

Good Government Clubs

By Edmond Kelly



THE question as to who is entitled to most credit for the defeat of Tammany Hall—the City Club, the Good Government Clubs, the Republican party, the Police Department, Dr. Parkhurst, Mr. Goff, or Mayor Gilroy—is one upon which it is probable that no two persons will ever agree.

It is difficult to believe that a community possessed of a spark of public spirit would tolerate the ascendancy of a machine under whose reign such appointments were made as those of Mayor Gilroy, or such blackmail levied as that of the Police Department; and yet, when we look back at the triumphant re-election of Grant after the disclosure of the iniquities committed by him in the Sheriff's office, and the indifference evinced regarding all the nominees of Tammany Hall in spite of the daily revelations of the press, we cannot but recognize that there must have been some new influence at work to secure the extraordinary change of public opinion which was evinced at the last election.

In November, 1891, the effort was first made to organize opposition to Tammany in the shape of a social club; it was received at first either with indifference or derision, and when the list of members was published, the "Sun" exultingly and contemptuously remarked that it contained the same old names familiar to defeat in the People's Municipal League. Nor was the "Sun" far wrong. In spite of a brilliant gathering of

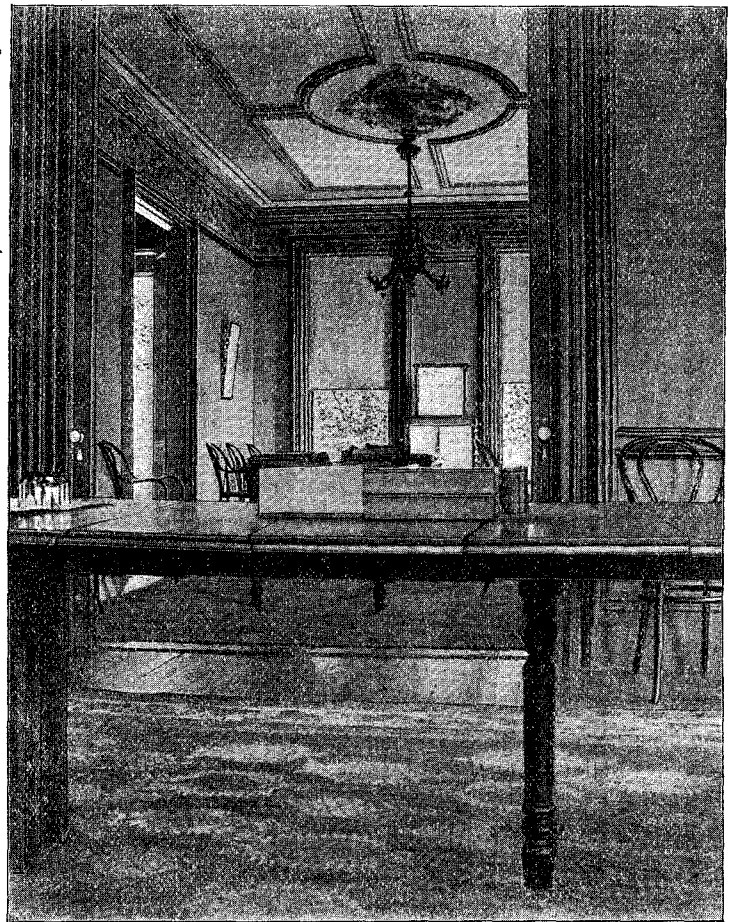


J. Augustus Johnson

millionaires at the opening meeting of the club, it was perfectly clear that the club would exert little influence if it did not extend its sphere of action beyond the walls of a club-house on Fifth Avenue. Nor was it ever the intention of those who originated the City Club to confine their activities thereto. On the contrary, the organization of the City Club was only a first step—and recognized to be a very short step—towards the ultimate goal. No sooner, therefore, was the City Club fairly put upon a self-supporting basis than the same men who originated it turned their attention to the problem of the organization of affiliated clubs in less wealthy districts of the city. They were confronted, however, with a somewhat singular set of difficulties. The Board of Trustees of the City Club would have nothing to do with the organization of any other clubs; it decided that it was unwise to hazard the success of the City Club by subjecting it to the failure or success of other organizations. The Board of Trustees, therefore, would not authorize the formation of a committee for the purpose of constituting affiliated clubs. They would consent to go no further than permit a committee to "draw up a plan for organizing affiliated clubs, and ultimately carry out such plan when approved by the Board of Trustees."

