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CHAS. MCKEN, Druggist, Woodstock.

## HOULTON AND WOODSTOCK.

Two Sister Towns Under Different Flags.  
Points of Comparison.

The bluff old English philosopher whose sayings are quoted all over the world, remarked in reply to a certain query, "Comparisons are odious." In making a comparison between the good and the bad points of Woodstock and Houlton THE DISPATCH must bear this excellent aphorism in mind and be as careful as possible.

Nature has done about the same for the two places, the advantage, if any being with Woodstock, for we have here the noble St. John running by our town, while our Houlton friends are forced to transform what we call "the creek," into the Meduxnakik River. But if nature has favored Woodstock, enterprise and an eye for the tasteful and beautiful are plainly more potent force with the citizens of the neighboring town. Must we confess that the American citizen has more local pride, more sand, more progress than the Canadian? It is hard to account for the relative appearance of things in any other way. The town proper of Houlton and the town of Woodstock are probably of about the same population, with perhaps the difference on the side of Woodstock. But Houlton is not incorporated as Woodstock is. The town of Houlton, legally speaking, is a district six miles square, so that a number of farms are included within the town limits.

THE DISPATCH spent a few hours in that beautiful place, last week, and while there did so much questioning, that it feels capable of competing with the grand oriental potentate, Li Hung Chang, in an interrogation match. The affairs of Houlton are managed by three selectmen, elected annually. The selectmen this year are Messrs. Michael M. Clark, M. D. Putnam, and Alex. Wilson. They are three live, wide awake men, but the wisest awake and the liveliest of the three seemed to be Mr. Clark, who being born in a very live place—Woodstock—took over to Houlton some of that energy, which Woodstock has been deprived of ever since. He very courteously and willingly put his time at the disposal of THE DISPATCH, and the spiritual adviser of THE DISPATCH who acted as a sort of interpreter—a Li Hung Chang.

"In order to run things as we judge they should be run," said Mr. Clark, "we have to take the bits in our teeth and go right ahead. If we have our town in pretty good shape it is not because we have had no opposition. All our reforms and improvements have been carried out in spite of bitter and unreasonable obstruction. We are trying to get our streets and sidewalks in decent repair, but opposition is met with constantly."

Here was a point of agreement between Woodstock and Houlton, only we have worse streets here, and more determined opposition.

"For the year 1895," he continued, "the assessment for the entire town was \$54,703.07. Out of this sum total \$5000 was for schools, \$1200 for free high school, \$500 repairs for school houses, \$750 for text books, \$5000 two new school buildings and lots, \$150 for the Bray school house. For roads we raised \$2000 in cash, and \$8000 statute labor. The statute labor is worth about \$4000 in cash. We have three road machines. They cost about \$150 dollars a piece. With regard to these road machines, I may say, they are a splendid affair, and are used, almost entirely throughout our county. In September the road commissioners examine the roads, and in December taxes are assessed for their building and repair. The people in the village would vote more money for the roads, but there is strife between village and country people. In improving our village sidewalks, we have to use our own heads a good deal. For instance I went to some parties who own handsome blocks, and said, we will let you off your share of road tax if you will put a curbing on the sidewalk opposite your building, and fill in with gravel. This was agreed to, and now all we have to do is to put down the concrete."

"Is there any likelihood of the village of Houlton, separating from the surrounding district?"

"Yes! I think in a couple of years we will get out a city charter."

THE DISPATCH was desirous of getting at, how much it would cost to run Houlton, if Houlton were a town of the dimensions of Woodstock. It will be borne in mind that it costs to run the town of six miles square over \$50,000. Mr. Clark said it would take half that amount—over \$25,000, to run the village if it became incorporated—that is to run it properly. There is one thing the people of Houlton are generous to a degree about—education and schools. "There is no objection raised to the expenditure on schools. We have 15 school houses and expend from \$10,000 to \$11,000 annually on them. No one objects." The school buildings in the village are models of architecture. The grammar school is an ornate and handsome brick structure, which would be a credit to any city, and other school buildings are equally attractive. In this point Woodstock is not in it, at all. According to the free school system in Maine, text books are supplied free to scholars. Now, there is another point of comparison. Houlton is the place for the laboring man. The poll tax is \$3.00 per head. There is \$1.00 road tax—a total taxation of \$4.00 per year. Mr. Clark said "There are family after family who come over here from the province and educate their children. I know of one man with a family of nine. They all get free education, books free, and it costs that man \$4.00 a year." In Woodstock the poll tax is \$8.00. Let the laboring man answer the question, Which is the better system?

