(December 17, 1906.)

The Capital of the United States.

By Hon. Henry B. F. MacFarland, Chairman of Board of Commissioners of the City of Washington, D.C.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on "The Capital of the United States," Hon. Henry B. F. MacFarland, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the City of Washington, D.C., said:—

I hope, Mr. President, you will not take this—(the applause which greeted the speaker's rising)—out of my time allowance.

Gentlemen of the Canadian Club, the very flattering introduction of your President reminds me of the desire of the Bishop of Missouri to add a line to the orthodox prayer, making it read something like this: "From traducers—and introducers—good Lord, deliver us." (Laughter and applause.) I hope, again, that this will not be taken out of my time.

I confess that the embarrassment of a pilgrim and a stranger in a foreign land is increased by the introduction of the President. Yet I remember an incident in which a bachelor colleague of mine on the Commission is said to have figured. It is told that he once asked a young lady what she would do if a man offered to kiss her. She responded promptly, "I would meet the emergency face to face." Well, that is what I propose to do. I have been looking forward to this hour for several years.

In the Salvation Army the weddings are held in public. They are not essentially different from our own, but occasion is often taken by the good Salvationists to turn them to spiritual account. In Philadelphia on one of these occasions the nervous young man was asked to leave as a message a line of Scripture. He paused for a moment and then blurted out: "There shall be wars and rumors of wars." The bride, also young and nervous, was asked to contribute a verse from some old hymn. On the instant she recited:

"This is the way I long have sought,
And mourned because I found it not."

Thus it is that I take occasion to allude to the pleasure it gives me to be at last in Toronto to speak for the capital of the United States under the auspices of this distinguished

Hon. H. B. F. MacFarland.
Chairman, Board of Commissioners, Washington, D.C.

club. Let me assure you that we in Washington appreciate the marvelous progress of Canada and sympathize with the ideals and aspirations of the Dominion. The United States rejoices in the prosperity of the Dominion, in the harmony of its peoples and the unity of its Provinces, because the two countries are not only near neighbors, but close friends, bound together by the highest interests, in spite of the invisible boundary line, which I crossed without any sense of being in a foreign land. May I express the hope that all Canadians will feel as much at home in Washington as I feel in Toronto, for you will find there always a warm welcome.

In speaking upon the subject which is to have our attention for a few minutes this afternoon, I have not come to offer any advice as to the government of cities in the Dominion, but only upon the invitation of this Club, so kindly repeated from time to time, to tell the municipal experience of Washington from my point of view.

Washington was founded by George Washington between 1790 and 1800. The far-seeing genius, believing that the United States would grow to be a great nation and that it ought to have an independent and adequate capital, brought about the creation of the District of Columbia, containing what we called the Federal City and what Congress named for him, planned on a great scale and with peculiar beauty.

For seventy-eight years Congress left the municipal government practically to the residents of Washington, who elected their mayors and other municipal officers and met all the expense of municipal services, although the national Government from the first owned more than half of the real estate by gift from the original proprietors.

During that period several kinds of government were tried, including four years of a Governor, a Legislature and a delegate to Congress. In 1878, after several years of consideration, the intelligent taxpayers in general and Congress came to an agreement upon the present, described in the Act of Congress as "the permanent form of government." Congress assumed the neglected obligation by promising to pay one-half the municipal expenses. The citizens gave up the elective franchise, generally without regret, in view of past experiences, and realizing that the National Government could not be taxed or its money appropriated by their vote.

Congress created as its agent for the government of the District a municipal corporation headed by three Commissioners, to be appointed by the President of the United States,

two of them to be residents of the District and the third an army engineer officer of high rank.

In practice the civil Commissioners, and a majority of the Board, including always its President, have represented their fellow citizens as well as Congress. Congress remained the Legislature, as provided in the Constitution, delegating, however, to the Commissioners power to make municipal ordinances, such as police, health, buildings and other regulations.

