

school of politics, an institution in which raw, untutored minds get their first introduction to political ideas and methods. If there were any possibility of getting into a blue book a representative selection of the correspondence of the local machines throughout the country, with a few samples of the higher epistolary style of the Provincial and Dominion staff officers, I think the country would start back at the revelation. It would not want to hug either the machine or itself. It is wonderful how ugly a little daylight makes some things look. At the same time good comes out even of this seething mass of evil. The primary school does not give a finished education, but it educates up to a certain point those who have any capacity to learn. The member of the local committee is trained to a certain sense of responsibility. He learns what can be done and what cannot be done. He finds out that men are not always governed by their lowest motives. He finds his more disreputable proceedings encountering the reprobation of the decent part of the community. He gets disgusted with the unmitigated self-seeking of some of those with whom he has to deal, and possibly has some useful fits of reflection on his own doings. If his party is in opposition he may learn some lessons of disinterestedness. We may further say this for the machine, that it is a contrivance for getting work done that would not otherwise be done. After its own fashion it keeps alive an interest in politics; it greatly helps to "bring out the vote" in a general election.

It is a somewhat singular thing that the framers of the Constitution of the United States do not seem to have any prevision of the difficulty there would be in getting the people as a whole to act in political matters. The explanation may, perhaps, be found in the fact that they had been accustomed chiefly to town meetings, in which, the subjects discussed being of local interest, decisions were easily arrived at. The Constitution, however, had not been long in operation before there was found to be a missing link—a device for getting the people interested and bringing them to the polls. It was to meet this need that the machine may be said to have been invented. As an impelling and controlling force it has since been brought to great perfection; and yet it cannot be said that the machine itself has either a clear insight into large political questions or any great interest in them. It does not, in fact, look upon great questions with favour. Its saws are not adapted to cut such lumber. It does not argue the question of the tariff, or of grants to higher education, or of Imperial federation, nor yet of prohibition; it approaches the elector with personal solicitation, and with arguments addressed more or less directly to his self-interest. The highest note it ever strikes is local interest: it sometimes reaches that. It does not make the issues that are presented to the country. These are hammered out in the press and, to a much less extent, in Parliament; but it gives many a shrewd hint to the party leaders as to what questions should *not* be allowed to grow into issues. The instinct of the party politician is to fight shy of all large questions; he always sees in them more of danger than of safety, more chances of loss than of gain.