LESSON IN REFORM.

HOW AMERICANS MAY PROFIT BY STUDYING ENGLAND.

From the Most Corrupt to Among the Purest— We Have the First Condition—Will We Be Able to Progress to the Second?

I once heard a profound student and teacher of social and economic questions say during a course of lectures that the whole subject could be summed up in two words—study England. Yes, England, once one of the most corrupt countries on earth in its politics, is now one of the purest. The most corrupt "ward heeler" of one of our large cities would have been an angel in England previous to 1832. The intimidation by force of negroes in the south and the none the less potent and reprehensible intimidation of factory and corporation employees in the north by threats of shutdowns, lockouts and discharge, are only fleeting shadows compared with the blackness of political injustice in England early in this century. Yes, study England, for there the progress toward political purity has been much more rapid than here.

In the seventeenth century, land then being the chief item of wealth, the rich agricultural sections in the southern part of England were the most densely populated. The parliamentary boros (boroughs) were determined by the crown, and at that time the larger number of such boros were in this rich agricultural section. When the inventions of the eighteenth century made possible those great industries for which England has become famous, the population diminished in the south and greatly increased in the north, but the parliamentary boros remained the same. Some of them became only the estate of some wealthy man, the only voters being himself and his tenants, while the great cities of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, etc., had no representatives at all. What an astonishing condition! Yet it grew so gradually, as evils do, that it became monstrous before it was seriously attacked. Yet the landed aristocracy clung with great tenacity to this inherited privilege, this "vested right." These "rotten boros," as they were appropriately called, were sold openly to the highest bidder, some bringing $50,000 per election when the parties in parliament were about evenly divided. Such gross bribery was defended and contended for by the rich landed aristocracy that benefited by it, they being indifferent to the rights of the many populous cities that were entirely without representation. As a rule, you can count upon the members of a privileged class carrying their consciences in their pockets. Also, as a rule, what are called "vested rights" are vested wrongs. Well, the reform bill of 1832 readjusted parliamentary representation. What would have required a bloody revolution on the continent was done in England by agitation, but the agitation was vigorous and determined, and right prevailed. "A man who owned a boro could usually command a peerage or an embassy for himself, a pension for his wife or an appointment for his son by placing one of the seats at the disposal of the ministry." Here is a glimpse of "the good old times"—good for the few, but the groans of the many still echo in space.

The audacity of "vested interests" is shown by the 200 or 300 rich men who owned the majority of the house of commons, declaring that they did not propose to give up "their property!" Will we ever have to meet such a class of holders of "vested interests?" Of course the "interests" will be in some other form, but the injustice will be just as real. Shall we wait for such a privileged class to voluntarily step aside? If we do, we will never see justice restored. They have to be put aside, either by the bayonet or (preferably) by overwhelming public sentiment, followed by irresistible legal means. Thus it has always been. I would like to hope to see the end of contention and strife, but such a hope is vain. As long as there are privileged classes they will cling with tenacity to their special privilege and claim it as their right. Private banking interests will oppose the establishment of postal savings banks. What are we going to do about it? Which are right, we or they? Have we, the people, a right to establish such an institution, or have the bankers a right to the special privilege of doing all the banking?

We are now paying the railroads about ten times as much per pound for hauling the mail as they charge the express companies for hauling express packages. Judging by a vote in the senate last May, a majority of the senators seem to think this is right. Do you? I suppose the railroads would consider themselves grievously wronged if they were cut down to a reasonable rate—they have been allowed this privilege so long, just like the boro holders. Shall we wait until the railroads voluntarily reduce the rate to a reasonable amount? Do you know how long that would be? The answer is one word, never. Yet if we had reasonable rates from the railroads we could now be enjoying penny postage on letters and rates on packages that the express companies could not compete with. Do we want these changes, or do we want to continue paying private corporations an outrageously high rate for hauling the mail? If you want a change, don't wait for the railroads to make it. Look after the senators whose votes seem to be controlled by the railroads. I can give you their names if you want them—if you will use the information to any purpose.

