

## THE REALLY SERIOUS MATTER.

THE fortnight which has elapsed since the election has been devoted very largely, by those who care anything about politics, to speculation as to the cause of the Democratic defeat. Of course, the conclusions reached on this subject are numerous and varied, and not one of them would probably meet with anything like general acceptance. But with regard to two important phenomena of the contest, there is, we think, an almost general agreement. One is, that the Republican victory did not come from the quarter from which it was generally expected—the operatives and mechanics of the great manufacturing centres: their alarm over the effect of a reduction of the tariff on wages did not influence the result. The other is, that money was used in this election with a profusion never before known on American soil. Some of the estimates place the Republican outlay at \$3,000,000, none put it lower than \$1,000,000. The former estimate derives much support from the fact that the Committee demanded \$400,000 in the last week of the campaign. When this sum was needed to finish up the work, we are warranted in inferring that \$2,500,000, at least, was needed to carry it on during the preceding three months.

How much the Democrats used we cannot say. We are not raising this discussion in their interest or for their vindication. But they undoubtedly were able to get very much less than the Republicans, because they had no wealthy class to call on which had, or thought it had, an immense pecuniary interest in the result. The Democrats, perhaps, did as well as they could in the same line, but their best was comparatively feeble; for it must be said, to the credit of the Administration, that assessments were not extorted from the Government officers, and although the President set a very bad example by a large contribution, voluntary offerings were, as usual, small and rare. We are not, therefore, attempting to compare the morality of the two parties. We are simply calling the attention of patriotic Americans to the fact that enormous sums of money, greater than ever before, were at this last election put into the hands of men noted for their unscrupulousness about means, and were used for the purpose, in some way or other, of deciding who should be the next President of the United States. It is no exaggeration to say that the election came nearer than any which has preceded it to being the sale of the Government at public auction to the party able to "put up" most money. Nor is it an exaggeration to say that all the tendencies of the day are in this direction—that in politics, as in morals, the first foe in the field is the belief or disposition to believe that a rich man ought to have his way. It was thought a "big thing" when Jay Gould gave \$50,000 to "Johnny" O'Brien in aid of Blaine in 1884. We believe a gift of a similar amount in the late canvass would have been considered a comparative trifle. The world marches on every side towards heavier expenditure. In a village near New York

there are seventy-five colored voters who have always hitherto disposed of their votes for two dollars apiece: this year they insisted on five dollars apiece, and, we believe, got it. They felt the buoyancy in the market almost as soon as the canvass opened.

There is nothing particularly new about all this. In the politics of all countries, under a popular government, rich men buy votes and poor men sell them, if the law permits it to be done secretly and with impunity. There is not a single modern State the government of which would not be periodically sold to the highest bidder, as the Roman Empire was occasionally, if there were no legal difficulties in the way of such transactions. In England the traffic in votes, and even in seats in Parliament, was, before the Reform Bill was passed, almost as open as the traffic in cattle; and the practice of purchasing closely divided constituencies, or "doubtful States," as we call them, continued with more or less activity down to the passage of the Parliamentary Elections Act in 1883. It was checked somewhat by the transfer of the trial of contested seats from the Committee of the House of Commons to the judges of the law courts, but it was not finally stopped until all candidates, and all committees or agents acting in their behalf, were compelled to publish a full and sworn account, with vouchers, of their receipts and expenditures. The law prescribes exactly what the legitimate expenses of a canvass are, and provides the voter, not only with the ballot, but with absolute secrecy in casting it.

These precautions are called for, not by anything peculiar in the condition either of England or America: they are called for by human nature itself, as it is known to us in every country, and will continue to be called for in every country which has not deliberately decided to be governed by a plutocracy. Whenever that determination is reached, however, the machinery of elections will be unnecessary. When the legal term of the party in power has expired, all that will be necessary will be to call for sealed proposals for the possession of the Government during the next term, to be opened on a prescribed day, and the Administration to be handed over to the candidate offering most money. This would be moral and decent compared to our present system of hole-and-corner bribery and corruption.

In the meantime, we would warn those who believe in the old-fashioned American plain of carrying elections by persuasion, by lectures, by speeches, by articles, by appeals to the reason, or even to the passions and prejudices of men, through voice and pen; who look back with tenderness to the days when the only great men in politics were orators and statesmen, and find it hard to accept the dispensers of funds as the real heroes of a Presidential canvass, that an evil of this sort is one which grows with wonderful rapidity, and that as it grows it weakens the public sentiment on which, in the last resort, we must rely for its cure. As long as no active measures are taken to check it, the distributors of "soap" will smile more and more at the activity of the distributors of documents.

