

## MAYOR STRONG AND THE GREATER NEW YORK.

NEW YORK CITY, May 30th, 1897.

**H**AVE spent this morning in the capitol building of the second city of the world. I refer to the city hall, which is to be the center of the government of the greater New York. The greater New York contains twice as many people as either New Jersey or Iowa. It has nine times as many souls as Rhode Island or South Dakota. All the people in Nevada would rattle around in some of its smaller wards like the dry peas in a pod and its inhabitants are more, with a few exceptions, than those of the greatest of our states. New York city is surpassed by only one place in the world as to its population, and it is an easy second among the world's cities in business and wealth. There is no town but gray-haired London which will compare with it, and with lusty strides it is fast tramping on London's heels. During my visit to the English metropolis not long ago, I heard a great fuss made about a sale of business property there at a price equal to \$10,000,000 an acre. A lot was sold within a stone's throw of the city hall only a year or so ago, for a price amounting to \$5,000,000 an acre. This lot was on the corner of Nassau and Liberty streets. It contained considerably less than a quarter of an acre of ground, and it brought \$1,250,000. There is scarcely any property on the Island of Manhattan which can be bought cheaply today. There are lots along lower Broadway which are worth a carpet of silver dollars over their entire surface; and there are some, I venture, which you could not buy by offering to stand silver dollars on edge, side by side and end to end, making a two-inch plaiting over the whole lot. The tendency of the prices here is ever upward. One-twelfth of the total assessed value of the United States exists in New York, the real estate alone amounting to more than \$2,000,000,000. Still, when the Dutch bought the Island of Manhattan off the Indians, they paid for it only \$24 worth of glass beads and buttons. It was the biggest real estate deal on record. Twenty-four dollars then—worth billions now. Think what the Indians lost.

It is a big thing to be mayor of a city like this. The office carries almost as much responsibility as that of the President of the United States. There are, I believe, about four thousand policemen now in this city, and there will be seven thousand in the new New York. There will be, all told, an army of city officials greater by that which Xenophon led on his retreat to the sea than the army of the United States, and the salary list will amount to more than thirty-three million dollars a year. The property interests of such a city are enormous. The business carried on is of every kind. There is more manufacturing done here than in any other town in the United States. The shipping interests are so great that three thousand ships come from foreign countries to these wharves every year, and two-fifths of all the products we ship to foreign countries are sent here to be loaded. The banking in-

terests are the greatest on this hemisphere. The New York clearing house does a business of twenty-five billions annually; while the stocks represented in Wall street affect every country town in the United States. There are in the greater New York one hundred and sixty thousand dwelling houses and business houses, which the mayor must see are in sanitary condition. The streets which have to be looked after, would make a line longer than the distance between New York and Chicago, and the mileage of the surface railways, would make five tracks from New York to Washington. I don't know the extent of the sewerage of the greater New York; but, four years ago, New York proper had more than four hundred miles of such works, and the bill signed by Governor Black, will largely increase this number. All of these things have to be looked after. In every part of the vast city there are men scheming to get money out of its treasury or to evade its laws. All sorts of taxes are brought to the city hall to be ground, and the mayor has to be a very smart man if he keeps the wheel turning in the right direction and uses it solely for the good of the people.

I believe that Mayor Strong does this. He has no ax of his own to grind, and he is the mayor of all the citizens. He has brought civil service rules into what was one of the most corrupt spoils cities of the world, and he has really worked wonders in reforming the government and the police. I spent this morning in his office, and I was struck with the free American way in which he does things. Whatever there may be about the other departments of New York, there is no red tape about the city hall. The mayor's office is open to all. You walk in and take your seat, and when your turn comes you step up to the mayor's desk and state your case. When I arrived at the office this morning it was 9:30. Mr. Strong had already been there a half-hour and he was still engaged in answering his mail. He had received, at this delivery, one hundred letters, and more than half of these were already disposed of. He went over the letters rapidly, directing his secretary how they should be answered, and later on the secretary took the mail and dictated the proper answers to a stenographer. After this, delegations began to come in. The mayor heard the spokesman of each party, and in many cases decided the disputes without leaving his seat.

It was between two such delegations that I was introduced by Mr. John Sleicher, formerly the editor of Frank Leslie, and now one of the city officials. Said Mr. Sleicher: "Mr. Mayor, here is a newspaper man who wants to look you in the eye."

"That is an easy thing to do," replies the mayor as he turns his face to me, and a pair of shrewd, honest blue eyes look into mine. I study his face as we chat, and am more and more surprised at his vigor and strength as he goes on. The mayor of New York is by no means an old man, and still he is more than three-score years and ten. His eyes are bright and full of life. His complexion is rosy and his face almost free from wrinkles. The thick thatch upon his head and chin contains but few gray strands, and his voice is as strong as that of a man of forty. As he chats, I think of the enormous amount of work he does, and resolve to get at the secret of

his vitality. I ask him as to his habits. He replies that he has no habits to speak of; that he lives simply, works hard, and thrives upon it. In reply to my questions he answers that he does not drink much, although his friends tell me that he is not averse to a finger of good old whisky now and then. He tells me that one of the secrets of his vitality lies in the fact that he never worries, and his assistants say that he sheds trouble as a duck's back sheds water. He says that he always does what seems right to him at the time, and then forgets about the matter until it again comes up. He puts his full force upon the thing before him. Nothing seems to ruffle him. A man may come into the office and denounce the city government. He may storm at the mayor and say things which might be considered unpleasant. The mayor passes upon his case then and there. After he has decided it he dismisses it from his mind, and the face which is turned to the next caller is as clear as a May morning.

I am told that Mayor Strong is very fond of humor. He has a homely way which reminds you of President Lincoln. He can see a joke as quickly as could Lincoln, and he enjoys a funny story amid the most solemn circumstances. People who come before him are surprised to hear him burst into a laugh and tell a funny story in the midst of a most serious consultation. Some of them cannot understand how it is in this love of humor that he rests his mind. The laugh breaks the strain which his position necessarily entails. The mayor is a good story teller, and his best stories are the reminiscences of his own life, which has been a typically American one.

Mayor Strong's life-story is that of a country boy, who came to New York and succeeded. He was, you know, born in Ohio. His early years were spent upon a farm, and one of his first business ventures was in a small store at Mansfield, Ohio. Mansfield is now a town of twenty thousand people. When Mayor Strong was young, I doubt whether it had three thousand; but among its young men it included some of the brightest minds of the United States. One of Mr. Strong's associates and friends was John Sherman, who had come to Mansfield from a school at Mount Vernon to study law with his brother Charley. It must have been during Mr. Strong's mercantile experience there that Sherman became a candidate for Congress and canvassed the district, going about with an old white horse, and stopping at the country cross-roads to make speeches. Another young man was Amos Townsend, who afterward went to Cleveland and made a big fortune there. He was sent from Cleveland to Congress, and was for years one of the soundest advisers of the republican party. I think that Townsend and Strong were partners at Mansfield. Another man who has done much since he left that part of Ohio, is General Tom Eckert, who is now the president of the Western Union Telegraph company. During my chat with the mayor, I asked him how he happened to leave Mansfield. He told me that he was ambitious, wanted to see something of the world, and concluded to try New York. He began his work here as a clerk, receiving at first a hundred dollars a month. Then he was sent out West to collect bills for his firm, and he succeed-