

BRIBERY AT ELECTIONS.

The English System Explained—The Law is Very Rigid and Inspires Fear.

Many practical politicians do not hesitate to say that there will always be much corruption in a country with widely extended suffrage. So many of the more depraved classes of the population habitually act from low motives, and so many of the ignorant are unable clearly to grasp the issues of the day, that the politicians in seeking votes find themselves unable to appeal successfully to motives of patriotism, or to judgment of governmental policies, and therefore appeal to prejudice and greed.

With due consciousness, therefore, of the difficulty that one has in seeing and understanding social movements in a foreign country, and with a preliminary apology to Englishmen for any interpretations that may, on account of my foreign training, be unjust, I shall try to give what facts I can regarding English election methods and customs that may be valuable to us in considering the still unsettled question of electoral reform.

Of direct bribery, all are agreed that there is, relatively speaking, very little left in England. In none of the contested cases at the general election, so far as I am aware, was a single instance of bribery proved to the satisfaction of the judges, though evidence was offered in several cases, and bribery was charged in many more. Indeed, I believe that no one has lost his seat on that ground since the law was passed.

In a petition on the special by-election held in Pontefract (Pontfret), decided in June, 1893, an illegal practice was proved that vacated the seat. The agent had paid the voter ten shillings for his railway expenses in coming to the polls, and this was held to be sufficient. In this case the candidate had no knowledge of the expenditure. This practice is so common with us, and so often thought perfectly innocent by well-meaning men, that it is valuable to see how the English courts look upon it. Such expenditures are directly forbidden in the act of 1893.

There can be no doubt, I suppose, that bribery, though rare, occurs at times where it is not found out, and is sometimes really known when it cannot be legally proved. One of the leading Conservative agents told me that he had known of one specific case where money was sent to the Liberal agent with which to buy votes. He had his information from the man who carried the money. A Liberal tells me a similar case against the Conservatives where the sum was sent, the bearer, and the train on which he went, were known; but direct bribery could not be legally proved. Another story is told by a Liberal agent who charged the Tories with bribery on this ground: The canvass showed some 400 doubtfuls, many of low character. About 250 voted for the Conservative, when normally, without undue influence, a majority would have voted the other way. The candidate was the son of a wealthy peer who took much active interest in the election, and who, in his exultation over the result, said to a confidential friend, slipping his pocket gleefully, "This is the way to get votes."

At least one case has occurred in which the Liberals, feeling that they have had evidence of corruption sufficient to unseat the successful Conservative, where about to bring a petition, when the Conservative agent told them to go ahead if they wish to, but that he had evidence against the Liberals also. Finally, he made his point to clear that it was decided to drop the matter entirely.

A form of bribery said to have been practised in some cases in the last election, but, it should be noted, not proved, was this: A voter would be asked to run to the next corner to call a cab, or to perform a trifling service, and half a crown or a sovereign would be given him. If the service were not performed, it was all the same. Nothing would be said about the vote. That was understood.

According to the most careful statements of the men best qualified to know, there are probably twenty constituencies in England where a little bribery—sometimes more than a little—still takes place at nearly every election. They are usually old boroughs that were formerly notoriously corrupt, and they find it difficult to get over the habit. Some voters will not vote without some such stimulus, and the agents see that they get it some indirect way. Of course, as the ballot is secret, you cannot know that they vote for your candidate; and the case is rather one, such as often occurs in the United States of paying men of your own party for the trouble of coming to the polls. For only twenty constituencies out of more than 500 (I exclude Ireland) to be really tainted to any noteworthy extent of bribery, is surely not serious. On the whole, I think that the Conservatives rather more given to corrupt practices than are the Liberals. The petitions seem to show this; and beside, it seems probable a priori. There are not worse people. Indeed they may be ground for believing that there are fewer dishonest men among them; but on the whole they have more money, and the greater number of poor and ignorant voters is to be found in the Radical camp. In consequence, the Tories have the better chance and the greater temptation.

It may be well to point out one or two features in the English system that are of especial value, and one or two weaknesses. The secret ballot is an essential; the corrupt practices act, with its rigid definitions of corrupt and illegal practices, is also essential to purity; but both of these would be vastly weaker than they are if contested cases were not settled by nonpartisan courts instead of by the House of Commons. The courts are liberal enough to the sitting member. One often thinks, in reading the decisions, that they are loath to unseat an elected member, and that they are too lenient in inflicting penalties, for much is left to their discretion; but on the whole, one feels that they are rarely, if ever, partizan, never wilfully

so, though one may suspect prejudice in rare cases. Their main, indeed their sole, purpose is to promote purity in elections, and hereby to give to their country the best legislators.

England has also a great advantage in other laws that have an indirect bearing on the question. Her Civil Service laws, which practically take all spoils from the hands of the politicians, in themselves lessen the pressure of the lower-grade candidates. The fact that members receive no salary works in the same direction, though it would be neither practicable nor wise to introduce such a system here. Indeed, payment of members will almost certainly soon be introduced in England.

