

but "with a great price" our forefathers "obtained this freedom." Through long years they wrought and fought and died that they and their country and their children might be free of despot sway. And the right of self-government purchased at such a price they have left for us. It is a sacred heritage to be well and wisely used.

How we love and cherish, almost venerate, relics of our ancestors, and the more closely they were connected with some special work or sacrifice, and the grander the cause and the nobler the deed which they commemorate the more highly are they prized and the more carefully guarded. The sword of a father or grandfather with which he fought for queen and country and liberty, or the well-worn Bible that was cherished by them as a hid treasure in times of persecution, with what pride such things are shown and their story oft retold.

The franchise, the right to vote, the freeman's right with other freemen to decide how myself and my country shall be governed is a heritage second only to the liberty of conscience, liberty to believe and think and worship as we will, and as such cannot be too carefully guarded and cherished.

A second feature of this right of self-government is even higher than the first mentioned, viz., that it is a God-given trust. Government is Divine. "The Lord is King." He is the head and source of all authority and rule. Human laws are but streams more or less impure from that source. All power is of God. But for the execution of that power among men He employs men. Until men attain the position where they will keep the sum of the moral law, loving God above all and neighbor as self they must be compelled to respect the rights of that neighbor by laws of a lower order enforced by fellowmen. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed." Rulers are "God's ministers appointed for this very thing," that they may be a terror to evil doers. Though chosen by men they are executing a Divine ministry. "The powers that be are ordained of God." "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."

With us government has attained high ideal, and free men choose from among themselves those who shall for them and in their name bear rule. Chosen by men they are "ministers

of God." As really as the Gospel is a trust given to men for the benefit of their fellow men, so really is the right to regulate the affairs of the nation a trust committed to the voters in a free country.

These two great facts make the trust of the ballot a weighty and serious one. They demand in the first place that every voter use his trust. To ignore it by neglecting to use it is throwing contempt upon the memory of those who sacrificed so much to win that sacred right of liberty which we enjoy, and it is faithlessness to a trust from God.

The right use of this trust demands that it be exercised intelligently, that every voter inform himself as best he can on the questions at issue, on the character and conduct of those whom he may choose. It is often impossible to unravel the tangles of falsehood that are spun by tongue and type, but, for the best knowledge he can get and the best judgment he can form, every voter is responsible.

Further, the choice may be, always will be, between evils. No men are perfect, no party beyond fault. And sometimes when men are trying as best they can to do the right, they may be unable to do what they would like. Many a political sinner can honestly adopt Paul's language—"for what I would that do I not; but what I hate that do I." But sad to say there are many more who cannot thus speak, who sin willfully. Party is all, principle nothing. But the fact that one cannot find purity or perfection is no warrant for not exercising the right of ballot according to conscience and judgment.

It follows also that if the franchise be a trust from God it is only used aright when as in His sight and looking to Him for guidance. "Lord, teach us how to vote," is probably not a very frequent petition, but its spirit should guide every man in the exercise of this trust.

And what shall be said of the man who makes his vote a thing of barter and traffic, sells his birthright as a free man for a mess of pottage, barter away his right of freedom and self-government which his fathers purchased for him at so great a price, trades the trust that God has given him, makes himself a tool, a slave, for a few dimes or dollars, or office, or some other petty gain?