

ident with the authority and impose upon him the responsibility for the details of route selection and canal construction.

If that were done, the president would be obliged, of course, to rely upon experts. He could not do the work personally. But having the power of employment and discharge he would be responsible for the ability and fidelity of the experts he chose. If they were privately interested, or gave way to corruption, he would be accountable to the people; and the consciousness of this undivided responsibility would tend to the intensification of his own probity and vigilance. There would be danger, to be sure, of corruption, which in some of its subtler forms might penetrate even into the White House. But when the personal integrity of the president cannot be trusted, whose can be? And it must not be forgotten that the danger of corruption cannot be wholly avoided, no matter what is done. So long as we foster gigantic private interests at the expense of public rights, we must recognize corruption as one of the ever-present factors in all public problems. The remedy is not to depart from common sense methods of managing public affairs, in order to head off corrupting influences. The less common sense there is in the method, the easier for those influences to creep in. The remedy really needed is the withdrawal from private and corporate hands of all the public favors which build up private interests in hostility to the legitimate interests of the public.

Consider this point in the light of the Isthmian canal controversy. In normal circumstances there would be nothing to the controversy but the impotent influences of a badly crippled foreign corporation owning the unfinished Panama canal and anxious to sell out cheap, on one side, and on the other the equally impotent influences of a speculative company hoping in vain to be subsidized to build and own a canal on the Nicaragua route.

A typical Tammany alderman could almost be trusted to decide such a controversy for the public good. But note the difference when a powerful railway interest injects itself into the problem. It owns all the highways across the continent. Not only the rails and ties and locomotives, but the rights of way. By this modern species of highwaymanship the ring is supreme in power, when its interests are involved. Its interests are involved in the Isthmian canal project. At present it commands the Isthmus. It owns the Isthmian railroad and it subsidizes the Isthmian steamers. There is, therefore, no competition with it save the insignificant competition of tramp vessels that go around the Horn. But if a public canal were cut through the Isthmus, the shipping of the world would compete for freight traffic with this transcontinental railroad ring. Is it any wonder that corruption is rife, and that powerful influences are at work to prevent the construction of a canal, or if one be constructed to make it a failure?

How simple a thing it would be to annihilate that pernicious influence, not only for this occasion but for all occasions. Its power is due, as we have already said, not to rails and ties and cars and locomotives, but to rights of way. They belong of right to the public. Unless the government owns them the private owners will own the government. Private highways are an anachronism. Let the government take them back for the people to whom they belong and who cannot justly be divested of them. This is even more important than an Isthmian canal, and for other purposes besides the destruction of a powerful corrupting influence. The canal is intended, in the commercial aspects of the project, to make a thoroughfare for competition with the railroads. That would not be necessary if the railroad rights of way were returned to the people from whom they have been taken, for railroad trains would then compete with one another. Just as private vessels may

sail through the public canal, so could private freight cars roll over the public railway. And why should this resumption by the public of the public highways not be made? Can any Isthmian canal advocate explain why it is government business to open and own a water highway across the Isthmus, operating locks if necessary, and not government business to open and own a rail highway across the continent, regulating time tables and operating switches as required?

The effort of the British ministry to manufacture friendly American sentiment just as American feeling is rising over the use by the British army of an American port as a base for military supplies with which to fight the Boers, and upon the heels of the ugly disclosure in a trial at London of the fact that the British postal authorities at Johannesburg were in the habit of turning over the American consul's mail to the British censor—that effort in those circumstances was ludicrously awkward. Observe how awkward it was. An obscure member of parliament asks the ministry to reveal a diplomatic secret of four years' standing affecting the United States with reference to their war with Spain. The request was utterly without visible cause. No related question was under discussion, or likely to be. Yet the ministry hastily made the requested disclosure, thereby indicating that at the beginning of the Spanish-American war the continental powers of Europe were disposed to embarrass the United States, and were headed off by the friendly attitude of the British tory ministry. If there was or could have been any other motive for that parliamentary performance than anxiety to counteract the rising pro-Boer sentiment in this country, a revelation of the mysterious motive would be at least interesting. Done more skillfully, the thing might have succeeded. But thin-skinned though the Americans are, and therefore susceptible to flattery, they are intelligent enough at least to recognize a "jolly"

so awkwardly constructed. And they don't like to be awkwardly "jollied."

