

foremost an Englishman — “the last Englishman of the United States — yet the first American”. His qualities, motives, and actions are presented as primarily English, and the author goes so far as to say that, once the Revolution was over and the leveling Democrats were in sway, “there was no place for such a man in the New America”. He emphasizes Washington’s isolation in the Republic he founded, his bewilderment at seeing everything going wrong and his own good name reviled, refers to that terrible day when in his own beloved Virginia — which had almost always given him his least support — a toast was drunk at a large dinner “to the speedy death of General Washington”. Those were the black days when mobs threatened to lynch him, and Congress threatened to impeach him for embezzling public funds and trying to make himself a king. But still he followed what he thought was the right path for the people’s leader, and though his temper exploded, he never bowed to the storm.

The chief fault I find with Bedoyere’s estimate is an underrating of Washington’s genius because it did not express itself in more picturesque gestures and language. But the very avoidance of the spectacular was part of his earthy grandeur, his mountainous monotony of immovable justice as he saw it. Americans will shudder at some of Bedoyere’s icy estimates of Washington as a man of commonplace mind and character, but even if these are accepted at their face value, there remain the glory and the wonder of his achievement, the chastity of his patriotism, the majesty of the fabric he so largely wove and saved, protected and projected into the future. Incidentally, the book is full of charming and unexpected tributes to him, vivid and witty presentations of the national and international picture, and

a fine calm sanity. It is a book that can be recommended to every American as a wholesome corrective to his usual diet of partisan history.



Concerning Honest Politicians

BY FRANK R. KENT

THE POLITICIAN: HIS HABITS, OUT-
CRIES AND PROTECTIVE COLOR-
ING, by J. H. Wallis. \$3. 6 x 9; 331 pp.
New York: *Stokes*.

BOSS RULE, by J. T. Salter. \$2.50. 5¼ x
8¼; 270 pp. New York: *Whittlesey House*.

THERE are several reasons why books on practical politics rarely ring the bell. One is because so many of them are written by academic individuals who have no actual experience and therefore no accurate knowledge of politics — for example, professors. Hence, their most profound observations are often ridiculous and their basic premises not to be relied upon. A second reason is that politics is a game for the playing of which no rules can be laid down, and politicians are a people impossible to classify. It is curious that certain fixed beliefs about politicians, not at all borne out by facts, have become so universally accepted. One which most of the theoretical political authorities particularly cherish, and which permeates the smug ranks of the better-grade business and professional men, is that successful politicians must be crooked. With most people this idea can be described as a basic belief. Of course, it is not so. There are today from three-quarters to a million men and women in the United States who can correctly be called politicians, who hold jobs or are identified one way or another with the two major political parties. Far be it

from me to contend they are all honest. I know better than that. None the less, the percentage of decency, honor, and intelligence, I contend, is not less among them than in the non-political world. There are shysters, thieves, fourflushers, corner-cutters, trimmers, time-servers, and humbugs in politics. But so are there in every other business and profession. It is all a matter of proportion and, shocking though it may seem to some, my earnest contention is that, upon the whole, politics does not suffer in comparison, for example, with either business or the law.

The chief reason for this is a simple one—publicity. The proportion of private crookedness which finds its way into print is small. This is not a discourse upon the depravity of the human race, but it is, nevertheless, a well-known fact that there isn't a great corporation or any kind of business or financial institution which does not have its share of large or small thefts. Amazingly few of these are publicized. There is a general conspiracy of silence about them. It is to the interests of both the bonding companies and the corporations to keep them quiet. In an astonishingly large number of cases, partial restitution is followed by no prosecution. It works just the other way with political stealings. With them, there are two great agencies that work for publicity—one, the newspapers, always alert for a sensation; the other, the opposition party, ever keen to expose its opponents' wickedness. Combined, these two agencies form a powerful deterrent to the political wrongdoer, and a great incentive to the man who plays straight. It is extremely difficult to hide the facts from them, and once they have the facts, it is impossible to keep them from being sensationalized to the limit. And, of course, there is vastly more public interest in even a small political theft than in a

large private one. And that, in my judgment, is sound and right. The net result is that there are proportionately fewer thieveries in public life than in private business. Most posted persons will concede this fact which, I submit, makes absurd the general attitude toward political crookedness. Bad as it is, we must not lose our sense of proportion about it.

