

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

MISGOVERNMENT OF CITIES.

WHY are American cities so generally misgoverned, and what is the remedy? These are questions which have been discussed almost constantly for many years, and the discussion has produced many plans for reform, some of which have been tried, but none of which has resulted in the establishment of anything more than a temporary and limited improvement. One set of reformers has maintained that the only way by which approximately good government could be secured was by the concentration of power in the hands of one executive, or at most of an executive and a few heads of departments. Another set has maintained that such concentration would lead surely to an aggravation of all our worst evil, and that the only road to reform lay in division of responsibility and power among the executive and legislative and administrative branches. Others have maintained that local rule was bad under any conditions, and that the only way by which honest government could be secured was for the State to take virtual control and rule the city through its legislature. Still others have advocated some system of minority representation as the only infallible panacea of all municipal ills. Of course the primary end of every reform system is the getting of fit men into the offices, and the fundamental reason for the common failure of the systems which have been tried is that they have one and all failed in accomplishing this purpose. Occasionally one of them has succeeded in doing it at one election, but the gain has been only temporary. The question naturally arises: Is there any system to be discovered which will infallibly put the right men in office and keep the unfit men out? If not, is it not time that we looked for relief in other directions? We are sure that many of our readers remember the valuable article by Mr. Albert Shaw upon the government of the City of Glasgow which we published in the March *Century*. He gave us in that a picture of a model city government, and also the reasons why it was so. Its town council, which rules it, is composed of members, he said, who "come chiefly from the ranks of men of business, and are upright, respected, and successful citizens;" they serve without salary; the office is deemed an honour; "party lines are seldom very sharply drawn in municipal elections. An efficient councillor may, in general, expect re-election for several terms;" and "the seat of a satisfactory man who asks re-election is in a majority of cases not contested at all." All the great departments in the Glasgow administration, that of public buildings, that of health, that of street cleaning, that of law, are occupied for life by men who are among the highest authorities on their several subjects that are to be found in the British Empire. A government thus constituted gives the city precisely the kind of administration which the same men would furnish were they placed at the head of a great private enterprise, and the result is a well-paved, clean, orderly, handsomely built city, with the rights of every citizen protected at every point, economical to live in, with cheap gas and water, low rents, and no breath of scandal throughout all its departments. Is it the system which does this for Glasgow, or the men who administer the system? Would Glasgow under the same system have a model government were its offices to be filled with such men as we put in charge of our American cities? Again, if the Glasgow system were to be adopted in any great American city, would it of itself result in the election of the kind of men who hold the offices in Glasgow? There are other European cities which can give us light on these points. Berlin, Birmingham, and Manchester are as well governed as Glasgow, but none of them has the same system. The first has for the foundation of its administration a great municipal assembly of 126 members, while Birmingham and Manchester have a form of town council similar to that of Glasgow, but not identical. The one peculiarity which all have in common is that they put the best men attainable into office, without regard to their political affiliations. There is not one of them which depends for the success of its system upon the system itself. First of all it looks to the character and fitness of the men who are to administer the system. Does anybody doubt, if this example were followed in America, that we are capable of producing the same results? Are we less honest, less intelligent, less fitted for self-government, than the people of foreign cities are? It cannot be denied that our unrestricted suffrage makes the problem more difficult here than it is abroad; but the difficulty is not insurmountable, and it is not, as is often claimed to be, the chief cause of our troubles. We are in the habit of charging all our worst evils to the combined ignorant and corrupt vote, but there is not a city in the land in which that vote is not many thousands less than the combined intelligent and honest vote. The trouble is that the latter vote, misled by party names and party issues which have no bearing upon questions of municipal rule, is about evenly divided in most municipal elections, and is thus deprived of nearly all its influence. When the happy day shall come that the respectable voters of our cities join hands and say that henceforth they will know no politics in the administration of city affairs, and will only ask of a candidate whether or not he is fit and honest, then there will no longer be any danger of apprehend from the combined ignorant and vicious vote. It will make very little difference what kind of a system we have upon which to govern the city when this spirit shall have entered into the election of its officials, but until we can secure that spirit in the elections it will be useless to

hope for reform under the most perfect system which the human mind can devise, for an ideal system administered by ignorant and corrupt men can not produce intelligent and honest government without performing a miracle.—From "Topics of the Time," in *The Century Magazine* for September.

THE THREE STUDENTS.

