

PROGRESS.

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No Longer a Citizen.

A good many people have been reading for years of the Jones assessment case. For nearly four years there would be a paragraph once in a while showing that one or two lawyers were fighting over the right of the city of St. John to tax a man who had been reputed to be the richest man in the community.

When the case came up first the citizens were rather startled by the assertion that a man who had been chosen by them again and again as their chief magistrate and who had handled their affairs in such a satisfactory manner that both the city and himself (in the character of a shrewd investor) were gainers to a substantial degree, should wish to resign his citizenship and refuse to contribute to the revenues of the city in which he had grown so wealthy. But it was a fact and the assessors and the aldermen soon realized that Simeon Jones did not propose to pay taxes.

His reasons for this course may be stated briefly. Some years ago, about 1894 or 1895, Mr. Jones determined to retire from business in St. John and in accordance with that resolution he made over his brewing business to his three sons, George, Keltie and Frederick. The business was to be run under the same name as before but the announcement was made that Mr. Jones, senior, had retired from the concern. It was also said then that his magnificent house had also been transferred, but of this PROGRESS is not sure.

Then Mr. Jones went away and traveled from place to place on this continent and in Europe. His daughters were with him sometimes and again they were not. But as he had been doing this for years the people among whom he had lived thought nothing of it. They still counted him as a citizen and perhaps some of them who held stock in the Bank of New Brunswick were disinclined to think anything else because he was a director in that home institution.

Mr. Jones was in New York a good deal of his time and it was said that he acted there as the agent of the Bank of which he was a director. He lived in palatial rooms in a hotel there as became a man of his wealth but still his familiar figure could be seen from time to time upon the streets of St. John.

There is no doubt he had business here, but he claimed that it was not his residence. He said he lived in New York and made affidavit to that effect. He was no doubt in New York a great deal of his time, but five months of the year he enjoyed life in fishing, hunting and moving from place to place, seeing the best that could be seen.

His assessment in St. John was fixed at the remarkably low sum of \$125,000. This was all personal. He had no real estate in the city. The rate of taxation was about \$1.55 per hundred and it can easily be calculated that his taxes were about \$2,000 a year.

He appealed from the assessment of 1896 and his case was before the appeals committee again and again. Finally they decided against him and his lawyer Mr. L. A. Currey, carried his case to the Supreme court at Fredericton. There the case was argued and the judges decided against Mr. Jones. Having lost his case, he paid his taxes, it is said under protest, stating that he proposed to carry the case to a higher court. Why he did not seek a reversal of that judgment is not clear to the writer now but when the city assessed him again in 1897 after a knowledge of the circumstances and his statement that he did not reside in St. John, he appealed again and again the appeals committee decided against him. Then to the court at Fredericton again, and the judges there agreed with the appeals committee and decided that Mr. Jones was a resident within the act and would have to pay taxes.

This looked as if Mr. Jones was a fixture and whether he liked it or not would have to reside in St. John for the rest of his natural life so far as taxation was concerned. He had no real property here and so the city could not collect so long as he did not come to St. John but Mr. Jones did not intend to stay in St. John for fear of being nabbed by a city marshal so he took the bull by the horns and went to Ottawa with his case. There M. C. Coster for the city and Mr. Currey for Mr. Jones endeavored to persuade the gentlemen learned in the law that each was right.

Mr. Skinner, the recorder, did not argue the case for the city because he was a relative of Mr. Jones.

The argument was sometime ago and now judgment has been delivered at last and the supreme court of Canada says Simeon Jones need not pay taxes in St. John—in other words that he is not a resident.

This means more than appears upon the surface. Mr. Jones being freed from the assessment of 1897 need not pay that for 1898 or 1899 which amounts to about \$6,000. More than that his lawyers say that the taxes for 1896 were paid under protest and if the amount is not returned they will sue for the amount. If they are successful the total will be \$8,000 and costs.

