

successors in the Sisyphean labour would have a lighter burden and a less rugged ascent to climb. One important result of the attention which they had drawn to municipal mismanagement was the passage of an act of the legislature, under which, in 1877, the governor of the State appointed a commission of eleven persons to devise a plan for the government of cities. This commission made a report proposing valuable improvements, and submitted it, with a bill embodying their suggestions, to the State legislature in 1878. The legislature, however, at the bidding of the Rings, for Pittsburg and other cities have their Rings as well as Philadelphia, smothered the bill, and all efforts to pass it failed till 1885.¹

In the course of 1880, the horizon began to clear.¹ Several honest and outspoken men who had found their way into the two councils of the city, denounced the prevailing corruption, and by demands of inquiry began to rouse the citizens. A correspondent of a New York paper obtained facts about the management of the Gas Trust which, when published, told seriously on opinion. At the November election, while Philadelphia cast a heavy vote in favour of General Garfield as Republican candidate for the Presidency, and for the Republican nominees for the offices of State Auditor-General, and judge of the State Supreme Court, she returned as City Controller a young Democrat, who having, with the help of the Municipal Reform Association, found his way into that office at the last preceding election, had signalized himself by uprightness and independence. The Republican bosses did their utmost against him, but the vote of independents among the Republicans, joined to that of the Democratic party (whose bosses, although secretly displeased with his conduct, did not openly throw him over), carried him in. Thirteen days afterwards, under the impulse of this struggle, an energetic citizen convened a meeting of leading merchants to set on foot a movement for choosing good men at the elections due in February, 1881. This meeting created a committee of one hundred business men, including a large number of persons bearing the oldest and most respected names in Philadelphia. All were Republicans, and at first they endeavoured to effect their

¹ In the narrative which follows I have derived much assistance from a little book by Mr. George Vickers, entitled *The Fall of Bossism* (Philadelphia, 1883), which, with some oddities of style, contains many instructive details of the doings of the Bosses and the Reform Campaign. Some information as to Ring methods in Philadelphia may also be gathered from a lively satire published anonymously, entitled *Solid for Mulhooly* (New York, 1881).

purposes by means, and within the limits, of the Republican party. They prepared a declaration of principles, containing their programme of municipal reform, and resolved to support no candidate who would not sign it. Soon the time came for making nominations for the three offices to be filled up, viz., those of mayor, receiver of taxes, and city solicitor. For mayor, the "regular" Republican party, controlled by Mr. M'Manes, nominated Mr. Stokley, who was then in office, a man against whom no fraud could be charged, but whose management of the police force and subservience to the Boss had made him suspected by earnest reformers. At first, in the belief that he was prepared to subscribe their declaration, the One Hundred gave him their nomination; but when it turned out that he, influenced by the Ring, refused to do so, they withdrew their "indorsement," and perceived that the time had come for a bolder course. Since they must resist the Ring Republicans, they invited the co-operation of the Democratic party in choosing a good man. The novelty of the circumstances, and the opportunity of doing a good stroke for their party and their city at once, brought to the front the best element among the Democrats. Overruling their bosses by a sudden movement, the Democratic convention nominated Mr. King for the mayoralty, a bold and honest man, whom, though a Democrat, the committee of One Hundred promptly accepted. For the not less important office of receiver of taxes, the One Hundred had nominated Mr. Hunter, a Republican, who had approved his public spirit by upright service in the common council. The Ring Republicans had taken for their candidate an unknown man, supposed to be a creature of Mr. M'Manes; and everything now turned on the conduct of the Democratic nominating convention. It was strongly urged by the feeling of the people to accept Mr. Hunter. But the Democratic bosses had no mind to help a reformer, and even among the better men, the old dislike to supporting a person belonging to the opposite party was strong. A passionate struggle in the Democratic convention, round whose doors a vast and eager crowd had gathered, resulted in the carrying by a small majority of a regular party candidate named M'Grath against Mr. Hunter. Thereupon the delegates who supported Hunter seceded, and marched, escorted and cheered by excited crowds, to the rooms

