NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

The October number of this sterling periodical is particularly lively. The article which will attract the most notice, at least in this part of the world, is Mr. James Parton's spirited review of "The Government of the City of New-York;" and, about election time especially, we could wish nobody more spicy reading. Mr. Parton has not only taken pains to make himself familiar with the machinery of our city government, and a good many of the inner mysteries of iniquity whose temple is the City Hall; but in the pursuit of knowledge he has even been a frequent listener to the "debates" of our Common Council, and a witness of the insolent mockery with which the six honest Councilmen of New-York are persistently over-ridden and laugbed at by the corrupt majority in that august assemblage. Here are a few specimens of what he saw and heard:

The twenty-four Councilmen who have provided themselves with such ample assistance at such costly accommodation are mostly very young men—the majority appear to be under thirty. Does the reader remember the pleasant description given by Mr. Hawthorne of the sprightly young bar-keeper who rainbows the glittering drink so dexterously from one tumbler to another? That sprightly young bar-keeper might stand as the type of the young men composing this Board. There are respectable men in the body. There are six who have never knowingly cast an improper vote. There is one respectable physician, three lawyers, ten mechanics, and only four who acknowledge to be dealers in liquors. But there is a certain air about most of these young Councilmen which, in the eyes of a New-Yorker, stamps them as belonging to what has been styled of late years "our ruling class,"—butcher-boys who have got into politics, bar-keepers who have taken a leading part in primary ward meetings, and young fellows who hang about engine-houses and billiard-rooms. A stranger would naturally expect to find in such a Board men who have shown ability and acquired distinction in private business. We say, again, that there are honest and estimable men in the body; but we also assert, that there is not an individual in it who has attained any considerable rank in the vocation which he professes. If we were to print the list here, not a name would be generally recognized. Honest Christopher Pullman for example, who leads the honest minority of six that vainly oppose every scheme of plunder, is a young man of twenty-seven, just beginning business as a cabinet-maker. Honest William B. White, another of the six, is the manager of a printing-office. Honest Stephen Roberts is a sturdy smith, who has a shop near a wharf for repairing the iron-work of ships. Morris A. Tyng, another of the honest six, is a young lawyer getting into practice. We make no remark upon these facts, being only desirous to show the business standing of the men to whom the citizens of New-York have confided the spending of sundry millions per annum. The majority of this Board are about equal, in point of experience and ability, to the management of an oyster-stand in a market. Such expressions as "them laws," "not the table," "Seventy-first rigment," and "them arguments is played out," may be heard on almost any Monday or Tuesday afternoon, between two and three o'clock, in this sumptuous chamber.

At almost every session we witnessed scenes like the following. A member proposed to lease a certain building for a city court at two thousand dollars a year for ten years. Honest Christopher Pullman, a faithful and laborious public servant, objected on one of two grounds,—first, rents being unnaturally high owing to several well-known and temporary causes; it would be unjust to the city to fix the rent at present rates for so long a period; secondly, he had been himself to see the building, had taken pains to inform himself as to its value, and was prepared to prove that twelve hundred dollars a year was a proper rent for it, even at the inflated rates. He made this statement with excellent brevity, moderation, and good temper, and concluded by moving that the term be two instead of ten years. A robust young man with a bull-neck and of ungrammatical habits said, in a tone expressive of impatient disdain, that the landlord of the building had "refused" fifteen hundred dollars a year for it. "Question!" "Question!" shouted half-a-dozen angry voices. The question was instantly put, when a perfect war of noes rolled down Mr. Pullman's amendment. Another hearty chorus of ayes consummated the iniquity. In all such affairs, the visitor notices a kind of ungovernable propensity to vote for spending money, and a prompt disgust at any obstacle raised or objection made. The bull-necked Councilman of uncertain grammar evidently felt that Mr. Pullman's modest interference on behalf of the tax-payer was a most gross impertinence. He felt himself an injured being, and his companions shared his indignation.

