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Semi-Weekly Telegraph and The News

ST. JOHN, N. B., AUGUST 24, 1910.

THE CIVIC SITUATION

St. John, as the newspapers are sometimes reminded by those in authority, is a small community. It is all the more difficult on that account to speak plainly about civic conditions, and to suggest changes in the methods of conducting civic business, without giving offence to some of the more responsible men who have been elected to the Common Council. Business men who go to City Hall to represent the ratepayers can only devote a comparatively small amount of their own time to the details of civic business, and, as a result, a few of the more active aldermen in practice,control the bulk of civic patronage and in practice are responsible for the results, or the lack of results, secured by the administration.

It is, perhaps, natural that a body of men like the aldermen, upon finding that the results of their work are being criticized, should in some measure instinctively stand together on the defensive, and should deny, without proper investigation, the allegations made concerning their regime. This, as we have seen during the last few weeks, does not always work out happily, and it very seldom works out in the public interest.

There is today proceeding a sworn investigation as to all of the circumstances attending the letting and the carrying out of the Main street contract, and apparently it is proposed to extend this investigation into the administration of the board of works and one or two other civic departments. However these things may be regarded, the truth is not to be avoided that the committee of investigation is really investigating the Common Council, which is to say that the aldermen are engaged in investigating themselves. It would be unwise to expect too much from that sort of investigation, because aldermen, like other men, are merely human, and it is perhaps unfair or unreasonable to ask half the members of the Council to bear witness against the other half, or against even three or four of their colleagues, and to tell actually all that they know in so bearing witness. Independent counsel would make the present inquiry a different matter.

Investigation of the Hassam contract is an important and pressing duty, yet it cannot be carried out if the aldermen persist in acting as if they were counsel employed for the defence of the contractors, the city engineer, and the civic administration generally. Moreover, it will be a misfortune if, in devoting attention to the Hassam contract, either the aldermen or the electors should be permitted to forget that a far greater and more pressing duty is the reorganization of the board of works and other departments, and that such reorganization can never be carried out effectively until there has been a drastic exposure of the conditions that have existed in these departments, not only during the last few months but during the last few years. It is utterly useless to talk about reform at City Hall unless the more responsible men in the Council frankly recognize the necessity for a very extensive house-cleaning. If they decline to deal with the whole situation man fashion, or if they affect to believe that conditions in several departments are not such as to necessitate immediate and sweeping action, then it will be useless for the ratepayers to expect progress from the present administration.

Mr. Carleton is not on trial, although several of the more active members of the Council act as though they believe he is. It is not the business of the Council, or of any member of it, to resist inquiry into present conditions, although several aldermen seem persuaded of the contrary. It is the business of the aldermen to act as counsel for the ratepayers whom they represent, and whenever they assume any other attitude they give fresh color to public distrust concerning things as they are.

THE INQUEST ON THE ROADS

There was printed in the Standard of yesterday a most diverting communication from A. J. Murray, M. D., Fredericton Junction, Sunbury County, in which that gentleman says that the roads of this province are in fine condition, and that any assertions to the contrary are the mere product of mad partizanship. Someone may ask who this Mr. Murray is, and the reply evidently should be that he is the final authority in all matters of road making, and that his acquaintance with the roads in every parish of this province is very great. It should be said further, no doubt, that Mr. Murray is the gentleman who showed the ancient Romans how to construct the military roads that made them famous, and that from the time of the Romans he has (in addition to attending to a healthy country practice) superintended most of the operations conducted by the road-making nations down to the present day. If all that were true it would be seen that should anyone mildly question the assertions of this sage of Fredericton Junction, the action would be obviously one closely trenching upon either irreverence or impertinence.

In making Dr. Murray's stature more clear to the people of New Brunswick, however, it may be well to say that he formerly was a councillor for the parish of Gladstone, in the county of Sunbury, where he has been known as a very zealous supporter of Mr. Hazen. In October last there was a councillors' election in the parish of Gladstone, and when the returns were counted it was found that the chill result was as follows:

David Mersereau	132
Oscar Tracey	109
Dr. A. J. Murray	49

It might be improper to assume that the vote on this occasion should be accepted as proving that Dr. Murray's fellow residents in the parish of Gladstone do not take him very seriously, but as a former St. John alderman was wont to remark, "We merely heave out the suggestion" for what it may be worth.

