

MUNICIPAL PROBLEMS IN THE UNITED STATES.

By the Hon. James K. Maguire, Mayor of Syracuse, N. Y., in Mosher's Magazine

There is no greater nor deeper problem in American politics to-day than the proper government of American cities. The national government has stood as firm as a rock for more than a century on the American Constitution. In national affairs, we have had the advantage of long experience in our country, to say nothing of the foreign knowledge from which we have profited, but the great problems of city government have been handed to us suddenly to solve during the past decade.

During the first seventy-five years in the life of the Republic, the majority of its inhabitants lived in agricultural communities. To-day we find more than one-third of our American people living in cities. Our country contains the second largest city in the world, several cities with a population of more than one million souls each, and a very large number of cities, each with a population varying from fifty thousand to five hundred thousand.

We have been passing through what may be termed a "Civic Renaissance" since 1875. On the whole, I believe there has been a vast improvement in the methods of administration and a marked gain in department efficiency. The city is, or ought to be, a business corporation, the stockholders being its inhabitants, and its officers the men and women whom the stockholders select to manage their affairs. In addition to the business features of an administration there are the creative, the sanitary and the educational features of the corporation which make its management vastly different from the ordinary business corporation. To please the people, and at the same time administer an economical government, is a mysterious art which has rarely been mastered in any city of our country for a great length of time.

The greatest evil I have discovered in the government of a city is the careless or corrupt grants of franchises of public monopolies to private companies. In my opinion these franchises are responsible for the corruption which prevails in our legislative bodies. The owners of these franchises, in many cases, pay the election expenses of candidates, and these candidates are nominated in the interest of this corporation, and vote accordingly in their interest after they are elected.

These valuable franchises, such as water, gas, electricity, street railways, subways, etc., are indisputably responsible for the deplorable fact that thousands of voters are bought like sheep or cattle on election day. There are many people also who see nothing in the science of city government except a low tax rate, and are oblivious of the passing away of their birthright of their ownership in the streets whose value they create.

The people who use the streets of the city have an inherent right to them, and this right should not be made over as private property. One of the greatest of our municipal evils is unlimited franchises. It is the source of most of the political corruption prevailing in the United States. It was a mistake originally to have granted franchises for an unlimited period. At first the streets were not valuable but the concentration of a large number of people have made them more valuable than any form of property. I believe the city should always reserve the right to buy its franchises back after a certain tenure of years.

It has been estimated that the various corporations holding franchises throughout the country could safely pay a yearly tax on their franchise which would amount to more than one third of all municipal taxes that are paid by the people in the cities of the country.

It goes without saying that every city ought to own its water plant. While there may be a wide divergence of opinion over the question of municipalities owning and operating street railroads, there is little opposition to the general principle that water and lighting can be properly and economically furnished by the municipality. As a rule the largest cities in the United States own the water works.

As a result the cost of water to the people has been reduced to a minimum and the best possible supply of pure water has been secured. Up to within a few years, the City of Syracuse was furnished with water by a private company, which brought to the city the nearest water that could be supplied without regard to sanitary conditions. The one thought was to make a profit with the least possible expenditure. In consequence, water mains were laid only in such streets as were certain to yield a profit for the distribution of water. Under municipal ownership and control of the water works, Syracuse furnishes 40,000 gallons of water per annum at a rate of \$5 per family, as compared with a rate of \$18 for an equal quantity under private ownership of water works. And better still, under municipal ownership we get the purest water from the most beautiful lake in central New York.

Under private ownership of electricity the city of Syracuse pays one hundred thousand dollars per annum for about one thousand large electric lights, which sum is equal to 5 per cent. interest on two million dollars. For one-half this sum, and considerably less, the city could build and operate its lighting plant and furnish lamps at a price varying from one-third to one-half less than what we are paying at present. The same proposition is equally true of gas.

Water, gas, electricity, street railways are natural monopolies and in my opinion should be regarded in the same light as streets, bridges, canals, harbors or other public conveniences. They are absolutely necessary to the people, in every sense of the word and by their very nature are rightly characterized as natural monopolies.

Experience has shown that real competition does not exist long where more than one gas, water, electric lighting or street railway company are doing business in a city. In nearly every instance the inevitable result is consolidation or combination. What has been saved to the people by the presence of competing companies in the past, is more than made up by the profits of the combination in the long run. Permanent competition in these natural monopolies is impossible. Competition being impossible, it is necessary that the city should own, control and operate its own franchises.

