Rats, dirt, disorder, disgrace HALL of RECORDS.

CITY Pays $90,000 Yearly for upkeep of this ONE BUILDING and Gets DISGRACEFUL Return—

Employes of the four city departments which were installed in the new Hall of Records, in Chambers street, about a year ago, are in open revolt against the filthy condition of the marble halls and sumptuous offices of New York's great municipal palace. From the imposing vestibule at the main entrance to the top floor, the whole building is so thick with dust that one can write his name almost anywhere, even upon the mahogany furniture in the most luxurious offices. Lawyers and others who use the public record rooms in the Surrogates' and Register's offices have made written complaints to the heads of those departments about the dirty condition of both the records and the rooms. These complaints have been sent on to the Borough President, but, though months have elapsed, nothing has been done to improve matters.

Still it is costing the taxpayers no less a sum than $90,010 a year in salaries alone to have this single public building taken care of, though an expert appointed by the Board of Aldermen reported some months ago that under the most liberal private management the work could be well done for $36,050 less than it is costing.

In one of the magnificent courtrooms of the Surrogates' department irresponsible visitors have scratched initials upon one of the massive oak tables used by counsel, and several finely carved oak panels that form part of the mural decorations in the rear of the judge's bench have been sadly mutilated by having pieces broken off, probably by souvenir collecting vandals. In consequence, both courtrooms have been ordered closed to visitors by Judge Thomas until some better means can be found of preventing further damage.

The building is also swarming with rats that have been driven out of their accustomed haunts by the tearing down of the buildings opposite to make way for the city's new terminal structure. Though all the departments are more or less troubled by these unwelcome visitors, they show a decided preference for the record rooms in the offices of the Corporation Counsel and those of the Surrogates' department, where priceless documents and court records are stored.

THIEVES AND VANDALS.

In a number of cases careless workmen have used the highly polished mahogany desk tops as a fitting place to deposit heavy tools, with the result that the thin veneer has been barked, showing the white pine filling underneath. In another instance an employe of the city was severely rebuked for having driven common iron staples into a piece of mahogany furniture so that he might be able to attached a padlock to it.

In several of the departments, it is asserted, property belonging to the city, as well as the personal effects of the employes, has a habit of mysteriously disappearing over night. In spite of complaints, this sort of thing has been allowed to go on for months unchecked.

But what is most troubling the officials and the public that is in the habit of using the building extensively is its disgracefully unkempt condition, and the fact that rats are allowed to grow fat upon the bindings of the court records. The officials of the Surrogates' office, especially, are much concerned over this destructive work. It is pointed out that many of the documents are originals of wills, deeds, executors' and administrators' bonds, as well as decisions regarding large estates, none of which could be replaced if destroyed. Under the Criminal Code responsibility for their care rests with the Surrogates, one of whom has personally complained to the Borough President, but as yet nothing has been done either to keep the place clean or to exterminate the destructive rodents.

An inspection of the Hall of Records made by a Tribune reporter revealed a condition of affairs that is little short of criminal. Though this magnificent granite pile cost the city about $8,000,000 to erect, it would be hard to find a second or third rate office building in such a condition. It is not necessary to even enter the place to find evidences of wanton neglect that would cost the superintendent of any reputable office building his job.

Half a dozen windows on the Chambers street front and as many more overlooking Centre street are innocent of shades. In their place the inmates of some of the offices have pasted newspapers against the glass to protect themselves from the rays of the sun shining upon their desks through the shadeless windows.

At the main entrance on Chambers street a lone cleaner with a stepladder, a pail of water and a cleaning swab was leisurely washing the grime from the faces and the draperies of the groups of statuary that flank either side of the portals to the municipal palace. He evidently had not yet found time to even sweep down the massive doors with their ornamental bronze grilling or the broad steps leading to the entrance. Half an inch of dust made them look like the gateways to a deserted warehouse.

A COAT OF DUST.

Immediately inside is the vestibule and foyer fashioned after that of the Grand Opera in Paris, all done in Siena marble. The broad staircases leading to the great colonnade on the second floor are executed in the same material. The picture ought to be impressive, but, alas, it looks tawdry. Over all this rich material there is a heavy film of dust, smeared here and there with streaks of polished brightness, where careless ones have dirtied their fingers or coat sleeves by rubbing against it. The groups of statuary in the vestibule, one representing the purchase of Manhattan Island and the other the consolidation of the greater city, look as if they were much in need of a bath. The figures have heavy crowns of accumulated dust, and the condition of their white draperies suggests the laundry.

