

park do., sewer do., assessor and collector of water rates, commissioner of public buildings, commissioner of supplies, commissioner of health, inspector of boilers, city counsellor, jury commissioner, recorder of votes, city attorney, two police court judges, jailer, superintendent of workhouse, chief fire engineer, gas inspector, assessors, and several city contractors and minor officers.

The four police commissioners who, along with the mayor, are charged with the public safety of St. Louis, are appointed by the Governor of Missouri, with the view of keeping this department "out of city politics." In 1886 the police force was 593 men strong, besides 200 private watchmen, paid by their employers, but wearing a uniform and sworn in by the police board.

The city School Board consists of 28 members, one from each ward, elected for three years, one-third retiring annually. It is independent of the mayor and Assembly, chooses its staff and all teachers, has charge of the large school funds, and levies a school tax, which, however, the city collector collects.

The strong points of this charter are deemed to be "the length of term of its municipal officers; the careful provisions for honest registration and the party purity of elections; the checks on financial administration and limitations of the debt, and the fact that the important offices to which the mayor appoints are not vacant till the beginning of his third year of office, so that as rewards of political work done during a heated campaign they are too far in the distance to prejudice seriously the merits of an election."<sup>1</sup>

On the whole the charter has worked well. The public works are efficiently managed, and the city credit stands high. Nevertheless the European reader will feel some surprise at the number of elective offices and at the limited terms for which all important offices are held. He will note that even in democratic America the control of the police by city politicians has been deemed too dangerous to be suffered to remain in their unclean hands. And he will contrast what may be called the political character of the whole city constitution with the somewhat simpler and less ambitious, though also less democratic arrangements, which have been found sufficient for the management of European cities.

<sup>1</sup> Snow, *ut supra*.

## CHAPTER LI

### THE WORKING OF CITY GOVERNMENTS

Two tests of practical efficiency may be applied to the government of a city: What does it provide for the people, and what does it cost the people? Space fails me to apply in detail the former of these tests, by showing what each city does or omits to do for its inhabitants; so I must be content with observing that in the United States generally constant complaints are directed against the bad paving and cleansing of the streets, the non-enforcement of the laws forbidding gambling and illicit drinking, and in some places against the sanitary arrangements and management of public buildings and parks. It would appear that in the greatest cities there is far more dissatisfaction than exists with the municipal administration in such cities as Glasgow, Manchester, Dublin, Hamburg, Lyons.

The following indictment of the government of Philadelphia is somewhat exceptional in its severity, and however well founded as to that city, must not be taken to be typical. A memorial presented to the Pennsylvania legislature in 1883 by a number of the leading citizens of the Quaker City contained these words:—

"The affairs of the city of Philadelphia have fallen into a most deplorable condition. The amounts required annually for the payment of interest upon the funded debt and current expenses render it necessary to impose a rate of taxation which is as heavy as can be borne.

"In the meantime the streets of the city have been allowed to fall into such a state as to be a reproach and a disgrace. Philadelphia is now recognized as the worst-paved and worst-cleaned city in the civilized world.

"The water supply is so bad that during many weeks of the last winter it was not only distasteful and unwholesome for drinking, but offensive for bathing purposes.

"The effort to clean the streets was abandoned for months, and no at-



tempt was made to that end until some public-spirited citizens, at their own expense, cleaned a number of the principal thoroughfares.

"The system of sewerage and the physical condition of the sewers is notoriously bad — so much so as to be dangerous to the health and most offensive to the comfort of our people.

"Public work has been done so badly that structures have had to be renewed almost as soon as finished. Others have been in part constructed at enormous expense, and then permitted to fall to decay without completion.

"Inefficiency, waste, badly-paved and filthy streets, unwholesome and offensive water, and slovenly and costly management, have been the rule for years past throughout the city government."

In most of the points comprised in the above statement, Philadelphia was probably at that date — for her government has since been reformed — among the least fortunate of American cities. He, however, who should interrogate one of the "good citizens" of Baltimore, Cincinnati, New Orleans, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, would have heard then, and would hear now, similar complaints, some relating more to the external condition of the city, some to its police administration, but all showing that the objects for which municipal government exists have been very imperfectly attained.

