

A BIG BLUNDER,

AND WHO MADE IT.

In the history of St. Thomas no greater mistake has been made by its civic authorities than the error of years ago when the proposition to purchase the plot of land directly east of the post office to be used for market purposes and as a site upon which to erect a city hall that would be a credit to the city rather than a disgrace. The proposed site covered a block and a-half of ground between Mary and Hiawatha streets, embracing the entire block lying between Talbot and Curtis streets and the half block adjoining this and lying on the north side of Curtis street. Through the exertions of Dr. Corlis, who was then chairman of the market committee of the city council, this valuable property, situated in the very heart of the city, was bought for the very low sum of \$22,000, and what was probably the largest petition ever presented to any council of this city was signed by citizens praying the council to submit a by-law authorizing the purchase of this site for market purposes.

Had the representatives of the people in the western wards possessed the wisdom that a glance into the future would have given they would not have acted so madly as they did; but governed then as they always have been in matters of this kind by purely selfish motives, the rash action was taken. Fearing that the location of the market on any site east of the post office would militate against the business of western merchants, and being unwilling that any site west of the post office should be chosen in preference to the present site, a plan was agreed upon whereby instead of granting the prayer of the citizens to submit a by-law for the purchase of the site described above, a by-law should be submitted for a site on the south west corner of Talbot and Elgin streets—a site adjoining the railway and in no way so suitable as the one petitioned for—a site, moreover, that could not be purchased upon terms nearly so advantageous to the city.

Two distinct propositions were thus before the council, viz.—to submit a by-law to purchase the easterly site or the westerly site. The former proposition was supported by all the repre-

sentatives of the eastern wards, and the latter by all the representatives of the western wards. The situation was critical. Upon the action to be taken depended very largely the future prosperity of the city. If the by-law to purchase the easterly site had been submitted, that site would have been chosen and the bone of contention between the west and east end people would have been forever removed. The expressed wishes of the people in the petition presented to the council should have convinced the western aldermen that a by-law to purchase any other site than the one named would be rejected, but this was doubtless just what was desired by the western mayor who voted with his western colleagues to submit a by-law to purchase the westerly site, which of course was defeated.

There is no sane resident of St. Thomas to-day who will not condemn the action taken by the council, for had the wiser course been taken the cause of discord between eastern and western people would not only have been removed, but by the location of the market on the two half blocks north and south of Curtis street and between Mary and Hiawatha streets, a site excelled by no other in the city would have been secured, while the half block facing Talbot street could have been sold in lots upon which the best business stands in the city would have been erected—two or more of these sites being reserved, of course, for the erection of a suitable city hall. By the sale of these valuable lots the entire amount paid for the site could have been secured, and the site of the old city hall and St. Andrew's market could have been realized upon to create a fund to erect a city hall and market buildings on the new site.

What stupidity must have possessed those men whose action in the council prevented the submission of the by-law petitioned for, which would have resulted in the building up of the central portion of the city where now are scores of eligible business sites uncalled for and unoccupied, a burden to their possessors rather than a source to them of handsome incomes! What a theme of pleasure it must be to those erring aldermen and that wayward mayor to contemplate the building up of a second distinct

business portion of the city far removed from the first! And what delight must be experienced by these residents of western wards who encouraged their representatives in the council to scourge the city as was done by the perverse act above narrated—may who urged their aldermen and mayor to do the deed or stand aside at the next election. Faithful servants of a happy people, what thank ye of yourselves to-day?

History repeats itself. The motives which governed the actions of representatives of the western wards ten years ago were the motives that actuated the same people two years ago, when once more a grievous mistake was made in the rejection of a proposition to establish a central market on what is known as the Moore site. Once again the council was evenly divided, the six western aldermen voting solidly against the proposition of the six eastern alderman, viz.—that a by-law be submitted to the people authorizing the purchase of the Moore site for a sum of \$10,000. The proposition was a fair one, and it was supported by a large number of citizens who petitioned for the submission of the by-law. It was not the duty of the council to balk the will of the people. It is customary for councils to test public opinion when any considerable number of rate-payers ask that such should be done; therefore it would have been wrong if a majority of the council had opposed the submission of this by-law. But a majority of the council did not so oppose it. By the casting vote of the mayor, a resident of the East End, the council was willing to submit the by-law.