The floor is of mosaic done in figure, but no one would be sure about it unless he was told, for it is covered with filth and does not look as if it had even a speaking acquaintance with "a woman and a mop." Marble door ledges, the broad banisters, the columns and bases of the colonnade and every conceivable place where dust could find a lodgement are filthy beyond description, and even the perpendicular walls have a film. The chandeliers and light brackets have globes that once were white, doubtless intended to shed a rich mellow glow over the scene of sculptored marble. Now they are a dirty black, because their interiors are filled with accumulations of dust, and they afford little light. Besides, there is no polished marble to glow even if there was the mellow light, for its brightness has disappeared.

The words "shameful neglect" traced by the reporter's fingers upon one of the marble walls stood out plainly. If the same amount of cleaning is done in the future as has been done in the past the words will still be legible six months hence. The secret refused to hide itself; this part of the building has not been thoroughly cleaned since it was opened a year ago.

A double flight of marble steps lead to the basement. Going down them gives one the sensation of descending a ladder; a man with large feet would be tempted to go down sidewise. The treads are not more than eight or nine inches wide. The explanation of the cynical critic is that the more treads the more costly material used. The two or three rooms occupied by the Armory Board were fairly clean, but the secretary, Mr. Davis, explained that after a long fight he had succeeded in having the vacuum cleaning apparatus with which the building was equipped at a cost of $46,000 put to work. His staff complained that the quarters were both cold and damp. It was impossible to open the windows because they looked into a narrow area below the level of the sidewalk that had not been cleaned since the building was completed. A string of carpet the full length of a long office disappeared after hours some time ago, and could not afterward be found or accounted for. There is upon this floor a storeroom used by the finance department to keep books and records that is directly over the machinery in the sub-cellar. The temperature in this room is so high that the book covers curl up and the binding comes to pieces in one's hands.

DIRT AND DISORDER.

The main floor is occupied by the public and private offices of the Tax Department. In one of the corridors off the grand foyer, and directly in front of the offices of the Tax Commissioners, tucked away in full view of every passerby, was a collection of pails, cleaning rags, mops and waste baskets. The dirty cleaning rags were inartistically distributed along the ornamental marble work. The cleaning implements were in evidence all right, but there was nothing to indicate that they had been used. At the other end of the same corridor, close to the entrance to the public reference rooms, there is an unused passage to a doorway that is regularly occupied as a dressing room by the alleged cleaning staff. It is only necessary to turn up early enough in the morning to find the bronze door handles hung with a motley collection of frowsy skirts and the marble walls of the recess piled up with other wearing apparel.

The long series of public reference rooms are connected by archways, and down the centre of these rooms runs a long mahogany counter. Behind this counter are the desks of the office staff. The condition of the offices is simply shameful. Not only are the concrete floors on both sides of the counter dirty, but it is the dirt of months, and smears of white plaster here and there show that the place has not been washed out since the workmen left it a year ago. A number of the windows have been without shades all summer in spite of repeated complaints. The slipshod manner in which the metal holders were fastened to the marble walls of the recess has been the cause of their collapse. In the recent hot months it was impossible to raise a number of the uncleaned windows because the weak chain pulls had parted and put the suspending weights out of business. Expensive bronze railings and gateways are so insecurely set up that most of them are in a rickety condition.

One of the gateways broke down some months ago and has stood against the marble walls even since. Another has been wrenched loose and refused to close. The mahogany counters, tables and desks are habitually filthy, and the office staff is compelled to clean them before beginning work in the morning. From these rooms three fountain pens and a pair of opera glasses disappeared some time ago and have not yet turned up. Down in the basement the Tax Department has a storeroom in which the office supplies of stationery are kept. Six or seven large bundles of blank forms have disappeared from this room at various times after office hours, and the officials have been compelled to alter the locks so that the pass keys of the janitor and his assistants will not open the door.

DEFECTIVE PLUMBING.

