

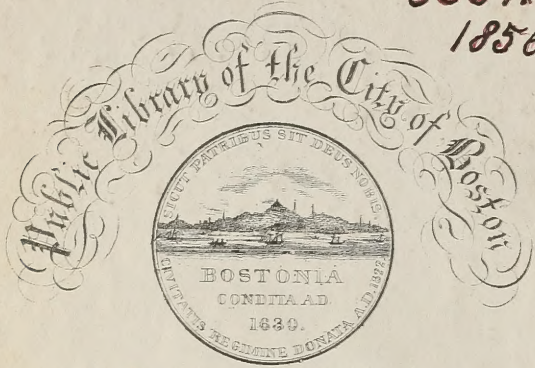
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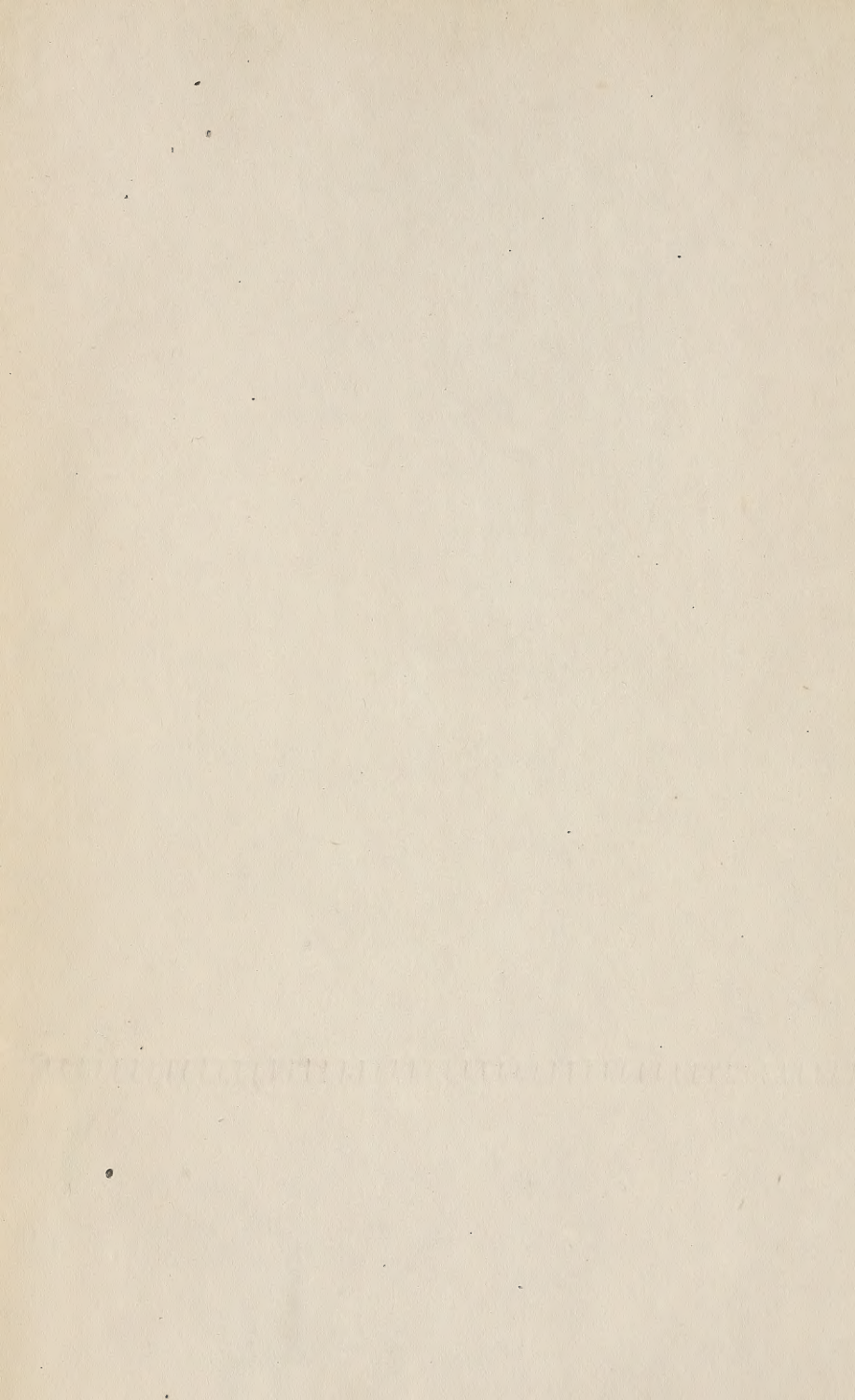
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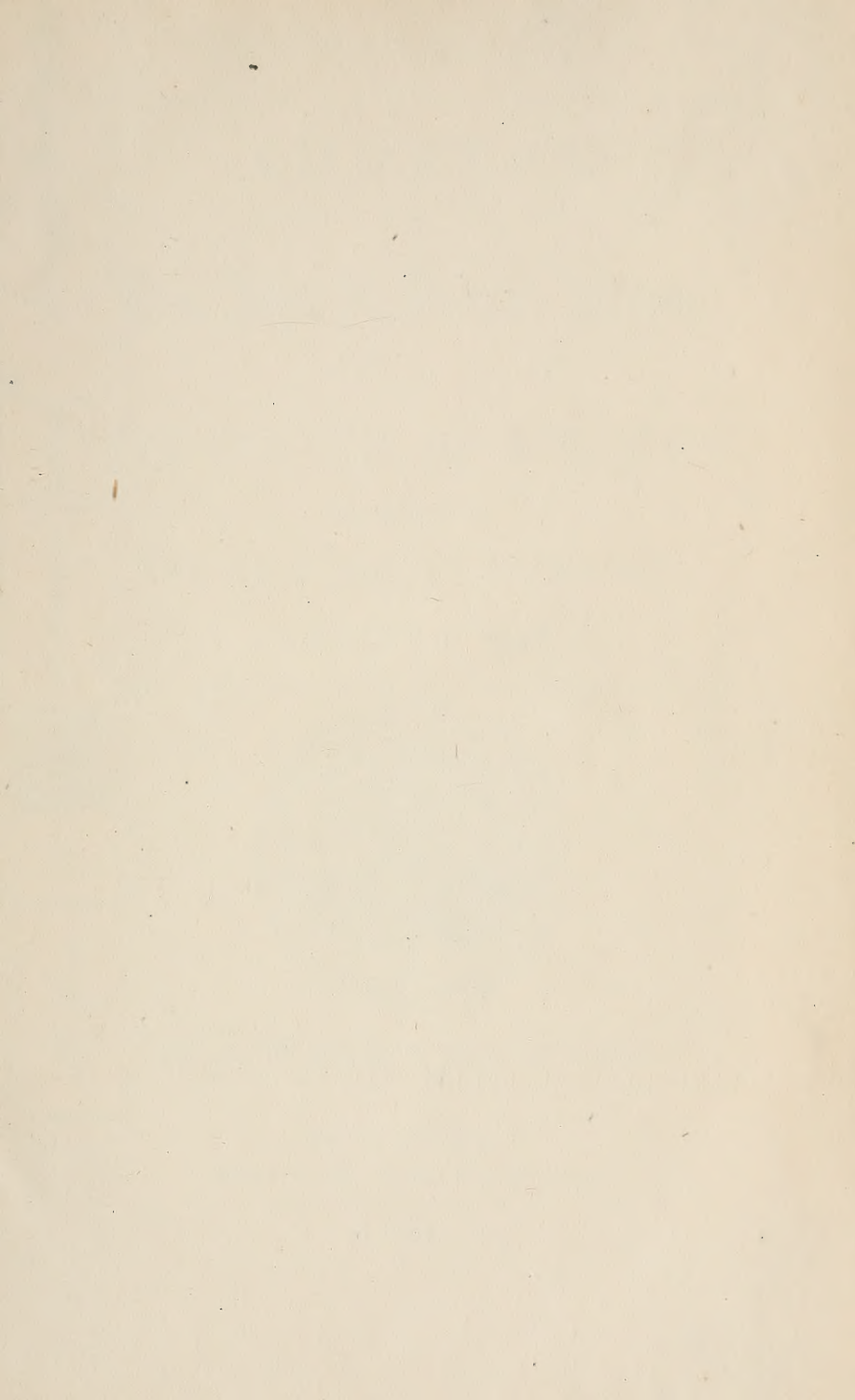


