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STUDIES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION
IN
GERMANY

AS SEEN IN THE GOVERNMENT OF A TYPICAL
PRUSSIAN CITY, HALLE a/S.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE present monograph contains a brief account of municipal organization and administration in Germany as seen in the actual government of a typical Prussian city. The limits of space set by the publisher prevented a full discussion of any of the subjects treated in the book. But it is hoped that even this brief presentation may contribute to a clearer understanding of actual conditions prevailing in German cities. The thanks of the author are due to the members of the city administration of Halle a/S. for their unfailing courtesy in answering what must often have seemed to them tiresome questions. Special obligation is also acknowledged to the members of the *Magistrat*, and more particularly to the accomplished and obliging head mayor of the city, the Honorable Mr. Staude.

APPENDIX.

NOTE ON THE CEMETERIES.

THE question of the proper relation of a municipal administration to the disposal of the dead is an important one. European cities have taken, on the whole, a very different attitude toward this question from American cities. They have evidently regarded it as not only a proper, but necessary function of the city, not merely to provide facilities for the sanitary disposal of dead bodies, but also for their interment in a manner corresponding with the prevailing ideas of decency and propriety in the community, and also at charges which shall be within the reach of even the poorest members of the same. This seems, at any rate, to have been the idea underlying the policy of the city of Halle toward the cemetery system, if one may be entitled to make such inference from the actual policy adopted by the city in this regard. The city owns at present three large cemeteries—one in the heart of the city, and two at the northern and southern extremities, respectively. The cemetery in the heart of the city is now practically closed to further interments, except those from families who own hereditary lots in the cemetery, ownership to which is not granted in fee simple, but only for the period of one hundred years, or, rather, until 1983, beyond which time no further concessions can be granted. The management of these cemeteries is most methodical. In the old city cemetery, which is one of the most picturesque in Europe, the outer wall is lined with a series of grave lots covered with arched roofs, very similar to those which one often sees in Italy. These lots are family concessions, conceded for a period of one hundred years, reverting to the city when the family dies out, or whenever the lots are habitually neglected, or the persons responsible therefor fail to pay the annual tax of \$2.50. Another portion of the cemetery is assigned to the so-called hereditary grave lots, 7 feet by 3 feet. These may be obtained likewise until the

year 1983 for sums varying from 200 to 600 marks (\$50 to \$150). They revert also to the city when the parties cease to care for them. A number of such lots may be taken together so as to provide for a family burial lot, but each lot must be registered and paid for separately.

The same arrangement is made in the other two cemeteries, and, in addition, further facilities for burial are provided for parties who do not wish to purchase hereditary grave lots in the following way: Most of the cemetery is divided into the so-called row-grave tracts, the grave lots being numbered consecutively and to be used in order. These lots are conceded or leased for the term of twenty years; after which they revert to the city and may be sold again either to the same party or to others for fresh interments. For burial in these row graves the fee exacted varies with the ability of the person to pay, as shown by his assessment to the income tax, and ranging from 75 cents for persons assessed to the income tax at a lower rate than \$225 up to \$7.50 for persons having an income of \$1,500 a year and over. The fees for paupers are paid by the city.

By the use of this device it is possible to utilize the cemetery over and over again for interments at periods of twenty years. In some other cemeteries in Germany this period is considerably shortened, being reduced in some places to five years. This custom, which is so repulsive to American ideas, is a necessary one, and naturally incident to a country of crowded population.

The city provides, for those who choose to use them, a system of funeral services, including all costs from the time of transferring the body from the residence to the mortuary chapel, up to the final burial. These charges are also fixed by city ordinances, and on a graded scale, corresponding to the expense which the survivors are able or willing to incur. The charge for the hearse is also based on the income of the parties, as shown by the income tax, and varies from \$1.25 to \$6. The charge for carriages is likewise fixed by ordinance, varying from 62½ cents for one-horse cabs to \$1.25 for two-horse cabs. People dying within the district assigned to a certain cemetery

must be buried there, unless they own hereditary lots in another cemetery, or unless permission is obtained from the city authorities. The Jewish congregation in the city has a cemetery of its own. An indication of the close relation between the state and religion is found in the fact that no address may be made in the cemetery in connection with the funeral services by any layman except with the consent of the clergyman having jurisdiction.

The city accepts sums of money as trust funds from which the expense of caring for the graves, etc., may be defrayed.

The privilege of furnishing hearses and carriages at the regular tariff fixed by the city is leased to a private individual, who, in return for the privilege, must pay to the cemetery fund 10 per cent. of his gross income and at least 1,000 marks per year. It is an interesting social fact to note that in 1899-1900, of the 315 occasions when a hearse was employed in connection with funerals, 51 belonged to the first class, 191 to the second, 28 to the third, and 45 to the fourth.

The city received three additional cemeteries in the annexed districts, which have become a part of the city since April 1, 1900, although two are so located that new interments will have to be prohibited before long and new locations will have to be provided.

The management of these cemeteries is intrusted to a permanent deputation or joint commission of the administrative board and the city council, consisting of six members—two from the administrative board and four from the city council. This commission is expected to administer the cemeteries in such a way that they will pay for themselves, and not be a charge on the general revenue of the city; nor does the city, on the other hand, expect a net revenue from the management of the cemeteries.

It will be seen from a study of the above facts that an effort is made on the part of the city administration to provide facilities for decent burial at moderate rates. In this policy the city seems to be following a line of development, which has taken place naturally and easily, growing out of historic conditions, rather than anything which has been adopted as a result of conscious reflection or thought.