The ceiling of one of the private offices of the Tax Commissioners is badly blistered and stained from water which has leaked through from defective plumbing on the floor above. Several times in the last twelve months this room has been flooded from these same leaks, though their existence has been reported several times. In another of these fine offices the reporter incautiously stamped upon the heavy rug that covered the floor. A cloud of dust immediately arose, and the portly occupant of the office seated at a mahogany desk showed his disapproval of this method of testing the dust holding qualities of his rug by a scowl. Visitors to the luxurious offices in the Hall of Records are supposed to tread lightly if they expect to have their presence appreciated.

The general offices of the County Register are on the second floor. The remaining space is devoted to record rooms that open into one another. The entire third and part of the fourth floors are also utilized as record rooms by the Register's department. The corridors on the second floor, the light fixtures, the marble walls and the columns of the colonnade are in the same dirty condition as those on the floor below. In the anteroom to the office of the Register there is an elaborate electrolier, the shades of which are simply black with dirt.

A partition of ground glass which separates this anteroom from a large apartment used by the secretary of the register is simply covered with black dirt. The floors of both rooms are dirty in the extreme, and an expensive rug that covers the floor of the inner room has borne dirty footprints for days. An official in this office admitted that the whole place was very dirty, and that complaints had been made by the public using the record rooms. He did not, however, blame the cleaning staff; they worked [illegible] to keep things in good shape. But the [illegible] the windows were opened in the morn[illegible] dust raised by the demolition of the [illegible]gs opposite made things as bad as ever. [illegible] condition of the electrolier in the ante[illegible] and the small piles of filth in the corners of his own room were pointed out to this official, but he insisted that the cleaning staff was not to blame. The fact was, he said, it was simply impossible to keep the offices and record rooms any cleaner as long as the dust from building operations opposite continued. In these offices also some of the windows were shadeless.

A walk through the half-mile or more of record rooms in this department disclosed the same criminal neglect. Thousands of volumes of records are contained in open mahogany cases with polished tops just high enough from the floor to be utilized as reference tables. Occasionally one could find patches of polished surface in looking over these rooms full of cases, where some unfortunate had wiped up the dust with his coat sleeves while referring to a bulky volume, but for the rest there is a covering of dirt over everything, the books in the open cases being particularly filthy. They do not look as if they had ever been dusted, for the dirt is thick upon their edges, except in cases where they have been recently taken out and used for reference.

RATS CHEW RECORDS.

The record rooms of the Surrogates' office, on the fourth, fifth and sixth mezzanine floors, are in the same neglected condition. In a large room on the latter floors the depredations of the rats among the bound volumes of records are most in evidence. A large number of volumes have been chewed along the edges, and in some cases the binding has been entirely gnawed away.

The general offices of the Surrogates, the private chambers of the judges and the two large courtrooms occupy the greater part of the fifth floor. Both courtrooms are kept fairly clean—as high as the cleaners can reach standing upon the floors—but the crystal electroliers and the high-up woodwork are covered with dust. The white globes of the light brackets are in the same condition. In what is known as the term courtroom two carved oak panels, one on the right of the judge's bench, representing Truth, and the other on the left, symbolic of Wisdom, have been mutilated. Portions of the carving have been either cut or knocked off. Immediately below the judge's bench there is a long and elaborately carved table for the use of counsel, with a highly polished top. In one corner of this top some vandal has deeply scratched the initials "N. K., 1907," with a sharp instrument.

When these wanton depredations were reported to Judge Thomas he ordered both courtrooms closed to the public until some arrangement was made to prevent further damage being done. A handsome mahogany desk in the office of the Surrogate has evidently been made use of as a workman's table, for the thin veneer of the polished top has been barked in several places. One of the shades in this room has been out of place for months. In the adjoining office, occupied by the chief clerk and his assistant, there are no shades at all, and the window glass is pasted over with old newspapers.

Under the law, when a will is admitted to probate the executors are bound to hand over to the custody of the Surrogate the original documents, which are retained for twelve months, so that they may be copied into the books of record in the office. After that time, if asked for, they are returned to the administrators. During the time these original documents are in his custody the Surrogate is responsible under the Criminal Code for their safekeeping. In addition, all letters of administration, guardianship decrees, and all bonds deposited by executors and administrators of estates are kept in the offices of the Surrogate. In all there are about forty thousand of these decrees in the record rooms of the department, which for months have been infested with rats. Though a personal complaint was made some time ago to the Borough President by Judge Thomas, pointing out the danger of documents being destroyed that could not be replaced and for which he was responsible, nothing has yet been done.