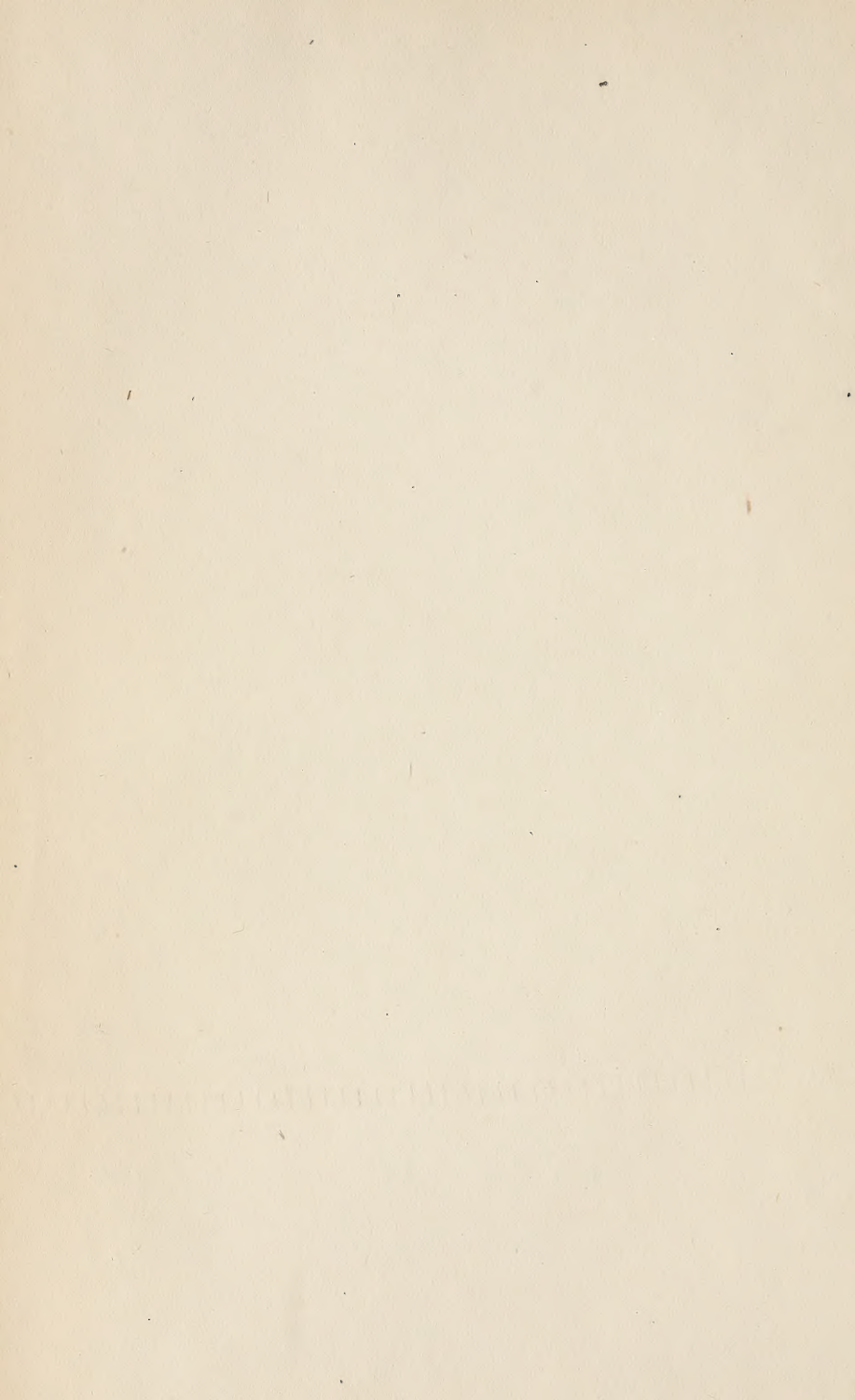
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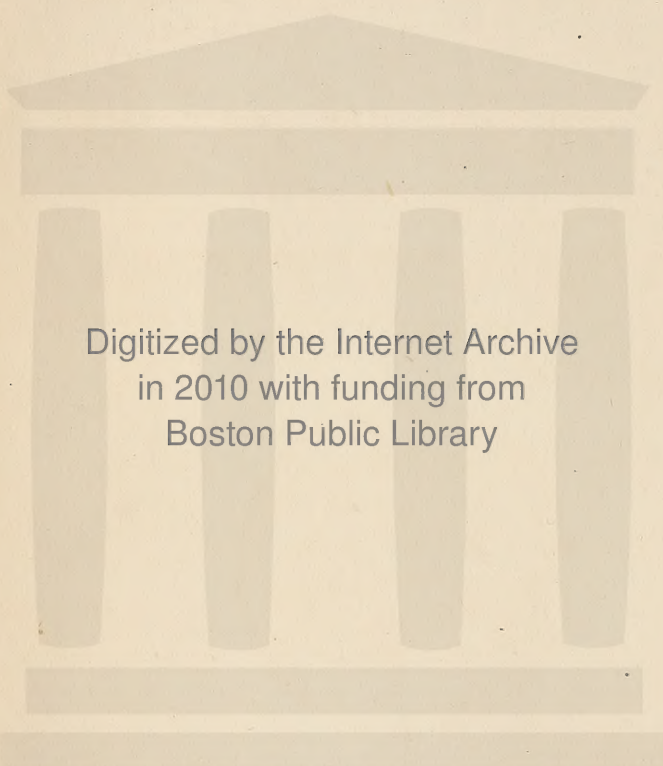












