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## CURRENT COMMENT

In that art of arts, the governance of men, the rarest quality is will power to do perseveringly what one sees to be right. Many rulers of men see the right course plainly enough, perhaps they talk loudly about it and thus acquire a reputation for judgment, or they indulge in promises or threats and thus for the moment delude their hearers into the belief that they will be as good as their word; but when the psychological moment comes for execution, they weaken before party clamor or back down before private entreaty. The strong ruler, on the other hand, talks little, promises and threatens less, but is eloquent in deeds. Baron Hubner, in his masterly life of Sixtus V., relates that when he was elected Pope, his advisers came to him requesting that he should issue the usual proclamations against the brigands who then infested the Roman Campagna, the waste places near the Eternal City. He replied that he would not. Then the Curia protested that all his predecessors had done so. The new Pope blamed them not, but called in the chief of Police and ordered him to trace and arrest some brigands without delay. Two of these highwaymen were caught red-handed. The civil courts tried them, found them guilty and condemned them to death for the murders they had committed. Sixtus V. quietly insisted on their immediate execution. The hanging of these criminals did more than a hundred proclamations could have done. Brigandage ceased in the Roman Campagna during the stern rule of that great Pope.

Such were the thoughts suggested to us by Mr. William Allen White's impartial and realistic sketch of the present Governor of Missouri in the December McClure's. Joseph W. Folk seems to have donned the mantle of Sixtus V. He talks little but does wonders. When Folk first appears on the scene as circuit attorney Missouri politics were sadly corrupted by the boodle and graft of the largest city, St. Louis. Folk attacked that stronghold of corruption. "His first alarming action was to indict a number of election thieves. He prosecuted them and convicted them—in spite of the elaborate explanation made to him by the machine leaders, that these thieves had worked for his own election. His predecessor in office warned him that there was no sense in making trouble for himself by pushing these cases; that the people would forget all about it when he needed votes. But Folk went ahead. . . . Within three years he uncovered in St. Louis more corruption than had ever before been uncovered at one time and place in the civilized world. The legal records of the country show that before Folk became circuit attorney of St. Louis, only 34 cases against bribe-takers had been brought in the whole United States during more than one hundred years. In Missouri, in all the history of that 'imperial state,' as the bass drum orators of the machine used to call it, not one indictment had ever been brought against a public official for boodling. Folk, in four years, brought forty cases; convicted twenty men—a dozen of whom were released by the State Supreme Court upon technicalities—and of the twenty convictions eight convicted men are serving time in the penitentiary." The conscience of the common people was aroused. In spite of the opposition of the State Supreme Court and of many lawyers who defended the boodlers and sneered at Folk, he was for a time, in St. Louis, a popular hero. But during that time, in Jefferson City, the capital, although the officials said out loud: "He has only done his duty; why this fuss over that?" yet in private "the influences he was combating poured their corroding wrath upon him; they tried to entrap him; set courtesans after him; threatened him with assassination, and sent men to him to say that when he was out of office corruptionists would make it impossible for him to live in Missouri. This they did many times, until Folk

believed that they would keep their word—if they could. Whereupon he saw but one thing for him to do, if he lived in Missouri after his term of office expired, and that was to destroy the corrupt forces which controlled the machine. There was but one sure way to destroy it—and that was to become governor and be governor in deed and in truth, instead of in name only as former governors had been."