BIG WHISKERED RATS.

The city's enormous legal department occupies the entire space on the sixth and seventh floors. Until a few months ago they had also the eighth floor, but that is now being cleaned out to receive the records of the county court. On these top floors the corridors and offices are cleaner, doubtless because the windows are higher up and in a measure out of reach of the dust from the streets.

Corporation Counsel Sterling intimated that, compared with the condition of the rest of the building, they had little to complain of, so far as the cleaning was concerned. They were, however, greatly troubled with rats. And they were not ordinary sized rats, either, but great, big, gray whiskered fellows. The women employes, who had occasionally to remain after hours when the building was quiet to finish up work, were afraid of the rodents. Even for a man it was not comfortable to have these big fellows scurrying across the office floor when he happened to be alone in the office. Besides, they were destroying the records and documents in the filing rooms. No serious damage had yet been done, but there was always the danger that important documents might be damaged. At first no one could understand how the rats were able to find their way all over a building constructed entirely of stone, concrete and marble, but the employes had found out that they came up through the holes made for the heating pipes.

Another serious cause for complaint, Mr. Sterling said, was the wretched telephone service. The switchboard for the building was down in the basement, and the inefficiency of this switchboard made the service little better than useless. Complaints have been made time and again, but without securing the slightest improvement.

This is the condition of the building which it is costing the taxpayers $90,010 in annual salaries alone to maintain. The fact became known to the Board of Aldermen a short time ago in the following manner: The Borough President made application to the board for an addition of $50,000 to his regular appropriation for the care of public buildings, intimating that the estimate for the cost of caring for the new Hall of Records had been exceeded by that amount.

BIG SALARY LIST.

This appeared to be a large sum in itself for taking care of a single public building, even if it was the new Hall of Records, so the Board of Aldermen ordered an investigation. It was discovered that the following salary list was responsible for the very large expenditure:

		Per diem.	Per annum.
1	Janitor engineer	$4 00	$1,460 00
1	Engineer in charge	5 00	1,825 00
7	Engineers	4 00	10,220 00
1	Wireman	4 50	1,642 50
1	Steamfitter	4 50	1,642 50
10	Stokers	3 00	10,950 00
3	Oilers	3 00	3,285 00
1	Foreman of elevators	3 00	1,095 00
12	Elevator attendants	2 75	12,045 00
1	Machinist's helper	2 50	782 50
17	Laborers	2 50	15,512 50
1	Laborer	3 00	1,095 00
14	Laborers	2 00	10,220 00
1	Cleaner	2 50	912 50
1	Watchman	2 50	912 50
3	Attendants	2 00	2,190 00
3	Telephone operators, at $900 a year		2,700 00
32	Female cleaners, at $360 a year		11,520 00
110	Total		$90,010 00

Even the Board of Aldermen balked at this schedule, and an expert was appointed to find out what it ought to cost to look after the building under the most liberal private management. The following is his report:

Title.	June payroll, 1907. No.	June payroll, 1907. Annual rate.	Extra liberal private management. No.	Extra liberal private management. Annual rate.	Excess of payroll. No.	Excess of payroll. Amount.
Janitor	1	$1,460 00	1	$1,460 00	—	—
Engineer in charge	1	1,825 00	1	1,825 00	—	—
Engineers	7	1,460 00	7	1,200 00	—	$1,820 00
Wireman	1	1,642 50	1	1,000 00	—	642 50
Steamfitter	1	1,642 50	1	1,320 00	—	322 50
Stokers	10	1,095 00	7	840 00	3	3,070 00
Oilers	3	1,095 00	3	840 00	—	765 00
Elevator foreman	1	1,095 00	1	1,095 00	—	—
Elevator attendants	12	1,043 75	9	720 00	3	5,565 00
Machinist's helper	1	782 50	1	782 50	—	—
Laborers	17	912 50	10	730 00	7	8,212 50
Laborer	1	1,095 50	1	912 50	—	182 50
Laborers	14	730 00	9	730 00	5	3,650 00
Cleaner	1	912 50	1	720 00	—	192 50
Watchman	1	912 50	1	720 00	—	192 50
Attendants	3	730 00	—	—	3	2,190 00
Telephone operators	3	900 00	3	525 00	—	1,125 00
Female cleaners	32	360 00	20	270 00	12	6,120 00
Totals	110		77		33	$36,060 50

