

WAITING FOR THE WORD TO MARCH
The Street-Cleaners' Parade in New York, May 26, 1896

Colonel Waring's "White Angels"

A Sketch of the Street-Cleaning Department of New York

By William W. Ellsworth



THE march of Colonel Waring's men down Fifth Avenue on a pleasant afternoon last May was one of the most inspiring sights that New York has seen in many a day. We have had "labor parades" before, but never one like this. Here was a body of men whose duty it is to do what is generally considered a menial work—to sweep our streets and take away our garbage—and they marched like honest, loyal citizens, proud of their glistening uniforms and proud of their organization and the man who led them. We who looked on saw one of the greatest examples of the truth of the old-time phrase, "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war." It was a victory for honesty in municipal government, a victory for real reform, a victory for common sense over "practical politics." Perhaps some who stood upon the curb came to scoff, but no one in sight of the writer did any scoffing after the procession once swung into sight. The people applauded a good "alignment" as if they were looking on at a parade of the Seventh Regiment; and it is safe to say that they went home with a higher idea of the "dignity of labor" and a deeper consciousness of pride in their own city than they had ever known before.

There was infantry and there was artillery in the procession. The infantry bore no arms, and was clad in shining white. The artillery was made up of carts, clean and freshly painted, each one covered with white canvas. The five hundred and fifty drivers sat up straight, each man on the right-hand side of his cart; and the fourteen hundred foot-soldiers marched in close-set ranks, shoulder to shoulder, keeping step to the music of the bands which led each battalion. The Stars and Stripes fluttered over the ranks, and the one sign borne in the procession told the whole story:

420 MILES
OF STREETS
CLEANED DAILY

We all had seen the "white angels" on the streets, an odd man here and there, working hard and no longer leaning

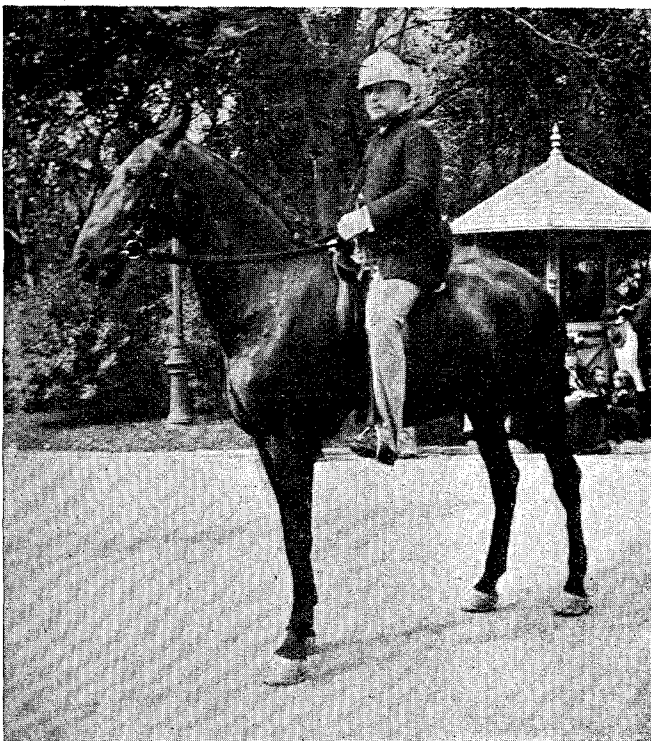
wearily on his broom as in days of yore, and we had seen an odd cart going about now and then to collect the sweepings. We knew that these men worked under some sort of system, and that it must be a good one, but it is safe to say that the public had no suspicion of the thoroughness of Colonel Waring's organization until that procession went down Fifth Avenue. That the men and carts were divided into "stables," that everything was perfectly systematized, that there was a genuine *esprit de corps* in this body of street-cleaners—this was the surprise. And at least one on-looker made up his mind that he would find out more about it—and what he has found out is here set down for the benefit of the readers of The Outlook.

