

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"Mr. Robb may be a thoroughly honest man and a first-class City Treasurer for all I know to the contrary," said Gaskill, "but as a political economist he is a dead failure. When a man begins to talk about taxation the way he does, its time for his friends to interfere and take him in out of the draft before he makes an ass of himself. When he tackled Helbronner on the Water Tax question in the papers of this city, he bit off more than he can chew, because Helbronner has forgot more about the levying and collecting of the Water Tax than Robb ever knew; and every time that our Treasurer rushes into print he displays an amount of ignorance of even the elementary principles of political economy which is distressing to men like myself who have always credited Robb with gumption enough to at least hold his tongue about matters of which he knows nothing. It is bad enough for him to be licked with his own figures and statements and made ridiculous in the eyes of the people, but to come out with such rot as is contained in his last epistle is downright madness. He says: 'The water rate is the only tax that is paid by the great majority of the working classes over and above their rent, and it covers all the advantages of city life, such as police and fire protection, street lighting, roads and sidewalks, the free use of public parks, and baths, besides an unlimited supply of pure water in their homes, all of which they get for three cents a day.'"

"You're right," said Brown, "when a public official makes assertions of this kind its time for the City Council to make arrangements for furnishing a room or two in an insane asylum, where such poor demented fellows could be properly attended to. No one but a fool at the present day contends that tenants do not pay taxes, because everybody, not even excepting landlords, knows that interest on money invested, taxes, improvements and insurance, are all paid by the tenant in rent. Robb would like us to infer that landlords are philanthropists who generously build houses for our accommodation and then pay all the taxes on them to boot. Now, even Garlick's old male knows that landlords, like other people, want to make all the money they can, and if they build houses at all it is because money invested in 'brick and mortar' yields a larger return than if 'salted' down in banks or invested in paper securities."

"The greatest proof of this is that no sooner has a man completed a cheap row of tenement houses than he is eager to build more," said Garlick. "I have advisidly said 'cheap' houses, because it is a notorious fact that the very worst kind of houses yield the largest percentage of profit; such houses were built to rent and not to live in, and just such, unfortunately, form the majority in Montreal. Where a house is built with due regard to the comfort and well-being of the tenant, even a fair interest on the capital invested is much too high a rent for the average wageworker and is therefore out of his reach; but that this is so is largely due to our idiotic and vicious system of taxation, which fines a man in proportion as he improves his property. And this is why I say that of all the horned cattle who walk this earth your average conscientious landlord is the very king and kaiser. I don't mean that blood-sucker who erects a shanty on four posts and charges an exorbitant rent for it; he is beneath notice; but I mean the man who has some consideration for his fellow man, and there are such men even among landlords; men who, when they do build, erect well ventilated, well drained and constructed houses, in which it is a comfort to live, and who do so more with the view of investing their money safely in an honest way than with a desire to grow rich on exorbitant rents. These men, above all others, should know that a system which compels them to pay more taxes because they build a better class of houses than their unscrupulous neighbors, is a vicious and unjust one; they must know, if they think at all upon the subject, that such a system must encourage the building of the very worst and cheapest kind of houses. The very fact of a large percentage of the better class of houses being empty on their hands should convince them that if the burden of taxation were shifted from the shoulders of land users on to the shoulders of land speculators, they could reduce their annual rent to the extent of the reduction of their annual taxation, and with rents reduced to that extent these houses would not now stand empty. I can't understand how intelligent men who put their land to the best possible use, quietly submit to carry the burden of taxation, and allow a lot of ground-hogs, who will neither build on their land themselves or allow others to do so, to go comparatively tax free; and yet the speculators' land would have no value as a building site if the adjoining

ground had not been built upon. As far as these epistles of Robb's to the workingmen are concerned, they form a feather in the caps of the Trades and Labor Council delegates. Had the City Treasurer remained silent no one would have suspected his ignorance, but like the ass in the fable his voice betrayed him. This agitation for a readjustment of the Water Tax will not stop at Mr. Robb's command, and not even the ridiculous assurance of our venerable City Clerk that the system worked well in his grandfather's time will prove oil on the troubled waters. We want this thing settled on an equitable basis. We desire to wrong no man or set of men, but we will not submit to any compromise, we want justice, and if the men in the City Council don't feel disposed to give it to us they will have to be turned out and replaced by others that will.

BILL BLADES.

Women's Rubbers at S. H. Parker's, Wool lined, for 49 cents.

THE QUEBEC SHIPLABORERS.

The Legislature Petitioned to Suppress the Society.

On Monday afternoon last a deputation of citizens, principally composed of members of the Quebec Board of Trade, waited on Premier Mercier and his colleagues with a petition to have the charter of the Quebec Shiplaborers' Society annulled.

Mr. Richard Turner, president of the Board of Trade, was the first speaker. He said the deputation represented the com-

mercial interests of the city of Quebec and its object was for the prosperity and improvement of the city's commerce. At present there was an organization known as the Quebec Shiplaborers' Benevolent Society. He knew the present deputation was taking a serious step in asking the Legislature to cancel its charter, but at the same time, as citizens of Quebec, they would not consider it their duty if they did not show good reasons why it should be done. For some years the society had ceased to be a charitable one. It had made rules which interfered with the practical work of loading sailing vessels and steamships, more particularly the latter. He then read a petition asking that the charter of the Quebec Shiplaborers' Benevolent Society be repealed.

Hon. Mr. Shehyn in reply said the same question had been brought up when he was president of the Board of Trade, but the most interested men in it then were not among the delegates now present. He supposed it was because they did not care to endanger themselves in a collision with the shiplaborers. The purpose of the deputation was a very serious one, namely, to take away the charter of a society that the Government had incorporated. An error had perhaps been committed in not having it entered that their by-laws should be approved by the Governor in Council. He would consider it a very dangerous movement for the Government to meet a number of gentlemen and tax upon itself the responsibility of removing the charter of a society whose rules to them seemed too stringent. The members of the same society had not even been given an opportunity to speak for themselves. It had been said that the society had gone beyond its charter. If so, then the question of settlement was one for the courts and not the Government.

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