But the will of even a majority of the council was thwarted by a minority of the members of that body, who vacated their seats at the council board at several successive meetings and left the council without a quorum either to pass the required by-law or to transact the business of the city. A spirit of outlawry was steadfastly maintained during the entire summer by those who had sworn to act impartially in the matter of making and enforcing laws on behalf of the people. The dishonest course pursued by the western aldermen was approved by the people whom they represented, for vacancies resulting from resignations of western alder-

men were filled either by the re-election of the one who resigned or by the election of another man as firmly pledged to oppose the will of the majority as his predecessor had been. Thus the matter stood until a partial compromise was made to the detriment of those who urged that the will of the people in the matter under discussion should be ascertained in order that the unholy strife between the two classes of citizens might cease.

During these troublesome times the city press was found on the side of the western disputants, and on one occasion the *Journal* in a rabid editorial reviewing the situation designated the representatives from the Eastern wards as "cut-throats." Calumniated as they were, however, the action of the East End alderman was fair and just to all citizens. Their action was that of honest legislators, and it has always been approved by those whom they represented in the council. It is approved to-day by the entire population of the eastern wards, not one of whom believes he is deserving of the appellation of "cut throat," or that the *Journal* editorial was other than cowardly and malicious and untrue. The stubborn resistance of the west end people resulted as it had done on the previous occasion in the defeat of the will of a majority of the citizens, and for a time again the market question was allowed to remain in abeyance.

The latest move made by the long suffering residents of the east is the one undertaken in March last when a public meeting was called to consider the advisability of opening the Horton market. It is unnecessary to review the history of this market, which but for the plan adopted by the west end schemers of summer following the site of this market in the fall of the year would years ago have proved an established success. It was determined to reopen this market, and the re-opening day on Saturday last witnessed a large gathering of both sellers and buyers. It was a pronounced success, and almost an unqualified one; the only qualification being that although there was brought to this market a much larger quantity of produce than the average amount taken heretofore to the St. Andrew's market, there was still not sufficient

to supply all who were desirous of purchasing but er and eggs. Fortunately the grocers were supplied, however, and all who could not purchase on the market found no difficulty in buying from grocers at the regular market prices.

The supply of produce on the western market was also good, but in order to dispose of their produce quickly, many of the sellers found it necessary to hurry down to the Horton market where the buyers made everybody feel happy by speedily converting their produce into cash. The fact was that without the usual number of east end purchasers, the St. Andrew's market felt lonesome, and even the auctioneers failed to draw around them an appreciative crowd, the result being that a modern Hegira was witnessed and the auctioneer's goods were hurriedly transferred to the eastern market where everything was soon sold.

Yesterday's market was also good, it being pronounced the best Wednesday's market that has been held for many months in St. Thomas. Its success removed the last doubt that existed about the permanency of the Horton Market. True, the *Journal* once more got in its contemptible work of misrepresentation in its report of last evening, but the day has gone by when such tactics can result unfavorably to those whom it is calculated to affect. The residents of the eastern wards can—and do—congratulate themselves heartily on the success of the movement so lately undertaken by them to remove the necessity that has so long existed for their wives and sisters, mothers and daughters to go to the St. Andrew's market and bear a heavy burden of produce, &c., so great a distance to their homes. *THE ERA* also presents its compliments and congratulations to them—one and all.

Another word ere we conclude this sketch of market history. There are, doubtless, some so highly elated over the success of the Horton market opening that a little harmless banter has been indulged in by them. Let those who boast, however, that the St. Andrew's market is "all broken up already" be governed by wise counsel and understand that it is not the desire of any fair thinking citizens to see