It is a favorite trick with these Councilmen, as of all politicians, to devise measures the passage of which will gratify large bodies of voters. This is one of the advantages proposed to be gained by the presentation of colors to regiments, and the same system is pursued with regard to churches and societies. At every one of the six sessions of the Councilmen which we attended, resolutions were introduced to give away the people's money to wealthy organizations. A church, for example, is assessed a thousand dollars for the construction of a sewer, which enhances the value of the church property by at least the amount of the assessment. Straightway a member from that neighborhood proposes to console the stricken church with a "donation" of a thousand dollars to enable it to pay the assessment; and as this is a proposition to vote money, it is carried as a matter of course. We select from our notes only one of these donating scenes. A member proposed to give two thousand dollars to a certain industrial school—the favorite charity of the place—to which all the benevolent most willingly subscribe. Vigilant Christopher Pullman reminded the board that it was unlawful for the Corporation to vote money for an object not specified in the tax levy, as finally sanctioned by the Legislature. He read the section of the act which forbade it. He further showed, from a statement by the Controller, that there was no money left at the disposal for any miscellaneous objects, since the appropriation for city contingencies was exhausted. The only reply to his remarks was the instant passage of the resolution by eighteen to five. By what artifice the law is likely to be evaded in such cases, we may show further on. In all probability, the industrial school, in the course of the year, will receive a fraction of this money, perhaps even so large a fraction as one-half. It may be that, ere now, some obliging person about the City Hall has offered to buy the claim for a thousand dollars, and take the risk of the hocus-pocus necessary for getting it—which to *him* is no risk at all.

It was proposed, on another occasion, to raise the fees of the inspectors of weights and measures, who received fifty cents for inspecting a pair of platform scales, and smaller sums for scales and measures of less importance. Here was a subject upon which honest Stephen Roberts, whose shop is in a street where scales and measures abound, was entirely at home. He showed, in his sturdy and strenuous manner, that, at the rates then established, an active man could make two hundred dollars a day. "Why," said he, "a man can inspect, and does inspect, fifty platform scales in an hour." The cry of "Question!" arose. The question was put, and the usual large chorus of ayes followed.

As it requires a three-fourths vote to grant money—i. e. eighteen members—it is sometimes impossible for the Ring to get that number together. There is a mode of preventing the absence or opposition of members from defeating favorite schemes. It is by way of "reconsideration." The time was, when a measure distinctly voted down by a lawful majority was dead; but by this expedient the voting down of a measure is only equivalent to its postponement to a more favorable occasion. The moment the chairman pronounces a resolution lost, the member who has it in charge moves a reconsideration; and, as a reconsideration requires only the vote of a majority, this is invariably carried. By a rule of the Board, a reconsideration carries a measure over to a future meeting—to any future meeting which may afford a prospect of its passage. The member whose engineering it watches his chance, labors with faltering members out of doors, and, as often as he thinks he can carry it, calls it up again, until at last the requisite eighteen are obtained. It has frequently happened that a member, after waiting five years in a state of reconsideration for months after robust young Ring for the happy moment to arrive. There was large pay for the Councilman who had a benevolent project in two horses which nine-hundred dollars for a hackney-coach, or the river one cold a drunken driver drove over the dock. Disagreement in the Ring night last Winter. There was some one was compelled to move on this measure, and the robust Ring, it was long before the for many reconsiderations. Admit of the appointment of a wires could be all arranged, Morarian, who has perhaps less to do "messenger" to the City, who is paid eighteen hundred dollars any man in New-York meets its reward. We hear that turns a year; but persons smoking in the City Hall at a salary of this messenger is fare.

Often hundreds, however also for preventing the attendance of There is a destructive members, like the honest six, which is obnoxious and effective. A "special meeting" is called. The ingenious makes that notice of a special meeting must be left at the residence or the place of business of every member. Mr. Roberts's residence and Mr. Roberts's place of business are eight miles apart, and he leaves his home for the day before nine in the morning. If Mr. Roberts's presence at a special meeting at 3 p. m. is desired, the notice is left at his shop in the morning. If it is not desired, the notice is sent to his house in Harlem. After he has left it, Mr. Pullman, cabinet-maker, leaves his shop at noon, goes home to dinner, and returns soon after one. If his presence at the special meeting at 2 p. m. is desired, the notice is left at his house the evening before, or at his shop in the morning. If his presence is not desired, the notice is left at his shop a few minutes after twelve, or at his house a few minutes past one. In either case, he receives the notice too late to reach the City Hall in time. We were present in the Councilmen's Chamber when Mr. Pullman stated this inconvenience, assuming that it was accidental, and offered an amendment to the rule, requiring notice to be left five hours before the time named for the meeting. Mr. Roberts also gave his experience in the matter of notices, and both gentlemen spoke with perfect moderation and good temper. We wish we could convey to our readers an idea of the brutal insolence with which Mr. Pullman, on this occasion, was snubbed and defeated by a young bar-keeper who happened to be in the Chair. But this would be impossible without relating the scene at very great length. The amendment proposed was voted down with that peculiar roar of *noes* which is always heard in that chamber when some honest man attempts to put an obstacle in the way of the free plunder of his fellow-citizens.

