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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."*

ALD. McKILLICAN is at his old tricks again, tampering with Sunday legislation with a view to making devout Christians of us all. He is not alone in this gigantic and fruitless task, poor man. Quite a number of misguided zealous individuals have spent and are spending time, talents and money in the fruitless endeavor to make us all angels on earth. Their efforts, however, fully occupy their minds and no doubt restrain them from doing those things which perhaps they ought not to do. These good people are probably well intentioned enough, but they should leave well alone. They try to cure by legislation the tendencies of mankind, and they make matters worse. If these grandmotherly aldermen would devote themselves to remedying public grievances, they would effect a greater reform than all their ten-cent legislation on the Sunday question. Here are filthy, badly-lighted streets, pit falls and man-traps to the pedestrian at night; an insufficient police force to cover the required territory, a fire department that is efficient more because of the devotion of its chief and men to their duties than to the niggardly policy of the council; there are sewers that are greater holes in the ground for throwing public money into than anything that could be imagined; a council that will cut down salaries and wages to starvation point and then expect a man to be honest. With all this and far more and worse, duties that they are elected to perform and for which they are manifestly incompetent, they want to extend their ramifications and legislate people into church on Sundays.

What a terribly destructive animal is the human being. Man's apparently ruling desire is to kill, his thirst for blood being seemingly unquenchable; armed with gun, rifle, knife or axe he can have no better pastime than slaughter. Sometimes this propensity becomes abnormally developed, and extends to his fellow man. Then he is called a murderer, whereas while he confined his operations to the lower forms of life he was a sportsman. Woman's destructiveness manifests itself in another shape. She pretends to admire all that is beautiful, but it is with an undisguised desire for her own personal adornment. The woman who will shed bitter tears over the dead body of a sweet, little songster, brought to an untimely end by the stone hurled from a cruel boy's catapult, will dry her tears and smile with unalloyed pleasure and pride at the bonnet adorned by the plumage of the poor dead bird.

Take also the matter of wild or other flowers. Turn a crowd of city people out on the wide, open country this time of the year, when nature provides a carpet of the richest and most beautiful material, and the air is laden with perfumes which seem too beautiful for this vice clad world. What will those people do? Why, the very first thing they imagine is to flop down there, women and children, boys and girls, aye, and even men, and pluck ruthlessly and soullessly the beautiful flowers and plants that make nature so lovely. They are pulled out root and stem and carried away to town, long before reaching which they are a tangled, bruised, miserable mass. What is the consequence? Outraged nature refuses to adorn the same place so magnificently the following year, and so on she withdraws her favors as she is abused, till the place becomes bare of any beauty. Beacon Hill is a living example of this propensity of human nature. Ten or twelve years ago, when this splendid park was not so near the city, it was one beautiful carpet of sweet smelling flowers and grasses. Year by year, it has been invaded, till now it is comparatively destitute of the beautiful flora which once flourished there in such luxuriance. It is the same story in the district surrounding Victoria; desolation and destruction to flowers, plants, beasts and birds. Why people cannot be content to admire without destroying is a difficult problem, and a physical defect which I am afraid can never be remedied.

Some humanely disposed persons are talking of forming a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but, while such a movement commands the greatest sympathy, I venture to say that there exists in this community a course of conduct on the part of a public corporation that is tantamount to criminal cruelty to men, whose health is not only their only capital personally, but in many cases that of their families. It is no wonder that the Victoria street car company fail to retain their men for any length of time. The men, especially the drivers, only make the job a sort of makeshift till they get something better, and no sensible person will blame them. There is the Fort street route, for example. A cold east wind, accompanied by either rain or sleet, blows along there without any appreciable shelter for two or three miles. The unfortunate driver has to face it, with his hands on the brakes, and the sleet penetrating the thickest part of his clothing. Indeed, I have often seen the poor fellow's hands perfectly blue, notwithstanding the fact that he wore heavy, lined "mits." The conductor, perhaps, is not quite so badly off, as being behind the car and the forward motion always more or less breaking the force of the cold, he is more sheltered than the driver.

The wonder is, therefore, that, when Mr. Higgins was in the east gathering pointers about the street car systems of the several cities he visited, he did not take a pointer from a place so near home as Tacoma or Seattle. Had he taken a short ride in either of those modern towns, he would have seen how closely and carefully the men are guarded from the elements. In summer, he would have seen a pleasant awning protecting the driver from the dust and sun, and in winter he would have observed an improvement on the lighter fabric of the more favorable season. The heavy tarpaulin that so effectually shields the driver in winter is sufficiently lighted by a large pane of glass through which he is enabled to view the entire track ahead of him. Now, why do the company act so inhumanely to their employees? It is far easier to guide men and get them interested in their work by kindness than by neglect, but, aside from that fact, the company should not be allowed to expose their men to so much unnecessary risk for the sake of a few dollars. The cost of fitting the cars with these awnings would be comparatively small, in view of the immense comfort and benefit accruing to the men.

May 1893
As I have said on more than one occasion, I am merely giving my own personal views on this subject of the religious observance of Sunday, but I take the view of certain members of the council that because there may be a few hundred people who desire to spend the Sunday in religious exercises, the thousands whose wishes lie in the other direction should have all the rest recreation and enjoyment which the Sunday affords. The churches are open and the ministers are at their posts for whoever wishes to attend divine worship; the boy or girl who is whipped into church and Sunday school will never make a red hot theologian or earnest worshipper, and it is doubtful if any different impression can be made by coercive religion on the more mature minds of the grown up members of the community. For myself, if the statute books were loaded with penalties for the non-observance of Sunday, I would pay no more attention to them than what is called for in my duty to society. It is as much of a crime to be seen intoxicated on the streets Monday as it is on Sunday; it is indictable to swear or use obscene language on the street Saturday morning as it is Sunday evening, and it is a punishable offence every day in the week to be noisy, abusive, quarrelsome or anything that is a nuisance to the public. The public morals act covers all these offences, in fact goes a great deal further than some of these zealous people imagine, but they have a pet fad about Sunday, and, like all cranks, they must flourish their hobby or fad in

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