

## THE CORRUPTION OF THE VOTER.

For The Public.

The corruption of the voter is the most serious problem in American political life.

The thoughtful and patriotic citizen regards the right of suffrage as a most sacred right—a right that has been secured by the long struggle of many generations against despotic power. He would have that right exercised by the rich and poor, the great and humble alike; not because all would exercise the right equally well, but because every citizen should have the opportunity to be heard and to be counted for the kind of government he desires. When the right of suffrage is exercised freely by all without bribery or coercion of any kind, a pure democracy results and a majority of the people secure the kind of government they consider best. Not so when the careless and vicious are bought by unscrupulous campaign managers, and when the poor but well-meaning citizens are coerced by their employers or others to whom they look for influence or help. A farmer, a merchant, a clergyman or a college president counts one when he votes, but a party leader with \$100,000 at his disposal counts 10,000 if he is able to buy the will of voters at ten dollars apiece. It matters little what the party leader stands for; if he can pay the money he gets the votes. Likewise the corporation, manufacturer or contractor employing many laborers counts a hundred, or a thousand, it may be, if he can make his employees believe that their livelihood depends on their voting according to his wishes.

The unfortunate man who sells his vote sees the few dollars offered him, but he does not see the selfish and pernicious motive of the buyer who intends to exact from the people many times the amount of money he pays for votes. The vote-seller does not see that he is casting aside for a pittance that boon of liberty for which his fathers fought and died. He does not see that he is forging chains for himself and for his children.

The still more unfortunate man who allows himself to be coerced into voting against his will sees the continued opportunity to earn his living. He does not see that he is losing character as a man in accepting such conditions. He does not see that he is making it harder for other men to work as free men. He does not see that if other employees followed his example, liberty and the right of suffrage would soon be gone for ever.

We denounce as a traitor and condemn to death the man who sells his services to an enemy in time of war. What shall we say of the man who sells his vote to an enemy in time of peace? And is the enemy who buys the votes, deserving of any more consideration? Was not Benedict Arnold as worthy a seat in the United States Senate as J. Edward O'Sullivan Addicks?

Think for a moment of the sources of the corruption fund used by the political parties. The fund comes principally from four sources: 1. Contributions from candidates for office and their friends; 2. Contributions from officeholders; 3. Contributions from gambling houses, houses of prostitution, etc., that are seeking protection for them-

selves in their illegitimate business; 4. Contributions from wealthy corporations and wealthy men who are enjoying or hoping to enjoy special privileges or immunity from the government.

It is clear that in the first two of these sources there are dangerous tendencies, while in the latter two there is positive crime. To force large contributions from candidates for public office, is to limit candidates to men of wealth; while to force contributions from officeholders is to promote graft and to cause salaries to become abnormally large. The acceptance and use by campaign managers of the contributions of disreputable establishments, or of individuals known or even suspected of carrying on an illegitimate business, is enough to condemn the party in the minds of all lovers of good government. No pledge is given by the party managers to these illegitimate places, and none is required; but so long as the proper amount is paid the house is allowed to run on undisturbed. The large gambling houses of this city furnish familiar illustrations. Contributions from those enjoying or expecting to enjoy special privileges, while not quite so vicious as those above mentioned, are demoralizing. The great sums of money paid into the treasury by the large corporations, when used in the purchase of votes, produce such decisive results that party leaders are very slow to pass measures for the protection of the people against the predatory monopolies. Laws designed to aid these monopolies are passed much more easily.

Large campaign funds are not necessary to a legitimate campaign. Such funds as are necessary could easily be made up by small contributions from the thousands of patriotic citizens who desire to disseminate the views they hold dear.

The evils of bribery are recognized in our state constitution and in our statute books, but the laws on the subject are of no avail. So long as those high in authority provide for, or at least sanction, the use of money at the polls we cannot expect the laws to be enforced. Moreover, public opinion is faintly expressed on the matter. People hesitate to express themselves in regard to the evil for fear of hurting their party. They forget that he who shields a criminal participates in his guilt.

We heard much during the recent campaign, of the "clean" methods used in conducting the campaign; but in spite of the boasted "cleanness" the greater part of the campaign funds were distributed to the district leaders on the night before election, and the vote-buying went on as usual. What influence was exerted by the money spent in this way, no one knows. It is certain that the managers would not have sent out the money had they thought it would produce no effect.

The saddest feature of the whole practice of vote-buying and selling, is the fact that high-minded candidates are willing to profit by the practice without uttering a word of protest. I believe elections can be won without bribing voters. If I am wrong in that belief, then the people do not deserve honest officials. I cannot believe that we have reached such a low moral standard as some party managers would have us believe, and I hope the day may soon come when all political parties will cease to accept contributions from question-

able sources, and will use no money for the purchase of votes.

HORATIO M. POLLOCK.

Albany, N. Y.

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OUR NEW FASTING.

For The Public.

Since Packingtown at last has sprung a leak And all its hideous horrors moan and shriek, McGinness thinks 'twould be a happy freak, If only Friday lasted all the week.

E. V. COOKE.

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"But, surely, you have nothing to worry you."

"Haven't I, though? It keeps me awake nights wondering what will become of my children when I die."

"Nonsense! Why, you're making barrels of money now, so—"

"That's just it."

—Philadelphia Press.

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Should you notice a dazed, please-pass-the-smelling salts look in the eyes of the Dove of Peace, make up your mind that the President's desire for a \$10,000,000 battleship has had a whole lot to do with it.

—Puck.

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Living costs continue to go up. The poor people of this country may yet have to move to Europe to get the benefit of low prices on tariff-protected American products.

—Chicago Daily News.

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Some time ago, in New York City, a man was wakened in the night to find his wife weeping, uncontrollably.

"My darling," he said, in distress, "what is the matter?"

"A dream," she gasped. "I have had such a horrible dream."

Her husband begged her to tell it to him, in order that he might comfort her. After long persuasion she was induced to say this:

"I thought I was walking down Broadway, and I came to a warehouse, where there was a large placard, 'Husbands for sale.' You could get a beautiful one for fifteen hundred dollars, or even for twelve hundred dollars, and very nice looking ones as low as a hundred."

The husband asked innocently, "Did you see any that looked like me?"

The sobs became strangling. "Dozens of them," gasped the wife, "done up in bunches, like asparagus, and sold for ten cents a bunch."

—Harper's Magazine.

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A young German lately arrived in this country was very much interested in history, but not well informed in regard to the history of the United States. Taking, one day, a railroad journey, he had in his hand a volume of history. A fat gentleman next to

Publishers' Column

The Public

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CHARLES L. LOGAN, D. O. OSTEOPATHIC PHYSICIAN

Office: 45 Auditorium Bldg.

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