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ADDRESS

OF THE

Hon. John S. Sleeper, Mayor,

TO THE

CITY COUNCIL OF ROXBURY.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWO BRANCHES IN CONVENTION,

JANUARY 7, 1856.

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PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

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ROXBURY:

JOSEPH G. TORREY, PRINTER, 94 EUSTIS STREET.

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1856.



CITY OF ROXBURY.

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IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, JANUARY 7, 1856.

*Ordered*, That the Address of His Honor the Mayor, delivered before the two branches of the City Council in convention, be printed for the use of the City Council.

Passed and sent down for concurrence.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk*.

IN COMMON COUNCIL, JANUARY 7, 1856.

Concurred.

JOSHUA SEAVER, *Clerk*.

84484

# ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL:

Having met together in the Council Chamber, to organize the municipal government for the present year, allow me to congratulate you on the continued prosperity of our city:— a prosperity, which, being based on a solid foundation, cannot be otherwise than healthy and permanent.

The local advantages of Roxbury, are self-evident. Order and quiet prevail in our midst; a protecting hand is extended over person and property: and our institutions and laws are calculated to urge us forward in a progressive age, and promote the well-being and happiness of our citizens.

The population of Roxbury, in 1851, when West Roxbury was organized into a separate township, was fifteen thousand and twelve. It has since increased in a ratio of but little less than a thousand a year, and it now numbers nearly nineteen thousand inhabitants. During the past year, many substantial dwelling houses have been erected: and the wealth of the city has increased in a ratio at least as rapid as the population. In 1852, the year succeeding the incorporation of West Roxbury, the valuation by the Assessors, of the real and personal estate was 11,935,200 dollars, and in May 1855, the valuation was 15,577,200 dollars, showing an increase in the wealth of the city, of



3,642,000 dollars in four years, or at a rate, exceeding 900,000 dollars a year.

