

OPEN VOTE BUYING
IN MANY STATES AT THE LAST ELEC-
TION.
EFFORT IN INDIANA TO ERADICATE
THE EVIL.

All good citizens, to whatever party they claim allegiance, must condemn the growing evil of the purchase and sale of voters at election. The practice has gradually grown to be a great evil, and public opinion does not frown it down, if the buying and selling are for the benefit of their own party and candidates. Those states and districts, where the voters are nearly equally divided between the two great parties, are the fields where the rascally work is principally carried on, and it is too bad to have to say that there are no exceptions to the general rule. The New England States, the Central States, and the West are equally guilty where the election is close and the voters are worth the price paid.

Indiana has always been what is known as a close or doubtful State, and so debauched has it been that four years ago the Republican legislature amended the law that then punished the vote-briber and the bribed as equally guilty, so that now only the voter who sells his vote can be punished and the one who pays the money goes free.

The Indianapolis Sentinel and the leaders of the Democratic party have constantly waged a fight to overcome this greatest offense that can be perpetrated against the institutions of a free country, and are now endeavoring to arouse public opinion so that a more efficient law may be passed by the coming legislature. The newspaper named, in its issue of November 17, has a number of interviews with leading Democrats and Republicans, all of whom declare against the practice.

Amongst these William L. Taylor, the State attorney general, voiced the opinion of many Republicans when he said:

I never did indorse the amendment to the election law which allows vote bribers to go scot free. At the same time I recognize the force of the argument made by those who advocated the amendment. It is easy to see that if only one party to the crime is punishable prosecutions are more likely than if both are punishable, for in the latter case both would have the same reason for maintaining secrecy.

The law as it stood before the amendment was adopted was practically a dead letter and the amendment was passed in the hope of making it effective. But even with the amendment the law is not much better than a dead letter. It is true there have been some prosecutions under it. In Montgomery county there were 30 cases brought against vote-sellers, and I believe there were some also in Spencer county. I see also that some man in Haughville has

succeeded in buying up a lot of voters that he now wants punished. These prosecutions have all been brought about by the reward clause placed in the amendment, which gives anyone who furnishes information that will convict a man of selling his vote \$100 from the county treasury. In my opinion, however, the vote-briber is as guilty as the vote-seller, and I do not know but what it would be advisable to amend the law again. But I do not know how the legislature will feel about it.

Not one of those interviewed hints that the charges are overdrawn of the extent of the evil.

In Connecticut vote buying on an extended scale would seem to be the rule, for startling charges are made and published in the Boston Transcript—good Republican authority—which on November 15th says:

William D. Bishop, Jr., of this city, the Democratic candidate for Congress in the Fourth district, has repeatedly declared since his defeat that three-fourths of the vote of the smaller towns is purchasable. Mr. Bishop is a man of high standing in the community and his words have exceptional weight. He says: "It is a fact that three-fourths of the entire vote in the small towns of Connecticut is purchasable. I gave the chairmen of the town committees to understand that while I would willingly pay all legitimate expenses that might arise in the canvass, I would not put up a single dollar with which to buy votes. Some of them received this information all right and some of them were not so well pleased. It is a peculiar fact that some years ago, when certain prominent Bridgeport men were running for office, they poured out money in many of the small and doubtful towns. In some towns, where the entire vote would not exceed 200 or 300 votes, they put in from \$2,000 to \$3,000 and votes sold as high as \$100 each. And there are in many of these towns a purchasable element that can be bought in every campaign.

The republican machine politicians that rule Connecticut, of which Senator Platt is the leader, must have had knowledge of this wholesale debauch of the voters, as they were the beneficiaries of the purchased votes, and it is well known that the Democrats, if willing, did not have the funds to bid against them.

B. W. H.

"LOBSTERS" I HAVE MET.
THE POLITICAL PILL PEDDLER OF
PONTIAC.

For The Public.

One August day in 1896, the year of the hottest political campaign in my experience, I had been talking over business prospects with the head of the firm, and was about to walk away, when he asked why I never went to Pontiac. "It isn't far out of your way, is it?" he inquired.

"No, sir," I replied; "about 60 miles, I should say."

"Well, Mr. Cruikshank, of Cruikshank & Burns, is an old friend of mine, and they have the best drug store in

Pontiac. I believe you could do some business with him."

"Very well, sir," I said, "on my next trip I'll run up there from Champaign."

I arrived in Pontiac one evening at ten o'clock, about three weeks after the interview with the "boss." It was pitch dark around the depot when the train pulled in. The hotel boy took my grip, and I followed him down the street.

"What's all the crowd around the depot for?" I inquired.

"They're up to see Billy Mason off," replied the boy.

"They can see him 'off' most any time in Chicago."

"Well, that crowd don't think he's 'off' that way," he replied, with a grin.

"That's a good thing for Billy. If the people ever get onto him he'll have to hustle for his meal tickets."

"You must be for Bryan?"

"You bet I'm for Bryan. Are there any Bryan people in this town?"

"Yes, sir, quite a good many."

Just then we came upon a crowd that had gathered near the hotel entrance. Telling the boy to go ahead with my grip, I stopped to see if there was anything doing.

There were probably 300 people gathered in front of the place, which had closed up for the night. I heard one of them say: "Why, the only people benefited will be the owners of the silver mines."

"How will they be benefited?" I asked.

The crowd about me at once opened up, and I pushed through.

"How will they be benefited?" he repeated, as he looked my way to get a glimpse of his new opponent. "Why, they'll get a dollar for every ounce of silver they bring to the mint, and it's only worth 53 cents now!"

"According to that they will make an extra 47 cents on each ounce of silver?"

"Yes, sir. I'm glad to see you're so good at figures."

"So am I," I replied; "and according to you the silver dollar will be worth 100 cents when we get free silver?"

At this a perfect pandemonium seemed to break loose, much to my opponent's discomfiture. It was as noisy a crowd as I ever saw.

Oscar went out of business and an insurance man took his place. I knew he was full of prunes before he'd said a dozen words. He must have sat up nights memorizing things that ain't so.

"I'll tell you what the value of a silver dollar will be if Bryan is elected," he said, like he was handing out