

own interest, and so much more positive in their demands.

They gain advantage, also, in another way. They are much less intense in their partisanship. One who watches the municipal contests in a city where the two great parties are pretty evenly balanced will see that the disorderly and vicious classes are by no means wedded to either party. Their vote goes, almost solidly, first to one party and then to the other,—always to the candidates that are the most satisfactory to them. Their political principles are precisely those which one of our prominent capitalists has so humorously avowed, and for the same reason. They are no bigoted partisans, not they. Consequently they manage, in a good many of our cities, to have things largely their own way.

If the supremacy of the vilest in our municipal governments is explained by the facts just mentioned, the way of overthrowing that supremacy is clearly indicated. A great increase of political activity and a corresponding abatement of partisanship, on the part of the best citizens is urgently called for. The latter is the simpler, and perhaps the more effective, remedy. If the upper half of each of the great parties were as fearlessly independent as the lowest quarter of the party is, the rule of the vilest would speedily cease and determine. It is the confidence of the bosses that the better citizens will be steadfastly loyal to their party obligations, that encourages them to truck and dicker with the rabble. The knowledge that they were in danger of losing the support of the reputable people would lead them to withdraw from that alliance.

The effectiveness of this remedy has already been demonstrated in several of our great cities. In these cities there is a great gain in the *personnel* of the government, and in the vigor and purity of the administration. The same remedy is within reach of the voters of all our cities.

Sanitary Legislation in American Cities.

It is somewhat depressing to look back and see how large a part of what has passed for political principle in the United States has been really only a temporary exemption from the necessity of meeting problems which had long vexed older peoples. In 1790, when there were but four American cities with a population of more than 10,000, and when the population of the largest was but about 40,000, it was easy for our people to relegate all matters relating to the prevention of disease to individual care, and to look with complacency upon this solution, as only a phase of the great political principle of individual liberty. It is a different matter in 1887, when nearly one-fourth of our people live in cities, when a single city with its environs contains almost as many persons as the whole United States in 1790, and when the consequences of individual carelessness or incompetency may be frightful. Under the latter circumstances, we can no longer leave to the individual, or force upon him, duties to which he is incompetent; nor, above all, can we any longer put such a solution into the class of political principles.

The only comprehensible relation which human society bears to the individual is that of conferring benefits on him; if it fails in this function, it is only a nuisance and an impediment to him. But the real ben-

efit which society can confer on him is not, as the socialist assumes, that of making life easier; it is rather that of enabling the individual to reach the point of the most strenuous endeavor, with the highest percentage of results. Society injures the individual when it repays to him the sum which a swindler has abstracted from his pocket; it confers a benefit on him when it locks up the swindler, and makes it more difficult for other swindlers to entrap the unwary. The dividing line is not difficult to follow, if one is honestly anxious to follow it. And it seems a natural, however unpleasant, consequence that the energy of the State should increase with the intensity of modern life; otherwise, the whole growth of the race in numbers and civilization would be a decided disadvantage to the individual, for every invention and development would merely bring in some new danger, against which he must guard himself, to the detriment of his ordinary work. When the numbers of a people have increased so that a small percentage is a large absolute number, when the individual workman finds himself menaced by an organization which is too strong for him, however weak it may be in comparison with the whole State, he has a right to expect from the State ample protection against anything which interferes with the full efficiency of his labor: it is no answer to say that the precedents do not meet the case; the State exists to make precedents in such cases. When new chemical processes in manufacture have brought into populous places odors and gases which are not only offensive, but distinctly detrimental to health, it is not fair to the individual to expect him to stop his ordinary work in order to abate nuisances of the sort: the State has found a new sphere of activity. When a city becomes packed like an ant-hill, and there is every temptation to individuals to disregard the usual laws of health in the construction and regulation of buildings, it is not fair to the individual to leave to his conscience or personal investigation the regulation or detection of defects which are so easily concealed; he is not to blame for the new conditions, and the State must do the work, in order that he may attend to his own work, and not be injured, instead of benefited, by the new developments. He who would reject at once a proposition that the State should build houses for workmen, on the ground that such a step would tend only to injure the individual activity of the recipients of the bounty, is not at all illogical in believing that the State is bound to use every energy for the prevention of preventable diseases in cities, for the latter step is merely a removal of the burden of new conditions from the individual who has become exposed to them, and an effort to enable him to do his work with as much efficiency as ever. Such legislation seems to be altogether Individualistic, as opposed to Socialistic.

