

ONE REMEDY FOR MUNICIPAL MISGOVERNMENT.

IN these days, when so many sanguine philanthropists are advocating large extensions of governmental activity, and indeed are hoping for a beneficent re-organization of society, in which popular governments shall plan, order, make, store, and distribute every thing,—all without unduly abridging individual liberty,—it may be wholesome to discuss sometimes the practical shortcomings of democratic government within its present rather limited field. Before we take courage to believe that governmental management would be successful in many new fields and on a much larger scale, we ought to be satisfied with the results of that management within its actual province. It is more instructive to discuss shortcomings close at hand than those remote, evils right under the eyes of the people than those they can hardly discern. To discuss the evils which attend municipal government is, therefore, more edifying than to consider the evils of the national and state administrations.

In peaceful times the national government is remote from the daily life of the average citizen. Its wastefulness does not come home to him. Its corrupting patronage and jobbery are unperceived by him. Errors in the financial policy of the government become plain to him, only when he experiences their ill effects. The post-office is the only function of the national government which concerns him intimately, and that function is really a simple business, and has always been a government monopoly; so that the average citizen who gets his mail with tolerable regularity, and has no experience of any other method of sending letters and newspapers generally, thinks that the post-office business is as well done by government as it could be by any agency. Municipal functions, on the other hand, touch the average citizen very nearly. It makes a great difference to him whether the city keeps good schools or bad, and clean streets or dirty, supplies him with good water or bad, and taxes him fairly or unfairly. Moreover, all critics of the working of the institutions of the United States during the last fifty years—whether friendly or hostile, whether foreign or native—agree that municipal government has been the field in which the least effi-

ciency for good has been exhibited and the greatest positive evils have been developed. To what causes the existing evils of municipal government in the United States are to be ascribed, and in what direction the remedies are to be sought, are, therefore, questions of the profoundest interest for the average citizen, as well as for the social philosopher.

It is easy to attribute these evils to the inherent viciousness and recklessness of the urban population,—wickedness and folly which are more and more effective for evil as the proportion of urban to rural population rises. It is easy for people whose forefathers came to this western world one or more generations ago to believe that the people who have just come are the source of all municipal woes. But neither of these explanations can be accepted as probable or reasonable. When we examine the working of the American democracy on the greatest state questions,—such as independence of Great Britain, the federation of the States, and the indissoluble union of the States,—we find that the democracy has dealt wisely with these great questions, and just as wisely in the generation of 1860–90 as in the generations of Revolutionary times. We observe, that, in the management of a great national debt, our democracy has exhibited better judgment, and, on the whole, juster sentiments, than any oligarchy or tyranny has ever exhibited. We see that private property is more secure under the democratic form of government than under any other form. We find that there has been an unequalled amount of diffused intellectual and moral energy among the mass of the people during the last forty years; and we are sure that the democratic form of government, working in combination with democratic social mobility, is eminently favorable to religious, social, and industrial progress. Into the immense material development of the period since the civil war there has gone a deal of sound moral force as well as of mental and physical activity. The census teaches us that the proportion of the urban to the rural population has rapidly increased during the last thirty years; but these new city people have all come in from the country. During this same period, rural town governments have fully maintained their excellence, and have in many States exhibited a new efficiency and enterprise; as, for example, in the development of primary and secondary education, the maintenance of free libraries, the restriction of the liquor traffic, and the improvement of bridges and highways. I submit, therefore, that there is no good reason to believe in any widespread and progressive demoralization of the mass of the population, whether

urban or rural. I would not be understood, however, to maintain that there have not been particular spots or particular occasions, some of them conspicuous, where failure and disgrace have resulted from moral causes; such as indifference on the part of voters to the bad character of the men they voted for; the corrupt procuring of votes in return for appointments, licenses, or tariffs; or the importation into municipal affairs of passions aroused in national party strife. My contention is, that, in spite of these manifestations, there is no good reason to believe that American constituencies, whether large or small, have frequently been dishonest or corrupt at heart, although they have sometimes chosen dishonest or corrupt agents.

