

## BANQUETS AND SPEECHES

Now is the season when men gather together, eat, drink, smoke and speak. Under one head and at many friendly tables, we dub these meetings banquets. They are held for various reasons, to give shareholders a twinkle of satisfaction at least once a year, to try and make men of different parts to think alike, to give respectability to politics and politics to respectability, and to do countless other things. The first banquet is a thing of beauty and of joy but the tinsel of delight begins to tarnish as the years pass. Yet, although men have come and men have decided never again to go, the banquet goes on forever.

The usefulness of the average banquet is spoiled. It is twice hurt,—by too much eating, and by too many speeches too long. An eight-course dinner with its trimmings, even should the guest take only two bites of each, followed with cigars and a few glasses of water, does not help to mould a receptive mind. Honorable W. T. White, minister of finance, once said that modern men dig their graves with their teeth. Much of the digging is done during the banquet season.

But, after all, the orators are greater sinners than the chef and the dinner committee. Less than one speaker in fifty recognizes that a good speech is short and has something worth hearing. Having, as we have, a great country rich in natural resources, so many after-dinner speakers think it necessary to start at Prince Edward Island, chronicle its history, describe its industries, taking us through the other seven provinces to British Columbia in the same way, discussing Canada's relation to the British Empire and to the United States, and to anything else, throwing in a few political references, and sprinkling well with enough statistics to make the already dazed head more dizzy. A good speaker can give attractively, more information in a ten minutes' address than all our poor speakers can in six hours. Everyone suffers from the bore of long and empty speeches, including even the next speaker who forgets his recent suffering when on his feet. After each address, a group of guests will leave on a vigorous search for hats and coats. The last speakers around midnight have to talk to a few faithful guests, empty tables, and tired waiters.

All this is too bad, because the banquet has an excellent mission in the world. The trouble is that few seem to know how to run them. One day someone will serve the traditional bun and glass of milk, toasts with only one reply, speeches limited to fifteen minutes, speakers hand-picked by a shrewd committee, and bed for the guests before midnight. This much-needed reform is ardently desired by every banqueteer and they all say so—in private.

In these days of highly refined civilization the war is costing leading belligerents \$50,000,000 daily and last week a starving man dropped dead in the bread line at Toronto.

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There is about \$20,763,000,000 of life insurance in force in the United States, while the amount in Canada is \$1,266,000,000. Estimating that there are 22,000,000 families in the United States, the average amount of insurance per family is \$932, while for the 1,566,000 families of Canada, the average is only \$760. Neither of the averages is sufficient or creditable.

## STATISTICS

The province of Quebec has issued its first statistical year book. In his introduction to the volume, the head of the provincial bureau of statistics points out that to have a statistical year book really read and frequently consulted, it must include a certain number of retrospective tables giving the same information covering the same ground for a great many years and thus permitting the progress made to be measured. It is on these lines that the statistical year books of the great foreign powers, such as France, as well as those of the Australian Commonwealth and its different components, are established. This, broadly, was the plan followed in the compilation of the present work. Quebec's first statistical year book is a worthy effort and will improve as the years pass.

It is unfortunate that the statisticians of the dominion and provincial governments have not been able yet to agree upon uniformity in the collection and presentation of statistics. The lead in this matter should be taken by the dominion government.

All the loan companies report prompt payment of principal and interest, with few exceptions. The prudent very seldom need special assistance and when they do, they usually obtain it without trouble.

## NON-TRANSMISSIBLE

On July 31st, 1914, at 8 p.m. a letter left Toronto, addressed to L. Beuttenlein, Frankfurt, Germany, and containing a circular and letter describing "Capital Investments in Canada," a volume published by *The Monetary Times*. The Toronto post mark advertised the Canadian National Exhibition whose slogan in 1914, said the post mark, was to be "Peace Year." Four days later, Germany and England were at war, but this particular letter may then have been on the high seas on its way to tell a German, whose name was on a list of likely purchasers, of a book which would inform him of the investments of various nations, including Germany, in Canada.

On September 4th, 1914, the letter reached the post office at Toronto again. Then it went through many official channels and on some day unknown it took refuge in the dead letter office at Ottawa. From thence, after the bestowal of tender official care, it left Ottawa on February 9th, 1915, arriving home at *The Monetary Times* office on February 10th, marked "non-transmissible." It was duly accorded a welcome, while the staff discussed the uncertainties of life's events. In the meantime, congratulations are due to the Canadian postal authorities upon their ability to give this innocent missive an airing of six months and nine days, all for the price of one cent.

What has happened to the proposed appointment of a fire marshal for Ontario?

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The natural sequence of secrecy in awarding war contracts is scandal or talk of it.