

suaed are truly worthy, regardless of every other consideration. In determining the question of worthiness two qualifications rank far above all others in importance and should have chief consideration. The first and indispensable question is that of personal integrity. No man whose reputation is not only above reproach, but above suspicion, should be thought of for a moment, no matter what his other claims to support. The citizens ought surely to be able to elect a body of councillors every one of whom may be relied on as incorruptible. Second to that, and only less imperative, should be the demand for sound judgment and good business ability. Besides these two prime requisites all considerations of social position, party affiliation, or denominational connection, should not be even thought of. Amidst so many candidates, though the selection has not been made on such principles as we had hoped, there is probably an opportunity for the citizens to select, at least, a fairly reliable Council. Will they take the trouble to do so?

The Debs Conviction.

The recent decision of Judge Woods, condemning Debs and other officers of the American Railway Union to six months imprisonment for "contempt of court," in connection with the great railway strike, has naturally given rise to much controversy in American legal and journalistic circles. To discuss the question in all its bearings would require much more space than we have just now at our disposal. Primarily the jurisdiction of the court which issued the injunction, which was disregarded by Debs and his associates, was involved in Judge Wood's decision. His conclusion, as we understand it, is that that court was within its right, a right given it under the Anti-Trusts Act, an act which, however applicable some of its provisions may have been found to be to the case in question, was, as everyone will probably admit, enacted for a very different purpose. The principle underlying Judge Wood's decision seems to be, in a word, that a man may be judged by what he may know or be reasonably certain will be the consequence of his act. The strike, or the ordering of the strike, was not in itself unlawful. Had no acts of violence been committed, it is fair to assume that no injunction would have been issued or thought of. The decision raises many questions. Is a lawful act made unlawful by the fact that disastrous consequences follow it, even granting that those consequences may or might have been foreseen, though not designed or desired, by the parties doing the act? Is it in the interests of good government and justice that the words of an Act, found to be applicable to a case never contemplated by its framers, should be so applied? It would be interesting to have the questions involved in this remarkable case discussed by some good Canadian authority, on abstract principles, of course. To us, we confess, the whole thing seems like a dangerous straining of legal forms and authority to meet a case unprovided for by law—a kind of invention which is very likely to recoil in some way to plague the inventors. The result, several men imprisoned for six months for a criminal offence, by the mere fiat of a judge, without trial or opportunity for trial by a jury of their peers, seems a startling episode in the history of a free country.

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The Ethics of Journalism.

THE question whether the Fourth Estate is not really the most powerful of the four in these democratic days, is one which may well be left to the debating societies, but the great and still growing influence of the press, especially the periodical, and above all the daily press, is a truth so patent to everyone's observation that the mere statement of the fact seems a stale truism. There was force and suggestiveness in

the sarcasm of the man who, when the mighty London *Times* was under discussion in its mightiest days, said to his admiring friends that having seen several of the leader-writers of the "Thunderer," he could assure them that not one of them was more than ten feet high." Yet so far as he meant to convey the impression that the influence of their leaders upon the world of thought and action bore the same proportion to that of other men as their physical stature of that of others, he was conveying a wrong impression. Everyone knows that this is not the case, that a writer of moderate abilities, given access to the editorial columns of any of the great dailies in either hemisphere, at once gains a hearing, and an influence upon the popular mind and will, out of all proportion to that which can be wielded by many a writer and thinker of greater ability who is obliged to come before the public in his own name, or over a fictitious signature.

It is not any part of our purpose just now to inquire into the cause or causes of this phenomenon. It may be and, as a rule, probably is, largely due to the fact that there is usually at the head of such a paper one or more minds of unusual force and penetration, and of large acquaintance with public affairs, and that the staff writer, when not himself a man of this description, generally does but put into good newspaper English, or whatever the language may chance to be, the thoughts and opinions of this leading mind. We say "newspaper English" advisedly, because it must be admitted that the style of the great newspaper is *sui generis*, and is not to be acquired in a day or a year by any but those who have a special natural aptitude of a very marked kind. To a certain extent, too, it must be admitted that the great party newspaper derives much of its weight from the fact that it has, or is supposed to have, access to sources of information and inspiration which are denied to others. It is, however, one of the signs of the times, and a most healthful one, we believe, that the inspired party organ, which plays for the public delectation only the tunes which are set for it in high places, is fast falling into desuetude. The tendency towards independent journalism has been especially marked in Canada within the last few years, and it goes without saying that a corresponding improvement is taking place in the character of the newspapers themselves.

But the special point to which we set out to call attention is the absence, among the members of the great fraternity of journalists, of anything like uniformity touching certain great questions of principle and practice in cases which must almost daily arise to perplex the wise and conscientious journalist. The members of other learned professions have usually their codes of professional ethics more or less clearly defined. Some of these, it is true, may seem arbitrary, unnecessary, or even mane to the minority and to the public, but none the less their observance is decreed, sometimes by a visible, sometimes by an invisible decree, or a well understood custom which has all the force of law. But in the wide field of newspaperdom every journal is, to a great degree, a law unto itself, amenable only to the judgments and tastes of the classes of readers for whom it caters. The writer remembers having, on one occasion, suggested to the manager and editor-in-chief of one of the most influential dailies in a large city, the propriety of suppressing reports of a certain kind, or at least of curtailing the amount of space given to them. The reply—and it was made by a man of principle, who, no doubt, sincerely desired to keep his paper upon a high plane—was to the effect that it had been found or was believed to be better, even from the ethical point of view, to keep up the large circulation of the paper for the sake of the good influence it would exert on the whole and upon all classes of readers, than to adopt a course which would result in a large reduction in the number of its readers, and consequently a mater-