

his party will make up their minds to lose by the agreement only what could not be securely won (for there always remains the danger of an election petition and its consequences,) and what one political party loses in this way in one constituency, the other will probably lose in another. The balance of parties will probably be little affected on the whole. In some of the many boroughs, where parties are nearly balanced, and a small corrupt phalanx turns the scale (and some of these are among the worst cases of corruption), there will probably be compromises, by which each party will obtain an uncontested seat. Here again the cause of public morality will gain, and the peace of the borough will be secured; and in these cases of nearly balanced parties a large minority, which a few accidents or more care in succeeding registrations might convert into a majority, has a fair claim to a share of the representation. Such compromises occurring in several constituencies would probably not disturb in the end the balance of parties. This may be considered a low mode of treating the subject, but it is well to endeavour to conciliate political partisanship.

All the money comes from candidates and wealthy supporters. If these can be got by agreement to abstain from spending money there will be no corruption.

A witness before the Committee of the House of Commons of 1860, on the Corrupt Practices Prevention Act, a gentleman of large experience in elections, Mr. Philip Rose, used a phrase in recommending suspension of writs for corrupt boroughs, which I would appropriate. Mr. Rose said, "I should treat a venal constituency as I would a drunken man, I would take away the stimulant in the hope that it would recover, and if Wakefield or Gloucester, for instance, were kept without their members for five or ten years, a new class of voters would arise in those boroughs, and corruption would be very much lessened." Now this is my plan, to take away "the stimulant." I propose to invite and incite candidates through the country to co-operate and combine to keep "the stimulant" in their own pockets. The suggested agreements and compromises will take away "the stimulant." Habits of corruption may then die away by disuse, and the appetite for bribes decay for want of the food which it has fed on.

Let us ascend from the leaders of constituencies to the leaders of parties. It is generally known that there is an organization for promotion of elections at head quarters in each party, and that, on the occasion of a general election, there have been always large subscriptions on the side of the Government and on the side of the Opposition. The Association might begin by addressing itself to the head of the Government and the leader of the Opposition, in order to obtain their co-operation in this movement, and assurances that they will urge those, with whom respectively a word from either would be a command, and who influence many others, to abstain from everything which can excite or facilitate corrupt expenditure, and to give every aid in promoting agreements and compromises, whose object is to prevent corruption.

Patronage provides other modes of influencing votes at elections, less gross and palpable than bribery, and "lends corruption lighter wings to fly." This brings us to the subjects of our administrative system and party-government, admitted, I believe, to be within the limits of social science, but whose bounds are divided by thin partitions from the questions of passionate politics, which here must be avoided. There are thoughtful men who regard the rivalries of party and the possession of large patronage by the Government for distribution among political supporters, as necessary to good parliamentary government. I cannot think this. I regard these things as defects and blots. One of the chief advantages, I conceive, of the system of examinations for appointments which has of late years made progress among us, is its tendency to purify representative government. The chief advantage can only be derived from free competitive examinations. The small places given away in all the boroughs and

counties by the great public departments, the Treasury and General Post Office for instance, through political supporters, might be given as prizes of local examinations; a suggestion of this sort was made in 1844, some years before the first introduction of examinations into our administrative system, by the present Lord Grey (then Lord Howick) in the House of Commons, on the occasion of a motion by Mr. William Ewart, on public education. Lord Grey urged the institution by Government of periodical examinations in districts, for the benefit of schools of the lower orders, and added:—"Government might bring candidates to their examinations by holding out more substantial rewards to a few of the children. This could be done at no expense whatever. They all know how earnestly situations in the lower ranks of the public service were looked for among the classes likely to send their children to these schools, and if a few such situations as those of tide-waiters for example were made prizes for perseverance, attention, and ability, the hope of winning them would attract great numbers of persons to the examinations. By a small sacrifice of patronage this important object might be attained."\* I remember that I myself recalled attention to this suggestion in the House of Commons, on the occasion of another motion of Mr. Ewart's in 1846, and then read an excellent passage in recommendation of it from a letter of Mr. Dawes, the present Dean of Hereford, then a clergyman in Hampshire, zealously promoting public education in his parish, which is printed in the Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education for 1845† I believe this to have been one of the earliest, as it is one of the most practical, suggestions of a plan which combines the advantages of extension of education, improvement of local administration, and lessening of electoral corruption. This plan of giving local appointments to local examinations has never been adopted. The plans which have been generally adopted, of appointment subject to an examination, and of nominations for limited competition, fall short of producing all the desired good. The patronage system remains. Patronage is even increased by the system of nominations for limited competition, each nomination being a favour. Members must still go to the Treasury to ask favours for their constituents, like the Roman clients thronging the patron's doorstep for the well-filled basket.]

"Nunc sportula primo  
Limine parva sedet, turbæ rapienda togatæ."

Constituencies can only be made thoroughly pure by removing all sources of corruption. So long as nominations can only be got by application to the Government, how can voters and Members help, or how can they be blamed for making applications? How can the Government be expected, while the system remains, to favour their opponents?

When, eighty years ago, Mr. Pitt had defied a large adverse parliamentary majority, and successfully appealed to a general election, and stood by the result on a supereminent pinnacle of personal ascendancy, one of his most attached and most celebrated friends, Mr. Wilberforce, thought (as it is recorded in his life) that "he was then able, if he had duly estimated his position, to cast off the corrupt machinery of influence."‡ "Party on one side," said Mr. Wilberforce, "begets party on the other." The ungoverned fury of contending parties begets and perpetuates corruption.

The leader of a great party is in this matter in the same position and difficulty as a great many candidates for seats in Parliament, that he does not know all that is done by others. But this can hardly ever be altogether an innocent ignorance. Friends and supporters will not in the end do what the chief is really determined shall not be done. As it is, leaders and

\* Hansard, July 12, 1844.

† Hansard, July 21, 1846.

‡ "Life of William Wilberforce," vol. I., p. 64.