charges that the ordinance had been passed by corrupt means, and that the interests of the city had been betrayed. To our minds, the charges of corruption were brought upon insufficient evidence; but the evidence that the public interests had not been guarded was overwhelming. There was no provision in the ordinance for the sale of the franchise to the highest bidder, none that any considerable part of the city would be supplied with fuel-gas within a decade, and none for the limitation of the franchise so that future generations should get the benefit of future improvements in the production of gas. All these things were brought to the attention of the Mayor at a public hearing, and a veto would surely have followed had not the ordinance been withdrawn before the hearing closed. These points, moreover, were not the only ones brought out. Representatives of the Good Government Clubs, the Social Reform Club, and others pointed out the fact that the rate at which the new company proposed to supply fuel-gas was the same at which smaller American cities were now supplied with gas for lighting as well as fuel. Cleveland, O., and Wheeling, West Va., were already supplied with gas for all purposes at seventy-five cents a thousand, and relief from the exorbitant rate of $1.25 now charged in New York was to be sought by the Cleveland plan of legal reduction of rates or the Wheeling plan of public ownership of gas-works. There was general agreement that the city should not again resort to the discredited method of reducing rates by chartering another company to lay another worse than useless line of mains. The strength of the public sentiment manifested in favor of legislative reduction of unreasonable rates, and still more the strength of public sentiment manifested in favor of public ownership of municipal monopolies, was a most gratifying result of the episode. The study of municipal conditions abroad and at home, which Dr. Shaw's books and the National Municipal League have done so much to foster, is beginning to bear fruit in practical efforts to relieve the people from manifest extortion.

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The New York Board of Health has secured an appropriation for the medical inspection of the schools, public and corporate. It is the culmination of long and persistent effort. The purpose of this inspection is to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. The President of the Board wishes the medical inspectors to be appointed in their own districts. Teachers will select each morning such pupils as appear ill, who will pass an examination by the medical inspector. If a contagious disease is suspected, the pupil will be sent home, and the Contagious Disease Bureau of the Board of Health will be communicated with at once. The list of absentees is furnished each day to the medical inspector, who forwards it to the Bureau of Contagious Diseases for comparison. If the absentee's name appears on the list reported to the Bureau, the medical inspector visits the house and determines as to the attendance of the other pupils resident in that house, if the cause of absence is a contagious disease. It is hoped by the President of the Board of Health that some, at least, of the summer corps of physicians will be appointed as inspectors of the new department of the Board. The appointments come under the civil service rules. The statement is made authoritatively that the establishment of public schools increased the contagious diseases among children in England from two to four hundred per cent. The presence in the school buildings of expert medical inspectors will lead to many reforms, the need of which is not now fully recognized—reforms that need public sentiment for their accomplishment. A Superintendent of Public Instruction, addressing an audience on the system of physical culture used in an Eastern city, stated that the work done in that department was nullified to a great degree because the school furniture was not adapted to the needs of the children. He proved the evil effects of imperfect lighting of the schoolroom by the statement that when the eyesight of the pupils in an outlying school building was tested five years ago, it was found that less than five per cent. of the pupils were suffering from defective vision. But soon after this examination large buildings were erected on either side of the school building, shutting out the light from the class-rooms. A recent examination to test the sight of the pupils in that building revealed the fact that over eighty per cent. were suffering from defective vision. Overcrowding, one of the worst evils in the school life of children, must yield when expert medical knowledge is once engaged in the service of the schools. Of the services rendered to the city of New York under reform government none is greater than this last, which aims to prevent disease and the physical degeneration of the children who must be protected by the State, if at all.

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The committee of the New York Board of Trade and Transportation, appointed to collect evidence to be used with a view to secure legislative action in the next Legislature regulating the height of buildings, has had a conference with the Health and Fire Departments. The chief of the Fire Department stated that the Department favored eighty-five feet as the maximum height of buildings. The height of fire-proof buildings is not regulated by law, and several reach the height of 300 feet. Office buildings should not exceed twelve stories in height, and should not be erected on a street less than 85 feet wide; commercial buildings should not exceed ten stories or 125 feet, and should not be erected on a street less than 70 feet wide; apartment-houses should not be more than seven stories, on a street not less than 60 feet wide. The President of the Board of Health believes that high buildings seriously affect the health of the city. They shut out sunlight, and thus compel the use of artificial light in the lower stories. In foreign cities the height of the building is regulated by the width of the street. In Vienna the maximum height is 82 feet. There is no doubt that an attempt will be made to regulate the height of buildings to be erected in New York City hereafter, during the next session of the Legislature.

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The recent annual report of the Secretary of the National Divorce Reform League—the Rev. S. W. Dike, of Auburndale, Mass.—contains an interesting review of the work of the League during the fifteen years since its formation. During this period the League has learned as well as taught, and the most valuable lesson it has learned has been the wisdom of securing what reforms it could through State legislation instead of concentrating its energies upon a Constitutional amendment which should enable the National Congress to establish—when it would—a uniform law for the entire country. Not only has the League been able to secure a great many satisfactory changes in the various States—getting the support of men who would conscientiously have opposed a Constitutional amendment abridging States' rights—but also it has found that the States themselves are ready to take co-operative action in the direction of uniformity. Twenty-eight States have established commissions on uniformity in marriage and divorce laws, and only one of these States—Pennsylvania—has failed to reappoint its commissioners. According to the report of the National Labor Bureau upon the statistics of divorce—a report, by the way, due to the exertions