The education of children is an obligation incumbent on every city or town; for on the intelligence of the people, depends not only their welfare, but the stability of all our institutions. It is the firm foundation, the mighty rock, on which the Federal Union itself reposes. I rejoice to be able to say that our city maintains its well earned reputation for the excellence of its schools, and the facilities it furnishes for the instruction of the children of all who reside within its limits. At the present time, the number of our schools, is thirty-seven; the average number of scholars, is 2921: the number of Teachers employed, is sixty-four, of whom fifty-seven are females. In this number of schools are included a High School for boys, and a High School for girls; and also a Latin School, which, although not under the immediate care and direction of the city government, is open to all who wish to avail themselves of the advantages of a classical education, preparatory to entering a college. The expenses of maintaining these schools, the past year, and keeping the buildings in repair, including an amount of 11,000 dollars paid towards the erection of school houses in 1854, was 43,722 dollars, or more than one-fourth part of the whole expenses of the city government.

The Cemetery at Forest Hills, is an institution of which Roxbury may well be proud. A debt of gratitude is due from the inhabitants of this city and the neighboring towns to that public spirited citizen, who conceived, and was so instrumental in carrying into successful execution the scheme of preparing a resting

place for the dead, on that beautiful spot, thickly strown with the charms of nature. Ever since his own remains were deposited within its hallowed precincts, his regulations and plans, with but trifling modifications, have been followed ; and the result, in every point of view, has been most satisfactory.

Since the consecration of that City of the Dead, about one thousand lots of land have been sold, averaging for the last three years, about one hundred and fifty lots a year ; and it is not likely that the demand will be less, until every eligible lot within its boundaries, shall be in a condition to receive its still and quiet inhabitants. By a wise regulation, which cannot be evaded, the funds received from the sale of lots, are to be appropriated to embellishing the grounds, and paying off the original debt, which amounted to 36,894 dollars. The Cemetery has been kept in excellent condition : the paths have been multiplied, and the grounds improved in beauty every year ; and the debt has been diminished from time to time, until the amount now, is but 24,000 dollars. The whole debt will undoubtedly be liquidated in the course of a few years.

The construction and repairs of Highways, Bridges and Sidewalks, constitute an important item in the city expenditures. Much has been done, and much remains to be done. And the calls from every part of the city for expensive improvements in these respects, are still numerous and urgent. During the past year, the amount expended for these objects, exclusive of the expenses incurred by widening Washington street, was 24,779 dollars. A considerable portion of this

sum was used in constructing sidewalks, and laying 25,000 feet (nearly five miles) of edgestones; more than double the amount ever before laid in a single year.

By the removal of the State paupers to institutions belonging to the State, the cost of maintaining the poor has been greatly diminished; and Roxbury, compared with other cities and towns in the Commonwealth, has now but little reason to complain of the burden which is imposed upon her in the shape of paupers. Arrangements have been made by which the poor are comfortably lodged, and well provided for. The expenses for the support of the poor the past year, have been 3,795 dollars.

The Fire Department of Roxbury is established on a good foundation. The value of a good organization of this department is acknowledged by all. No reasonable expense has been spared to keep it in an efficient condition, and well provided with the means of extinguishing fires. Happily during the past year, the number of fires, and the amount of property destroyed, have been comparatively inconsiderable. The expenses of this Department, chiefly owing to extra expenditures for additional materials, have been greater than in former years, amounting to 10,287 dollars. The wooden buildings in the city in proportion to the whole number of buildings, is very large, and in many cases they stand in clusters, for which reason a destructive fire, that would test all the force and value of our active and energetic Department, would, I fear, at no time be regarded as a surprising event. No reasonable



amount of expense or care can be ill bestowed in providing against so serious an emergency.

In the preservation of order, the detection of crime, and the enforcement of the laws, an efficient and faithful Police is at all times necessary. During the past year, a change, which, it is believed, will prove beneficial, has been made in the mode of compensation for the services of Police Officers. They now receive an increased amount of pay, per day; and the fees are paid into the City Treasury. The amount of expenses of the Police and Watch Department, for the year ending December 1st, after deducting 712 dollars, being the amount of fees received, was 6,694 dollars. The ordinary expenses of this Department, as might perhaps be expected, are increasing from year to year. In 1854, the expenditures amounted to 5,370 dollars, and in 1853, only 4,419 dollars.