HOW THE STREETS ARE SWEEPED

On a June morning, a few preliminaries having been arranged, a smart horse and buggy drew up to the writer's door, driven by a young man clad in a modest uniform and a white helmet. The words "Department of Street-Cleaning" were lettered on the side of the buggy, and the young man was a "district superintendent" who was about to undertake the work of initiating his guest into the mysteries of street-cleaning. He was on his regular morning round of visits to section foremen, and before we had gone two blocks a bicyclist with a white helmet was seen pedaling along in the distance. When he saw us he stopped his wheel, produced his written report of the previous day's work, and the two men discussed the affairs of the district together. The report showed the number of sweepers who had been at work, regular and extra men, the number of cart-loads of garbage, ashes, and sweepings removed, closing with "No ashes or garbage left in streets." If anything has gone wrong in the district, the foreman is expected to telephone to the stable before eight o'clock, at which hour the superintendent makes out his general report to the main office and sends it by special messenger before starting out on his rounds. The superintendent does not have his foremen wait for him at any particular place, but prefers to drive around and find them. They do not know within an hour when to expect him, and from this time on he is liable to appear at any moment—and

general inspectors and members of the personal staff of Colonel Waring are on the alert day and night.

The city is divided into eleven districts, each in charge of a superintendent, and nine of these districts have their own stables. The district visited by the writer runs from Fifty-eighth Street to One Hundred and Twelfth Street, on the West Side. It includes all the streets and avenues between Central Park and the Hudson River, and two streets north and south of the Park as far east as Sixth Avenue, which, for districting purposes, bisects the city. The superintendent has under him seven section foremen, with one hundred and twenty-two regular sweepers and



COLONEL GEORGE E. WARING, JR.

sixty carts. Each foreman is responsible for a section about eight blocks in length and across the full width of the district—eight to ten miles of streets. He has from fifteen to twenty sweepers and eight carts in his charge. Each sweeper takes care of about six short blocks or three long blocks, which he sweeps at least once a day and often twice or three times, depending on the traffic. The asphalt of Hester Street, down town on the "East Side," crowded with playing children and hucksters, is swept five times a day. Some of the business districts in the lower part of the city are swept only at night. Broadway, from Fourteenth Street to the Battery, is swept by a contractor, and the same avenue from Twenty-second Street to Eighteenth is taken care of by Italians under a contractor employed by the storekeepers, as has been the custom for many years. There are still some private sweepers in the residence districts, but, as a foreman said, "We don't pay any attention to them—we clean the streets just the same."

In the district which the writer visited are three "section stations"—comfortable rooms secured where the rent is low (\$40 a month or less), which are at fairly regular intervals in the district; these are the headquarters of the sweepers. In the old days the men met anywhere, and went to work with more or less irregularity. Now they know just where they belong and what streets they are responsible for. They reach the section stations in the morning in time to put on their white uniform, each one leaving his extra clothing on a peg which bears his name above it. A man (usually somewhat superannuated) is in charge of each station and stays there during working hours. At 6:45 the men line up on the curb before the section foreman, the roll is called, and any special instructions which may have come in a general order from headquarters are given out. Then they are "inspected" just as if they were policemen; uniforms must be fairly clean, and belts and badges in proper place. If a man is sick

he sends word and a substitute is taken on for the day. The extra man does not need a uniform, but he must have a white cap.

Colonel Waring was sharply criticised when he put his men into white uniforms, but the result has shown that he knew what he was about. A man in white duck is as incapable of concealing himself as an ostrich. A sweeper who comes out of a liquor-saloon becomes the cynosure of every eye in the block; and a section foreman, bicycling along an avenue, can tell at a glance down a side street whether his men are at their posts or not. The cost of the uniform is \$1.25 (each man must have two), the helmet is \$1.30, the oilskin suit for rainy days \$1.10, and belt and buttons 88 cents—total, \$5.78. The city provides each sweeper with broom, watering-can, and scraper (for asphalt); a bag-carrier will soon be added. The man must furnish a shovel and a small hand-broom.

The sweepers are paid \$720 a year, which is \$2 a day for 360 days, and as they do not work on Sundays except in emergencies, the pay is a little over \$2 a day. New men are now paid \$600 for the first year, \$660 for the second, and \$720 for the third, but all who were employed before January 1, 1896, receive the highest wage. They are probably the best-paid unskilled laborers in the world, but they are doing such good work that the city does not begrudge it to them, and, moreover, they are rapidly becoming "skilled." New York is perfectly willing to pay for clean streets; what we used to object to was paying for dirty ones.