of the League—less than one-tenth of the total number of divorces are secured through the migration of the parties from the State where they originally resided. Uniformity of legislation, therefore, while important, is, nevertheless, a minor part of the problem. Since the League began its work nearly all of the changes in State laws relating to divorce have been in the direction desired by its members. In two or more States each the following examples of improvements are given: the old "omnibus clause," granting divorce on any ground the court might allow, has been repealed; the term of residence before a suit for divorce can be entered has been increased from six months to a year; the rule has been adopted that a petition must go on file four or six months before it is heard; the interposition of a period between the granting of the divorce and its legal effect in permission for remarriage has been made mandatory; a stricter definition of domicile has been given; suits for non-residents, except in carefully defined cases, have been forbidden; the advertisement of the divorce business has been made a misdemeanor; and provisions for personal service of libels have been established. Sometimes one of these slight changes removes nearly all the illegitimate applications from other States. Turning more especially to the legislation of last year, it is encouraging to observe that California makes the formal celebration of marriage obligatory, and that Kentucky has a new statute requiring that when the defendant in a divorce suit fails to appear, the facts alleged and the residence of the parties must be absolutely proven. Altogether the record demonstrates that the public conscience throughout the Nation is being awakened.

A recent article in our columns explained the importance of the new Japanese Ministry in that it marks a new period in the constitutional history of Japan. It embodies a confession, not formal, but none the less real, that the Ministry must be subordinate to the Diet, that it cannot carry its opposition to the will of the lower house beyond a single appeal to the country. This, however, is not the only noteworthy feature of the situation. Until now the Ministry has been controlled by a more or less formal agreement between the two great clans, Satsuma and Choshu, in accordance with which, however greatly the successive Cabinets might differ as to questions of governmental policy, each one must be made up so as to subserve the purpose of these two clans to keep the reins of government firmly in their own hands. It is true, outsiders have not infrequently been admitted to important positions—as, for example, Count Mutsu, the late Minister of Foreign Affairs—but never to such an extent as to weaken the prestige of the representatives of the so-called Sat-Cho interests. That long-standing coalition has at last been broken. There is no Choshu man now in the Government. The two clans have come to the parting of the ways. The Choshu leaders have cast in their lot with the Liberals, who, in spite of their name, constitute the party, not of conservatism, for there is no conservative party worthy of the name, but of moderation. The Satsuma leaders, on the other hand, are looking for the support of the Progressives, the radicals—hardly willing, perhaps, to pay the price, but yet knowing that it must be paid. The ratchet of a well-settled public opinion will prevent any renewal of the old coalition, and no intelligent observer believes that there will ever again be occasion for an outcry against clan government. Another important gain has been made. Hitherto every Ministry has been constituted, in the main, of men who were conspicuous in the great struggle which culminated in the restoration of the imperial rule in 1868. Now, however, the breaking up of the coalition renders it necessary to select the minister of state from outside this relatively narrow circle. This, of course, must give to future Prime Ministers a much freer hand in choosing their associates, and will almost inevitably lead, not merely to the introduction of new men, but of younger men in more thorough sympathy with modern thought and modern methods. This does not necessarily mean that a new stimulus will be given to radicalism; indeed, it is by no means certain that the younger men, when sobered by official responsibility, will not be found more truly conservative than some of the older statesmen have been; but it probably does mean a general improvement in every department of state, partly because of the broader culture of the prospective ministers, and partly because of a far greater amenability on their part to public opinion as expressed in the Diet. The general feeling is that this Ministry will not long be able to maintain itself; but, however this may be, it will have a conspicuous place in the annals of Japan.

Schools in the South

A friend writing from Atlanta, Ga., incloses a clipping from an Atlanta journal on the education of the negro. This article states that during the last twenty years sixteen former slave States have appropriated nearly eighty millions for negro schools; that their policy during the last sixteen years, persistently pursued against great obstacles, shows that the South is irrevocably committed to two propositions: first, the support of negro schools by general taxation; second, the separation of the schools for whites and negroes. The article goes on to affirm that under this policy forty per cent. of illiteracy among the negroes has disappeared; that there are over twenty-seven thousand negro teachers in the Southern States, and their number, as well as the number of negro pupils, is steadily increasing; and that there are in the South one hundred and sixty-two institutions for the secondary and higher education of negroes, including thirty-two colleges. Our correspondent adds:

> "Our section is aroused as to the need of more and better schools. Occasional editorial reference by you to 'the infamous Sheats Bill' makes it clear to us that even you have failed to grasp the real meaning of the contention. Suppose you let us work it out! Our point of view is not the same, and I can imagine the burning denunciation you would shower upon Northern editors if you lived in the midst of a population five-sixths negro, and saw the harm that such utterance caused. We like the negro. Our children prefer a negro to a white comrade, and the feeling is fully reciprocated by the enfranchised race. Trust the solution of the problem to us."

We have repeatedly in these columns emphasized the truth that the South believes in the education of the colored people and has attested its faith by its works. We are glad to give this evidence which our correspondent furnishes of the truth of this declaration so often made by us. Moreover, we are of the opinion that separate schools and separate churches are generally better; that separation is desired at present by both races; and, if this desire were even simply due to race prejudice, it would be necessary to wait until time and patience should eradicate it. We call the Sheats Bill an "infamous" one, not because it provided for separate schools, but because it made it a criminal offense for a white parent who wished to do so to send his child to a negro school, thus requiring him, in case no other provision was made for the education of white children, to leave his child to grow up in ignorance. It is not necessary to enforce the laws of nature by statutory penalties. So long as the State provides adequately separate schools for colored and white pupils, it should