Gas having been introduced into the city, it has been lately used in the City lamps, greatly to the convenience of the people; but extra expenditures have been caused by the erection of suitable lamp posts, and by providing additional lamps in various parts of the city. The expenses for these objects, and for lighting the streets through the year, amounted to 9,194 dollars.

During the past year, a discretionary power has been given to the Committee on lamps: and several institutions and offices have been established, which, it was believed, would subserve the interests of the city. The expediency and utility of these measures, have now, to a certain extent, been tested; and whether it will be

wise to continue them, in their present shape, or to modify or abolish any or either of them, will be a question for your consideration.

And I will here take occasion to repeat the trite maxim, that "much government is an evil." There can be no doubt that laws for a State, or ordinances for a city, which are not absolutely necessary, or clearly demanded by public opinion, are evils rather than blessings. The machinery of government, should always be characterized by simplicity as well as by strength. A multiplicity of laws, or ordinances heaped on ordinances, render it complicated and difficult to manage.

The aggregate amount of the public property, including the City Hall, School Houses and other public buildings, as well as the materials of the Fire Department, &c., must of course increase with the general prosperity of the city, and the demand for public buildings. In 1848, the value of all the public property was estimated at 154,000 dollars; on the 1st of February 1851, the estimated value of the city property was 207,260 dollars. The real estate belonging to the city on the 1st of December last, was estimated at 217,861 dollars, while notes due the city, secured by mortgages, amounted to 58,449 dollars, making the whole value of the public property 276,312 dollars.

Of this large amount, however, but a portion can ever be used for defraying the expenses of the government, or the liquidation of the city debt. The real estate of the city, which, in case of an emergency, might be made available for these purposes, consisting

principally of land, is estimated as worth only about 49,350 dollars. If we add to this the amount of notes secured by mortgage, 58,449 dollars, we shall have the amount of the consolidated resources of the city, making the aggregate sum of 107,799 dollars.

In this estimate, I do not include the disputed claim of Roxbury to lands in the Back Bay, the value of which, even were the full claim legally established, would be prospective and uncertain.

The annual expenditures of the City Government must vary according to the demand for public improvements through the whole year: and in several instances, particularly in the years 1852, 1854, and 1855, they have largely exceeded the amounts contemplated at the commencement of the year, and provided for by taxation, and receipts from other sources.

The aggregate amount of expenditures in different years, however, will hardly give a correct idea of the character of different administrations, so far as economy is concerned. This can only be arrived at by examining the different items of expenditure: ascertaining the amount of notes renewed or taken up, and funds received from other sources than taxation. In 1852 a large expenditure was incurred in making important improvements in Ward Three; and in 1855, besides the State tax, 9,918 dollars, Washington street was widened at an expense up to December 1st, of over 19,000 dollars, and other extra expenses, to which I have already alluded, were increased. The expenditures, however, in connexion with the comparatively small amounts raised by taxation, will serve to



show the general principle which has been established, and brings me to the subject of the city debt.

In the year 1846, when Roxbury became a city, the debt amounted to only 22,776 dollars: in February, 1851, the city debt was 48,476 dollars. In February, 1853, it was 186,810 dollars. On the 1st of February, 1854, it was 181,110 dollars. On the 1st of February, 1855, it was 209,265 dollars; and on the 28th day of December last, the city debt amounted to 243,765 dollars.

While the city debt has been thus rapidly augmenting, the rate of taxation has been increased from five dollars on a thousand in 1846, to seven dollars and eighty cents, during each of the past three years. Any deficiency in the amount of funds necessary to meet the expenditures, must be raised by a loan, which, as the security is good, is easily effected; and in this way a large city debt has been created, and is annually accumulating.

I have stated that the available funds of the city, in every shape, amount at a fair estimate, to only about 107,799 dollars. If we deduct this from 243,765 dollars, the amount of the City's indebtedness, the result will be about 136,000 dollars, which the city of Roxbury now owes, without any available means of liquidating, excepting by taxing the property of the citizens. It should also be recollected, that the annual interest of the whole debt, 243,765 dollars, will amount to upwards of 14,000 dollars.