Further, at the risk of inviting fresh fulmination from Fredericton Junction, The Telegraph perhaps might venture to point out to Mr. Murray that notwithstanding his vast experience in the construction of roads, and his extended knowledge of conditions beyond his immediate horizon, and his expert training as one of His Majesty's coroners, he has not succeeded in burying Mr. Hazen's dead. Mr. Murray's letter is an amateur's attempt to befog the issue by concealing it under a mass of words, but Mr. Murray knows that the camera does not lie about the Hazen government's roads, and he knows, too, that no amount of discussion as to road conditions under a previous government can make the electors of this province blind to the evidence apparent in every parish. And, in every parish with few exceptions, this evidence shows that the Hazen government has given the people of New Brunswick the most wretched roads they have had in a generation.

Mr. Hazen has been in office since March, 1908, and his partizans, among whom there are few so lost to political reason as the road-maker of Fredericton Junction, are still crying out that the Hazen road law should be given a more extended trial. Let us say to Dr. Murray, and to those others who reason as he does, that Mr. Hazen cannot avoid the day of settlement by the idle assertion that he has not yet had time enough to carry out his promises with respect to the highways of New Brunswick. Mr. Murray's frothy letter may be condensed into the single contention that the bad roads are goods roads. There is none so blind as those who will not see, and of these Mr. Murray is one. But there are comparatively few just like him, and this Mr. Hazen has already discovered. The condition of the roads is a sore point with the local government today, and not a few of its own supporters have notified the Premier and some of his colleagues that unless a revolution be brought about in this matter within the next few months the government of the day will be swept out of existence when the people again have an opportunity of dealing with them. There has been in the political history of New Brunswick no such exhibition of confusion and mal-administration as has followed the return of Mr. Hazen to power. His political situation is far too desperate to be bettered by the wordy intervention of his Fredericton Junction lieutenant who "also ran" in that election for councillor.

THE BETTER WAY

Many battles might have been fought since June last over the questions at issue between Britain and the United States, had these nations appealed to the arbitrament of the sword instead of appealing to the Hague Tribunal. The fisheries case was begun before the international court three months ago, during which space of time an active military campaign would have cost both nations about a billion dollars, not to mention loss of life and general dislocation of civilized conditions.

Perhaps considerations of this sort may cause the public to regard with more than customary patience the slow methods by which the tribunal proceeds. One reads, for example, that the court sits but four hours a day, and that one man usually addresses the judges throughout such a session, and then, perhaps, has only begun his argument. Sir Robert Finley's address occupied two weeks; former Senator Turner, a gentleman whose name will be recalled in connection with the Alaska boundary decision, spoke for only eight days, and must have been astonished at his own moderation; and Sir William Robson spoke for a week. Mr. Elihu Root, former American Secretary of State, was speaking all of last week. After some process of elimination the questions to be decided have been reduced to the following seven:

1. Must regulations made by Great Britain, Canada or Newfoundland be subject to the consent of the United States? The American contention is that the treaty of 1818 limited British sovereignty by forming an international "servitude."

2. Have Americans, in fishing on the treaty coasts, the right to employ persons not inhabitants of the United States? Americans have been filling up skeleton crews by hiring Newfoundlanders, which is contrary to the Newfoundland laws.

3. Can Great Britain require Americans to report at the imperial custom houses and pay lighthouse and harbor dues?

4. Can Great Britain restrict Americans in certain matters relating to shelter, repairs and supplies of wood and water?

5. What is a "bay"—the shortest and most difficult question on the list. American fishers must keep beyond the three-mile limit, but what are their rights in a bay whose entrance is a little over six miles wide? There are geographical bays and there are legal bays.

6. Have the Americans identical right in Newfoundland and in Labrador. The wording of the treaty is ambiguous.

7. Are American fishing boats entitled to the commercial privileges on the treaty coasts allowed to American trading vessels generally?