Sunday work is done when it is necessary—after processions on Saturday, etc.—and in some districts a few sweepers and carts are out for several hours every Sunday. The sweepers work till four o'clock in the afternoon, with an hour for dinner. After four the section foreman goes over all of his streets (thorough work in this was made possible by the bicycle) to see that they are in good condition and that all the garbage and ashes have been removed. If he finds any cans unemptied, he telephones to the stable for a cart, unless the can has been put out since the proper hour, in which case he calls the attention of the householder to the matter.

The greatest difficulty which the department has to contend with is the generally dirty habits of the people who use the streets. They throw away banana-skins, bits of paper, and even whole newspapers. If there were plenty of proper receptacles for street refuse, and if the public once got hold of the idea that the thing to do was to put things into such receptacles, this evil could gradually be cured. The societies which Colonel Waring is forming among the school-children to help along the street-cleaning work are doing a great deal of good, especially in the poorer quarters. A man goes along the sidewalk there and carelessly tears up and throws away a letter, and the first thing he knows a small gamin is plucking at his coat, and telling him he'd "better pick up dem papers, 'cos it's against the law, see? and he'll get pulled." The man indignantly spurns the small boy, and proceeds on his way. The boy proceeds also, running along at a respectful distance until he sees a "cop." He tells the "cop" and the "cop" tells the man, and the man goes back and picks up the papers. He has had his lesson, but there are several hundred thousand men just like him in this great city, and it takes a good while to get around.

That the down-town crowded quarters of New York are now kept as clean as Fifth Avenue is a well-known fact. The section foremen there have less territory to cover and more sweepers. It is said that the daily applications at a large free dispensary on the East Side have fallen away one-third in a year—a result which the doctors attribute to better health on account of clean streets.

THE HORSES AND CARTS

The department stables are kept in as good condition as the best private ones. The writer has visited five out of the nine, and each one was as neat as a typical new pin. Not more than two horses out of from sixty to eighty were on the sick-list in any of them, and in one stable but one horse out of eighty had a sore back. Their tails are cut short, but not docked. The carts, sometimes kept in the stables and oftener in vacant lots near by, were in perfect

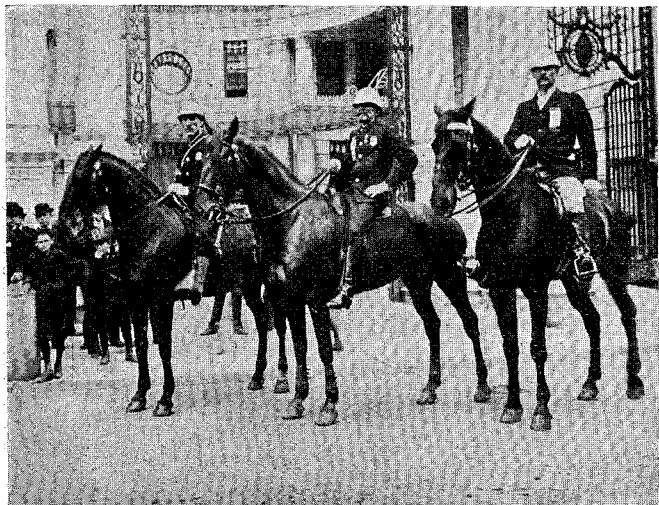
order, tipped up and packed in even rows. The carts are washed every third day in some stables, and in others, where the conveniences are not as great, only once a week. The harnesses are hung up in order, and there is a full supply of extra harness. In the old days there was no extra harness at all, and a break meant the loss of a man's time, with horse and cart, until repairs were made. Each stable has its own blacksmith, harness-menders, etc., and there is a veterinarian to every three stables.