THE following incident occurred in Paris in 1841 on a cold, foggy December night, the twenty-fourth of the month. A tall man, leaning on a stick was making his way slowly and painfully along Mazarin Street; his clothing, an insufficient protection against the biting north wind which was howling furiously, consisted of a pair of thin summer pantaloons, an old coat buttoned up to his chin, and a broad hat which was pulled down over his face so as to leave nothing visible except a long beard and thin white locks of hair falling upon his stooping shoulders. Under his arm he carried an object, oblong in shape, wrapped up in a checked handkerchief. He crossed the bridge and the Square of the Carrousel, reached the Palais Royal, and walked round the garden, stopping frequently; then, as if the floods of light and the savoury odours which issued from the restaurants, where many a merry feasting was in progress, had the effect of giving him a vertigo, he hurried away with tottering steps towards the Cour des Fontaines. Here he looked up at the lighted windows, and then, stopping under a small shed, put his stick against the wall within reach of his hand, unfastened the checked handkerchief and displayed a violin. With trembling hands he tuned the instrument, and folding the handkerchief placed it under his chin, laid the violin tenderly upon it, and began to play. His strains however were so melancholy and so discordant that some street urchins who had stationed themselves in front of him took to their heels exclaiming that such music was fit to raise the devil; a dog near him began to howl dismally, and the passers quickened their pace. At last the player in despair sat down on a step, laid his violin across his knees and murmured sadly: "I can play no more. Oh, my God, my God?" A deep sob escaped him, and the next instant three young men came tripping down the dark, narrow street. They were singing a merry song, which was then popular among the conservatory students, and, not perceiving the violinist, ran full against him, one of them nearly knocking him over, another kicking his hat along the sidewalk, while the third stood still and looked on with amazement. As the old man got up and came out of the shadow, with an air of mingled dignity and humility, the newcomers exclaimed anxiously: "Pardon us, sir! Have we hurt you?" "No," replied the player, stooping painfully to pick up his hat, but one of the young men sprang towards it and handed it to its owner, and another, seeing the violin, asked: "Are you a musician?" "I once was," replied the poor man, while tears rose to his eyes and rolled slowly down the deep wrinkles in his cheeks. "What is the matter? You are in trouble, can we do anything to help you?" cried the three comrades in a breath, and the musician looked at them earnestly for a minute, then held his hat towards them as he answered: "Give me alms. I can no longer earn my living by playing, for my fingers have grown stiff. My daughter is dying of consumption and of poverty." There was an accent of deep distress in the speaker's words, and his hearers were touched with pity; they hurriedly thrust their hands into their pockets and brought forth their whole contents. Alas! the first man had but fifty centimes, the second thirty, and the third a piece of resin; total, eighty centimes. It was very little for the relief of so much misery! They looked at each other sadly. "Friends?" cried one suddenly, "something must be done—this man is our colleague, a brother musician. You, Adolphe, take the violin and accompany Gustave, while I will take charge of the funds." It was no sooner said than done. The three men turned up their coat collars, drawing their hair across their foreheads, and pulling their caps down over their eyes. "Now, all together!" cried the leader, "in honour of the Christ-child in his manger. Begin with your prize piece, Adolphe, so as to draw a crowd." Beneath the practised touch of the young virtuoso, the poor man's violin resounded joyously, and the "Carnival of Venice" rang out with wondrous brilliancy. Windows were thrown open, people crowded round the player, applause sounded on every side, and silver pieces were dropped into the old man's hat, placed conspicuously under the street lamp. After a minute's pause the violinist played a prelude; Charles, the leader, whispered: "It is your turn now, Gustave," and the young tenor sang "Viens, gentille dame," in a strong, clear, melting voice. The audience, in an ecstasy of delight, cried "Again! Again!" the crowd kept increasing every moment and the collection with it. Charmed at the success of his plan, Charles said to his companions: "We will finish with the trio from 'William Tell.' Adolphe, old fellow, play the accompaniment, and at the same time practise your bass notes, while I will do my best with the baritone. Now, Gustave, you have but to open your mouth and a fortune will fall from heaven." The trio began. The old musician, who had all this time stood motionless, hardly believing his eyes or ears, and dreading to wake up and find that a dream had been mocking him, suddenly drew himself up to his full height, seized his stick and began beating time with such masterly precision that the young singers gathered fresh inspiration and fairly electrified their hearers. As the song ceased the applause rang through the air, and money dropped from the windows and from every pocket, so that Charles was kept busy picking up the coins. The

