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## MY AMERICAN EXPERIENCES.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS REPUBLIC.

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FROM my early boyhood I desired to visit America, not that I wished to seek a new home there, or merely to satisfy my curiosity or my love of travel, for the land and people of the United States always excited an interest in me which had something of the fascinating power of magnetism.

I left the University of Jena on the 13th of November, 1860, and reached New York after a stormy voyage of twenty-one days. The political situation in the United States at that time was comparable with the sultry air which precedes a thunderstorm. In South Carolina the Governor had declared, that in the event of Mr. Lincoln's election the only alternative left was the secession of that State from the federal Union; and if, he said, the Government of the United States, forgetful of the lessons of history, should attempt coercion, it would become the solemn duty of the South to meet force by force.

I remained in New York only a few days, but long enough to receive a lasting impression of the tremendous energy which pulsed in the waving life of the Empire City. I was particularly struck by the discovery which I made there that in the United States the task of the policemen is not to vex their fellow-citizens, but to protect women and children, who were led safely through

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# NEEDED MUNICIPAL REFORMS.

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## I. OUR PRESENT OPPORTUNITY.

BY THE REV. C. H. PARKHURST, D. D.

DIFFICULT as it is to arouse public opinion, there is still a greater difficulty in harnessing down that aroused opinion into discreet and concerted action. No one can be knowing to the present condition of sentiment in this city, as expressed in the common speech of men, and as reflected in the public journals, without being assured that if enthusiasm and indignation were all that are required in order to a municipal revolution, the necessary material is amply in hand. Unfortunately, however, sentiment, no matter how honest and well-intentioned, cannot be counted on for safe, and least of all for concerted, efforts. There are not a great many intelligent and reputable people in this city, and scarcely a respectable journal, but what antagonize strenuously the existing *régime*. Now if all that were required was a plebiscitum, in which each citizen had only to vote for or against the continuance of Tammany control by a "yes" or "no" ballot, probably the business could be pretty easily finished. The intelligence and conscience of the city are quite solidly arrayed *against* the administration now existing, but there are not evident the symptoms of a similar consensus *in favor* of any other mode of administration to take its place. Destructive agreement is an easy matter, and this city is full of it; but constructive agreement is a rarity and a luxury. This is the rock upon which municipal reform has been wrecked in times past, and there is a possibility, not to say a probability, that it will be wrecked on the same rock next November.

Political revivals are in that particular somewhat like revivals of religion. Churches of various denominations will, in seasons of religious interest, combine for evangelical effort, with little

consciousness of their interdenominational incompatibility, and the appearance will be that incongruities have been eliminated, and that the lion and the lamb have indeed lain down together. And yet the case has very often been that just that suspension of hostilities has been the occasion of accumulating only a fresh and enhanced supply of interdenominational virus, and I have known of no religious bitterness that rivals that which sometimes develops between churches in the process of capturing the converts after a series of "union services." Human nature is a singular thing, and there is a great deal of it. The illustration we have just used states fairly the condition we are in to-day. We are passing politically through what may be termed a series of "union services." The lion and the lamb—in fact, all the animals except the tiger—are lain down together. There is a harmonization of sentiment that is almost millennial. This harmony, however, is replete with vast possibilities of jealousy and rivalry, and the confidence with which Tammany Hall faces the coming November election is based, to a considerable degree, on its appreciation of that fact. Our purpose in so stating the matter is not to discourage the hopeful, but it is poor philosophy to deal with a situation without having first taken its honest measure.

There exist at the present time a considerable number of reform movements in New York that are agreed in their purpose to destroy Tammany, but that are just as distinct from one another in the complexion of the administration which they desire respectively to establish in its place. Each of these reform movements is aiming at precedence in the overthrow of existing conditions, and each of them already regards with a jealous eye the efforts that are being made by its competitors to marshal the approaching campaign. A man or a clique may be intensely interested in the weal of his city, and yet be still more interested in the success of his personal or political scheme for the compassing of that weal; and when it comes to be a matter between the saving of his city, and the success of his own plan for saving, he gives the preference to the latter, and sacrifices the municipal interest rather than see victorious any rival policy for the promotion of that interest. This has occurred repeatedly in the recent history of this city, and it is extremely probable that it will occur again this year. There are reputable Democrats who are laboring and praying for the overthrow of Tammany Hall, that would nevertheless

rather see Tammany Hall win than to see a Republican elected mayor; and there are Republicans in large number that are guilty of precisely the same sort of political bigotry. They will not confess it, perhaps are not even aware of it; they will not vote the Tammany ticket next November, but they will do what is in effect precisely the same thing: they will refrain from casting an anti-Tammany ballot, and thus become the passive auxiliary of the very condition against which they are to-day laboring and praying.

