

# TOPICS OF THE TIME

## «The City for the People!»

AMERICA, in its «Greater New York,» will on the first of next January present the spectacle of a municipality in size next to the very first among all the cities of the earth. On the preceding November the inhabitants of this great new municipality will decide as to the character of the men who shall govern it, and the influences that will control these men. The free institutions of America cannot escape being judged anew before the whole world in connection with the decision to be then made by the voters of the various boroughs of New York. It is no wonder that the millions of inhabitants of this imperial municipality are beginning to be stirred by the contemplation of the fateful experiment about to be entered upon, and that the disinterested citizens of the metropolis are not content to let corrupt machines and blackmailing bosses choose all the candidates and quietly take possession of the city's offices and the city's revenues.

Citizens' movements have been successful in New York before this, and their success now and in the future would be more assured were it not that the people have unfortunately become so used to seeing city politics run in many of its details by men of disreputable character and associations that the sight of decent men taking an interest in local government savors of impertinence in many minds. The corrupt machine-men play upon this prejudice, and endeavor to effect by ridicule what they cannot accomplish by reason.

Of course, as a matter of fact, if there is anything humorous in the situation, it is the preposterous pretense of the corruptionists that *they* are the true statesmen, the disinterested patriots, the only citizens to be trusted with the direction of public affairs, and that other citizens become ridiculous by simply doing their manifest duty in connection with local government. It must be, after all, a weak sort of brain that can be influenced in the interests of the boddlers, bosses, and bribers by ridicule of this kind.

The idea is indeed absurd that the complicated machinery and gigantic business interests of the newly constituted metropolis are safer, on the one side, in the hands of the set of men who are at the present moment disgracing the name of a great political party in their conduct of the affairs of the State by appointments among the most shameless ever made in this commonwealth, and by hypocritical and treacherous attacks upon the merit system in the civil service, or, on the other side, in the hands of that local organization the very name of which stands throughout the civilized world as a synonym for civic corruption, rather than in the hands of a genuine Citizens' Union of the most public-spirited and disinterested elements of the entire community—capitalists and day-laborers, men of all parties, of all

creeds, of all conditions in life, believing in home rule, in honest, constructive, and progressive city government, and united upon a platform which has been well epitomized in the phrase, «The city for the people!»

He must think ill of the intelligence and honesty of the people of the metropolis who deems it hopeless to hold up to them higher ideals. Is New York to be the only one of the world's great cities that is to be perpetually menaced by, or actually in the possession of, political adventurers? The way out for us, and the way to stay out, lies in such movements as that so successful in Birmingham, as described by United States Consul Parker in *THE CENTURY* for last November. The conspicuous success there, said Mr. Parker, was not achieved in a day, or maintained without effort. «The men who began the work learned everything possible about the needs of their community, and proceeded by speech and writing to explain them, and to demonstrate the necessity and policy of undertaking reforms. One class has not transacted the public business, leaving to another the management of charitable, religious, and educational institutions; *all has been treated as part of the civic life that must be carried on.*»

As to the new city of New York, Dr. Albert Shaw, whose studies of municipal problems are well known to the readers of *THE CENTURY*, declares, as an expert, that the new charter in its very nature, more than any other framework of municipal government that he has ever known, calls imperatively for non-partizan administration and for the conduct of municipal elections upon strictly municipal issues.

In the winter just passed, our own local history, and our municipal problems of every kind, have been studied and debated—in «the borough of Manhattan,» at least—as never before. The City Club and the Good Government Clubs, the Public Education Association, the League for Political Education, the City History Club, the City Lectures Committee, the public-school evening lecture courses, the Reform Club and the Social Reform Club, the various «Settlements,» and other organizations, have all been at work. The church clubs have also taken up civic subjects.

There has been, to some extent, a revival of civic patriotism. The constitutional separation of the municipal from State and national elections is the opportunity of the honest and patriotic citizens of the Greater New York. The whole civilized world will look on at the progress of this municipal campaign, and await with keen expectation its momentous result.

## The Pleasures of Yachting.

It is not many years since a popular prejudice associated the pleasures of yachting with idleness and wealth, hardly to be thought of except as a questionable luxury. Did not the mariner and the fisherman likewise spread

their white wings above the treacherous waters, and did they not solely and wisely find joy in the fact that they were ashore again, thank God! and with some profit? But the idea has made way among the American people that yachting and the other outdoor sports, aside from being the most rational diversions of people of leisure, are the natural solace of active minds, the means by which the physical balance, disturbed by the demands of civilized life, is most efficaciously restored. There is no more warrant for the sedentary recreation of him who labors with his muscles than for the wasteful gambols on sea and land of the mind-worker when his hour of rest has come. And it is a fact that the surprising growth of yachting, tennis, golf, bicycle, and other athletic clubs throughout the land, is not indicative of increasing distaste for serious employment on the part of educated and well-to-do people, but rather of a more wholesome view of the relation of play to work. Indeed, the most active members of these organizations are as often as not the busiest men in professional life and in commerce. Not only are the present votaries of outdoor sports the rank and file of industry, but they are the cause of new and vast expansions in the industrial life of the world. Even the superannuated have been lured by the present taste back into the ranks of quasi-active life, for graybeards are no longer forced to the solemn inertia of an Eastern kadi as a necessary adjunct of personal dignity.