The undertaking appeared most foolhardy. Missouri was supposed to be hidebound, full of prejudices and hoary precedents. Folk was a new man from another State, Tennessee. He had no family connections, no social prestige, and was hardly known outside the city of St. Louis. He had no considerable campaign fund, while his enemies had an unlimited one and all the politicians of any note sneered at him. He is no orator, he is not magnetic "He ignored the politicians; he made no deals nor combinations; he replied to none of the abuse the machine leaders were heaping upon him. But he went straight to the Missouri farmers; told them what he had done in St. Louis, and asked for their support in a straightforward fashion, unashamed and without promises of what he would do. Because he was clearly an honest man and unquestionably a brave one, they took him on faith" and elected him by a majority of 30,000, which is 5,000 more than they gave to President Roosevelt. Commenting on this "whirlwind campaign," in which all the Democrats but Folk were defeated and all the other offices but that of governor fell to Republicans, Mr. William Allen White says finely: "This shows two things clearly: that the return from boss government to constitutional government may be accomplished by the people whenever they desire to do so, without any new laws and without any unusual conditions; that whenever a politician appeals to the people directly and sincerely upon a moral issue, he need fear no deal nor combination nor strategy on the part of the crooks or their friends. The people have sense; they know the right and the wrong of a cause, and only when the right and the wrong are muddled by compromising manipulators on both sides of a fight, is the issue in doubt. Folk's victory should teach young men in politics first to champion the sheer right of a question, and then to trust to the basic common sense of the people to see the right and choose it." One factor, however, there is which Mr. White throws into strong relief elsewhere in his article and which must not be forgotten in a general view of the situation, and that is the personality and the previous record of Folk. Just men, firm of purpose, like him are, unfortunately, very rare.

Rarer still is the young man that is not spoiled by promotion. "In nine cases out of ten promotion finishes a young man's usefulness. He sees another promotion ahead, and begins to compromise to get it, and that is the end of him. But this young man Folk"—he is only thirty-six—"is not letting down. He is keeping up his standards, living up to the ideals which gave him his promotion. Political prosperity agrees with him." No sooner was he inaugurated than he began enforcing a law which had been a dead letter on the Missouri statutes for nearly forty years, the law prohibiting railways from giving passes to legislators or state officers or state employees. Next, while vetoing bills that were unfair to the railways, he gave his support to needed railway legislation "and the first time since 1873 a law was passed regulating freight rates in the state." Another was passed forbidding railway employers to work their employees more than sixteen hours at a time on freight runs. These and several new and wise laws regulating railways were strictly enforced. Then Folk put in force, after a memorable fight, the law prohibiting race-track gambling and making it a felony, and broke up the Delmar track. "The horses are gone, the bookmakers have fled, and gambling upon the results of the St. Louis races has ceased all over the United States."

Persistence is the secret of Folk's success. When he began last spring to enforce the Sunday closing law which had lain forty years asleep in the Missouri statutes, people thought this show of severity would soon cease, probably after the third Sunday, "which is the Sunday when Sunday closing spasms" in other cities, and under other rulers "generally" stop; so a large number of back doors were opened. On Monday morning the keepers of those saloons lost their licenses. One great difficulty in St. Louis was the large German population which, it was thought, would not consent to forego its beer for one day each week. But the German Americans now obey and uphold the law. "The hotel bars and all drinking places are closed on Sunday in the first-class cities of Missouri for the first time in the history of the state."

Though Folk is described as a "deeply pious" man, self-denying and clean-livered, he publicly preaches but one doctrine, the narrow, practical one, that honesty pays better than graft. "And this is how it has paid: Since the election of Folk as circuit attorney of St. Louis the value of land in the State has increased 20 per cent. The annual immigration to the State has increased 25 per cent. The Sunday business of the local street cars has increased 25 per cent., and the Monday deposits in the banks of the cities have increased remarkably, while the number of arrests in the three cities, where statistics are available, has decreased 20 per cent. and the Sunday arrests have diminished 40 per cent. More than that the trade of the grocers and small merchants has increased so materially that they are making a sentiment for Sunday closing strong enough to maintain it when Folk leaves the governor's office at the end of his term in 1909."