Now, in passing, something must be said about the license system. They don't license whiskey over the line, any more than in Woodstock, but they are nearer the boundary line, and, anyway, liquor can be sold without a license as well as with one. And they don't license commercial travellers.

"No!" said the selectman. "We never think of asking a commercial traveller to pay



THE RECORD OF  
Ayer's Sarsaparilla.

a cent. A peddler may peddle all over the County of Aroostook for \$5.00, and all over the State of Maine for \$50.00, and he can peddle any products of the United States free."

Is Houlton ahead of Woodstock in this or not? What say commercial travellers?

That the appearance of Houlton's main street is better than the appearance of Main street is not the fault of this town. It is always difficult to make a pretty street on a side hill, and we cannot expect people to tear down useful buildings, simply because they are not artistic. The square in front of the Snell house gives Houlton a city-like appearance that Woodstock lacks, but the fountain which adorns the square is not greatly ahead of the beautiful fountain at the foot of our own Main street. The residences and residential streets of Houlton are prettier than in Woodstock. There is an abundance of colour. Green and yellow and red figure in the buildings, and the effect is pleasing. Then the lawns are kept scrupulously neat and clean, and fences are almost unknown, while numerous placards "keep off the grass" show how carefully the green sward is kept from intrusion.

The buildings most worth seeing in Houlton are the court house and gaol. The former building was originally built in 1859. An addition of 35 feet has been made, and the old portion so repaired and refitted as to be practically new. The original cost was \$20,000. Another \$20,000 was put on the building last year, and it is now a most attractive structure, worthy of a city of 50,000 inhabitants. The finishing in oak is particularly pleasing. A handsome sitting room and library is set apart for the use of attorneys. The gaol is handsome outside, and neat and strong inside. It was built seven years ago. There are some 20 prisoners now in it. These gaol birds work around the grounds, and there is a yard where they break stones to be used on the streets. Why could not our prisoners be put at some such work? The lawn around the court house and gaol is beautifully kept and asphalt or concrete sidewalks run through it. This walk is made some five or six inches deep, and costs 65cts a yard square. Two policemen (in uniform,) mark this guard the good people of Houlton, while there is an annex of ununiformed constables.

Houlton had a bad fire in the business portion recently. It was proposed to erect a wooden building, but the selectmen said No! and put their feet down. The result was that an injunction was issued restraining the party from putting up such a building, and now it is illegal to erect a wooden building within the business limit of Houlton. Score against Woodstock! Quite recently a handsome new bridge has been built across the Meduxnakik. It has two passenger walks and the fine for driving faster than a walk is \$3.00. Here we are told to pay \$20.00 for going faster than a walk. Houlton may collect \$3.00 with some grace. Who, in Woodstock would ask a Jehu for \$20.00?

In driving around Houlton, the general impression formed was that there was not the volume of business done there, that there is in Woodstock. Nor were there as many new buildings going up. In appearance only is our neighbor town ahead of Woodstock, but in this important respect, it certainly leads.

Every year the ratepayers are given a neat little pamphlet "Annual report of the selectmen, treasurer and auditor of the town of Houlton. Also report of S. S. committee. Board of Health and Chief Engineer." It is a very much better plan than putting the report in the newspapers, and the ratepayers do not raise a row over the extra taxation it involves.

Houlton has a waterworks system, an electric light system and a sewer system. None of these systems are owned by the town and in this respect we in Woodstock have a decided advantage.

Houlton has many fine church edifices—too frequently, alas, a poor sign of Christian principles—the Roman Catholic, Unitarian, Methodist, and Episcopal churches being very attractive buildings. The latter, the Church of the Good Shepherd, has a beautifully finished interior. Over the altar is a striking painting in memory of Mrs. Z. W. Earle, formerly Miss Edith Symonds of St. John, who died quite suddenly in Houlton a year or so ago, leaving very many sincere mourners in the Episcopal congregation.

People in Woodstock sometimes ask how so many printing offices can be run here. In Houlton there are four job printing establishments, with some seven job presses as against three in Woodstock. They do more printing in Houlton than they do here—even printing the registry books, excepting the special part of the various records. It was explained to THE DISPATCH that recording is a simple and cheap process over there, to what it is in Woodstock, and apparently there is much less red tape.

Woodstock can afford to borrow ideas from Houlton in many ways, and, Houlton will find that in some respects, it may take Woodstock for an example.

Imitation is the sincerest kind of flattery.

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