

ST. LOUIS' MUNICIPAL BOODLERS

Single-Handed Exposure of a City's Corruption to Which New York under the Tweed Regime is the Only Possible Comparison. Many Millions of Dollars Received in Bribes.

St. Louis is the fourth city in size in the United States. There is a man at work there, one man, working all alone, but he is the circuit (district or state) attorney, and he is "doing his duty." That is what thousands of district attorneys and other public officials have promised to do and boasted of doing. This man has a literal sort of mind. He is a thin-lipped, firm-mouthed, dark little man, who never raises his voice, but goes ahead doing, with a smiling eye and a set jaw, the simple thing he said he would do. The politicians and reputable citizens who asked him to run, urged him when he declined. When he said that if elected he would have to do his duty, they said, "Of course." So he ran, they supported him, and he was elected. Now some of these politicians are sentenced to the penitentiary, some are in Mexico. The circuit attorney, finding that his "duty" was to catch and convict criminals, and that the biggest criminals were some of these same politicians and leading citizens, went after them. It is magnificent, but the politicians declare it isn't politics.

The corruption of St. Louis came from the top. The best citizens—the merchants and big financiers—used to rule the town, and they ruled it well. They set out to outstrip Chicago. The commercial and industrial war between these two cities was at one time a picturesque and dramatic spectacle such as is witnessed only in our country. Business men were not mere merchants and the politicians were not mere grafters; the two kinds of citizens got together and wielded the power of banks, railroads, factories, the prestige of the city, and the spirit of its citizens to gain business and population. And it was a close race. Chicago, having the start, always led, but St. Louis had pluck, intelligence, and tremendous energy. It pressed Chicago hard. It excelled in a sense of civic beauty and good government; and there are those who think yet it might have won. But a change occurred. Public spirit became private spirit, public enterprise became private greed.

Along about 1890, public franchises and privileges were sought not only for legitimate profit and common convenience, but for loot. Taking bit and always selfish interest in the public councils, the big men misused politics. The rift-raff, catching the smell of corruption, rushed into the municipal assembly, drove out the remaining respectable men, and sold the city—its streets, its wharves, its markets and all that it had—to the now greedy business men and bribers. In other words, when the leading men began to devour their own city, the herd rushed into the trough and fed also.

The St. Louis charter vests legislative power of great scope in a municipal assembly, which is composed of a council and a house of delegates. Here is a description of the latter by the February grand jury:

"We have had before us many of those who have been, and most of those who are now, members of the house of delegates. We found a number of these utterly illiterate and lacking in ordinary intelligence, unable to give a better reason for favoring or opposing a measure than a desire to act with the majority. In some, no trace of mentality or morality could be found; in others, a low order of training appeared, united with base cunning, groveling instincts, and sordid desires. Unequipped to respond to the ordinary requirements of life, they are utterly incapable of comprehending the significance of an ordinance, and are incapacitated, both by nature and training, to be the makers of laws. The choosing of such men to be legislators makes a travesty of justice, a premium on incompetency and deliberately poisons the very source of the law."

These creatures are well organized. They had a "combine" and legislative institution, which a grand jury has described as follows:

"Our investigation, covering more or less fully a period of ten years, shows that, with few exceptions, no ordinance has been passed wherein valuable privileges or franchises are granted until those interested have paid the legislators the money demanded for action in the particular case. Combines in both branches of the municipal assembly are formed by members sufficient in number to control legislation. To one member of this combine is delegated the authority to act for the combine, and to receive and to distribute to each member the money agreed upon as the price of his vote in support of or opposition to a pending measure. So long has this practice existed, that such members have come to regard the receipt of money for action on pending measures as a legitimate perquisite of a legislator."

One legislator consulted a lawyer with the intention of suing a firm to recover an unpaid balance on a fee for the grant of a switch way. Such

difficulties rarely occurred, however. In order to insure a regular and indisputable revenue, the combine of each house drew up a schedule of bribery prices for all possible sorts of grants, just such a list as a commercial traveler takes out on the road with him. There was a price for a grain elevator, a price for a hort switch; side tracks were charged for by the linear foot, but at rates which varied according to the nature of the ground taken; street improvement cost so much; wharf space was

ed the slogan, "reform," and "no more Ziegenheimism." Mayor Ziegenheim, called "Uncle Henry," was a "good fellow," "one of the boys," and though it was during his administration that the city grew ripe and went to rot, his opponents talked only of incompetence and neglect, and repeated such stories as that of his famous reply to some citizens who complained because certain street lights were put out: "You have the moon yet—ain't it?" One afternoon, late in January of



Joseph P. Folk

classified and precisely rated. As there was a scale for favorable legislation, so there was one for defeated bills. It made a difference in the price if there was opposition, and it made a difference whether the privilege asked was legitimate or not, but nothing was passed free of charge. Many of the legislators were saloon-keepers—it was in St. Louis that a practical joker nearly emptied the house of delegates by getting a boy to rush into a session and call out, "Mister, your saloon is on fire!"—but even the saloon-keepers of a neighborhood had to pay to keep in their convenient locality a market which public interest would have moved.

