The Municipal Problem of New York City.

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Introduction.

Since 1846 New York City has had twelve distinct charters. The latest one is that issued to Greater New York. Though grown to be one of the most conservative people on matters touching our national government, in municipal affairs we are the most innovative. City government in the United States is still in a rude, experimental stage. We have tried
to construct it on broad democratic principles, and the result has been, to say the least, extremely unsatisfactory. Thus, there has come into existence a tendency to discard conventional democracy and experiment in other fields. As an example of this growing tendency and the one most worthy of standing representative in the struggle for municipal reform government is New York City. It is the greatest of American cities, and it is in the great cities that our—
principal government has failed to grow with the changing and enlarging conditions. New York is forced just to the solution of great city government, the solution of which is much needed by her sister American cities. The unique place New York holds in the world's great cities should be sufficient claim to insure a national interest in her effort to secure good municipal government.

An English writer, Mr. W. H. Stead, says nine-tenths of the world judge...
New York for their impression of America.
This is the great journalistic centre of the United States. New York is the harbor of all the great ocean liners. New York is America's great commercial centre for international trade.
In this great city, it is the writers intention to observe some of the municipal machinery beginning with the American rule at the time of its exposure by the Dewey Committee's investigation and trace the attempted
correction of the system in its substitute, the Greater New York Charter.
This new charter is regarded as an incident in the evolving
government of New York City. It is yet incomplete and defic-
tive.
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Part I

Pamuny Hall

Chap. 1.

An outgrowth of its

Envir onments.

Mr. Rith Lowe writes

that "The aim of the

Americans for many

years deliberately was

to make a city govern-

ment where no office

by himself could have

power enough to do

much harm. The nat-

ural result of this was

to create a situation

where no office has

the power to do good."

The check and balance
system, so strong in democracy, proved too rigid for the practical administration of municipal government.

Dr. Albert Shaw observes that in the United States there has been a strong and unscientific theory that it is unsafe to lodge a full authority anywhere — and so this has resulted an inextricable network which has made ineradicable the dispersion of all authority and responsibility, and made the municipal domain
a rich field for political free-booting and machine-workers."

The "machine" grew out of these conditions to fill the void once filled by the immediate democracy created with every government there. Thus must be lodged a central responsibility and authority. If such is not created by legislation, it will of necessity come into existence of itself. So chaotic and complex have been New York's charters that many years ago in its form days was a
real aid to the working of the charters. In spite of its corruption its rule was endured for long years in despair of other government. It has occasionally shocked public morality and temporarily dislodged its power. It has all the time been an irresponsible power with almost sovereign authority.

I need, the old Tammany Boss, apologized for the corruption of the ring and threw the blame on the system under which New York was ruled.
Chapt. 11

"To the victor belong the spoils."

This Jacksonian doctrine has under Panmouny management reached its colossal capabilities. It is the spoils that are to be sieved out that have so long held the organization together and bound it so closely.

Concerning its strength Mr. Baker writes that "in respect of age, skillful management, unity of purpose, devotion to correct principle, public usefulness and..."
Finally, success, it has no
superior, and in my opin-
on we equal in pol-
tical affairs the world
over. Any one would
probably admit this
a fair estimate of
the Pan-American democ-
acy, if the bold claim
of "devotion to right
principle" and "public
usefulness" were ex-
cepted. The organiza-
tion is not perfect.
The system has grown
to stand over and
direct the constitution
at machinery of the
government, made to
work of itself without
This additional Tammany supervision.

The ring seems organized with an eye to spoils. Nor does "Boss" Croker attempt to defend the policy. He says Tammany does stand by its friends and it always will until some change occurs in human affairs as will make it praise worthy and beneficial that a man or an association should stand by his or its enemies. In fact Tammany never makes use of the fruits of that
fullest extent. Merit counts for little. It is regretted that in America the best men rarely enter politics. The spoils system is largely held accountable for this state of affairs. The rank and file of Tammany membership is made up of a distinctly common class. The patronage is confined to this class and as a result New York City has had a set of officials that have brought discredit on her government.
Chapt. III.
The City Commission.