New York City is many years behind interior cities in lighting facilities, for the reason that the gas companies have such a grip on the metropolis that many of the streets of New York are poorly illuminated by gaslamps which should have long since given way to electricity. A number of European cities furnish the inhabitants with gas of a fair quality at a price averaging from 60 cents per thousand. The price in American cities averages about \$1.50 per thousand, outside of the natural gas belt. Gas experts have estimated that, under municipal ownership, the average price of gas in American cities would not exceed 75 cents per thousand feet. In Berlin the city supplies gas for less than \$1 a thousand and the gas works' net returns to the city equal to about 15 per cent. of the net costs of conducting the city government. Nearly every attempt to reduce the price of gas by act of Legislature is defeated by the gas lobby.

The most serious objection to municipal ownership is the fear that the system will be operated so as to entrench the politicians, or the party in power. That is a danger which I admit forms a most serious objection, and which cannot be overcome unless the plants are operated strictly on honest principles—"A fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and no sinecures." The time is coming, however, when the people will see the advantage in utilizing these franchises in their own interest, and they will overcome the political objection to municipal ownership. I have always believed that the street cars and the street railroads ought to be owned and operated by the people. It may be thought that this suggestion extends the functions of municipal government too far, but in this connection I would call attention to the street railway system of Glasgow. I

quote from the London Chronicle:—"One Cent Street Car Fares":—"Glasgow runs its own street railroads and gives fine service and low rates."

"The fourth annual report of the Glasgow Corporation, which covers the 12 months ending May 31st, last, shows the continuous progress of this famous municipal enterprise. The gross profits have increased to £100,538 (\$502,690.) To appreciate fully the profitable character of the Glasgow municipal tramways, it should be remembered that the policy of the department is not to accumulate profits in aid of rates, but to build up a fine service, both cheap and efficient."

"It meets the interest (£18,497) on the capital and sinking-fund charges (£11,075), and in addition has this year set aside the large sum of £22,684 (\$113,490) for depreciation which is written off capital."

"There still remains a net surplus of £39,387 (\$196,935), which added to the payment of the common-good fund, would be sufficient to pay a dividend of 8 per cent. on the capital invested."

"Every year shows a great addition to the number of passengers carried. During the last twelve months the total number was 106,344,437, which is almost double the number carried the first year of the municipal working."

"The new competition of underground railways and subways in Glasgow has had no effect in arresting the development of the tramways, which show an increased revenue almost every week throughout the whole year."

"The report shows the increasing popularity of the half-penny (one cent) fares. Over 35 per cent of the tickets issued are for half-penny fares, and the average price obtained is only about three farthings (a cent and a half.)"

"The corporation is carrying out very important extensions, running its lines into suburbs. It is also pushing forward with its electric equipment of the Springburn and Mitchell street route. Arrangements are also being made to equip another line, and the cars are now being built in corporation workshops."

"While we are waiting for the municipal ownership of street railroads, we should not lose sight of the constant opportunities to secure returns from the sale of street railroad franchises. I believe in taxing the gross receipts of street railway franchises in no instance lower than two per cent., and on some lines as high as 15 per cent. of the receipts. Street railroad franchises in the city of New York have been auctioned off at as high as 30 per cent. of the gross receipts."

Mr. Furst, of Baltimore, told me not long ago that the street railroads pay into the city treasury 9 per cent. of their gross receipts and manage to pay dividends varying from 10 to 15 per cent. All reports agree that public management of franchises is superior to private management as a general management. That is to say the service is more satisfactory and the quality of the work performed much better.

Municipal reforms come slowly, first, because many sincere citizens believe that reforms can be accomplished by legislative restraint; secondly, the vast majority of citizens have no fixed municipal ideas. No two cities are governed alike. More than one-half of the ordinances adopted are dead letter laws because the people are indifferent to their execution. Our city charters have become great, cumbersome volumes, containing amendment after amendment which have a thousand interpretations. We find municipal government more frequently at a low ebb because manhood has been displaced for money and patriotism dethroned for material things. We have a double standard of morality for private and political life in American cities which is contrary to the teachings of Christianity. What is needed most of all in our civic life is a spirit of brotherly co-operations, which is the only spirit that can bring the standard of city government to the highest pinnacle of success.