of the One Hundred, where they organized themselves afresh as an Independent convention, and nominated Hunter. Immense enthusiasm was evoked in both parties by this novel and unexpectedly bold action. Independent Democrats organized clubs and committees in Hunter's cause, and the movement spread so fast that ten days before the election M'Grath retired, leaving the regular Democrats free to cast their votes for the Republican Hunter, along with the Democratic King. Only one chance was now left to the Gas Ring — the lavish expenditure of money, and the resort to election frauds. They assessed the police, about 1300 in number, \$20 a head to replenish the campaign fund, levying assessments on the other city departments also. Preparations for repeating and ballot-box stuffing were made as in former days, but the energy of the One Hundred, who, while they issued a circular to clergymen of all denominations, requesting them to preach sermons on the duty of electors, issued also notices threatening prosecution against any one guilty of an election fraud, and organized a large force of volunteer citizens to look after the police, so much frightened the Ringsters and their dependents, that the voting was conducted with fairness and purity. The excitement on the polling day was unprecedented in municipal politics, and the success of the reform candidates who were chosen, King by a majority of six thousand, Hunter by twenty thousand, was welcomed with transports of joy. Astræa had returned — the "City of Independence" was again a city of freedom.

The committee of One Hundred, to whose efforts the victory was mainly due, was kept on foot to carry on and perfect the work of reform. It recommended candidates at the spring and fall elections during the three years that followed, obtaining for them a measure of success encouraging, no doubt, yet less complete than had been expected. It retained counsel to aid in a suit instituted against the Gas Trustees, which resulted in disclosing scandalous waste and fraud, and led to a great improvement in the management of that department. It induced the State legislature to reduce the salaries of a number of over-paid officials, and to place on a permanent basis the salaries of judges which had hitherto been voted annually. The Mayor, whom it had carried in 1881, stopped the assess-

ment of the police for "campaign purposes," and rigidly restrained them from joining in the nominating conventions or interfering with voters at the polls. The tax office was reorganized by the new Receiver, and the income which its employes depleted turned into the city treasury. The system of banking city moneys, which had been used for political purposes, was reformed under an ordinance of the city councils, secured by the efforts of the committee. The lists of voters, which had been carelessly and sometimes corruptly made up, were set to rights, and capable men appointed assessors instead of the ward politicians, often illiterate, to whom this duty had been previously entrusted. An inspector of highways was engaged by the committee to report cases in which contractors were failing to do the work in repairing streets and drains for which they were paid, and frauds were unearthed by which the city had been robbed of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Gross abuses in the management of the city almshouse and hospital were revealed; a new administration was installed, which in its first year saved the city \$80,000; while the conviction and imprisonment of the chief offenders struck wholesome terror into evil-doers in other departments. Finally, the committee undertook the prosecution of a large number of persons accused of fraud, repeating, personation, violence, tampering with ballot-boxes, and other election offences, and by convicting some and driving others from the city, so much reduced these misdemeanours that in the end of 1883 the city elections were pronounced to show a clean bill of health.¹

Work so various and so difficult cost the members of the committee of One Hundred, who were nearly all men actively engaged in business, and had passed a self-denying ordinance binding themselves to accept no personal political advantage, an infinitude of time and trouble. Accordingly, when they found that the candidates, whom they had recommended at the election of February, 1884, had been rejected in favour of other candidates, who made similar professions of reform, but seemed less likely, from their past history, to fulfil those pro-

¹ The committee observe in the Report that the party organization of the city, in nearly every instance, did its utmost by supplying bail, employing counsel, and rendering other assistance to protect the culprits, who were regarded as sufferers for the sake of their party.

fessions, they determined to wind up and dissolve the committee. It had done great things, and its failure to carry its candidates at this last election was due partly to the intrusion into municipal politics of the national issue of the protective tariff (the most burning of all questions to Philadelphians), partly to that languor which creeps over voters who fancy that by doing their duty strenuously for some years they have mortally wounded the power of corruption and need not keep up the fight till it is stone dead.

A recent authority sums up the situation thus:—

“The committee of One Hundred fought the Ring at every point and at all points for city and county officers, the council, and the legislature, the plan being to unite for the nominations of the two great parties and endorse one or the other of the candidates, or even nominate candidates of their own. They sent tickets to every citizen, and created the class of ‘vest-pocket voters’—men who come to the polls with their tickets made up, to the confusion of ‘the boys.’ They changed for a while the complexion of councils, elected a reform mayor and receiver of taxes, caused the repeal of the infamous Delinquent Tax Collections Bill, and the equally notorious and obnoxious Recorder’s Bill, and generally made a more decent observance of the law necessary throughout the city. In its nature, however, the remedy was esoteric and revolutionary, and therefore necessarily ephemeral. It could not retain the spoils system and thereby attract the workers. Its candidates, when elected, often betrayed it and went over to the regulars, who, they foresaw, had more staying qualities. Its members became tired of the thankless task of spending time and money in what must be a continuous, unending battle. The people became restive, and refused their support to what jarred on their conservative ideas, and what they were pleased to call the dictation of an autocratic, self-constituted body. The cry was raised: ‘Who made thee a ruler and judge over us?’

