

THE WHISTLE OF THE HONG KONG TRAIN.

It is almost ten years since a great deal of enthusiasm has been manifested in Halifax regarding port matters. Almost everyone can remember the meeting in the Academy of Music in 1891 when a large audience assembled to signify their protest against a threatened withdrawal of mail steamers. Opinion on the trans-Atlantic mail service was at fever heat then, but that fever has been subsiding steadily. A couple of winters ago it received a slight impetus when there was a prospect that the steamers might cease to make Halifax a port of call. But apart from that it may be said that there has been a gradual subsidence of strong feeling in Halifax on port matters and particularly on the fast mail service. Whether this is due to a feeling of despair that we shall ever succeed in bringing into realization the great ambitions that we commenced to cherish twenty years ago, we know not. But one thing is obvious. There is no red hot sentiment on the matter to-day, and *there ought to be*.

It isn't necessary to review the claims of Halifax. All that was threshed out long ago. This port should have at least its share of the winter business of Canada, and we ought to have the Fast Line. Nay, more; we not merely *ought* to have these things—we *must* have them. "Ought" is academic; "must" is practical. We have disposed of the theory of the business; it's time now to get to work.

Two things are necessary in approaching the matter: one is to overcome any jealousy that may exist regarding St John, the other to forget the extreme party feeling that exists and fight for a common end.

With regard to the former, there is a great deal in John Paul's philosophy. While Halifax and St. John are at war with one another American sea ports take advantage of our absorption in the squabble to gather in all the spoils. What Halifax should do is to unite with St. John and let both cities make a demand upon the government asking it to do everything in its power to find an outlet for Canadian traffic through Canadian ports all the year round. The ports that are most economical for trade will then obtain it. In the summer a large proportion would indisputably go to Montreal; in winter Halifax and St. John would have it between them. If it should then prove that St. John is a more economical port for handling business than Halifax, the latter needn't expect any at all. It would be contrary to the laws of good trading

should it be otherwise. The same thing obtains with regard to St. John in competition with Halifax. But there needn't be any dread lest St. John should be able to outdo us, nor on the other hand that Halifax may be able to outdo St. John: there's enough business originating in Western Canada to keep both ports busy all winter long and cause the distribution of a large amount of money more than is now distributed in each city. Besides, when we come to consider the distance that the West is from both cities, the greater distance of Halifax is not sufficient to put it at a disadvantage as compared with St. John.

When we come to consider the intensity of political feeling in Halifax on both sides of politics, we meet one of the worst foes of the advancement of this port. Because of it a question of such importance to the community at once becomes political, and that spoils our best prospects. If the party leaders of one side sympathize, the rank and file of the other, instinctively think the other way, and we become divided with regard to our own best interests. Result, we never get any farther ahead. This must appeal to every reasonable man as being true. And if people will only think the matter out they will see that to our over-enthusiasm in matters political that do not concern ourselves except in a small degree and to our apathy in matters that may be called essentially our own business—to these we largely owe the present absence of conditions that we long to see and *will* long to see as long as we persist in being hidebound.

Our people are energetic enough and they have the faculty of discernment in sufficient degree, but they seem to lack in this one thing—determination to forget all rivalries in emulation among themselves for the realisation of a common good. This lack of public spirit, if we may term it such, explains why Montreal is permitted to be known as the "National Port of Canada." We are not jealous of Montreal, but great as that metropolis is as compared with our city, we must deny it a right to such a title. It's absurd. A port that is frozen five months every year! Does that represent Canada? Is that a National Port whose freights go largely through American ports when ice binds the St. Lawrence? What's the meaning of "Winter Port" if we have a "National Port?" The people of Halifax should rebel against so being placed in the background. Halifax needn't aspire to being called the "National Port"; she simply won't be called a "winter port"; but we will be satisfied to be a *great* port, handling the percentage of Canadian business that our enterprise can procure when justice has been done us in common with all Canadian ports.

After an interval of ten years it is time to get at the question again in dead earnest.

"Have you heard the whistle of the Hong Kong train?" asked Dr. Farrell at that meeting referred to in the opening paragraph of this article. "No, you have not heard the whistle of the Hong Kong train. Why? It's blowing in Portland, one thousand miles away." It was blowing there ten years ago. It is blowing in the same place to-day, as far as freights are concerned—though mails come through Canadian ports—but occasionally you may hear it in Boston, and if you stand on the outskirts of New York you may hear it once in a while as the train passes some important crossing "in shattering thunder of resistless flight." If we're no farther ahead than we were ten years ago, isn't it time to do something? Wouldn't it be a good idea to revive the old agitation again?

If we do revive that agitation we must make a supreme effort. We can't afford to do something spasmodic and then permit the question to pass into comparative oblivion again. If we go to work we must accomplish something. Now that elections are over the time is opportune. Presently a new government will be formed (very much like the last one no doubt, but nevertheless new) and we ought to let it know just what we think and just what we *must have*—not in a threatening spirit, but simply by impressing it with our earnestness and singleness of purpose. Halifax people should allow this sentiment to take deep root within their hearts and permit themselves to be governed by a perfectly legitimate desire. Then all that is necessary is to put some machinery into existence to carry on a work that will accomplish something; or else nothing *can* be done. It's worth trying.

Dr. Farrell suggests as a means towards this end, the formation of a transportation association that would keep in touch with all matters regarding this important interest. Its members should all be energetic and earnest and should gather together all the information possible, print and distribute literature, have public meetings and do everything that organization can do to inflame the public mind with one idea. Then it should work and work and work and then keep on working. It should stop passing all resolutions except one, which should be to work more. And finally it should just work away until the people are unanimous in their opinion and have lost all political sentiment that isn't in harmony with the one idea. This committee would represent the citizens and every citizen should give it his support; for it ought to be the loyal ambition of every Haligonian to see his city a very busy port, it ought to be the wish of everyone to see the abundance of employment that would ensue to labor as a result of such business coming to the port. In short this is a question which should interest every man who has any pride in the city and any good wishes for its welfare. Being so everyone should become interested immediately and prepare himself to do whatever may lie within his power to help any campaign along that will have this project for its purpose.