During the year 1892 Mr. Parkhurst began the study of the then existing municipal government and from his pulpit made the startling statement that "there is not a form under which the devil disguises himself that does perplex us in our efforts, or so bewilders us in the devising of our scheme as the political harpies that under the pretense of governing this city are feeding..."
day and night on its quivering vital's. They are a lying, perjured, rum-soaked and libidinous lot." Dr. Parkhurst was forced to make some further investigations to sustain his statements. They were easily found and proclaimed. Public opinion demanded a judicial investigation. The Dew Committee was assigned the work what it announced in the summer of '94 as founded the world. The records show a total of 10,576 pages of
Proceedings: 638 witnesses. It is impossible to comprehend the utter corruption of the machine without reaching the testimonial of the witnesses given under peculiar circumstances. Mr. Parkhurst had found the real proof of corruption when he began his war against the police. The whole police was rotten to the core. We cannot do more than merely refer to the catalogue of their crimes. The proceedings show case upon case.
where the police had been guilty of the most brutal treatment against those under arrest and even against innocent persons. There was no redress to be gotten. The Reports contain this statement. "It appears therefore that the police formed a separate and highly privileged class, armed with authority and machinery for oppression and punishment but practically free themselves from the operation of the criminal law."

In addition to the col-
oscal evils that a full array of the evils system brings into existence there existed in New York under the direction of Tammany, a system of promotion by purchase. There seems to have been fixed regular prices that must be paid into the Tammany treasury to hold an office or procure a promotion. There was a practical exclusion from official public life of all who could not pay a large sum, amounting often to the whole salary of the position.
The collection of black mail was found to permeate the whole police department. Saloons paid a monthly fee to the police of the precinct for the privilege of violating the Sunday law. Houses of ill fame, that had no legal existence, were sources of rich revenue to the police and testimony of witnesses show cases where they have actually forced persons in charge of such houses to continue business against their will under threats of arrest.
The investigations show that nearly every conceivable form of crime was allowed to flourish in the city under an organized system of blackmail.

In regard to the election at friends, the Committee reports say: "It has been conclusively shown that in a very large number of districts, almost every conceivable crime against the elective franchise was either committed or permitted by the police, invariably in the interest of the dominant Democratic
organization, -- I mean any Hall." This evidence was established by a large number of witnesses and shows that the frauds were carried on on a stupendous scale. One wonders how such a state of affairs could possibly exist in the first city of the New World. The lethargy of the good people, partly explains all this had transpired behind the curtains, and once revealed, New York stood amazed with surprise, at the powerful, corrupt Tammany organization.
Part II
Reform Movements
Chap. I
Beginning to make changes.

The people once shown the real state of their municipal bill, began movements for reform. The next election for mayor saw the party line drawn between the two great factions, Tammany and anti-Tammany. The anti-Tammany forces were organized and the campaign conducted by a committee of private citizens.
The various municipal reform societies of the city formed a truce. The result was the election of Mayor Strong. This happened to be a Republican majority at Albany, that gave the power of removal of heads of departments. This enabled Mayor Strong to make a clean sweep of the Tammany men and appoint in their place men whom he judged possessing integrity, ability, and conscientious desire to make the city's interests the first
objec[t] of their thoughts."

There was another change under consideration. Since 1892, there had been a commission at work for the preparation of a scheme uniting under one government what now constitutes the Great New York.

Recently a journalist pointed out that the Spanish mind does not know how to remedy a bad law. Its redress is the assassination of the officers. In America the opposite tendency seems to prevail. Of any thing go.
wrong in the adminis-
tration of a law, our
first impulse is to
change the law. We
too seldom enquire if
a change of man would
be for the better. A de-
ocratic system regards
a full authority nowhere
and has no great account
ability to claim. It
has been our prime
aim to create an office
and so hedge it in that
misrule cannot exist.
Authority is thus curtail-
ed and made unwork-
able. About such were
the conditions under
which January sprang
into existence. Pamunkey itself, corrupt
as it became, has at
least taught New York
charter makes one valuable
lesson in municipal
government, and it is
not too much to say
that a good part of the
workable machinery
of the great New York
charter is gotten from
Pamunkey experience.
The lesson taught is
that there must be a
central authority vested
with power and account-
ability. Election will
create the accountability
which is not held over Pamunkey.
Chapter 11.

The Machinery of the Great New York Charter.

