

The New Political Era.

It is universally recognized that the American people have entered on a new era in their political history, but it is not so generally perceived that they have entered on a new era in the history of the world; yet such is really the case. For twenty-five hundred years the chief interest of political history has lain in the struggle on the part of the people to gain freedom and political power, and it is only in our own time that this struggle seems approaching its end. Beginning in the cities of ancient Greece, the conflict raged with varying success through the whole of the prosperous period of ancient history, until the liberties of all nations were crushed by the world-wide empire of Rome. Then, as the modern nations emerged from the darkness of the middle ages, the same great struggle had to be entered on anew; and after the lapse of centuries, and after labors and martyrdoms untold, the contest has at last resulted in the substantial triumph of the popular cause. In half-barbarous Russia, indeed, the people's cause has made little headway, and even in Germany and Austria its success is far from complete; but throughout the greater portion of the European world the full establishment of free government is only a question of time.

Meanwhile the people of the United States, having inherited the liberties and the popular institutions of the leading free state of Europe, and having left behind them the feudal and monarchical establishments of the Old World, have carried the principles of popular government to their extreme and logical conclusion, and have reached a condition of things in which nothing remains to be done to extend the liberties or increase the political power of the masses of the people. The extinction of negro slavery and the conferring of the right of suffrage on the emancipated slaves were the final steps, so far as we are concerned, in the long-continued struggle for freedom and human rights; and there is nothing in our politics or our social condition now to indicate that the ground thus won will ever again be lost.

Now that the people have got their freedom, what will they do with it? and how will they succeed in the task they have undertaken of governing the world?

It is one thing to gain political power and keep it when it is gained, and quite another thing to wield it in accordance with wisdom and justice. It has, at all times, been asserted by the opponents of popular government that, even if the people were successful in getting control of affairs, they were wholly incompetent to conduct them even in their own best interest, and instances are not wanting to give some support to this assertion. There have been free governments that were by no means a success, and in ancient times, particularly, many a state, after winning both freedom and glory, lost its freedom by corruption or eternal dissension, and its glory departed with it. We Americans, however, are in little danger of losing our freedom, and what we have now to do is to use our freedom and our power so as to promote the highest good; this it is that makes the opening era so different from all the eras that have gone before, and renders it at once so interesting and so important. The difficulties that lie before us are neither few nor small, and we are beginning to realize that the task that is laid upon us is not going

to be so easy as thoughtless American patriots have sometimes supposed.

There are two points to which we would call attention as likely to be of special importance in the politics of this country and of every civilized state where popular government exists. There is one abuse against which we shall have to guard, and one requirement we shall have to meet if our attempt at self-government is to be a full success.

In the first place, we have to protect ourselves against extortion at the hands of our rulers and of men in private life in collusion with them. The leading abuse in our public affairs to-day is the use of political power and influence to make money out of the people and to plunder the public under the forms of law; and unless we can put an end to this, in great part at least, we shall have gained much less than we ought by our political freedom. The evil appears in various shapes, and under many disguises, and its worst forms are not always those most obvious to the careless eye. We need not dwell here on the various schemes by which the people are defrauded. The reckless system of subsidies and land grants, the making of fraudulent contracts, the river and harbor jobbery, are familiar to us all, yet these are far surpassed in deleterious influence by the unjust privileges often granted to corporate bodies, and by that great system of monopoly known as protection to native industry—a system which, whatever may have been its earlier uses, is now constantly invoked in the interests of the few against those of the many. In all these ways, and many more, the American people are plundered for the benefit of a favored few.

Yet it will not be an easy task to make the people understand how some of these things affect them. Nevertheless, the people must be enlightened and the abuses be brought to an end, lest the gain of our liberty be followed by the loss of our property, and we come at last under a new tyranny scarcely less fatal than the old.

Again, the times demand, and the country will have to supply, a more scientific system of legislation than that which now prevails, if our government is to keep pace with the progress of civilization. It may be said, perhaps, that the world has not had much perfect legislation in ages past, and that the democracies that are now taking charge of affairs can hardly govern worse than the monarchies and aristocracies that have gone before them. But then, the democracies ought to govern better than the class governments of the past, and besides, the need of scientific legislation is now greater than ever before, owing to the vast development of industry, the greater freedom of action now enjoyed by all classes of men, and the great and increasing complexity of social relations. The democracies must supply this need or fail in their self-appointed task of governing the world. Such are some of the problems that lie before us in the new political era, and it is evident that their solution will demand both higher governing capacity and greater purity of character in the actual holders of power, as well as a higher level of intelligence among the people at large, than have been found heretofore in any nation of the world. The recent enactment looking to a reform in the Civil Service (referred to in the preceding article), is a step in the right direction—but it is only a step.

Sunday Rest.