The work is slow, but there is a much greater chance of arriving at a just and lasting settlement than there would have been had the countries engaged in a great war. During the eight days occupied by Senator Turner's speech, tremendous destruction would have been wrought on land and sea by the armies and navies, and the burden of debt, loss, and sorrow saddled upon both nations would have been beyond human computation.

THE CAMERA AND MR. HAZEN

There is reproduced on the first page of today's Telegraph a charming photograph representing a sylvan bridge on one of the highways near Fredericton, on a road which carries much traffic. In connection with the photograph there are published extracts from the letters of several correspondents, referring to the hole in the bridge, and to the portion of the bridge rail which has been wrenched away and placed on its end in the hole in order to warn passers by of the peril there lying in wait for them because of the neglect of the Hazen government.

A former photograph, showing a bridge near Grand Bay, which was published in this journal, excited considerable anger in the ranks of the Hazen government forces, but we trust that this second exhibit will be received with more composure, and a greater sense of humility.

It is not possible for the Hazen newspapers and the Hazen apologists to make much headway by merely roaring out day after day frenzied denials of the evidence that is to be found in every parish in this province.

Undoubtedly the camera — which is strictly non-partizan—will be of very material assistance in placing some of this evidence before the electors of New Brunswick in a fashion at once artistic and convincing. Besides, it is highly probable that the reproduction of these photographs will tend to convince the local government of the necessity for making some attempt to place the roads and bridges in better condition before the snow once more hides the awful evidence from the public.

THE KING

His Majesty King George is winning golden opinions from all of the people with whom he comes into contact. The Empire knew something about his interest in naval matters and now the Illustrated London News says of him:

"King George is showing himself a keen soldier, and this characteristic thoroughness with which His Majesty deals with everything he undertakes was strongly evidenced during the memorable week he has just been spending at Aldershot. Turning out daily at an early hour the King went everywhere on horseback, and personally inspected everything. He showed a close personal interest in the men, and making informal inspections of the men 'at home' as it were; also going over the hospitals and training schools."

BE CALM

The North Shore Leader is very much annoyed because The Telegraph has printed a portion of the truth regarding the condition of many roads and bridges in this province. This journal presents its compliments to the excited North Shore Leader and directs its attention to a moving photograph reproduced on the first page of The Telegraph today.

If this exhibit (and there are others to come) does not draw tears of contrition from the eyes of our North Shore friend, the case is a much more hardened one than we are willing to believe at this juncture.

When the North Shore Leader, or any other journal concerned for Mr. Hazen's political existence, loses its temper in discussing public affairs, the common conclusion will be that it is angry with the facts, and cannot look them in the face with composure. Cheer up, neighbor; the worst is yet to come.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

There is to be a meeting of the Public Utilities Commission in St. John on Wednesday next, at which, it may be assumed, the complaint of the Board of Trade's telephone committee against the New Brunswick Telephone Company, because of its arbitrary action in increasing its rentals for 'phones in St. John, will be carried forward. It will be recalled that the telephone company, has been able, by reason of its having in practice a monopoly of the telephone business in this province, to compel its patrons to pay the increased charges placed upon them some months ago.

The purpose of the hearing before the Public Utilities Commission is two-fold. In the first place, an attempt is to be made to find out whether or not the recent ulities legislation passed at Fredericton renders improper and illegal the action of the telephone company, in increasing its rentals. The business men of the Board of Trade, who spend much time in examining the facts bearing upon this question, made a report in which they said the company's action was unjustifiable. The evidence to support their contention has been submitted to the commission, and we shall now see how long an interval must elapse before the public will secure a verdict in this case.

But there is another object in taking the telephone company before the commission, and this second object is to ascertain whether or not the company may, at any time of its own choosing, arbitrarily impose still further increases in tolls and rentals upon its helpless subscribers. What has happened once without good reason, may happen again without good reason, unless the authorities of the province, who are supposed to exercise a measure of control over those holding public utilities franchises, interpose some check such as the law governing public utility corporations.

What does that law really amount to? It was passed last winter, with a considerable flourish of political trumpets, and it was said somewhat loudly at the time by Mr. Hazen and some of his more conspicuous supporters, that if the legislation then enacted did not contain strong enough medicine to deal with the exactions of the telephone company, the local government would stand ready to make such amendments as might be necessary to make the remedy efficacious. Many months have elapsed since the act was placed upon the statute books, but thus far the patient and trusting public has not seen any results.

