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EDITORIAL

MUNICIPALISM.

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ALTHOUGH, with the exception of bold-bad Tammany, the other parties of Capital in this city started with the usual fan-fare about “municipal issues are non-political,” as the campaign proceeds we hear less and less of this latest scheme to deceive. Instead thereof, Tammany and anti-Tammany, including the Hearst variety, are, through their major and minor mouthpieces, declaring with startling unanimity that municipal government is “the most difficult branch of administration,” and “presents the most perplexing issues.”

This is true. And 'tis true for the very simple reason that all the impurities of the body political settle down in the municipality.

“Bossism,” “graft,” “favoritism,” “extravagance,” “corruption,” in short, all the thousand and one ailments that “perplex” municipal reformers are ailments found to afflict national and state governments as well. But there is a difference.

Whatever act of “bossism,” whatever manifestation of “graft,” of “favoritism,” of “extravagance,” or of “corruption” breaks out in Washington, breaks out at the political head-spring itself. As such, the outbreak presents nothing that is perplexing. It is the product of the politicians who face it and of the politicians who oppose them. The one and the other know exactly how it came about; they know exactly through what channels it flows; they know exactly what law incited it. Accordingly they know how the thing can be checked. It is otherwise with municipalities.

Down to the bed of the municipality filters the consequences of every political act. A protective tariff that is equivalent to a check drawn to the favor of a favored manufacturer; a financial law that adds grease to the elbow of a favored bank; a bill that squanders revenues in favor of specific and pet individuals; a measure that creates offices for hungry pursuivants; an appointment to “influential” committees;

—these and the numerous other acts of the legislative and executive departments start a stream of pollution that filters downward. Like a sink, the municipality, under political rule, gathers the drippings that come from above, and which it, not being their originator, is utterly unable to grapple with. Whatever “power” municipal political government has is of subaltern nature. The ordinances of municipal councils and boards of aldermen are essentially ratifications of the mischief done above, and to which the municipality must adapt itself—and does gladly adapt itself to through its political agents, amidst their amusement at the capers of the sincere reformers, who tinker at “tenement pest holes” and other pests all of which have their source, not in the municipality, but in the top center of capitalist political government.

The argument that municipal government is the most complex of administrations amounts to a complete somersault on the part of the gentry that have hitherto sputtered the theory about municipal issues being non-political. The argument points to the source of the evil—and to its abolition.

Municipal issues will continue “perplexing” until the Political State is abolished. Not until then will Government start from below.

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