The theory that the immigration of a few millions of foreigners within thirty years is the true cause of municipal evils in the United States must also be rejected, although the too quick admission to the suffrage of men who have had no acquaintance with free institutions has doubtless increased the evils of city government in a few localities. The great majority of the immigrants have been serviceable people; and of late years many of them—particularly the Germans, English, Scotch, Scandinavians, and Swiss—have had a better education than the average rural American can obtain. The experienced voters of the country cannot shelter themselves behind the comparatively small contingent of the inexperienced, particularly when the former are wholly responsible for admitting the latter to the suffrage.

I venture to suggest in this paper another explanation (a partial one, to be sure) of the comparative failure of municipal government in the United States,—an explanation which points to a remedy.

It is observable that the failures of the democratic form of government have occurred chiefly in those matters of municipal administration which present many novelties, and belong to the domain of applied science: such as the levying of taxes; the management of water-supplies and drainage systems; the paving, lighting, and cleaning of highways; the control of companies which sell in city streets light, heat, power, transportation for persons, and communication by electricity; the care of the public health; and the provision of proper means of public enjoyment, such as open squares, gardens, and parks. All these matters require for their comprehension and proper management a high degree of scientific training, and all of them require the continuous execution, through many years, of far-reaching plans. I proceed to consider each of the topics I have mentioned, with the intention of showing that antiquated methods of municipal administration,

and particularly short and insecure tenures for the heads of departments, are responsible for the greater part of the municipal evils which are bringing discredit on free institutions, and that the altered nature and conditions of municipal business require that these old methods, which answered very well in earlier times, be fundamentally reformed.

In the course of this rapid sketch it will appear at various points that the monarchical and aristocratic governments of Europe have grappled with modern municipal problems much more successfully than our democratic government. The discussion will, I think, suggest that explanations of this result, so unsatisfactory to lovers of liberty, are to be found in the slowness of a democracy to change governmental methods, and in the comparatively small and temporary influence of political and administrative leaders under a form of government which makes frequent appeal to universal suffrage.

I. I begin with the levying of municipal taxes. One of the greatest mischiefs in American municipal government is the system of local taxation; for this system is, in many places, an effective school in evasion and perjury, and, as a rule, an agency of stinging injustice. The trouble is twofold.

In the first place, the incidence of taxes is one of the most difficult subjects in political economy, and very few American legislators know any thing about it. More than that, very few Americans in any profession or walk of life know any thing about it. The colleges and universities of the country are greatly to blame for this condition of things. They never began to teach political science in any serious way till about twenty years ago. The generation of men now in their prime either never studied any political economy at all, or studied it in one small textbook for a few hours a week for perhaps half a year at school or college, or they picked up a few notions about it in the intervals of professional or business occupation after they had entered upon their life-work. The number of living Americans who have any thorough and systematic knowledge of the principles of political economy, including the incidence of taxes, is absolutely insignificant; and these few are mostly either professors, or business-men who have been also life-long students. The average business-man and the average professional man have never given any attention to the science, except perhaps to some little scrap of it, like the doctrine of protection, which has temporarily had some political interest.

