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RANDOM REFLECTIONS.



IN a former issue we pointed out that our municipal system of taxation as now conducted discriminates against industry and the spirit of improvement by exacting from occupied, improved properties an unjustly large share of the first cost of improvement, and in making the cost of the maintenance of such conveniences as our water system fall solely upon such, enables the landed obstructionist to pocket values to the creation of which he did not contribute a fair share, and from the maintenance of which he is totally relieved. But this is only one of many injustices resulting from the same source.

The facilities for communication which are amply sufficient for a remote country district will prove to be altogether wanting for the requirements of a moderately active country town, and the provision which serves admirably as the principal street of the town will prove altogether inadequate for the thoroughfare of a large city. The location of cities are determined more by their relative position to natural advantages than by the choice or the efforts of those who build them. Men congregate together to form the town which eventually develops into the city in obedience to the natural law that all men seek the gratification of their desires by the easiest road. It follows

then that if the natural advantages which will eventually call the city into existence exist, no artificial obstruction (though it may retard its growth) can be strong enough to prevent it, and the greater the natural advantages the greater the price that may be obtained for the relinquishment of any privilege that may be permitted to stand in the way of its development.

The facilities furnished to trade and intercourse by commodious streets are of the first importance in the development of a city, and the advantages which our system of taxation affords for the holding of vacant, unoccupied property on streets which, by reason of the growth of the community and their requirements become of inadequate width, places in the hands of those who hold them a power to compel payment to them of enormous sums by the community ere they make improvements, the principal benefits of which accrue to the landholders themselves, and which, even if they were compelled to relinquish the lands required for such improvements without compensation, far exceed the sacrifice they would be called upon to make.

The truth of this is established in the experience of every city of Anglo-Saxon people in existence to-day. It has been the most serious and difficult question with which the London (England) County Council has had to deal. And the giant power of the landholding interest opposed in this way to that of the public has been of greater weight in legislation with the English Parliament than the demand for the recognition of the rights of the people clearly and emphatically expressed by the representatives of the municipal government of the greatest metropolis on earth.

And this question has already presented itself in a practical form to the people of Victoria for a solution at their hands. Last year the people of this city voted a considerable sum for the purchase of grounds and the erection of permanent and substantial buildings for exhibition purposes. The experience of older and larger cities fully demonstrates the beneficial effects of such institutions in their growth and development, and of the further fact that the increased values created by

such an expenditure attaches itself almost exclusively to land values in their vicinity.

The street leading to the Victoria exhibition grounds and buildings may have served well enough for the requirements of a quiet and only partially occupied suburb, but it proved totally insufficient for the accommodation of the immense throngs of visitors, who were compelled to make their way through its suffocating dust and narrowness to the exhibition. This was foreseen by those interested in making the exhibition a success, and an effort made to induce the owners of property along the street to give enough ground for a sidewalk in addition to its present width. Mechanics of small means, whose lots represented the toil and savings of years, generously acceded to the request, satisfied that the increased value to their property would more than recoup them for the concession.

The Jubilee Hospital people, at a time when financial aid was urgently needed, with commendable public spirit cheerfully relinquished property, for which they paid a high price, to the public convenience. And it remained for one whose wealth is an evidence of how liberally the people of this province deal with those who serve them, and to whose remaining lands would attach the largest accretions of value, to refuse to relinquish lands, which cost him but a trifle, to the public convenience and the progress of the city without the utmost sum in compensation which law, framed solely in the interest of class and privilege, would allow, and in this way to render of no avail the generous public spirit of others.

Can the producers who toil in the shop, the mart, and all the avenues of trade with but a doubtful hope of a competence as a reward, permit to exist a system of taxation which encourages this "dog in the manger" policy to meet them at every turn, and by robbing them, under the form of law, of the rewards of their exertions to grow rich in idleness by the obstruction of prosperity and the progress of the arts of peace? The question is a pertinent one, and with the people remains the answer.

CRESSET.