

FAKIRS KEEP MOVING.

ST. JOHN MEN WHO BOB UP SERENELY AROUND BOSTON.

The Shamrock Oil Man Has Not Lost His Voice—Corners Where Familiar Faces Are Seen—How Some of the Well Known Exodians Are Thriving.

BOSTON, Jan. 21.—I met a St. John man on Hanover street the other day, and while we stood talking the usual crowd around the corner of Portland street seemed to grow in numbers and enthusiasm. This corner is one of the great noon-day resorts of fakirs, selling everything from a potato parer to the best liniment on earth, and they never fail to find an appreciative audience.

I can never pass a fakir without stopping to hear what he has to say. The majority of them are bright and original, and the way they can convince the crowds which invariably surround them that it would be a positive crime to be without the particular article they have to sell,—when in nine cases out of ten the buyer knows he is being taken in, or is purchasing something he will have no earthly use for—shows what useful men they might be in the world if they exerted themselves in other directions.

How much better the world would be if they all turned ministers of the gospel and were as successful in convincing their fellowman of the errors of his ways instead of making him buy something that he does not know what to do with, when he gets it! But that's enough.

This day the voice sounded familiar, and we went over to see the man. It was McQuade of the Shamrock oil.

Last summer he stood in a carriage on market square, St. John, and asked the general public if it could hear his voice. The Saturday night promenaders will all remember him, for when McQuade had rubbed a bottle of his oil into the ear of an unfortunate victim sitting in the carriage and then shouted "Can you hear my voice?" everybody heard it from one end of King street to the other, and the deaf victim went away "cured."

In those days he travelled in style with horses decked out with green blankets, and the word Shamrock in large letters. When I last saw him he was standing in the gutter, but still poured oil into the ears of deaf old men and then asked them if they heard his voice. And of course they did.

St. John had a colony of fakirs, native born. They did not sell oil of course, but when the circus came to town, or the exhibition was running, they turned up at every corner, with the shell and pea game, a wheel of fortune; or gold soap with five dollar bills for wrappers.

I have seen quite a number of them here recently loafing around Scollay square, near Austin and Stone's Museum or the Howard theatre, and others again who had evidently "gone to work," until the country fair season strikes in.

"Prof." Seymour who is a chiroprapist in cold weather and works the country fairs with a shell and pea fitout in summer was on Tremont street the other day, and a short time afterwards I saw Mr. Foster "the walker," who made quite a reputation in the Victoria rink a number of years ago, but of late years has been better known as the originator of take walking matches in the Palace and Lansdowne rinks. His greatest achievements, however, were with the shell and pea, but since the exhibition a few years ago when he relieved a countryman of all the money he had; and then was escorted to jail, and later skipped his bail, other places have had more attraction than St. John.

Talking about Scollay Square, it is the meeting place for St. John boys who when at home used to spend most of their time on the street corners. I seldom pass there without seeing a face that seems familiar, and it often happens that the corner of Howard or Court street bears a striking resemblance to the foot of King street, Oak Hall corner, a Charlotte street corner, or perhaps a corner in some part of the North end or Marsh road.

People are the same wherever they go. One night during the Salvation Army Congress in Boston, I had to go to a meeting at the Bowdoin Square headquarters. It was a "special" meeting announced with big posters, which, had it been held in St. John, would have crowded the hall to the doors and the weather would have made no difference. The night was stormy.

The room was close and smoky, much the same as the barracks in St. John; the converts prayed and sang and testified and went through the same performance that goes on in half a dozen places in St. John every night. It was all strikingly familiar, but a glance around the hall made it more so.

St. John people? Yes, a number of them, mostly young men and women whom I had seen at army meetings in St. John.

It's the same in many cases. The people who frequented certain places in St. John, seem to hunt out corners of Boston that bear resemblance to them, and go there nightly or as often as possible.

Societies, lodges, clubs and dancing classes all come in the list. There is very little change.

It is such people who would "just as soon be in St. John," if things were so and so. In fact St. John has more attractions for them than Boston, and they have no hesitation in saying so. But, there is a reason always.

Then, again, people are the same everywhere they go.

I see G. Herbert Lee on the street occasionally and he walks as fast as ever—always in a rush, with an utter disregard for street crossings, and a greater tendency than ever to cut off the corners.

Mr. Charles Lawson, who for many years was foreman of McMillan's printing office, and before coming to Boston was foreman of the Telegraph job office, now takes a special interest in music printing. He is superintendent of Gilson's music printing office on Stanhope street, and after seeing a great deal of Boston printing offices, thinks that in some respects St. John workmen could give them pointers.

R. G. LARSEN.

WHERE HE KNOCKED OFF.

The Experience of a Stenographer with a Man who Had a System.