One weak point is certainly found in the English system of registration, which is cumbersome, and, besides, is carried on usually at the expense of the candidate, a grievous fault. A bill to amend and simplify the law is now before the House of Commons; but it seems to me that even this might be improved, though, of course, the complicated conditions of suffrage make the subject a difficult one.

Another point open to criticism is the canvassing, the evils of which are so great that not a few Englishmen advocate its abolition by law. It is, however, very doubtful if it can be abolished, or even materially changed, without doing more harm than good. A somewhat similar criticism with a like half conclusion, is to be made against the social political clubs that virtually bribe under other forms. We must remember that social union of the various classes is really a good.

It is the opinion of many Englishmen that the penalties of the Corrupt Practices Act are too severe, and that, in consequence, it is much more difficult to get a conviction of the violators of the law. I am inclined to think this true—to a degree, at least; so that, in fact, the risks taken by corrupt politicians are somewhat less than they seem.

The conclusion of the whole matter is a very clear one. Englishmen are very human. The voters there are often ignorant and careless about their votes, as in every country where the suffrage is a broad one. Often the voters are men who have few high aims, but who have low, selfish appetites that they like to satisfy. The candidates and their agents like to win, and for the sake of winning they will do as the voters wish in many cases, if they dare. They appeal to the higher motives first and most strongly; then to prejudice; then, if need be, at times, to the lowest motives of greed and appetite.

The law, however is most rigid, and, on the whole, public opinion is behind it. The risk from corruption is so great that warnings not to violate the law are put forward most prominently by all parties, and the dangers of so doing are fully explained. Without the risk involved in corruption, there would be much more of it. There is still a very little bribery; a little personation; more, but still not very much, treating; some coercion by employers, some by priests; a good deal of trickery and misrepresentation that is mean but very natural, and which often comes from sincere but narrow prejudice; and a good deal of indirect and, on the whole, I think, very insidious and evil, though not always illegal, corruption committed while "nursing the constituencies." This evil is hardly so much political as social.

From all that I can learn, what corrupt practices exist are to be found mostly in the parliamentary elections. Those for the county councils, and those more strictly local, are as might be expected perhaps, more free even than parliamentary from corrupt practices of all kinds. On the whole, speaking broadly and comparatively, the elections of England are pure—probably, on the whole, better than those of France or Germany, far better than those of the United States. I think that one may say that they are purer than in any other of the great states where the political interests is so powerful. This is probably no more bribery or treating or personation in Germany, no more coercion by employers; but the government sometimes has made its coercive power felt more there, and the same thing holds true, in a somewhat different way, in France and Italy.

England, from a state of the worst corruption, has reached a very enviable condition, and this in good part as the result of her law making. I have shown, I think, the very worst that can be said, and I have in a great measure left unsaid the good; but the relative weakness of the bad side brings out the strength of the good.

The experience of England seems to point out the next step for us to take, for we must not assume that any legislation on the subject will be final.

There were more petitions to unseat members after the election of 1892 in England than after that in 1885. Presumably the politicians found the law more terrifying when it was new, and were therefore unwilling to take so many risks in evading it. This is often the case with such a law. After a time it can be more or less successfully evaded, and it must then be amended to meet the new tricks. So we shall in the future, perhaps, need much legislation to keep the suffrage pure; civil service reform; some limiting qualifications of the suffrage for immigrants, perhaps, or for the ignorant and corrupt—possibly the proportional system of representation that works so strongly for purity in Switzerland. But, for the immediate future, we can most wisely look to corrupt practices acts, framed in the main on the English model, with, of course, due adaptation to our forms of government and of party organization. Seven of our States have already framed such laws, though most of them will probably need to be made more stringent and detailed. But such laws, with the Australian ballot to aid, and a favoring public opinion to enforce them, can, for the present at least, give us within measurable distance a pure ballot.—Jeremiah W. Jenks.

Politics will now give place to something more reasonable and less exciting, and the calf the bull, the hungry adventurer, the man with the cold feet and empty stomach, Grundy, Muldoon, Sheriff Mowat, and the other minor issues of the campaign, such as Roman Catholic aggression, the preservation of the forests, and prohibition, will be temporarily relegated to the limbo of forgetfulness.—Toronto Mail.

Parties wanting a nice Trunk or Travelling Bags would do well to call at Hugh Hay's, Woodstock.

Here and There.

Jess—How is one to distinguish the yachtsmen from the visitors? Jack—That's easy enough; the visitors all have on yachting caps, while the yachtsmen wear straw hats.

Dick Singleton—I congratulate you, my boy. I hear that it's twins this time. How did that happen? Mr. Muchblest—Well, you see, we had twelve already. And my wife is fearfully superstitious.

In his eminently readable history of the United States, Mr. Nye professes to have derived much information with regard to the discovery of America from a volume entitled "Debates and Proceedings of the Legislature of Minnesota with a Price List of Members."

I wool—The conductor was impudent and I reported him.

Van Pelt—Did he get discharged? Wool—No; they transferred him to a place in which politeness is not required; they made him a ticket seller.

Grateful customer—I am glad to see you keep your hands as well as your razor scrupulously neat and clean.

Tonsorial Artist—Yes, sir. We're obliged to. A barber never can tell when he's in danger of catching the measles or something of that kind from a customer. Shampoo, Sir?

