

the candidates and their committee men present, and the crowd seemed in no great hurry to depart. When it had grown somewhat thin, and the mass had become a series of groups, Mr. Spike could be seen in close conversation with a member of his committee. Presently the said M. of C. espied a farmer standing by himself not far from them.

"Ah," he said, "there is Catchall from Pokeville. I must speak to him."

The M. of C. went over to Mr. Catchall, whose face, as the former approached him, assumed an expression which seemed to say, "Now don't suggest money to me—please don't. I'm an honest man. I vote on principle. And don't dare to breathe the word 'soap.' My hands are never soiled. And if you should so much as hint at 'influence,' I'd knock you down."

"Mr. Catchall," said M. of C., shaking hands with him, "how do you do, sir. I hope I see you in good health."

"Fair to middlin', squire—only fair to middlin'. Not so kinky as I was ten years ago. Gittin' old, squire—gittin' old."

"Ah yes, that's the way with us all, Mr. Catchall. Well, what's the news?"

"Nothin' new, squire. Hard times—but that's no news in this country."

"Oh yes, I've heard you talk before. It's all very fine for you to talk about hard times, when we all know you have the snuggest place in Pokeville. You're a sly one, Catchall."

"Not half so sly as these here politicians," said Mr. Catchall with a knowing wink.

"Of course we expect you to say so. But what do you think of the chances for Spike this time? Capital speech he made to-night, don't you think?"

This was a feeler. But Mr. Catchall was not to be caught at the first throw.

"Plenty of gab, squire—plenty of gab. But Snike rather got the best of him. Eh?"

"Snike! You don't mean to say that you put any faith in what Snike would say? Smart man—no doubt about that—but you can't trust him. The man has no conscience—wants to get elected, that's all."

"Well, I don't know, squire, but it seems to me it's about time we had a change of government now. I ain't no good to argey, but I reckon a change wouldn't do no harm. Times is mighty hard—I know that."

"Well, but, Mr. Catchall, you approve of the general policy of the government, don't you?"

"I used to, that's a fact. I give 'em a vote last time. But I been kinder thinkin' it over lately, an' I come to the conclusion there's a heap too much money spent that we don't git no good of. We don't never git nothin' down here. I know I never git no good of it."

This was a counter feeler, so to speak; and M. of C., like the shrewd man he was, at once took the cue.

"Got any stock to sell this fall, Mr. Catchall?"

"Well yes, squire. I got some fine lambs out there."

"You have one particularly fine one, haven't you?"

"Yes—there is one a good deal better'n 'tother ones."

"What price do you set on that one, now?"

"I 'spose about five or ten dollars, squire."

"Well now, look here. Suppose I gave you ten dollars for that lamb, and you keep it till I call for it—unless you see a chance to sell it when you sell the rest—would you be likely to call it a bargain?"

"Well, I guess I would, squire—seein' its you."

"Very well—we'll consider it settled. Now, Mr. Catchall, what do you really think of Spike's chances?"

"I should say they was good, squire—good."

"I suppose you'd be apt to say that almost anywhere. Eh?"

"Yes, squire. I'd uphold them principles anywheres."

"In Pokeville, for instance?"

"It's not unlikely, squire—as you say—I might."

"And if you did talk in Pokeville, what effect would it have? Anybody listen, do you think?"

"Well, I guess so. I got some influence out there, moral influence—strictly moral influence, squire."

"I'm glad to hear it—in fact, I knew it. Remember, if you see a chance to sell that lamb at a good figure, you can do so. I must go now—good-bye."

M. of C. took his hand from his pocket and placed it in the hand of Mr. Catchall. Mr. Catchall took his hand from the hand of M. of C. and put it in his pocket.

Then M. of C. went away, and Mr. Catchall soliloquised as follows: "That lamb's only half sold—wish one of Snike's fellers 'ud come along now."



One of "Snike's fellers" did come along, and Mr. Catchall's face once more assumed its deprecatory expression.

"Mr. Catchall," said the second M. of C., "how are you. You'll give us your influence this time, I hope?"

"I'd like to, squire. But your party haint got the right policy. Besides, squire, I couldn't honestly vote for Snike—don't put no dependence in the feller."

"Oh, the man's all right—best of the two by all odds. He sticks up for his county every time. You know that. And as for policy, no party could possibly give us any harder times than we have now. Then look at the dishonesty and extravagance of the government."

"Times is hard," admitted Mr. Catchall,—mighty hard. I know I got bills to meet an' I can't git hold of a dollar. I never was so pushed in my life."

The second M. of C. took his cue.

"By the way, I think I owe you a trifle myself, Mr. Catchall. There was a little balance between us on account of some butter I bought from you just before the last local election, wasn't there?"

