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TALES OF THE TOWN.

THE commercial paper of this city notes a distinct improvement in trade conditions. The volume of business is increasing, and prospects are brightening for the future. The monetary situation is without special features, either in the great financial centers or locally. The demand, while subject to the mid-summer dullness, is improving in many points and promises to be quite active within the next 30 days. Collections are fairly good everywhere.

Undoubtedly our people should be well satisfied with this state of affairs. Very few cities in Canada could have passed through an epidemic of even such diminutive proportions as ours and show a similar report. In fact, I believe it proves, as I have always contended, that Victoria possesses the material upon which great commercial cities are built. But she can never hope to become much more than what she is at present if a thoroughly enterprising class of men are not placed at the helm. The sloth cannot accomplish great things, nor can a city government, such as the one now at the head of civic affairs, keep pace with the enterprise of the neighboring cities.

That I am not alone in this opinion is evidenced by the fact that there is now a movement on foot to place in nomination at the next municipal election a ticket composed exclusively of business men. Simply because a man is economical, even unto parsimony, it will not render him eligible for a place on the ticket. He may know how to saw a board straight, plaster a wall, conduct a real estate sale, or believe he can feed a multitude for three whole days with a few loaves of bread and a can of salmon; but if he be not imbued with thorough business principles, he will not be recognized by the business men when they are making up their slate. This is a move in the right direction, and I have no doubt it will recommend itself to every man in this city who has the future greatness of Victoria at heart.

Making perhaps smallpox the excuse, the council is now going to kick over the traces and spend or borrow money right and left. One alderman proposes to borrow \$50,000 for surface drains, while another one, not to be outdone by this sudden outburst of prodigality, proposes to make it \$100,000, as glibly as if proposing to spend privately a \$20 piece! I must honorably exempt Messrs. Hunter, Humber and Bragg—all dissidents. I remember at the beginning of the sittings, the civic body only "estimated" spending \$25,000 on all the streets together, and it is now proposed to spend \$50,000 for surface drains, besides \$30,000 on account of the main sewerage scheme; and I understand there is an overdraft of two or three hundred thousand dollars at the Bank. Have our city fathers again been prospecting for gold on the Work Estate? Of course we have the smallpox yet with us, for which \$50,000 is already asked on account. Is there any talk of another Royal Commission?

But there is yet something to be said for Mr. Beaven. He was elected as the economical mayor. He was to succeed a very popular man—most men are popular who spend a great deal of money. By the way, the Hon. Mr. Beaven was himself at one time very popular, while occupying a higher position. He spent money, sowing it broadcast with in some cases but

slender good results, and sometimes the reverse. However, let bygones be bygones. Mr. Beaven and council were to succeed, shall I say a spend-thrift mayor and council. Mr. Beaven has hitherto, I think, redeemed the implied pledge at his election, of discouraging useless expenditure. When the smallpox broke in upon us, Mr. Beaven, though probably quite alive to the emergency of the case, was still following unconsciously in the groove in which he started. How could he be lavish all at once!

A correspondent who has evidently read with close attention the real estate articles that have appeared in these columns writes and asks, with every appearance of good faith, whether or not all the schemes dealing with outside real estate are based on misrepresentation and exaggeration to the extent that is characteristic of the enterprises already mentioned in THE HOME JOURNAL.

The fact that we are in receipt of a letter of this kind demonstrates to us the casual and superficial way in which Victorians, and particularly Victorians with money to spend and invest, are apt to consider and discuss matters in which they are very much concerned. One would suppose that when a man was in possession of sufficient money to begin to think of buying a home, he would inquire very carefully as to the place where that home is to be established, and make a deliberate investigation as to the means of getting there and the surroundings of the place after it has been reached. If this were done, the projectors of land schemes that are fraudulent or very nearly so would speedily find their business exceptionally unprofitable. And, if such investigations were made, those who are looking for permanent homes would speedily discover places that were possessed of advantages and where the investment of their money meant a proper and natural benefit to them in the future. If people with money had done a little investigating last spring before investing it, there would be very little need forewarning them against land schemes, and certainly no necessity for pointing out the proper places for them to patronize.

It is, of course, fraudulent for a company to buy up ground that is absolutely worthless in itself, that is not adapted for any improvement and that lies so far away from anywhere as to be practically useless for a man doing business. It is when these lots are sold to people at attractive terms—who buy them in most cases without looking at them, that the fraud consists, and it is this kind of fraud which I have thought should be persistently and relentlessly exposed. In exposing the pretensions of some of these land sharks, the purpose of these articles is fulfilled. I do not want to go into land schemes that are legitimate and honest, for the simple reason that if would-be purchasers would make the most casual investigations these schemes could easily be identified.

My attention has been directed to a feature in connection with the contemplated Victoria & Sydney Railway, which I believe is worth looking into. I am informed that already several of the Saanich farmers are proposing to cut up their farms into lots and place them on the market. Now every one knows that there is no possibility of a large city being built at any point along the proposed line of railway, and that nobody but a fool or a knave would attempt to think of such a thing. I therefore would

advise the Saanich people to stick to their farms and cultivate them thoroughly—something I am sorry to say that has not been heretofore strikingly characteristic of the yeomen of that district.

I observe, with much pleasure, that President Ellis of the British Columbia Agricultural Society, has "bared his strong right arm," as a preliminary proceeding to working for the success of the exhibition which opens during the latter part of next month. Mr. Ellis has reason to believe that the forthcoming fair will be equal in every respect to that of last year. At present it really looks as if the space at the disposal of the directors will be insufficient to accommodate the numerous requests that will be made for it. Several new features are spoken of in connection with the event this year.

It appears after all that I was in error in saying that Mr. J. C. McLagan was first known in this city as an agent for Bibles. Mr. McLagan's advent was as agent for the Toronto Globe, and as the Globe is called the "Grit's Bible" down in the county where I came from, the mistake occurred quite naturally. A curious thing in connection with Mr. McLagan's work in this Province for that paper is the circumstance that he presented each new subscriber with a real handsome and durable watch as a premium. These watches were admirable "time"-keepers. It was a matter of rumor that they would not lose a minute in a day; in fact if anything they would gain more than twice that time. So well and favorably known did they become in the city of Victoria that Mr. McLagan conceived the idea of starting the "Times," a paper which, I am pleased to chronicle, under the intelligent management of Mr. Templeman, has since become the leading exponent of Liberal ideas west of Toronto.

Speaking of Mr. McLagan's laudable desire to place a reliable timepiece within easy reach of every man, woman and child in this Province, a somewhat unfortunate neighbor of mine (Phillip Chalk, Esq.) informs me that the genial and benevolent agent betimes would adorn himself with a long, flowing white beard, and with a scythe thrown over his right shoulder, to represent Father Time, would parade up and down Government street. On several occasions he was mistaken for Santa Claus, and was as often addressed by that title as by Father Time.

I was nearly forgetting to mention the fact that these watches had metal cases and were manufactured at Waterbury, Conn. By reason that it took half-an-hour to wind them up, farmers used to remark in a facetious way, of course, that they would either have to neglect their farming operations or let the watches run down. A policeman, whose word I have no reason to doubt, informs me that no thief has ever been suspected of stealing a Waterbury watch.

Mrs. Partington and Mrs. Malaprop are not the only ones who take liberties with the language and have a cinch on lingual "gaucheries," by any manner of means. We have a prize winner right in our own city, and she can say some of the most peculiar things with charming innocence. The other day she was speaking to a lady to whom she had modestly introduced herself, and as a part of her conversation she made the following unique observations:—Why, my dear Mrs. So-and-So, you have no idea what a lovely time we had over

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