elsewhere, that such deplorable calamities are to some extent at least preventable. We cannot help thinking that a more rigorous, expert and effectual system of investigation into every accident of the kind would tend to minimize the trouble. Such investigations should not be left to the average coroner's jury. In England they are looked after by officials of the Board of Trade. The proper body to supervise these enquiries in Canada is the Railway Commission. If in every case the responsibility were directly brought home it would be a good thing both for the companies and the public. The ordinary coroner's jury has no special qualifications for such work.

A Humble Petition.

Petition and counter-petition assail the Senate Banking Committee regarding the fire insurance features of the pending insurance bill. The underwriters, both tariff and non-tariff, have plainly set forth in their recent memorandum the essential unfairness of allowing unlicensed companies to compete for Canadian business.

From the opposing camp there has issued a "humble petition" which "respectfully exposeth" the fact that many Canadian manufacturers are not so logical as they might be. While favouring rigid enforcing of a customs tariff to protect their own interests, they urge letting down the bars when it comes to admitting unlicensed insurance companies from abroad.

The Beef Trust.

The United States Government has inaugurated an investigation into the affairs of the Beef Trust. Meanwhile a movement has obtained considerable headway in the United States and has made some progress in Canada to fight the trust by boycotting meat, that is by refusing to eat meat at the present famine prices. If the boycott does not succeed in breaking the prices, it may do good in other ways. Most of us eat too much meat. A few weeks' abstinence from the flesh pots of Egypt may improve the health of the people, and teach them that they are not solely at the mercy of their butchers.

Donald Macmaster.

We tender 4,600 hearty congratulations to Mr. Donald Macmaster upon his splendid victory in Chertsey. It is a triumph for him, for the Unionist party and for Canada. Canada will be well represented in the next Parliament and Mr. Macmaster's old friends in Montreal will expect to hear of him in the near future. He is a man of great ability and brilliant oratorical power. Chertsey will be proud of its member.