THE EVENING TIMES.

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THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

A question that is discussed with a good deal of interest in this city at present relates to the fire department. The recent application of the call firemen for an increase of pay has raised the question whether the city should not discontinue the present semi-volunteer system and follow the example of other cities, with a paid force of firemen always on duty. It is estimated that the increase of pay asked for by the men would amount to $16,000 per year, and this would pay the wages of quite a large permanent force. Possibly to provide a sufficient force would cost a little more, but there would be, it is argued, the greater advantage of having a body of men always available, always ready, and perhaps more quick to respond the moment an alarm of fire is sounded than is the case even with the very large number of call men now required to ensure a good fire-fighting force.

There can be no doubt that sooner or later St. John will find it not only expedient but necessary to change the system now in vogue. Of course the conditions will be changed somewhat when a gravitation water supply has been secured, but no one can tell what effect this will have on the work of the department. It will always be necessary, however, to have a good fire-fighting force, and the question of a paid force always on duty naturally comes up when there is a proposition to largely increase the cost. No one questions the statement that firemen should be well paid. It is only a question of the relative value of service by a compact, paid department, and a scattered body of call men. Many citizens appear to be of opinion that the next move should be to secure a paid force.

AN ONTARIO PROBLEM

The province of Ontario is confronted by a condition with which New Brunswick was called upon last year to deal. It is, "The devising of a system for the care and treatment of the insane which will more adequately combine government and individual responsibility in regard to sharing the burden of maintaining the provincial lunatic asylums and which will not tend, as at present, to make the asylums refuge places for the senile, the destitute and the weak, who should more properly be cared for by relatives and friends or by the municipalities to which they belong."

The case was stated this week before the Canadian Club in Toronto by Hon. W. J. Hanna, provincial secretary of Ontario. We quote from the Mail and Empire report of his address:—

"He quoted some rather startling figures to show the alarming increase in the asylum population of Ontario, an increase altogether out of proportion to the growth in number of inhabitants. The number of inmates now in the provincial insane asylums, he said, was three times what it was in 1871, and over twice what it was in 1881. According to actual figures, insanity seems to be rapidly increasing, and there is today nearly one-third more lunacy in Ontario and Quebec and New Brunswick, and two-and-a-quarter times as much in Ontario as in Nova Scotia. We have in the institutions for the insane in this province 6,000 people. These are maintained at an annual cost of quite $1,000,000, if we allow anything at all for capital account. For the maintenance of but 1,200 of these (or about 20 per cent.), is anything contributed by the patients or by those morally or legally responsible for their care and comfort. This means that 88 per cent. of the cost of maintenance is defrayed by the province."

Hon. Mr. Hanna admitted the duty of the province to care for the insane, but argued against a centralized system, which "destroys that oversight of each individual case which is the distinctive feature of local interest and control; while in a localized system the municipal officers had personal knowledge of every case and of the ability of the relatives to pay, and whether they should be made to pay."

"Every time the government relieves the individual or the community from the discharge of a duty," he said, "that government does that individual or community a wrong. It encourages the relaxation of effort, lets down the moral tone and saps the virility of the recipient. The trouble with all government help is that the help is so pleasant to take that it is apt to create an appetite for more. After one experience of government help, people come to rely upon it instead of upon their own exertions."

Continuing, Mr. Hanna said:—"One of the most conspicuous consequences of the present system is that it has a pauperizing tendency. It deprives the communities and individuals of all incentives to the exercise of that oversight which only they can give, and it supplies them with potent, and in some cases irresistible inducements to charge upon the province the care of the senile, the destitute and the weak, who by any stretch of the imagination can be held to be mentally defective."

This is exactly the condition of affairs that confronted the government of New Brunswick and led to recent legislation. Hon. Mr. Hanna states that Ontario must face the question, and endeavor to find a better system; although he feels that it must be done without adding a heavy additional burden on the municipality. But the insane asylums must not become charity homes for those who are not insane.

In Montreal the principle of the responsibility of heads of departments is recognized. The Star of Wednesday says: "The new Fire Committee, which met for the first time yesterday afternoon, laid down the principle that Chief Benoit should have full control of the men under him. He is to have power to discharge men, and upon his report men will be given situations and promotions will be made."

The Times is glad to observe that a Halifax newspaper man has been appointed clerk of the Legislative Council. Such bodies require the infusion of a little vigorous life, and even if Mr. Barnstead of the Recorder is not a member of the Council itself, his presence may have some effect upon the ancient of days who doze and dream in the upper chamber.