This amount of debt has been incurred from time to time, as I have already intimated, by the erection

of school houses; the abatement of nuisances; increasing the accommodations of the poor; widening and otherwise improving the streets; and for other objects, the immediate accomplishment of which, was by the proper authorities believed to be for the public good.

It may be said that our City Debt is not so large as to give any reasonable cause of alarm. This may be so. Yet it is manifest that if the same *system* of expenditure, taxation, and credit be continued, it will in a few years become undesirable and inconvenient; and may prevent or retard any judicious plan to benefit the city, and cause an onerous tax to be imposed, which will neutralize, to a very considerable extent, the advantages that would otherwise be realized. This is a subject well worthy the attention of the members of the City Council.

The people of Roxbury have a right to expect all the benefits which ordinarily attend a wisely administered government. The streets must be kept in repair, and lighted, and widened, or new ones constructed, as public convenience may require. The Alms-house establishment must be provided for, and the poor, who are always with us, must be clothed and fed. The Public Schools must be cherished, and if it may be, improved. The Fire Department must be kept well organized. The interest on the city debt must be paid. Public officers expect to be remunerated for their services. A Police force must be kept on duty, order maintained, the laws enforced, and criminals arrested and brought to justice. These ex-

penses are necessary, and can hardly be stinted ; and if judiciously regulated, will be cheerfully defrayed by our citizens in proportion to their means.

What we have particularly to guard against, however, is a system of expenditures for objects and improvements, which, however desirable, are not absolutely or immediately necessary ; and cannot be obtained without borrowing money : thus increasing our pecuniary obligations, and imposing a burden on posterity without corresponding advantages.

This system of borrowing money to defray the ordinary expenses of a city, may be regarded as a fault of the age, and has proved a source of great detriment, I had almost said, ruin, to cities in every section of the Union, possessing, in other respects, all the elements of prosperity. Let us take warning by their example.

As a general principle, the expenses of a city or a town, should not exceed its amount of taxation. Exceptions of course, should be made in cases where some gigantic and well digested scheme of public improvement is to be realized, with the approbation of public opinion. A heavy debt hanging over a city, is a misfortune. It is a bar to desirable improvement and wholesome enterprise. It is an incubus which checks its growth, and strangles its prosperity.

I need hardly say that the present Municipal Government is confidently looked to by the people to check this growing disposition to expend money, with an exhausted treasury, for objects which are not indispensable ; to restrain the city expenditures within a com-

pass, the amount of which may be met without putting our credit in requisition, or imposing an unreasonable tax upon the people.

To bring about this result, it will be advisable that the appropriations at the beginning of the financial year, should be carefully and deliberately made: that we should consider wisely and well, not *what may be wished*, for the increase of our comforts, and the embellishment of our city, but what amount of funds the citizens can *afford* to expend for such objects—and the moneys thus appropriated, *and no more*, should be judiciously expended: all the officers of government should be held to a strict accountability: no unnecessary offices should be created or allowed to exist; and a system of rigid economy should be introduced into every department of government.

In this way, we shall avert the evils of an approach to that state of bankruptcy which would seem to be ere long, the inevitable fate of many cities in the Union, now in apparently a flourishing condition; and pave the way towards the solid improvement of our city, and the durable prosperity of its inhabitants.

And now, gentlemen of the City Council, we, having been selected by our fellow citizens, to manage the city business for the present year, and having undertaken that responsible trust, it behooves us to enter upon the work with a determination to do our duty; to cultivate, above all things, a spirit of harmony in our councils; to act in all cases, according to our deliberate judgment, without being influenced by fear, favor, affection, or self-interest. Let us at all times



