

FLOOD CAUSED NEW LAWS

Galveston Plan of City Government Is Outcome of Disastrous Floodwaters.—Working Principle of Commission Government.

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.
Americans are long suffering under abuses, but when the limit is reached they go after the evil without gloves. Our municipal governments present a case in point. For generations we have stood their rottenness, inefficien-

cy, grafting and disgrace. Now they are becoming so bad we can put up with them no longer. The result is that we are eradicated the old system root and branch and substituting therefor the commission plan of government. The old scheme had got past the mending point. It had be-

come honeycombed with ward and partisan politics. To ourselves it was a reproach, to other nations a standing joke. It was a combination of Tammany and Hinky Dink. The exposures in St. Louis, San Francisco, Pittsburg and elsewhere only scratched the surface. It was time for a new deal, and the new deal has come. Now the cities of the entire land are falling over each other in their haste to try on the commission system. Wherever inaugurated it has worked like a charm. Everybody is happy over it except the professional politicians and the grafters.

The commission form of government in America is only a trifle more than ten years old. It started in 1900 as a result of the Galveston flood. So staggering was the catastrophe that the old form of government was unable to meet the crisis. Alderman McMaster proposed that the council resign in a body and call in business men and experts to deal with the extraordinary situation. This was done. A commission of five was formed, two of them elected by the people and three appointed by the governor. Afterward the supreme court decided that the governor had no right to appoint, and all the commissioners were elected.

Prior to the hurricane and tidal wave that so nearly swept her off the map Galveston had the usual discouraging history of municipal misgovernment. As a result she was in debt, her bonds were below par and her treasury on the verge of bankruptcy. Under the commission system the city was rebuilt, the grade raised several feet, the streets repaved, a retaining sea wall constructed, the debt cut down, expenditures kept within the revenues, city employees paid in cash, bonds brought to a premium, streets kept cleaner, sanitation improved, saloons kept out of the residence districts, politics banished from the city hall, public gambling abolished, civic spirit awakened and a condition of harmony and prosperity begun such as Galveston had never before known. In other words, the new government did better in the face of the calamity than the old had done in times of tranquillity. One most significant fact is that, despite the expenditures required to rebuild, raise and protect the city, the tax rate was kept down lower than that of any large city in Texas.

To show the contrast between the old Galveston government and the new, public improvements had stopped under the former "ring rule" and public buildings were deteriorating, finances were going behind at an average of \$100,000 every year, city employees, including even schoolteachers, were paid in scrip, and the bosses, who were growing rich, had such a grip it was impossible to strike them loose.

All that is now changed. The floating debt has been retired, a sinking fund started, public improvements are going forward, bills are paid in cash when due, and the political bosses have become independent memories. That these and other beneficial results are due to the commission system of government is proved by the fact that other cities adopting the commission plan have had a like experience.

Under what came to be known as the Galveston plan each of the commissioners took charge of some branch of the city government. For this he was responsible to the commission as a whole and to the people. So successful was the system in the city of its origin that other municipalities in all parts of the land began to study it with interest.

To one who does not believe in universal panaceas and cure-alls the working out of the commission form of government is little less than marvelous. It has agreeably surprised both its friends and enemies. Is it the long looked for solution of our municipal government problems? An unqualified affirmative answer is almost too good to be true, and it is too early to go that far, yet the more one studies what has actually been accomplished under the new system the more enthusiastic he grows. My own prediction is that as soon as the bulk of American cities realize just what has been achieved in the commission towns there will be such a scramble to make the experiment for themselves that it will result in a virtual municipal revolution.

RUMBLE BUYS FARM.

Lee Ferguson Place Near Elgin Sold to E. W. Rumble.

E. W. Rumble has purchased from Lee Ferguson 40 acres adjoining the Springdale fruit tracts and will plant it in apple trees this fall or next spring; and we understand that Mr. Ferguson will plant trees on the adjoining 40, which he retains, says the Elgin Recorder. The price paid for the land was one hundred dollars per acre. The Springdale people will set the trees and cultivate them for three years, at the end of which time they will be in bearing and will be worth in the neighborhood of \$400 per acre. The tract adjoins Springdale and will be planted to conform with their trees. Eighty acres added to Elgin neighbor-

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hood's orchard tracts is an important event. When in full bearing it will take over \$30,000 yearly to purchase the crop. In wheat, under the most favorable conditions, it might bring 1-30th of that amount. That's why this country cannot afford to depend entirely on grain crops.

NO WOMEN IN HIS PLACE

Al. Emmons Says He Ran a Respectable Place in Enterprise.

The Observer is in receipt of a letter signed by Al. Emmons of Enterprise in which he objects to a news story from that city under date of July 18 in which it was stated that "liquor and girls" were taken from a joint at Enterprise. Mr. Emmons says the girls were products of Joseph and sent to the county jail by the recorder's court of that city; that he never allowed women in his place and it was his endeavor to always run a respectable place. He asks that this paper make the correction which is done herewith, for if Mr. Emmons had no women connected with his place the public should know it.

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