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the British colonial secretary, who is responsible more than any other person for the infamous war of subjugation in South Africa, made a defensive statement in parliament on the 20th, which reveals his possession either of a great deal of ignorance of modern American history or of a very low grade of moral sense with reference to property rights. Referring to the conclusion of the civil war in the United States, he said that—

no political conditions were given the Confederates, while their property was confiscated on a tremendous scale.

As no property was taken by the conquering power from the people of the Confederacy on a large scale, except the slaves, who were not confiscated in the strict sense of the term but were set free, it must be inferred, if Mr. Chamberlain knew what he was talking about, that he recognizes slaves as legitimate property. It is rather late in the history of human progress for a man to be accorded credit for the most ordinary moral instincts who refers to an act of human liberation as a confiscation of property.

Cable correspondence from London to the American papers justifies all the more the position taken by Congressman Kern regarding American special representatives at the British coronation ceremony, upon which we commented last week. It appears that such representatives, instead of being honored envoys to the British people are to be made inferior guests at a royal family party. Says one of the dispatches, that to the Chicago-Record-Herald, of the 19th:

The whole system of etiquette for such occasions is very elaborate. Crown princes, representing the emperors and the elder sons of kings, naturally come first, and after them the special envoys, whose precedence is sometimes arranged according to the date of their arrival, and at other times alphabetically. If the latter method is followed, as is predicted,

the United States would come at the end or just before Uruguay and Venezuela.

At last the veil of secrecy and prevarication is removed, and the reconcentrado order of an American general in the Philippines—J. Franklin Bell—comes to light. From time to time the facts have leaked out regarding modified applications in the Philippines of Weyler's barbarous policy of reconcentration, but now its unmodified application is boldly revealed. Gen. Bell's order, issued early in December, requires the inhabitants of the province of Batangas to come within American military camps under penalty of the confiscation and destruction of their property. This is the policy with which Weyler shocked the civilized world and aroused the indignation of our own country when he originated it in Cuba. It is the policy which the British, to their shame, have adopted in South Africa. It is a policy which means disease, starvation, torture and death in the Philippines just as it did in Cuba and does in South Africa. It is a policy for which the responsibility must be placed where it belongs, not upon Bell, the subordinate, but upon President Roosevelt, the commander in chief. Whether he ordered it or not he has the power to stop it.

Epigrammatic and cutting is the admonition with which Dr. Parkhurst favors Mayor Low, of New York city. "There is not much to choose," he writes, "between a Tammany administration that has bad principles, and a reform administration that has good principles but is afraid to use them." This is apropos of the discovery that New York is as "wide open" a town under Mayor Low as it was under Mayor Van Wyck. It is true that Mayor Low has been only a short time in office. But he was not required to get new laws enacted in order to redeem the anti-Tammany pledges. The laws exist. They need only to be enforced. Why they have not been enforced anyone familiar with New York knows. The administration

that should become responsible in the public mind for their enforcement would be damned beyond resurrection. The laws are "hay-seed" laws, imposed by the state legislature, at the solicitation of a small minority of the inhabitants, upon this vassal city. What the political reformers who manage Mr. Low have hoped to do has been to enforce the laws to flatter the minority, without enforcing them enough to enrage the majority. But Dr. Parkhurst is not yet flattered.

Several bankers of Colorado Springs petitioned the governor of Colorado to include in a call for an extra session of the legislature, as one of its purposes, the repeal of the Bucklin constitutional amendment resolution now pending before the people. They state their belief that this amendment, if adopted, would be detrimental to the interests of the state. That is suggestive of much, as Carlyle might have said. The Bucklin bill is a resolution for the amendment of the constitution so as to allow the people of any county to adopt the popular Australasian method of taxing land values if they want to. It was passed by a clear two-thirds vote of each house of the legislature. It is now under discussion before the people of the state, who are to vote on it next fall. If they adopt it, no change in the fiscal system of the state or of any county would thereupon ensue. Nor could any change be brought about without elections petitioned for by tax payers, and after a popular vote in favor of the change; nor even then except in the county voting. Yet these bankers want the legislature to repeal the resolution so as to cut off a popular vote upon the amendment. It is not difficult to understand that proposition. Lobbies can influence legislatures, whereas the public cannot be approached in that way, and the bankers are evidently disposed to rely upon a lobby. Something else is not hard to guess, which is that the petitioning bankers are more deeply interested in real estate speculation than they are in legitimate