From the assembly, bribery spread into other departments. Men empowered to issue peddler's licenses and permits to citizens who wished to erect awnings or use a portion of the sidewalk for storage purposes charged an amount in excess of the prices stipulated by law, and pocketed the difference. The city's money was converted into private bank accounts. City carriages were used by the wives and children of city officials. Supplies for public institutions found their way to private tables; one itemized account of food furnished the poorhouse included California jellies, imported cheeses, and French wines! A member of the assembly caused the incorporation of a grocery company, with his sons and daughters the ostensible stockholders, and succeeded in having his bid for city supplies accepted although the figures were in excess of his competitors'. In return for the favor thus shown, he endorsed a measure to award the contract for city printing to another member, and these two voted aye on a bill granting to a third the exclusive right to furnish city dispensaries with drugs.

Men ran into debt to the extent of thousands of dollars for the sake of election to either branch of the assembly. One night, on a street car to the city hall, a new member remarked that the nickel he handed the conductor was his last. The next day he deposited \$5000 in a savings bank. A member of the house of delegates admitted to the February grand jury that his dividends from the combine netted \$25,000 in one year; a councilman stated that he was paid \$50,000 for his vote on a single measure.

Then the unexpected happened—an accident. There was no uprising of the people, but they were restive; and the opposition party leaders, thinking to gain some independent votes, decided to raise the cry "reform" and put up a ticket of candidates different enough from the usual offerings of political parties to give color to their platform. These leaders were not in earnest. There was little difference between the two parties in the city; but the Republican rascals had been getting the greater share of the spoils, and the Democrats wanted more than was given to them. "Boodles" was not the issue, no exposures were made or threatened, and the bosses expected to control their men if elected. Simply as part of the game, the Democrats raised

at that time a representative of the house combine, to meet him in the office of the Lincoln Trust Company. There the two rented a safe-deposit box. Mr. Stocke placed in the drawer the roll of \$75,000, and each subscribed to an agreement that the box should not be opened unless both were present. Of course the conditions spread upon the bank's day book made no reference to the purpose for which this fund had been deposited, but an agreement entered into by Messrs. Stocke and Murrell was to the effect that the \$75,000 should be given Mr. Murrell as soon as the bill became an ordinance, and by him distributed to the members of the combine. Stocke turned to the council, and upon his report a further sum of \$60,000 was secured. These bills were placed in a safe-deposit box of the Mississippi Valley Trust Co., and the man who held the key as representative of the council combine was Charles H. Kratz.

Thus the passage of House Bill 44 promised to cost the Suburban Railway Co. \$144,000, only one thousand dollars less than that originally named by the political boss to whom Mr. Turner had first applied. The bill, however, passed both houses of the assembly. The sworn servants of the city had done their work and held out their hands for the bribe money.

Then came a court mandate which prevented the Suburban Railway Co. reaping the benefit of the vote buying, and Charles H. Turner, angered at the check, issued orders that the money in safe-deposit boxes should not be touched. War was declared between bribe-givers and bribe-takers, and the latter resorted to tactics which they hoped would frighten the Suburban people into submission—such as making enough of the story public to cause rumors of impending prosecution. It was that first item which Mr. Folk saw and acted upon.

When Messrs. Turner and Stocke unfolded in the grand jury room the details of their bribery plot, Circuit Attorney Folk found himself in possession of verbal evidence of a great crime, he needed as material exhibits the two large sums of money in safe-deposit vaults, two of the largest banking institutions of the west. He decided in this case that the magnitude of the interests involved warranted unusual action, so he selected three of the grand jurors and visited one of the banks.

"Mr. —," said Mr. Folk, "a crime has been committed, and you hold concealed the principal evidence thereto. In the name of the State of Missouri I demand that you cause the box to be opened. If you refuse, I shall cause a warrant to be issued, charging you as an accessory."

For five minutes not a word was spoken by any one in the room; then the banker said in almost inaudible tones: "Give me a little time, gentlemen. I must consult with my legal adviser before taking such a step."

"We will wait ten minutes," said

the circuit attorney. "By that time we must have access to the vault or a warrant will be applied for."

At the expiration of that time a solemn procession wended its way from the president's office to the vaults in the sub-cellar—the president, the cashier, and the corporation's lawyer, the grand jurors, and the circuit attorney. All bent eagerly forward as the key was inserted in the lock. The drawer yielded and a roll of something wrapped in brown paper was brought to light. The circuit attorney removed the rubber bands, and national bank notes of \$1,000, \$500 and \$100 denominations spread out flat before them. The money was counted, and the sum was \$75,000.

