

adequate for the proper transaction of business. Had the necessary facilities existed there, it was discovered, the higger-mugger over the city accounts could not have well gone on, and the city might have been richer by 25,000 dollars.

Only one site was available for a new town hall in the city. This was Mr. Macalpin's vacant lot.

As great bodies move slowly, no action was deemed necessary in this matter until the committee had drawn up its report. No doubt was felt that so public-spirited a man as Mr. Macalpin would at once accede to the wishes of the city in so important a matter as this.

But promptitude is better than dignified leisureliness in all such cases, as the committee soon found.

Whilst they were deliberating on their report the old-fashioned frame building which served as the principal Catholic church was burned to the ground. No time was lost by the energetic parish priest, Father Malone, about retrieving the disaster. A meeting of the parishioners was at once convened, and a goodly fund for a new church was there and then subscribed. The old church had stood on a back street. It had long been a cherished dream of Father Malone's to see a fine structure worthy of its divine purpose standing in the best portion of Clanalpin. There was the site ready to hand—Macalpin's vacant lot.

Mr. Macalpin was not then in town. He did not think it to be judicious to stay in town in the early stages of the canvass. All the preliminary skirmishing he deemed it good strategy to intrust to his fuglemen. He lived in a magnificent mansion in Poughkeepsie. From the style kept up in this establishment he had acquired the popular title of 'the Laird of Poughkeepsie.'

Mr. Monteith MacIan, the trusted lawyer of Mr. Macalpin, watched after his client's interests in town, and kept him posted from day to day on all that passed with regard to the canvass.

'You'll have to play a cautious card, laird,' he wrote, 'about that vacant lot. The reform party are after it for a new town hall, and the Papists for a new Mass house. You can't afford to offend either, ye ken; so you must be diplomatic. The extreme sections of these two parties, combined with the few utterly indifferent in both the Republican and Democratic camps, who wouldn't leave the house to vote if the day was wet, are what will decide the election.'

The Laird of Poughkeepsie wrote back in a couple of days:—

'Tis all right about the vacant lot, Monteith. I've settled the confounded thing at last. I have long been negotiating with a big syndicate over the place. A new line of railway to open up trade with the West is going to be laid down, and the vacant lot is wanted for the depot in Clanalpin. As the negotiations stand at present, I am not at liberty to disclose the business more specifically, but you might get an item into the "Tomahawk" announcing vaguely that Mr. Macalpin is just now engaged in promoting a vast project calculated to confer enormous benefit on Clanalpin and necessitating the erection of a splendid structure on the vacant lot. You know how to word the announcement so as to make it striking and grand. Do it in your best style.'

With a splendid flourish, strong in fine adjectives and full of Ciceronian dignity, the 'Tomahawk' came out with the masterly piece of news. The shot told. Neither Demorest, the Republican candidate, nor Antrobous, the bearer of the Democratic colors, had a single gun to answer this big howitzer. Practically speaking, they had no armament at all to enter upon the fight. They had no more programme to unfold than the audacious Disraeli under similar circumstances, content to rely, as he expressed it, upon 'the sublime traditions of an ancient people.'

In a couple of days Mr. Macalpin appeared upon the scene and began the operation of laying regular siege to the electorate. His headquarters soon began to fill. Deputations soon commenced to appear on the scene—deputations from prohibitionists, deputations from woman's suffragists, deputations from liquor dealers, deputations from labor leagues, deputations from anti-union employers, deputations representing every antagonistic principle in human society. Amongst the other deputations was one representing the burned-out Catholic congregation. Father Malone and three of his most influential parishioners came to urge the claim of this section of the community to a site for a decent place of worship.

'Nothing would have given me greater pleasure, I assure you, Father Malone and you gentlemen,' answered Mr. Macalpin, with marked unction, 'than to be able to comply with your request. But I am committed irrevocably to other plans for the lot. What these plans exactly are I am not now at liberty to divulge,

but I am free to state they are such as must result in immense benefit to the commercial prosperity of Clanalpin. This and the expression of my regret that it is so completely out of my power to comply with your very reasonable request are all that I can offer in reply.'

