

# The Observer.

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## Observations.

BY MARC MARIUS.

Will you tell me, Master Shallow, how to choose a man?  
*Falstaff, Henry IV.*

The cold weather, the influenza and the depression that always follows the excitement of the Christmas holidays and the civil elections, have combined to make the present period one of unexampled dulness. There are few marriages, no runaways or divorces, no murders or crimes; in fact, the week is a perfect blank except for Mayor Fleming's inaugural speech. Of this interesting document—for it must be considered as a document—I have little to say except that it promises much that may be hard to fulfill.

I believe Mayor Fleming will make a good executive officer. He has ability of no mean order, he has opportunity and means, and what more could any man desire? It is in his power to make one of the ablest mayors this city has yet seen. It is in his power to clean the Augean stables at the city hall and to put civil affairs on a sound basis.

If he fails he cannot blame lack of experience. He knows the ways of the tricksters in the council very well. Why should he fail? If he has sufficient of that article to which the Americans give the homely name of "sand" he will make a record for himself and do good to the city.

The office of mayor in this city is no sinecure. It is an office fraught with peril to the holder. It is an office of grave responsibility. Mayor Howland ruined his regime by running after fads. He was not sufficiently diplomatic—not decisive enough. He promised much, but his term of office might justly be labelled a "failure," and why? Because he was not sufficiently practical. He never climbed down from the clouds of the *a priori* to plain practical talk. He attacked wrongs in masses instead of defeating them in details. He was too fond of brilliant *coups*, and very often his *coups* resolved themselves into sheet lightning and stage thunder. He was Frenchy in his methods and not sufficiently materialistic, and for that reason, whilst his term of office was one continuous din and clamor, there was much smoke and very little fire.

Mayor Fleming is not much of a theorist. He may have theories, but I think he has also a varied knowledge of detail. The business in which he has been engaged from boyhood must have taught

him the value of practical work and that persistent effort tells more forcibly in the end than intermittent attempts. If he keeps out of the clouds and begins the work of reform in a small way he may do something yet before the end of his year.

I see by the papers that when the proposal to grant \$5,000 to the Highland regiment was before the City Council and was defeated, Ald Hallam, who opposed it, waved his hands and shouted "On, Stanley on!" Now, I have nothing to say about the grant, but I have something to say about this knight of the "selected fleece." Ald Hallam, you are a humbug. Mark Twain's jumping frog never equalled you. When this proposal to grant the money to the kilties first came up you waved the thistle and did all in your power to aid the grant. You gave a picturesque description of your trip to England and how your heart warmed to the bare-legged soldiers, and if you had your way you would have made the grant \$10,000. But a change came o'er the spirit of your dream, and now you pose as the exponent of economy and the enemy of the kilties. Where can you look for friends? Certainly not among those who opposed such a grant, for they know your conduct in the first case, and death-bed repentance is not respectable to say the least of it. Do you think these long-legged, long-headed, long-minded Scotchmen will forget you? Not much! They are not built that way.

Ald. Hallam, you apparently forgot that the year you were so profusely "loyal" and had a flag and a "Jingo" motto on your election card, you were left at home, and I fain confess none is the place for you. A man with such a fickle mind, and such weak knees, is better off among the distaffs than consorting with the bad wicked aldermen at the City Hall. Drink lime water to knit your bones so as not to be a jelly fish. Then, perhaps, when you enthuse on some scheme at the City Hall you will at least be consistent and not make an ass of yourself by blowing hot and cold.

My friend E. E. Sheppard is off to Italy. He left a few days before the civic elections, and rumor has it, that he left to escape the snowing under his candidate was going to get. Mr. Sheppard helped to defeat Mr. Osler. The labor men have learned to dread gifts from the hands of E. E. Sheppard, and when they found him advocating Mr. Osler's cause they became suspicious. Mr. Osler might have won if he had kept Mr. Sheppard off the stump and sent him to Italy early in December.

The Ashbridge's Bay scandal that furnished the sensation for last week is almost forgotten already. The libel suits that Mr. Gregg and Mr. Caiger brought against Col. Alexander and Mr. McWilliams, have been postponed twice through the illness of the defendants, and it would seem as if it were going to take a long time for these gentlemen to settle the question in the courts. The outcome, judging from past experience, will be unsatisfactory to all parties concerned.

Last week I said something in defence of the newspaper men, but since then I have been down to the City Hall and find that they do things a little different there now from what used to be the rule. I found that there are several reporters who make themselves very obnoxious to the aldermen by interfering when different matters come up. They say to the aldermen, "If you support (or oppose) such and such a scheme it will hurt you (or help you)." They give this advice gratis and try to run things generally. In these questions, as a rule, these reporters have no interest whatever, but they have opinions and take sides when it is their business to tell the facts.

I always thought that opinions were unknown among newspaper reporters, and that the editorial page was the place for them. Reporters with opinions cannot help coloring their reports. If this has been going on at the City Hall for some time, and if the reporters are taking advantage of their position to bulldoze the alderman, there may be some truth in what Ald. Hewitt said about the city press, and it is high time some of the City Hall reporters were called down.

The number of seats declared vacant by the courts in Canada will give the people in the bye-elections an opportunity of showing what they think of the government of Mr. Abbott. From the excess of Reformers unseated over the Conservatives it would appear that the party of purity has fallen far from grace. When there is no great line between political parties except a question of ins and outs, the corruptionists generally get in their fine work.

Prof. Goldwin Smith has been interviewed by the New York papers, and in the course of his remarks got off some witty things at the expense of the Americans. He led the reporters to infer that if the United States went to war with Chili the latter country would have the better of it. Prof. Smith says before there can be annexation, there must be a strong desire on the part of both the United States and Canada. I agree with him. But there is no desire.