Law costs, when the city has to pay for them, are usually a very respectable figure. They have proved so in the past and will no doubt in the future. The fees of the lawyers who were before the appeals committee again and again for three and a half years and have been arguing the case from time to time in the courts will be considerable and the city will have to pay the bill. The prospects are that it will amount to at least \$1,500 if not \$2,000. So the city stands to lose not only about \$20,000 but all future taxation of Mr. Simeon Jones—not to mention the ex-mayor himself.

COLLAPSE OF THE INQUIRY.

Chief Clerk's Apologetic Explanation—The Provincial Secretary Present.

The unexpected happened in the McKelvey-Clark investigation on the last evening. The chief went prepared to put in his defence and he had his witnesses there but Mr. Pugsley, as he intimated at the first session said he proposed to call another witness or so. One of these was Alderman Allan, who was in the station that day, and the other was supposed to be although it was not so stated—Mrs. Earle, the woman who was thrown out by the chief.

But neither of these witnesses gave their evidence. Ald. Allan was on the stand but just as he was beginning to talk, the Mayor appeared upon the scene and requested the chairman to permit him to talk to Messrs Pugsley and Skinner for a few minutes.

After the air of surprise had worn off the request was granted and those gentlemen left the room. The scent of a settlement was in the air and this was considered all the more probable since the provincial secretary was known to be in the city. Soon afterwards he entered the room and took a seat by the chairman and a little later the chief left the room and conferred with the lawyers and mayor and Mr. McKelvey upstairs. A settlement was reached and an apologetic explanation prepared which seemed to suit Mr. McKelvey.

This was drawn up in proper form and read to the safety board upon their return. The chief said practically that he was in the fault but that his action did not arise out of any ill will toward Mr. McKelvey.

And so the much talked of inquiry dropped and when the people read how it had been settled every one wondered why the chief could not have said as much when the complaint was made and saved the safety board the trouble and the expense incidental to the city, to himself and Mr. McKelvey.

But it is stated that the payment of Mr. McKelvey's expenses, viz, Mr. Pugsley's bill was a part of the settlement.

He Went in Plain Clothes.

Officers Semple is a member of the North End division and sometime ago he was quite prominent and very vigilant so far as after hour business was concerned on the Westmorland road. Most of the readers of PROGRESS know that Westmorland road is different from Charlotte or Prince William street and yet the liquor dealer who gets a license there has to pay \$300 a year just the same as a retail dealer has to in the more populous centre. And yet in spite of this the police seem to exercise greater vigilance toward the dealers on the outskirts of the city than they do in other sections. An example of this has been told PROGRESS. According to the information, Officer Semple, who was on night duty doffed

his uniform and, putting on his plain clothes a week ago Saturday night, endeavored to find out if his suspicions of after hour selling were correct.

Whether he was right or not he was not able to get enough evidence to make a report and there seems to be a lot of people who have a good deal of sympathy for the people who were under espionage.

THE LADIES WERE NOT IN IT

As Money Winners in the Bazaar Contest in Megantic.

There was a lively contest up in Megantic a few days ago. A bazaar was being held and the ladies made up their minds that they would make as much money as possible out of local rivalry. So they bought a handsome gold beaded ebony cane from Messrs. Ferguson & Page of this city and announced that it would be presented to the most popular hotel proprietor in the place. Votes were sold at ten cents each and the contest opened in an easy fashion. The cane was paid for in a very short time and to the surprise of those who thought the contest would not pay the sum of \$100 was soon paid into the treasurer. Then the workers for the different hotel men began to hold back their money and delayed putting in their votes. But the most extravagant rumors of the number of votes soon got around and money was forthcoming in plenty. When Monday night, the closing time, came around, excitement ran high and \$20 bills were in evidence. The winner it is said bought \$20 worth of votes a few minutes before the close and when his friends found that he had twice as many votes as the competitor next to him they had quite a laugh at his expense. Host Murray won the cane and the ladies netted the handsome sum of \$405.68 from the contest.