When Mr. Ahearn was faced with these reports he explained that the increase of $50,000 was not all required for the Hall of Records. The estimated cost of looking after other buildings had been exceeded also. The request had mentioned the Hall of Records only because it was in a large measure responsible for the estimate of the department being exceeded. The result of this explanation was that the request was granted.

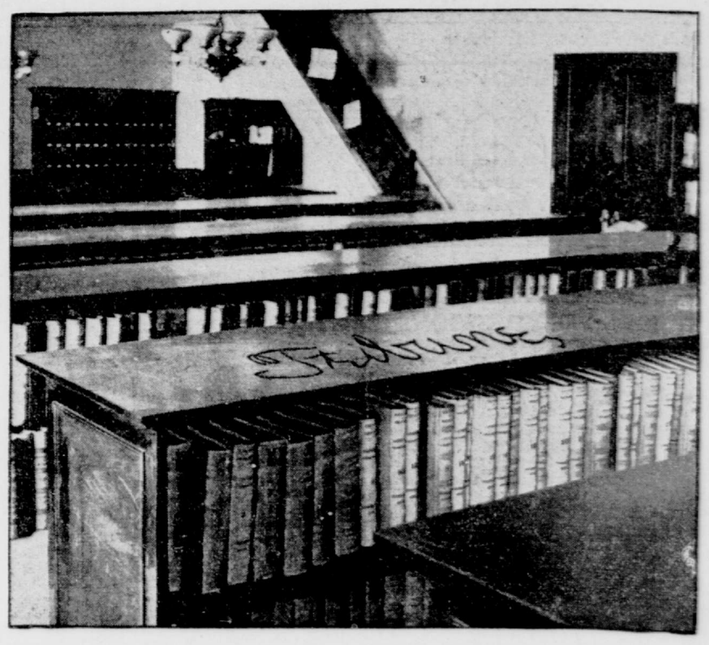
EVIDENCES OF GRAFT.

It is interesting to note, especially in view of the present filthy condition of the building, that the expert employed by the Board of Aldermen proposed to save $36,050 by dispensing with the services of twelve out of thirty-two women cleaners, twelve out of thirty-two laborers and three attendants. The number of elevator attendants for the six passenger elevators in the building is twelve. The expert proposed to reduce the number to nine, which is a fairly liberal allowance considering that the Hall of Records is closed after 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Three telephone operators are getting $900 a year, though the rate paid by the telephone company for skilled operators is only $416 a year. Still the Corporation Counsel insists that the service given by these highly paid operators is little better than useless.

The evidence given at the inquiry into the charges against the Borough President before Governor Hughes at Albany reveals further interesting details as to the cost of maintaining the Hall of Records. It was brought out in evidence the other day that the Metropolitan Equipment and Supply Company, which is the firm name used by Max E. Cramer, one of Mr. Ahearn's favored contractors, supplied to the Hall of Records among other things last year forty-five dozen feather dusters at a cost of $750. He also supplied fifty-two pounds of sponges that cost $80 37 for $156, or a profit of 94 per cent. If these two items are any criterion a close examination of the accounts for supplies would probably show more interesting statistics of graft and extravagance.

In the mean time the interior of the city's magnificent municipal palace is suffering much unnecessary deterioration through lack of proper and adequate cleaning in spite of the $90,000 a year which is being paid out for that purpose.

NEGLECT IN ONE OF THE RECORD ROOMS OF THE SURROGATES' DEPARTMENT.
The condition of the bound volumes shows the destructive work of rats.



THICK DUST IN ONE OF THE PUBLIC RECORD ROOMS IN THE SURROGATES' DEPARTMENT.
The tops of these mahogany cases are used by the public as reference tables. The word "Tribune" was traced by the reporter's fingers in the dust which covered the polished top. This is a fair sample of the condition of hundreds of these reference tables.

