

"THE LIBERAL"

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THURSDAY, APRIL 8th, 1937.

ABOLISH THE COUNTY COUNCIL

York County Council as a result of the record of its January session which included the salary grab clearly forfeited any remaining vestige of a claim that as an administrative body it was seriously trying to legislate in keeping with the demands of the times and the mind of the general public. As a result we submit that there is today an overwhelming majority of public opinion in agreement with us when we say that County Council should be abolished. In this we know we are supported by a great many substantial citizens of the County including many who have sat as members of the County Council. Changes in conditions and administration over a period of years have left the County with very little to do, and we still have a council of forty-nine members to do it. It is almost unbelievable that such a condition is allowed to continue.

RELIEF ADMINISTRATION

We know of few positions more difficult to fill in these times than the job of relief officer. It is a hard job and a thankless one. In Richmond Hill Reeve Greene has been carrying this burden along with the other numerous duties of the Reeveship. Therefore it was no surprise to anyone at all familiar with the demands and difficulties of this office that the Reeve asked at Monday's council meeting to be relieved of the responsibility. It seems altogether too much to ask any man to act as Reeve and assume the responsibility for administration of relief. We always have felt that it was too much to ask of a reeve, but as long as Reeve Greene carried on and handled it as efficiently and economically as he has in the past, certainly nobody else was going to kick. However now that he has asked to be relieved of the duty, he should not be asked to continue to bear this great burden. We doubt if the appointment of a paid official would work out economically for the village, but at least other members of council should share in the administration of this important work. We think there should be a relief commission, the same as there is a waterworks commission and a roads commission and a parks commission. It should be a committee of council and should function as the other committees do in carrying on the administration throughout the year. Undoubtedly there would not be a great rush of aspirants among council members for the position of relief chairman. In some municipalities this difficulty is overcome by having the council members take turns at heading the relief department. It sounds like a fair idea and Richmond Hill council members might find this sharing of the burden the best way out of the present situation.

BLACKSMITH SHOPS

Surely there is no scene in the life of the village boy that recalls happier hours than those spent in the cosy warmth of the blacksmith shop. There, the beating of the hammers, the flying sparks and the glare of the red hot metal held us with a fascination so strong that errands were forgotten, home work, chores and other mundane things entirely neglected. These hours were well worth the chastisement that followed when home was reached. To see a frightened young colt shod for the first time was a thrilling experience, and there were the evenings when the wandering strong man with his marvellous feats arrived at the village and challenged all and sundry to compete with him for a wager.

As we grew older and were taken to concerts there was no song sung by a basso profundo that had a greater appeal than Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith" whose daughter was the idol of the village choir.

In view of the advent of the automobile and the farm tractor, it may seem surprising to learn that there are even now over five thousand blacksmith shops still operating in the Dominion, but such is the case, and the village boy has an adventure over his less favoured city cousin. In the cities of over 30,000 population there are only 300 of these shops, while there are more than 4,000 in the rural areas and over one thousand in the villages and small places.

The 1931 census showed that the receipts of the blacksmith shops aggregated over seven million dollars. In the main they were one-man concerns.

STRICTER DRIVING TESTS

At the Spring Assize Court in London, Mr. Justice A. C. Kingstone advocated stricter driving tests in Ontario for motorists. It is a good sign when the judges are becoming alarmed for the public safety, and are speaking out strongly in the courts when cases come before them. It has been exceedingly difficult to arouse the public to a sense of the terrible danger that exists on the highways of the Province from reckless drivers. His Lordship pointed out to the Grand Jurors that there were three classes that should be banished from the roads. One was the inefficient operator, another the selfish one who disregards courtesy and the rights of others, and the third the intoxicated motorist. "The third class of driver," he said, "can and will be dealt with severely by the courts. The person who drives while drunk is an absolute menace."

AMUSEMENT TAX EXEMPTION IS WELCOMED

The announcement of the abolition of the Amusement Tax by the Provincial Government is being received with pleasure by the various sporting fraternities, church organizations and theatres throughout the province. This form of taxation, especially on the lower prices of admission, has ever been unpopular and has been universally designated as a nuisance tax, and its removal, which becomes effective the first of June, will be a boom to entertainments of various kinds, as well as the theatres.