Mr. William Allen White deserves great praise for sketching in so many, honest and factful a way a career which is an invaluable object-lesson for all who sincerely seek the best interests of their country or city, wherever that country or city may be. What a blessing it would be for Winnipeg if the present exciting municipal campaign were to develop some imitator of Folk's methods! As Mr. White is careful to explain, genius is not necessary. He insists that Folk is not an intellectual giant, that he is merely an ordinary young man, "whose only difference from many another young gentleman in Vanity Fair is that he has sense enough to be honest and to make it pay." And Mr. White very wisely deprecates "the effort to make him a presidential candidate while he is still up to his elbows in a work that he has sworn to do without variability or shadow of turning. What this country needs of Governor Folk, and what it has a right to demand of him, is that he keep right on making Missouri a model American commonwealth, that other states may profit thereby. . . . With ten years of seasoning in public life—perhaps six of it in Washington" (as United States senator)—"Folk would be sound and strong and worthy of any burden; but now his duty lies in Missouri, at his appointed task."

One most admirable feature of this birth of wholesome public sentiment in Missouri and one which we Canadians can with difficulty emulate is the sinking of party difference for the sake of the common good. "The Republican state officials, who in any other state and in any other conditions might feel that party policy required them to hinder rather than help a Democratic governor, are doing all they can to help him. Attorney General Hadley, a young Republican of the new school of politics, has been standing shoulder to shoulder with Folk in every important fight, and he deserves the highest praise for the way he has risen above party bias, and has become a faithful servant of the people. But for Hadley's sense and loyalty, Folk might have been badly crippled."

Another excellent article, also making for honesty and thoroughness in government appears in the same number of

McClure's Magazine, which has already done so much to awaken the conscience of Americans and others all over the world. Mr. Ray Stannard Baker, who is writing a series of articles on the management of railways, those gigantic monopolies which "have infinitely more to do with the happiness and success of the people than the United States Government itself," writes this month on Railroad Rebates. He defines a rebate, strictly so called, as "a sum of money secretly paid back by a railroad company to a favored shipper as a refund upon his freight-rate." Last winter and spring, before the United States Senate Committee which investigated railway management, the railway presidents testified that rebates had disappeared. But Robert La Follette, Governor of Wisconsin, did not trust these general denials. He determined upon a business-like investigation. "The information regarding rebates came out as the by-product of an investigation into railroad taxation. It was charged a number of years ago that the railroad corporations were avoiding taxes—that they did not pay their full share." So La Follette, who, like Folk, is nothing if not thorough, put four or five skilled accountants at work for about two years, "in the main offices at Chicago and other cities of all the railroads that traverse Wisconsin." Before this work was begun, the railway officials "denied just as plausibly and as positively as they did last winter in Washington, that there were any such things as rebates; but the very first thing the investigators learned was that immense amounts of money paid as unlawful rebates did not appear in the gross earnings reported by the companies. And when the cases came into court a few months later, these same men who had denied the existence of rebates, in order to prevent all the details coming out in court—for they fear nothing so much as real publicity—signed a stipulation admitting that they had made those illegal rebate deductions from gross earnings! The total amount of all such deductions from 1897 to 1903 was found to be \$10,500,000 in the State of Wisconsin alone." Upon this amount, said Governor La Follette in his message "the railroads should have paid a tax of four per cent., or approximately, \$420,000, of which sum the State has been defrauded." However, as soon as the expert accountants went to work, the amount of rebates dropped off from \$46,000 in one month to \$9,000 in the next, and to \$666 in the second month after the investigation had begun. "Without any threat of prosecution, indeed, without any intention of looking for rebates at all, the mere sunlight of publicity almost dried up this particular rebate plague spot." This is certainly an admirable lesson to those statesmen who really intend to make railways amenable to law.