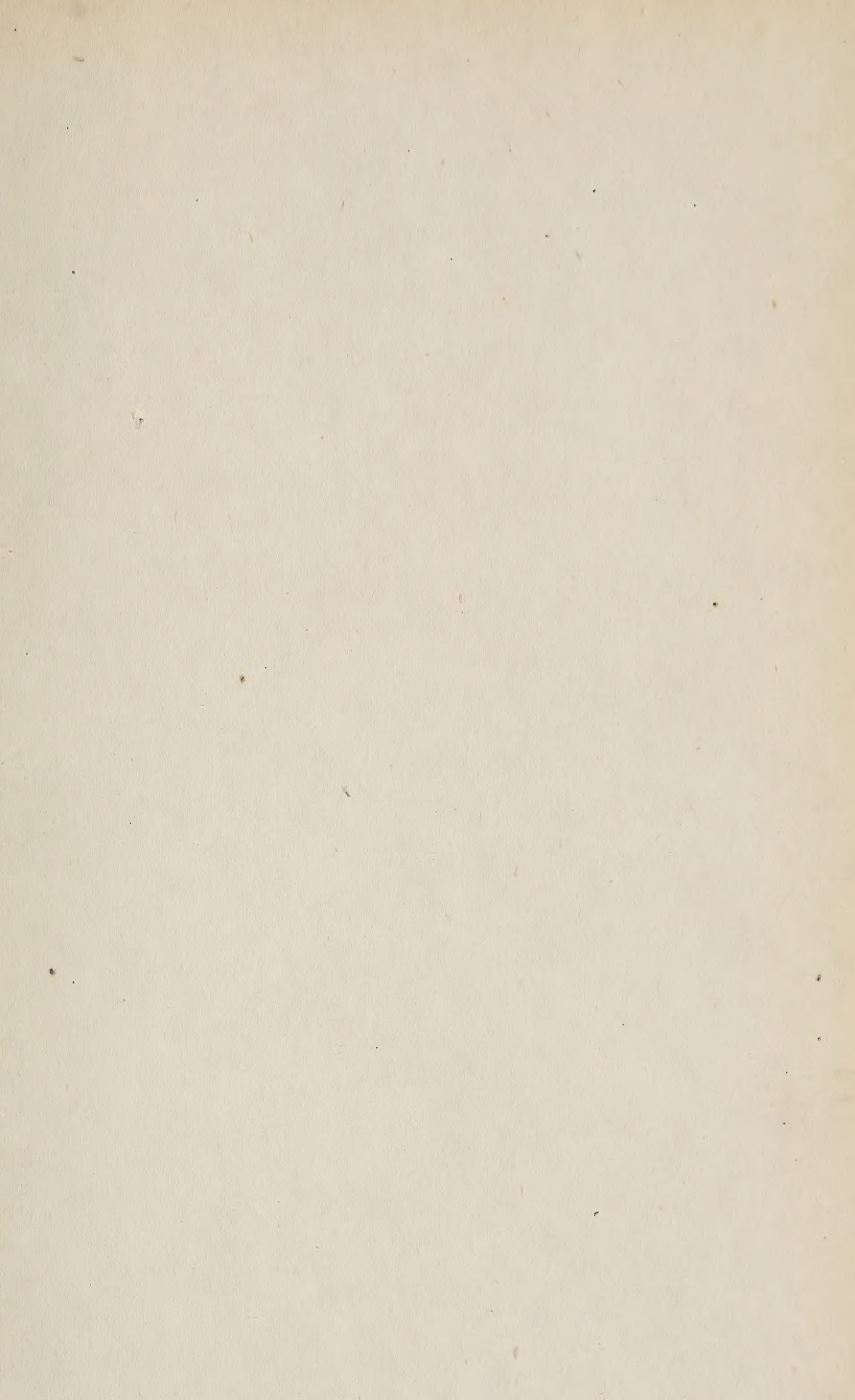
remember, that we are delegated to do the people's business, and not our own.

With less experience in the affairs of the city, or in a practical knowledge of its wants, than any of my predecessors, I must, and do confidently rely upon you, Gentlemen, members of the City Council, for your advice and assistance in devising good and wise regulations, and also for your support in carrying into effect the Ordinances of the City, and the Laws of the Commonwealth.

JOHN S. SLEEPER.











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