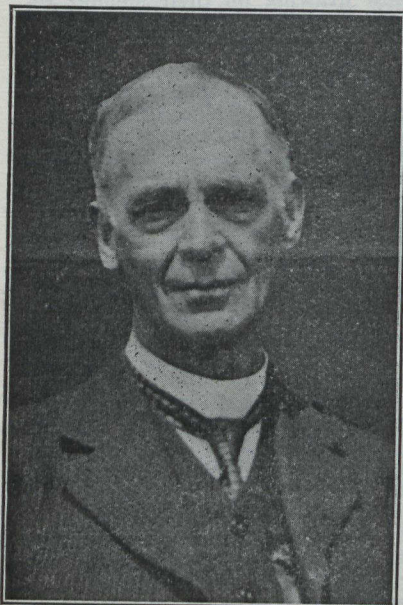


SOME BIG MUNICIPAL MEN

(By AJAX.)

**CONTROLLER F. S. SPENCE,
Toronto.**

Should a new school of public thought and life spring up in Canada because of her new position as a consequence of her part in the present awful fight for the free institutions of democracy, one of the leaders of that school would be F. S. Spence, of Toronto.

At first sight this statement does not seem to fit in with the pacific nature of Toronto's senior controller, who has been before the public for so many years that some of

the younger generation—who do not know him—would relegate him as a back number. Not so the writer of this sketch, who has, more than once, had the opportunity of studying the erudite forcefulness and mental capacity of the Controller. A walking encyclopedia in anything and everything municipal—from the legal to the ethical, from the practical to the extreme theories of the faddist—he is quick to dissect any scheme put forward in the municipal interest of the country, and such is the confidence that men have in Spence that his analysis is accepted with respect. Every theory must stand the test of practical application before it is endorsed by him, but he is always more than willing to help in putting into practise any good idea, if advanced in good faith. This attitude, philosophical in its quiet confidence of the leavening of values, would give the impression that Controller Spence is a prototype of the dead leveller. Nothing is further from the truth. One would say that he has always been a fighter, and a hard fighter, too, in his many propaganda of reform, and taking all the chances of defeat. This spirit would seem to have permeated his temperance campaigns—F. S. Spence is a noted temperance man—to carry on which he not only used voice and pen, but much of that very essential, money. But between F. S. Spence and most reformers there is this difference, that whereas many men who want to show the world how to live have only one way and that their very own, Spence does assume that his opponents have their side, too; all of which have had the effect of broadening his own views, so much so that he, after a long experience of human nature, does see some good in this old wicked world still.

This is the class of man required in the building up of the new Canada that we all hope for after this war, and the kind of man necessary in the standardizing of her public life. That is assuming he could be brought out—rather dragged out—for, singular

to state, though in the local public life of Toronto for so long (at least for one generation), Mr. Spence is the shyest of men. Modest in his own ability and rather too prone to sink his personality in the furtherance of a cause, leaving others less worthy to take the credit, the Controller has, time and again, been the willing horse for schemes good in themselves, but which have meant for him more kicks than oats. But there is no doubt about Controller Spence's ability. Every municipal man who comes in contact with him feels it, but every municipal man knows something more, that he is safe with Spence. It would be interesting to know how many aldermen and officials, and others, have been spared from making asses of themselves by this genial mentor. But Spence won't tell.

Controller Spence is an Irishman, which should be sufficient evidence that, mixed with the even temperament most of us know, there must be a streak of the devil. Or perhaps it would be better to state, and probably more correct, that his apparent evenness of temperament is but the surface of a character that is as volatile in its make-up as any Celt need be. Donegal was his birthplace in 1850. But Toronto has been the background of the greater part of his life. He was educated in the Queen City, and entering the teaching profession, he was headmaster, at different times, of a number of the city schools, though Drummondville and Prescott have both had the advantage of his scholastic services. In the year 1882, Francis Stephens Spence entered the public and journalistic arena at the same time. In fact, he made the one necessary to the other. What has also helped him in his public work is his gift of speech. One might say that his marshalling of facts, and the common sense logic of his reasoning have made him one of the most interesting and convincing speakers we have in Canada.

F. S. Spence first entered municipal life as an alderman of Toronto, in 1896, and since that date, with the exception of the year 1901, when he unsuccessfully contested the mayoralty, he has either been an alderman or controller. In 1911 his colleagues elected him as president of the Council. During this long period of practically twenty years' splendid public service, Controller Spence has endeared himself to every soul in Toronto's municipal life, from the Mayor to even the boys. He has represented the City on the Harbour board more than once, and in 1904, 1910 and 1914, he acted as president. Of his other public positions, the principal are Secretary of the Ontario Association of Municipalities (President 1904); President Ontario Branch Dominion Alliance; Vice-President Union of Canadian Municipalities; etc. The mayoralty of Toronto some day is his fair due. Mr. Spence is editor of the *Pioneer* and author of "The Facts of the Case," which is a summary of the evidence given before the Royal Commission on the liquor traffic (1896).

Issues of Canadian municipal bonds during August were \$1,807,415, comparing with \$546,830 a year ago. The proportion of the month's sale made in the United States was over \$1,000,000.