Secondly, the forms of property have changed so prodigiously

within forty years, that a theory of assessment which worked reasonably well before 1850 has become thoroughly mischievous in 1890. The old theory of taxation was, that every man should be assessed at his home on all his property. It was all there, or it returned thither periodically, like his ox-cart or his vessel. If, by rare chance, a man had property out of the town where he lived, it was a piece of real estate which was to be assessed for taxes in the town where it lay, and there only. Nowadays in cities this is all changed. In the country and in remote communities by the sea, the lakes, and the rivers, the old forms of property—namely, lands, buildings, implements, live-stock, carriages, and vessels—remain the same that they were fifty years ago, and in such communities there is no difficulty about the assessment and incidence of taxes; but in all the urban populations there are innumerable forms of property which are of very recent creation. The various bonds of railroad, telegraph, telephone, land, and bridge companies—which are a kind of preferred stock without any liability or any voting power—have been almost entirely created within thirty years. The English statute which provides for incorporation with limited liability dates only from the year 1855. The innumerable stocks of transportation, financial, and manufacturing companies, have almost all been created since the present type of American municipality was established. The history of Harvard University, like that of any old institution, illustrates the newness of these forms of property which have become so common. In 1860 only two per cent of the quick capital of Harvard University was in railroad stocks and bonds; now fifty per cent is so invested. If we go back in the history of the university thirty years more, to the year 1830, we find that the university owned neither stock nor bond, except fifty-two shares in a Boston bank, one share in a local canal, and certain interests in three wooden bridges leading out of Boston. Legislators, assessors, and voters have been quite unable to grasp the new situation so suddenly created. They have been unable to master quickly enough the new conditions. The conservatism of a democracy is intense, partly because the average voter is afraid of administrative novelties, and partly because inexperienced officials necessarily follow precedent. The more rapid the change of officials, the more surely will this unreasoning following of precedent prevail. A new official is afraid to depart from custom, lest he fall into some dangerous or absurd difficulty. Yet to follow precedent when conditions have changed is the surest way to fall into both absurdity and danger. Clinging to the old

theory that a man was to be taxed at the place of his residence on all of his property,—a perfectly good theory under former conditions, and, indeed, under present conditions among a rural population,—American legislators and assessors have endeavored to tax at the place of residence property which did not lie there, never returned thither, and was wholly invisible there. Hence all the inquisitorial methods of assessment which disgrace the American cities.

At present, in many States of the Union the attempt is made to tax the house and the mortgage on it, the merchant's stock and the note he gave for the money with which he bought it, a railroad and the bonds which built it. So far as this method is successful, it falsifies the total valuation of the country, and produces inequality and injustice in the distribution of the public burdens. So far as it is unsuccessful, it causes another kind of injustice, excites suspicions and enmities among neighbors, and dulls the public conscience. These grave evils take effect, for the most part, in urban communities, and there work their most serious mischiefs. Yet they result from popular persistence in a theory which was perfectly good no long time ago, and from the inability of ill-trained and often changed officials to adapt public policy quickly to new conditions of finance and trade very suddenly created. To deal wisely with public taxation in the face of rapid and progressive changes in business and social conditions requires on the part of the tax officials exact knowledge, sound judgment, wide experience, and continuous service: in short, it requires highly trained experts, serving the public on independent tenures, for long terms.

II. The management of water-supplies and drainage systems is another municipal function which is of recent growth and of a highly scientific character. As a regular part of city business it has all been created within fifty years. I was brought up in one of the best built houses in Boston, situated near the top of Beacon Hill. The house drainage was discharged into a cesspool in the rear of the lot, and the whole family drank the water from a deep well which was not more than fifty feet from the cesspool. Moreover, five private stables stood near the rear of the lot, all of them but a short distance from the well, and the natural slope of the land was from the stables and the cesspool toward the well. There was at that time no sewerage system in the city of Boston and no public water-supply.

The mayor of Boston is elected to-day in the same way and for the same term as in those not remote times; but his function and the

whole municipal business which he superintends have utterly changed. I need not say that the provision of adequate supplies of wholesome water in a large city is a work of great and increasing difficulty, which can be successfully managed only by men who have received an elaborate training, and who have labored for years continuously in that one field. The difficult subjects of average annual precipitation, natural water-sheds, prevention of pollution, and effective distribution, will always task the full powers of gifted men who have received the best possible training. Continuity of policy is of great importance in regard to the water-supply of any large population. The same may be said of the related problem of sewerage. The disposition of the fluid and semi-fluid refuse of cities is an engineering problem which presents great variety in different localities, and almost always great difficulty. In our expanding cities the moment one difficulty or danger is overcome, another presents itself. The planning of sewerage works pre-eminently requires foresight; and durability is always a primary merit in their construction. That the water-works and sewer system of a great municipality should be under the charge of constantly shifting officials is irrational to the last degree. The forms and methods of our city governments were determined when no such problems were to be solved by city agents.

