

candidates are not told what goes on, and they do not inquire, contented, like Wordsworth's poet—

"Contented if they may enjoy  
The things which others understand."

They resign themselves not without reluctance and misgiving to this contentment; and the action of public opinion is needed to save them from it and its consequences.

To return to the subject of agreements to abstain from corruption; where any candidate or his committee should refuse on being formally applied to for the purpose, to join in such an agreement, he will be an object of suspicion. Amid the hubbub of a general election, the suggested Association may be a central eye to watch everywhere, and a central head and hand to aid in exposure and punishment through existing laws.

I have not mentioned coercion and intimidation, but these also may be regarded as forms of corruption, and the proposed agreements should include all illegitimate influences, such as of customer over tradesman, landlord over tenant, &c.

In a paper read by Mr. Chadwick before the Law Amendment Society, in February, 1859, the collection of information on a large scale by a Commission as to existing constituencies in order to lay a basis for a measure of parliamentary reform was powerfully recommended. I have only to do here with so much of Mr. Chadwick's proposal as concerns corrupt proceedings. Men of all opinions on parliamentary reform will concur in an observation of Mr. Chadwick's that the Legislature cannot be in the best position for extending or lowering franchise until it has obtained full knowledge of the kinds of corruption prevailing in constituencies, and while so much corruption exists, and is even in some places increasing. A similar opinion was intimated before the Corrupt Practices Prevention Committee by a gentleman, whose profession, experience, and well-known political opinions, give peculiar value to his statement. I refer to Mr. Joseph Parkes, who said, "A certain class of boroughs are much influenced by attorneys on both sides, and also by the licensed victuallers and beerhouse keepers, which latter I consider the most growing evil of the day, particularly if the franchise is to be lowered." The suggested Association may do the work of Mr. Chadwick's proposed Commission, as regards corrupt practices, by collecting information about bribery and corrupt expenditure. By printing and widely circulating facts as to corruption in constituencies, it will do further good—strengthen the feeling against the existing evils. The misdeeds of corrupt constituencies may thus be widely made known for shame, and in the same way the conduct of pure boroughs returning members in the public-spirited manner mentioned by Mr. Mill, may be held up in tracts widely circulated for general admiration and example.

In constituencies like the large metropolitan boroughs, where there is no purchasing of votes with coarse money bribes, it would well become leading men to combine to regulate and limit expenditure, the greater part of which leads to virtual corruption, and which has often notoriously become so large in amount as to deter candidates. In the evidence already referred to, taken by the Committee of the House of Commons of 1860 on the Corrupt Practices Prevention Act, there are many interesting and instructive particulars as to the corruption involved in general expenditure, showing what perhaps does not need to be shown, how voters who let carriages be secured by hiring their conveyances, printers by lavish printing, publicans by refreshments to supporters and hire of committee-rooms, and how an unnecessary number of voters and their relations are engaged as paid canvassers, messengers, &c., &c. These expenses which the fury of election rivalry carries beyond bounds might, by agreement between the leading men of a large borough solicited for its political reputation, some of them be got rid of, and others reduced to the limits of necessity.

Mr. James Vaughan, who was the Chief Commissioner for the inquiry in 1859 at Gloucester, strongly recommended the prohibition of paid canvassers, and limitation of messengers. A great deal of this might be effected by agreement. It would be in the long run, the same for both parties. "In the evidence we received," Mr. Vaughan said, "we found 112 messengers employed on the one side, and 150 on the other, and it was stated that ten or twenty could do the work."

Mr. Vaughan also conducted an inquiry at Tynemouth, in 1852, and says, "There were 882 on the register, and 669 polled; the publicans who voted were 108, and in that case we found scarcely a single instance where there were not either refreshment orders, or dinners, or suppers provided by the publicans, and the publicans were wavering backwards and forwards as they received a good order from one party or the other."

Mr. Vaughan says of paying expenses of voters from a distance, "We found at Gloucester there were a great number of voters brought up upon either side, and the result was that the expenses to the candidate were largely augmented, with no practical result as regards the success of the candidate: there would be ten men brought up on the one side and ten on the other."

I should think that in large boroughs where public spirit prevails, there might often be no difficulty about the appointment of a Committee, having the confidence of the whole constituency, to regulate the mode of conducting elections, with a view to limitation of expenses and suppression of corruption; and he would be a rash candidate who would not thankfully abide by the rules.

The limitation of the number of attorneys employed to one for each candidate was strongly recommended by Mr. Pigott, the present Judge. Of the employment of attorneys, he said, "I am sure that it leads to undue influence. If you employ attorneys, they have influence over a great number of voters; in a borough particularly. Some are debtors, some have mortgages, some expect a lawyer's letter; in one way or another there are numerous modes in which an attorney has influence over voters." Mr. Vaughan said on the same subject, "We found that there were a large number of solicitors employed at Gloucester. Solicitors know a great deal about people in a town, and they are no doubt employed in consequence of the influence which they can bring to bear. I recollect that one voter mentioned he felt he must vote on a particular side, because the solicitor on that side had a mortgage on his cottage." Mr. Joseph Parkes, a distinguished member of the profession, and most experienced manager of elections, strongly protested against payment of attorneys as agents, and made the following statement. "I think that it is an evil to the public and an evil to themselves [to pay solicitors as agents] nearly all the professional men in towns and counties act gratuitously. I myself, after 1826, never took a fee in my life, and I never would. I know all the valuable agents in Warwick, in Coventry, and at Birmingham, and I know that at the town and county elections most of them, whether upon the Conservative side, or upon the Liberal side, are volunteers; they are the men who do the work, and it is the class of the young solicitors, and the class of generally inferior men, who do a great deal of mischief, and incur useless cost. I should wish to state only one reason why I should object to the employment of solicitors. It is notorious that every agent causes more people to vote in consequence of the fee given to him, and I think it is a gross anomaly, that, because he is a lawyer, he is to be receiving the candidate's money; you might just as well give a fee of fifty guineas or five guineas a day to a medical man, who would be equally influential. A general practitioner, from his influence among families, would bring up more people to vote than even the lawyer could. How absurd it would be that you should retain