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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."*

ALD. BELYEA'S motion to insert a clause in all contracts entered into by the corporation of the city of Victoria prohibiting the employment of Chinese in connection with the work or of material in the manufacture of which Chinese are employed, has been adopted by the city council. Quite naturally, the laboring men who have suffered the most by Chinese labor, are jubilant at Ald. Belyea's success in probing the great evil to its source, and if he follows the matter up, he will no doubt earn for himself their everlasting gratitude. Strange, too, that this motion should emanate from a man who makes no pretensions of being in accord with the aspirations of the horny-handed son of toil. He has rather sought to repel any such idea; yet it remains a fact that he has struck the greatest prop from under the Chinese superstructure. While the municipal elections were in progress, Ald. Belyea made no promises as to what he would do for the laboring man; these things he left to Damon Baker and Pythias Bragg, who stood around the corners and execrated the Chinese and exalted the white laborer. That they were elected by the votes of their dupes is strongly in evidence.

But talk is cheap. It did not cost Ald. Baker and Bragg much to promise this, that and the other thing; but when it came down to reducing their professions into plain, every-day practice, the worthy pair concluded to flop. Of course, as Ald. Bragg learnedly remarked, there may be a "unitarian side" to the affair, although what the "Unitarians" have to do with this secular matter at this moment is not apparent. It occurs to many that it was not merely brotherly love for the Chinese that prompted the two aldermen to come forward as the avowed champions of cheap labor. In fact some go so far as to say that some aldermen are interested in the employment of Chinamen. If the talk of those interested in the abolition of the Chinese counts for anything, it is quite certain that Ald. Baker and Bragg will never be permitted to occupy seats at the council board another year. Henceforth they shall be known as the "Chinese champions."

Although not having the honor to occupy the onerous position of fire editor of this great family publication, I may say that it has fallen to my lot to be in the vicinity of several fires lately, and so have had an opportunity of observing the work of the fire department staff. The last fire, up to the time of writing, was that of the Ameri-

can hotel, which occurred at a time when the department could be seen to the best advantage, and it must be said that the boys were a credit to any city. Everything went like well oiled, carefully kept machinery. Orders were given and obeyed in a systematic manner that showed perfect confidence in each other as well as competence on the part of chief and men. A staff that can work so efficiently should be maintained at every reasonable cost, especially such an important branch of the civic service. It is one which the Chief Justice said, in the late Royal Commission, should not be touched with a view to reduction in either number or salaries; the city cannot afford to lessen its efficiency in any respect. But is the city following the sound advice of the learned Chief Justice? It is feared not. In their insane, muddle-headed craze for economy, they are pursuing a course which will be far more expensive to the ratepayers in the end than the ostensible saving of a few paltry dollars just now. Here is an institution which, after perfect sanitation, is what the city most needs in a state of perfect efficiency. How is it kept? Every little improvement that has been added has either been granted grudgingly, or a howl about extravagance has been raised. The chief has begged and begged for them as though they were personal favors; in fact, I do not remember him sending one application for an increase of salary for himself personally, and I have seen dozens of requests from him for improvements that a live committee, which knew its duty, would never let a chief have to ask for. The appliances he has now are the result of steady, persistent begging and nothing more. Perhaps the day may come when the electors will elect business men with business heads instead of chumps with wooden heads, filled with more verbosity and gas than so many old women.

In this connection it might be remarked that other cities have a very commendable custom which is markedly absent here. The heads of the Fire and Police departments are given annual vacations, and a present made them sufficient to take them to some bigger city where they can obtain pointers for the working of their respective departments. Now there is a great convention of fire chiefs to take place in San Francisco, in the course of a couple of months, and I venture to predict that if the chief of our fire staff can manage to attend it, it will be at his own personal expense, whereas the information and education he will obtain at that convention will be worth a considerable sum to the city at large. In fact, the best remedy for this want of enterprise on the part of the council is to do as Mr. Van Horne does occasionally with the city council of

Montreal, and that is, put them in a special car and take them to some big city where the rush and roar of things will brush the cobwebs off their eyes, and put something of life and common sense into their old moss back bodies.

From information received from private sources, I conclude that the Chicago World's Fair is not meeting with that high general approval which it was considered it would receive. Its promoters thought it would beat all creation and that the Americans would astonish and open the eyes of visitors from all parts of the world who would be amazed at the wonderful sights which would be seen there. Men of ability and intelligence from Great Britain confess to a disappointment, and do not look upon the Chicago Fair as equal to their expectations, being especially disappointed in the exhibits of the Americans. By some it is regarded as a money-making undertaking, but, judging from the returns for the month of May, those that expected to make money out of it will be equally disappointed with the visitors to whom I have referred above.

A correspondent writes concerning one feature of the Fair: "The oddest thing about the whole exposition is the way the Midway Plaisance is being boomed at the expense of the fair proper. If the thousands of people who pay their good money every day to see the attractions of that fakish street only knew it, they are wasting much valuable time, as well as hard earned coin. With a few notable exceptions, the attractions of the Midway Plaisance are a delusion and a snare. There is a dim suspicion that three-fourths of them never saw the land of any other continent but America, and their purpose in reaching out after the great American dollar is so obvious as to be very funny to all except the fleeced."

Premier Davie, who left Victoria to visit the Kootenay country, according to the reports which come as to his movements, abandoned that idea, much to the disappointment of the people of the great mining section of the province, and went east among the following of President Van Horne of the C. P. R. There would appear to be something mysterious as to his movements, as it is said nothing official or otherwise has been heard regarding him. Is he following the example of Premier Mercier in the way of announcing a visit to one place and then turning up in a wonderful way upon the continent of Europe? I am anxious to know what he is doing, and I doubt not that the same is the general feeling.

It is remarked by an American newspaper that this has been a year when woman, in a very emphatic manner speaks

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