This committee met week after week only to find a majority in the committee opposed to the organization of any clubs at all, the opposition taking the same view as the Board of Trustees. No plan was ever submitted to the Board, because it was believed that no plan would be approved by it. The organization of these clubs, therefore, was left entirely to the personal initiative of a few

members of the committee. The statement had been made in the committee that there was probably not a block in the city in which a Good Government Club could not be organized if an attempt to do so were resolutely



Interior Good Government Club B

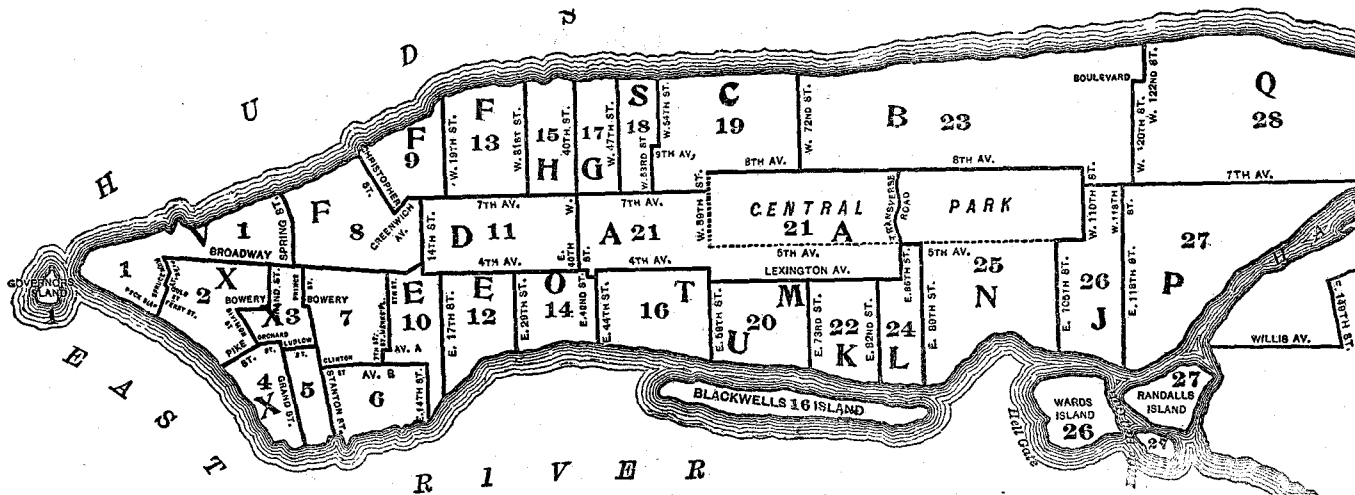
pushed with sufficient perseverance and energy; but it met with little or no response in the committee. The truth of the statement, however, was very soon demonstrated by the organization of the first Good Government Club by a few gentlemen residing in East Sixtieth Street. While these gentlemen were deliberating, framing a platform and constitution, securing membership and equipping

a club-house, now known as Good Government Club A, Dr. John P. Peters in Harlem made a similar attempt in the Twenty-third Assembly District. This club is now known as Good Government Club B. The letter C was reserved for the district just south of the Twenty-third District, that is to say, the Nineteenth; but here an attempt was made to take the remnants of an old County Democracy Club, called the Riverside Club, and convert it to Good Government Club



Dr. John P. Peters

principles. The result was as might have been expected—a complete fiasco. Mr. R. W. G. Welling, however, was more fortunate in the Eleventh District, where he and a few others organized what is known as Good Government Club D, which secured last year the nomination and election of Mr. Sheffield to the Assembly, and therefore is entitled to credit for the good work done by Sheffield in the



Good Government Club Map of New York

The Assembly Districts are indicated by the numerals; the Clubs by their letters. The region above the Harlem (not shown on map) is covered by clubs Q (Twenty-eighth District), W (Twenty-ninth District), and R (Thirtieth District).

Legislature. The next effort was made by Messrs. J. Augustus Johnson and Charles M. Perry in the Tenth, Twelfth, and Fourteenth Districts, and now bears the name of Good Government Club E. Messrs. John P. Faure and S. Carman Harriot next undertook the organization of a club in the Seventh District,



R. W. G. Welling

now known as Good Government Club F, and Mr. Harriot became so encouraged with his success in that district that he immediately proceeded to scatter Good Government Clubs all over the city, and, with the efficient support of Mr. R. W. G. Welling as Chairman of the Affiliated Clubs Committee, laid the foundation of some half a dozen more clubs in the vicinity of the clubs D and F. In the meantime, overtures had been made to the organizers of the German-American Reform Union. Messrs. Carl Schurz, Oswald Ottendorfer, Van Briesen, and Gustav Schwab were induced to write a circular-letter recommending the American citizens of German extraction to organize German Good Government Clubs. Mr. Ludwig F. Thoma was employed by the Affiliated Clubs Committee to push this movement, and he did so with vigor and efficiency. Mr. Welling secured from the City Club an appropriation which enabled him to secure the services of two active young men, and, what with their activity, his own, and that of his committee, there have been at last organized no less than thirty of these clubs.