ABUSE OF A MASSIVE OAK TABLE.
One used by counsel in the term courtroom, Surrogates' Department, showing where some vandal has scratched his initials deeply upon the polished top.

ONE TREE TO COST TAXPAYERS $18,250.

Life of a Park Birch Saved, but at What Expense!

It has cost the city $5,000 to save the life of a single white birch tree in Central Park. The amount has not been paid in cash; the city business is not done in that way. Corporate stock will be issued for the $5,000, and upon a fifty-year bond, bearing interest at the rate of 4½ per cent per annum, the money will be borrowed. Every year for half a century the taxpayers will be called upon to pay an interest charge of $225 for the saving of this tree. Half a century hence, when the bond matures, a future generation of taxpayers will have to go down into their pockets and pay the original $5,000. Altogether, with principal and interest, the saving of this tree's precious life will cost the city $18,250.

The story of how the life of the tree was endangered and how it was nobly rescued ought to be a lasting tribute to the devotion to his artistic duty of Central Park's landscape architect, Samuel Parsons, jr. It also reflects the greatest possible credit upon the officials of the Water Department for the part they played in what might have been a tragedy, ending in the ultimate death of the tree. To other city departments that have the reputation of continually quarrelling with one another over which can squander most of the taxpayers' money the story will conclusively prove that there are ways in which the municipal revenues can be artistically wasted in perfect peace and harmony. The Good Book admonishes the sluggard to go to the ant in order to learn the ways of industry; after this it will be in order for city officials to go to a certain white birch in Central Park to learn the methods of artistic extravagance.

The incident is the more noteworthy because there were a number of ways in which the tree could have been saved for ever so much less money than it cost, but each of these ways was open to the serious objection of being disgustingly cheap and ridiculously practical. The essentially hard headed and practical individual who was compelled, much against his own inclination, to play a prominent part in the rescue has now the hardihood to suggest that the whole thing could have been done, and better done, for a paltry $150. But he must be devoid of even the slightest trace of the artistic in his make-up.

HOW THE PERIL AROSE.

It was months ago that the Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity awarded contracts totalling over $500,000 for the laying of a huge water main, five feet in diameter, up Central Park West to the 81st street entrance to the park. The ultimate destination of the big main was the reservoir that lies just nine hundred feet to the east of Central Park West, within the sacred bounds of the people's great pleasure ground. This new water main, among other things, is one of the many evidences of the growing requirements of the great city, for it replaces a modest thirty-inch main that was laid by the city fathers a quarter of a century ago in the confident expectation that it would be big enough for every future need and would never again have to be rudely disturbed by the hand of man.

The underground course of this old water main from the park entrance at 81st street to the reservoir wall, is in a perfectly straight line. When the officials of the Water Department came to the last lap in the excavation of the trench for the new five-foot main through this short stretch of park surveys were carefully made over the direct line of the old pipe.

As luck would have it, a fine young white birch, fully thirty feet high, with outspreading branches, stood directly in the centre between the two surveyed lines for the new trench walls. When the landscape architect for the park, Samuel Parsons, jr., came to examine the course of the proposed excavation, prior to granting the customary permit required by the department before any one is allowed to turn over any turf in the park, he stood aghast at the ruthless precision with which the officials of the Water Department had included within the lines of their devastating trench one of the noble young giants of the artificial forest he is sworn to protect.

Then his righteous indignation found vent, and he swore by all the dryads that such a trench would never be run. In vain did the engineers of the Water Department explain with much practical logic that the old main had been laid in a straight line and that it would cost no end of money for specially cast pipes and much additional expense for laying them to have this large main zigzag around every tree that happened to stand in the way. Such arguments, however, had little weight with the landscape architect. What mattered the taxpayers' money, anyway, where the natural beauties of the park were concerned.

Then it was suggested that the tree could be moved, without touching the roots at all, for a small fraction of what it would cost to lay a crooked line of pipe around it. As an alternative it was pointed out that the contractor could even tunnel under the roots at a depth of fourteen feet, and thus lay a straight line without injuring the roots of Mr. Parsons's forest beauty.

PARSONS TO THE RESCUE.

