

Messenger and Visitor

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Bribery in Elections.

In a democratic country like Canada where the power of creating Parliaments is vested in the people, the responsibility which rests upon the people in connection with a general election is correspondingly great. In some countries the people have no constitutional voice in determining the character of the government which is over them. They are subject to the sway of an autocrat who governs them according to his will or his whim, his wisdom or his folly, his ideas of right or the dictates of self interest. And the word of this absolute ruler, good or bad, the people must obey. In other countries the people have, in a greater or smaller measure, a voice in the selection of the men who make and administer the laws of the country, and to a corresponding extent they are able to determine the character of the government under which they live. There are few countries in which a greater measure of the governing power has been committed to the hands of the people than in our own. The possession of this power has come as the result of long centuries of agitation and struggle. It is because our ancestors had that in them which would not submit to oppression and injustice that the authority of government has been transferred from the hands of kings and hereditary ruling classes into the hands of the people. And the common people of the land, instead of being mere pawns for tyrants to play with, have become the real source of government, able to create parliaments and to impose their behests upon rulers and governments. This liberty has been secured at heavy cost. It is in no small degree the purchase of blood, and unless the men of this generation possess the intelligence to prize, the integrity and the courage to defend these liberties, they confess themselves unworthy to be the sons of the men who purchased this freedom at so great a price.

What then is to be thought and said of men who have been entrusted under the constitutional government of this country with the great and honorable duties of the electorate, who are the guardians of popular liberty and the source of political authority, but who are nevertheless willing, for some paltry consideration, to sell their electoral birth-right? What is to be said and thought of the politician who, while posing as the advocate of good government and the friend of the people, is ready, for the sake of furthering his personal ambitions and promoting the interests of his party, to poison the political life of the country at its very source by corrupting the electorate? As such influences prevail in the politics of the country, it is inevitable that the ideals and the whole character of its public life shall be come lowered. The conditions of entrance into it, and of continuance therein, tend to become such that the men of really noble aims and high character are repelled; and when the best men in a country come to look upon its political arena as an unclean place, into which they are unwilling that either they or their sons shall enter, there is a condition of things which bodes ill to the country's highest interests. It is true in respect to political interests, as in other things, that those who misuse the blessings which have been bestowed upon them are in a fair way of losing them.

This matter is one which intimately and vitally concerns the people of this country. It is admitted on all hands that corruption in elections extensively prevails. Men into whose hands the solemn and important duties connected with the electorate have been entrusted, are to be found everywhere on election day ready to sell themselves to the highest bidder, and the agents and leaders of political parties are found everywhere ready to tempt men to this degradation of their manhood by offering them a few paltry dollars for their votes. So wide-spread is this evil that men who are in a position to know whereof they affirm, assure us that if there are any

constituencies in Canada in which bribery plays no considerable part in elections, they form the very rare exceptions. It might indeed be expected that in a country where so large a proportion of the adult male population is included in the electorate, there would be found in every constituency a small number of electors whose intelligence and moral character would not be sufficiently high to resist the temptation of a bribe. But it is to be feared that the men who are thus prostituting their manhood are not by any means all of a class who would be supposed to be indifferent to the moral character of such an act. If the truth is being told, there are not a few members of Christian churches who are to be found among those who are willing to sell their political birth-right for a mess of pottage and to barter their votes for dollars on election day. If this is true it indicates a very serious condition of things, and one that calls for searching enquiry on the part of all who have to do with the political, moral and religious education of the people. If all was being done that is possible, by those who prize wholesome and pure government, to instruct the people of the land as to value of popular government, as to the honorable and responsible position occupied by the electorate as the source of political authority, and as to the sacred character of the obligations which rest upon every elector to discharge his political duties intelligently, honestly, and in the fear of God, would it be possible for this country to be so polluted and disgraced as it is by the prevalence of bribery and other impure practices in elections? This is a subject which will perhaps bear some further discussion, and we hope to return to it again.

Dining With Pharisees.

Our Bible lesson for the week affords an instructive glimpse into the daily life of Jesus. We see him entering the house of a prominent Pharisee, in response doubtless to an invitation, to eat bread with him on a Sabbath day. We can imagine that it would have accorded much more with the inclination of the Master to accept an invitation from some humble friend, in whose home, with simpler fare and less display of wealth, he would have found more sympathetic hearts and a more genuine hospitality. But to refuse the proffered hospitality of the rich may be as much an indication of pride as to despise the invitation of the poor. Jesus did neither. While he was ever the friend of the humble, he did not turn away from any man because of his wealth or exalted position, or because the acceptance of such a man's hospitality might make himself the butt of suspicion or unkind remark on the part of those who hated the truth which he declared.

