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MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENT.

To His Worship the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Hamilton :

Having broadly stated it as my opinion that Real Estate only should be the subject of Municipal Taxation, I propose now to give my reasons for this opinion. It has been alleged (and with truth) that simply because Real Estate cannot be hidden, and is therefore easily got at for the purpose of assessment, and that personal property is difficult to be got at, and consequently much of it escapes or by possibility may escape assessment, is not a sufficient reason for allowing the whole of personal property to go free and placing the burden on Real Estate alone. I propose therefore to show better and more equitable reasons than this. It will no doubt be contended that if one man has put \$10,000 into Real Estate (I use these words in preference to "land," as I include in the words "Real Estate" the land and everything on the land which forms part of the freehold), and another man has put the same amount into personal property, there is no reason or equity in making the first man pay the whole burden of taxation. A very strong feeling prevails in this direction amongst those whose principal investments are in Real Estate. It exists with equal strength amongst the holders of what may be called tangible personal property, viz : that which can be seen and got at, (such as merchants and manufacturers stocks) in regard to those who hold intangible personal property, viz : that which cannot be seen and got at, (such as money, mortgages, stocks, debentures, &c.,) and a great deal of which is believed (and doubtless with some truth) to escape altogether. I have no doubt a good deal does escape, and this is unavoidable under the present system of assessment. The point is, shall we seek to amend the assessment law so as to allow no escape of personalty, and should we succeed in this, would it after all be just. It is quite clear that Real Estate being local and immoveable must form the principal security to the creditors of the City. If it should happen that every dollar's worth of personal property was removed from the City, the land and the houses and warehouses (empty as most of them would be) would remain to meet our liabilities. Now, upon this view of the matter, what shall we say? Does the Real Estate benefit the personal property or does the personal property benefit the Real Estate? It appears to me self-evident that the personalty confers all the benefit. Real Estate owners cannot take their Real Estate to the personalty, but they can and do attract personalty to their Real Estate. What use is their Real Estate if it remains empty and unprofitable? What then do sensible people do? They will argue in this way :—We want to make this place attractive. How can we do it? Well, in the first place, we will encourage railroads to run in here to make it a commercial centre. We will then have an efficient water supply. We must also provide proper sewerage, good streets properly lighted, and a good police force. We must also provide good schools and a hospital, and an efficient fire brigade. All this time I am supposing personal property like a coy maiden keeping aloof until being wooed by real estate—she consents to cast her lot in with his. Now, mark the effect. Merchants attracted by the place, and believing that a good trade can be done, come into it. They require business premises, and they require dwellings, and they give employment to people who also require dwellings. Manufacturers in like manner only to greater extent do the same. The gentleman of independent means requires a good residence, and helps to support the City. Can it now be argued that the Real Estate has conferred any favor or benefit upon personalty? Is it not entirely the other way? Does not personalty confer a benefit on Real Estate? True, Real Estate has made the City a suitable place for merchants and manufacturers to prosecute their business in, and has made it an attractive place for the residence of people of wealth; but in whose interest was this done? Was it done by Real Estate owners in a spirit of pure philanthropy for the benefit of holders of personal property? Was it not rather done by Real Estate owners because they knew that their property