The other test, that of expense, is easily applied. Both the debt and the taxation of American cities have risen with unprecedented rapidity, and now stand at an alarming figure.

A table of the increase of population, valuation, taxation, and debt, in fifteen of the largest cities of the United States, from 1860 to 1875 shows the following result: —

Increase in population . . . . .	70.5 per cent.
" taxable valuation . . . . .	156.9 "
" debt . . . . .	270.9 "
" taxation . . . . .	363.2 <sup>1</sup> "

Looking at some individual cases, we find that the debt rose as follows: —

Philadelphia . . . . .	1867, \$35,000,000 — 1877, \$64,000,000
Chicago . . . . .	" 4,750,000 — " 13,456,000
St. Louis . . . . .	" 5,500,000 — " 16,500,000
Pittsburg . . . . .	" 3,000,000 — " 13,000,000 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Municipal Development of Philadelphia*, by Messrs. Allinson and Penrose, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Article "Cities" (by Mr. S. Stern) in *Amer. Cyclop. of Polit. Science*. He observes: "The cost of opening or improving highways and of placing

Much of this debt is doubtless represented by permanent improvements, yet for another large, and in some cities far larger, part there is nothing to show; it is due to simple waste or to malversation on the part of the municipal authorities.

As respects current expenditure, New York in 1884 spent on current city purposes, exclusive of payments on account of interest on debt, sinking fund, and maintenance of judiciary, the sum of \$20,232,786 — equal to \$16.76 (£3: 8s.) for each inhabitant (census of 1880). In Boston, in the same year, the city expenditure was \$9,909,019 — equal to \$27.30 (£5: 9: 3) for each inhabitant (census of 1880). In 1889 the total ordinary expenditure of New York was \$48,937,694 (being \$32.30 for each inhabitant); that of Boston, \$16,117,043 (being \$35.94 for each inhabitant).<sup>1</sup>

There is no denying that the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States. The deficiencies of the National government tell but little for evil on the welfare of the people. The faults of the State governments are insignificant compared with the extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement which mark the administrations of most of the great cities. For these evils are not confined to one or two cities. The commonest mistake of Europeans who talk about America is to assume that the political vices of New York are found everywhere. The next most common is to suppose that they are found nowhere else. In New York they have revealed themselves on the largest scale. They are "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." But there is not a city with a population exceeding 200,000 where the poison germs have not sprung into a vigorous life; and in some of the smaller ones, down to 70,000, it needs no microscope to note the results of their growth. Even in cities of the third rank similar phenomena may occasionally be discerned, though there, as

sewers in streets is of course not included in this vast aggregate of moneys annually levied and debt rolled up, because the cost of those improvements is levied directly upon the land by way of assessments, and they never figure as part of the ordinary expenditure of the city."

In New York the total net funded debt was in Dec. 1891, \$97,857,230.

<sup>1</sup> These totals of 1890 (census returns) include all the ordinary expenditures, but not sums paid for investment securities or redemption of municipal debt.



some one has said, the jet black of New York or San Francisco dies away into a harmless gray.

For evils which appear wherever a large population is densely aggregated, there must be some general and widespread causes. What are these causes? Adequately to explain them would be to anticipate the account of the party system to be given in the latter part of this volume, for it is that party system which has, not perhaps created, but certainly enormously aggravated them, and impressed on them their specific type.<sup>1</sup> I must therefore restrict myself for the present to a brief enumeration of the chief sources of the malady, and the chief remedies that have been suggested for or applied to it. No political subject has been so copiously discussed of late years in America by able and experienced publicists, nor can I do better than present the salient facts in the words which some of these men, speaking in a responsible position, have employed.

The New York commissioners of 1876 appointed "to devise a plan for the government of cities in the State of New York," sum up the mischief as follows:<sup>2</sup>—

"1. The accumulation of permanent municipal debt: In New York it was, in 1840, \$10,000,000; in 1850, \$12,000,000; in 1860, \$18,000,000; in 1870, \$73,000,000; in 1876, \$113,000,000.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Part III., and especially Chapters LXII. and LXIII. See also the chapters in Vol. II. on the Tammany Ring in New York City, and the Gas Ring in Philadelphia. The full account given in those chapters of the phenomena of municipal misgovernment in the two largest cities in the United States seems to dispense me from the duty of here describing those phenomena in general.

