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WHY

THE biggest city in Canada is the worst managed. According to the repeated and vociferous confession of its own journals, the revenues of our commercial metropolis have been mishandled until it is on the verge of bankruptcy. Bankruptcy is the word employed.

Why is this?

Simply because the city is too big. It has outgrown the capacity of the officials who attempt to manage it. They might deal with affairs involving hundreds or thousands of dollars. But millions are beyond them.

All the troubles of the world, says some one, begin with the multiplication table. The settler in a new country builds his house near a spring and so ensures his water supply. To get water for the village or town is somewhat harder; but not impossible. One pump per household is the rule and every man can still drink from the waters of his own well, a condition of beatitude. But when the town becomes a city, even on our Canadian ten thousand inhabitants classification, the cost of its water supply becomes the most serious of questions. When the city swells to the size of Toronto or Montreal, the problem of giving the people clean water to drink and of washing involves the outlay of millions. So with the distribution of every necessity of life—food, fuel; so with transportation from point to point. The difficulties increase in direct ratio to the size of the community, the numbers to be supplied.

And yet every city in Canada wants to be big. It is afflicted with the disease called megalomania. The town of ten thousand wants to be a hundred thousand, and the city of a hundred thousand aims at a million. Simple souls organize what they call "booster clubs" to increase the population, with a "slogan" of a "bigger, brighter, busier" town. If you catch one of these megalomaniacs in a lucid interval, and ask him why he wants a bigger city, he will gasp "progress," "more business." Apparently he never reflects that if the city grows, more traders will press into it, competition will be keener, rents will go up with cost of living and overhead charges. The benefits of bigness are a delusion.

WILL anyone who remembers Toronto forty years ago deny that it was then a pleasanter city to live in than it is to-day? Bloor Street was the northern boundary then instead of being the equator. On a Saturday afternoon you could walk right out into the real country, where now there are railway lines and strange, exotic palaces. Most of your friends lived within easy distance of Queen's Park. Now Toronto is twice as big and twice as lonely. To see your friends, you must go a day's journey in a street car. Everything costs twice as much as it did forty years ago. And yet, I suppose the "boosters" won't be happy until Toronto has spread northward to Georgian Bay and taken in Hamilton and Kingston as suburbs. I wonder if they will be happy then. There is no limit to megalomania.

Once more I ask, "Why big?"

It reminds me of the argument that used to prevail



***BIGGER** the town, on an average the harder it is to live in. This big-town craze struck this country, not once but many times. When is a man better off—in a city of half a million or a one of 100,000 population? The answer is suggested in this article.*

By ARCHIBALD MacMECHAN

in the school-yards of Ontario, "My father's bigger'n your father."

It is the talk of children.

The cities of Italy compete with one another, it is said, almost to the point of financial ruin. But they do not compete in respect to size of population. They boast which has the finest art gallery, the best museum.

Suppose Canadian cities began to compete not in mere size, but in sane matters that count.

Suppose they began to brag, not that they were becoming "monstrous tuberosities," but that they had the cleanest streets, the lowest death rate for children, the lightest taxes, the best appointed schools and play-grounds, the highest salaried teachers. If a single Canadian city specialized in the single matter of light taxation, it would have all the population it could possibly deal with eagerly flowing into it.

Suppose—it is an impossible, a ridiculous supposition—that a single Canadian city could justly boast that it had solved the problem of housing its working

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people. The big city spells high rents (i.e., fat profits for the speculator and the landlord) and over-crowding and slums for the poor. Here is a chance for Canadian originality. Here is a chance for a Canadian city to make a name and fame for itself that will echo all round the world. For there is a limit to bigness. In spite of all the "boosters" in the world Toronto can never be as big as New York. The frog in the fable tried to puff himself up as big as the ox, but he burst in the effort. Suppose Toronto were the first city to attack the problem of the modern city, the housing of the working class. For the city is carried on by the people who labor with their hands. But for them, the business of the city would come to a standstill like a clock that has run down. Is it fanciful, is it Utopian, to hope that some Canadian city will lead in making it possible for the laboring man to have a decent shelter for himself, his wife and his children, a real home, not two rooms in a ramshackle tenement?

IS it too much to hope that his children will have some place to play in besides the street, that his wife will have some relief from her housework besides gossip with a neighbor, that he himself, now that the saloon is abolished, will have some place of recreation where he can meet his friends? Apart altogether from the demands of social justice, the solving of the housing problem would be "good business," the very best of good business. We boast of our progressiveness; but old communities like Glasgow and new communities like those of New Zealand have far outstripped us in this regard. And why should we stop at bettering city conditions for the working class? Why should not the city be made a possible place for the little clerk, the shop-girl, the family man on small salary? In each case, it takes one dollar out of every six, if not one out of every four, merely to provide shelter, a roof over one's head. It is too much. There is something wrong somewhere.

The modern city has come to stay. It cannot be abolished. Nay, more, it will continue to grow. But it is not a mere work of nature. It is a human contrivance, the work of human brains and human hands, designed for the benefit of man. We can remould it nearer to our heart's desire. Robert Balmer, after thirty years' absence from Toronto, was horrified to see the same old slums in the centre of the city that he had known as an undergraduate at Varsity. In the interval he had seen how much better a city can be managed in the case of Sydney, N.S.W. Adam Shortt, one of the wisest men in the country, has his ideas on the development of the city. Forestalling the land-sharks is part of his scheme and rapid transit another. In Belgium, thanks to rapid transit, the workman could have his own house and garden well removed from the foundry or the shop. Berlin owns 36,000 acres outside its present encircle, which were bought in the open market and are being held for rational development by the community, not to enable a few speculators to fatten on the needs of their fellow men.

(Concluded on page 25.)