For these reasons this coming meeting of the Public Utilities Commission is awaited with a marked degree of interest. Telephone subscribers, not only in St. John but throughout the province, are now determined to ascertain just what is the relation existing between them and the monopoly. It must be very clear that they should have this definite knowledge long before there can be another session of the legislature; for it will never do to permit the present condition of uncertainty to continue for many more months. If the company is bigger than the legislature,—that is to say, if it is more powerful than the power which creates the franchise under which it operates—then it is surely time that the people of this province should realize it. And, if the company is adjudged by the Public Utilities Commission to have sovereign powers, and to be beyond the control of that body, under existing legislation, the people will speedily set about securing a better act.

As has been remarked previously in the discussion of these matters, the telephone question in New Brunswick will never settle until it has been settled right.

TWO WAYS TO INVESTIGATE

There are two ways to investigate civic conditions. By the first method, the gentlemen responsible for the conduct of civic business, for the appointment and control of civic officials, and for the honest expenditure of public funds, sit down together and conduct some such investigation as in now proceeding in this city.

That is not the right way to investigate civic conditions, if the aim and intent be to disclose the truth no matter whom it may strike.

The other way to investigate is somewhat different. It is based upon the fact that when an individual, or a body of men, stand accused of some offence or shortcoming, the accused is not permitted to judge his own case, but is handed over to an impartial tribunal which discovers and analyzes the evidence, without prejudice, fear or favor. Thus in Montreal when the Cannon investigation removed the lid that covered the most surprising state of civic infamy yet disclosed in the Dominion, the aldermen were not asked to investigate themselves and their officials; but a commission, presided over by a jurist of high repute, and assisted by efficient and aggressive counsel, was charged with the unpleasant task in hand. It was fully realized that even some honest and responsible men who sat in the Montreal council could not be expected to conduct the rigorous investigation that was absolutely necessary if the facts were to be exposed for the education of the electors.This was no reflection upon these honest and responsible men; but it was recognized that there were other members of the council who were responsible for existing conditions, and who were, perhaps, sufficiently numerous and powerful to nullify any enquiry conducted by the aldermen themselves.

And, as public opinion in Montreal demanded a drastic procedure, a real investigation was set on foot, and its disclosures were followed very promptly by something very like a civic revolution.

But, someone asks perhaps, what good would follow, if in the present situation in St. John, the matter of enquiry were turned over to some impartial authority and an experienced lawyer were engaged to summon and conduct the examination of whatever witnesses he might have reason to call? Let us ask first, Who is afraid of having such an investigation? If no one is afraid of such a proceeding, we should have had it long ago. It is, for one thing, very obvious that no wholly satisfactory result will be obtained by the present enquiry. Indeed, it was known from the first that this sort of enquiry could not be expected to amount to much; for it was clear enough that there would be on the part of the aldermen natural hesitation in pushing the probe home in certain quarters where probing is most needed today in St. John.

If we are to avoid repetitions of the Main street incident, and of others like it, there is only one course to be followed, and that course would involve an independent enquiry into the management and methods of several of the civic departments for several years back. Such enquiry, if it were conducted along the lines followed in Montreal and in other cities where public opinion compelled the adoption of such a course, would disclose the sort of evidence that would give St. John the civic reform it has been seeking for many years. There is, in a word, no cure for the civic situation of today short of a complete exposure of the conditions leading to such weaknesses and lapses as have recently been discovered.

"DEAR IRA"

Another guide, philosopher, and friend of the Hon. J. D. Hazen, willing to assert that the roads and bridges of this province are in good condition, has thrust himself into the limelight (to some extent) by writing a letter to the Standard. The writer is Mr. John E. McAuley, of Lower Millstream, Kings county. Now, who is this Mr. McAuley, and what measure and manner of strength does he bring to Mr. Hazen at this time? The question is a fair one, is it not? If so, we shall call Mr. McAuley as a witness and ask him to testify in his own behalf. In September, 1908, just prior to the memorable Federal elections of that year, Mr. McAuley, who was a county councillor, a burning member of the Kings-Albert Purity League, and a shining light in other reform organizations, overcome by a desire to strike a blow for the Conservative cause, seized a gray goose quill and wrote a letter to Mr. Ira Earle, a Liberal in the parish of Kars, postmaster at Belleisle Bay, who ran the scow ferry at that place. Mr. McAuley, of the Purity League, wrote in part as follows:

"Lower Millstream, Sept. 28, 1908.

