

### Development of Municipal Institutions in Ontario.

It is said that Government by-town meetings is the oldest form of Government known in the world, and the student of ancient History is familiar with the Comitia of the Romans, and the Ecclesia of the Greeks. These were popular assemblies held usually in the market place, the Roman Forum, and the Greek Agora. The Government carried on in them was a more or less qualified democracy.

The principles of the town meetings, however, is older than Athens or Rome. Long before streets were built or fields fenced men wandered around the earth in family parties. These were what we call Clans, and is supposed to have been the earliest form in which civil society appeared on the earth. Each Clan usually had a chief or head man, useful more particularly as a leader in war times. Its civil government, rude and disorderly enough, was, in principal a democracy. When a Clan, instead of moving from place to place, fixed upon some spot for a permanent residence, a village grew up there surrounded by a belt of vacant land or somewhat later by a stockaded wall. The belt of land was called a "mark," and the wall was called a "tun." Afterwards the enclosed space came to be known sometimes as a "mark" and sometimes as a "tun" or town, and in England the latter name prevailed. It was customary to call them by their Clan names. Town names of this sort are to be found all over England, and point us back to a time when each was supposed to be a stationary home of a Clan. These old English towns had their tungemot or town meetings in which by-laws were made and other important business transacted. The principal officers were the reeve, the beadle, the tithing man, or the petty constable. At first these officers were elected by the people, but after a while, as great lordships usurped jurisdiction over the land, the lord Stewart or bailiff came to supercede the reeve or beadle. After the Norman conquest, the townships thus brought under the sway of great lords, came to be generally known by the French name of "manor" or dwelling places.

The relation of the people to the lords is referred to in that strangely beautiful story, "The Cloister and the Hearth," in which Charles Reade has drawn such a vivid picture of human life at the close of the middle ages. There is a good description of the siege of a revolted town by the army of the Duke of Burgundy. Arrows whiz, catapults whirl their ponderous stones, wooden towers are built, secret mines are exploded. The sturdy citizens, led by a tall knight, who seems to bear a charmed life, baffle every device of the besiegers. At length the citizens capture the brother of the Duke's general, and the besiegers capture the tall knight, who turns out to be no knight at all, but

just a plebeian hosier. The Duke's general is on the point of ordering the tradesman, who has made so much trouble, to be shot, but the latter still remains master of the situation, for, as he dryly observes, if any harm comes to him the enraged citizens will hang the general's brother. Some parley ensues, in which the shrewd hosier promises for the towns folk to set free their prisoner and pay a round sum of money if the besieging army will depart and leave them in peace. The offer is accepted, and so the matter is amicably settled. As the worthy citizen is about to take his departure, the general ventures a word of inquiry as to the cause of the town's revolt. "What, then, is your grievance, my good friend?" Our hosier knight, though deft with needle and keen with lance, has a stammering tongue. He answers: "Tuta-tuta-tuta-tuta—too much taxes."

The words "too much taxes" furnish us with a clue wherewith to understand and explain the origin of municipal institutions. Many events recorded in history, sieges, marches, deadly battles and romantic plots have owed their origin to question of taxation. This issue has been tried over and over again in every country and in every age, with various results. How much the taxes shall be and who is to decide how much they shall be are always questions of the greatest importance. A very large part of what has been done in the way of making history has been to settle these questions, whether by discussion or by blows, whether in council chambers or on the battle field.

After the English had been converted to Christianity, local churches were gradually set up all over the country, and districts called parishes were assigned for the administrations of the priest. The parish generally coincided in area with the township and in the course of the 13th century we find that the parish had acquired the right of taxing itself for church purposes. Money needed for the church was supplied in form of church rates, voted by the ratepayers at the vestry meetings. The officers of the parish were the constable, the bailiff and the vestry clerks—the beadle, the waywardens, or surveyors of highways, and the haywards or fence-viewers and common drivers, or collector of taxes, and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, overseers of the poor were added. There were also church wardens, usually two for each parish, whose duties were primarily the care of the church property, assessing the rates, and calling the vestry meetings. The officers were all elected by the ratepayers.

In addition to the parish or township we find upon examination that a map of England shows the country to be divided into counties. We have seen how the clan, when it became stationary; was established, as a town or township, and in these early times, Clans were generally united more or less closely into tribes, made up of a number of Clans, or family groups.

The names of the tribes were applied first with the people, and afterwards to the land they occupied. A few of the oldest county names in England still show this plainly, for example, Middlesex was generally occupied by the Middle Saxons. Each tribe had its leader whose title was, "Ealdorman" or elder nan, and as they increased in influence they took the title of kings. The little kingdoms coincided sometimes with a single shire, sometimes with two or more shires. The shires was governed by the shire mote, which was a representative body. Lords of lands including abbots and priors attended it, as well as the reeve, and four select men from each township. As the cities and boroughs grew into importance they sent representative burgers to these meetings. This shire mote was both a legislative body and a court of justice. After the Norman conquest the shire began to be called by the French name "county," because of its similarity to the small pieces of territory in that country governed by counts. The officers of the shire mote were the shire reeve, or sheriff, who was at first elected by the people, and held office for life, but who was afterwards appointed by the king for a term of one year. The coroner, or "crownor," was especially the crown officer of the court, and the justice of the peace. In 1362, the justices of the peace in each county were authorized to hold court four times a year.

*To be continued.*

The Honorable James Bryce, in an article published in *The Forum*, entitled, "How to teach civic duty," says that it should be taught in the schools, that the pupils should be made to begin from the policeman and the soldier whom he sees, from the workhouse and the school inspector, from the election of the town council and the member of the legislature. He suggests three habits to be cultivated: (1) to strive to know what is best for one's country as a whole; (2) to place one's country's interests when one knows it above party feeling or class feeling or any other sectional fashion or motive; (3) to be willing to take trouble, personal and even tedious trouble, for the well-governing of every public community on belongs to, whether it be a township, a ward, or of a city, or of a nation as a whole. And the methods of forming these habits are two, methods which, of course, cannot in practice be distinguished, but must go hand in hand: (1) the giving of knowledge regarding the institutions of the country; (2) knowledge sufficient to enable the young citizen to comprehend their workings.

The proper form of municipal government must be that of growth, shaped and determined by our political life, and the example of foreign countries cannot be of but little use in helping to solve the problem of so-called necessary reform in municipal government.