“In 1883 the committee’s candidate for controller was defeated in a pitched battle, and the following spring the reform mayor was beaten by over 7000 votes by the most advanced type of a machine politician, who has since been impeached by his own party in Common Council for pecuniary malfeasance.”¹

The above extract was written in 1883. Since that year there have been changes for the better in the city administration of Philadelphia, which I touch on but briefly, since it is to the Gas Ring episode that this chapter is specially

¹ Mr. E. P. Allinson and Mr. B. Penrose, in an article on “City Government in Philadelphia.” For a history of municipal government in the city, reference may be made to the treatise, “Philadelphia, 1681-1887,” of the same authors.

devoted. A bill for reforming municipal government by the enactment of a new city charter, approved by the One Hundred, came before the State legislature in 1883. It was there smothered by the professionals at the instance of the Gas Ring. When it reappeared in the legislature of 1885 circumstances were more favourable. The relations between the State Boss of Pennsylvania and the City Ring headed by Boss M’Manes were strained. The State Boss seems, while wishing to cripple the City Ring by cutting off some of its patronage, to have thought that it would be well to conciliate the good citizens of Philadelphia by giving his powerful support to a reform measure. He was the more drawn to this course because the Mayor of Philadelphia, whose appointing power would be enlarged by the bill, was, although not a “high-class politician,” far from friendly to the Gas Trust. Long discussions of the bill in the press and at meetings had produced some effect even on the State legislature at Harrisburg; nor was there wanting in that body a small section of good members willing to help reform forward. Many leaders and most newspapers had in the course of the discussions been led to commit themselves to an approval of the bill, while not expecting it to pass. Thus, in 1885, the opposition in the legislature ceased to be open and direct, and came to turn on the question when the bill, if passed, should take effect. Its promoters prudently agreed to let its operation be delayed till 1887; and having thus “squared” some of their opponents, and outmanœuvred others, they ran it through. Public opinion and a righteous cause counted for something in this triumph, but even public opinion and righteousness might have failed but for the feud between Mr. M’Manes and the State Boss.

The new city charter has worked for good. By bringing gas management under the control of the city executive, it extinguished the separate Gas Trust, and therewith quenched the light of Mr. M’Manes, who ceased to be formidable when his patronage departed, and has now become “a back number.” Municipal administration has gained by the concentration of power and responsibility in the mayor and the executive heads of departments whom he appoints. The Councils, however, are still bad bodies, few of the members respected, many of them corrupt. They are still nominated by a clique of machine-

politicians, and this clique they obey, paying some regard to the interests of their respective wards, but none to those of the city. Reformers think that to give them a salary might lessen their temptations, since it seems impossible to raise their tone. In the stead of Mr. McManes, the State Boss now reigns through his lieutenants; and so tight is his grip of the city, that when, in 1890, the suspicions he aroused had provoked a popular uprising which overthrew his nominee for the State governorship, turning over to the other party some thirty thousand votes, he was still able to hold Philadelphia — rich, educated, staid, pious Philadelphia — by a large majority. Elections continue to be tainted with fraud and bribery; the politicians still refuse the enactment of adequate laws for a secret ballot and the publication of election expenses. Perhaps the most menacing power is that wielded by the great local corporations, including the railroad and tramway or street-car companies. Whether by the use of money, or, as is thought more probable, by influencing the votes of their employés, or by both methods, these corporations seem to hold the councils in the hollow of their hands. One of them lately secured from the city legislature, at a merely nominal figure, a public franchise, which, while it made the streets more dangerous, added to the market price of its stock about \$6,600,000. And this was done by a two-thirds majority over the veto of the mayor, in the teeth of an active agitation conducted by the most worthy citizens. Against scandals like this the best city charter furnishes little protection. They can be cured only by getting upright Councils, and these again can be secured only by having free instead of cooked nominations, honest elections, and a far more constantly active interest in the welfare of city than the mass of the voters have hitherto evinced. Philadelphia is not the only city in which private corporations have proved more than a match for public interests, and in which such corporations have netted immense profits, that ought to have gone to reduce the burdens of the people.¹

Against these evils a strenuous campaign has been con-

¹ It is stated by the Municipal League that the city has of recent years lost as much as \$50,000,000 by improvident grants of valuable purchases to street railroad companies.

ducted by various associations of "good citizens," some permanent, some formed for a special occasion. Two such, of which it is enough to say that they are worthy successors of the Committee of One Hundred, are now at work. They include nearly all those in whom high personal character is united to a sense of public duty. But their members have hitherto formed so small a proportion of the voters that it is only when some glaringly bad candidate is nominated or outrageous job perpetrated that their efforts tell in an election.