The reform in England above referred to would have taken place much sooner if the country had not been engaged in foreign wars which attracted the people's attention from important matters at home, and this is the very danger with which we are now confronted. Our recent war with Spain and the acquisition of new and distant territory will if we are not careful take our attention from important domestic matters and bring a season similar to that at the close of the civil war, when corporations gained such a tremendous hold, when the currency was contracted by the burning of the greenbacks in the interest of creditors, and when our contract with the bondholders was changed more than once in the interest of the bondholders. "Government should begin at home." Yes, and it should stay at home. Take care of home interests first. A contemporary very pointedly says: "Go where you will—to congress, legislatures, city councils, executive offices, the bench and the marts of business—and the rich few need more watching than the many poor." No, the poor do not buy legislatures, corrupt judges, congressmen, etc. They patiently toil and uncomplainingly pay the bills, but I complain that they should have more sense, more courage. The designing few will exploit the many as long as the many permit it. Another contemporary says, "It will cost not less than 100 times more to satisfy the bond thieves than it did to whip the Spaniards." And the congressmen that voted for the bonds would vote against postal savings banks. Write to them and see.

Then just think of this: If we had established postal savings banks to receive deposits without interest, enough money would have been deposited to pay the expenses of the Spanish war. The people who would deposit in postal savings banks care more for safety and convenience than for interest. Instead of this we have interest bearing bonds that must run for from 20 to 30 years. Oh, the bondage of bonds! Many of these bonds are already being deposited to secure national bank currency. The bank deposits the bonds and receives 90 per cent of the face of the bonds in national bank notes, which he loans. The bonds still continue to draw interest, and his loans draw interest—that is, double interest. The interest on the bonds ought to stop while so deposited, or I should have a right to deposit the deed for my house, or you the deed for your farm and be permitted to draw a certain percentage of currency—that is, I would coin my house while still continuing to use the same, and you coin your farm, just as the national banker is allowed to coin his bonds, and still collect interest on the bonds. In colonial days land could be thus coined in Pennsylvania, and it was very successful. I am not ready to advocate this system at the present time, but if it is granted to the bondholder it should be granted to the property holder. * * *

While the basis of representation in England was radically reformed in 1832, and thus indirectly much bribery and other forms of corruption were stopped, yet much still existed. In 1854 the first act aimed at this evil was passed. This was aimed at bribery, treating and "undue influence." The bribe takers as well as bribe givers were to be punished, but corrupt practices continued to prevail, and in 1872 the ballot was adopted to take the place of open voting, but still corruption continued. The means of detection were inefficient, and the house adjudicated the cases, just as our house does now, and, as we know, the decision is a partisan one and not according to the evidence. A change of these cases of contested elections and charges of corruption to a purely judicial tribunal materially aided the ends of justice. A similar change here—transfer of contested election cases from the house itself to a judicial court would result in much good. But still corruption in the elections in England prevailed in spite of all these efforts. In 1881 a bill was introduced that struck two deadly blows at corruption. First, it limited by means of a fixed scale the amount that might be spent in elections, requiring a strict and full accounting immediately after an election; second, it rendered detection certain if corrupt practices were indulged in. This was effected chiefly by providing that any election procured by fraud or corrupt practices would be void. No man could sit in parliament if it could be shown that bribery, treating, undue influence or anything else prohibited by the law had been indulged in in his behalf, either by himself or by any of his agents. This provision makes each side the watcher of the other side, and each side must be pure in its own defense. This law went into effect in 1883, and since that time the elections in England have been perhaps purer than those of any other country on the globe, possibly excepting Switzerland, where they have the initiative and referendum. What a glorious victory for law! A magical change from the most corrupt to the most pure. This was done during Mr. Gladstone's premiership and was one of his greatest achievements. Oh, for a Gladstone on this side of the Atlantic!—Dr. C. F. Taylor in Medical World.

British Telephone Investigation.