<sup>2</sup> The commission, of which Mr. W. M. Evarts (afterwards senator from New York) was chairman, included some of the ablest men in the State, and its report, presented 6th March 1877, may be said to have become classical. Most of it is as applicable now to great cities as it was in 1876.

<sup>3</sup> The New York commissioners say: "The magnitude and rapid increase of this debt are not less remarkable than the poverty of the results exhibited as the return for so prodigious an expenditure. It was abundantly sufficient for the construction of all the public works of a great metropolis for a century to come, and to have adorned it besides with the splendours of architecture and art. Instead of this, the wharves and piers are for the most part temporary and perishable structures; the streets are poorly paved; the sewers in great measure imperfect, insufficient, and in bad order; the public buildings shabby and inadequate; and there is little which the citizen can regard with satisfaction, save the aqueduct and its appurtenances and the public park. Even these should not be said to be the product of the public debt; for the expense occasioned by them is, or should have been, for the most part already extinguished. In truth, the larger part of the city debt represents a vast aggregate of moneys wasted, embezzled, or misapplied."

"2. The excessive increase of the annual expenditure for ordinary purposes: In 1816 the amount raised by taxation was less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the taxable property; in 1850, 1.13 per cent; in 1860, 1.69 per cent; in 1870, 2.17 per cent; in 1876, 2.67 per cent. . . . The increase in the annual expenditure since 1850, as compared with the increase of population, is more than 400 per cent, and as compared with the increase of taxable property, more than 200 per cent."

They suggest the following as the causes:—

1. Incompetent and unfaithful governing boards and officers.

"A large number of important offices have come to be filled by men possessing little, if any, fitness for the important duties they are called upon to discharge. . . . These unworthy holders of public trusts gain their places by their own exertions. The voluntary suffrage of their fellow-citizens would never have lifted them into office. Animated by the expectation of unlawful emoluments, they expend large sums to secure their places, and make promises beforehand to supporters and retainers to furnish patronage or place. The corrupt promises must be redeemed. Anticipated gains must be realized. Hence old and educated subordinates must be dismissed and new places created to satisfy the crowd of friends and retainers. Profitable contracts must be awarded, and needless public works undertaken. The amounts required to satisfy these illegitimate objects enter into the estimates on which taxation is eventually based, in fact they constitute in many instances a superior lien upon the moneys appropriated for government, and not until they are in some manner satisfied do the real wants of the public receive attention. It is speedily found that these unlawful demands, together with the necessities of the public, call for a sum which, if taken at once by taxation, would produce dissatisfaction and alarm in the community, and bring public indignation upon the authors of such burdens. For the purpose of averting such consequences divers pretences are put forward suggesting the propriety of raising means for alleged exceptional purposes by loans of money, and in the end the taxes are reduced to a figure not calculated to arouse the public to action, and any failure thus to raise a sufficient sum is supplied by an issue of bonds. . . . Yet this picture fails altogether to convey an adequate notion of the elaborate systems of depredation which, under the name of city governments, have from time to time afflicted our principal cities; and it is moreover a just indication of tendencies in operation in all our cities, and which are certain, unless arrested, to gather increased force. It would clearly be within bounds to say that more than one-half of all the present city debts are the direct results of the species of intentional and corrupt misrule above described."