These half-fledged legislators are acquainted with the device known by the name of the "previous question." We witnessed a striking proof of this. One of the most audacious and insolent of the Ring introduced a resolution, vaguely worded, the object of which is to annul an old paving contract that would not pay at the present cost of labor and materials, and to authorize a new contract at higher rates. Before the clerk had finished reading the resolution, honest Stephen Roberts sprang to his feet, and, unrolling a remonstrance with several yards of signatures appended to it, stood, with his eye upon the chairman, ready to present it the moment the reading was concluded. This remonstrance, be it observed, was signed by a majority of the property-owners interested—the men who would be assessed to pay for one-half of the proposed pavement. Fancy the indignation Roberts with the document held aloft, the yards of signatures streaming down to his feet and flowing far under his desk, awaiting the time when it would be in order for him to cry out, "Mr. President." The reading ceased. Two voices were heard, shouting, "Mr. President." It was not to Mr. Roberts that an impartial chairman could assign the floor. The member who introduced the resolution was the man who "caught the speaker's eye," and that member, forewarned of Mr. Roberts's intention, moved the previous question. It was in vain that Mr. Roberts shouted, "Mr. President!" It was in vain that he fluttered and rustled his streaming ribbon of blotted paper. The President could not hear a word of any kind until a vote had been taken upon the question whether the main question should be now put. That question was carried in the affirmative by a chorus of ayes, so exactly timed that it was like the voice of one man. Then the main question was put, and it was carried by another emphatic and simultaneous shout.

The total failure of the contract system is a case in point. To check jobbery and favoritism, it was enacted several years ago that all work done for the city, and all commodities supplied to the city, greater in value than $600, should be the subject of contracts, to be awarded after due notice to the lowest bidder. The contract system, so far from putting an obstacle in the way of corruption, has furnished facilities for it. We have the sworn testimony before us, that it is common for factious bids to be sent in, for genuine ones to be bought off, and for parties who are best prepared to do the work required to be kept in ignorance of the proposals. Large iron contracts, for example, have been awarded before any one of the great iron firms have been aware that such contracts were in the market; and they have been awarded to men who never melted a pound of iron, nor had any means whatever of doing the work. To a pork-butcher was assigned the contract for building a very costly bridge over a wide river; and the difficult work of grading an avenue, hilly and rocky, has been awarded to a politician ignorant of the most rudimental engineering.

We have before us a successful bid for supplying the city offices with stationery, in which we find the bidder offering to supply "blue folio post" at one cent per ream; "magnum bonum pens," at one cent per gross; "lead pencils," at one cent per dozen; "English sealing-wax," at one cent per pound; and 83 other articles of stationery, at the uniform price of one cent for the usual parcel. This was the "lowest bid," and it was, of course, the one accepted. It appeared, however, when the bill was presented for payment, that the particular kind of paper styled "blue folio post" had never been called for, nor any considerable quantity of the other articles proposed to be supplied for one cent. No one, strange to say, wanted "magnum bonum" pens at one cent a gross, but in all the offices the city had been for "Perry's extra fine," at three dollars. Scarcely any one had used "envelopes letter-size" at one cent per hundred, but there had been countless calls for "envelopes note-size" at one cent each. Between the paper called "blue folio post," at one cent per ream, and the paper called "foolscap extra ruled," at $5 50, the difference was too slight to be perceived; but every one had used the foolscap. Of what avail are contracts, when the officials who award them and the other officials who pay the bill, are in league with the contractor to steal the public money?

Mr. Parton believes that the only remedy for the existing corruption is in a restriction of the suffrage; and he estimates that by refusing the right of voting to every man who cannot read English composition of medium difficulty, no fewer than 15,000 votes would be excluded in this city alone, and the control of the government would be given back to its legitimate owners, the virtuous and industrious portion of the inhabitants. No man, moreover, should be allowed to vote at any city or State election who has not paid a direct tax; and that tax should vary with the whole amount to be raised.

Among the other noticeable articles in the review are Mr. O. W. Curtis's admirable summary of the character and career of "Stephen A. Douglas," and Professor Lowell's caustic paper on "The Seward-Johnson Reaction." Mr. Howells contributes a very readable essay on "Modern Italian Poets;" Professor E. P. Evans an article on "The Philosophy of the Fine Arts;" F. B. Sanborn a survey of "American Prisons;" J. T. Morse, jr., a review of "The Present Aspect of International Law;" and C. E. Norton a paper on the "Harvard Memorial Biographies." The Dana-Lawrence controversy is reviewed in a note, in which Mr. Lawrence's charges against his distinguished rival are very indignantly repelled.

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