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ADVICE GRATIS.

ARTHUR SCAIFE.

A woman's heart although it be as warm as is cremation,
Is yet in one particular the obverse of a Saint's;
She can't admit a rival's claim without a reservation,
And qualifies approval by asserting that she paints.
So when basking in the sunshine of the smile of your intended,
And the claim of rival beauties raise discussion which is hot;
If you're wise you'll feel the least said is by far the soonest mended;
And you'll act on this most sensible suggestion like a shot.
And again, when you're married, if you think she's yours forever,
You'll but tumble to the error which befalls the common lot.
You've got to keep her heart your own by constant, keen endeavor,
Or take your chances on discovering one morning that it's not.
Victoria, March 24.

TALES OF THE TOWN.

*"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind
To blow on whom I please."*

THE Government's proposition to erect new departmental buildings has fanned into a flame the smouldering embers of that old jealousy between the Island and Mainland, and is likely to bring forth the same bitterness and spite as was evinced by the Mainland in the recent smallpox scare. Many men, particularly in Vancouver, of great pretensions to public spiritedness and patriotism then manifested a spirit so petty and contemptible as to disgrace the "meanest man," and there is a likelihood of these individuals excelling all their previous efforts on this occasion. But still one can't help giving these fellows credit for the fuss they are making; they are up and howling in their own interest while, with a few exceptions, Victorians are pursuing their customary easy going course of come-day-go-day-God-send-Sunday. The Mainland will naturally oppose any measure that has for its object the addition of a single brick to the Island, so I am not at all surprised that opposition has cropped up in the House from quarters whence it was least expected. There is no doubt about it that our governmental buildings are such as to make one feel, if not actually ashamed, at least inclined to brag very little about their creditableness to the enterprise of our Government. One feels like apologising to one's friends, and when your rich maiden aunt comes to see you, this is about the last of the "sights" of Victoria that you feel like showing her.

They have rightly gained the name that a well known traveller and writer once gave them when he referred to them as the "kindergarten government buildings." Mr. Semlin's opposition was partly expected, but his arguments were weak. The State of Washington found obstacles in their way, but the government, with the push and enterprise characteristic of the nation, proposed erecting buildings which would represent the total revenue of our government for three or four years. In Tacoma alone, the government has just completed a court house that will fully equal the value of our proposed executive buildings, and in Seattle, Spokane and other centres in the state are buildings that make the British Columbian feel very apologetic for his false work in cement and sheet iron, whose cheapness and flimsiness are only too apparent.

The captains of ships which carry bricks, we are told, have to be very careful. An ordinary brick is capable of absorbing a pint of water. So with a cargo of brick in the hold serious leakage may quite well go on undetected, for the water that enters is sucked up as fast as it gets in. Where the danger comes from absorption by the brick is the possibility of the shipowner not knowing that the absorption has taken place and therefore, not being prepared soon enough to stop the leak. The power of absorption, if dangerous in some respects, has its strong points. The man who has the faculty of absorption, whether of means or by knowledge, is building up strength. But if he does not give out to some extent that which he has absorbed, his strength will be a source of weakness and injury both to himself and others. It is the old story of the talents. Only those which are put to use add other talents to those already possessed. The talent that is tied in the napkin gains nothing and rebounds upon the owner. The sponge is useful in absorbing water only as it gives it out again for some useful purpose, to take in a fresh supply to be again made use of. The Mainland may wreck itself and others, if like bricks in the ship hold, its policy is one of individual selfish absorption.

An eastern newspaper remarks that no matter who has been the player, politics has been at least a vulgar game with the public possessions. But no direct losses incurred in the past, estimate that at what we may, will be for a moment commensurate with the enormous indirect loss that would follow a general hostility on the part of the people to even a generous policy of expenditure for municipal development. The tendency of popular criticism of late has been decidedly towards parsimony. An ever-deepening mistrust of both the honesty

and the capacity of the officials the people themselves create is leading the public to believe that a degree of insurance against speculation is to be effected only by the adoption of a poorhouse system of managing the city's affairs. No improvement is to be effected that can possibly be foregone. We must have police, and water, and sewers, we must enact the street cleaning farce annually, we must improve the streets when their condition would disgrace the County Kerry. But beyond these commonplace necessities for the mere foundation of a tolerable existence official enterprise must receive no encouragement from citizens.

It would be difficult to establish a policy more disastrous than this to the growth of a city and the welfare of its inhabitants. No sum of money could possibly compensate for the inestimable loss that would inevitably result from maintaining the city at a low state of efficiency. There can be nothing so costly as inefficiency. Bad streets exact a heavy tax from every wheel passing over them; congested streets are but long toll-gates where traffic and passers-by pay according to the length of their way. The congested condition of Chinatown entails a vitiated atmosphere and a depression of the public health and vitality, and it is not necessary to say that a high state of the general health is of enormous economic value. Everybody must have observed how greatly his productive capacity is lowered from time to time by depressing weather, and can understand how adversely permanent unsanitary conditions affect the general prosperity. Even the geniality and brightness of one's surroundings count for a great deal in maintaining vitality at a high point, and though one cannot fix the amount, who can doubt that a thorough renovation of the city would be worth thousands of dollars to us. Everybody must recognize that nothing has paid this city better than its public improvements. There are very few of them that the city would part with now for their cost. For these reasons the wise citizen will welcome a more active policy concerning improvements. The trouble in the past has been that improvement has not moved fast enough, hasn't kept pace with population and the requirements of the city.

As a result of the Sons of Erin concert the two orphanages of this city have been enriched to the extent of \$202. Every one will admit that no more worthy objects of charity could be chosen than the two referred to above, and no doubt the Sons of Erin have been used as instruments in the hands of a higher power to fulfill the promises of God to the fatherless. But there is another matter in connection with