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## TALES OF THE TOWN.

THE people of Victoria are under a debt of gratitude to their Mayor and City Council, which they may never be able to pay, except the gentlemen composing that body offer themselves for re-election. The glory of our present municipal administration, if it ever had any glory, has been completely obscured by the sublimely incapable manner in which His Worship Rip Van Winkle the Mayor and his associate gnomes have managed the outbreak of smallpox in our midst. Since the organization of Victoria as a municipality there has probably never been a greater opportunity presented for the municipal authorities to make a record for themselves than during the past few days. And how did Mayor Beaven and the aldermen act in the emergency? They simply went into their shells, and for aught I know have fallen into the twenty-year sleep of their illustrious prototype of the Catskills, immortalized by America's greatest novelist, Washington Irving. Instead of employing their time in seeking out the extent of the pest and using all the means within their power to check it, they seemed to think that in the event of an epidemic they should receive the indulgence of the people, and that with a little time the matter would be buried in silence. In this they have reckoned amiss.

I have passed through an epidemic or two in my time. I have watched the manner in which these matters are conducted, and I confess to have seen some very serious blundering by officials, but for downright stupidity and utter incapacity the mayor and aldermen of the city of Victoria far surpass the greatest efforts I have ever seen in that direction.

The situation in Victoria to-day demonstrates conclusively the great injury that may result from placing men in charge of civic affairs who are in no way qualified for the task. If it had not been for the timely and deter-

mined action of the Premier, smallpox would by this time have reached the proportions of an epidemic, with the mayor and aldermen fast asleep in their cradles. Of course, it will be said that the Attorney-General is trying to make capital for his Government by his highly commendable action at this time, but that gentleman can well afford to laugh at the contemptible insinuations of men who, rather than bestir themselves, would sacrifice the lives of their fellow-citizens and ruin the commerce of the principal city of the province. One thing is certain, that the Hon. Theodore Davie has proved himself the friend and protector of the people, while the Council, instead of atoning for their former negligence by any wise measure of protection, are content to stand idly by and listen to the groans of their outraged fellow-citizens.

Doubtless it will be said that I am endeavoring to arouse the passions of the people, but I will now appeal to their understanding. If the municipal authorities have daring enough among them to deny the truth of my assertions, let them come forward and they will find me ready and willing to maintain my position, that they have not only been negligent, but further that at every new phase of the disease they have presented the appearance of men appalled at the extent to which their negligence has brought them. All that remains for them to do now, if they hope to preserve the remains of ruined reputations, is to quit the busy scene and conceal themselves from the world. Anything I have said is done merely to assert my share in the public resentment.

I believe the daily papers could very well forego an unseemly political discussion while we are in the midst of this smallpox scourge. The result of grooming political favorites and handicapping political opponents, at this moment, can have only one result, and that is to detract from the undivided

interest which should be manifested in stamping out the disease. Smallpox is just as likely to claim a Government supporter as its victim as it is a supporter of what is called the Opposition, therefore both parties should sink political differences, and unite for the general good of the city and Province. Already a feeling of disgust finds expression in words in certain quarters at the attempt of one or two newspapers to make political capital at the expense of the protection of our citizens.

And how have the Vancouverites treated us in this our hour of peril. Not content with sending us the smallpox, they have presumed to arrogate the power vested only in Dominion authority. Right now, Victoria may well ask, "Who is my neighbor?" Certainly not people who would use that most devastating weapon of warfare, namely, a fire-engine, to impede the course of commerce, and, if deemed necessary, treat us to a Noachian inundation.

It always seemed to me an unwise exercise of power that authorized Vancouver to become an incorporated city. The people of the community, generally speaking, are far too yeomanlike to ever adopt the manners and customs prevailing in a city. Nearly all of them have been brought up on farms, and it will be many generations before they get the hayseed out of their hair. Farmers and backwoodsmen are well enough in their way, but I have never yet known of an instance in which they built up a great city. Would anybody but a countryman conceive the idea of using a fire-engine to prevent the landing of respectable people in their town. Ye gods, what innocence! Did the idea originate in the mind of that rural military war horse, Col. John Michael O'Brien? Or have we to thank that great authority on pumpkins and beans, the agricultural editor of the World, Mr. J. C. MacLagan for it? Certainly the brilliancy of the expedient could not have emanated from anybody

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