III. I turn next to the care of highways, including paving, lighting, and cleaning. It is unnecessary to dilate upon the intelligence and skill which are needed in modern cities for the right conduct of this department of the public work. The services of engineers of the highest intelligence and skill, and of the highest professional honor and business capacity, are constantly requisite. In the great European capitals, these departments of municipal service are admirably managed by men trained, in schools long famous, expressly for the planning and direction of such public works, and kept in service, like officers of the army and navy, during good behavior and efficiency. There is not a great capital in Europe, I had almost said there is not even a small city, which does not immeasurably excel in the care of its highways the best governed of American cities. The monarchical and bureaucratic governments of Europe see to it that city streets and country highways are smooth, hard, and clean. The streets of European capitals, and their public squares, are incessantly swept and washed, and all rubbish, manure, and offal are promptly removed; but in most American cities the manure of animals, the sputa of human beings, and much other vegetable and animal refuse, are suffered

to dry up, and blow about as dust. The footways in American cities are as inferior to those of foreign cities as the carriage-ways, in respect to convenience and cleanliness, except, indeed, that there are some portions of the oldest European cities in which originally no footways were provided. Spain is not considered a particularly clean country; but I remember sitting down in a small public square in Seville to eat an orange, and so absolutely tidy was the enclosure that I could see no place where it was possible to leave the skin of the orange, and I had to carry it away with me. The inferiority of American cities in this respect is not due to lack of sufficient expenditure on the highways: it is due primarily to the fact that competent experts are not steadily employed to direct this important branch of municipal business, and, secondarily, to a flood of abuses which become possible in the absence of competent and honest supervision. There is no point at which municipal government in the United States has been so complete a failure as here. It has disastrously failed to provide for the convenience and comfort of the people in a matter which seriously affects the daily well-being of every inhabitant.

IV. I speak next of an important municipal function which is of very recent origin, which, indeed, has hardly as yet been developed at all; namely, the control in the public interest of the companies which sell light, heat, power, transportation, and telegraphic or telephonic communication. The value of these franchises has only recently been demonstrated; and the many ways in which these companies may affect the business interests and the comfort, health, and pleasure of a compact community, are not yet fully developed. The introduction of electricity for all these purposes, except heating, has very recently greatly modified the methods of the purveying corporations. Not a single American city has succeeded in dealing with these serviceable monopolies justly and at the same time to the public advantage; and, so long as the present modes of electing and organizing a municipal government continue in this country, we may well despair of seeing any effective control over these corporations exercised in the public interest. They are controlled in Europe by skilful engineers whose duty is to the public, and whose authority is exercised steadily and independently. This grave municipal problem is, however, very new. It is only about forty years ago that the first street-railways were built in the United States; the telephone seems to many of us a thing of yesterday; and the introduction of electric lights and electric cars is quite within the memory of children still in school. Within

five years a wholly new class of municipal difficulties has arisen from the multiplication of overhead wires, for all sorts of purposes, along and across the public highways. How absurd it is to expect an effective discharge of supervisory functions over these novel and enterprising corporations, which are eagerly pursuing their private interests, from city officials who are elected by universal suffrage once a year or once in two years, or who depend for their positions on the single will of an official so elected!