The European reader will have found four things surprising in the foregoing narrative—the long-suffering of the taxpayers up till 1881; the strength of party loyalty, even in municipal affairs where no political principle is involved; the extraordinary efforts required to induce the voters to protect their pockets by turning a gang of plunderers out of office; and the tendency of the old evils to reappear as soon as the ardour of the voters cools. He will be all the more surprised when he learns that most of the corrupt leaders in Philadelphia are not Irishmen, but Americans born and bred, and that in none of the larger cities is the percentage of recent immigrants so small. The general causes of municipal misgovernment have been discussed in preceding chapters, but it may be well to repeat that the existence of universal suffrage in a city of a million of people imposes a vast amount of work on those who would win an election. Nothing but a very complete and very active ward organization, an organization which knows every house in every street, and drops upon the new voter from Europe as soon as residence and the oath have made him a citizen, can grapple with the work of bringing up these multitudes to the poll. It was their command of this local organization, their practice in working it, the fact that their employés were a trained and disciplined body whose chief business was to work it—services in the gas or water or some other department being a mere excuse for paying the "workers" a salary—that gave the Gas Ring and its astute head their hold upon the voting power of the city, which all the best Republicans, with frequent aid from the Democrats, found it so hard to shake. It is the cohesion of this organization, the indifference of the bulk of its members to issues of municipal policy and their responsiveness to party names and cries, that

enables the henchmen of the State Boss now to wield that power, and with impunity to sacrifice the interests of the city to those of rich and vote-controlling corporations.

The moral of the whole story is, however, best given in the words of four eminent Philadelphians. I multiply testimonies because Philadelphia is a peculiarly instructive instance of the evils which everywhere infect municipal government. Her social and economic conditions are far more favourable than those of New York or Chicago, and the persistence of those evils in her is, therefore, a more alarming symptom than the grosser scandals which have disgraced those cities with their masses of recent immigrants.

Two of them wrote me as follows in 1888. One said:—

“Those who study these questions most critically and think the most carefully, fear most for the Republic from the indifference of the better classes than the ignorance of the lower classes. We hear endless talk about the power of the Labour vote, the Irish vote, the German vote, the Granger vote, but no combination at the ballot-box to-day is as numerous or powerful as the stay-at-home vote. The sceptre which is stronger to command than any other is passed by unnoticed, not because outworn in conflict, but because rusted and wasted in neglect. The primary, the caucus, and the convention are the real rulers of America, and the hand which guides these is the master. Here again the stay-at-home vote is still more responsible. In New York City in 1885 there were 266,000 voters; of these 201,000 voted at the regular election, and between 20,000 and 25,000 voted at the primary. This proportion would hold good the country over, and it appears that one out of every four does not vote at all, and nine out of every ten do not attend the primaries. It can therefore easily be seen that it is very easy to control the primaries, and granting strong party fealty how difficult it is to run an independent ticket against the machine.”

The other, Mr. Henry C. Lea, the distinguished historian, said:—

“Your expression of surprise at the mal-administration of Philadelphia is thoroughly justified. In existing social conditions it would be difficult to conceive of a large community of which it would appear more safe to predicate judicious self-government than ours. Nowhere is there to be found a more general diffusion of property or a higher average standard of comfort and intelligence—nowhere so large a proportion of landowners bearing the burden of direct taxation, and personally interested in the wise and honest expenditure of the public revenue. In these respects it is almost an ideal community in which to work out practical results from

democratic theories. I have often speculated as to the causes of failure without satisfying myself with any solution. It is not attributable to manhood suffrage, for in my reform labours I have found that the most dangerous enemies of reform have not been the ignorant and poor, but men of wealth, of high social position and character, who had nothing personally to gain from political corruption, but who showed themselves as unfitted to exercise the right of suffrage as the lowest proletariat, by allowing their partisanship to enlist them in the support of candidates notoriously bad who happened by control of party machinery to obtain the ‘regular’ nominations.