The drivers come on duty at 6:30 in the morning, and after roll-call and inspection they harness up (each man has his own horse, cart, and harness, for which he is responsible) and start out on their rounds, first gathering the garbage and then the sweepings. At noon most of them are able to take their horses to the stables, as the dumps are generally near stables. The men are through with their work for the day between three and six in the afternoon, the average hour being four o'clock. Hostlers clean and feed the horses. Drivers and sweepers are paid alike, but a driver has more responsibility, and it is harder for him to keep his clothes in good order (he wears a brown suit and helmet); nevertheless many men are fond of horses, and some consider the position of driver to be more important than that of sweeper.

A few new stables would greatly facilitate the work, for as now arranged a horse and cart may be obliged to go two or three miles to the place where they are to collect garbage and ashes, and perhaps another journey of about the same distance to a dump. There is, for instance, no dump on the West Side between Forty-seventh Street and One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street, a distance of about four miles. There used to be one at Seventy-ninth Street, but it has been abandoned. A horse and cart travel from twenty to thirty miles a day, collect from four to ten loads, according to distance, and the average cost per load is sixty-five cents.

DISCIPLINE

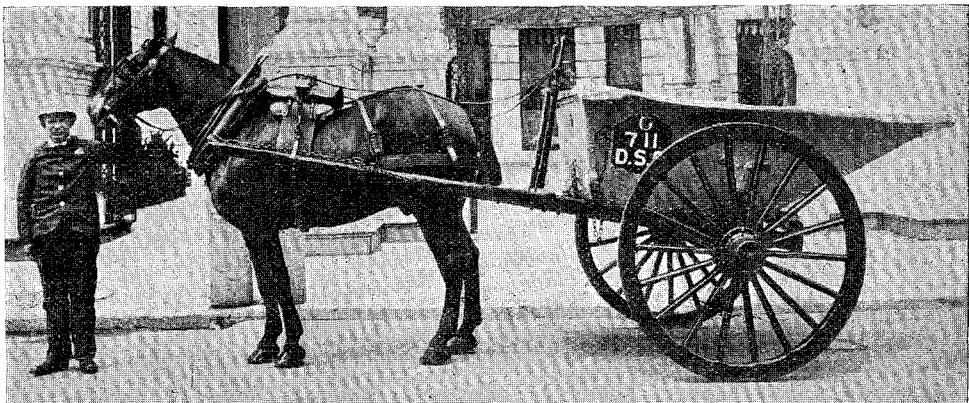
The discipline of the department is on a military basis. Each man is responsible for the men under him. The Commissioner and his deputy are at the head. The general superintendent is in charge of the district superintend-



SOME OF COLONEL WARING'S STAFF

ents, and the assistant superintendent directs the stable foremen and looks after the horses. The district superintendents give their instructions to the section foremen, who, in turn, communicate directly with the sweepers. There is a conference once a month between the representatives of Colonel Waring's personal staff and the men, repre-

sented by one delegate from each section station and one from each stable. As a result of this conference valuable suggestions are often made regarding the detail of the work. The offenses which may be committed, subjecting



THE PRIZE CART

men to fine or dismissal, are fifty in number—about one-half referring to sweepers and one-half to drivers. A list of these offenses and penalties, printed in large type, is posted conspicuously in section stations and stables. Some extracts from it are given in the accompanying schedule :

EXAMPLES OF PENALTIES FOR OFFENSES

Offenses are reported through foremen to superintendents as a first, second, third, or fourth violation of a rule, and the recommendation for punishment must not *exceed* the code of penalties. When the prescribed penalty is dismissal, the offender may be suspended without pay, awaiting the action of the Commissioner. A fourth violation of rules indicates incorrigibility and brings dismissal. There are no suspensions except in cases of men recommended for dismissal. Men who refuse to work while subject to forfeiture of pay are at once dismissed. "D" means dismissal. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 10 mean forfeiture of so many days' pay.