has now become one of the regular studies. You will also be pleased to learn that the school to lead in this matter is one of the best parochial schools in the archdiocese of Chicago—St. Patrick's parochial of South Chicago. While the study of Irish history is now introduced into this school, it must not be inferred that it was done without an effort on the part of the parents and others here who favored the project. But this effort has been crowned with success, and what has been accomplished at South Chicago can, by a similar effort on the part of

earnest intelligent men, be accomplished in every parish in the city where an English-speaking parochial school is established. As there are Irish-Americans in every parish in Chicago who are as much interested in having the history of their motherland taught their children as the men of South Chicago, a statement in your columns of how the matter was brought to a successful issue here may prove useful and interesting.

Last fall, when the Seventh Regiment was returning home, a number of the leading Irish-Americans of this part of the city held a meeting to arrange for a suitable reception to the gallant soldier boys, it having been stated that the regiment was to delay for some time at South Chicago before proceeding further into the city. Having transacted the business for which these gentlemen met, conversation turned on Irish affairs, and during this conversation the teaching of Irish history in the parochial schools was discussed at some length. The project, as presented by those who had given the matter previous study, so commended itself to all present that before separating they promised not only to lend such a movement their moral support, but also to contribute all necessary financial aid. The matter was then taken up in earnest with the result as above stated.

An organization known as "The South Chicago Irish Historical Society" was first elected. The members of this Society met regularly and directed the work on intelligent lines. The greatest difficulty encountered was the procuring of a good text-book. A M. Sullivan's Story of Ireland," as issued by the Pilot Publishing Company, of Boston, was considered the most suitable for school purposes of any of the works on Irish history so far published. Having completed all preliminary arrangements a committee called on Rev. M. Vandelaar, pastor of St. Patrick's Church and stated to him their desire to have Irish schools under his charge. No sooner had the committee clearly presented their case than it received Father Vandelaar's warm approval. The Sister Superiors of the schools was next called upon and she too consented to the committee's request.

In order not to make the matter burdensome financially on the children or their parents, and that all the children so desiring might have a chance to commence the study at once, the committee agreed to furnish the text-books free to the school. As it was found practical to confine the study to the children of the high school during the present year, the committee ordered thirty-six copies of "The Story of Ireland" and placed them in the hands of the Sisters. But the members of the society do not intend to drop their work here. They have arranged to give, from time to time, addresses on subjects connected with Irish history, literature and music delivered before the students of the school, and they have also arranged for a series of premiums—medals, books, etc.—to be given to the most proficient students at the end of the school year. This is as far as the work can be pushed at present but it is a favorable beginning.

Now, as I before stated, I believe that what has been done here can be done elsewhere. All that is needed is an intelligent organization to work in every parish. But, in order to give this matter a still more forcible direction, I would suggest the formation of a central organization, composed of men well known for their knowledge of Irish history—men who would command the confidence of the clergy and laity alike, and especially men whose interest in Irish affairs is not dictated by selfish motives. Any number of such men can be found in Chicago, and I am sure if this matter is once properly presented to them they will be just as ready to take the subject up as were the men of South Chicago.—Very truly yours,

P. T. O'SULLIVAN,
Secretary South Chicago Irish Historical Society.

PARNELL AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

We take the following interesting sketch of Parnell from the New Parliamentary weekly, "Lords and Commons"; it is admirably written:—

"When the political situation demanded attention of him, and when no formal meeting of his party was deemed necessary, he usually consulting a few of his leading colleagues in one of two places in the House. If the difficulty was a mere passing one as to what it would be best to do or say immediately, Mr. Parnell and one or two of his advisers withdrew from the chamber, and, seated in the lower corner of the "No" Division Lobby, the point at issue was quickly settled. If the moment for action in the House was still some time off, he might be seen in close consultation with either Justin McCarthy, Mr. Sexton, or Mr. Healy, walking up

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IT IS THE BEST.

and down the quiet, silent corridor running by the side of the Library to the Speaker's Office. This was generally the place where important decisions were reached. No man was so often the cynosure of all eyes in the Lobby as was Parnell. Ministers might be defeated, or meet a crisis in their career, but they could withdraw behind the Speaker's Chair and seek the quietude of their own rooms. But in many a late charged moment the Irish Leader had to come into the full light of the Lobby, where his bearing and attitude might be scruti-

ned by all who were there. He was the centre of such study when he entered for the first time after the Kilmainham Treaty, after the Phoenix Park Assassinations when the Times published the Pigot forgeries, when the special Commissioner gave judgment in his favor, when the decree of the Divorce Court shattered his career. Through all these ordeals, fit to test the strongest soul and the most iron nerve, from the first until the last, he was the same Parnell—imperturbable, unreadable, Sphinx-like."

