

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers I*, 1885 – 1886 Oct 3, '85 to May 29, '86) The original is very badly faded.

### A Very "Modern Instance" Of Steele

While the good people of Cincinnati are congratulating themselves over their escape from a large steal in the matter of the paving contracts, it may be a propos to mention a few facts in reference to the Walnut Hills Sewer contracts, whereby the city is likely to lose many thousand dollars through a manipulation of the bids very like that which was unsuccessfully attempted by those eastern capitalists who sought to do our city paving.

The sewer recently laid in Park Avenue and Francis Lane Walnut Hills was let apparently to the lowest bidder but actually to the highest; and this was apparently made possible by the negligence of those city officials whose duty it was to prevent the city from thus being robbed. The facts are substantially as follows:

The specifications upon which the work was let mentioned the estimated quantities of the various materials necessary for the completion of the work, and the stated amount of some of these materials was very much below while as to others, as very much above what was actually needed. To provide, however, for any inaccuracies in these estimates of quantity, the specifications recited that the more or less of the materials named should be furnished at the prices named in the bids. For instance, the oak-sheathing needed for the work was estimated at 50,000 feet; and the largest size earthen-ware sewer-pipe was estimated at say 5000 feet. The crafty contractor who took the prize on the highest bid, offered to furnish the oak-sheathing at say \$40 per thousand, while it is worth about \$16; and the large pipe he agreed to furnish at say \$150 a foot while it is worth say \$4.00. The square bidders bid on each article about the market price, but the man who bid on the large stone pipe at \$150 gets the job for the large quantity of this type named in the specifications more than overcomes the excessive figure named by him for the small amount of sheathing which the city engineer thinks necessary. When the work is finished and the cost is footed up, it is found that instead of 50,000 feet of sheathing, something like 550,000 feet has been used, for which \$40 per thousand must be paid, or about \$24 per thousand more than it cost. And if the large stone pipe upon which the sagacious contractor's bid was so surprisingly low, instead of 5000 feet only about one tenth of that amount is used. This you see, is the way it is done

right under the eyes of the officers who were paid by the tax-payers to attend to the city's business; and one of these gentlemen had the gall, in his speech at a public dinner the other night to say pleasantly that the people of Cincinnati were very hard to suit; for instance said he, "the Walnut Hills people have for years been crying for a sewer, and now when they have got one, they turn round and decline to pay the assessment." Of course they do.

The editor

Budget

[Charles B] Wilby editor

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