Rule.	Character of Offense.	Penalty.			
		Offense			
		1st	2d	3d	4th
1	Absence for more than five days without authority of the Commissioner.....	D			
2	Failure to report or send notice to foreman when sick.....	1	3	D	
3	Absence from roll-call at proper hour.....	1	2	3	D
5	Failure to provide himself with prescribed uniform, oilskin suits, sweater, and badge, after reasonable time.....	D			
6	Failure to wear prescribed uniform and badge while on duty in the manner directed by orders.....	3	D		
10	Neglecting or abusing a horse, whipping or striking a horse, using a horse who is sick or lame, and failing to take such horse to stable or reporting him to foreman.....	D			
12	Neglecting to have lost shoes replaced on horse at nearest department stable as soon as practicable.....	1	3	5	D
16	Failure to remove bits and to dump carts while feeding at noon.....	5	D		
17	Deliberately trotting or galloping a horse.....	5	10	D	
19	Loitering at work.....	2	5	D	
24	Neglecting to pick up small stones found on route, and failing to report large ones or other obstructions lying in the street, such as gutter-planks, etc., to section foreman.....	1	3	5	D
29	Neglecting to keep load covered and allowing it to blow or spill on street.....	3	D		
32	Accepting or demanding a fee or gratuity for work done.....	D			
33	Entering a liquor-saloon during work hours.....	3	D		
34	Being under the influence of liquor while on duty..	D			
43	Being boisterous or using profane language or any incivility to citizens.....	1	3	5	D
46	Failure to sweep properly.....	1	2	3	D
48	Absence from post of duty without reasonable excuse.....	2	3	5	D

It will be noted that these are the maximum penalties, and full punishment is not always meted out. During the first year of Colonel Waring's régime the chief penalty was dismissal. Often a man was dismissed for a time and then taken back ; but on January 1, 1896, the rule went into force by which men who were re-engaged had to come in at the new rate (\$600 for the first year), and a temporary suspension became so serious that it was necessary to inaugurate some system of lesser punishments. The present plan went into force about April 1 of this year.

In each stable there is a large blackboard where the

names of men disciplined are written out for the benefit of their fellows, with the character of the offense and the punishment.

ESPRIT DE CORPS

This was a term which was absolutely unknown in the nomenclature of street-cleaning before the days of Colonel Waring. To-day there is as much *esprit de corps* among the officers and men of the Street-Cleaning Department of New York City as among any body of men in the world. The difference between the old régime and the new is almost solely owing to the fact that the men have found out that nothing is of importance but good work. In the old days the district boss got his man "on a broom" and



A DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT AND HIS ASSISTANT

kept him there. A conscientious stable foreman who tried to have the harness kept in order or the horses well cared for was liable to get himself into trouble. There were no penalties, and every man was as good as every other man—the common laborer often having more "pulls" than his chief. I talked with several stable foremen who were on the force in the old days, and they said that there was only one feeling to-day among them all—they wouldn't go back to the old plan if they could; they know just where they stand, and if they want to keep their places it is only necessary to do good work. Of the 2,500 men now on the pay-rolls about 1,500 were there before Colonel Waring came in. They have done well, and they have been retained. It took some of them quite a time to experience a change of heart, and to find out that it was an actual fact that politics was no longer "in it," and that no one had any power over them except their superior officers. Having once experienced the change, they worked just as well as any one, and many have been advanced and are now filling important positions. An old Tammany foreman, with a diamond still gleaming in his shirt-front (but it was Sunday and he was excusable) told the writer that the men who took the most pride in the recent procession, and drilled the hardest and worked the best, were the "left-overs"—"and Colonel Waring will tell you so, sir."

The procession, by the way, was paid for by the force. The men were to have new uniforms and helmets, and it was a good time to show them off and make an impression on the public. The men wanted to do it, and they paid for it—thirty-five cents for a sweeper or a driver, and more for those who had higher salaries. The amounts were paid voluntarily and not as assessments, and the total cost (mostly for bands) was about \$1,600. The drilling was done in the early morning before roll-call.

The district superintendent who drove me around is twenty-five years of age, a graduate of an institute of technology, and a civil engineer by profession. He gets \$1,800 a year, and is having an out-of-door life full of

interest and incentive, and there is no reason why young men of the same education should not be doing similar work in scores of American cities instead of contentedly drifting along as draughtsmen at \$10 and \$12 a week. It occurred to me that if any of the smaller cities are in need of Street-Cleaning Commissioners or Superintendents they could not do better than to send to Colonel Waring and get away from him just such a young man as my district superintendent—though I doubt if the Colonel will thank me for making the suggestion.