## THE REMEDY FOR VOTE-BUYING.

THE theory that a secret ballot is the surest as well as the simplest remedy for bribery at the polls, is strongly sustained by all the many accounts which have been published concerning the methods by which both political parties bought votes in the recent national election. In every instance, the chief concern of the briber was to keep a close watch upon the man whom he had bribed until his ballot was deposited. Colonel Dudley was most emphatic upon this point in his famous letter: "Divide the floaters into blocks of five, and put a trusted man with necessary funds in charge of these five, and make him responsible that none get away and that all vote our ticket." The limit of five was put because that was the largest number one man could hold under such constant surveillance that no change of ballots could be made without detection. Another Indiana plan which has been described by a county committeeman was even more careful than this: "When we had secured a voter, we took him to the polls and sent him to our worker, who stood at the window. The worker handed the voter a ticket, and *saw him* give it to the judge of election." It was only after this that the money was paid over.

In New York city it has for many years been the custom of the bribers to require the man whose vote has been bought, to walk to the polls with the folded ballots which have been given to him held erect in the air, with the hand about shoulder-high, where they can be seen every moment by the watcher until they are deposited in the boxes. It is not an unusual thing in many of the worst districts of the city to see squads of men, ranging from five to ten in number, marching to the polls with their ballots thus held in view. In all the accounts of bribery which come from the New England States and from the interior and other portions of New York State, there is the same testimony on this point—the briber never allows the bribed voter to be a moment out of his sight after he has received his ballot and has started for the polls. The "bull-fence" device in some parts of Indiana is evidence on the same point. As described by one of its inventors, in the account published in the *Evening Post* of Monday, it "is a curved chute made of a high fence that leads up to the polls on one side and away from them on the other," and its object is to "give our men a chance to change their ballots on the way to the polls and not get caught at it"—that is, one party buys a number of the other party's voters, furnishes them with ballots, takes them to the polls, and starts them into the chute towards the ballot-boxes. "But," says the narrator, "at the moment when they are out of sight in the chute they slip that ballot into their pockets, slip out the ballot of their own party, and hand it to the election officers without any one having seen the change made."

All this furnishes conclusive evidence that if the act of voting were performed in secret no bribed voter could or would be trusted to

carry out his bargain when left to himself, without possibility of detection at the polls. This has been found to be the case in Australia and England, and, in fact, wherever the secret ballot has been put into practice. It is the unanimous testimony of all English authorities that it is the secrecy provision, rather than the rigorous provisions of the law against bribery of all kinds, which has abolished bribery at the polls in Great Britain. Speaking on this point when he was in this country last year, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain said:

"In my opinion there is at the present moment exceedingly little electoral bribery and corruption in the United Kingdom. The elections are singularly pure, and are daily, if it were possible, improving in that respect. Corruption, indeed, is almost an impossibility, owing to the fact that the briber is absolutely dependent upon the bribe-taker's observance of the motto, 'Honor among thieves,' for the briber has no means of ascertaining how the latter votes. This is due to the secrecy in which the ballots are cast, so very different from here, where the voter practically casts his vote in public."

Yet before the English law requiring a secret ballot went into effect, bribery had reached proportions there far in excess of what we have ever witnessed here, even in the late election. The secrecy requirement abolished it completely; for while, under the former system, there had been enormous expenditures of money, and charges of bribery sometimes affecting nearly one hundred seats, in every Parliamentary election, at the first election under the new law the expenditures dropped from \$15,000,000 to less than \$4,000,000, and there were only two charges of bribery made, and at the second election under it the expenditures fell off still more, and there was not a single charge of corrupt or illegal practice.

Sooner or later we must have in every State a reform in our election laws based upon secrecy in voting as the fundamental principle. It exists now in the Wisconsin law which went into operation in the city of Milwaukee last spring, and has worked with great success there; but it applies nowhere else in the State. It exists also in the new Massachusetts law which will go into effect next January, and will apply to the whole State. Experience has shown that secrecy is as imperative in the rural districts as in the cities, for the growth of bribery at the polls has been quite as alarming in the former as in the latter. There are signs of a greatly increased public sentiment in favor of the reform; and whether it is strong enough to compel the politicians to grant it this year or next, it is certain to become so before many years have passed.

#### THE SALOON IN POLITICS.

THE candidacy of David B. Hill for Governor of New York as the champion of the saloons was so open and flagrant an exhibition of subservience to the liquor interest, and its effect upon the national election was so obvious, that the public is in danger of overlooking some other manifesta-

tions of the same influence in politics which are hardly less important. This tendency is strengthened by the fact that Republicans find party advantage in fixing attention upon the discredit which the Democrats of this State brought upon their organization throughout the country by yielding to the demand of the saloons for Gov. Hill's renomination, and thus claiming that the Democratic party is always and everywhere the liquor party.