"Haven't I intelligence enough to vote? That's what I ask my husband.

"And what does he reply?"

"That I have not. He said I did not know the difference between the tariff and the Ferris wheel. But I cornered him. I asked him to tell me wherein they differed and he tried to put me off by saying pooh, and tute—regular men's arguments."—Harper's Bazar.

A gentleman who is much interested in the raising of hogs and is becoming well known by the introduction of an excellent variety among the farmers of the Northwest, is said to have received a letter awhile ago that looks so many ways that he does not know whether to be pleased with it or not. It began: "My Dear Sir: I went yesterday to the fair at A—I found several pigs of your species. There was a larger variety than usual and I was surprised at not seeing you there."—Alexandria (Minn) Post-News.

Cooling a room.—Those who have tried the experiment affirm that a large sponge hung in the room at night or in the day time, if it can be behind a convenient screen, and kept constantly wet, will greatly assist in keeping the room cool, or a cloth hung in the window over the blind will cool the room as if a shower had fallen. All know how fresh water sprinkled on the pavement in front of all the windows and doors will freshen the hot, dry air. This is something to remember when the hot nights are upon us.—Boston Courier.

Chicago Councilman—"I can stand a good deal, but this is too much."

Friend—"What's the matter?"

Chicago Councilman—"I don't mind voting to make St. Patrick's day a legal holiday, and I didn't object when it came to adding Emperor William's birthday to the legal holidays, but when these Chicago Chinese laundrymen come forth and demand that we decorate the City hall and suspend business because it's the anniversary of the day that the great Confucius caught the measles, I think it's time to draw the line."—Life.

The financial success of the great Manchester ship canal, about which there has been much doubt, appears to be assured. A report from Manchester states that the revenues from dues and tolls for the five months ended May 1st last, were \$33,701, which more than covered all expenses connected with the traffic, including wages, salaries, and stores, rates, and a full proportion of office expenses. Maintenance was not included, and, until the work is complete, all outlay on works will be charged against capital. The traffic in the time covered was made up of 211,915 tons in ships, 63,785 in barges, and 323,056 passengers.

The hero of this article has kicked the bucket. The fools of the world are not all dead yet, but are gradually passing in their checks for the great future subsequently. "Society Bill," or in the States known as W. Hoolrah, got on his chin last Saturday down at Meteete, Wyoming, so we are informed by a letter from Capt. John Corbett, and went down on the Gray Bull River and shot his measly heart out because Belle Drury, a siren of ethereal blue eyes and calculus cheek would not let her peach blossom complexion and sylph-like lips be obscured by the pink-eyed man of society. We are glad to see a man get out of the world who is such a fool as to shoot himself about a little thing like love. We have loved a thousand woman as as hard as a mule could kick down hill in a snow storm and our widowed heart is good for a thousand or more. The Bible teaches us that we are created to love one another and we do not believe in going back on the bible and never intend to do so—as long as we live in this world of goodness and roseate purity.—Shelby Eli Dillard.

I would flee from the city's rule and law—from its fashions and forms cut loose—and go where the strawberry grows on its straw and the gooseberry grows on its goose; where the catpurr tree is climbed by the cat as she clutches for her prey, the guileless and unsuspecting rat on the rattan bush at play. I will watch at ease the saffron cow and cowlet in their glee, as they leap in joy from bough to bough on top of a cowslip tree; and list while the partridge drums in the wood, and the dog devours the dogrose fruit in the primitive solitude. Oh, let me drink from the moss grown pump that was hewn from a pumpkin tree! Eat curds and drink milk from a rural stump, from form and fashion free—new gathered mush from the mushroom vine, and milk from the milk-weed sweet with luscious pineapple from the pine! Such goods as the gods might eat! And then to the whitewashed dairy I'll turn, where the dairymaid hastening lies—her ruddy and gold red butter to churn from the milk of her butterflies; and I'll rise at morn with the earliest bird, to the fragrant farm-yard pass, and watch while the farmer turns his herd of grasshoppers out to grass.—Guelph Herald.

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OUR OTTAWA MEMBER Speaks to the Point on St. John Navigation Question.

Dr Colter, the liberal representative for Carleton, is a member who is always in his seat and who closely follows all the debates.

He gave Minister Ouimet a pretty severe dressing down for his failure to carry out promises made to him across the floor of the House. Last year the Minister told Dr. Colter he would spend a \$2,000 appropriation in deepening the channel between Woodstock and Fredericton. Instead he spent \$750 of it on the river in Kings county; \$500 in Queens and \$500 on peirs in Sunbury county.

He also showed that at the time of making the promises Mr. Ouimet had misstated some facts in connection with the surveys and then showed that much of former appropriations had been wasted. He made a strong, logical and determined plea for a fair treatment in the expenditure of the \$10,000 voted for the improvement of the river, and suggested it be done under the direction of Capt. Duncan of the steamer Aberdeen, who was the man best acquainted with the river. Dr. Colter read a memorial on the subject from the Woodstock Board of Trade and made out such a strong case that Minister Ouimet promised that the necessary improvements would be made.—Ex.

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