"Mr. Ira Earle:

"Dear Friend,—I am writing you a short letter, I believe for your own benefit, regarding the future. As you know, we are before an election and everything at present points to the Laurier Government going down. Now Ira, let you and I reason together for a moment. First of all, the local government is changed and you are holding a position. Now if you put up a good bluff that you are taking no part, it WILL MAKE YOU SAFE FOR THE OFFICE YOU HOLD FOR THE FUTURE, ALSO IF YOU TAKE ANY ACTIVE PART IN THE COMING ELECTIONS, and as I do conscious believe they go out, YOU WILL LOSE YOUR POST OFFICE AND THE SCOW BOTH. So, Ira, for your own sake do not make any fuss over elections. Now remember, I am not asking you not to vote for your own party, but let no man know how you vote. Then neither party can censure you anyway. As I want to see you hold the Post Office, also the scow, please do not give me away as I am registering this letter. If you cannot do anything else, you CAN SHAM SICK FOR A MONTH. * * * *

"Now do not say this outside, but watch carefully as it does not matter whether you or I vote or not this time, so no more in politics.

(Sgd.) "J. E. McAULEY."

The Telegraph at this time, in commenting upon the cheering epistle by John, said in part:

"Mr. McAuley's associates in the purity league will 'view with alarm' his efforts to promote the objects of the organization by correspondence. Mr. McAuley, mayhap, upon reading that the league is drawing the sword of the Lord and Gideon upon all, regardless of party, who stray from the straight and narrow election path, may experience a premonitory shiver. It would seem in order for the league to drag from the reluctant Mr. McAuley some swift and luminous explanation as to what he meant by his dark sayings to his 'friend Ira.' The chill light of publicity will cause Councillor McAuley to remember an old saying and a wise one to the effect that letters of a certain sort should always be posted—in the fireplace."

It is, on the whole, not surprising that, when Mr. Hazen's discredited road system is in need of certificates of character from the faithful, Mr. McAuley of the Purity League, should be foremost among those who are willing to stand up in meeting and give their testimony. Much sawdust has floated down the Millstream since Mr. McAuley was last heard from. We welcome him back to the arena; his evidence does not change the bad roads by so much as a hump or a hog-back, it is true, but as an unimpassioned and non-partizan observer his walk and conversation are delightful and lend to an otherwise drab controversy a touch of humor. Meantime, the roads are no better, and Mr. Hazen's plight is no whit improved.

NOTE AND COMMENT

But who will investigate the investigators?

* * *

That City Hall inquiry is not yet lifting the lid; but it must come off.

* * *

While the aldermen are about it they should let the public know how many of their number have done work for the city, or sold goods to it, within the last few years.

* * *

If the Common Council is in earnest it will employ an independent lawyer in whom the citizens have confidence, and allow him to call and examine witnesses (including aldermen and officials) in his own way. The citizens could supply such a lawyer with many valuable tips. Who's afraid?

* * *

The boy scout movement in Canada should be much stimulated by the visit of Lieutenant-General Sir R. S. S. Baden-Powell to the Dominion, says the Canadian Gazette of London. "He sailed on Friday by the Empress of Ireland, taking with him fifteen boy scouts, who are proceeding on a camping trip through Canada, and who will spend a good deal of their time in the Rockies. Sir Thomas Shaughnessy is taking a keen interest in the scout project, and largely through his generosity the present trip has been made practical. Prior to sailing the general stated that he was going out to inspect the boy scouts and generally to see what could be done to help forward the movement. 'I have no idea,' he added, 'of the number of the Canadian boy scouts, who have only been recently organized. No returns as to their numbers have been submitted to me. I shall not go round with the boys, who are proceeding to different centres. They will visit, among other places, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Calgary, where they will work for some time on a ranch. They will be met by a party of Indians, who will give instruction in wood carving and tracking. They will afterwards land on an island in one of the lakes, where they will enjoy themselves in fishing, boating, and bathing. Subsequently, it is arranged, they will go down the St. Lawrence in canoes.'"