At the same time there was a ladies contest and voting was lively for the most popular young lady in the town. This contest netted \$141.80 and Miss Nellie Rocket was the fortunate young lady. The strange feature of the affair was that the young men did not rally to the support of the ladies in the same degree as the ladies worked for the hotel men.

After the Minister of Railways.

When Minister Blair reached town last week there was an unusual stir on Prince William street the next morning. The politicians were out in force and it was difficult work for the representative of New Brunswick in the government to make his way along the street. As soon as he had looked over some properties in connection with his recent newspaper enterprise he went back to his car and then the stream of visitors was incessant. Everyone had something to ask and all got some kind of a hearing. The callers included men of all classes, politicians, ward workers, and members of both parliaments. Still there have been no appointments made as yet and the applicants are still waiting.

In the Luxurious List.

"Edward Sears, Mayor" is getting to be a familiar signature nowadays in the daily papers. The Telegraph always has a city coat of arms an inch deep to put over his call for a Transvaal volunteer committee meeting, and places the same double headed at the head of its local column. It is to be hoped that the charge (if there is any) will not come out of the fund. The mayor also has a fondness for sending long telegrams to the mayors of other towns when a letter would be more suitable and a two cent stamp is so much cheaper. Still good things come high—we must have luxuries—and it begins to look as if our gallant mayor was in that list.

Prefer St. John Boys.

The phrase "St. John boys" was used in the discussion at the council in the tax exemption business this week and some comment has been the result. Preference, according to Ald. McGoldrick, should be given to St. John boys and plenty of people seem to agree with him. Strangers in the past have been able to get concessions that St. John people could not secure and it is time that some mention should be made of giving preference if any should be given to the boys who live in St. John and are inclined to start manufacturing enterprise.

Boy Wanted.

A good bright boy is wanted at once for office work, though not necessarily inside all of the time. Apply at PROGRESS office.

Aldermanic Sympathy.

Exemption from taxation is a catching phrase—so attractive and so alluring that a number of firms, tempted by the kindness of the aldermen toward Messrs. Peters and their tannery have resolved to put the same kind of a petition before the council. They are not so far out of the way perhaps as some might think, because the common council has a weakness for precedents and having made one so important will no doubt be induced to follow it up.

Among the concerns mentioned as possible applicants are the two nail manufactories on the eastern side of the harbor, the Portland rolling mills and some foundries. All they will have to do will be to get their petition in promptly, then prevail upon the Mayor to call some kind of a public meeting at an hour when few people can attend and see to it that his office is comfortably filled with their employes. That will give the request a fair start and when the resolution they pass is presented to the council itself, the influence cannot be resisted.

This is about what happened in the Peters' case. The request for exemption having gone into the council the mayor was persuaded to call a public meeting of the citizens to discuss so important a question as exempting industries from taxation.

A public meeting in St. John has usually been held in a public place, say in the Mechanics institute or the Opera House, where the public would have a chance to attend and listen in comfort to all that is said or done, but this meeting was called by his worship in one of his persuasive little notes to the daily newspapers, to be held in the city building where at the most only fifty people could gather with any comfort, and the hour was fixed for half past three Saturday afternoon!

It may be that the mayor did not realize just what this meant to his meeting. He could not have expected many business men to leave their stores at the busiest time of the busiest day of the week even to confer upon such a question as exemption from taxation. Saturday is pay day where employment is found and the afternoon of such a day the very worst time that the mayor could have selected. There was no occasion for rush, still the council was called for Monday morning and before the interested class of taxpayers had a chance to give their views the exemption resolution was passed in the council.

There may be some aldermen who honestly believe in exemption. If so they had better get their arguments ready. They will find it hard work to find reasons why they should exempt Messrs. Peters' tannery and not confer the same favor upon the soap factory across the street. But that is what they have done and they will be prepared, no doubt, to back it up. Delay was out of the question with them. Did not Messrs. Peters want to build right away? And was not Sussex and Hampton, St. Martins and Otobag, for all we know, reaching out their eager hands to welcome this new industry! It must not be lost and it was not. Feverish haste rather than common sense characterized the action of the aldermen. There were a few cool ones but they were in the minority and what influence they had was discounted by the resolution moved by Mr. Hurley and seconded by a citizen who for some time has been employed in the tannery and who naturally wanted his job back again.

