

Unquestionably the literature of one generation, even of one decade, is the natural result of the literature immediately preceding it: evolution is inexorable. But upon this force of heredity operate the great and complex forces of the times, and the man who is thrust head and shoulders above the mass, as the target of his generation and a landmark for posterity, is he in whom both forces have met and been ignited by the divine spark that shot in his unborn brain, whence no man can tell.

GERTRUDE FRANKLIN ATHERTON.

III.

THE POLITICS NEAREST HOME.

IS THERE not something beyond mere accident, or coincidence, in the widespread interest suddenly manifested in America in the question of the government of cities? There seems to be the action of a sociological law in this; for it may be observed that when the time is ripe for a political or social advance the movement begins to assert itself, not at one point alone, but with a sort of spontaneity in various portions of the National mass. It cannot be denied that in the practical government of cities some of the leading European countries are now far in advance of us. This acknowledgment strikes something of a blow at our National pride—or vanity; for we have been so accustomed to regard ourselves as the political models for the world that it seems humiliating to have to concede the superiority of others in any respect. Therefore, while allowing the fact, many of us have been disposed to ascribe it to the fundamental difference between European and American theories of government, and to say that, while great European cities were undoubtedly better governed than ours, the free spirit of the American people would never tolerate the application of such methods here. But if this were true, would it not be a very unfortunate confession of American incapacity? Would it not give the lie to our professed ability to surpass the rest of the world under an equality of opportunities? Fortunately for us, this excuse is not valid. It is not owing to monarchical institutions that European cities are better governed than ours. Those cities are old democracies and the parents of our modern republicanism; self-government maintained itself in them while despotism ruled the land, and it is because of their methods of responsible self-government that their affairs are now so well administered.

It is a healthful sign that this sense of our defects has aroused an active interest in the question of municipal government. If the body politic be diseased, its ills will show themselves most keenly in the parts most immediately concerning the public; and if the very foundation be defective, we can hardly hope for a sound National structure. It is well, therefore, that we are becoming aroused from our self-complacency and made to see plainly that, of all the countries calling themselves enlightened, our own free land has the distinction of possessing the worst-governed cities.

Two important courses of lectures on municipal government, given in Boston and Providence, have commanded exceptional attention far beyond the public to whom they were directly addressed, and the subject has otherwise been widely discussed and studied throughout the country. In the comparisons between European and American methods, made by several of the lecturers, data have been made prominent that plainly show the reasons for the excellencies on the one hand and the defects on the other. The differences lie both in system and in functions. In the chief cities of Great Britain and Germany—the countries furnishing the best examples of model municipal government—the business-like organization is notable. While our system of frequent elections and short terms of both officials and popular representatives puts a premium on inexperience and incapacity, the purpose of theirs is to secure men of experience and capacity at the head of affairs. Their city councils are permanent bodies, only a certain proportion of the members retiring periodically, so that even should none of them be reelected, there always remain a majority of men familiar with the public business. The other features of their governments are likewise arranged with a view to the best efficiency, and we see the fruits in the economy and thoroughness with which affairs are administered, as against the extravagance and

neglect that are the rule in nearly all our large cities. They are likewise in advance of us in the municipal exercise of functions that are usually here handed over to private corporations with substantially free license to ride rough-shod over the public. Therefore, while we have to pay the highest rates for services of necessity and convenience, rendered as poorly as the public will bear, they get the cheapest and best possible services of the same kind.

When we Americans fully realize the wastefulness and corruption attendant upon municipal methods, we may be expected to make practical application of the lessons imparted by foreign examples, regardless of prejudice. We have taught the old world much of the highest value, and in return we can afford to receive good instruction from that quarter. One of the most profitable things that we can learn is to administer municipal government so efficiently as to make it the instrument for all the services that can be better performed collectively than by individual effort.

SYLVESTER BAXTER.

IV.

AMERICA FOR THE AMERICANS.

"BECAUSE of its size and the heterogeneity of its components, the American Nation," says Herbert Spencer, "will be a long time in evolving its ultimate form, but its ultimate form will be high. From biological truths it is to be inferred that the eventual mixture of the allied varieties of the Aryan race forming the population will produce a finer type of man than has hitherto existed."

It is with this question of the heterogeneity of its components that the American Nation has now to deal. Will not this finer type of man, which is evolving from the "allied varieties of the Aryan race"—will not this type, I ask, be slightly impaired by the yearly absorption of masses of criminal, slothful, imbecile humanity from other lands? Will not the yearly dissemination of hundreds of thousands of paupers, criminals, and idiots among us retard, in some measure, the evolution of this "finer type," to which the biologist bids us aspire? I am of the opinion that it will, whether we view the question morally or politically.

When Augustus of Poland remonstrated with France for affording refuge to the fugitive Stanislas, the Duke of Orleans, then Regent, replied to the ambassador in what Voltaire calls these remarkable words: "*Monsieur, mandez au roi votre maître que la France a toujours été l'asile des rois malheureux.*" America has given asylum to all; has hospitably welcomed to her shores the high-born and the low. But when foreign powers persist in flagrantly and shamelessly abusing this open hospitality, then is the time for this hospitality to cease. Then is the time to view clearly the question whether we are to continue to receive yearly, with outstretched arms, the refuse and filth of European governments. From the very nature of the circumstances America is, and ever will be, a hospitable nation, but, as Mr. Depew remarked, "We refuse to act as the dumping-ground of Europe."

When Young America was embarking on its voyage through life, it welcomed all new-comers to its shores, in the very joyousness of youth, demanding no pedigrees, asking no questions. But now that the youth has developed into a full-fledged man, Liberty's Goddess, under whose fostering care this youth was transformed into the man, pauses and views with wrathful eyes her gracious rights of hospitality trampled in the dust and the annual arrival of criminals, idiots, paupers, and diseased upon her shores. We have, indeed, hitherto, cordially received all "varieties of the Aryan race," but there are certain varieties at which we choose to draw the line—a very decided and emphatic line. We are now a nation complete in ourselves, and we ask no foreign assistance in the shape of exotic criminals, imbeciles, and ex-inmates of the poor-house. We refuse to allow that rank weed, anarchism, uprooted from its native land, Germany, and spurned by England, to embed itself in American soil. We may, in accordance with the biological truths previously stated, be evolving "a finer type of man than has hitherto existed"; in some rare, sunny moments we hope that such may be the case; but we have already evolved a nation—a nation fathered by a Revolution, purged by the fire of Civil War—a nation the purity and well-being of which we refuse to endanger by pollution from the offscourings of Europe.