V. One would imagine, *a priori*, that "government by the people, for the people," would always have been careful of the people's health; but here we come upon one of the most conspicuous failures of free institutions in urban populations. Democratic government is at present at a serious disadvantage, in comparison with aristocratic and monarchical governments, as regards the care of the public health. The evidence of that disadvantage is of two sorts. In the first place, there are several cities in the United States which already, in spite of their comparative newness, have a death-rate absolutely higher than that of the best conducted cities of Europe. London, with its six millions of people, has habitually a lower death-rate than Boston, New York, Brooklyn, or Chicago. A few facts must suffice to illustrate this point. In the third quarter of 1889, the summer quarter, Chicago, Boston, and New York had a higher death-rate than Rome, Milan, and Turin, in hot Italy. In the fourth quarter, Chicago had a higher death-rate than Copenhagen, Christiania, Prague, Hamburg, Bremen, Cologne, Dresden, Leipsic, Berlin, Lyons, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Sheffield, Birmingham, Liverpool, or London. In the first quarter of 1890, the death-rate in New York was a little higher than the mean rate in the twenty-eight great English towns, including London, some of those great towns being confessedly in habitually bad sanitary condition. The population of New York is about equal to that of Berlin. In the first quarter of 1890, the deaths in New York were at the annual rate of 28.8 persons in every 1,000, against 23.3 in Berlin; a fact which means that in those three months 2,600 more persons died in New York than in Berlin, although New York has great advantages over Berlin as regards both climate and situation. In the fourth quarter of 1890, the death-rate in New York and Brooklyn was higher than in Berlin by more than 3 in 1,000. In the second place, in those American cities which have made some effort to preserve the public health and to lower the death-rate, no such success has rewarded the effort as in many European cities,

although the newness of most American cities should give them great advantage over the European. London, which is supposed to contain in East London the largest mass of human misery in the civilized world, is the best example in the world of sanitary success. Berlin is another striking example of sanitary success under extremely unfavorable conditions. Before 1871 the annual death-rate in Berlin had for thirty years been from 37 to 39 per 1,000. Of late years, 21 to 23 per 1,000 have been common rates,—an immense annual saving of life, which is chiefly due to the construction of a good water-supply and a good sewerage system. The worst district of Glasgow—No. 14, a physical and moral plague-spot—had in 1871 a population of 14,000 and a death-rate of 42.3 per 1,000; in 1881 a population of about 8,000 and a death-rate of 38.3; in 1888 a population of about 7,000 and a death-rate of 32.45. No American city has obtained sanitary successes like these. Boston among cities, and Massachusetts among states, have taken as much pains in sanitary matters as any American communities, yet the death-rate has not been reduced during the past twenty-five years, either in the city or in the state at large. How much saving of life is possible under favorable conditions may be inferred from two comparisons. In the year 1888, the death-rate in Boston was 24.57 per 1,000: in the adjoining, or rather interjected, town of Brookline, it was 11.43. In urban England, the death-rate during the last quarter of 1890 was 21.2 per 1,000: among the remaining population, it was 17.5 per 1,000.

What are the reasons of the comparative inefficiency of democratic government in the care of the public health? I maintain that they are not vice and criminal negligence, but ignorance and unwisdom. Is it not obvious that the care of the public health requires a high degree of intelligence and of scientific training in the officers who have charge of it? and that our system of municipal administration almost precludes the employment of such competent officers? Preventive medicine is a comparatively new science, and it has been more effectively cultivated in Europe than in this country, partly because the methods of municipal administration which there prevail give a chance for putting its principles into practice which American methods have not given. In its respect for personal liberty and the rights of the individual, democracy lets ignorance and selfishness poison water-supplies with fecal matter, distribute milk infected with diphtheria, scarlet-fever, or tuberculosis, and spread contagious diseases by omitting the precautions of isolation and disinfection.