A curious instance of rebate-giving with which our city of Winnipeg is indirectly, though not responsibly connected, is described at some length by Mr. Baker. Last year R. D. Wood & Co., of Philadelphia, wished to secure a contract for iron water pipes for Winnipeg. They had to compete with manufacturers in Scotland who had a preferential duty into Canada of \$2.40 a ton. The U.S. duty into Canada is \$3 a ton, making a competitive difference against the American manufacturer of \$5.60 a ton. Thomas L. Morton, traffic manager for R. D. Wood, managed to reduce this difference one dollar by obtaining a rebate of five cents a hundred pounds from C. E. Campbell, General Agent of the Great Northern Railway in Philadelphia, who offered to charge only 44 cents, while the legal rate was 49 cents a hundred. "The bills of lading read as straight as a string, 49 cents, freight-rate, the regular published tariff, and this was paid by R. D. Wood & Co. The transaction was spotless both in the books of R. D. Wood & Co. and in those of the railroad company. After it was all over, L. W. Lake of New York, traffic manager for the Mutual Transit Company, a line of vessels on the Great Lakes with which the Great Northern Railway had made arrangements, came down to Philadelphia with a cheque of \$1,500—rebate at five cents a hundred

on 1,500 tons of iron pipe. This cheque he handed to Mr. Morton, who endorsed it to R. D. Wood & Co. The rebate transaction was complete and no one except the two traffic managers was the wiser." This transaction which took place in 1904 and 1905, has since leaked out. By it were wronged not only the Scotch iron manufacturers, but "other American iron manufacturers, who, had they known that the rate was 44 instead of 49, might have had a chance to bid on the business. And, finally, it wronged all other shippers on the road, for if the published rate of 49 was reasonable, then 44 was too low, and other shippers must have paid the difference which R. D. Wood & Co. put in their pockets." Mr. Baker lays the chief blame for this unfair discrimination in favor of big jobs upon the financiers of Wall Street, who demand that railways shall pay dividends, who defend secret management, and who in the long run get the profits of these underhand and dishonest transactions.

This painstaking search after public fraud, so ably conducted by McClure's Everybody's and their more recent imitators, promises well for the correction of many evils that afflict the neighboring republic and, to a lesser extent, our own country. We hail this wholesome movement with real satisfaction because a return to natural virtue is an excellent preparation for supernatural grace. But we are far from entertaining the delusive hope that this movement is the harbinger of a millenium. In fact we are haunted by the fear that it is only a passing phase, and that the Folks and La Follettes of to-day may be followed by the Tweeds and Crokers of to-morrow. History has a taste for cycles of good followed by cycles of evil, and it generally repeats itself. There can be no lasting reform so long as the majority of a nation has no early religious training in Christian schools. Dread of public exposure, not conscience, the everlasting vigilance of rulers, not the fear of God, the utilitarian side of honesty, not a sense of duty, are the mainsprings of the present movement, and these springs soon wear out. Besides, there can be no permanent reversal of the universal reign of graft till the well-head of the evil is stopped up. And this is the magnitude of that source of corruption as summarized by William Allen White: "Fifty men in New York City form the board of directors of the majority of the great railroads, the great banks, the great life insurance companies, the great public service corporations. A score of these men are high-salaried lawyers. A dozen big law offices in New York hire subordinate lawyers in every American state and territory, and it is not so much the duty of these subordinate lawyers to practise in the courts as it is to control the courts and the forces that make the courts and the laws that the courts pass upon. Half a dozen of these great New York lawyers, through their common subordinates in the state capitals and trade centres, can practically dictate the election of United States senators, governors and Supreme Court judges in two thirds of the American states. For, by the use of railway passes, the subordinate attorneys may say what delegates shall attend every important local convention, and thereby what candidates shall win, and what state policy shall be followed. Given a permanent machine in a state amassed wealth controls it as surely as the sparks fly upward."

His Grace Archbishop Bruchesi, of Montreal, wrote recently a weighty pastoral letter to his flock, warning them against the demoralizing tendency of most of the French plays represented in the theatres of that city, and designating clearly enough the wicked and licentious dramas in which Sarah Bernhardt was to be the bright particular star. "Le Canada," a nominally Catholic paper, but a secret enemy of religion, published His Grace's pastoral, and, underneath it, the names of prominent Catholics who were present at Sarah Bernhardt's play the previous evening in spite of the Archbishop's warning. These names were more

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