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TALES OF THE TOWN.

IF the liquor commission results in a change in the present lax laws, its mission will not have been a failure. It is impossible to examine any subject connected with the progress, civilization, the physical well being, the religious condition of the masses, without encountering that monstrous evil—the legalized liquor traffic. It is at the centre of all social and political evil. It paralyzes beneficent energies in every direction. It neutralizes educational agencies. It silences the voice of religion. It baffles penal reform. It is the great obstruction of political reform. It rears aloft a mass of evilly inspired power which at every salient point threatens social and national advancement; which gives to ignorance and vice a greater potency than intelligence and virtue can command; which deprives the poor of the advantages of modern progress; which debauches and degrades millions, brutalizing and soddering them below the plane of healthy savagery, and filling the centres of population with creatures whose condition almost excuses the immorality which renders them the enemies and the disgrace of their generation. All this and more, the Chief Justice of British Columbia to the contrary, notwithstanding.

The proposal to purchase broken stone, the product of convict labor, is not one which reflects credit on some of our city aldermen. Here we have hundreds of men out of work who would be only too glad to work at breaking stone, or any other kind of work, deprived of the opportunity of gaining a livelihood, except they steal something and go to prison, where they can get work. The principle of permitting convict labor to enter into direct competition with free labor has long since been abandoned in the east, and it remained with a few Victoria aldermen to dare to perpetuate a system which is alike damning in its influence and results. Such a policy, if persisted in, would reduce every laborer in this city to the level of a convict, and no doubt when the election of aldermen comes on in January the workingmen will find some way to repay the aldermen, to whom they are also indebted for the recent visitation of smallpox, for this latest insult.

Notwithstanding the recent warnings received by drivers of vehicles, there appears to be an unconquerable desire on the part of certain Jehus to ride roughshod over everybody and everything. While crossing the street at the corner of Yates and Government streets, the other night, four different drivers made several unprovoked attempts to deprive me of existence. But for the fortunate intervention of the Divine hand of Providence, I would not

now pen these lines. Has the pedestrian no rights, and is there no law to prevent these attempts on the lives of our citizens?

There are few things which are of more value to a community than a broad, wide-gauged weekly paper. Since the first issue of THE HOME JOURNAL, it has been the desire of its publishers to make it a medium of conveying to its readers words of wisdom and truth, at the same time eschewing the worm-eaten policy of the daily papers of this city. In it, from week to week, have been found interesting features from the pens of the leading men of thought in this city. And truly, I felt that its mission was being fulfilled until I read the *Times* last Wednesday evening. In the latter paper of that date, a correspondent irreverently refers to THE HOME JOURNAL as a "faint echo of the voice of the *Colonist*." I am not aware that THE HOME JOURNAL is indebted to the *Colonist* or any other paper for the high degree of excellence which it has attained. In fact, in size, make-up, or policy, we doubt if THE HOME JOURNAL would be mistaken for the *Colonist* or the *Times*, for that matter.

At first I suspected that the correspondent was a friend of the *Colonist* who desired to pay a compliment to an organ which I regard as the most perfectly preserved specimen of primeval journalism extant, but further reflection led me to the belief that it was some creature who was not able to distinguish between a great modern newspaper and a joint stock concern, published on joint stock lines and with joint stock ideas. The correspondent of the *Times*, in speaking of the eligible candidates for the mayoralty, should not have overlooked himself, as I understand he has aspirations in that direction.

The Australian ballot system, or rather the Canadian ballot system, seems to meet with the approval of the Republic over the way. By the new process of voting the tumultuous scenes about the polls—henchman rushing wildly about with packages of tickets, many of them fraudulently arranged to deceive voters; bulldozing bosses ordering men how to vote—are all eliminated. The secret ballot, as cast, under the system, places the bosses and bulldozer in contempt and under defiance. As it is now carried out in the United States, it has one drawback, however, and that is the process of counting. A good many of the judges, or as we say, returning officers, have had to remain 48 hours or more without sleep or fresh air because the count had to be completed and because in many precincts, instead of 400 voters and under, as the requires, there are included 500, 600 and even 700 voters. In order to remedy the existing defects, and thereby prevent

delay, it is proposed to limit the precincts so that they shall not include not over 250 voters; or if this cannot be accomplished, to allow two sets of ballot boxes, the contents of one set to be counted while the other is receiving ballots, the counting to be done by sworn counters, guarded from intrusion and counting until the count is complete. The latter would seem to be an easy way out of the difficulty.

The Jubilee Hospital, no one will deny, has done a good work in this city, but there is another charitable institution which I venture to say, is equally as deserving as the Jubilee Hospital, and which I do not think, has been fairly dealt with. I refer to the British Columbia Benevolent Society. This society for years, quietly and unmostentatiously has been pursuing a work worthy of commendation. But wonderful to relate it does not receive that hearty support to which it is entitled. The churches devote the collection of one Sunday in the year to the Jubilee Hospital, but no church has yet treated the British Columbia Benevolent Society with such liberality. This treatment some of the members of the society resent, and believe it is an oversight which should be rectified; and the sooner the better.

The other night, in the absence of other amusement, I sauntered "behind the scenes" at The Victoria Theatre. The occasion was the annual semi-annual, or quarterly entertainment of the Ladies' Auxiliary. Through the "peep hole" in the curtain, which is an indispensable feature of every well-regulated theatre, I observed that there were few vacant seats in front. But behind the curtain what a scene! The ladies were doing their best to look as though they had considerable stage experience, but behind all this I could see that most of them were almost scared to death, and considering that this was an amateur entertainment it is not to be wondered at that they should suffer from what is even common with professionals—stage frights. The men, I could see at a glance, were even more frightened than the women. The lany manager, on whom devolved a great deal of the hard work, was free to confess that she felt convinced she would have brain fever. After a long time, order came out of chaos, and the quartette, who were down for the opening number, admitted that they were ready; the bell in the flies gave a prolonged ring and up went the curtain. One young man ambled on the stage from what is known as the prompt entrance, and the others wandered on from somewhere "upstage" and in the course of time they ranged