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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."*

A SENSATION of no small proportions was created in a well known home in this city last week, when it was learned that at a party a few evenings before some of the young men who came as guests had been treated to a game of cards up-stairs with stakes so high that the amount lost was talked of and caused almost a common scandal. I am not going into particulars—that is not the object of my writing, but just here let me make a statement. Gambling has taken a firm hold in what is known as our best society. Extraordinary isn't it? But true nevertheless as many a young man knows to his cost, and some young women have found out to their sorrow. "Come up and spend the evening and bring your wife with you so that we can have a game of cards." This is the invitation, and of course you go. Formerly you played whist or euchre, now it is poker, or black jack, and even in some places, a species of faro, roulette or piquet. Don't be startled at this. It is no innovation, but a gradual growth. It started with whist at so much a point and then when there happened to be five the game was changed to hearts at 5 or 10 cents a heart. Some one suggested poker, a mild game in its way and often played for amusement only, but gradually it becomes a betting game with some stakes no matter how small. There are those who say you can't lose any money at poker at a 25 cent limit. They must be mistaken for though I never played cards in my life, I have heard it stated by those I knew to be good players that a 25 cent limit game was liable to run away with a good deal of pocket money, even if the game only lasted from 8 to 11 o'clock. A gentleman was telling me the other evening about an evening he spent at the home of a friend. He was one of the three guests, the others being a lady and her husband. They all played poker and had a most enjoyable game, as they declared when they had finished, yet the only winners were the hostess and her husband, who between them accumulated some fourteen or fifteen dollars. And the "guests" went home just that much poorer and no doubt they had thought of the happy time they had spent with their "friends." I have heard it said that ladies are not good card players. Perhaps this is correct, but I am assured by an acquaintance of mine that he knows some fair ones who are expert manipulators of the paste boards and who like nothing better than to sit around the gaming table. Punch once advised those

who were thinking of getting married. The advice is just as good for and just as applicable to those who are getting into the habit of playing cards for money—*Don't.* Let this be emphatic, not only spelled with a big D, but with the whole word in big letters like this **DON'T.**

"He Got it Where the Chicken Got the Axe," as a popular song bids fair to rival the implosion of the late lamented McGinty and his neighbor's handsome daughter, Miss Annie Rooney. A gentleman well-known in Victoria musical circles has presented me with the words of the new song, the first verse of which reads:

In the country once a farmer killed a chicken with an axe,

Just by striking him a single little blow,
But I noticed he took extra care to land upon his neck,

And the poor old rooster gave his final crow;
Then I quickly told the farmer that I thought he was a brute,

And I got so mad I challenged him to fight,
Then he threw aside his axe and said, I'll give you light enough,

When he made a rush and hit me with all his might.

And I got it where the chicken got the axe,
Just because I made too many "sassy" cracks;

But his blow I failed to check, so it landed on my neck,

Just exactly where the chicken got the axe.

A popular song, remarks an exchange, like an apartment house or a new hotel, must have "all modern improvements" if its duration in prosperity is to be long, and the chief of these improvements is the addition without number of new verses satirizing or paraphrasing well known individuals or current events. Every man whose expectations are disappointed, or hopes frustrated may be said to "get it where the chicken got the axe." I add a few verses for local consumption:

In Vancouver I am told there dwells a man of great renown,

He believes he has a mission to perform;
He thought by dissimulation that he could out-Davie down,

And he poses as the leader of reform.
In the House the Independents and the Opposition, too,

Swelled his shiny head to twice its usual size;

But he made a break outrageous, as the sequel goes to show,

When the Government he tried to paralyze.
And he got it where the chicken got the axe,
For Theodore would not stand his naughty cracks;

When he snubbed the B. P. R., wasn't it going rather far?

So he got it where the chicken got the axe.

In the suburbs of Victoria there was once a peaceful home—

(And the husband kept a little grocery store)—

"Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one,"

Was the legend which was written o'er the door.

Now this winning wife did tarry one night with neighbor Harry,

Who o'er the gate purloined a little smack,
The grocer saw it all, and loudly he did bawl:

"Oh, I'll put that silly pair upon the rack!"
And they got it where the chicken got the axe,

For the husband wouldn't stand so many smacks,

So he knocked his neighbor out, while the poor wife she did shout:

"Oh, I got it where the chicken got the axe!"

One is accustomed to read a great deal about general reform—of the unnecessary pomp and circumstance with the heavy expense attendant upon the final disposition of the remains of one's loved ones after it has become impossible for human help and human affection to do anything more for them. Not unfrequently it happens that all this outlay is made by people who can ill afford it—by the members of a family perhaps whose head has been taken away and who have no idea of the condition in which matters have been left—whether the future shall be one of accustomed comfort or of penury and deprivation—and, at the best, of dependence upon possibly the grudging charity of relatives and friends; whose ostentatious contributions of flowers and other outward signs of respect and esteem might be far better exchanged for a substantial gift of money or by the adoption into their families of some of those who have been left partially, if not altogether, unprovided for. Undertakers' charges are unquestionably a most serious bill of expense, being for a funeral of the most modest description fully fifty per cent. higher than they ought to be, those concerned having, as if by combination, determined to make all possible profit out of the desires of the survivors to do the best they can by "by the dear departed."

But, outside of these, the city authorities are greatly to be blamed. They are neither an eleemosynary nor a commercial concern, their charter, like that of other cities, closely defining their objects and functions. It is well known that no small sums have been taken out of the profits on the operation of the water works and devoted to other services. This ought not to have been the case. All that is over and above the working expenses of that department should have been devoted to permanent water works improvements or the water rates should have been by that much reduced. The legitimate methods of raising revenue for general ordinary purposes are sufficiently defined and as well understood. To tax water—the prime necessity of life—is utterly repugnant to all the principles of social economies. Quite as objectionable as this is the manner in which the people are taxed in connection with the Ross Bay cemetery, the municipal authorities, in their search for