The committee appointed May, 1898, by the British house of commons to inquire "whether the telephone service is, or is calculated to become, of such general benefit as to justify its being undertaken by municipal and other local authorities," and, if so, to recommend the conditions, has made its report.

The committee unanimously declares that the privately owned system now in use is not of general benefit to the United Kingdom at large or even in those limited portions of it where exchanges exist. Secondly, the committee considers it is unlikely that the service will become a general benefit so long as the present arrangements continue, and it points out the superiority of the service in those countries where public ownership obtains. The rates are higher in England and the accommodations worse. The national telephone has paid 5 per cent dividends that are really 15 per cent on the actual investment. The report advises those municipalities that can afford it to compete with the private monopoly.

THE WHEAT BAROMETER.

The Prosperity Humbug and the Farmer's Condition.

During the past few months much has been said about this year's wheat crop. Last summer certain speculators loudly proclaimed that there would be a shortage, which served to stiffen prices, and there is a strong impression abroad that the government encouraged this view in order to bolster up the prosperity humbug among the bankrupt farmers. Certain it is that the Leiter corner in Chicago, which sent wheat over the $2 mark, afforded Republican prosperity puffers a splendid opportunity to boast, especially in the Oregon contest.

But now all the well known statisticians agree that the wheat crop of this year will break all previous records. Mr. Broomall, the editor of the Liverpool Corn Trade News, recognized as an authority the world over, finds that the grand total of the world's crop for 1898 is 2,607,000,000 bushels, compared with 2,270,000,000 last year, or an increase of 336,000,000 bushels. Adding to this enormous crop the reserve left over from last season, which on Aug. 1 amounted to 112,000,000 bushels at the lowest calculation, the world today possesses 2,719,000,000 bushels of wheat. Mr. Broomall shows that the increase was general in America, Europe, Australia and Africa, and there was a slight falling off only in Asia, amounting to 20,000,000 bushels.

These figures will be a severe blow to the demagogues who promise the agriculturists higher prices and consequently prosperity, for it is one of the ironies of the capitalistic competitive system that the more of a product is placed on the market the greater is the price fall. Of course if the farmers could be organized and could devise some plan to hold their wheat until prices had reached a top notch figure some of them would be benefited. But the farmers—that is, the small farmers at least—cannot hold their crops. In thousands of instances their product is sold before it is reaped or immediately thereafter, as they have pressing obligations to meet. The large farmers, the bonanza kings of the west who can lay wheat down in Chicago at 30 cents per bushel at a profit, are not alarmed because of an "overproduction" in the wheat supply. While the low prices are forcing their small competitors to the wall the bonanza kings are prospering and gobbling up the choicest acreage and adding to their holdings. As in other industrial pursuits, the big fish are swallowing the little ones, and no doubt the census of 1900 will show some startling facts relative to the increase of tenantry and the concentration of land and capital in the agricultural districts.—Cleveland Citizen.

Postal Savings Banks.

Postal savings banks are something that we have been advocating for many years. We believe in them. We are glad to see the government making arrangements to take care of the savings of the people. We do not take much stock in savings banks, even though they pay a little interest. The average citizen is safer in placing his money with the government at no interest, and he will make more money in the long run, because the goverrment is good. We have two or three pinky doodle savings banks in Denver that ought to be shut up, institutions that would not bear investigations, institutions whose investments are of such a character that if they were pressed today to pay could not pay their depositors 20 cents on the dollar. Denver has had much experience in this line, and it seems as if it would be hardly necessary to call the attention of our readers to the importance of patronizing Uncle Sam's postoffice when they have any money to put away in the way of savings.—Denver Road.

U. S. Government Telegraph Lines.

There are 470 miles of telegraph lines in Porto Rico, and these are the property of the government. With the acquisition of the island by the United States they pass into the hands of the American nation, and, for a time at least, government ownership of telegraphs will be a fact in a part of United States territory. Those lines now held by the United States troops are in charge of the telegraphers in the signal service of the United States army. The future of these government lines is not known, but it is probable that the United States will sell them. It is to be remembered that the United States sold its own lines in the infancy of telegraphy to the company which has since become known as the Western Union Telegraph company.—W. M. Handy in New Time.