concert over the crowd dispersed slowly, and wondering remarks were heard on every side. "Those are not street musicians," said the people, "they would make one forget that M. Frisquet is dead. What a lot of money they made! They can have a fine supper now! And the old fellow with the bludgeon—whirling round like a windmill. I believe they were artists who had laid a wager. I have been to the Grand Opera, I tell you, and they sang no better there. How he scraped the old cracked fiddle—it gave me a tickling in my spine." When the confusion had subsided the three young men approached the old musician, and, in a voice which trembled with emotion, he exclaimed: "Tell me your names, that my daughter may remember you in her prayers!" "My name is Faith," said the first artist. "And mine is Hope," said the second. "Then I am Charity," added the third, bringing up the hat which was overflowing with money. "Ah, gentlemen, gentlemen!" cried the old man, "let me at least tell you who it is that you have helped so generously. My name is Chappner, and I am from Alsace. For ten years I was leader of the orchestra in Strasbourg, where 'William Tell' was often given. Alas! ever since I left my home misfortune, sickness, and sorrow have been gathering to overwhelm me. You have saved my life, young gentlemen, for with this money I can go back to Strasbourg, where I have friends who will take care of my daughter, and her native air will, perhaps, restore her to health. Your youthful talents, which you so nobly and so simply devoted to my service, will always be blessed. I predict that you will one day be famous." "Amen," replied the three friends, and linking their arms together gaily they continued their way down the street. Noble, generous hearts! They have, no doubt, forgotten that December night. But if you are curious, my readers, to know how far old Chappner's prophecy was fulfilled, I will be so indiscreet as to reveal the names of the three conservatory students, even at the risk of offending their modesty. But who knows? Perhaps these lines will meet the eyes of the old Alsatian's daughter and she will be glad to know the names of her benefactors. The tenor's name was Gustave Roger. The violinist was Adolphe Hermann. The collector was Charles Gounod.

LIFE IN A NEW ZEALAND HOMESTEAD.

It is not, then, wonderful that life remains pure and simple, and that one actually does escape from many of the worries of the outer world. To assert that the domestic life of a New Zealand sheep farmer and his household in the backwoods has in it little of hardship or discomfort will, perhaps, astonish the generality of people. But such is the fact. The rooms of the house are spacious and cheerful, with a wide verandah outside, covered with creepers, honeysuckle and roses. By the way, the rose trees in this part of the world grow so high that at Christmas, when the sitting-room is decorated with *Maréchal Niels*, they are inaccessible without a ladder's help. Though the life is principally an out-door one, even in winter, every comfort is found within—from Liberty cushions and a Broadwood to fine glass and damask. The mistress and her neighbours vie with each other in making their homes pretty and picturesque. Outside, the sheds and stables are rude and rough, but indoors comfort reigns supreme. Much thought is spent on the fare, and great efforts made to disguise the inevitable mutton, which is, of course, the *pièce de résistance*. The *menus* are, however, varied now and again by gifts from neighbours—so called, though the nearest is twenty miles away—and the sportsmen who bring in wild cattle, pigs, turkeys, hares, and all sorts of water-fowl. Still, the housekeeper can place no dependence on these, and her brain is exercised in veiling the monotony of the fare; and very wonderfully successful, as a rule, are her efforts. Home-cured hams, bacon, eggs and cakes are the staple dishes, and supplemented by an overflowing dairy and kitchen garden, it is surprising how much can be done with simple materials. Bread is baked at home, of course, unless one wishes to send seventy miles for it. The hours are only comfortably early at the station, unless there is extra work to be done. Generally, however, one is up betimes; for early morning is glorious among the New Zealand mountains; clear and fresh, with an exhilarating atmosphere, and a crisp feeling even in midsummer. It is a pleasure, moreover, which will bear frequent repetition, to watch the sky slowly brighten behind the dark mountains, with long crimson rays stretching far into the intense blue, until at last the grand old sun bursts forth in full power. The breakfast table is always laden with fruit, which has to be freshly gathered, the butter put into the snow stream to cool, and many other duties attended to.—*Cassell's Family Magazine* for September.

TREASURES UNDER THE SEA.

THE close of the last century seems to have been very prolific in wrecks. The British frigate *De Broek*, lost in a storm off Lewes, in the United States, in 1798, is stated to have had on board no less than 52,000,000 dollars' worth of specie and jewels, taken from an intercepted Spanish fleet while on her voyage to Halifax, and with it were also taken 200 prisoners. The latter were in irons on the lower decks when the vessel foundered, and all were lost. Many years afterwards, in 1881, search was being actively prosecuted by a Diving Company for the purpose of recovering this specie, the result of which has not yet been chronicled. It would scarcely be believed that valu-