The Nova Scotia government, in deciding to create a pension fund for school teachers, is taking another forward step in educational policy, which, if a workable scheme is adopted will tend to encourage members of the teaching profession to remain in the service.

The Socialist candidate in the provincial by-election in North Toronto got 280 votes. Mr. McNaught, Conservative, got 3,839, and ex-Mayor Urquhart, Liberal, 2,418. Toronto is still Conservative, and the Socialists are very few in number.

Canada's gift of flour to the famine stricken section of Japan is a timely benevolence, and it is also good policy. Trade between Japan and Canada is certain to assume large propotions in the not distant future.

AN IMPORTANT DECISION

Probably the most important and far-reaching decision, as far as the interstate commerce law is concerned, was delivered yesterday by the supreme court when by an undivided bench it laid down the new principle that railroads cannot deal in the commodities which they haul over their lines. This decision falls principally on the railroads which directly or indirectly own coal mines and sell their products, but if the courts sustain the claim of the Interstate Commerce Commission that private car lines are common carriers the principle laid down yesterday may also include them, so that the owners of refrigerator cars would be prohibited from using their own cars for the transportation of their products. The decision as to coal alone, however, removes what is acknowledged to be one of the greatest evils in the matter of railroad rates. It also enlarges considerably the power of the Interstate Commerce Commission, taking it further in that particular direction than was contemplated even by the pending Hepburn bill. As pointed out by the court, there was no prohibition in the interstate commerce law of railway ownership in commodities, but, notwithstanding its absence, it was plain, according to the court, that to hold otherwise would be contrary to the very spirit of the act. The case involved a charge of discrimination in favor of the New Haven road by the Chesapeake & Ohio in freight rates. It grew out of complications arising in connection with a contract made between the two companies in 1896, in accordance with which the Chesapeake & Ohio agreed to deliver 2,000,000 tons of bituminous coal to the New Haven road between July 1, 1897, and July 1, 1902. The delivery in the last year covered by the contract fell short to the extent of 60,000 tons, on account of a stike in the coal fields, which rendered it impossible to supply the coal. The New Haven road purchased coal elsewhere and presented a bill to the Chesapeake & Ohio for $193,000, representing the difference in cost. Instead of paying the money, the Chesapeake & Ohio delivered 60,000 tons of coal, notwithstanding the price of coal and of transportation had advanced to such an extent that it is said the company lost more than $1 a ton on its shipments. The case was brought to the attention of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and the charge made that the transaction constituted a preference in freight rates in favor of the New Haven road. The company contended that it was acting in the capacity of a vendor and not as a carrier, and was merely supplying the coal to pay a debt. This plea was also made the basis of a charge against the company, as the laws of West Virginia, where the coal was mined, prohibit common carriers from dealing in coal. The circuit court held, however, that as there is no federal statute against railroads acting as vendors that question need not be considered; hence the loss should be considered a dealer's loss. But, while so holding, the court decided that if the transaction involved an actual and substantial benefit to one shipper as against another it was in violation of the interstate commerce law. This condition was adjudged to have prevailed, and the trial court held the contract to have been illegal, and enjoined further proceedings under it. The lower court also held that the strike could not be held to absolve the Chesapeake & Ohio from the requirement to deliver the coal under its contract.

NEW CONSUMPTION CRUSADE

(London Daily Mail.)

The most interesting feature of the new crusade against consumption which is about to be initiated by the staff of the Brompton Consumption Hospital, will be the attempt to overcome the sources of infection in the homes of the poor.

Frederick Wood, the secretary of the hospital, yesterday indicated the general lines which will probably be followed.

"In a very large number of cases," he said, "the home is the source of infection. Therefore, when a patient comes here, working in conjunction with the local medical officer of health we shall endeavor to have the home thoroughly disinfected. Then we should invite all the members of the patient's family to come here and be examined. If any are consumptive we should offer to take them in. If they are free from the disease, we should impress upon them the absolute necessity of fresh air and sunlight in the home, and advise them on matters of home hygiene.

"Of course the carrying out of the scheme will cost money, and at the close of last year there was a deficit of £5,000 in our accounts, but we are hopeful that the public will come to our support."

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THE INGLENOOK PHILOSOPHER OF KENNEBECCASIS BAY.