I was attending one of the strictly rural circuits last summer in a section which may with much propriety, be alluded to as Whiskerville. For, there is just one thing in Whiskerville that never succumbs to flood or frost, or heat or blight, and that is its crop of whiskers.

Down at the hotel in the evening we were all sitting around talking about the weather, the weevil, the children of Israel and such like emotional topics, when the foreman of the jury fixed his gaze upon me firmly and inquired:

"Young man, be you the stennygrafer, so to speak, that makes them ere hen-tracks an' diaframs, that is?"

I replied that I had that honor. The billowy sea of hair and whiskers around me settled down to an impressive calm.

"Wall, kin you take down the hull business, so to speak, when all them lawyers is a bellerin'?"

I said that I had no trouble in doing that. The great difficulty with me was that I had too much speed. Being of an excitable nature, the temptation to write 800 words a minute was, at times, almost uncontrollable.

"Wall now," said the foreman, "tell y' the gospel truth, young man, I useter rite that ere stennygrafer to'able smart myself, till I found I was a-gittin' so all-fired consty that I knocked rite off." A ripple of interest swept over the whiskered sea.

"What system did you write?" I asked.

"Wall, y' see, I invented the ternal thing myself, so to speak. I was at a wood frolic over thar to Gander Ridge an' I slathered into my gamble jint with the pint of the ex, so I laid up 'bout all that spring an' I jist slung the ternal stuff together, that is to say, in the interim. 'Twas mighty hard sleddin' at first I'll allow, but by hayin' time I'd got that sry that I could waller through most anything that come along. But I found I was a-gittin' so mortal consty that I knocked her rite off short."

"Would you mind showing me how your system works?" I asked.

"Not at all. 'Fwouldn't put me out a mite. I kinder hanker jist to take you city chaps down onst in a while. But thar aint no hard feelin's, young man, is thar?"

"O, not in the least."

"That's rite. Wall, jist gimme a keettle shingle, er a chunka clabard er somthin', an' a hunka red chalk, an' I'll show you a wrinkle or two uv my own. Makes me mad sometimes to think what a flammer-gasted fool I was to knock off whar I did. It does bgoosh."

The ripple on the hairy sea had now become a breeze, and a murky fog of tobacco smoke poured in upon the scene. The shingle and chalk were found and the foreman wound his legs up in a knot and prepared to write at my dictation. "Say when yer ready, young man," said he, "an' no hard feelin's!"

I began to read from a newspaper and the foreman began to write. His hand moved like a streak of lightning. The chalk fairly seemed to hiss as it flew across the shingle.

"A keettle faster, young man, if you don't mind, an' no hard feelin's."

I quickened the pace to fully 200 words a minute. The hand of the foreman gyrated with awful velocity and the shingle roared with the friction.

"Jist a keettle faster, young teller, if thar's no hard feelin's!"

I would not have thought it possible that human nerve and muscle could execute the amazing figures the horny hand of the foreman was now describing. A faint odor of burning cedar was borne upon the air. The chalk was being ground to powder.

"Hurry up a keettle, city chap, an' no hard feelin's."

Just then the chalk tore down the homestretch and crashed through the bottom of the shingle. I looked around and saw that the whiskered sea was convulsed by a raging squall of excitement.

The foreman handed the shingle unto me. It was covered with marks compared with which the notes of the great speed test at Lake George appeared as a poem of sweetness and of light.

"Did you get it all down?" I faintly asked.

"Jist as easy as rollin' off a log."

"It is certainly a wonderful exhibition," I said. "Now, would you kindly read it."

POINTS IN CIVIC RULE.

THE IDEAS OF A HALIFAX MAN ON SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT.

In Order to Secure Efficiency Several Things Are Necessary—There Must be a Responsibility—How Departments Should Work Together—Some Illustrations.

The view of the average man is apt to be that whatever all the people do at any given moment is the best possible thing to be done. This sanguine optimism prevents all effective struggle towards a higher ideal. Against this it is certainly right to place the dictum of Sir Henry Maine, that popular governments, like all others, must be tested by results. The first requisite for improving our city government is a profound belief on the part of the people, first that the city government needs to be improved, and second that it can be improved, under conditions actually prevailing.

We are now to consider the main question. What does good government consist in, and how are we to get it in Halifax. Any high conception of good city government implies, first of all, efficiency; second, honesty; third, economy, without parsimony; fourth, foresight; fifth, civic courage.

Efficiency has to do with the executive. It is a noteworthy and suggestive fact that in all our large cities the tendency of late years has been to make a strong executive. For some time past our executive has been little more than a figurehead. Some of the most important offices in the city were filled, not according to the best judgment of the council, but according to the best compromise that could be effected. Meanwhile the sense of responsibility for results was lost. In the largest cities, where the evils of inefficiency have been most severely felt, the present tendency is to lodge with the mayor the power to appoint or at least nominate all the executive officers of the city. It is doubtful whether a high degree of efficient administration can so well be obtained in any other way.