“The nearest approach which I can make to an explanation is that the spirit of party blinds many, while still more are governed by the mental inertia which renders independent thought the most laborious of tasks, and the selfish indolence which shrinks from interrupting the daily routine of avocations. In a constituency so enormous the most prolonged and strenuous effort is required to oppose the ponderous and complicated machinery of party organization, which is always in the hands of professional politicians who obtain control over it by a process of natural selection, and who thus are perfectly fitted for the work. Recalcitrants are raw militia who take the field with overwhelming odds against them, both in numbers and discipline. Even though they may gain an occasional victory, their enthusiasm exhausts itself and they return to more congenial labours, while the ‘regular’ is always on duty, and knows, with Philip II., that time and he can overcome any other two.”

A third writes in 1893:—

“The great majority of the voters take no interest in local politics. They refuse to attend the party primaries, and can rarely be induced to do more than spend a few minutes once a year in voting at city elections. Many refuse to vote at all, or yield only to corrupt inducements or to the solicitations of interested friends. The result is that combinations of unworthy leaders and mercenary henchmen are enabled to control the nominating conventions of both parties; and when election day comes, the people can do nothing but choose between two tickets dictated by equally corrupt men and nominated by similar methods. . . . I do not therefore look for progress towards an honest and intelligent conduct of municipal business until a considerable part of the now indifferent voters can be roused to a careful consideration of the subject, and convinced of the importance of organizing for the nomination of better candidates, and for the exclusion of national issues and national parties from municipal contests.”

A fourth, writing in 1894, observes:—

“The most characteristic feature of the situation is the supremacy of the Republican party, which has an immense majority in the city. Politically, therefore, the controlling party managers and the class from which reform leaders might be expected to come are in accord (manu-

facturing interests being the most important); and the advantages to be derived by persons in business in a large way from standing well with the managers of the dominant party are sufficiently great to check in no small degree individual inclination to strive for better conditions. As elsewhere in America, it is not the natural leaders in the community, the men who have succeeded in business or in the professions, who are party leaders, but men who are of no importance in any other connection. This fastens upon us an impersonal rule, those who exercise it not being influenced by public opinion, which would certainly act as a restraint upon men of standing. . . . The councils are dominated by the party managers who nominated them, and corporations who pay wages, in one way or another, to a considerable portion of the members. The city charter of 1885 is a good one, and we should look not so much for more legislation as for some means of stimulating the people to take a common-sense view of municipal government and realize their responsibility for it.

Philadelphia has just erected a magnificent city hall, the largest and finest building of its kind in the United States, with a tower, 537 feet in height, which far overtops Cologne Cathedral and the Pyramid of Cheops and St. Peter's at Rome. The thoughts of the traveller who is taken to admire it naturally turn to what goes on beneath its ample roof, and he asks whether the day will arrive when Philadelphian voters will take to heart the painful lessons of the past, and when the officials who reign in this municipal palace will become worthy of so superb a dwelling and of the city where the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution first saw the light. His Philadelphian friends reply that such a day will doubtless arrive. But they admit that it seems still distant.

CHAPTER XC

KEARNEYISM IN CALIFORNIA

I. THE CHARACTER OF CALIFORNIA

WHAT America is to Europe, what Western America is to Eastern, that California is to the other Western States. The characteristics of a new and quickly developed colonial civilization are all strongly marked. It is thoroughly American, but most so in those points wherein the Old World differs from the New. Large fortunes are swiftly made and not less swiftly spent. Changes of public sentiment are sudden and violent. The most active minds are too much absorbed in great business enterprises to attend to politics; the inferior men are frequently reckless and irresponsible; the masses are impatient, accustomed to blame everything and everybody but themselves for the slow approach of the millennium, ready to try instant, even if perilous, remedies for a present evil.

These features belong more or less to all the newer and rougher commonwealths. Several others are peculiar to California—a State on which I dwell the more willingly because it is in many respects the most striking in the whole Union, and has more than any other the character of a great country, capable of standing alone in the world. It has immense wealth in its fertile soil as well as in its minerals and forests. Nature is nowhere more imposing nor her beauties more varied.

It grew up, after the cession by Mexico and the discovery of gold, like a gourd in the night. A great population had gathered before there was any regular government to keep it in order, much less any education or social culture to refine it. The wildness of that time passed into the blood of the people, and has left them more tolerant of violent deeds, more prone to interferences with, or supersessions of, regular law, than are the people of most parts of the Union.