He bowed his deputation out with an exhibition of elegant deportment, and then proceeded to deal with the next one in the same polished way. Every answer that he gave was a masterpiece of skilled evasion, thanks to the excellent coaching of Mr. Monteith MacIan. With the reform deputation, who desired the vacant lot for a new town hall site, he experienced the greatest amount of trouble. From the candidate of their own selection they had expected compliance with every wish they might express. But they dissembled their emotions quite as well as Mr. Macalpin did his, as there was nothing better for them to do just then.

But in politics it is good to be able to smile while you carry a stone up your sleeve. It shows fine art.

The campaign went on briskly. Whilst things looked badly for the old-fashioned candidates, they preserved each a cheerfulness of demeanor that was edifying and encouraging. Though they were promised but few votes, they individually spoke as men who were quite assured of victory.

Clanalpin possessed two daily papers normally, but a third one had been temporarily started to meet this emergency. This was the 'Tomahawk.' As no regular printers could be had, the managers were forced to fall back on what tramps they could get. These tramps, for the most part, were of a bacchanalian and easy turn of mind. They usually worked when they wanted money, and then revelled until they wanted more. They would have preferred to be paid for revelling if such were the custom in Clanalpin, but the civilisation in that place was not of that high plane as yet, hence they were compelled to work a little by way of variety.

There had not been any friendship between these men and the printers of the 'Sentinel' and 'Argus,' the respective organs of Republicanism and Democracy, until the eve of election. The 'Tomahawk' had come out with its 'Last word before the battle,' and the wearied tramps, kept for eight hours at work under threat of being shot in their tracks if they moved, swarmed out to drink in the air of liberty and as much liquor as was due them on the score of lost time.

Quite accidentally they fell in with a party of union hands from the 'Argus' office. There was, to their great surprise, a friendly greeting from these and an invitation to go for a sail up the river.

But whilst they were enjoying themselves the clever manager of the 'Argus,' who had planned the fraternisation with the Democratic leaders, was busy. All night long the remainder of his staff were busy printing a 'stop press' edition and thousands of large placards and handbills. This 'stop press' and these placards contained the subjoined announcement:

'The city of Clanalpin, one of the most prosperous and progressive centres in the United States, is to have a new music hall on the London pattern. It is to be built immediately on a vacant lot in the best part of the city. Negotiations to that end between the owner of the lot, Mr. Macalpin, and Mr. Harry Beasley, one of the most enterprising London managers, have just been successfully terminated.—London "Era."'

Clanalpin was thrown into a state of wild ferment over this news. Mr. Monteith MacIan rushed down to the office of the 'Argus' in a state of fury, demanding to know the authority for such an atrocious libel. There was nobody there but the office sweeper. Then he darted off to the office of the 'Tomahawk,' with a view to getting out a special edition to contradict the report. The place was a desert. He shouted for the editor, the manager, the foreman—all were not there. He sent out emissaries to scour the town for printers. All were reported to be dead drunk. Then he and many others went wildly about the city endeavoring to undo the mischief. But all their efforts were in vain. The poison had done its deadly work; the assassins of a spotless reputation had been only too successful. The day was lost to Macalpin. Triumphant Democracy, when the sun set, laughed over the funeral pyre of betrayed reform in Clanalpin.

When the hurly-burly was done and the tangle came to be unraveled, it was found that it was all owing to a blunder in the telegraph office. The answer to Mr. Harry Beasley's offer for the vacant lot had been put by mistake into the envelope addressed to the agent for the railway company, and the other found its way into the office of the general music hall manager.

In course of time the vacant lot came into possession of the railway company, in which one of Father Malone's wealthy parishioners was a large shareholder.