If this power, so lodged with the mayor, is made a part of a consistent system by which the responsibility goes with the power with equal step, the dangers to the city resulting from the system are really less than those which flow from other methods. Power without responsibility is always dangerous; but power, with responsibility to a constituency which can readily call it to account, is not dangerous. It is the first requisite to efficient administration. A city is not so much a little state as it is a great corporation. So long as we can look to our provincial and federal governments to protect us in our liberties as citizens, we need have no fear in forming our city governments for the purpose of doing efficiently the work that a city government ought to do.

The system prevailing in Brooklyn, N. Y., for joining responsibility with power, seems as nearly ideal as any that we have heard of. The mayor is elected for a term of two years, and takes office on the first of January. The great administrative departments of the city are carried on for him, for one month, by the appointees of his predecessor. On the 1st of February it becomes the duty of the mayor to appoint or confirm, without confirmation by the common council, all the heads of the executive departments. These appointments are made or ratified for a term of two years, so that each incoming mayor enjoys the opportunity of making an administration in harmony with himself.

Under these conditions, an administration is formed for which the mayor not only should be willing to be responsible, but for which he must be responsible. It is a fact worthy of note, that few heads of departments have changed with change of mayor. In practice, the people of Brooklyn understand that for all administrative failure in any part of the city government, the mayor is finally responsible. Complaint, naturally, is made first to the head of a department himself, if it is made to the mayor. If the mayor corrects the evil, that, of course, is the end of it. If he does not, he makes himself directly responsible for it. When a new mayor is to be elected, canvass is conducted admittedly upon the theory that the outgoing mayor, so far as the people are concerned, is responsible for all the acts of his administration. Naturally this makes a long line for the mayor to defend, and conspicuous failures is pretty certain to receive an emphatic verdict. There may, indeed, be poor administration under this system, but there cannot be poor administration for which nobody is responsible.

The remedy is understood and can be applied at will by the people of the city. It was contended by the commission appointed by Gov. Tilden to report upon the government of cities, "That these should reside, in the hands of the people, for safety's sake, the power to remove a mayor." There can be no serious objection to this reserved power of removal. Practically it would be resorted to very infrequently if at all. But by all means let it exist, if it will satisfy us to make a strong executive. Until some such system is had, of concentrating in the executive head of the city, power and responsibility equal to the demands of the situation, it is useless to expect a truly efficient city government. The second condition of efficient administration is that executive work should be committed to one man. It seems strange that among so practical a people as we are, it should be necessary to emphasize this plain truth. Yet there is scarcely a city which does not violate, in its city government, the dictates of this maxim, which sums up the whole testimony of human experience. The old Romans, when they had five aqueducts, placed every one of them under the charge and supervision of a single man. Our forefathers placed each of the executive departments of the general government in the care of a single officer. Who supposes, for a moment, that the post office system of England for instance, could have been developed to its present condition, except along the line of administration of executive work by single individuals? All the great interests affected by the Finance Department are committed without hesitation by civilized nations to a single Finance Minister. Yet when it comes to the cities, and the small concerns comparatively, which are affected by them,

we appear to be afraid to lodge the administration of the department of city works, or the fire department, or the police department in single heads. If human experience teaches anything with greater emphasis than executive work to be well done should be committed to one man, it teaches that the feeblest of all forms of administration is by committee. Yet, in our city—in most cities, the committees of the common council are practically the executive arm of the city government, the nominal executive having but little inherent power. Our city, therefore, must not expect to attain to a high degree of efficient administration until they commit to a single head each of the executive departments of the city. The principle of personal responsibility on the part of one man to his superior must permeate the departments from top to bottom before it becomes reasonable to expect any high standard of efficiency. There may, indeed, be failure of executive work under these conditions if the head of a department be in fact a poor executive, but the mayor ought to be given the right not only to practically appoint his heads of departments, but a similar power to cause their removal, so that when experience has demonstrated any appointment to have been a mistake, he can remedy it, and so properly be held responsible at every moment for efficient administration in all parts of the city government.

The next element in efficient administration of the part of a city government is that it should work together. The police department, for example, touches in its daily duties the department of city works, the health department, the fire department, and the building department. The ordinances affecting all these departments depend for their enforcement upon the efficiency and co-operation of the police. The failure to co-operate with one another, so frequently found in the executive heads of departments springs in the main from the absence of any tie compelling them to realize a common responsibility. They are, indeed, officers of the same city, but that is all. His department is his business, and nobody else's. If they are nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the council, such appointments usually involve the feeling that they represent this or that personal interest. The idea of a common responsibility to work together for the public interest never presents itself under such conditions. It happens, therefore, that city governments often are loose ends, very much as the planets would be if the law of gravitation were suspended. Collisions in the heavens would not be more certain in the presence of such a suspension of the law of gravity than conflicts between departments are certain in a city government which is held to no common responsibility. This element of responsibility to a common head can only be effectively obtained through the appointment of all such officials by the mayor of the city. This relation gives to a city government precisely the element which is needed a responsibility to a common head who is himself responsible to the people of the city. A government so ordered, as compared with a government in which the heads of departments feel each one independent of all the others, would present precisely such a result as the football field, where a team which is in the habit of playing together defeats a fifteen made up of better individual players who have not been in the habit of playing together.