2. The introduction of State and national politics into municipal affairs.



"The formation of general political parties upon differences as to general principles or methods of State policy is useful, or at all events inevitable. But it is rare indeed that any such questions, or indeed any upon which good men ought to differ, arise in connection with the conduct of municipal affairs. Good men cannot and do not differ as to whether municipal debt ought to be restricted, extravagance checked, and municipal affairs lodged in the hands of competent and faithful officers. There is no more reason why the control of the public works of a great city should be lodged in the hands of a Democrat or a Republican than there is why an adherent of one or the other of the great parties should be made the superintendent of a business corporation. Good citizens interested in honest municipal government can secure that object only by acting together. Political divisions separate them at the start, and render it impossible to secure the object desired equally by both. . . . This obstacle to the union of good citizens paralyzes all ordinary efforts for good municipal government. . . . The great prizes in the shape of place and power which are offered on the broad fields of national and State politics offer the strongest incentives to ambition. Personal advancement is in these fields naturally associated with the achievement of great public objects, and neither end can be secured except through the success of a political party to which they are attached. The strife thus engendered develops into a general battle in which each side feels that it cannot allow any odds to the other. If one seeks to turn to its advantage the patronage of municipal office, the other must carry the contest into the same sphere. It is certain that the temptation will be withstood by neither. It then becomes the direct interest of the foremost men of the nation to constantly keep their forces in hostile array, and these must be led by, among other ways, the patronage to be secured by the control of local affairs. . . . Next to this small number of leading men there is a large class who, though not dishonest or devoid of public spirit, are led by habit and temperament to take a wholly partisan view of city affairs. Their enjoyment of party struggles, their devotion to those who share with them the triumphs and defeats of the political game, are so intense that they gradually lose sight of the object for which parties exist or ought to exist, and considerable proportions of them in their devotion to politics suffer themselves to be driven from the walks of regular industry, and at last become dependent for their livelihood on the patronage in the hands of their chiefs. Mingled with them is nearly as large a number to whom politics is simply a mode of making a livelihood or a fortune, and who take part in political contests without enthusiasm, and often without the pretence of an interest in the public welfare, and devote themselves openly to the organization of the vicious elements of society in combinations strong enough to hold the balance in a closely-contested election, overcome the political leaders, and secure a fair share of the municipal patronage, or else extort immunity from the officers of the law. . . . The rest of the community, embracing the large majority of the more thrifty classes, averse to engaging in what they deem the 'low business' of politics, or

hopeless of accomplishing any substantial good in the face of such powerful opposing interests, for the most part content themselves with acting in accordance with their respective parties. . . . It is through the agency of the great political parties, organized and operating as above described, that our municipal officers are and have long been selected. It can scarcely be matter of wonder then that the present condition of municipal affairs should present an aspect so desperate."

3. The assumption by the State legislature of the direct control of local affairs.

"This legislative intervention has necessarily involved a disregard of one of the most fundamental principles of republican government (the self-government of municipalities). . . . The representatives elected to the central (State) legislature have not the requisite time to direct the local affairs of the municipalities. . . . They have not the requisite knowledge of details. . . . When a local bill is under consideration in the legislature, its care and explanation are left exclusively to the representatives of the locality to which it is applicable; and sometimes by express, more often by a tacit understanding, local bills are 'log-rolled' through the houses. Thus legislative duty is delegated to the local representatives, who, acting frequently in combination with the sinister elements of their constituency, shift the responsibility for wrongdoing from themselves to the legislature. But what is even more important, the general representatives have not that sense of personal interest and personal responsibility to their constituents which are indispensable to the intelligent administration of local affairs. And yet the judgment of the local governing bodies in various parts of the State, and the wishes of their constituents, are liable to be overruled by the votes of legislators living at a distance of a hundred miles. . . . To appreciate the extent of the mischief done by the occupation of the central legislative body with the consideration of a multitude of special measures relating to local affairs, some good, probably the larger part bad, one has only to take up the session laws of any year at random and notice the subjects to which they relate. Of the 808 acts passed in 1870, for instance, 212 are acts relating to cities and villages, 94 of which relate to cities, and 36 to the city of New York alone. A still larger number have reference to the city of Brooklyn. These 212 acts occupy more than three-fourths of the 2000 pages of the laws of that year. . . . The multiplicity of laws relating to the same subjects thus brought into existence is itself an evil of great magnitude. What the law is concerning some of the most important interests of our principal cities can be ascertained only by the exercise of the patient research of professional lawyers. In many instances even professional skill is baffled. Says Chief-Justice Church: 'It is scarcely safe for any one to speak confidently on the exact condition of the law in respect to public improvements in the cities of New York and Brooklyn. The enactments referring thereto have been modified, superseded, and repealed so often and to such an extent that it is