Mr. Hurley is a manufacturer too. He purchased goods from Messrs. Peters and made them up into boots and shoes. There is no doubt he would be glad to see exemption and what the man who converted hides into leather got in this direction why should not the man who worked leather into foot wear also enjoy?

So Mr. Hurley helped Messrs. Peters out all he could and from his standpoint no one could blame him, but private interests are seldom identical with those of the public and it was so in this case.

PROGRESS made some inquiry of the chairman of the assessors regarding the amount of taxes received from industries with a view to arriving at the amount to be made up should this exemption principal apply to all people. But the chairman smiled when the query was put and replied that there was no such classification on the books but he had just started to try

and ascertain just what proportion the revenues from the different sources bore to each other. While not expressing any opinion upon the action of the council he thought it was quite probable that there would be a number of applications asking for the same privilege as has been given to the Messrs. Peters.

There is one notable case of almost entire exemption from taxation in the city and that is the Park's Cotton industry. Their assessment was fixed by law at \$5,000 for ten years and when that expired the period was extended for another term. There is in addition \$20,000 additional assessment on stock and a small amount on some real estate not included in the exemption clause, bringing the total amount taxable to between seventy and eighty thousand dollars or about one tenth of what it would have been had not the assessors been restricted by the law exempting them.

The case of Messrs. Peters is somewhat peculiar. There are three or four brothers interested in the concern, all of them active, energetic men. They want to stay in St. John no doubt because they have other interests and property here but they knew enough to bring prompt influence to bear on the aldermen, while their sympathy for their misfortune by fire was yet alive, to promise them exemption from taxation if they would build again. No one can blame them. It was shrewd business and few if any merchants or manufacturers would pay taxes if they could persuade the city that their presence or absence affected the community to such an extent.

CARRIE AFTER HIS MONEY.

He Wants Pay For Books Contracted For Through Misrepresentation.

Some time ago PROGRESS told the story of how one or two persuasive well groomed gentlemen canvassed the city for orders for books and the successful manner in which they persuaded many citizens to sign their contracts. Their work was supposed to illustrate St. John and other cities and it was to come in parts. All the parts, some sixteen in number made a set.

Two of these "parts" were devoted to St. John and New Brunswick and it was quite natural for the parties canvassed to express a wish to have them. It was not explained to them apparently that they could not get a part without taking a "set" and yet no doubt the contract contained the word "set" and not "part" and the man who signed it contracted for a set of sixteen or more parts. But in some cases that PROGRESS knows of, it was clearly stated that the parties simply wanted the two St. John and New Brunswick parts and nothing was said to them about the necessity of taking the whole set but the word "two" was inserted where "one" should have been. This made the contract for the complete sets instead of two parts and the price \$4 instead of between three and four dollars.

The work was to be presented in parts but it was delivered as a whole and payment requested. Several of the duped ones paid up, angry with themselves and vowing never to sign a contract that they did not know by heart and test under a microscope but there were others who said they would go to the courts and even if they lost expose the parties who, as they said, made such misrepresentation to them.

The accounts have been placed in the hands of a young lawyer to collect and he has already sent out the preliminary demand for a settlement.

He Didn't See the Other Paper.

In a letter to an evening paper this week the brother of young Shonaman, the lad arrested for vagrancy, has a word or two to say in which he calls attention to the fact that the facts as told in PROGRESS were exaggerated. A funny part of the affair is that the story as told in this paper was the same as that told in the Globe three or four days before PROGRESS was published. The facts were exactly the same in both papers.

Millinery Sale

Mr. Charles K. Cameron's advertisement this week calls attention to a sale of head-wear, hats, toques, bonnets etc., trimmed and untrimmed. The entire lot will be disposed of at prices that cannot fail to suit ladies in search of stylish millinery.

Board of Works Smay-99