Let me say to you frankly that I believe that the progress made since 1878 has been largely due to the form of government. It is a real government by public opinion, even though it does not provide for voting. The citizenship of the national capital, I think I may say, is especially intelligent. It is drawn from the best of every State in the Union, from every Province of Canada, and from the countries beyond the seas. It is highly organized for activity in public affairs, and develops and employs public opinion with the aid of an entirely independent press, in an unusual degree.

Besides the Board of Trade and the Business Men's Association, each with a membership of more than seven hundred representative citizens, there are at least a score of other organizations of similar character and aims, and, in all probability, two thousand men and as many women devoting much of their time in organized effort to public affairs.

Although many Washingtonians for sentimental and other reasons desire the ballot, although they have never agreed on a practical plan for its restoration, the great majority of the intelligent taxpayers believe that the present status is best. While, as Galveston is apparently showing as a result of a political revolution to meet the emergency caused by the flood, a certain form of government by commission may be maintained by a city having the elective franchise, under certain conditions, it is believed by the great majority of the intelligent taxpayers of Washington that the elimination of partizan politics from municipal affairs, due to the elimination of the ballot, is the chief cause of the efficiency of the present form of government.

Public opinion acts directly upon the Commissioners through the citizens' organizations and newspapers, indeflected by the partizan warfare between political parties which elsewhere confuses and breaks its power. No bosses, nor machines, nor partizan newspapers attack or support the Commission. It is not influenced by partizan politics. Freed from the hampering and harrassing domination of partizan

politics, it is able to carry on the municipal business as business.

In dealing with Congress the citizens act individually and through their organizations, but chiefly through their official representatives, the Commissioners. The latter present to Congress estimates for the annual appropriations, which are all made by Congress, and also drafts of legislation desired for the District. Four committees, two in each House of Congress, attend to practically all the legislation and appropriations for the District. They give the Commissioners every opportunity to present the cause of the District formally and informally, and they refer to the Commissioners before they act upon them, all bills introduced in Congress relating to the District, and are generally guided by the reports made by the Commissioners. The President of the United States sends to the Commissioners, for report, all measures relating to the District passed by both Houses of Congress, before they are acted upon by him. In all cases where it is desired by the citizens, or where the Commissioners desire it, the Commissioners give public hearings on any matter of public interest, including legislation and appropriations. Directly through the Commissioners, who have every facility for presenting their views, the public opinion of the District is made known to Congress, and, where there is general agreement, is usually effective sooner or later, and at least as rapidly as public opinion is effective in dealing with legislation elsewhere.

Moreover, the members of the committees dealing with District affairs generally exhibit in a marked degree the great common interest and pride of the country in the national capital, and some of them, particularly the chairmen, devote much time and effort to advancing the District's interests. A notable example was the late Senator James McMillan, of Michigan, a Canadian by birth, who as chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, rendered unusual and beneficent service, which added greatiy to his reputation and reflected credit on his State and his native country. Washington owes Canada, as the birthplace of Senator McMillan, a marked debt.

The Congressional Committees, in dealing with District affairs, like the Comissioners, are not influenced by partizan considerations. The District citizenship not being divided in these matters by such consideration and the District Commission being entirely non-partizan, the question of politics does not enter into the disposition of District affairs in Congress.

Congress in general fairly represents the general and cordial national desire to have the national capital made beautiful physically and spiritually.

It must be remembered, of course, that human nature is the same in Washington as in Ottawa, and that what has been done and is being done under this form of Government has the limitations of human nature. Very much remains to be done to make the national capital what the citizens and the country desire. It is far from perfection, but it is steadily advancing towards its ideals, and it is believed by the great majority of its intelligent taxpayers that its form of government makes its progress easier and faster than would be the case under a different form of government.