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THE LIBERAL SHORT STORY

HERO'S WIFE

By Charles McGuirk

THE BIBLE SAYS, "As a man thinketh so is he," and there is an awful lot of truth in that saying.

A preacher gets to looking holy just from thinking and talking about things in the Bible. A cop gets tough from swinging a club as he walks along with the idea that he is protecting the city from murderers and criminals. Keep telling a homely woman that she's beautiful and pretty soon she gets to acting as though she were and the first thing you know, darned if she isn't kind of good looking.

Up to the time Harry Meiss saved those two kids from drowning in the river, you could have sent him scooting into the next town with a good hearty yawn. But after he dived into the swirling waters of the Hudson on a March night after Johnny Monks and Eddie Gravers so many people told him he was a hero that soon he began to know he was.

Harry was a little bit of a guy. He stood about five feet two and he weighed about a hundred. He had a face that retreated from a chin he had to feel for. He wasn't much good at anything. He did everything he did just well enough to get it by. Except swimming. Harry could swim like an otter. When he was a kid he found he had an aptitude for the water. Water was the only thing of which he was not afraid. And it never put up any stiff resistance. It was the only thing in life that didn't, and Harry took advantage of it. In the years of his childhood he became an excellent swimmer.

That was why when he heard the two kids yelling from the water, he ran over to the pier's end and looked down at them in the water. Johnny and Eddie, about 10 and 11, had been reading Robinson Crusoe and had built a raft. It stayed together for about 15 minutes after they launched it and pushed out in the water. Then it came apart. Both the kids could swim pretty well but the shock of the cold water and the dusk of early evening made them panic-stricken. Instead of taking it easy and swimming back toward the pier, they began to scream and thrash.

You'll have to give it to Harry. One look at them gave him the complete picture of the situation. They were only about two hundred yards from the shore but they were scared. If either got his arms around Harry's neck, it was curtains for all three of them.

Harry didn't have time to think of that last. All he had time for was one swift look at the two of them thrashing and screaming in the river. He shucked himself out of his coat and dived in. Eddie was the one farthest out and Harry made for him. Luckily, Eddie had kept his head a little. He did what Harry told him to do. He put his hand on Harry's shoulder and kicked with his feet and they got him back to the shore in little or no time.

But Johnny wasn't so well off. Johnny was beside himself with terror. He was going down for the third time when Harry reached him and he lashed out and got a grip on Harry's arm and started to pull him down.

If Harry could have pulled away, you can bet that he would have been glad to do so whether Johnny drowned or not. But he couldn't pull away. Johnny had him in a death grip. So Harry, with all his strength crashed his fist into Johnny's jaw and Johnny went limp. Harry got him by the hair and towed him in.

There were a lot of people on the pier when he and his cargo reached it and they leaned over and jerked both of them to safety. They laid Johnny down and started to beat hell out of him until the pain pierced Johnny's unconsciousness and brought him back to life. They wrapped Harry in coats and overcoats because it was a raw and chilly night. Somebody found a bottle of whisky somewhere and they gave several drinks to both victim and hero. The first thing Harry knew he was drunk.

In his drunken state he heard people marvelling at what a hero he had turned out to be. But he didn't marvel. He took it as his due. He told himself that he had known it all the time. And he planned just how he would treat Flora, his wife when he got back to the lunchroom.

Flora was a pretty fine woman and the best wife he had ever had. Harry having married only once. But she was a little too much inclined to look down on him on account of the difference in their sizes. For if Harry was bordering on the shrimp species, Flora might be said to be of the genu hippo. She had big shoulders and she broadened out from there on the way down. Her mid-section bulged out like a relief map

of the Western Hemisphere.

Their friends called Harry and Flora "the ant and the elephant" behind their backs, and that seemed to about sum it up, even in Flora's eyes. Flora loved Harry but her love was a mixture of gradually lessening passion, mixed copiously with the general idea that she was his mother, and he was her timid, shrimp-like son.

But she got over that after Harry saved those kids. At first when they brought Harry home soaking wet and more than three-quarters cock-eyed she thought he had fallen into the river while drunk and she was taking a deep breath, preparing to give him hell when they burst out with the story of his bravery. At first, she thought they were kidding and she didn't know whether to laugh with them or bring a frying pan down on somebody's skull. But when she understood that they really meant it and that it was true, she looked at Harry as though she had never seen him before. That the little shrimp taking his life in his hands in a gamble to save two others? Wasn't he the surprising little devil? It just went to show you you never could tell about people, even when you lived with them.