Then the second box was opened. In this was found \$60,000. The chain of evidence was complete. From that moment events moved rapidly. Kratz and John K. Murrell, alleged representatives of council and house combines, were arrested on bench warrants and placed under

Cairo, Egypt, that Ellis Wainwright, many times a millionaire, proprietor of the St. Louis brewery that bears his name, now a member of a New York broker's firm, had been indicted. Julius Lehmann, one of the members of the house of delegates, who had joked while waiting in the grand jury's anteroom, had his laughter cut short by the hand of a deputy sheriff on his shoulder and the words, "You are charged with perjury." He was joined at the bar of the criminal court by Harry Faulkner, another mirth-provoking member.

Consternation spread among the boodle gang. Some of the men took night trains for other states and foreign countries; the majority remained and counseled together. Within twenty-four hours after the first indictments were returned, a meeting of bribe-givers and bribe-takers was held in South St. Louis, the total wealth of those in attendance being \$30,000,000, and their combined political influence sufficient to carry any municipal election under normal

conditions. This great power was aligned in opposition to one man who was still alone. It was not until many indictments had been returned that a citizens' committee was formed to furnish funds, and even then most of the contributors concealed their identity. Besides the convictions of these and many other men of good standing in the community, and the flight of many more, partnerships were dissolved, companies had to be reorganized to rid themselves of men disgraced and save their credit, business

houses were closed because their proprietors were absent, clubs expelled prominent members, and families were broken up. Mr. Folk, deterred as little by success as by failure, moved right on; he was not elated, he was not sorrowful. The man proceeded with his work quickly, surely, smiling, but without fear or pity. The terror spread, and the rout was complete.

Her August Majesty The His An. Dowager Empress of China, and her worthy adopted son, His Imperial Majesty Kwang Hsu, offer a charming contrast to the angry passions of the Spanish royalties. Recently, to mark the renewal of perfectly good relations between China and the powers, the worthy Empress Dowager gave a "pink tea" to the ladies of the embassies and ministries at Peking. It is reported that Her Celestial Majesty was urbanity itself; there was something even kittenish and sprightly in her greeting to her guests. This dear old lady, who was so universally inattentive only two years ago, and who was reported by the veracious news-providers of Shanghai to have boiled two or three ambassadors in oil or filled them up with melted lead, was decked, it seems, in a magnificent gown of blue silk, embroidered with golden butterflies and birds. Her hair was done in the Manchurian fashion, with two huge bows, or butterflys, at the side and her smile was sweet and winning. Emperor Kwang Hsu stood beside his adopted mamma, sweet-tempered and affable, his olive face lit up with a playful smile. He allowed the dear old lady to do all the talking, through a charming "Chinese damsel," the daughter of a former Chinese minister in Berlin, who speaks German and English fluently. The Dowager Empress wore high-heeled shoes—a somewhat necessary precaution, if, as is credibly reported, she is even shorter in stature than was Queen Victoria, the two august ladies, who, between them, governed half the human race, averaging something less than five feet in height. Most amusing was the end of this reception, for the Dowager retired to her bedroom, taking two of her lady guests with her, and all three climbed into a huge bed, where, it is said, they played cat's cradles. This particularly delighted Kwang Hsu, who came in while the game was going on. Altogether, these royal personages, the world over, are very much in the public eye in this so-called twentieth century. —Harper's Weekly.

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PROFESSIONAL CARDS

LAWYERS

PATTULLO & RIDLEY — Advocates

Notaries, Conveyancers, etc. 107-108 Rooms 7 and 8 A. C. Office Bldg.

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THE CHINESE EMPRESS

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Burrard Vacancy

Victoria, Jan. 5.—The election of a member for the Dominion house to succeed the late G. R. Maxwell takes place on February 5th. The nomination day is January 20th.

Thos. F. Neelds was on Thursday re-elected mayor of Vancouver by acclamation. In Ward 3 Aldermen Dr. McGuigan and C. H. Wilson were re-elected by acclamation. There were contests in all the other wards. In Ward 1 Ald. A. Bethune, ex-Ald. R. Grant, Ald. W. Blackmore and J. W. Prescott were nominated. In Ward 2 the contest will be between Ald. Jas. McQueen, John Simson, J. B. Campbell and Ald. E. Cook. In Ward 4 there will be a struggle between Robt. Macpherson, John Crow, Ald. Foreman and Ald. Brown. In Ward 6 Ald. Wood, W. A. Brown, John Morton and Ald. Wylie will fight it out.

Senator Armand Dead

Montreal, Jan. 2.—