That legislation can do much in this direction has been abundantly proved by experiment. England's first half-century of sanitary legislation, beginning in 1838, has just ended, and its results are full of encouragement to those who have had faith in the possibilities of such work in American cities. During this period, the death-rate of England and Wales has been reduced from 22.07 to 19.62 per 1000; and that of London from 25.57 to 21.01 per 1000. Such percentages become much more intelligible when it is added that the death-roll of England and Wales, at the rate of 1838, would have

been 102,240 larger last year than it was under a system of sanitary legislation: that is, that this number of lives was actually saved and prolonged by the intelligent direction of the energy of the State. If there is any taint of socialism in "State interference" of this sort, which goes only to the relief of the individual from the necessity of guarding him from the unhealthy influences of modern city life, and thus enabling him to work longer, with less anxiety and more efficiency, it is not easy to detect it.

The conditions of American life have thus far been in favor of a low death-rate. The death-rate of the whole United States in 1880 was stated by the Census Bureau as 15.09 per 1000; but it is difficult to believe that some failures to report did not have an influence on this very favorable showing. London's death-rate of about 20 per 1000 is extremely low for an English city, and yet Philadelphia and Pittsburg about equal it, and Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Providence, St. Louis, and San Francisco surpass it, Cleveland having about the lowest death-rate of the world's great cities. In all these cases, active municipal work has done much to reënforce the naturally healthy conditions of American cities, even under the increasing density of population; but the time is rapidly approaching when legislators must realize their duty of giving an active and intelligent support to those who have in hand the municipal work of fighting off disease, under conditions

which give every advantage to the encroachments of disease. With the increase of tenement districts, in which human beings are packed closer than an inexperienced person would think possible, while ignorance and heedlessness add to the difficulties of obtaining prompt information, a case of small-pox or cholera is really more frightful than tons of gunpowder; and yet the difficulty of the work of municipal boards increases out of proportion even to the increase of the peril.

It would be well, too, if our people could realize, before that time comes, the necessity for the entire freedom of the municipal health service from any control by the so-called politician class. As population grows denser, the debasement or elevation of this branch of the municipal civil service will be seen most plainly in the death-rate, for consistent and intelligent sanitary legislation may be passed, but can never be administered, except by a class of public servants who are not bound to any party, but to the public service. A high death-rate falls most severely on the poor; and it would seem that a wide field for watchfulness and usefulness is here offered for the proper energies of every labor organization, quite apart from all boycotts or sympathetic strikes. Good municipal civil service touches interests of the workingman which are quite as important, if he would but see it, as any for whose defense the walking delegate has yet given his signal for action.

OPEN LETTERS.

Education of the Blind.—II.

THE BLIND AS STUDENTS.

WE pride ourselves much in this country upon our special schools for this exceptional class, and with reason. Unquestionably they have done and are doing a vast amount of good; unquestionably they are, in comparison with those of Europe, the acme of perfection in system and management. Yet they are fearfully one-sided in their training, lamentably limited in their scope.

Many suppose that the only rational course, the moment an individual under thirty is pronounced hopelessly blind, is to send him at once to one of these establishments and keep him there till he is turned out a finished specimen of its educational excellence. For the child of indigent or wholly incompetent parents, this may be the only choice, to be taken for better or worse; but where a fair amount of means, intelligence, and attention can be devoted to him at home, he had much better remain there during most of his formative period, learning and doing what others do, as far as possible.

I am very far from denying the great value of these special schools to any and all pupils in the pursuit of certain peculiar branches of study, and in learning the application and use of certain inventions peculiar to the needs of the blind; and a short attendance at some institution of the kind is most advisable, say from one to three years. But this time should be amply sufficient in which to avail one's self of such particular advantages, and a longer sojourn, even at one of the best institutions, I hold to be decidedly detrimental.

It is in the actual active world, not within the sheltering walls and among the specially adapted arrangements and customs of an asylum for their class, that the blind must live and labor; and the almost unavoidable danger is that a prolonged stay at the latter will unfit them in a great measure for the former. Certain peculiar habits are too likely to be acquired, harmless enough in themselves and useful to sightless persons when together, but which attract attention and stamp one as odd in the outside world. Such, for instance, as snapping the fingers to indicate the position of the extended hand, when about to exchange a friendly greeting or pass any object; making some sound in passing one another to show exact whereabouts; groping noisily and conspicuously for any desired article; and many more of the like, all of which are roughly but forcibly classed in the school phraseology under the head of "blindisms," and, once adopted, are very difficult to lay aside.

Then the competition at such institutions is always and in every department only with those hampered by a like disadvantage; and the pupil is too apt to content himself with slow, clumsy methods and a low standard of results. He needs the constant spur to his pride of seeing those about him, many of whom he feels to be his inferiors in intellect, accomplishing more in less time, whether in study or competitive sports, to stimulate his ambition and arouse his faculties, so as to overcome the greater obstacles and equal his companions. He needs the broadening influence of being brought into forcible daily contact with subjects and with attainments which are not naturally within his