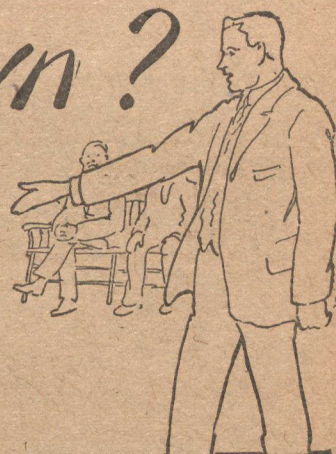


# What is the Matter with my Town?

A FEW weeks ago we asked this question, expecting readers to answer it. Politics and war have combined to keep the response to a very small minority. People are evidently too busy on matters outside their own town boundaries, to take much time off for criticizing the towns they live in. Four people have sent in four interesting articles on that subject. Four towns anyway have something wrong with them. Here are the criticisms. They are interesting enough as samples of shrewd observation and lively humor to be read, even if the towns were indicated by x, y, z. But there's something wrong with Fort William, Owen Sound, Kingston and Hampton, Ont. These "What's-the-matter-with-my-towns" are all in Ontario. For reasons very well understood, the critics do not wish their names published. But we leave it to the reader if there is anything in any of the criticisms to entitle the critic to a coat of tar and feathers or even a ride on a rail.

—The Editor.



## OWEN SOUND

OWEN SMILEY says that the C. P. R. from Toronto to Owen Sound is like a church organ, it has so many stops. When the train leaves Owen Sound it labors like Pilgrim with his load until it reaches Rockllyn; coming therefrom it describes a semi-circle and slips down a grade as steep as the proverbial road to destruction, to a building called the C. P. R. station. That train must be a horrible thing, for before it stops, the commercial men have filed out, the first, standing on the lowest step of the car platform, leaves it before the train stops, and followed by the others makes for a 'bus. Should the roads be muddy you will understand why perdition is always pictured at the bottom of a grade.

There is only one railway station in Ontario with a gloomier outlook than that of the C. P. R. Owen Sound, and that is the G. T. R. station on the opposite side of the river. We are ignoring the home of the London Advertiser in this article. The G. T. R. station is bounded on the west during spring and autumn by a river of mud; and on the east, just far enough from the track to make it inconvenient for would-be suicides, lies the harbor. Both railroads out of Owen Sound take you north to get you south, as though loath to leave the pure, crystal waters of the Georgian Bay.

The all-absorbing problem in Owen Sound to-day is the coal situation. If you want a ton of stove coal you 'phone each of the half-dozen dealers. A coal dealer is a person who doesn't speak the truth. You discover that some of the dealers have invoices, some have shipping bills, some have invoices but no shipping bills, some have shipping bills but no invoices, and some have soft coal, but none has stove coal. Before the dealer denies very strongly that he has coal, he asks your name, and should it be "Smith" or "Jones" he denies with the vehemence of Simon Peter. In fact, as you hang up the receiver you feel guilty that you should ever have thought that a coal dealer would sell coal. Coal dealers have written some very interesting letters to the Owen Sound press censuring the Town Council for having dared to go into the coal business. Happy thought! I 'phoned the Mayor, but he said the invoices hadn't arrived and that the town dealers had lots of soft coal. How the Town Council must be trespassing on the coal dealer's business in Owen Sound!

But for worldly wisdom commend me to the wood dealer. I 'phoned for cedar kindling, just a little, say a quarter of a cord. With a quiver in my voice, doubtless, I asked the price. They're not asking the price now. Ten dollars a cord for cedar kindling. "All right, then, a quarter of a cord, please." When it arrived, there proved to be one-eighth of a cord. "You sent me only one-eighth instead of one-quarter of a cord." A feminine voice, "Oh, we don't sell wood by the cord, we sell it by the load, we sent you a quarter of a load." "How many cords in a load?" "Oh, a load's a—a load's a—a load, but we sent you a quarter of a load." "No, no, but it wasn't a quarter of a load." "Oh, yours was cedar kindling, we weighed yours." "Er—er—what did it weigh?" Crash!

I went down cellar and proceeded to split up the cedar. It was too watersoaked to burn. I understood why they weighed it.

I shall order my next lot of cedar kindling by the gallon.

SOAKED.

## KINGSTON

I SCRATCH my head, I stroke my beard, I look at the bowl of my good old friend, "Brier Pipe," and again I say—"What is the matter with my town?"

Is there anything the matter with Kingston?

Kingston, the birthplace of Governors, Premiers, Statesmen. Is there?—is there?

"Yes," I soliloquize. "Yes, there is."

"But," I say to my pipe—"What is it?"

Is it location? "No; God gave Kingston the finest location in the province, if not on the continent."

Is it the power question? "No, I think Kingston has solved that matter in connecting up with the Hydro."