With the exception of the bicycle-trade, yacht-building has perhaps led in the expansion of industry to meet the demands of outdoor pleasure. Refinements of science and mechanics have added to the cost of the larger yachts, and, at the other end of the scale, have produced better boats for a smaller outlay. But coöperation may divide the cost, and it is not unusual even for the «twenty-one-footer» to be built by a «syndicate» corresponding numerically to the necessary crew. Yet there is no great bar of expense to the field of yachting pleasures. The little craft that is a rowboat in calm and a smart, able cat-boat in breeze or blow was never so popular as at present; many a schooner or big single-sticker carries at the davits an open boat provided with centerboard and easily adjusted canvas, and which, if the truth were told, confers on the owner more of the characteristic delights of sailing than the expensive craft handled by a professional crew.

While there is an equableness of temper and a briny sparkle in the salt-water yachting-grounds which render them superior for the sport to the inland lakes and rivers, the pleasures of yachting are no longer monopolized by the dwellers on our coasts. On many a lakelet of the West may be found fleets of spry craft representing the skill of the most famous builders of the world, while the larger bodies of fresh water in summer teem with a nautical life somewhat modified from that of the sea-coast to suit the whimsicalness of interior winds, and waters of a tamer aspect, yet more disquieting when aroused. The Eastern yachtsman strolling on the lake front at Chicago may well wonder to see the sloops close-reefed in a breeze which at home would invite him to carry topsail, when, if he were at the tiller in that flawy and vicious breeze, he might now and then realize that he had lost some of his nerve with a change of sky.

Not that the pleasures of yachting are to be had only

at a risk to life in excess of the dangers that lurk in other outdoor sports. Holiday revelers who go out in boats ostensibly to fish or sail, but really for the unrestrained companionship of flask and jug, are responsible for nine tenths of the reputation for danger to life that is attached in the popular fancy to boating. On the contrary, yachting is one of the safest of sports, because sailing is a plain science, easily learned by any person of practical faculty and ordinary discretion and common sense. It is true that many persons ride horses year after year without accident who might not attain to perfect control of a sail-boat. This is because the intelligence of the horse comes to their aid and keeps them in the road. On the other hand, many lives are sacrificed every year to the timidity or viciousness of the horse; whereas in a sail-boat the steerer has only his own disposition to deal with, and in greater measure may anticipate the changes to which his environment is subject. Science has placed at his disposal simple means of adjustment; it is necessary only that he should be able to think clearly and methodically, and should not be foolhardy. Even the golf-field has its dangers, derived from the careless and the inapt. Some degree of danger resides in every sport the cultivation of which adds to the sureness of human faculties; but it may be safely said that no sport, properly taught, is safer than that of yachting, or more productive of calm judgment and physical self-reliance.

Until amateur aeronauts shall sail here and there through the upper spaces, «horsed upon the sightless couriers of the air,» those who know that the greatest spice to physical exercise is freedom and self-reliance will skim the salty blue or the turquoise lake, with one hand on the tiller and the other within reach of the main-sheet. Here is activity with restfulness, excitement with quiet, energy without weariness; the vitalities of wind, wave, and tide course, as it were, through the sensory nerves of the yachtsman; mind and muscle joy in their cunning dominion over the giant forces of the elements; and the soul, if it please, expands to the wider horizon of the eye, and calmly roves into the beauty-land lying in the kaleidoscopic angle between water and sky.

#### Language before Literature.

THE recent visit to the United States of the distinguished French critic M. Brunetière has naturally revived the discussion of the relations of language to literature,—relations nowhere more intimate or more evident than in Paris,—and leads one to ponder on the differences between a literary country like France and a country like the United States, where books are read rather than considered—indeed, where there seems to be a marked diminution even of reading. This statement may be met with facts and figures showing the establishment of new libraries, the multiplication of university extension, etc.; but, without derogation of these excellent influences, it must be perceived on second thought that they make for scholarship or erudition rather than for literature; for they rarely go deeply into what is now the fundamental lack in American education—knowledge of our own language. After all, what makes one book a piece of literature, while another is not, is the presence of that subtle and yet tangible quality called style; and what is