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FAMOUS GEMS OF PROSE

THOREAU

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

From a "biographical sketch" which prefaces "Excursions by Henry D. Thoreau." (Boston, 1866.)

IT was a pleasure and a privilege to walk with him. He knew the the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. He knew every track in the snow or on the ground, and what creature had taken this path before him. One must submit abjectly to such a guide, and the reward was great. Under his arm he carried an old music-book to press plants; in his pocket, his diary and pencil, a spy-glass for birds; microscope, jack-knife and twine. He wore a straw hat, stout shoes, strong gray trousers to brave shrub-oaks and smilax, and to climb a tree for a hawk's or a squirrel's nest. He waded into the pool for the water plants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor.

On the day I speak of he looked for the Menyanthes, detected it across the wide pool, and, on examination of the florets, decided that it had been in flower five days. He drew out of his breast pocket his diary, and read the names of all the plants that should bloom on this day, whereof he kept account as a banker when his notes fall due. The Cypripedium not due till tomorrow. He thought that, if waked up from a trance, in this swamp, he could tell by the plants what time of the year it was within two days. The redstart was flying about, and presently the fine grossbeaks, whose brilliant scarlet makes the rash gazer wipe his eye, and whose fine clear note Thoreau compared to that of a tanager which has got rid of its hoarseness. Presently he heard a note which he called that of a night-warbler, a bird he had never identified, had been in search of twelve years, which always, when he saw it, was in the act of diving down into a tree or bush, and which it was vain to seek; the only bird that sings indifferently by night and by day.

His eye was open to beauty and his ear to music. He found these, not in rare conditions, but wheresoever he went. He thought the best of music was in single strains; and he found poetic suggestion in the humming of the telegraph wire. His poetry might be good or bad; he no doubt wanted a lyric facility and technical skill; but he had the source of poetry in his spiritual perception. He was a good reader and critic, and his judgment on poetry was to the ground of it. He could not be deceived as to the presence of absence of the poetic element in any composition, and his thirst for this made him negligent and perhaps scornful of superficial graces. He would pass by many delicate rhythms, but he would have detected every live stanza or line in a volume, and he knew very well where to find an equal poetic charm in prose. He was so enamored of the spiritual beauty that he held all actual written poems in very light esteem in the comparison.

His own verses are often rude and defective. The gold does not yet run pure, is drossy and crude. The thyme and the marjoram are not yet honey. But if he want lyric fineness and technical merits, if he have not the poetic temperament, he never lacks the casual thought, showing that his genius was better than his talent. He knew the worth of the imagination for the uplifting and consolation of human life, and liked to throw every thought into a symbol. The fact you tell is of no value, but only the impression. For this reason his presence was poetic, always piqued the curiosity to know more deeply the secrets of his mind. He had many reserves, an unwillingness to exhibit to profane eyes what was still sacred in his own, and knew well how to throw a poetic veil over his experience. All the readers of "Walden" will remember his mythical record of his disappointments—"I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse and a turtle dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travelers I have spoken to concerning them, describing their tracks, and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud; and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."

Uncle Walt

The Poet Philosopher

A POET'S TROUBLES

I said: "I'll write a masterpiece, a noble song, as slick as grease, that men will quote long ages hence, when I am planted by the fence, and cockleburs and jimpson wave above my two-by-seven grave." And so I locked me in my den, and wrestled with a fountain pen for many long and weary weeks, and oft the neighbors heard my shrieks, when I wore out my brain and thews to get a toe-hold on the muse. At last my noble song was done, and printed in the Punkville Sun, and people met me and exclaimed: "We know old man you can't be blamed; some cogs have slipped beneath your thatch; you should be at the booby hatch." And then one time I wrote a lay about a brand of shredded hay (which makes red blood, restores your youth, and grows pink whiskers on each tooth), and got a check for fifty bones. And so I say, in thunder tones, that if you cannot write your name upon the heaven's spangled frame, you may descend, with gentle thud, and write the blamed thing in mud.

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