Is it labor? "No, labor seems to be perfectly satisfied in Kingston."

Is it education? "No; certainly not, with one of the finest universities on the continent, dominated all through its career by men of the MacKerras, Grant, Gordon type; a military college second to none on the continent, not to mention numerous other colleges and schools of learning."

Is it religion? "No, it has churches and preachers of the finest calibre."

Is it politics? "No more than any other city."

Well, what is it? What does Kingston want most—to put her ahead of other cities of her size?

And as I puff, the smoke takes on the shape of an attractive rotunda, neat marble pillars, uniformed attendants; I see a block, three sided, with paved streets all around; I see a location for one of the most up-to-date hotels in the country, all outside rooms, courtyard in the centre, tea room for ladies, grill-room and all the other things that go to make a hotel worth stopping at.

I see from its roof-garden, four or five stories high, the finest view that can be obtained from any hotel in Ontario.

I can follow the beautiful Rideau River, past the locks at Kingston Mills until it merges itself in the Lakes, foliage, and skies of the distant up-lands.

I can see the majestic St. Lawrence losing itself in the wonderful Thousand Islands.

I can see a most wonderful sunset tingeing the blue sky that kisses the crested waves of Lake Ontario 10 or 12 miles distant.

I can see the Cataraqui River dreamily winding its way through hill and vale to its outlet, five miles west. Such a view! Tourists! Well, would they not clamor for rooms in this "oasis," this pure, cool, summer air, ten degrees cooler than any other city in Eastern Canada?

Travellers! Would they not endeavor to make their week ends at this resting place?

Conventions! Can you picture a more heavenly place, or suggest a more central?

But, alas, it is a dream.

What is the matter with my town?

The matter is that there is not enough nerve and backbone in the Aldermen, either individually or collectively, to propose a Civic-Owned Hotel in my city.

The matter is that they will all be dead and buried before they wake up to their great possibilities.

The matter is solved if they will take the McRae Block, for instance, and build an up-to-date hotel in this most beautiful city and run it, and if there is a deficit for a short time—charge it up to the tax payers in the municipal tax.

My pipe is out.

"HERLOCK SOLMES."

## FORT WILLIAM

WHAT is the matter with my town? Nothing—nothing very much, except that it has good, healthy, natural growing-pains. As proof of its adolescence, the ten-hour workday is palpably prevalent. Of course we wanted to be Big. Bigness means money.

My town, at the head of the lakes here, is one of the best industrially on the North American continent. In quest of manual labor I have beat about it from coast to coast, so I ought to know. I would call it the best, were it not that my industrial perspective is unimpaired. My town functions through the medium of civic-ownership, and its slogan is, "Boost—boost till you bust."

They call my town Fort William, although some of the tiresome old crabs have at times yclept it "Bonusville." We did so want to be Big, for we knew that the concomitants of Bigness were: patriotism, honor, love, life and happiness. So we encouraged manufacturers to come to us from the East—in fact, anywhere. They came, the good with the bad, some of them individuals who had been "snowed under" by the fierce eastern competition, and as a last resort were forced to a perusal of Horace Greely.

We took them to our arms, ensconced them on free sites, deluged them with tax exemptions, and in the way of cash-bonusing, the public purse was reminiscent of apple-ducking at a Hallowe'en Eve festivity. Quite a few of our new influx made good, while other business-like Christians hung for a few years on our generosity, made their pile, and tried the new, profitable game elsewhere.

Our city fathers, at some time bucolic in their upbringing—most of them—were out to buy their experience. But times were good, and the busy taxpayers had no time to bother with questions of modern industry, high finance, or the body politic.

Came a time when a nearby falls of tremendous waterpower cried aloud to be decked in harness. Our resources at the time were hardly adequate to warrant the cost. Private enterprise came to the rescue, assumed the undertaking, smiled at the legality of a liberal franchise and went to work.

Their smile so broadened to a hilarious grin that to-day local power-consumers are beside themselves by the arbitrary tactics of private control. Some of the bolder spirits among the local captains of industry have called in the "big smoke" of a power company of national celebrity to try and force a reasonable issue, the importance and result of which remains yet to be seen.

Our water and lights as public utilities run smoothly along, although our educational system could stand a poultice. Our public library is an intellectual source of inspiration. The residents, however, are happily, and willingly, worked to death.

And our street-car system—wow! Transportation is the paramount need of the industrialist up here, in that the elevators, and manufacturing plants are so vastly scattering. This extensive area demands a cheap fare. But the official "car-heads" have all along complained that the system was hard set; so recently the fare has been doubled. Now, when we wish to visit our Port Arthur cousins, three miles distant, we help swell the civic exchequer by the sum of one dime. This innovation is preposterous, and courts Dominion-wide publicity. The latest remedy is to put the cars on a one-man-running basis, the progressive whim of a "gink" from Cal-

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