This is a truth to be stated promptly and urgently. There is being a good deal of hard, honest work done in behalf of our wickedly misgoverned city, and we are some of us continually nettled and acerbated by the reflection that there are political experts of every stripe that are lounging ambitiously around waiting for the opportunity to capture the movement in the interests of their own party or prepossession, posing as reformers till the critical moment comes, and then seizing upon the opportunity with precisely the same hungry rapacity as that which distinguishes the municipal administration we are suffering under already. Unpleasant as the fact may be, it must nevertheless be appreciated by the rank and file of our reputable citizens that a great deal of the bitterness with which Tammany Hall is regarded by some of our conspicuous citizens who have been taking a long political vacation is due exclusively to the fact that they are tired of going barefoot, and are hunting for dead men's shoes. The municipal enthusiasm that is developing among certain political "back numbers," certain Republican and Democratic corpses that have been lying in grave-clothes for some years, waiting for the resurrection tattoo, is too transparent to baffle the perceptions of intelligent citizens who care to take the candid measure of the situation.

The times are ripe for the reconstruction of our municipal life, and the general desire and demand that exist among us for something better will not fail of being realized unless the movement is sidetracked, or unless it is employed for partisan purposes or is prostituted to the promotion of individual ambitions. This is a movement of the people, and the people must not allow themselves to surrender their control of it. Professional politicians have not been the authors of it, and it is not, therefore, a thing to be committed to their custody. The people, as such, have rights here, and one of their rights, and one of their obli-

gations too, is to assert themselves in all that relates to the municipal interest. One of the charges that have been popularly laid against Tammany Hall is its system of "bossism." At present, one man determines our municipal character and administration. Now, it must be urged upon the popular attention that what is needed is not an exchange of "bosses," but the abolition of "bosses." The names can be easily specified of those who are voluminous in their vituperation of Mr. Croker, but whose enmity to him is based, not on the autocratic position he holds, but on the fact that his occupancy of the position cuts them out from occupying it themselves.

The doctrine to be preached in all these matters is that no system of half-measures will hit the urgency of the times or be level to the popular demand. If Tammany control is to overcome next November, it will be at the pressure of a tide of wisely directed popular enthusiasm, and it will be far easier to develop the requisite enthusiasm by presenting to it men and measures that meet the entire demand, than by presenting to it men and measures that meet the demand but half way. Thoroughness is the prime condition of permanency. If we simply *better* our condition next November, we might about as well remain as we are. Such a result would not pay for the effort it would cost, for we should presently slide back into our present state, and have to repeat the tiresome farce of self-extrication. We do not like machine politics, but we would most of us just as soon be the victim of machine politics that spells itself "Tammany Hall" as the victim of machine politics that spells itself by any other or more reputable name. It is the *thing* we object to, not the name that is tagged to it; and now is a good time to get rid of the *thing*; and we shall get rid of it if, at the popular demand, the politicians are kept from spoiling the movement.

There was probably never in this city so earnest and clear-cut a conviction as now that in all municipal matters the distinctively political element should be reduced to a minimum. People who never said it before are saying it to-day, that the affairs of our city should be administered in the interests of our city, and not in the interests of the office-holders, and not in the interests of any national theory or policy. Conducting the concerns of New York is a business, and the people, with a phenomenal unanimity, are demanding that it should be conducted on business

principles. New earnestness is given to this consensus by the example of the new Mayor of Brooklyn, who proposes to embody that principle in his administration. When the time comes here, as it has in so many of the English cities, that candidacy for official position means above all integrity and competency to fill the position, we shall wonder that it took us so long to graduate from the senseless opinion that a man's national convictions determine his qualifications for municipal trust, and that his views of tariff, or of any other national issue, ever touch the matter of his fitness to stand at the head of a city or at the head of any of its administrative departments.