But as long as he was a hero, he was a hero and she was going to treat him as such. So she shooed out all the admiring neighbors and she tossed him on the bed and peeled his garments from him. By this time Harry was good and drunk and he was making threats to her which she didn't believe. Nobody in her right senses could believe that a little squirt like Harry could do the big things he threatened to do to her. But they thrilled her. She half wished he could. And she got him more liquor and he went to sleep pie-eyed.

The next morning he woke up good and sick and he would have been humble and pretty penitent only Flora wouldn't let him be. As soon as he opened his eyes he could see that Flora was a different woman. She was bending over him with tears of admiration glistening in her big cow-like eyes. She had convinced herself during the night that Harry, her shrimp of a husband, was the bravest man in the world. A little thought would have proven otherwise. All she had to do was to think of the time that mouse got caught in the trap behind Harry in the cellar and scared him half way out of his pants.

But when that memory stirred in her she reached out and strangled it. Flora was a woman and she was a wife and she had enough sense to know that if she could really believe her husband was a hero it would make him something to admire and twice as easy to live with. She was good and tired of thinking and feeling and acting as the man of the house. From now on she was going to be wife and woman to a man as brave as that old fellow David in the Bible.

Harry thought she was kidding for a few days when she kept telling him how brave he was. But then he began to believe it and the stronger his belief became the more he strutted. It made him do things.

Like that time the big truck-driver came into the lunchroom and demanded a rare steak and got angry because it was too well-done. Flora picked up a skillet all ready to crown him. But Harry pushed her aside. "I'll take care of this," he said. "Listen, Big Boy," he growled at the driver, "you can't come in here pulling stuff like that before a lady. Now you get to hell outta here!" The truck driver laughed and Harry hauled off and popped him on the nose.

The blow didn't hurt the driver but he was a hard drinker and often when he was on the verge of the delirium tremens he saw little men like Harry. And he thought to himself: "My God, if these dizzy things are getting so they can sock me I must be goin' nuts." And he walked out of the lunchroom holding his nose and being scared of his sanity.

Well, after that Harry was Jack Dempsey, as far as Flora was concerned. He was the bravest guy in the world. And she treated him like that. She fetched and carried for him. She did whatever he told her without a word of protest. She let him win every argument they ever had because she believed he was the voice crying in the wilderness. And Harry strutted himself. He was tough.

This had been going on for a year when Izzy Borkis and Mike Bennesy two punks of 19 and 20, decided to stick up the lunch room. They were strangers in the neighborhood, so they didn't know that Harry had a

terrible reputation which Flora believed. They walked into the lunchroom and sat themselves down on stools and ordered a cup of java. Flora was behind the counter and she served up their coffee with a nice big smile. Harry was sitting at one of the tables reading a newspaper because lately, he never did any of the work. Why should a hero work?

And when Izzy and Mike finished their coffee, they looked at Harry and they looked at Flora and they looked at each other and Mike pulled a gun. "Stick 'em up," he grated. "This is a robbery."

Flora was in the little kitchen and she was holding a frying-pan she had just polished. She walked out behind the counter, her mouth open. Harry took one look and tried to hide in a fold of the paper.

"Get the dough Izzy," Mike said. It made Flora good and mad and she swung the frying-pan at Mike's head. Mike didn't expect the movement because people aren't supposed to do that in a hold-up. He ducked but the frying-pan hit him on his gun arm and sent the gun flying out of his hand to light in Harry's

lap. Harry grabbed the gun spasmodically. By accident he caught it by the trigger and the pressure shot the gun off. The bullet hit Mike in the neck. It was a blessed sight to Harry. His courage came surging back.

"Back here, you rat!" he yelled at Izzy who was halfway through the door. Izzy halted.

When the police got there, Mike was on the floor. Izzy was standing with his hands in the air and Flora was hugging Harry on the side opposite his gun arm.

When the cop took the two away Harry turned to tell Flora what a brave woman she was, but Flora beat him to it.

"Honest to God, Harry," she said "I think you're the bravest man in the world!"

Harry patted her and let it go at that. Maybe he thought he was.

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