The Barrens

By William Wilfred Campbell

I know a bit of common countryside,

A stretch of bleak and lonely open land,
Where none of earth's glad beauties do reside,
Nor joyous children of the seasons bland.

Men pass it by as drear and commonplace,
Where only bogs and knotted roots are found,
And, like a worn and sodden human face,
It wears no smile, nor giveth gladdening sound.

A few gnarled trees all twisted wry ashape
Across the dismal sky-line, autumn-blown,
Lean, like to lonesome, grotesque ghosts, agape
For some lost weird the vanished years have known.

A zigzag fence all mossed and tumble-down,
A worn cow-path athwart the barren hill,
A few dead stalks and sedges sere and brown,
Make up this dreariness so stern and still.

Yet I have seen, at settings of the sun
And autumn morns, joys that this landscape wore,
As though through lonely hours its heart had won
Some secret beauty from great nature's store.

And I have stood and marveled at the peace
And patient splendor of that lonely place,
As of a life that, having won release,
Had left the hopes, new found, on its dead face.

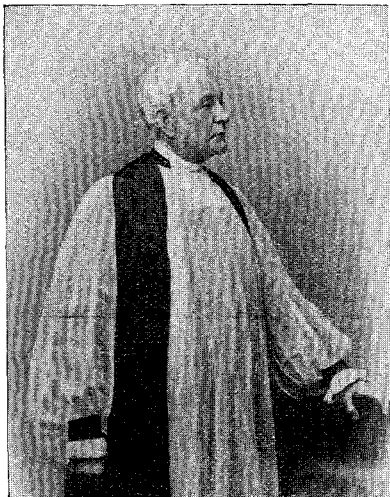


Protestantism in New York

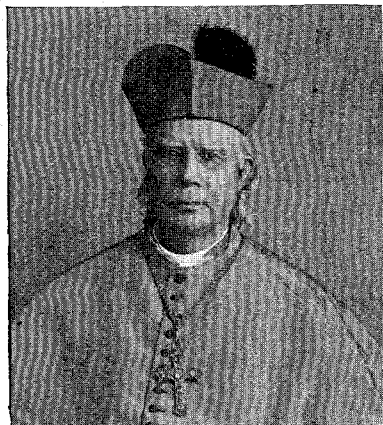
The "Christian City" for May contains an interesting article entitled "A Short Chapter from the Book of Numbers," in which it answers the question, Has Protestantism advanced numerically in New York during the last thirty years? It shows that within the limits of New York City the gain in population has been 86 per cent., while the gain among the Methodists has been 56 per cent., thus indicating that, while the denomination has steadily increased in numbers, the population has increased faster. The Hebrews and Roman Catholics, on the contrary, have increased about 200 per cent. Thirty years ago these elements were about one-third of the population; now they are about one-half. In the metropolitan district the population exceeds 4,000,000. The gain of population in thirty years has been 133 per cent.; the gain of membership in the Methodist Church about 120 per cent. The gain of the Methodists in the suburbs has been greater than in the cities. The gain, however, in that denomination during the last decade is much greater than that of the preceding one, and has nearly reached the ratio of the population's increase. The percentage of gain in some of the other denominations is as follows: Episcopalians, 180 per cent.; Presbyterians, 49 per cent.; Baptists, 43 per cent.—as against the total gain of the population of 86 per cent.; the Episcopalians alone outstripping the ratio of the gain of population. In the metropolitan district the rates of increase have been as follows during the last thirty years: Episcopalians, 195 per cent.; Methodists, 120 per cent.; Baptists (on imperfect data), 111 per cent.; and Presbyterians, 105 per cent. These figures show that the actual increase of the four Protestant denominations has equaled that of the population. An interesting inquiry arises at this point: To what are we to ascribe the great growth of the Episcopal Church? In New York City it leads all the denominations. We believe that the answer to the question is to be found, first, in the fact that it has behind it enormous wealth, as, for instance, that of the Trinity Corporation, and that of several other churches. It is financially a matter of comparative ease to plant churches wherever they are needed. In the next place, we mention the wise policy of Episcopalians in the operation of their churches. They do not expect a rector to be preacher, pastor, manager, and general visitor. The one-man ministry is practically unknown among them. Many of their churches have six or eight different clergymen in active service.