Men of a critical and censorious spirit were present that Sabbath day in the Pharisee's house. "And they were watching him"—watching not to see some good deed done, to hear some word of truth bravely spoken, that they might applaud the gracious word or deed, and act upon the truth, but with unfriendly spirit, to find fault with and condemn, in order that they might excuse themselves from obedience to the truth which Jesus taught. Such watching eyes, through which souls shrivelled and jaundiced with formalism, bigotry and cynicism look forth, make it hard for the men who desire to live and to speak the truth. Those hateful eyes such as followed with instinctive malice the Master's work are not all closed yet. How hard it is for a man to be simple and brave and strong—to be and act his best self—when he knows that fiercely critical—or perhaps still worse—coldly censorious eyes are turned upon him, watching for defects and quick to find occasion to belittle, denounce and condemn. It does not make it easier certainly if they are the eyes of those from whom he might reasonably expect the expression of a friendly regard, a kindly and hopeful charity. It is an indication of the unique moral greatness of our Lord that these malevolent watching eyes, constantly directed upon him and his work, had no power to turn him from his course to the right or to the left. They watch him here to see whether he will heal on the Sabbath and so incur the condemnation of the Pharisees. There is no hesitation. He heals the sick man and dismisses him, then turns to those Pharisaic spies and confounds them with a question which places the seal of self-condemnation on their lips. There is not one of them who if his beast fell into a pit on the Sabbath would not pull him out, and can they

open their lips to denounce an act which has effected for a son of Abraham on the Sabbath, what either their natural compassion or their self-interest would have led them to do for a brute?

The Master has certain other things also to say to these men who have sought, and sought in vain, to find occasion against him. The hour was opportune for impressing upon his hearers two important lessons. First, there is a lesson as to the distinction between real and factitious honors. There is an idea of honor which connects it with appearance merely. There is a man who thinks that he has attained to honor if he can maintain a certain kind of dress and equipage, and successfully assert his right to certain positions among his fellowmen. This is the kind of man who covets a chief place at a feast. His honor and his enjoyment depend upon the seat he occupies. There is another man whose claim to honor does not consist in any titles or outward distinctions but in his large personal worth. To such a man the highest seat in the room adds no distinction, while he brings honor to the humblest seat. And the time must come when the really honorable man will be accorded his true place, and the man whose only title to distinction consists in the place which he so unworthily occupies shall begin with shame to take the lowest place. This is a lesson which doubtless the Pharisees of old had much need to learn. And we who now study these records of the Master's teaching have not yet grown so wise in these matters that we do not need to have this lesson impressed upon our hearts.

There is another lesson here which is not less important, and which perhaps we have not less need to learn than that which has just been noticed. It is a lesson in regard to the ideal hospitality. Whom shall we invite to our feasts? With whom shall we share the good things which God has bestowed upon us. Our Lord seems to say to us: Do not limit your sympathies within narrow bounds. Let your fellowship be free, generous and unselfish. Take care that even the expressions of your good-will are not ruled by selfishness. Do not limit your kindly thoughts and deeds to those who can repay you in kind. But bestow your good things freely upon those who can make you no recompense. Do not fear to put money where you will never see it again in this world. Invest in the Bank of the Kingdom and expect your dividends at the resurrection of the just, and you will not be disappointed.

Editorial Notes.

—The Duke of Abruzzi who is a first cousin of the present King of Italy, has lately returned from a polar expedition in which he reached the latitude of 86 deg. 33 mins. a point nineteen miles farther north than that reached by Nansen. It is said that the two explorers are likely to unite in another attempt to reach the Pole. The Duke of Abruzzi has lost the tips of two fingers as a result of having them frozen while in the polar regions.

—In another column will be found a communication from Rev. J. B. Morgan, explaining why it has been decided to recall the announcement made by him last week respecting the Christian Culture Courses for the B. Y. P. Unions. The situation reached is to be regretted. No doubt there will be considerable disappointment on the part of the Maritime Unions. The fact however seems to be that the opinion of Ontario and Quebec had to be obtained, and that when it was obtained, it proved to be unfavorable to the plan adopted by the B. Y. P. U. Committee of the National Convention. The result demonstrates the impracticability of hastily undertaking any work in regard to which large and widely separated communities are to co-operate.

—The Casket says: "We should be pleased if the MESSENGER AND VISITOR would point out where we have ever used nick-names—no other sort of epithets remember, but nick-names, for those are what we said were offensive to good taste." But does the Casket mean to say that the only possible offence against good taste, in writing or speaking of an opponent, consists in the use of nick-names? Our contemporary would surely feel much embarrassed at times if it were not able to find epithets more offensive than nick-names to fling at the enemy. The Casket reminds us of the old sea captain, who agreed to pay a fine for every profane-expression he might use, but stipulated that the use of any word or expression to be found in the Bible was not to be regarded as profanity.

—Rev. Charles Inwood who has lately returned from an extended trip in the northern portion of China, in the course of which he travelled ten thousand miles and had close fellowship with the missionaries of all evangelical societies, delivered an address at the Methodist meetings lately held in Belfast, Ireland, in which he bore testimony to the noble work being done in China by missionaries from Great Britain and America. Speaking from personal knowledge, Mr. Inwood praised in the highest terms the wisdom of method and calm devotion to the needs of the people displayed by the missionaries in China. The great uprising, he said, was anti-foreign, but not anti-missionary. So far as the Protestant missionaries were concerned, there was no bitter antagonism