



MR. W. T. R. PRESTON has written a sprightly letter from far-away Japan to the *Mail and Empire* protesting against his use as a "chopping block" whenever the genial editor of that journal feels like taking a little invigorating exercise. Mr. Preston says that he was not corrupt when he was in active politics; that he was never sorely tempted save once, when he did not fall because the other fellow held him up, or rather, refused to be "held up"; that, on the contrary, he always discouraged corrupt methods and—inferentially—did much to keep his party honest. I notice that the *Mail* takes this "apologia pro vita sua" with a smile of cynical amusement; but cynicism has become a settled habit with the *Mail* ever since its venture into independent journalism failed. As for Mr. Preston, he suffers from the common impression that all party organisers are corrupt. There are lots of people who cannot understand what a political party wants a paid and permanent organiser for if it be not to bribe people and perform other nefarious services.

SOME one should undertake the task of writing a defence of the political organiser. I have known several of them with a fair amount of intimacy; and not only am I nothing the richer for my acquaintance, but I have found them good fellows, with as high a sense of honour as most business men, though obsessed by a settled conviction that the leaders of the party they were opposing were long overdue at either the penitentiary or the insane asylum. I should say that the chief characteristic of the party organiser is not corruption but "offensive partisanship." Now, of course, he may be a corrupt institution for all I know. I have had precious little to do with the practical working of party machinery. But my conversation with them has led me to the suspicion that it is their employers who are corrupt in intention, though cowardly when it comes to practice; and that the organisers never carry through a fraction of the devious tricks which are urged on them by outwardly super-respectable public men. What I am trying to say is that, while I have no notion that party organisers are strayed members of the angelic host—their associates would prevent that—neither do I believe that they sit up nights devising criminal schemes for the discomfiture of the enemy.

OF course, somebody arranges for all the organised corruption and election crime. Possibly at times the official organisers do it. I don't know. But I would have thought, just from superficial indications, that they were generally too clever to put their necks in any such noose. You will notice, too, that when the noose draws, their

necks are generally outside of it. Then it must not be forgotten that a political party is always very badly in need of a man who will handle its campaign fund without permitting the countless wolves who hang on its skirts to steal the greater share of it. Political parties are much more afraid of being robbed by their own "friends" and "workers" than of failing to practise corruption enough to win an election. And it is just possible that they might select an organiser who would stand between them and the wolves; and see to it that they got value in public meetings, literature, canvassing and the like for their money. No political party ever won a national election by corruption; but political parties have been hampered before to-day by the wasting of their resources by insinuating scoundrels who pretended that they would employ it to get votes and then let it slip through a hole in their pockets.

PRACTICAL politicians will tell you that the greater share of the money which is spent during an election in contravention of the law, is not used for bribery in the proper sense at all. It is not so very often, they say, that men are paid to vote for one candidate when they would otherwise have voted for the other. That is a pretty risky business. The more usual thing is to "pay a man for his time"—as the phrase goes—that is, to pay him for the time he spends in going to vote for his party candidate. If he did not get paid, he would not vote for the other candidate. In most cases, he would refuse indignantly a proffered bribe to do so. But neither will he vote for his own candidate. He will simply stay at home. Not for a moment does he regard his action as immoral, no matter what the stupid law may say. He reasons it out this way—the politicians make money out of politics; they cannot make that money unless they get my vote; it does me no good to go and vote and takes up my time; therefore it is only fair that the politicians shall drive me to the polls and indemnify me for my loss of time if they want me to go and vote for them. It may be oblique reasoning; but it is very common. The man who insists upon being driven to the poll is not very far from it.

AS I have frequently ventured to say, the sole cure for corrupt politics is politics dominated by issues. If we can give that man who wants pay for his time an issue in which he is profoundly concerned, he will be on hand to vote without pay, and will walk all the way if necessary. So long as it makes no difference to him which party wins, he will be careless whether he votes or not. All the academic lecturing we can supply about his duty as a citizen and the blood-bought privilege of the franchise passes over his head. A half-day away from work is the loss of a half-day's pay or profit; and that is a real issue he can understand. When the politicians give us live issues which awaken public interest, the sphere of influence of the briber will contract painfully—to him. He will not admit it, of course, until he must; for there are some camp-followers of both parties who make a good living out of a set of sticky fingers through which they pretend to slip the money which buys votes.

N'IMPORTE



Turkey at last joins Europe: Turks Voting for the Election of Members of the First Turkish Parliament. See next page.

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