We, in New York, are in the condition we are in to-day for the reason that our local character and concerns have been so long subordinate to considerations of a national character, and we are, a good many of us, tired of it and disgusted with it. We want the political element of our municipal life exterminated. There is probably not one intelligent and conscientious man out of fifty but what assents to that when the issue is fairly put; and the men who do not assent to it are those who have some ulterior ambition of their own to further, or who are willing to purchase the aggrandizement of their own party at the expense of the economy, thrift, and honor of their municipality. The rank and file of the people are coming out very distinctly upon this ground, and it behooves them to stand firmly by their conviction, and not to allow themselves to be either bulldozed or hoodwinked by the specious machinations of the self-constituted leaders who are trying to make political capital out of the "dear people" whose interests they are affecting to espouse. Instance the matter of a non-partisan police board. At this writing it is proposed that such board should be composed of two Republicans and two Democrats. Certainly a non-partisan board is less mischievous than one that is predominantly either Republican or Democratic; but the legislated obligation to put upon the board two men that are distinctively of one party, and two men that are distinctively of the other party, will be certain to have two evil effects: the first of which is that it will "tie" the board on all questions that involve political considerations—a fact which is amply illustrated by past attempts to secure the conviction of police captains before such a two-headed commission; and the second is that it

will legislatively fasten the political feature upon municipal government, just at a time when men are more anxious than ever before to get rid of political features. The sooner we get rid of the whole system of police commissioners, the better; such a system affords a nest for all sorts of political machinations to breed in, and, by distributing responsibility, makes it impossible definitely to locate responsibility. At present the superintendent shoulders the blame for non-enforcement of law upon the police commissioners, and the commissioners reciprocate. No one knows the exact point at which either credit or blame is to be attached. The whole effect of our present quadruple commission is to handicap the superintendent, to obfuscate the field of his accountability, and to confuse the entire department by the introduction of ingredients that are foreign to the proper purposes of the department, and to the specific advantage of the municipality. There is no more necessity for the introduction of a commission between the mayor and the superintendent of police than there is for a bureau of control between the agent of a manufactory and the heads of the respective departments into which that manufactory is organized. We shall have neither a safe nor an effective municipal government till it is so relieved of unnecessary machinery that we shall know precisely what to find fault with when things go wrong. A good deal of the present difficulty in dealing with our police department lies in the fact that, corrupt though it be in its entire animus and working, everybody in it hides behind everybody else, and it is next to impossible to pin obligation anywhere. It will be the politicians that will oppose the abolition of such commissioners, for that would be to diminish by so much the number of lucrative positions; and when you have robbed a politician of boodle and patronage, you have taken from him everything that in his estimation makes government dear.

Our "municipal opportunity," therefore, is to be interpreted not simply in its relations to an escape from the despotism of Tammany, but to the emancipation from the domination of whatever self-constituted authority undertakes to bind us to its behests. What the citizens of this city want is, not an exchange of masters, but deliverance from all masters save that of the collective will. That is the line along which educating influences will have to be made to bear in the months that are to come. Politi-

cians that are "in" will make jest of such a policy ; so will politicians that are "out," but that want to get "in"; but the rank and file of us believe in home government; and when we say home government, we mean not only New York city's government of itself as opposed to government from Albany, but our own individual government of ourselves and participation in the governmental influences that go to compose our municipal character and history. The best thing we can do for months to come will be, not to talk about candidates, and not to draw the net of partisan interest with which we may be severally affiliated, but to prevent the present municipal earnestness from mortgaging itself to any man, movement, or party; to make people intelligently and burningly conscious of the immediate situation ; to go on uncovering the crookedness with which the members of our present city government have warped themselves, and the filth with which they have begrimed themselves ; to be steadily drawing to a finer tension the motives and purposes of our citizenship ; to protest untiringly against the adoption of any half-measures or compromise candidates ; steadily to emphasize the moral element involved in the present warfare, and so to lift the struggle above the level of petty ambition and sectional prejudice that the popular mind shall become more and more elevated and insistent in its demands, and that its choice of leadership be determined, not by the scheming of a cabal, nor by a policy of barter and dicker, but by the wide drift of event and the high exigencies of the hour.

C. H. PARKHURST.

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## II. JUGGLING WITH THE BALLOT.

BY JOHN W. GOFF, COUNSEL TO THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROSECUTION OF ELECTION FRAUDS.

At a mass meeting held under the auspices of the Bar Association of the City of New York at the Cooper Union last October, a committee of fifty was appointed to invite the co-operation of citizens, irrespective of party, to secure as far as possible an observance of the election laws. A number of gentlemen volunteered to act as watchers at the polls on election day, and while it was, under the circumstances, impracticable to man each of the 1,157 polling-places in the city, yet there was a sufficient