But that, it seems to me, is exactly what the author of at least one of two recent books on politics has done. *The Politician: His Habits, Outcries, and Protective Coloring*, by J. H. Wallis, is wholly founded on the assumption that the only way to succeed in politics is to be a faker. The other book, *Boss Rule—Portraits in City Politics*, by J. T. Salter, is down another alley, it is true. It deals with the organization workers and division leaders rather than with the breast-beating, candidatorial boys seeking elective office. But something of the same belief is discernible in it too. However, as Professor Salter appears to have gotten most of his material from observation and contact with members of the old Vare machine in Philadelphia, perhaps it is too much to expect him to have found politics fragrant.

It would be difficult to find two books written more differently. Mr. Wallis at all times uses the light touch, or tries to. He is satirical, sardonic, somewhat laboriously humorous, and starts out with the determination of showing that the whole bloody business of politics is phony, that all politicians are frauds, and that the voters are saps. He holds this note clear to the end, never lets up on it for a second, through more than 300 large pages. Toward the middle it begins to be slightly repetitious. . . . Professor Salter, on the other hand, writes in grim earnest, with the sole idea of conveying information. For two years or so he lived among the

Philadelphia politicians, notebook in hand. Conscientious and sincere, he seems to have confined himself to meeting and knowing the various division leaders, and presents the facts about them in a series of sketches without any real information as to exactly how they played their particular politics. Toward the last, the Professor goes Wisconsin and New Deal in a big way, which somewhat spoils the judicial tone of the earlier pages. He recommends a literacy test, the short ballot, permanent registration, the City Manager plan, proportional representation, and an effective merit system — not a new or startling program and one which is not apt to be realized in the near future. His is not an exciting book, and the only thing it has in common with Mr. Wallis' effort is that both authors claim Machiavelli as their model.

This seems justified in the case of Mr. Wallis, who tries throughout to look at the politician in the way Machiavelli looked at the Prince. His thesis is the insincerity, cowardice, and humbuggery of the candidates for office. To prove his points the author has gathered an amazing lot of data, and the book teems with quotations from speeches and letters. Much of this undoubtedly demonstrates Mr. Wallis' points, and he proves up to the hilt the dreadful fakery, lack of conviction, and general spuriousness of a considerable number of fairly well-known men in both political parties, some dead, but quite a few still alive — some in very high office, indeed. The wealth of material Mr. Wallis has dredged up in uncovering the fakers should have the effect of diminishing, to some extent at least, that sort of thing in the future. By helping the voters to see through the false pretenses of the candidates and to understand exactly how hollow is their praise of racial heroes and how utterly insincere their form letters to

the leaders of various classes and groups, Mr. Wallis may promote candor and lessen hypocrisy. It is too bad his book had to go to press before the famous "copy cat" letter of President Roosevelt to the clergy was disclosed as having first been written as a circular by Governor Philip La Follette of Wisconsin for his own local purposes. Mr. Wallis would have loved that incident. It would have proved his point better than anything else.

It seems fair to say that Mr. Wallis could hardly have written *The Politician* at all had it not been for the late Huey Long of Louisiana, Big Bill Thompson of Chicago, Ex-Mayor John F. Hylan of New York, Ex-Senator Thomas J. Heflin of Alabama, and the Honorable Hamilton Fish of New York, who the author predicts will be nominated for the Presidency at least once before 1948. He does not refer to Grover Cleveland, Carter Glass, Harry F. Byrd, Albert C. Ritchie, Dwight F. Morrow, John W. Davis, Frederick C. Walcott, John Sharp Williams, or any one of a lot of other Democrats and Republicans, alive or dead, whose courage, character, and sincerity has never been questioned. To have brought them in would have spoiled the book.



A Voice from the Death House

By LEWIS E. LAWES

WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE, by David Lamson. \$2.50. 5½ x 8¼; 338 pp. New York: Scribner's.

THE varied and vivid impressions of a great American prison, recounted in this book with sustained dramatic intensity by a narrator of considerable literary ability, constitute an important con-