As soon as the necessity for concerted action was felt, the Good Government Clubs sent delegates to a convention for the purpose of drawing up a constitution for the so-called Council of Good Government Clubs. This constitution contains the usual provisions regarding representation, determines the powers and duties of the Council, the conditions on which clubs are to be admitted to the federation, how they may be expelled therefrom, and how nominating conventions are to be held. Mr. J. Augustus Johnson was elected President, and Mr. Preble Tucker Secretary. In the early part of the present year the Good Government Clubs felt the importance of nominating candidates who would secure the support of all citizens and factions opposed to Tammany Hall. A convention was held in May for the purpose of nominating candidates. The



S. Carman Harriot

nomination of candidates was deemed premature at that season, but a campaign committee was formed, with Mr. Harris Roome as Chairman, which rendered yeoman service to the cause. The leading spirits of this committee remained in town during the entire summer and conferred with the leaders of the respective parties, thus preparing the way for the organization of the Committee of Seventy through the initiative of Mr. Gustav H. Schwab, acting on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce.

Such is a meager history of the events which preceded the downfall of Tammany Hall. It but faintly, however, describes the real forces at work throughout this season. What the Good Government Clubs contributed to the campaign was, in the first place, to bring into the field of politics a membership of over seven thousand men, mostly young, who had never been in politics before, and who entered it for no purpose save that of destroying a corrupt partisan ring. In the second place, these young men were brought together in that closest of all organizations—the social club. In the third place, these local organizations, each with a strong sense of independence, were nevertheless animated by a common purpose and yoked together for united effort by representation in the Council of Good Government Clubs. The atmosphere created by the enthusiasm of these united efforts gave those citizens who had lost hope some reason for believing that the overthrow of Tammany was not, as was often described by the "Sun," "an iridescent dream." When the villainies of Tammany Hall were taken up by the entire press and illustrated by the splendid efforts of Dr. Parkhurst, Mr. Goff, and the Lexow Committee, the discontent and despair of previous years gave way to resolution and hope, and these are the moral elements that bring about great popular victories.

But the work of the Good Government Clubs was not confined to mere moral education. They were extremely efficacious in securing what would have been good legislation but for the iniquitous vetoes of Governor Flower, and they provided a corps of watchers at the polls which did the work of preventing fraud at the polls with a completeness never before attempted in the city of New York. The manual on the election law published by the City Club was to be seen in everybody's hand on election day, and the Good Government Club badges, which abounded about the polls, for the first time gave the citizen reason to hope that the votes he cast might ultimately be counted.

Nor does this sum up the benefits to be derived from this organization of Good Government Clubs. An essential difference between the present movements and all previous citizens' movements in New York and elsewhere is



John P. Faure

that this one is organized upon a permanent basis. All these clubs are self-supporting; they have headquarters to which their members resort throughout the entire year, and in which they will continue to meet. Committees have been formed for the purpose of keeping watch over the various departments of the city, and discussing bills for promoting their efficiency. Such work as this cannot but keep alive the spirit of civic pride and the sentiment of civic duty, to which alone can the recent victory be attributed.

Moreover, they are perfectly conscious of the work that remains for them to do. Tammany is stunned, not killed; the work of destruction is still to be completed. Moreover, the Republican party, which is already beginning to claim the victory, cannot be trusted to give us good government, any more than Tammany Hall. The character of the Mayor put in office by the citizens' movement is of course a sufficient guarantee for the present against the partisan use to which the Republican party has heretofore put such victories as these; but it now becomes the duty of the Good Government Clubs to stand by their Mayor in the conflict which must inevitably arise between himself and his own machine if, indeed, he proposes to carry out the programme laid down by the Good Government Clubs and the Committee of Seventy. This is the work which is still before us; this is the work which will, more than all things, test the efficiency of our organization.

The accompanying map gives a description of the Good Government Clubs actually scattered about the city. It will be observed that the lettering follows no consecutive order. This is due to the fact that the letters were allotted in historical order, the first club organized taking letter A, the second the letter B, and so on. The lettering, therefore, furnishes a clue to the order in which the clubs were organized.

