

The Municipal Framework of German Cities.
—The Municipal Structure.

Although the framework and general structure of the municipal house are not of vital consequence to good housekeeping, they have a very considerable importance. It happens that the Germans care less than the French for a modern and regular system—one that shall conform to geometrical rules and harmonize with a philosophical ideal. In the United States, reformers have too often quite lost sight of the aims and objects of good government in striving after good government as an end in itself. Their attention is concentrated upon the structure and mechanism, and so far as the cities are concerned, they keep changing it perpetually. They are forever overhauling, repairing or reconstructing the house, but they seem to have no very inspiring uses for which they are eager to make the house ready. The Germans, on the other hand, have taken their old framework of city government as they found it, and have proceeded to use it for new and wonderful purposes, altering it somewhat from time to time, but not allowing its defects to paralyse the varied activities of the household.

THE FRANCHISE AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS.

The electoral system is somewhat complicated. A city, Berlin for instance, is laid off in a number of electoral districts; the voters are listed in the order of the sums they pay for taxes, with the heaviest taxpayer heading the list; they are then divided into three classes, each of which has paid a third of the aggregate amount, thus: the first class will contain a group of very heavy taxpayers, the second will be made up of a much larger number of men of moderate fortune and income, and the third class will comprise the great mass of working men and small taxpayers.

Thus, the elections are indirect, and a voter of the first class has as much weight as twenty voters of the third class, or as five of the second; and a voter of the second class counterbalances from three to five of the third. In large parts of the German empire, it is true, the class system is not maintained in municipal elections, and in other parts the voters of the three classes choose their representatives directly without the intervention of the *Wahl-manner*. An extreme instance of the preponderance that this system gives to wealth is afforded by the manufacturing city of Essen, where, in a population of some 80,000, there are three men who pay one-third of all the taxes, and are therefore empowered to designate one-third of the electors. The Krupp gun works form the great industry of Essen, and at the last municipal election, one voter appeared for the first class and counted for quite as much as the nearly 2,000 men who appeared for the third class. Where the class system exists, it is not always true that the voters select men of their own class to represent them.

THE ELECTED COUNCIL AS A VITAL FACT.

As far as the voters are concerned, their one task is the selection of a good municipal council. Everything in the life of the *Gemeinde* revolves about this one central body. It finds the *Bürgermeister*, designates his expert associates of the magisterial coterie, supplies the means for carrying on the city government, and represents in its own enlightenment, ability and aspirations, the standard and the character of the community's progress. It is to this body that one must go to discover the secret of the consistency and continuity of German municipal policy.

Stability in the German municipal council is secured by partial renewal. Thus, the councillors of Berlin and the Prussian cities are elected for six years, and one-third of the seats are vacated and refilled every two years. In Berlin there are forty-two electoral districts, and these are arranged in three groups of fourteen each. Each group elects its councillors in its turn. Thus, group one chose its forty-two councillors in 1889, group two had its turn in 1891, and group three renewed its representation in 1893. Each district elects three councillors, corresponding to the three classes of voters, and thus each group contributes forty-two to a total elective council of 126 members.

THE COUNCIL AS A FOCUS OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP.

Municipal councillors in Germany are, as a rule, very excellent citizens. It is considered a high honor to be elected to the council. Membership is a title of dignity that merchants, professional men and scholars are usually eager to hold. No salaries are paid to the councillors and a penalty is attached to refusal to serve if elected. The sentiment toward these positions is much the same in Germany as in Great Britain, though stronger with men of high education in German than in British towns. The re-election of good councillors term after term is common in both countries.

In addition to the magistracy and the council, there is in Berlin, a body of about seventy-five so-called "citizen deputies," who are selected by the council for their general fitness to serve as associates on committees charged with the oversight of the various municipal interests, such as parks, schools, the care of the poor, and the sanitary services. They have no authority to vote in the council, but they illustrate at the centre of administration, the excellent practice which is followed throughout the entire ramification of German city government, of enlisting the co-operation of unofficial citizens in managing the ordinary concerns of a community.

THE BÜRGERMEISTER AND EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATES.

The *Bürgermeister* and the magistrates are the most highly trained experts that a German city can secure. The *Bürgermeister* is an expert in the general art of municipal administration. Associated with

him in the magisterial council are experts in law, experts in finance, experts in education to administer the schools, experts in engineering to oversee public works of every character, experts in sanitary science, experts in public charity, experts in forestry and park management, experts in the technical and business management of water and gas supplies, and so on.

We may deprecate German officialism as much as we like, but the Germans will not cease to manage the business affairs of their municipal corporations through the employment of a trained professional service, until American railway corporations cease to seek the best technical and expert talent, whether in administration or in engineering to carry on their enterprises.

The German *Magistratsrath* is the glorification of the expert chiefs of departments that one finds in the English system. It may be regarded as a fusing into one supreme executive group of these professional and salaried experts, and the level-headed old chairmen of council committees. Of the Berlin magistracy, seventeen are salaried and are appointed for twelve year terms, and seventeen are unpaid, and are chosen for six year terms. The salaried men, including the mayor and deputy mayor, are selected for their expert qualifications, exactly as a board of railway directors would make up its staff of general officers.

ADMINISTRATION BY PERMANENT EXPERTS.

The mayor or head of the municipality, in some cities, called the *oberbürgermeister* and in some simply the *Bürgermeister*, is the general manager of the whole mechanism of administration, and usually the guiding spirit as well in the economic policies of the municipality. He may feel that success in the management of a smaller city will perhaps be rewarded by the prize of the mayoralty of a greater one.

The tenure of the paid magistrates, in general, follows that of the mayors, and the cities which give life appointments to the chief of the municipality, commonly give them also to the expert professional element among his associates, while limiting the unpaid magistrates to terms corresponding with those of the popularly elected councillors. Duties are so well distributed among the magistrates that there results the highest types of executive efficiency, and the least possible friction or waste of energy. New departments of administration may either be assigned to the portfolios of existing magistrates, or may be provided for by the appointment of additional members. Thus the *Magistratsrath* is sufficiently flexible to respond to the changing circumstances of a city, and the presence of its unsalaried citizen members keeps it always sufficiently in touch with the spirit of the community. It should further be said that in the details of administration, the magistrates have the co-operation in various ways of numerous unofficial citizens serving in a voluntary or honorary capacity on countless sub-committees.—*Albert Shaw in Century for June.*