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TALES OF THE TOWN.

*"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind
To blow on whom I please."*

OWING no doubt to the close proximity of the United States boundary line and the difficulties attendant upon bringing offenders to account, legally or otherwise, numerous offences against the law and against good morals, too, are committed with comparative impunity, although the tongue of scandal wags in its own quiet way in the inner circles. But the opportunity that exists for the commission of the offence also opens the door to the professional scandal-monger and allows him to dip his pen into gall and publish to the world through the coast papers what he would not dare to do at home, even were the *media* available—which fortunately there are not—for the circulation of their stories, which are often furnished on the merest thread of fact.

Victoria is also cursed with a large number of scandal-mongers, registered and in practice, to whom even the domestic circle is not too sacred for violation. During the present week particularly the tongues of these serpents have been hissing; they have hinted that so-and-so was unfaithful to his or her marriage vows; that if the sins of certain young ladies were written upon their foreheads veils of exceedingly thick material would become fashionable, and so on. So far as I can learn, based upon most diligent inquiry, proof of these assertions is lacking in nearly every instance. The case of a married man who was reported to have ruined a young woman really does appear to pos-

sess the necessary ingredient of truth; but the other rumors are without foundation, and were evidently set afloat to gratify the vitiated taste of the scandal-monger. It may occur to many that there is ample room for the machinery of the law to be set in operation both as regards the newspaper correspondent who telegraphs lies to his paper and the slanderer who ruins the character of his neighbor by circulating untruthful reports.

One can scarcely wonder at the occurrence of accidents like that which befel the ship *Victoria*, when the average capacity for blundering by officers in charge is taken into account. The *Warspite* steecplechased a rock; the *Amphion* tried the climbing racket also; the *Howe* came to grief, and numerous other "accidents" have happened, for which the long suffering British taxpayer has been called upon to foot the bill. In nearly every case the officers in command escape on some technicality or other, so that it would seem courts martial are very similar to civil courts where one gets plenty of technicality and law, but such a thing as justice is unheard of.

I am led to reflect thus from the attempted manoeuvres at Esquimalt the other evening, when hundreds like myself went down, not to see what was to be done, but what could be done. Esquimalt was supposed to be attacked; taken by surprise; the war vessels were to show what they were capable of doing in an emergency, should a foe present himself at our gates. This was all to be done under

cover of darkness. Somehow suspicion was to be aroused; the vessels would at once be on the alert; the enemy would be detected and scattered to the winds.

But those interested in this little bit of mimic warfare forgot the moon; and she declined to be dictated to even by the representatives of Britain's maritime majesty. The consequence was that the attacking torpedo boats could be seen outside the harbor long before any search lights were directed on them. Now who but a British officer would think of carrying on such manoeuvres on a night like Tuesday? Or who but a British officer would think of taking a number of battleships by surprise on a night clearer than midday? The idea is preposterous in the extreme, and was simply an illustration of the complete absence of foresight and calculation that is sometimes exhibited in important cases by people holding responsible positions.

The invincibles had just filed out on the lacrosse grounds for Saturday's great match, when an enthusiastic Vancouverite offered me five to two on the first game. I took the wager, subsequently pocketing the money, and offering him ten to one on the second game, but he declined. My faith, as after events proved, was not misplaced; the boys were game, and full of it. But to say they played all round the Vancouver team would be unjust to both. The latter put up probably the best game they have played for some years. Indeed the play was so smooth on both sides that at times home sympathies were for-