It was plainly evident to the irate landscape architect that these prosaic engineers had lost all the appreciation they ever might have had of the artistic in nature, else such suggestions would never have emanated from them. He refused to even listen to the proposals of such vandals, and betook himself in high rage to the higher powers in the department. There were several heated conferences, it is said, in the big building in Park Row, but in the end Mr. Parsons emerged from the struggle triumphant and the Park Department granted a permit to lay the crookedest line of water main that probably ever has been put beneath the ground. True, it is short, but it is at least artistic in the complexity of its tortuous course and simply splendid in the enormity of its cost. Besides, and most important of all, the noble white birch and a couple of stunted pines that stand timidly in the background have been saved from any possibility of injury.

In the hope of being able to find some one who could tell the prosaic story of how the huge water main was successfully laid in its zigzag trench, and incidentally to see and photograph the famous white birch tree that cost so much to save, a Tribune reporter last week wandered around the scene of Mr. Parsons's triumph. New laid sod covered the devious lines of the trench, except for a distance of about forty feet, where the wide ditch was still open close to the reservoir wall. Sections of the enormous cast iron pipe were lying about. Walking with his head down, the reporter had no difficulty in passing from one end to the other through these monsters. Finally, high up on the reservoir wall, a man was discovered who looked as if he had something to do with the work. In answer to a hail he clambered down a rickety ladder.

"Are you in charge of this job?" he was asked.

"Yes, I am; worse luck!" he responded with a surly look.

"Had a hard time of it from the appearance of things," ventured the reporter.

The man looked his disgust, but didn't answer a word. Finally, after a short silence, he opened up.

"Bad time!" he said. "Why, it's simply been sheol. (A slight misquotation.) These park people are the limit. They have spent enough money here to lay half a mile of pipe. The blue print I've had to work from looks more like a streak of forked lightning than anything else. And all this to save a measly white birch and a couple of half dead old pines. The only tree in the bunch that is any good could have been moved, with half an acre of land about its roots all wrapped up in new canvas to keep the wind off, for a third of what this silly game has cost.

DID THE STANDARD DODGE TREES?

"Just think of it, twenty-one special castings of a five-foot pipe, five sharp turns, all the very old Harry to fit, and backed with concrete, to take a water main of this size around this cursed tree. But that was not enough even, for they made me build a circular wall of dry masonry around their infernal tree, for what do you think? Simply because they were afraid that the loose earth thrown up from the crooked trench might fall against the trunk and take the bark off.

"I am supposed to be big and good natured; that's why the boss put me on this job, but all my good nature is gone. The silly uselessness of the whole thing gets on my nerves, and I simply can't stay around the place for long at a time. If I do I feel like taking it out of the workmen, poor devils! so I walk around and look at the hanged tree and speculate on how much it must have cost the Standard Oil Company to run their pipe line clean through the park. They must have done the work at night so they wouldn't have to dodge trees, or it wouldn't be finished yet, even if it was begun a dozen years ago.

"And now I am up against it again. You see where that pipe goes under the reservoir wall? Well, for eighty feet inside that old pipe is laid in concrete eight feet thick, top, bottom and sides. Why it was so done heaven only knows. They must have had a job lot of concrete they wanted to get rid of when it was put in. But you can imagine what I am up against trying to get through that solid mass.

"I'll be glad when this job is finished. I've had a good deal of experience in my day, but another job like this would drive me to the crazy factory."

Deputy Water Commissioner Goodwin, when the reporter called upon him to find out what the saving of the birch had cost the city, started right in to explain that the Water Department had nothing to do with saving the tree. The Department of Parks was responsible for that. Brought back to the point about the cost, he was surly and beat about the bush. Finally, when he found the story was out and could not be kept back, he reluctantly admitted that the difference in cost between running the line of pipe as it had been run and running it in a straight line was five thousand and some hundred dollars.

"That amount," he added, "was not considered an unreasonable sum for preserving the natural beauty of the park."