Study of the Irish Language.

The Rev. Richard Henebry, Professor of Celtic Languages, in the Catholic University, Washington, has written a most useful letter regarding the study of the sound of Irish words. For the benefit of our "Gaelic Society," we will reproduce a few of his most important statements. After showing that the language to be scientifically treated must be heard, and that it is the business of phonology to translate orthography, and give a voice to literature, he says that the study of Irish should be undertaken with an utter disregard for prejudices derived from English. Irish written characters and Irish pronunciation have persisted unchanged for over 1500 years. If then deals with the introduction of the Latin Alphabet when Christianity came to Ireland. Having demonstrated that the ancient Irish grammarians were exact and thorough beyond parallel, he comes to a new consideration, and this we give in full. It is this:—

"That all the peoples speaking kindred languages occupying the territory stretching from the mouth of the Ganges to the mouth of the Shannon, only those inhabiting the extreme limits on either side have preserved certain common characteristics derived from the Indo-European tongue and the folk who used it. Those are the Irish and the Aryan or Sanskrit peoples, and their common characteristics are the blend or bonded system of language, and their knowledge and use of an exact science or grammar, look back as far as we may into the history of these peoples we are ever confronted by the fact that they, and they only, conscientiously subjected their languages to analysis and grammatical classification. None other of the kindred peoples presents this exact study as the invariable concomitant of their literary history. The science of grammar was of very recent growth among the Greeks and Romans, and developed only when the glory of their golden period was paling to extinction. But the grammatical activity of the Irish and of the people of India began in the prehistoric period and reaches down to the present day. How in both cases the later exercise of this study tended to disassociate itself from the language and establish itself as an independent

science is a commonplace. In fact, the results of the over-prosecution of grammar and lexicography on this self-contained basis constitute a serious stumbling block nowadays to the students of Irish and Sanskrit. Originally not the word but the sentence was the unit element of language.

The second characteristic uniting the East and the West is the chained property of language called, in Sanskrit, sandhi, and in Irish grammar, vocalic, consonantal and nasal inflection. This is a peculiarity springing from the language of primitive unity by virtue of which all words were bonded, dovetailed, and fitted together; inasmuch that it is plain that not the word, but the sentence, was the unit element of language. In the intermediate dialects traces of this may still be observed, merely enough to show that it was one time a universal feature. By the use of this property all the varying elements employed to put a complicated proposition into words are reduced to a level potential, and the sentence goes forth a knit and compacted thing that is not merely a procession of sounds, but a something possessing organic unity and life in all its members. Yet the subtle and complicated process involved would be comprised forthwith in the few rules for aspiration and ellipsis given by our new grammarians!

Those, and some like thoughts, should warn us that Irish phonology and orthography are not to be lightly approached, but rather in a befitting meekness of spirit, and with at least some of the necessary equipment of knowledge. A controversy, perhaps yet remembered, in a Dublin print of a few years ago, concerning the best method of simplifying (!) modern Irish orthography, will stand an example of that which should not be done. Learners, however, require to hold fast by only one principle—a determination to catch and reproduce with rigorous exactness the sounds of the language as they fall from a traditional, not a literary speaker.

NEW INVENTIONS.

- Below will be found the report of patents granted to inventors by the Canadian Government. This report is prepared especially for this paper by Messrs. Marion & Marion, Solicitors of patents and experts, New York Life Building, Montreal.
- 62,828. Joseph Alfred Plante, Quebec, Can., acetylene gas generating apparatus.
- 62,832. John William Bacon, Enderby B. C., chalk line reels.
- 62,850. Ury de Gunzburg, Vitry-sur-Seine, France, method for preserving and tawing skins.
- 62,858. Amedee Sabillot, Paris, France, process of manufacture sulphuric acid.
- 62,909. Walter Geo. Collins, Coramba, New South Wales, prospecting dishes.
- 62,912. Alex. Krofting, Christiana, Norway, improved system of apparatus for treating seaweed for the manufacture of industrial products.

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