

The Citizen and his City—The City and His Citizen.

The third of The Arena's series of articles on city government is contributed by the Hon. John Boyd Thatcher, of Albany, who divides the municipal problem into two parts—first, the relation of the citizen to his city, and second, the relation of the city to its citizen. Mayor Thatcher censures the indifference and carelessness of the average "good citizen," who are not only immediately responsible for much bad government, but are also taken into account in the formation of constitutions and charters. The Great New York charter is cited as a case in point. Probably no municipal instrument has ever been framed with such care and study as the proposed charter for Greater New York. Yet it is apparent that its aim has been to relieve the citizen of care and responsibility in the city government, except by inviting his attention once in four years when a mayor is to be chosen. It proposes to restrict executive powers by the employment of an impersonal police commission and of individual heads of departments who are deprived of control over subordinates. A single-headed commission appointed by a mayor (himself elected every one or two years), and removable at any time by the mayor, means unusual watchfulness on the part of the citizen. Unremitting watchfulness on the part of the citizen means constant agitation and frequent annoyance.

In discussing the relation of the city to its citizens, Mayor Thatcher lays down the rule: The city shall do nothing for the individual which the individual can do for himself, which he applies to all the functions exercised or proposed to be exercised by city government. Private philanthropy should be depended upon to supply municipal luxuries, and not the city or the state. In other lands, where the state does everything for the individual, the public dedication of private fortunes is not common. Now and then, in a European city, an Althorp library or a Borghese gallery is given to the public, but the instances attract attention from the unexpected diversion of the fortunes to public service. In America the gathering of a fortune has been largely with a view to the establishment for the public of beneficent, charitable and higher educational institutions. This sense of public obligation has been very strong in this country, and it has reconciled the unambitious man to the grasping hands of his accumulating brother.

Mayor Thatcher criticises the municipal activities of Glasgow as follows: "In Glasgow the municipality is a landlord. It not only enters into competition with other landlords, but like any giant of monopolistic tendencies, it drives other landlords out of business. Some of the cheap lodging houses were immoral. There was a large population of men without families who had to be provided with cheap accommodations. To purify

the character of the immoral lodging houses—a police duty, by-the-bye—and to preserve cheap homes for its poorer bachelor citizens, the city of Glasgow erected comfortable houses where a good room and bed, light, heat, and the privilege of a cooking stove were furnished at cost per night of from seven to nine cents in our money, according to accommodation. In that same city and in other cities on the continent, the municipality is engaged in the laundry business. The city owns tubs, steam machinery, mangles and ironers, and conducts in several districts a general laundry trade, not merely competing, but actually establishing, by its municipal wash lists, the price and charges of that particular business enterprise. The thoughtless philanthropist cries "Splendid!" Yes, splendid! but not the proper employment for government. The same philanthropist applauds the municipal lodging-house plan. He does not consider that these cheap, comfortable, convenient rooms are keeping men in an unmarried, and therefore in an unnatural state, and further, that where thousands of men are maintained happily on fifteen or twenty cents per day—this sum includes lodging and breakfast and supper—one of two things must come to pass: either this vast army of bachelor laborers will compete with and drive out of the labor market another vast army of married laborers who enjoy none of these cheap comforts, or else this vast army of bachelor laborers will work but one day in the week at the sustained and regular rate of pay, thus earning enough to keep themselves in idleness, and at possible mischief the remaining six days. The philanthropist is a blessed being, and we owe to him most of the amelioration of the race, but his mission is to soften and leaven government and not to fashion it.

Mr. John E. Ramsden, who has recently been appointed County Clerk of York, is a man of wide experience in municipal affairs, having occupied every position in the County Council. As County Commissioner he is well versed in the troublesome road question of the past; as a representative of the Board of the Industrial Home he is conversant with the working of that institution, and as a member of the Board of Audit this matter, too, has come under his notice. Commencing his municipal career in 1886, Mr. Ramsden was for four years a councillor in East Gwillimbury, and was elected reeve on the retirement of Mr. Rowen. He represented the municipality in the County Council for four years, and in 1889 received the honor of being elected Warden of the County. He was then defeated by Mr. Pegg, who represented East Gwillimbury for four years. In 1896 he defeated Mr. Pegg, and this year is representing Sharon Division No. 8 in the County Council. He has been a successful business man at Mt. Albert for years. He was born at Thornhill, Markham township, forty-seven years ago.

Social Aspects of Municipal Services.

In the administration of city services, especially the municipal industrial enterprises, the social effects of their operation must be kept in view. In our American cities the gas and street railway services have never been viewed in the light of their social function. The former, while in many cases under direct municipal management, has been controlled by purely financial considerations. The latter has been uniformly managed by private corporations. Here, again, the recent experience of English cities is extremely significant. The street railways of Glasgow and Sheffield, which are under direct municipal management, are being used as a means of affecting a better distribution of population. The rates of fare are so adjusted as to offer direct inducement to the laboring classes to move into outlying districts instead of congregating in the central and already overcrowded portions. The one and two cent fares during the early morning and evening hours have been the means of bringing large numbers into a new environment. Recently the city has decided to go one step further in offering model tenements in peripheral districts. This may seem a dangerous extension of function, and yet it is but the logical outcome of a recognition of the true relation of the community to its environment. In the administration of the gas service similar ends have been pursued, although not always with the same conscious purpose. The use of gas in England among the working classes is not as general as in the United States, a fact which does not affect the general principle. In order to make its use an integral part of the standard of life, it was necessary to sacrifice, to a certain extent, the purely financial end. To effect the introduction of a new commodity into the standard of life, it is necessary that the utility of that commodity should exceed its cost to a degree greater than that of some one of the elements making up the existing standard. In other words, the commodity must appear more desirable to the individual than some other he has been in the habit of purchasing. Every inducement to use gas for both heating and lighting purposes was offered. The price was gradually reduced until at the present time Glasgow offers gas at 58 cents per 100 cubic feet; Bradford, 58 cents; Manchester, 56 cents; Leeds, 54 cents. As an additional inducement, penny-in-the-slot meters were introduced in most of the cities, of which Leeds has 1,300 in operation; Birmingham, 2,000; Manchester, 11,500. A similar policy is now being adopted in the electric light service.—*Dr. Leo S. Rowe in June Municipal Affairs.*

"With Greece it has been out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"Yes, and the best the powers can possibly do will be to get her back into the frying-pan."