"I don't rightly remember, squire—mebbe so. I could tell by lookin' at the book."

"Well, I think there was—almost sure of it. Look it up, and I'll settle it when I come out next week."

"It won't be mor'n ten dollars squire—not mor'n ten dollars. You him rely on that."

"All right—I'll fix it. But, Mr. Catchall, don't you really think you could give us your influence?"

"That's my intention, squire. I was only jokin' with you a while ago. You kin count on me every time."

"Good. I knew your heart was in the right place, and your head too. How does Pokeville go this time?"

"I guess I kin stir 'em up out there so's our man 'll git the bulk of the vote. I got some influence out there, moral influence—strictly moral influence, squire."

"Good again. Well, I'll see you again in a few days. I must move around now—Good night."

The second M. of C. moved away, and again Mr. Catchall soliloquised, "I guess I kin afford to buy that cow, after all—wish Smiler 'ud come along." But Smiler, having dislocated his shoulder in shaking hands with a particularly influential man, failed to appear; and the honest man with the moral influence in Pokeville wended his homeward way reflecting upon the low moral status of our public men.

Two electors were conversing in another part of the room, one of them a bleary individual whose dominant expression was one of mingled simplicity and cunning.

"Say," queried this gentleman, with a laugh and a wink, "did you git any money?"

"No," said the other. "I am not in the market."

"Well," said the bleary individual, winking again, "they say there's money flyin' round; an' if there is, I'd like to git a squirt at it."

"How do you vote this time?" asked the other.

"Don't know yit—haint decided. I brought in a hull waggon load pollin' day last local, an' we was all to git a dollar apiece. We voted all right, but we never seen the dollar.\* They don't never fool me agin—bet yer bottom cent on that."

Mr. Spike had meantime been surrounded by a group of gentlemen standing just outside the door. One of them was a prominent member of the church, and was now struggling manfully in the toils of Satan.

\*A fact.

"I tell you, Mr. Spike, there's no man living I'd rather vote for than yourself, personally. But I can't—I can't possibly support this rotten government. I have every confidence in you, Mr. Spike—every confidence. I know you to be an honest man. I know you'll do the very best you can for us if you are elected. I've always respected you, Mr. Spike—always. No man I respect more. And I challenge any man—yes sir, any man—to show that I ever said one word against you personally. And I'd like to support you—I would indeed. But to vote for you would be to vote for the government; and I couldn't—my conscience, Mr. Spike, my conscience wouldn't let me—give any countenance to such a rotten government. It's a matter of conscience, Mr. Spike. I'm sorry—very, very sorry that I can't support you. You're one of ourselves, you've made your way by honest, hard work. I respect you, as I said before, but I can't conscientiously support the government. That's positively the only objection."

There was some further argument, and protestation, and expostulation, after which Mr. Spike started to move off. The conscientious gentleman followed him, and plucked his sleeve when they were beyond hearing of the others.

"Say," he remarked, in a cautious and confidential undertone, "I might give you a vote, Mr. Spike, if—if you'd make me a—a nice little present."

Even Spike was not prepared for such a peculiar freak of conscience as this one, and for a moment could only stand and stare.

"Well," he said at length, "I couldn't do it myself, you know. But—I'll see what can be done, Mr. Blank."

Then the conscientious gentleman renewed his assurances of respect and affection for dear Mr. Spike personally, and the two parted company once more, the one to continue his vote hunt, the other to repair to the family altar.\*

The chronicler of this great meeting was called away at this juncture. He learned afterwards that both Spike and Snike and their leading supporters were busy till very late that night and that there were many swelled heads in the morning. But the country was greatly benefitted and it was noted thereafter that the merchants had less difficulty in collecting amounts due them than for a long time—a sure indication of national prosperity.

The campaign was short, sharp and exciting. On nomination day the name of Smiler was added to the list of candidates, and he made a stirring appeal to the electors, on the grounds stated in his former speech, already referred to. Business was practically suspended for a fortnight prior to election day, and tremendous efforts were made to bring every voter to the polls. When at length the result was announced, it was learned that the government candidate had been elected by a considerable majority, and that Mr. Smiler had at least saved his deposit. As soon as the result of the voting was made known, there were ominous threats of a protest on the ground that Spike's election had been bought and paid for. The friends of Mr. Spike trembled exceedingly for some days, for they feared that the "indiscretion" of some free and independent supporter, in not leaving his pocketbook at home when he went canvassing, might render the election null and void. But their opponents, having been likewise guilty of "indiscretion," were deterred, doubtless by that honour which is said to exist

\*The truth of the above incident is vouched for by one of the best known of Canadian public men.