Who Owns America?

The railroad companies own 215,715,000 acres of land in the United States, which amounts nearly to the combined acreage of land in the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas, that foots up to 216,511,200 acres. Foreigners that do not live in this country own 65,000,000, Murphy of California 5,100,000, Vanderbilt 1,000,000, Dittson of Philadelphia 4,000,000, the Standard Oil company 1,000,000—nearly all of which land has been acquired since the civil war. Thirty-one thousand people own more than one-half of all the wealth of the United States. With a congress and president working for the interests of these few, how long does the reader think it will take these few to own the balance of America?—Kansas Commoner.

The Typical American.

The typical American is a man who permits some other man to so manipulate what is produced by this typical American and other thousands of typical Americans that this one man becomes the possessor of millions of dollars which he never earned and to which he is not entitled. The typical American is lost in admiration of this feat and regards with reverence his despoiler.—Frederick Upham Adams.

WHAT ONE VOTE DID.

The Man Who Neglects to Vote is the Esau of Modern Society.

HARTINGTON, Neb., Oct. 17, 1898.

Editor Independent:

If we are defeated in this campaign, it will be the corn fields that do it. Let every populist vote. In paraphrase of the immortol Nelson, Nebraska expects every man to do his duty. Consider, my friend, the possibilities of a single vote. At the council of war before the battle of Marathon, eleven generals were to decide, by a majority vote, whether or not the Athenians should give battle without waiting for the arrival of the Spartans. Five voted to fight, five voted not to fight. Callimachus had the casting vote, and at the earnest solicitation of Miltiades, voted for battle. Every college-bred man will recollect how graphically the Greek historian Herodotos describes that council of war. The character of modern civilization and destiny of the world was decided by that vote

Aaron Burr, Benjamin F. Wade and Samuel J. Tilden each lacked one vote of being president of the United States. One vote would have made Toombs president of the southern confederacy, instead of Jefferson Davis. At the general election in the state of Massachusetts for the year 1839 held on the 11th of November of that year, Edward Everett received for the office of governor 50,725, Marcus Morton 51,034, all others 307 votes. It then required a majority to elect and as the total vote was 102,066 the number necessary for a choice was 51,034, which Morton received. And so Marcus Morton was elected governor of Massachusetts by one vote.

In 1801 Andrew Jackson was made major general of the militia of Tennessee by the casting vote of Governor Roane. That vote made Jackson.

One of the most prominent members of our last legislature was selected by a single vote.

The most remarkable case I ever knew occurred in my own county. It was in 1891, the first time we elected our commissioners by districts. The vote was not as heavy in that district as it is now, and stood as follows:

Lucien B, Bruner	167
Charles F. Clark	166
John Lorang	165
Total	498

Considering what possibilities lie in a single ballot, he who would sacrifice the sacred prerogative of casting that ballot to harvest 50 bushels of corn 24 hours earlier is a modern Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage.

WILBUR F. BRYANT.

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Dr. Hartman, Columbus, O., will prescribe for fifty thousand women this year free of charge. All women suffering from female troubles or any disease of the mucous membrane, may have Dr. Hartman's private counsel without cost. Send for special question blank for women.

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Certificate of Publication.

OFFICE OF
Auditor of Public Accounts,
State of Nebraska.

Lincoln, Neb., October 14, 1898.

It is hereby certified, that the

Erie Fire Insurance Company,

of Buffalo, in the state of New York,

has complied with the Insurance Law of this State and is authorized to transact the business of Fire Insurance in this State for the current year.

The company has a paid up

Capital of $200,000

and a

SURPLUS OF $349,303.34.

Witness my hand and the seal of the Auditor of Public Accounts the day and year above written.

JOHN F. ADAMS,
(Seal.) Auditor P. A.
SAMUEL LICHTY, Ins. Deputy

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