Relations between Pollard and myself have been slightly strained since he called me a cannibal and I called him an ass, but this should not be so, for each of us gave utterance to an everlasting truth. And Pollard is lonely. There have been others in a similar state of mind, a multitude of others, through all the ages. Rev. Minot J. Savage has said:

"One of the loneliest things in all the world is the average human individual. It has been noted that divergences, differences, contrasts, are found in the limits of the same family. When you go outside of the family, of course these divergences are all exaggerated. And when you remember the different races, civilization, degrees of culture, and then reflect a moment, you will see that the individual is as lonely as one star in space, born differently, trained differently, with different tastes, and different degrees of education, different temperament, different in all ways. And yet, lonely as we are, the one thing we long for, perhaps, more than anything else is real friendship. Friendship is not that which is always touched with sunshine, but is willing to go into the shadow."

And Emerson found his most steadfast friends and entertaining companions in the woods and fields. Indeed, away from Nature, in crowds and cities, one must necessarily be lonely, unless he numbers among his friends a coterie of choice spirits of all times, who through their writings have become his familiars. These never obtrude, never grow dull, never disappoint by the boorishness or want of understanding, and are always at hand when wanted.

From the bottom of my heart I pity the man who has to depend upon his so-called friends and chance acquaintances for his entertainment. They are as unstable as water, for all have separate aims, are of different families, as it were, including one's nearest kindred. He is wise therefore who goes to the woods and fields for companionship, instruction and consolation, if they are within the limits of his range, and if he is without those limits, or the city shuts him in, who turns to books for the intimacy that he craves, but which, in another form the world never gives. Sitting in that chair in the corner Laurence Sterne has told me many a story of Uncle Tobey that is not told in Tristram Shandy; Dean Swift has recounted many adventures of Gulliver that are omitted from his travels; Goldsmith has given me fresh recollections of Fleet street, and Dickens has sat with Little Nell and Little Dorrit on his knees and toyed with their silken hair. Only last night Thackeray sat there, singing to himself:

"Forty times over let Michaelmas pass:—
Grizzling locks the brain doth clear—
Then you know a boy is an ass—
Then you know the worth of a lass—
Wait till you come to forty year."

Oh, no! These people never obtrude; they come when I call them; they go when I am sleepy. They bring me sweet rest and pleasant dreams.

Poor Pollard.

White Head, Kings county, Feb. 22.

WHY FRANCE INSISTS

(Ottawa Journal.)

The Sultan of Morocco, practically the last of the descendants of the Moorish conquerors of Northern Africa to have maintained a semblance of immunity from Frankish aggression, might well view the outcome of the international conference at Algeciras with less concern than is entertained by any of the other participants. His Oriental philosophy—for, of course, he is an Oriental in spite of his geographical environment—must have convinced him that in any event his day is done. It is easy to picture him in the posture of rare enjoyment of the differences of the modern world powers as to the policing of his ancestral territories for the protection of modern commerce.

These differences are broadly definable in brief terms. France holds to her prescriptive right to police Morocco herself. Germany, a new comer in North Africa, desires an international arrangement for the supervision of Moroccan affairs. Germany's plea is plausible, plainly designed to enlist the sympathy of Christendom, if the mediaeval term will pass in consideration of any phase of modern diplomacy.

But however much France may be willing to concede with regard to other reforms, it is likely to insist that its preponderating interest in Morocco receive substantial recognition.

To understand the reasons for its stubbornness on this point it is only necessary to recall the immensity of its territorial possessions near Morocco and the consistency with which for the greater part of a century it has sought expansion in this part of the world. One fact not generally taken into account is that the French African possessions greatly exceed those of any other power, aggregating 4,000,000 square miles, the bulk of the territory lying in northwestern Africa. It acquired Algeria in 1830 and since that time its sphere of influence has steadily increased until it includes not only Tunis, obtained in 1881, but the whole tract comprised in the French Sudan, with outlets upon the Atlantic at Senegal, French Guinea, Dahomey and the French Kongo. It thus possesses a continuous stretch of territory surrounding Morocco on the east and south and cut off from it on the west coast by only a small block of land held by Spain.

The British government in April, 1904, consented to the proposal to allow France a free hand in policing Moroccan territory, Spain giving its assent a few months later. Until Germany brought forward its objection to the arrangement in March of last year, the plan apparently had the approval, tacit or expressed, of all the first-rate powers. In view of these facts and considering also that France promises the "open door" and full and equal protection to the trading privileges of other powers, it may be expected to remain firm in its opposition to the German demands.

In the meantime the president of the United States, who by recently acquired temperament and by geographical isolation from the centres of world mischief, is peculiarly qualified to act as buffer in such matters, is reported to be employing his offices to smooth out a difference which, relatively insignificant in itself, might easily set the world in arms.

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