

# THE VICTORIA HOME JOURNAL

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## THE VICTORIA HOME JOURNAL

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FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 1, 1894.

## ALL THE WORLD OVER.

*"I must have liberty.*

*Withal as large a charter as the wind—  
To blow on whom I please."*

The "hit the nail on the head" is an act which the sages advise, and a difficult little operation which most men aspire to. This, of course, is the figurative nail. The real article is to be found in abundance on the sidewalks of Victoria, projecting in the most tempting fashion. Long, long ago, our footpaths were constructed of wood, immense nails being used to keep the planks in position. Now, without in the least casting a doubt upon the durability and excellence of quality of British Columbia's forest product, it must be admitted that the wood is not as durable as iron. The sidewalks are badly worn out, while the nails remain almost intact, peering up an inch or two above the even surface. I had my new boots on the other day, when I started on my tour of inspection around town, and when I returned—oh, those new boots! How those nails did tell on them! In every other community I know of, in which the plank sidewalk is used, a man is occasionally sent the rounds to drive down the nails, so as to keep them level with the boards. In these days of municipal offices, would it not be well that yet another official be appointed to be known as the Nail Inspector, whose duty it would be to see that the sidewalks are kept clear? It is claimed for a certain county in Ireland that the soil is so productive that a four-penny nail inserted in the ground would develop into a crowbar

within three days. But in our case, it is not the nails that grow; 'tis the planks that wear.

I once heard a play upon words which ran somewhat as follows: "I know my nose; you know I know my nose, and you know I know, I know my nose." Since the sewerage works have been begun on our leading thoroughfares, I will venture to say I know my nose, and that everyone else knows his nose. Such foul, disease-producing gases as are emitted from those excavations can surely be rendered less obnoxious in some way. The stench is simply intolerable and positively dangerous to health. I noticed that a few of the storekeepers along Government street closed their doors to keep out the smell, nor did this unusual procedure keep out the customers also. It rather improved trade, for people rushed in to avoid the foul air without, and no doubt became purchasers. Would it not be well that some cheap disinfectant be used during sewerage construction, or must we have an epidemic in the city?

In spite of severest censure and trenchant anathema from every quarter, the city fathers continue in a blissful state of serenity. After the persistent attempts of the press of this city to arouse them to a sense of duty, to a perception of the urgent needs of the city, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the council are stolidly indifferent to our interests. To put it positively no one by the wildest flight of imagination could justly accuse our civic solons (?) of manifesting an enthusiastic interest in our welfare. It is useless to discuss causes, when effects are obtrusively palpable. Be the fault where it may, this city is wretchedly governed. There is something wrong, either in our system of civic polity or body elect. I am inclined to think that our present system is susceptible of the highest economic results. The municipal machinery, from a theoretical standpoint, is invested with potentiality. Is the fault in the running? We are prone to blame men more than things, because intelligent direction can always devise ways of making a creditable show even with faulty material. Questions and difficulties are not taken up in the manner of shrewd, confident business men. No matter how insignificant the subject, the action of our aldermanic

board is characterized by an absence of definiteness. There is too much vacillation, with the result that in no direction do we perceive policy, by which, I mean, each separate act, not isolated and viewed from the aspect of the present, but considered as a unit in many and varied factors of symmetrical development, each precedent link fitting in with and strengthening its consequent. The local dailies furnish constant instances of municipal bungling, negligence and lack of forethought.

The council have been so dilatory that I feel it would be useless to schedule, much more to detail and animadvert on all the grievances which can be directly traced to aldermanic responsibility. Criticism is wasted effort. It has the permanency of water poured on a duck's back. How long will patience tolerate such a state of affairs? The ultimate blame rests with the people. Here is an opportunity for the Citizen's Association to demonstrate its usefulness. I wonder if it is possible for the people of Victoria to get really angry. Their equanimity is astonishing, considering the provocation. Would it be a difficult matter for a representative body of our citizens to make a list of wants, and present some well-considered manner in which they could be satisfied? It is contended by some that it is a misuse of the term policy to apply it to city government. I cannot help thinking that better results would be obtained, if the mayor and council were bound at the beginning of office to succinctly and clearly declare what they intended doing. At present we are in the dark. Could any one of the council conscientiously say that our questions are being dealt with in relation to the future. There is too much haphazardness, too little method. Civic inertia has become chronic. Take the hack nuisance for an example. The council have absolutely ignored the question. Who are the masters of the streets? If left to the council, the cab-drivers will be left in undisturbed possession. Shall the capital city of the Province present to visitors a main street polluted with ponds of fetid excretion? The city fathers deserve great praise for their attitude in this matter! Perhaps when the elections are in sight, a feeble effort may be put forth. During the summer months, whilst fumes of foulness have saturated the air, whilst street-goers have been forced to hold