Clearly, this feebleness of democracy is largely due to ignorance. Aristocratic and autocratic governments have learned quicker than democracies the economic and humane value of sanitary science, and have applied that science more promptly and efficiently. If the sufferings inflicted on the poorer and less intelligent portions of the community, and the economic losses inflicted on the whole community, by incompetent practitioners of medicine and surgery, could be brought home to American legislators, the quacks and charlatans would have short shrift, in spite of the inevitable interference with so-called private rights. Registration acts for practitioners of medicine would be promptly passed, and vigorously enforced. In like manner, if a democracy were only persuaded that contagious diseases—like yellow-fever, small-pox, and diphtheria—might be closely limited by isolation, the present careless methods of dealing with these scourges would soon be as obsolete as surgery and midwifery without antiseptics. The multitude does not know how typhoid-fever lurks in contaminated water; it does not comprehend either the suffering or the economic loss which inevitably falls on any population breathing polluted air, or drinking polluted water; it does not realize that public health is only the sum total of the individual healths, and that every avoidable injury to the public health means individual sufferings and losses which need not have been incurred. A few American states and cities have made some progress in the care of the public health; but the good work has been done chiefly by educated physicians and engineers serving gratuitously on boards of health. Such an organization is vastly better than none; but, as the results show, it is less efficient than the steady, paid service of such competent health-officers as all large European communities nowadays employ. Again we see that this recently created but important municipal function requires experts for its satisfactory performance.

VI. Another matter in which democratic government manifests, in comparison with aristocratic and autocratic governments, a curious neglect of the interests of the masses, is the provision, or rather lack of provision, of parks, gardens, open-air parlors, and forests for the enjoyment of the populace. This subject is closely connected with the last to which I referred,—the public health. One would have supposed, that, before the urban populations began to feel keenly their deprivation of fresh air and rural beauty, liberal reservations of unoccupied land would have been made in our country for the use of the public. The fact is, however, that European towns and cities,

both large and small, are much better provided with parks, gardens, small squares, and popular open-air resorts of all kinds, than American towns and cities. The gardens, parks, and game-preserves of royalty and nobility have there been converted, in many cases, to popular uses with the happiest results. The largest and densest European cities—London, Vienna, Berlin, and Paris—are greatly better off in this respect than any American city. Even the least progressive parts of Europe, like Spain and Sicily, surpass the United States in making provision for the out-of-door enjoyments of crowded populations. All about our large cities and towns the building-up of neighborhoods once rural is going on with marvellous rapidity, and the city population is progressively excluded from private properties long unoccupied, but now converted into brick blocks and wooden villages, mostly unsightly. Meantime the municipalities take no measures to provide either small squares or broad areas for the future use of the people. Some of the smaller New England cities have actually hesitated to accept, or have even declined, the gift of valuable tracts which public-spirited citizens have offered them. A notion has been spread abroad by assessors and frugal citizens who prefer industrial or commercial values to spiritual and æsthetic or joy-giving values, that any area exempt from taxation is an incubus on the community; the fact being that the exempted areas in most towns and cities represent, as a rule, just those things which make a dense community worth having at all, namely, the churches, museums, libraries, hospitals, colleges, schools, parks, squares, and commons. One would infer from democratic practice, that in democratic theory public parks and gardens were made for the rich or the idle, whereas they are most needed by the laborious and the poor. The richer classes can provide their own enjoyments; they can go to the country or the sea when they please: it is the laboring masses that need the open-air parlor, the city boulevard, and the country park. The urban population in the United States has not yet grasped these principles; and herein lies one great difficulty in regard to good municipal administration in this matter. But there is another serious difficulty: the satisfactory construction and maintenance of public works of this nature require many years of steady work upon one plan, and they require both artistic and engineering skill in the officials who devise, execute, and maintain such works. Again we see that good municipal administration must, in this department also, be in the hands of competent experts, and that not for a year at a time, but for long periods.

I have now touched, I believe, on the chief municipal functions which have a distinctly scientific quality. There remain the administration of justice, the protection of the city against fire, disorder, and crime, and the conduct of the public schools. Experience has abundantly proved that independent and permanent tenures, after proper periods of probationary or subordinate service, are indispensable for the heads of all these departments of municipal administration; but these functions are less novel than those with which I have chiefly dealt, although even in these departments many new questions present themselves nowadays which never troubled at all the men of the last generation.

