

CHICAGO RUMBLINGS PRESAGE ERUPTION

**Political Surface Tranquillity
Fails to Soothe Nerves of
Experienced Thinkers.**

'BIG BILL' OMINOUSLY SILENT

**Mayor Believed to Be Planning
Deep Move While New Party
Is Being Talked Of.**

By S. J. DUNCAN-CLARK.
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TIMES.

CHICAGO, May 15.—On the surface this big congeries of overgrown villages, technically known as a city, presents for the moment an appearance of political placidity, but beneath the calm exterior a listening ear may detect subdued rumblings of interesting presage. The vibrations which occasion them may presently spend themselves in muttered sound, or they may gather force and create fissures beneath the feet of the unsuspecting.

That well-known person, the average citizen, busily engaged with his own affairs and dreaming of Summer and vacation, is semi-conscious of the fact that where once there was much fuss and fury there is now a strange silence—gratifying but odd. It is true that gangsters and grand juries, aided by legislative investigating committees, continue to disturb the quiet and the echoes of the General Assembly in session at Springfield. Congress, farm-relief and the tariff cause a few ripples of interest; here and there, perhaps, a ruffle of anxiety or even of indignation. But a clamor which dinned louder than all else in Chicago's ears has ceased, and few may be found to regret it.

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"Big Bill's" Ominous Silence.

But if regret be scant, there is, in some sensitive quarters, a feeling of apprehension. The utter silence of Mayor "Big Bill" Thompson has become ominous. Chicagoans generally are happy in the fact that he is allowing them to forget him; but some of them wonder whether he may not be enjoying quite as much an oblivion which he designs shall be temporary only.

The ponderous figure of Chicago's Mayor, surmounted by its broad sombrero, has vanished from the public gaze. It is no longer beheld hastening hither and thither through the streets in an official automobile; no longer does it impose itself upon neighborhood celebrations. It has appeared occasionally in the City Hall and at council meetings, but even so it has been marked by an unwonted diffidence. Conflicting rumors have floated about as to "Big Bill's" health. The only certain thing seems to be that his bulk, when visible, shows no sign of fading.

Certain members of his cabinet are more or less conspicuous, however, Dr. Arnold H. Kegel, the young, vigorous and efficient Commissioner of Public Health, frequently takes the spotlight. He is eloquent with plans for bettering the conditions of the city as they relate to the well-being of the people. Christian P. Paschen, Building Commissioner, talks earnestly and often about demolishing ancient and unsightly structures and supporting Dr. Kegel in plans for improved housing. Richard W. Wolfe, Commissioner of Public Works, a man of temperament and energy, who is accused of having a greater sympathy for esthetic values than any official in a supposedly hard-boiled administration is entitled to possess, bobs up with programs and prospectuses of quaint literary charm. A little mysterious, and regarded by some people as the real manipulator and Mayor, Samuel Ettelson, corporation counsel, shrewd, far-seeing, industrious, sticks to his job—although just what the job may be is not always as obvious as his title.

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Preparing to Reappear, Maybe.

There is a suspicion that "Big Bill" is quietly permitting these and other good friends of his to repaint the picture in which he was once the centre of interest—to repaint it in less glaring color and tones more pleasing to the eyes of respectable citizens. In fact, sensitive ears, listening to the sub-surface rumblings mentioned in the opening paragraph of this letter, profess to hear a movement under way which is preparing for the reappearance of "Big Bill" in the picture.

Incredible as such a dénouement may seem, and doomed to disappointment for its projectors as one may be inclined to deem it, there are discerning citizens who feel more than a faint alarm at its possibility. And that accounts for the fact that beneath the surface there are also audible some counter-rumblings.

The Chicago Government Planning Association is responsible for some of these. From this most recent of civic organizations emanated the bill to enable Chicago, by referendum, to adopt the City Manager plan. Its introduction in the State Senate represented a flank attack upon the political powers now in office, and it was accepted as such—although not openly. Everything appeared to be set for the passage of the bill in the Senate. Members of the association were congratulating themselves that the first hurdle would be surmounted, when suddenly the wind changed. By just what means the change was effected is not known, but its effect was immediately blighting. The bill curled up and died overnight. Political meteorologists aver that the devastating breath issued from the City Hall.

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A New Party Rumored.

The other day a group of citizens met in a room at the City Club. The officers of the club deny all knowledge of the nature of the meeting and all responsibility for it. The room was rented to certain persons of entirely respectable reputation. Rumblings which emanated from the room were interpreted as indicating a movement to organize a

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new local political party which would have for its aim the unifying of voters who are agreed that the present form and personnel of government in Chicago do not constitute the best of all possible governments.

Of course, such a meeting as this is a commonplace in the agonizings of democracy, and for one that has reached any fruition there have been hundreds, probably, which sputtered out ineffectually. But, taken in the light of other circumstances, significance attaches to such symptoms of a ferment at work. From many quarters of late, this observer has both noted and heard indications that the men who think constructively and hopefully in the com-

munity are reaching hands to one another or calling quietly for comradeship in a common effort.

There is encouragement in the fact that the so-called Crowe law, by which the former State's Attorney sought to fortify himself against the intrusion of special prosecutors named by the courts, has been repealed by the Legislature. Further, the act which former Governor Small secured, rendering him immune from quo warranto proceedings, has been put on the way to repeal by an overwhelming vote of the House. Thus, the people are recovering power, that, to recall a phrase of the late William Jennings Bryan, had been embezzled.

A very tangible evidence of the intense interest which prominent Chicagoans take in promoting a better citizenship is found in the announcement that the Union League Club will erect its third club building for underprivileged boys at a cost of \$150,000. It will be called the Victor P. Arnold Club, in tribute to Judge Arnold, recently deceased, and whose record as judge of the Juvenile Court and friend of boys endeared him to the public.