

a surgeon! Why should the legal profession alone be a paid class? I take it to be a custom fraught with evil."

There is no class of men whose co-operation would be so important as that of solicitors in a general movement for the diminution of election expenditure and the destruction of corruption. Other eminent solicitors versed in elections gave evidence before the Committee, Mr. Rose, Mr. Clabon, Mr. Drake, and others. The members of the profession throughout the constituencies, animated by the spirit and example of these witnesses, would be invaluable aids for the proposed Association.

I will only mention the notorious fact of a great increase of corruption in many boroughs by corrupt practices at the annual municipal elections. Mr. Philip Rose speaks of the municipal contests as the "nursery of the evil." He says, "These oft-recurring contests have led to the establishment of what I might almost term an organised system of corruption in the municipal boroughs throughout the kingdom, which provides a machinery ready made to hand, available when the parliamentary contest arrives. I am sure that if Members of Parliament on both sides of the House will inform the Committee accurately, it will be admitted that the great strain upon them by their constituents is not so much for the support of charities or public institutions, as it is for the support of the municipal contests in November, the argument invariably being, on the part of the local agents, that £10 spent at a municipal contest is better and more advantageous than £100 spent at the parliamentary contest." Other witnesses called attention to this subject. Boroughs rapidly get worse and worse under an annual administration of "the stimulant" at municipal elections; and a strong impulse from without for local organization against corruption becomes more and more necessary.

Mr. Erskine May's condensed account of the general results of the inquiries which have been prosecuted by Commissions since 1852, is a painfully striking statement:

"At Canterbury, 155 electors had been bribed at one election, and 79 at another; at Maldon, 76 electors had received bribes; at Barnstaple, 255; at Cambridge, 111; and at Kingston-upon-Hull, no less than 847. At the latter place, £26,606 had been spent in three elections. In 1858, a Commission reported that 183 freemen of Galway had received bribes. In 1860, there were strange disclosures affecting the ancient city of Gloucester. This place had been long familiar with corruption. In 1816, a single candidate had spent £27,500 at an election; in 1818, another candidate had spent £16,000; and now it appeared that at the last election in 1859, 250 electors had been bribed, and 81 persons had been guilty of corrupting them. Up to this time, the places which had been distinguished by such malpractices had returned members to Parliament prior to 1832; but in 1860, the perplexing discovery was made, that bribery had also extensively prevailed in the populous and thriving borough of Wakefield, the creation of the Reform Act; 86 electors had been bribed, and such was the zeal of the canvassers, that no less than 98 persons had been concerned in bribing them."*

And how many more boroughs may there be equally steeped in corruption which have escaped inquiry? Let the leaders in all such boroughs, if they care for the reputation of their towns, bethink themselves that detection may another time fall on them. The above statement, in a work which will live, casts discredit on English civilization. Should not every effort be made to diminish such an evil? Every Act of Parliament proves inoperative. May not the evil increase?

The Association might also make it one of its objects to consider, prepare, and urge measures for restraining bribery and

expenditure, which require the interposition of the legislature; and among such measures which have been from time to time suggested, are a comprehensive declaration for members on taking their seats, so framed as to prevent evasion by a man of honour, and the plan of taking votes by voting-papers collected from the voters' houses, which has been often strongly pressed by Mr. Chadwick, and was recommended by Mr. Philip Rose in his evidence before the Corrupt Practices Prevention Committee, which was the subject of a bill proposed by Lord Shaftesbury in 1853, and was introduced into the Reform Bill proposed in 1859, by Lord Derby's Government.

But the great object is to rouse an enthusiasm against electoral corruption, and to cover the country with it, and to carry it into every constituency. We have this advantage to begin with, that the moral sense of the nation already unmistakably condemns bribery. There is no need to create a feeling; we have to intensify it, and to make it conquer. It is only among the inferior people who profit by corruption, and whom temptation and habit have degraded, that there is any insensibility or want of conscience on this subject. The classes from which candidates for seats in Parliament come, are entirely opposed to bribery. Suggestions have latterly often been made for the application of degrading punishment to candidates convicted of bribery, which could never have been put forward, if bribery were not condemned by opinion. Such punishments were recommended by several witnesses before the Corrupt Practices Prevention Committee, among others by the present Baron Pigott. This distinguished witness recommended that the punishment should be incapacity from holding any office of trust or public employment. Even stronger measures had been previously suggested by one whose name occupies the highest place of authority, and whose opinions must ever be most valued here. There is in print a letter written in 1856 by Lord Brougham to Mr. Hastings on the occasion of an anniversary meeting of the Law Amendment Society, from which I will make an extract. "With our distinguished colleague, Sir John Pakington," said Lord Brougham, "I have long been in co-operation upon this important subject, and I retain, as I believe he does, confidence in the beneficial tendency of a stringent declaration exacted from members on taking their seats. But I conceive that we should also go to the root of the evil as regards the agents of corruption. Why may we not deal with this as five and forty years ago I dealt with the execrable slave trade? For the gains of that infernal traffic we found that men would run the risk of heavy pecuniary penalties, but they shrunk from the risk of being transported as felons, and the traffic ceased. So the prize of a seat in Parliament will tempt some men to run the risk of being unseated on petition, and even of being exposed as having furnished the means of corruption to their agents; and the guilty profits will induce those agents to accent the employment with the comparatively trifling hazard that now attend it. But neither the candidate nor his supporters will encounter the danger of the treadmill or transportation; and we may see bribery, as we have seen slave-trading, cease to bring disgrace on the country."*

Let us hope that such strong measures may not be necessary. Let us make one great endeavour to attain the desired end by a large plan of co-operation for prevention by persuasion and agreement. I have thought that such an effort might well be made, at this moment, under the auspices of an Association, whose object is to utilize social science and promote all social reform, which numbers among its members leading men of all the parties that divide the State, and the name of whose President is already conspicuously associated with this question.

* *Y. s. "Constitutional History of England,"* l. p. 364.

* *"Law Amendment Journal,"* vol. 3, p. 113