Of the judicial and legal departments of a great municipality it is perhaps unnecessary to say more than this,—that their efficiency depends on the steady employment of learned, independent, and honorable lawyers and judges. Of the education department I can say with confidence, that the welfare of the schools will always be best promoted by superintendents and teachers who have been selected by a professional appointing body, proved in actual service under the observation of competent inspectors, and then appointed to permanent places. Academies, endowed schools, and colleges often have better modes of selecting teachers than the public schools, and more secure tenures of office. Hence, in part, the greater comparative success of these institutions, their relative resources being considered. It is interesting to notice, that, under stress of great disasters, the fire department has become the best-managed public organization in an American city. In that department are often found all the features of an efficient service,—careful selection of the members of the force, steady employment, advancement for merit, compensation for injury, and a pension on retirement after faithful service.

I believe it is no exaggeration to say that good municipal administration has now become absolutely impossible without the employment, on permanent tenures, of a large number of highly trained and highly paid experts in various arts and sciences as directors of the chief city departments, and that the whole question of municipal reform is covered by the inquiry, How can a city government be organized so as to secure the services of these experts? Without attempting to go into the details of municipal organization, I venture to indicate the direction in which reform must be sought. Of late years the direction of reform movements has been towards increasing the responsibility of the mayor, by freeing him from the control of muni-

cipal elective bodies, and giving him larger rights of appointing and dismissing his subordinates. This method will succeed only so far as it procures for the city independent and highly trained expert service. I do not see that it tends to secure such service, unless the tenure of the mayoralty itself is prolonged and the heads of departments are made safe from arbitrary dismissal. On the whole, there is but slight tendency in the American cities to prolong the period of service of mayors. To give the mayor, who is himself a short-term official, larger powers of appointment and dismissal, does not tend to secure to the heads of departments long terms of service. Competent men will not leave their own business or the service of the numerous corporations which give useful men secure positions, to accept municipal positions the tenure of which is no longer, to say the least, than the tenure of the mayor. The inevitable result will be that the city will secure only second-, third-, or fourth-rate servants. As a rule, only incompetent people, or people out of work, or adventurers, will accept casual employment. I believe that all reform efforts ought to be primarily directed to the means of procuring under democratic government, as under aristocratic and autocratic governments, honest, highly trained, and well-paid permanent officials. The intelligent American closely resembles the intelligent European in preferring an independent and permanent position. He will always accept lower pay for a steady job. He will always prefer, when he has passed the speculative and adventurous age, a moderately paid position with which go public consideration and a prospect of steady usefulness, to higher paid but insecure positions. The method of employing competent persons in permanent positions is also more economical than any other: it procures more service, and more faithful and interested service, than any other method. The experience of many American corporations illustrates this fact. In the service of banks, trust companies, insurance companies, railroads, factories, shops, colleges, and hospitals, it is the almost universal practice to retain as long as possible well-proved managers, trained clerks, and skilful workmen. This policy is, indeed, the only profitable policy. In many towns and counties, also, the tenure of elective offices is practically a tenure during efficiency. For a cure of the evils which now attend democratic government in cities, it is of the utmost consequence that the methods of municipal service should be assimilated to the methods of the great private and corporate services which require intelligence, high training, and long experience. The doctrine

of rotation in office when applied to such functions as I have been describing is simply silly.