There were two things the New Yorkers had pretty generally come to consider essential in a new charter. The one was that Albany's perpetual interference should at last be greatly curtailed, and that New York should be governed "at New York, by the people of New York, and for the sake of New York." The other was the demand for some more centralized,
and thereby more fully responsible, form of government. Both are worked out in the new charter. There were hundreds of measures of a purely local and special nature which every year were introduced into the state legislation and in transposing this species of work, the commission created a local body analogous in its legislative methods to that of the State. This municipal assembly is divided into two branches, the lower chamber being the Board of Alder-
men of sixty members
and the upper chamber of
Council of Twenty-nine
members. The Council is
elected for a period of
four years and the Alders
men for two. The Mayor
and President of the
Council are elected at
the same time as the
Council by the vote of
the whole city for a
period of four years.

It would be natural
and seem proper that
the Municipal Assembly
should exercise the
full deliberative and
legislative authority of
the city. But its power
is strangely curtailed by the peculiar construction of the executive. The mayor is entitled the chief executive. He cannot be immediately re-elected. The business of city administration is divided into eighteen executive departments.

Some of these departments are to be administered by a single head, or by a commission, and others by a board of several men. Dr. Albert Shaw, to whom the writer stands largely indebted for this analysis, says: 'The charter-makers have
considered that the work of certain departments involves a relatively large element of deliberation. As a result power seeming to belong exclusively to the municipal assembly is trans ferred to the departments. The same authority further says: "The system ... puts the executive government wholly into the hands of the eighteen departments, which are practically supreme in their respective eighteen spheres, except as they are limited by ... the boards."
of apportionment and public improvement."
Their departments are filled by appointment of the mayor, and his power of removal extends over the first six months of his mayorsity and practically closes there.
The mayor is given the additional office of President or chairman of the board of estimate and apportionment, through whose hands all estimates of expenditures must pass.
The mayor also has the power of veto, but no measures can be carried over his head pro-
vided they can command a sufficient majority. This majority is not the same for all bills, but varies according to the nature of the proposed legislation. The Assembly will scarcely be able to know what kind of a majority is required to pass a bill without reference to the above. The charter itself is a massive work of about 1100 pages and so complex that no one can boast a thorough comprehension of it. This outline will serve the present purpose.
Chap. III.

A Link in the Evolving Government.

The great New York Charter is far removed from the conventional democratic idea. The municipal assembly, elected by the popular vote, holding full authority and administering under local self-government was the original ideal democratic municipal government. There has been for a long time a marked tendency to throw into discredit
the assembly. The first growth could not be much completed than under the new charter. To the question why they are assembled, der. Shaw remarks, "There can be but one answer; they are there to carry on a debating society, and to rage in vain at their own impotence." That we, the great representatives of democracy should take such a course is strange. In a study of the European municipal governments, der. Shaw observes, "There
are many variations in the detailed structure of municipal government in the several European countries, but in them all one finds the same fundamental fact, that the basis of municipal government is the king led-chambered council out of which, or by authority of which, is evolved a pure system of government." Of the New York (Greater) government, he says, "This is government, not by the municipal parliament, not by an automatic mayor, but yet by the famil-
ian American system of an executive and a legislative counter-balancing each other.
But it is bureaucracy, pure and simple." Mr. W. S. Bland does Dr. Shaw the honor of following his analysis of the chart to a considerable extent and adds concerning it, that it has "written on its face throughout going distrust of the people," that its aspect is "black with despair." Machine government drove the people to this ex-pedient. It is the
direct but came, the res-ult of the bitter expe-
rience of Tammany rule. Since "Boss" rule
seemed fixed upon them,
the people at least pre-
ferred to choose the "Boss."
Brooklyn tried the
expedient in 1882 of
lodging almost absolute
authority in the hands
of her mayor, elected
every two years. Dr.
Chase appropriately said
it resembled a
corporation fallen into
the hands of a receiver.
The Greater New York
Charter does not go
so far. It has dio-
tributed the power among the different departments of the manner of a strict bureaucracy, and so great are the number of checks and safeguards against the abuse of power conferred upon the municipal assembly that it bears the stamp of distrust and curtailment. The charter is workable, and will insure the city good government provided properly disposed and manipulated. The city has this
Sound policy still to learn, - that good men in office are more necessary than change, great though the latter may be. The development of the true civic spirit will go far toward bringing about good city government.