

binding than mere church affiliation. Instead of a perfunctory ecclesiastic, he was a servant of those who worship in spirit and in truth. This species of ministerial service necessarily called him into the social field of influence. He was none of your pulpiteers who "preach the gospel" to the exclusion of economic justice—as if the one could by any possibility exclude the other. He preached social no less than individual righteousness as two phases of the same thing. At the coffin side of this preacher, loved by his congregation and respected by his community, there gathered last week by hundreds men and women of many shades of religious opinion. There were Catholics and Jews and numerous varieties of Protestant, from the strictly orthodox to extreme free-thinkers—all inspired by a common religious impulse from that second great commandment which is essentially "like unto the first." While among the living, such a man may seem to fail in comparison with the one who gathers gold with a muck rake; but when such men die we realize that they have been "drinking in the glory of the stars."

+ +

Undebatable Items of Betterment.

Collier's proposes a "magazine syndicate of social service," to focus power on a program of social betterment, and suggests five "undebatable items" to begin with. Doesn't Collier's realize that a program of social betterment consisting of undebatable items would be either unthinkable or impotent? Social reform which doesn't arouse opposition, disturbs no parasitical interests; and social reform which disturbs no parasitical interests doesn't make for social betterment.

+ +

Side Party Voting.

The tendency of side parties to stick at some low percentage of the popular vote (pp. 771, 776) is exemplified again in the official returns from the Presidential election. With the Prohibition party it is an old story; but the Socialists, distinguishing their parties from all other side parties, have looked forward to steady growth only to find that the influences that make side parties impossible in this country apply as well to theirs, with its infallible doctrines, its cock-sure place in the current of history, and its international connections, as to the Populist party and the Prohibition party. When elections are by pluralities, as in this country, instead of majorities, as on the continent of Europe, no new party can get or hold its own strength unless it springs at once into first or second place, no matter how meritorious

its organization nor how popular its principles. That a very large proportion of the voters of this country are prohibitionists, as firmly attached to the idea of coercive teetotalism as the Socialists to their class-conscious shibboleth, no one can doubt; and yet the Prohibition party polls a pitiful percentage of the popular vote—a percentage that hardly varies from election to election. Nor can any one doubt that the socialistic sentiment of this country is enormously greater than is implied by the Socialist vote—both Socialist parties included—of barely 3 per cent. The most conservative estimate of the Socialist party vote before election—the really thoughtful estimate of the International Socialist review for October—put the aggregate at 676,500. If there were any reason to hope for the growth of the party this would have been a small increase under the circumstances. But the actual vote, according to the highest report, falls 225,000 short of that estimate. It falls almost as low as the vote of four years ago. The only real hope for third party voting is the majority system, with its second elections at which the two highest candidates at the first elections are the only candidates. This system removes the voter's fear of "losing his vote" if he gives it to a side party, and until that fear is removed no side party can command anything like its own true strength. The Socialist party is evidently no exception to this historic rule.

+ + +

HAVE WE A DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

We may well thank God that there is a democracy in this country, but no citizen who has a fair knowledge of practical politics can thank him that there is a Democratic party; for there is no Democratic party—there never was a Democratic party, and there never will be one until the unorganized Democracy organizes and refuses to be ruled by an oligarchy.

The Democracy has always been led by the nose (except now and then when it has balked), and that is the way it will be led so long as it continues to ignore the methods of democracy and to delude itself with the idea that a Democratic party can be brought into existence and be kept alive by an oligarchy.

Any political party whose purpose is to promote democratic government will fail in its mission unless it is itself ruled by democratic methods. This is a truth the great Democrats of the past did not realize—a truth to which Democratic leaders of today must open their eyes or else accomplish little. The voters of the party are sovereigns of the party,

and no man nor set of men can promote democracy by usurping that sovereignty. A Democratic party cannot employ oligarchic methods and continue to be democratic. It must of necessity employ the methods of democracy, and those only; for its platforms must be the consensus of its voters, and its acts must be controlled by their deliberative will.