I adverted at the opening of this paper to the fact that town governments in the United States have remained good, down to the present day, through all the deterioration of city governments. The principal reason for this fact seems to be that the best men in a rural town can undertake the service of the town without interfering with their regular occupation or business, and may derive from that service a convenient addition to their ordinary earnings. A selectman, road commissioner, or school commissioner in a New England town, has a position of respectability and local influence, with perhaps some small emolument; and he holds it without suffering any loss in his private business. In large cities, on the other hand, it is quite impossible for the chief officials to attend to their private business and at the same time to fulfil their municipal functions. Moreover, city men of capacity and character are sure to be absorbed in their own affairs so completely that they give but a reluctant and spasmodic attention to the business of the public. Democratic freedom inevitably tends to produce this devotion to their own affairs on the part of intelligent and industrious citizens. An able professional man, merchant, or manufacturer, cannot abandon his regular vocation to take municipal service, until his success in his profession or business has been so great that he can afford to impair, or dispense with, his ordinary annual earnings. Aside from persons of fortune and leisure, there are but two classes of competent and desirable men in this country who can, as a rule, enter the public service at all without sacrificing their individual and family interests. These two classes are lawyers, and business-men whose business is already so well organized that they can temporarily abandon it without incurring any loss which they care about. Of the Fifty-first Congress of the United States, nearly three-quarters are lawyers—fully three-quarters of the Senate, and nearly three-quarters of the House. Of the other quarter, the majority are business-men of the kind I have described. A lawyer returning from public service to his profession generally finds, if he is a man of ability, that his private practice has been increased. A manufacturer or merchant who is already rich can of course run the risks of the public service. If the voters abandon him, or his superior discharge him, he returns to his private business. As a rule, no other persons in the American community can really afford to enter the public service, either municipal or national, as it is at present conducted.

Before municipal government can be set right in the United States, municipal service must be made a life-career for intelligent and self-respecting young Americans; that is, it must be attractive to well-trained young men to who enter it,—as they enter any other profession or business,—meaning to stay in it, learn it thoroughly, and win advancement in it by fidelity and ability. To enforce this principle, to indicate this one necessary direction of all reform movements, has been my modest object in this paper. To say that this reform is impracticable is equivalent to saying that American cities cannot be well conducted; and that, again, is equivalent to saying that the democratic form of government is going to be a failure for more than half of the total population. Free institutions themselves are valuable only as a means of public well-being. They will ultimately be judged by their fruits; and therefore they must be made to minister fairly well to the public comfort, health, and pleasure, and to conform in their administrative methods to the standards of intelligence and morality which are maintained by other trustees and large business agencies in the same communities.

CHARLES W. ELIOT.

SOCIAL VERSE.

To improve on the collection or selection of poems issued years ago under the title of "*Lyra Elegantiarum*"* might have seemed impossible even for its editor: but Mr. Locker-Lampson has done so. In all such volumes a reader will usually find omissions to regret and insertions which surprise him: to take note of these is the best and sincerest tribute he can pay to the excellence of the general accomplishment—the fullest acknowledgment he can make of the high standard maintained and the happy success achieved. And when all necessary deductions on either score have been duly made and registered, it will remain evident to the capable reader that there is no better or completer anthology than this in the language: I doubt indeed if there be any so good and so complete. No objection or suggestion that can reasonably be offered can in any way diminish our obligation either to the original editor or to his evidently able assistant Mr. Kernahan in the compilation of a larger if not a more ambitious volume.

The crowning merit, the first and highest distinction of the book, is the fair if not yet quite adequate prominence given now for the first time to the name of the great man whose lightest and slightest claim to immortality is his indisputable supremacy over all possible competitors as a writer of social or occasional verse more bright, more graceful, more true in tone, more tender in expression, more deep in suggestion, more delicate in touch, than any possible Greek or Latin or French or English rivals. Meleager no less than Voltaire, and Prior no less than Catullus,† must on this ground give place to Landor. The editors, to their lasting honour, have put into their casket no less than thirty-eight of his flawless and incomparable jewels: but how came they to overlook a thirty-ninth yet lovelier than all? There is

* *Lyra Elegantiarum*: a Collection of Some of the Best Social and Occasional Verse by Deceased English Authors. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Edited by Frederick Locker-Lampson, assisted by Coulson Kernahan (Ward, Lock, and Co., London, New York, and Melbourne, 1891.)

† Such a poem as that on his old yacht would no doubt be the greatest example on record of such work, if it were not this and something more.