All these thirty clubs have headquarters the extent of which varies with the district. The younger clubs have, of course, less elaborate headquarters than the older. The two finest club-houses are those of Club A and Club B. Club A is situated on the corner of Fifty-eighth Street and Lexington Avenue. It has several parlors, committee-rooms, reading-rooms, and a billiard-room, all of which are attractive and well frequented. The club-house communicates with Vienna Hall, one of the largest halls up-town, which serves the Club as a meeting-room on important occasions.

Good Government Club B's house is a comfortable one, surrounded by spacious grounds, and is located at 70 West One Hundred and Fourth Street. It is the working headquarters in the Twenty-third Assembly District and in its vicinity on the West Side. It has a reading-room, supplied with the principal dailies, weeklies, and monthlies. It has a library and a billiard-room (the latter having both billiard and pool tables) and other conveniences of a social club. The house is open to members from eight o'clock in the morning until midnight, Sundays included. These five hundred members are both Republicans and Democrats in National and State politics, but all are heartily at one in the desire for good city government. The initiation fee is one dollar, with monthly dues at fifty cents, the same as at most of the Good Government Clubs. A few, however, charge but twenty-five cents a month, in order that those of very limited means may be attracted to membership. Though frequent entertainments are provided for members and their friends, it is by no means intended that any social features shall predominate. Each club is a separate organization distinct from every other, and connected with the remaining Good Government Clubs only by community of aim and representation on the Council.

The only requisite of membership is that a man should be of good character and be a believer in the political principles advocated by the system. These principles, in a word, are: Separation of municipal government from National politics; public office a public trust, and fitness for office the only qualification therefor. The crusade of the Good Government Club system is specially directed against spoilsmen and partisanship. All those, therefore, who want good government as distinguished from ring rule will help the cause by joining the club in their district,

and, whatever their station in life, they will be sure of a hearty welcome there.



The Newspaper Proprietor

By Arthur Reed Kimball

I was sitting one day in the office of the assistant business manager of one of the largest metropolitan newspapers of the country. I asked a question about a certain member of the staff, and the reply was: "I do not remember whether he is still with us." On the desk lay a catalogue of the employees of the establishment, containing perhaps six hundred names, for ready reference. After hunting up the particular name, the manager turned to me and said: "Look here, at this list of heads of departments, about twenty in all. Of the twenty men who were here when I came, less than a year ago, only six are left. I had not thought of it before, but that's the fact. My turn, very likely, will be next. I accepted a big salary to come here, one so much bigger than is usually paid for such a place that I can afford to be discharged to-morrow."

It was not "to-morrow," but some six months after our interview, that my friend's turn came. Constant shifting and change was part of the system on which that newspaper property was managed, and successfully managed, too, from the standpoint of mere money-making.

The incident was recalled at the time of the death of John Walter, the proprietor of the London "Times," a man who "has been, on the whole, for more than forty years the most powerful individual in England," as Mr. George W. Smalley said of him in some interesting reminiscences and comments contributed to the New York "Tribune." No contrast could be greater than a contrast between the management of the London "Times" under Mr. Walter (as described by Mr. Smalley) and the management of the metropolitan paper referred to—a paper to some extent a type of success in modern American journalism. As the manager of a great newspaper property Mr. Walter is pronounced "just and considerate." He pensioned in their old age those employees who had served the "Times" faithfully. When it became necessary to supersede an employee, it was always done in a way, if possible, that spared his feelings. "He was the arbiter of every man's fate, and every man knew that his fate was in safe and honorable hands." He was the real controlling power in the management of the "Times"—the real "Thunderer"—even in the days of the great Mr. Delane. But he gave Mr. Delane wide latitude, exacting no petty subservience to his own whims. As regards the public he tried honestly to "live up" to the ideal of his father, thus expressed, in conducting the "Times:"

To recognize commerce and industry as the true source of the greatness of England; to uphold the cause of humanity and freedom; to spare no efforts in the collection of intelligence and no pains in securing its accuracy and authenticity; to discuss public affairs with moderation, good sense, and a single-minded regard for the welfare of the country, the stability of its institutions, and the maintenance of its position among the great powers of the world.

In short, the late Mr. Walter felt fully the many responsibilities involved in the control of the most influential newspaper of the world—toward his employees, of just and considerate treatment; toward his editor-in-chief, of retaining ultimate control while conceding large liberty of action and decision; toward the public, of maintaining a high character of news service and comment.

Now compare that idea of newspaper proprietorship with the views governing the proprietorship of a modern "enterprising" American newspaper in a big metropolis, such as is shown in a constant readiness to discharge any employee offhand as the proprietor's whim may dictate. Such a proprietor, of course, recognizes no obligations to his employees, except such as may be enforced in damages through the breaking of a carefully drawn contract. Every working newspaper man knows the demoralization to all high ideals of journalistic work characterizing an office where