THERE are two solid grounds on which Sunday laws rest: one, the right of the prevailing religion of the country (be it Jewish, Christian, or Pagan) to have its day of worship free from disturbance; and the other, the right of every man to an equal share in a rest-day from toil.

As regards the first, if this country were a Jewish country the Jewish worship on Saturday should be peculiarly protected from molestation. If it were a Mohammedan country, the Friday should be in like manner protected. This is simple common sense applied to things as they are, and no action of doctrinaire theory. Where there is a conflict of sacred days, as among Jew, Christian, and Mohammedan, all cannot be protected, and hence the majority must determine the question. This certainly distinguishes the sacred day, but does no harm to those who do not count it sacred. It only obliges them to be courteous. The inequality in the matter is only such as in some things must obtain among the freest people.

As regards the second ground: physiologists, physicians, statisticians, and sensible observers in general, have agreed that man's body and mind need a complete rest at an interval of about seven days. But man will not take that rest from labor unless he is obliged by law to do so. His greed for gain will make him ruin health in his own case, or (worse still) make him force his employes to ruin theirs by continuous work. The law, therefore, must make and enforce a rest-day. But what day shall it take? Again: common sense says, "Take the day which the mass of the community, from religious reasons, already regard as a rest-day." So the civil law, providing for men's physical well-being, appoints and enforces a rest-day from labor, which is the same day on which the great Christian community worship, and in which the same law, for other reasons, protects them in worship.

There is the whole of the Sunday question in a nutshell. There is no compelling men to be religious, no supporting a state church, no puritanical blue-law. The Jew, or Mohammedan, or Pagan simply must not make a boisterous demonstration, such as a noisy parade, on Sunday. Why? Because the vast majority of the people see fit to worship on that day. The Jew, or Mohammedan, or Pagan must not keep open shop that day. Why? Because the people have decreed a rest-day from labor once a week to help humanity, and that is the day.

The only objection that has any color in it is that the Jew then must keep two rest-days in the week, and hence is at a disadvantage with his neighbor. Well, as we have already said, in the most equal administrations, there must, in the nature of things, be some inequality. Laws, for example, require a notice of "danger" to be put up in dangerous places in the city; but, alas! blind men cannot read the notices. The laws are unequal to the blind man. They have to be. So here the Jew's conscience tells him to keep from working Saturday. The law tells him to keep from working Sunday. It is a pity; but it cannot be helped. The other alternative would be "no rest-day," and that would be destructive to the whole community. We must all bear some burdens for the public good.

Our American liberties are largely connected with the weekly day of rest. This day has given the people time to think, and read, and enjoy family life, and without it we should have become an ignorant, brutish, machine-people, like the low peasantry of Continental Europe. Take away this rest-day, and you undermine our high moral and educational condition as a people. You turn us into a nation of mere "workies." The cry of religious oppression, as against Sunday observance, is a device of the enemy. It is but the voice of soulless corporations, and of the proprietors of drinking-saloons and other demoralizing places, who wish to make their great gains on Sunday, and care nothing for the welfare and happiness of the people. They are the oppressors, and the advocates of a day of rest are the staunch supporters of a true freedom.

America has three bulwarks of liberty—a free ballot, a free school, and a free Sunday, and neither domestic treachery nor foreign impudence should be permitted to break them down.

Stealing a Minister.

THE great deep of Protestant ecclesiasticism is often vexed by no small tempest of talk about the relations of vacant churches to settled pastors. It frequently happens that a clergyman, supposed to be happily and permanently located, is called away from his work to a new field of labor, amid loud complaints of the injury done to the church left pastorless. Even when a decorous silence is maintained before the public, there is often not a little suppressed resentment; and the opinion that no church has a right to disturb a settled pastor by calling him into its service finds angry expression. The act is denounced as a species of larceny, and laws to punish the crime of stealing a minister are feelingly invoked. Several flagrant cases of this sort have recently occurred, arousing unwonted ire in the breasts of staid parishioners, and no week passes that does not witness griefs of this nature in some part of the land. The ethics of this relation deserve, therefore, a little careful study. It is a subject in which good Methodists are supposed to have no interest.

Without doubt it is a hardship that a church should be deprived, for any reason, of the services of a teacher to whom it has become attached, and who seems to be contented and successful in his work. The wish to be protected against such a loss is one which the members of a church naturally entertain. But the question has two sides, and the irate church whose pulpit has just been emptied is not apt to see more than one of them. The welfare of the minister, as well as of the church, must be considered. Now, it is unquestionable that the welfare of the minister sometimes requires him to change his field of labor. A life-long pastorate may be the ideal, but it is impossible, in many cases, to realize it. A change is sometimes demanded, not chiefly for an increase of salary, but for relief from burdens of labor and care that have grown intolerable, or to preserve health and power of work. In these exacting times, when the pulpit must grapple with so many great questions, and when the condition of power is wide and constant study, this necessity frequently occurs. There are ministers who,