A Democratic party would itself be a democracy—a model democracy. It would be alert to employ methods that would promote the democracy of its own government. In the use of such methods it would lead the civil government, rather than follow it. It would use the initiative and referendum to build its platforms. Its voters would elect its officers, and have power to “recall” them. Its representative officers would represent constituencies and not territories. The voting power of each representative would be proportioned to the number of his constituents. And it would have in use yet other methods of democracy, now known to but few.

But instead of such a party, what do we behold? An organized oligarchy! A miserable manipulator of votes! A predatory band that dresses and parades in democratic garb to cheat the democracy out of its political power! Contemptible pretenders, so inconsistent with democracy, and so false to “government of the people; by the people, for the people,” that plutocrats, cunningly painting the treachery of these oligarchs as the folly of Democratic voters, have made Democracy an object of contempt and derision!

Is it not plain, my good fellow Democrat, that it is utter folly to hope to promote democracy by means of an oligarchy? “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” And may we not very positively assert that if the so-called Democratic party had been ruled by its voters instead of its ringsters, it never could have been symbolized as an ass?

ASHER GEO. BEECHER.

+ + +

“SHALL THE PEOPLE RULE?”

When Mr. Bryan sounded the slogan, “Shall the people rule?” there was clearly the presupposition that the American people are not self-governed, that the will of the majority fails to find free and untrammelled political expression. In the face of as great a defeat as Mr. Bryan met in his first campaign as standard bearer of his party, does there still remain any substance or significance in the denial of that dictum? Do the people rule?

Surface indications affirm the people’s political sovereignty, while material results have seemingly added new strength and prestige to the victorious

party. However, if there are ten thousand men who supported Mr. Bryan and who now vaguely believe that the people do rule, there are millions more who still believe that the people do not rule; that while the election of a large majority of Presidential electors on the Republican ticket is a political puzzle which cannot be easily unraveled, confusing and disquieting as it has been, there are causes, not fanciful but clear and true, which subtly influenced a majority of men in giving their support to Mr. Taft, even while their sympathies were with Mr. Bryan, and who in their hearts would have secretly rejoiced at his success. A paradox indeed. But is it true?

The American people are not morally or politically corrupt, however strongly is surging through the body politic the venous blood of the politician, and the leaven of corrupting influences working in social and economic life. What, then, is the answer?

+

In the last years of the past century one of the clearest visioned of men left this message to his countrymen and to his fellow-men in all lands:

The power of a special interest, though inimical to the general interest, so to influence common thought as to make fallacies pass as truths, is a great fact, without which neither the political history of our own time and people nor that of other times and peoples can be understood. A comparatively small number of individuals brought into virtual though not necessarily formal agreement of thought and action by something that makes them individually wealthy without adding to the general wealth, may exert an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. A special interest of this kind is, to the general interests of society, as a standing army is to an unorganized mob. It gains intensity and energy in its specialization, and in the wealth it takes from the general stock finds power to mold opinion. Leisure and culture and the circumstances and conditions that command respect accompany wealth, and intellectual ability is attracted by it. On the other hand, those who suffer from the injustice that takes from the many to enrich the few, are in that very thing deprived by the leisure to think, and the opportunities, education and graces necessary to give their thought acceptable expression. They are necessarily the “unlettered,” the “ignorant,” the “vulgar,” prone in the consciousness of weakness to look up for leadership and guidance to those who have the advantages that the possession of wealth can give.

Now, if we consider it, injustice and absurdity are simply different aspects of incongruity. That which to right reason is unjust must be to right reason absurd. But an injustice that impoverishes the many to enrich the few shifts the centers of social power, and thus controls the social organs and agencies of opinion and education. Growing in strength and acceptance by what it feeds on, it has only to continue to exist to become at length so