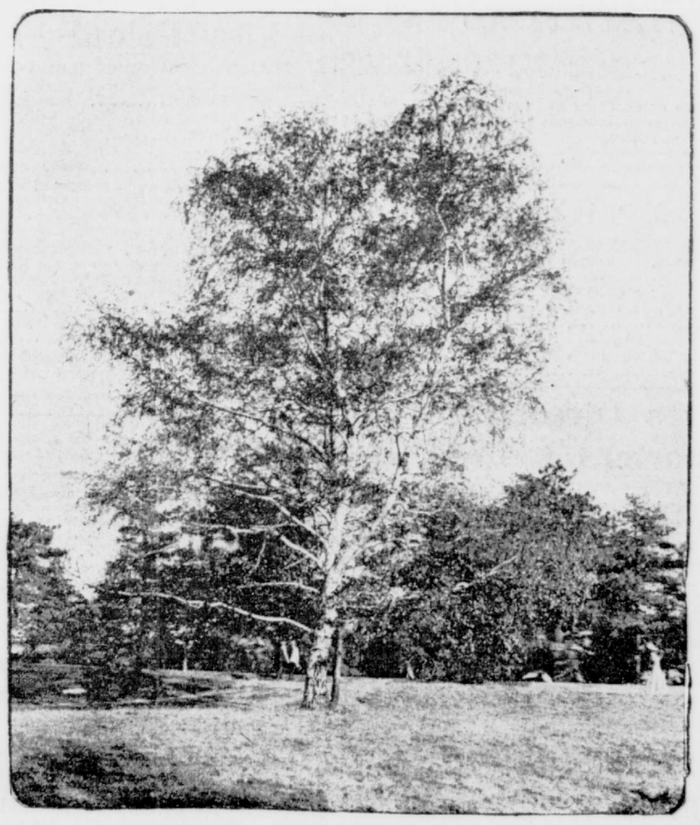
When Mr. Ahearn was faced with these reports he explained that the increase of $50,000 was not all required for the Hall of Records. The estimated cost of looking after other buildings had been exceeded also. The request had mentioned the Hall of Records only because it was in a large measure responsible for the estimate of the department being exceeded. The result of this explanation was that the request was granted.

EVIDENCES OF GRAFT.

It is interesting to note, especially in view of the present filthy condition of the building, that the expert employed by the Board of Aldermen proposed to save $36,050 by dispensing with the services of twelve out of thirty-two women cleaners, twelve out of thirty-two laborers and three attendants. The number of elevator attendants for the six passenger elevators in the building is twelve. The expert proposed to reduce the number to nine, which is a fairly liberal allowance considering that the Hall of Records is closed after 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Three telephone operators are getting $900 a year, though the rate paid by the telephone company for skilled operators is only $416 a year. Still the Corporation Counsel insists that the service given by these highly paid operators is little better than useless.

The evidence given at the inquiry into the charges against the Borough President before Governor Hughes at Albany reveals further interesting details as to the cost of maintaining the Hall of Records. It was brought out in evidence the other day that the Metropolitan Equipment and Supply Company, which is the firm name used by Max E. Cramer, one of Mr. Ahearn's favored contractors, supplied to the Hall of Records among other things last year forty-five dozen feather dusters at a cost of $750. He also supplied fifty-two pounds of sponges that cost $80 37 for $156, or a profit of 94 per cent. If these two items are any criterion a close examination of the accounts for supplies would probably show more interesting statistics of graft and extravagance.

In the mean time the interior of the city's magnificent municipal palace is suffering much unnecessary deterioration through lack of proper and adequate cleaning in spite of the $90,000 a year which is being paid out for that purpose.



A WHITE BIRCH TREE IN CENTRAL PARK THAT WILL COST THE TAXPAYERS $18,250.
It is shown in the foreground and is situated close to the 81st street entrance from Central Park West, about sixty feet from the West Drive.

TO MANAGE THE WENTWORTH HOTEL.

Of interest to friends and former patrons of the Wentworth Hotel, at Newcastle, N. H., is the announcement made that W. K. Hill, for eighteen years its manager, is again to conduct that well known property during the coming season.

Mr. Hill has been identified with several prominent hotels, among others the Hotel Majestic, in this city, and the Hotel Ampersand, in the Adirondacks, but because of his long connection with the Wentworth he is best identified with the fine New Hampshire property of the late Frank Jones.

SUPERLATIVELY PARLIAMENTARY.

"There is a motion before the house," says Mme. President, holding the gavel so that her rings come into the foreground. "What is your wish regarding it?"

"Mme. President," begins the new member, rising with a flutter.

"Mrs. Justine," recognizes the president.

"I move that the motion be carried."—Chicago Evening Post.