Washington is not only a political capital, but it is an intellectual capital, with more men in scientific work than any other city, and with about five thousand students in its universities, colleges and private schools, drawn by its peculiar educational advantages from all over the country. It is not only a most attractive residence city, but it has a considerable commerce, its banks having nearly trebled their resources in the decade from 1895 to 1905, when they reached $70,000,000—a large proportion for a population of something over 300,000, one-third colored, the largest colored population in any city in the world.

A movement of Washington business men for increasing the commercial and manufacturing interest of Washington is now well under way and promises important results. There, as elsewhere, good government promotes good business, and the business leaders of Washington are practically a unit for the present form of government.

The taxpayers pay a reasonable but not a high rate of taxation, about the average per capita in American cities. Upon real estate, assessed at two-thirds of its value, they pay $1.50 on the hundred dollars. Upon tangible personal property they pay one and a-half per centum of the assessed value, with a thousand dollar household exemption and also an exemption of libraries, heirlooms, wearing apparel and ornaments. Corporations pay special taxes and businesses license taxes. The rates are fixed by Congress, the assessments made by assessors, with right of appeal for the citizens before a Board of Review.

The total revenues for the fiscal year ended June 30th, 1906, from taxes on private property and privileges, including an unexpended balance of $219,185.31 from the fiscal year ended June 30th, 1905, were $5,313,930.26. Adding to this

amount the proportion contributed by the United States on its share of the expenses of the Government of the District of Columbia, besides $5,621,675.81, besides $646,428.75 advanced by he United States to the District at two per cent. interest, in accordance with law, to provide for the payment of the District's share of the cost of extraordinary improvements, makes the total expense fund $11,582,034.48. The net expenditures, for extraordinary improvements and current needs for that year were $11,437,053.37, leaving an excess of $144,981.47 of receipts, including loan, over actual expenditures.

The total of the appropriations for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1907, for extraordinary as well as current expenditures, including an item of $975,408 for interest and sinking fund on an old bonded debt incurred under the forms of government which preceded the present one, is $10,470,232.16.

The estimates for the next year cover $1,875,800 for extraordinary expenditures and $9,906,102 for current expenditures, including $975,408 on the old bonded debt.

During the present period of important municipal and public improvements, begun six years ago, including a railway terminal, filtration plant, new sewage system, and District Government building, it has been necessary for Congress to aid the District Government by making temporary advances from the national treasury, which are being repaid with interest in order to meet the District's half of the cost of these improvements. All District revenues are deposited in the United States Treasury and disbursed only on Congressional appropriations, and all District accounts are audited by the National Treasury Department, as well as by the District auditor.

There are large plans for the physical improvement of Washington, its extension and embellishment, for the betterment of its municipal services, and for the improvement of its laws and customs. The sentiment of the American people strongly favors these plans. It supports Congress in everything it does looking to the development of the capital. The time may come when Congress will do what many outside as well as many within the District of Columbia desire, by providing whatever may be needed in the way of money for the upbuilding and beautification of Washington, without regard to the amount contributed by the taxpayers except to see that it is reasonable.

But I must be closing. I have already spoken too long. After all is said, forms of government are not so important for successful administration as the civic spirit. The city is

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whatever the citizens choose to make it. If its men, especially its best men, neglect its affairs, while they are making or spending money, it will suffer.

Politics originally meant simply the affairs of the city. If citizens are true citizens they will put the affairs of the city first in their thoughts and then politics will not be what it is in some cities, an occupation by which men live upon the city, but a high calling of men who live for the city. Politics in the degraded sense must be kept out of the municipal business and citizens must show civic patriotism, so that public opinion may be kept right and really governed.

This is the secret of successful municipal administration and the form of government is best which will best serve that end. Civic patriotism, willingness to fight and to spend oneself, if necessary to suffer, is the one essential thing. Such a citizen as Goldwin Smith, the world-famous citizen of Toronto, is the chief civic glory of a city and to multiply such citizens is to safeguard the future. The heroic age is not past.