

POPULAR AMUSEMENT. In the good old days of the country lyceum, when once a week the sturdy farm lad escorted his rosy-cheeked sweetheart to the little school house, and listened to the debaters wrestle with the issues of the hour as though upon the decision of the judges rested the fate of the commonwealth, the question which frequently commanded the attention of the orator was: "Resolved, That United States senators should be elected by direct vote of the people." Looking backward one may see the first speaker for the affirmative side, who, with his store suit, white shirt, and celluloid collar, his boots well greased, hair pasted tight to his forehead, hands dangling uselessly at his sides, looking and feeling extremely idiotic, and wishing that the meeting had never been called to order, opens the debate. We see this future statesman gradually warm up to his work, encouraged by the applause of his friends, and finding much to his surprise that his knees are getting steadily stronger and his voice more under control, and by the time he has been at it fifteen minutes he is flinging out arguments right and left, as though he never did anything else in his life. Just close your eyes and imagine the stuffy little hall, with its red-hot stove roasting every one at one end of the room, and the draught through a broken pane freezing every one at the other. Allow yourself to think of that old familiar scene for a few minutes before you go to sleep tonight, and in dreams you will hear the orator thunder forth in stentorian tones "Honorable judges, there is no more reason why a senator should not be elected by direct vote of the people, than there is why a congressman should not."

When you arise in the morning sort over your daily papers, and there is every chance that you will find that never-varying sentiment in the editorial columns, or, if not to be found there, it will appear in some interview given out by an office holder, or office seeker, who makes his campaign upon that issue, as it is always a popular one. But in spite of the strenuous efforts of the debater and the well rounded speeches of the politician, the senate continues to be chosen by the state legislatures, and will continue to be so chosen simply because the men who comprise that august body well know that they have a good chance to be re-elected under the present system, and the change might jeopardize their position.

But after all that has been said in the district school house for years and years, in spite of the speeches with which congressmen have regaled their

constituencies, the important and significant fact remains that the United States senate is composed of the very best and brainiest men that the country affords; that here there is no place for the ward heeler, or district boss found so frequently in the lower house.

It is set forth that legislatures may be manipulated, but cannot party conventions be also prostituted, and are not elections equally unsatisfactory in this respect? Under the present system, with the parties evenly divided, as they usually are, a few men who have a high conception of what a senator should be, have the power to prevent the election of a shyster, and they almost invariably do so.

In party conventions it is the "vote-getter," not the statesman, who is nominated; at the polls it is the "good fellow," rather than the man of talent who is favored, but senators, as they are now selected, are, with a few notable exceptions, men of whom the country may well be proud. They are the choicest of the choice, the second siftings of the country's statesmanship, the result of the deliberations of state legislatures composed of men who are chosen because they are supposed to possess judgment superior to the rank and file, and who meet and measure the various candidates for senatorial seats—a privilege the average voter does not and cannot enjoy.

FIRST VETO. President Roosevelt has for the first time exercised the executive's prerogative by stamping his disapproval upon an act to purge an ex-soldier of the sin of desertion in the face of the enemy. Congressmen all too frequently use their influence to erase this blot upon the record of men who desire to be placed in a position where they may ask a pension from the government they have never served. This course of proceeding is not only in direct opposition to the purpose and intent of the pension laws, but it is an insult to the faithful soldier of the rebellion to be included in the same class as the man who refused to allow himself to be exposed to a shower of lead, but has no objection to being assaulted with a hail of gold.

A SUPERIOR SYSTEM. The white man boasts of his superiority over the men of darker hue, but ever and anon some savage proves that "a fool may give a wise man counsel." To support this assertion we point to the bush tribe of Central Africa, whose orators are required to stand upon one leg while addressing the council; the speech being abruptly ended the moment the

other foot touches the floor—or ground. Such a simple and effective system of curtailing eloquence and promoting the transaction of serious business, if introduced at Washington, would shorten the sessions of congress about 90 per cent, and relieve the gorge of political buncombe which now burdens the congressional record.

JUDGMENT. There is some talk of placing Senator Gorman in charge of the congressional campaign committee, with a hint that should he prove a success he may be called upon to do a little harmonizing on his own account in the coming presidential campaign. It is now time for the chief objector to let an anxious public know what his next issue of the Comical will state as to Mr. Gorman's availability. Of course the decision will be adverse, but all the main thoroughfares of America's principal cities are thronged with people, who are clamoring to know what the peerless and eminently successful politician and candidate has to say about Gorman. Will he, with his usual acumen, decide that Gorman cannot lead the party forward to a glorious and spectacular defeat such as was achieved in 1900 or 1896?

INDESTRUCTIBLE WEALTH. Fire destroyed the \$50,000 plant of the Fremont (Neb.) Tribune, probably the most complete and valuable newspaper equipment to be found in a city of that size in the world. To many men this loss would have been irreparable but to Hammond Bros. it is merely an item. The three-story brick building is in ruins, the machinery warped and useless, the type melted and mingled with the ashes of thousands of dollars worth of stock paper, but the business credit, the reputation for honesty and integrity, of the Hammond brothers is unimpaired; it is an indestructible reserve fund ever at hand in case of necessity; a part of the capital stock which can now be branded "time tried and fire tested." The Tribune plant will arise from the ruins, not because its owners have money on deposit or tangible possessions upon which to draw, but because they are known near and far as men of honor, and supply houses everywhere are telegraphing their willingness to furnish them with new goods to an unlimited extent. This is a cheap sort of fire insurance; it is a policy which every business man can hold without cost; it is a reserve fund which cannot be lost, burned or stolen, and the moral is—be honest.

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