The same conditions which result in the highest degree of efficiency happily result also in the greatest measure of popular control. It would be impossible to get the judgment of the people at the same election upon all laws of the legislature. In the same way, it is impossible for the people of a city to discriminate intelligently as to many officials at a single election. To tell the people that they must elect one officer this year and another officer next year, and still another officer a third year before they can get control of even a single department of the city government, is to enter upon a task which is hopeless from the beginning. To tell the people that they must choose a good mayor because the mayor will determine the character of the city government in all its parts, is to make a proposition which is easily understood and easily acted upon. When the whole character of the city government is at issue, the newest citizen can be made to appreciate its importance; and when the duty devolving upon him is simply to make choice between two names or three, he is entirely competent to discharge that duty intelligently. As a consequence, a city government which is organized upon the line of direct responsibility of all its parts to the mayor, and through him to the people, is precisely that form of government over which the people of the city can exercise the most complete control. The requisites for efficient administration and popular control, therefore, go hand in hand.

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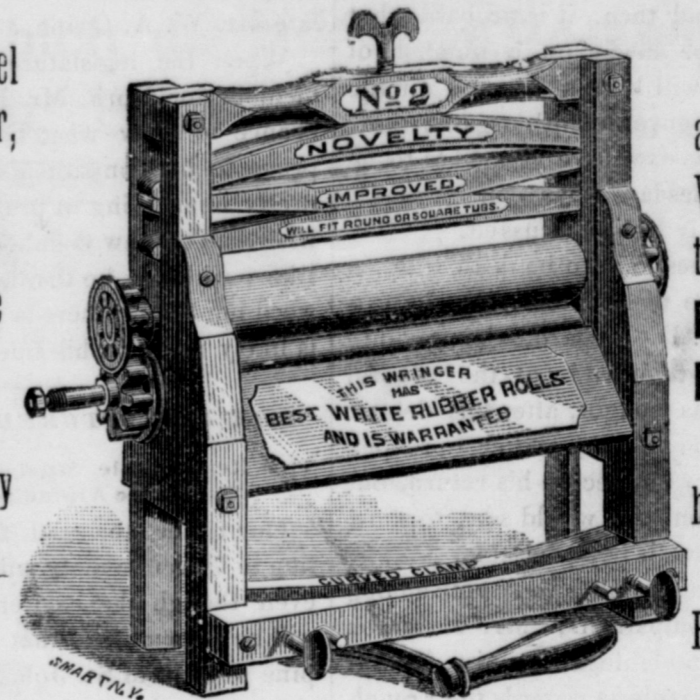
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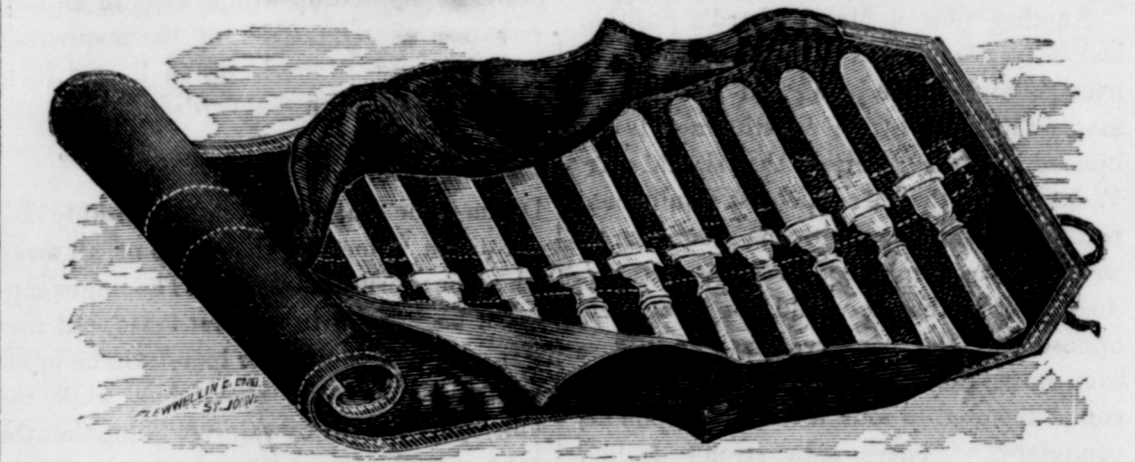


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