Buffalo, the City of Homes¹

By the Rev. William Burnet Wright



Rt. Rev. A. Cleveland Cox, D.D., LL.D.
Bishop of Western New York



The late Rt. Rev. Stephen V. Ryan
(Roman Catholic) Bishop of Buffalo

Buffalo has suddenly become known as the largest market in the world for coal, for flour, for fresh fish, for sheep; and the second for lumber, grain, and cattle. Along the lakes which pour their traffic into her lap an amount of tonnage moves each year greater than that which enters the port of Liverpool or London or all the harbors on our Atlantic coast; and Niagara Falls is expected soon to make her the most important factory in the Union. During the ten years preceding 1890 her population increased from 155,000 to 255,000; the last five years have seen it swelled by nearly 100,000 more; and the fastest railroad train on earth is fully occupied in carrying others to share in her material prosperity.

In view of these well-known facts, one may ask whether the city is being "puffed up" into a second Babylon, or edified after the model of the "New Jerusalem." Her growth in stature is conspicuous. Is her heart gaining strength sufficient to throw life into all her fast-accumulating tissues?

Her physical conditions are such as tend to develop the sound body which helps so much in producing the sound mind. Her streets, broad, straight, and paved with asphalt, are swept clean by frequent winds from the lake. A superb system of parks and parkways, easy accessible, and free from the pneumonia of placards and policemen warning "off the grass," oxygenates her blood. The Niagara River makes perfect drainage easy, and Lake Erie furnishes an unlimited supply of water, which criminal carelessness alone can keep from being always pure. Her dwellings are not built in blocks, but stand apart, each in a bath of air, so that she is not plagued as other cities are by disease-breeding tenement-houses.

That these advantages have neither been neglected nor abused is indicated by a letter written recently to the Superintendent of her Health Department by a Committee sent from Nashville to inspect the sanitary arrangements of other cities with a view to the improvement of its own. The letter says: "We are about completing our trip of investigating sanitary matters. New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington have given us valuable information. . . . We will say that, after looking over the field thus far, you have the ideal system in nearly every particular. Hence, in view of bringing your system particularly and prominently before our people of Nashville, we inclose you a list of questions which we hope you will answer."

This glance at the house will prepare the reader to consider the people who live in it.

A careful census taken last May by the police, and confirmed from other sources, shows them to be—rejecting fractions—109,000 Americans; 9,000 other persons whose mother tongue is English; 100,000 Germans, 59,000 Poles, 35,000 Irish, 7,000 Italians, and 19,000 who can be grouped only by saying that among them is spoken nearly every language under heaven and that they have come from every zone between the pole and the equator.

The welfare of the city depends upon the success it has in changing these heterogeneous and often antagonistic citizens into homogeneous Americans. The task is difficult, but facts show that it is possible.

The Poles and the Italians each occupy a separate section. To some extent that is true of the Americans and the Germans. But the geographical lines which separate the two last are fading rapidly, and the prevalence of German names among the most influential firms and in the most honorable positions shows that the distinction between "Saxon and Teuton" is vanishing. The green flag also is no longer conspicuous, and the yellow harp is learning to play "Hail Columbia" correctly and with spirit. The Poles and the Italians still appear like veins of trap in the bed-rock, but there is reason to believe that they also will in due



Hon. James O. Putnam



ARCH OVER DELAWARE AVENUE (BUFFALO PARK)

¹ Previous articles in this series have been: "The Higher Life of American Cities" (introductory), by Mr. Theodore Roosevelt (The Outlook for December 21, 1895); "The Higher Life of New York City," by Albert Shaw (The Outlook for January 25, 1896); "The Higher Life of Chicago," by Melville E. Stone (The Outlook for February 22); "The Higher Life of Boston," by Edward Everett Hale (The Outlook for March 28); and "The Higher Life of New Orleans," by Grace King (The Outlook for April 25). Other articles will be on Philadelphia, by Mr. Talcott Williams, and on St. Louis, by the Rev. John Snyder.