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Observations.

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ABOUT this time of the year men begin to develop symptoms of what the Portuguese call *saudades* or a yearning. This yearning has as its object public office, and the virulence of the complaint is generally in inverse proportion to the ability of the subject. Men who cannot conduct the business of a corner grocery are generally those who thrust themselves forward, and are the loudest in their demands for public favour. Having made miserable failures out of their own affairs they are willing to run those of the public. And, strange to say, business men who would not trust such fellows with the collection of a five dollar debt, for fear they might embezzle the money, countenance and even work for these worthless demagogues.

The strangest thing in connection with the government of the city of Toronto, is the lack of men of business ability and skill in the council. Now, I will grant that there are a few men in the council that possess average ability in a business sense, but in many cases such men fail because they lack the tact of the demagogue.

Mr. Thomas Meehan, a member of the common council of the city of Philadelphia, and one of the most successful business men in that city, recently gave a few stray leaves from the book of his experience as a councilman. He gives as the reason why so many business men fail in municipal and other politics, that they do not live up to the Ciceronian maxim, "Qui non dissimulare nec non regnare." Even in a city council the man "who cannot dissimulate cannot reign," and men habituated to the straightforward answers and conduct necessary to success in business importing this honest method into their public life fail.

There is a good deal of truth in what Mr. Meehan says, and a study of Machiavelli's "Prince" in the present state of public affairs would not perhaps militate against a man's chances of success either at the polls or in the council chamber. We all love the straight, honorable man, and demand such as our ideal politician, but the rogue we nevertheless elect to office. Whilst professing a strong desire for truthful men in politics, our most noted politicians are those noted for their ability to lie. We have not even the decency of the Greeks, who admired a skillful thief, and considered it not dishonorable to steal, but dishonorable to be caught stealing. Even public men who have been caught pilfering on the public domain are elected to office, as if, not content with allowing vice to steal the garb of virtue, we must also give her virtue's crown.

The growth of a city is to a large extent dependent upon the manner in which the civil finances are conducted. One reason—that is often overlooked—why manufacturers and business men

left so many country towns and settled in Toronto was that the rate of taxation in this city used to be far less than that of the average Canadian town. Low taxation, reasonable assessments, the growth in value of property, and convenience as a distributive centre gave Toronto a great advantage over other towns and cities in Ontario. But our business men were content to allow the city to be run by a few loud-mouthed incompetents, and if such a state of affairs is continued much longer, Toronto will be a good place for a manufacturer or business man to get out of.

The mercantile life of the city is largely dependent upon its municipal government. The lower taxation is kept and the more carefully the civic treasure-chest is guarded, the more confidence capital has in making its investments. Every cent added to the tax on a business of any description is a cent deducted from its earning power and a reduction in its value. Say, for instance, a man has property worth a hundred dollars that will earn 5 per cent., or five dollars a year, which we will say is the current rate of interest. Now, if out of this \$5 he has to pay \$2 taxes, his property will only earn \$3. But if a hundred dollars should earn \$5 and his property only earns after deducting the taxes \$3, then his property is only worth sixty dollars and the tax of \$2 has reduced its value forty dollars.

If money is worth five per cent. every mill added to the civic taxation will reduce every hundred dollars' worth of property in the city \$2. Surely the civic rulers do not realize this when they add so recklessly to the rate.

One of the chief causes of our present civic condition is the way in which agitators have been pandered to. Why should so-called labor men want to fill all the offices in the city's gift? Why should they be allowed to elect whom they please and do as they please with the city by laws and the city government? Why should labor men, because they are labor men, have all the sweetness and light of public office? Have they any more rights than the groceryman, the manufacturer or the merchant? Why should they not be content with equal rights without special privileges?

Now, I believe in giving to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to labor the things that are labor's. If the labor unions have differences to settle with employers, let them settle them as best they can, or let the law of supply and demand settle it. Labor has often been dealt with harshly, but time has always worked a cure. The body politic has always been willing to accord justice to the oppressed, and a just cause never goes begging for advocates or friends. But why should the labor men want the earth? I know a few of the local thunder-makers personally, and I have never been impressed with their wonderful wisdom, ability or sagacity. In their own ranks they have not been able to develop that sterling ability that they are

always parading. As co-operative concerns they have failed. Even their own ranks are now so diminished that there is only a shadow left.

I have been among them, and know that those who say the least, but stay at home and mind their business after paying up their union dues, are those endowed with the most wisdom. These are the men who go hungry when there is a strike, who shed tears over their hungry wives and children, who battle silently but firmly for their rights. These are the men that do the fighting, and win victories for the unions, not the loud-mouthed rattle-pates that talk fortnightly at the Trades and Labor Council. These are the men the bosses cannot help honoring, and I say all honor to the man who fights uncomplainingly for his rights, and is not everlastingly whining about the rights of labour.

But if anything is done to further the interests of the business community of this city, forthwith there is howling at the Trades and Labor Council, that institution that relegates to itself the welfare of the city, that sits up all night watching civic legislation like the man in the play who sits up all night watching the British constitution, that with owl like gravity pronounces dogmatic opinions on questions that even the ablest financiers would hesitate to discuss offhand.

Let us analyse it and we will find that there is a good deal of ass under this lion's skin; that it is composed of an aggregation of animated kazooes, with aching emptiness in their heads, murder of Queen's English in their hearts and stale beer lower down in their stomachs. We will find that when an oracle issues from their Delphi it generally emanates from Bro. John Armstrong, Bro. McCormack or Bro. O'Donohue, and no triumvirate in ancient Rome could kick up such a dust as these three.

Why should such men dare to raise their voices in public affairs, when it is notorious that they are not above taking public money themselves?

Who are they anyway?

Who is John Armstrong? A printer by trade, a member of an honorable profession from whose ranks came some of the greatest and noblest men living and dead. But Armstrong is great only in his own mind. He is a labor agitator for what he gets out of it. A labor commissionership is the price of his tongue, and a high price it was, for among his fellow printers his "slips of the tongue" are a constant source of merriment.

Next comes Bro. O'Donohue, another printer, cursed with the madness of a tongue that can only be bridled with the bit of office. He is another labor man in office for what he can get out of the Ontario Government. What right has he, a pensioner of the Ontario Government, to pose as a critic? Only his own lack of delicacy and decorum permits him to discuss the actions of his betters.

Then there is Bro. McCormack. Who is he? Is he a Bayard and so pure in his public actions that he would be the type of a man to discuss public questions in the interests of the citizens? Is he not the McCormack who figures as a sewer inspector for the city? Well, indeed, does it pay him to have a hand in the making of aldermen. If he had any shame he would refrain from criticising the actions of the city council. As a grabber of salary at the city hall, he has been a howling success. He should go and hide his diminished head.

Truly this is a great galaxy of talent that shines in the ranks of labor, and with callous impertinence assumes to speak on its behalf.