But the idea that the saloons are Democratic any more than Republican in politics, or that the liquor interest cares anything for politics at all, except as it can make either party serve its ends, is altogether wrong, as has been proved by elections held in other States. We have more than once referred to the fact that, while the Republicans of New York were inveighing against the Democrat, David B. Hill, as the friend of the saloons, the Republicans of Connecticut were trying to elect to the Governorship of that State Morgan G. Bulkeley, who has long been equally notorious among his neighbors as the friend of the saloons. The saloons of Connecticut, without regard to party, were as stoutly opposed to the Democratic candidate for Governor of that State as the saloons of New York were to the Republican candidate for Governor of this State.

Still more striking was the influence of the saloon in the politics of Missouri. This is a State long controlled by the Democrats, and where, according to the theory of New York Republicans, one would expect to find the liquor interest controlling the Government through the Democratic party. On the contrary, Missouri was one of the first States to accept the doctrine of high license, a law of that sort having passed the Legislature several years ago and been maintained against all attempts to weaken it. In the chief city of the State a Democratic Mayor, David R. Francis, has enforced the Sunday Closing Law, and secured St. Louis the quietest Sundays it has ever known. In short, Democracy has given Missouri, and particularly its metropolis, a severer restriction of the liquor evil than Republicanism has brought about in Ohio, and especially in Cincinnati, where a Republican Mayor obstinately refused to enforce the Sunday Law passed by the last Legislature.

With the same impartiality in the matter of parties as was exhibited in New York and Connecticut, the saloons in Missouri waged war upon their enemy. Mr. Francis having been nominated for Governor by the Democrats, the saloons of St. Louis, which are chiefly beer-saloons, threw their whole influence against him, and carried the city for the Republicans by a large majority. The *Republic*, the chief Democratic newspaper, says that "they polled at least 8,000 votes, and polled them as a unit, demonstrating the power of the beer-saloon in politics as it has never been demonstrated before until this election, when we have similar evidence of it in the vote for Hill in New York."

The saloon showed equal impartiality in national politics. Mr. Gallus Thomann, the head of the Literary Bureau of the United

States Brewers' Association, tells a reporter that "the Republicans were beaten in 1884 because they nominated a man for President from the great prohibition State of Maine, whose record on the prohibition question did not suit the Germans. I know what I am talking about," he added, "for I myself made the investigation of his record. I found that Mr. Blaine, while a drinker himself, had been hypocritical enough to be an ardent advocate of the Maine law in his own State. That lost him the German vote, and cost the Republican party the election." But the Republican managers changed front this year, and so won back the German vote and carried the election. "They found out their mistake," Mr. Thomann went on, "and in 1888 they nominated a man who had no objectionable prohibition record, gave the Prohibitionists the cold shoulder, and adopted a resolution copied after the utterance of the National Liquor-Dealers' Association. The consequence was that the Germans came back to the party and Harrison is elected."

The moral of all this is plain. The saloon is in politics only for the saloon. If in one State it throws its weight for the Democrats, it is not because it loves the Democratic party, but because that party in that State is on its side; and it is equally ready at the same time in another State to cast its vote for the Republican party if the latter party in that State makes the higher bid. In like manner it will oppose the Republican candidate for President in one election if it suspects him of affiliation with prohibition, and support the Republican candidate four years later if convinced that the saloon has nothing to fear from him.

The great advantage which the saloon has in all these controversies is the fact that its favorite, when once nominated by one of the great parties, is sure to be supported by a large percentage of the opponents of the saloon, simply because he is the regular candidate. Most of the Democrats in this State who deplore the power of the drink evil voted for Hill as the Democratic nominee, just as most Republicans of the like mind in Connecticut voted for Bulkeley as the Republican nominee. In other words, so long as the saloon can nominate its man in a close State, it can rely upon a large share of the churches to help elect him.

#### THE SUPINENESS OF RAILROAD STOCK-HOLDERS.

THE present state of some of our great railroads in the West is certainly amazing. We hear much said of the timidity of capital, and many bugbears in the shape of organized labor, State interference, and even anarchy, have in recent years been paraded before frightened property-holders; but it appears after all that their foes are of their own household. A really "smart" president or general manager, such as stockholders apparently delight to select, can do more harm to his own railroad, as well as others, than State Legislatures or Knights of Labor are likely to effect, and the success of these men of late has been phenomenal. The stockholders submit to the loss of their property with the apathy of the subjects of an