

responsible. But when we are asked to turn the Republicans out as a step toward reform, the question immediately arises, Whom have we to put in their place?

Such a party as the Republican party now is would not remain long in power if there were a party of unimpeachable integrity to put in its place. But, unfortunately for the Democrats, the integrity of their party is by no means unimpeachable, and there is strong reason to doubt whether they are a whit better than their opponents. To be sure, they have not done so much as the Republicans toward corrupting the national government, for the excellent reason that they have not had the power to do so; but in the States and cities where they have had control of affairs their management has been quite as corrupt as that of their opponents. Nay, in one respect it has been worse; for the shameless repudiation of public debts in many of the Southern States has been in the main their work, though there has been some disgraceful coquetting with the repudiators on the part of Republicans. Then we all know what scandalous abuses have marked their reign in the city of New York, where they have had uninterrupted control for a whole generation—scandals which are by no means a thing of the distant past. Nor has the party redeemed these acts by valuable services in the work of reform; on the contrary, it has in many cases opposed reforms which the Republicans carried into effect.

Now, the object of a change in the government is to make things better, and not to put one set of "rascals" in the place of another; and we see no reason for turning the Republicans out and putting the Democrats in, unless the latter give evidence that they will do better than their opponents. Up to this time, however, such evidence is not forthcoming; and there is one reason to fear that the contrary might be the case. The Democrats have now been out of power for nearly a quarter of a century, and they are evidently hungry for office. Is there not danger that, if they should attain to power, they would revive in all its fullness the old policy of "spoils"? and if they should do so, would not the country then be worse off than it is now? To jump out of the frying-pan into the fire is not usually supposed to be advantageous, yet many voters will fear that such may be our experience if we "turn out the Republican rascals" only to let in the "Democratic knaves."

In our opinion, the Democrats will make a serious mistake if they attempt to make the election hinge on this issue alone, to the neglect of the more important questions of legislation and public policy. The people will not readily be persuaded to put them into office merely to make a change in the *personnel* of the government. There is undoubtedly a good deal of dissatisfaction among the people with the Republican party; but it is due not merely to the malfeasance of certain Republican office-holders, but also to the failure of the party to enact thorough measures of reform. If, then, the Democrats would secure the presidency in the election next year, they ought to do something at the coming session of Congress to meet the popular demand for reform. They will have next winter the virtual control of legislation, and if they will use their opportunity to enact useful laws, such as the country now requires and the people demand, they will stand an excellent chance in the coming contest.

But if they spend the winter's session in merely exposing and denouncing, for partisan purposes, the misdeeds of their opponents, the independent voters, who will really decide the election, will see little reason for preferring them to the party that is now in power.

Law-and-Order Leagues.

As population increases and civilization becomes more complex, it is evident that a large amount of volunteer work must be done in the administration of government. It will be necessary for good citizens not only to attend the primary meetings and to vote intelligently at the elections, but also to assist, by various methods, in the execution of the laws. This, indeed, seems at present to be the weak point in our political machinery. The inefficiency of the police and the prosecuting officers, and the fatal uncertainty of trial by jury, render our laws, in many cases, wholly inoperative. There are good laws, not a few, in every community, that are approved by the numerical majority of the voters and by the great mass of those who represent its property and its intelligence,—the class that ought to rule,—and yet are set at naught continually by the vicious and disorderly classes. The reasons are not remote. The disorderly classes are always bringing a powerful pressure to bear upon the officers of the law, to restrain them from enforcing its penal provisions; they control many votes, and they always make their political influence count for all it is worth. These classes constitute a positive, aggressive, implacable element in our politics; they know who are their friends, and they never fail to punish their enemies.

The intelligent, virtuous, and well-to-do citizens on the other side are not at all aggressive. Some are too busy, and some too fastidious, to take any active interest in the administration of the government. If they vote on election day for such candidates as the leaders of the caucus provide, they think they have discharged to the full their obligation as good citizens; if they go so far as to attend the primary meeting and register an ineffectual protest against the devices of the machinists, they count that a work of supererogation—a degree of patriotism to which only the elect ever attain. Of course, a great deal of promiscuous grumbling and deploring is done between elections by these prosperous and virtuous citizens; but very few of them ever attempt to influence the administration of government. The work of executing the laws belongs, they say, to the officers of the law.

Accordingly, we have on the side of disorder and lawlessness a positive and strenuous force, always pressing against the authorities—an influence that makes itself felt and feared every day in the year. On the side of law and order we have plenty of good sentiment, but no force that is organized or concentrated, and, practically, very little effective pressure is brought to bear upon the people who are responsible for the execution of the laws. And who are these people who thus stand between this determined band of law-breakers and this numerous but negligent company of reputable citizens? It is not necessary to make any sweeping assertions about them; it is enough to say that the men who hold the offices are, as a rule, men who want office, who desire to keep

their places or to win promotion, who have a profound respect for any one who can influence votes, and who wish, therefore, to have as little controversy as possible with the rum-sellers and the gamblers and the keepers of vile houses. The conduct of the average town or city official, under such circumstances, can be easily predicted: he will yield to the more aggressive force; he will move in the direction of least resistance.

It begins to be evident that the law-abiding classes must oppose to the pressure of the law-breakers an influence in favor of the execution of the laws not less positive and strenuous. Doubtless, the first thing to be done is to secure, wherever that is possible, a higher grade of officers; but that is not enough. These officers, at best, will be human; and it is too much to expect that they will do their whole duty when the powers of iniquity are loud and instant, and the powers of righteousness are irresolute or indifferent. It is due to them that they should be constantly braced and invigorated by being brought in contact with the moral forces of the community. The malefactors will not fail to make them afraid to enforce the laws, will show them that it is for their interest to neglect their duty; good citizens must make them afraid *not* to enforce the laws, must show them that it is for their interest to *do* their duty. The problem of bringing a steady and constant pressure of moral influence to bear upon the men who are responsible for the execution of the laws is the problem to be solved.

There is no lack of right sentiment in our communities; all that is necessary is that it should be organized and directed, that it should find a voice. Public sentiment, like every other force, must be concentrated that it may be effective. There is enough indignation against lawlessness diffused through the community to form an irresistible motive power for the enforcement of law, if it could only be gathered up and could have adequate expression. For this purpose, Law-and-Order Leagues have sprung into existence of late in many communities, east and west, and the results already reached are extremely encouraging.

Some of these leagues take into their own hands the work of prosecuting offenders, employing attorneys and detectives for this purpose, and pushing cases through the courts. What has thus been done in New York, with the assistance or in spite of the police and the Excise Commissioners, is well known; and the leagues in Boston and in Chicago have been even more successful. Probably this method is the only one that can be successfully employed in the larger cities; but there is another method, much less expensive, that has been tried with good results in the smaller communities. This method contemplates the employment of no detectives, and the prosecution by the league of no offenders; it proposes to secure its results through the constituted authorities,—the police and the prosecuting attorneys,—and not independent of them. It assumes that the officers of the law are ready to enforce the law, and it stands by them to give them moral support, and to aid them, so far as possible, in furnishing them information. The Law-and-Order League, formed for this purpose, ought to include in its membership a large number of the best citizens of the community—merchants, manufacturers, teachers, lawyers, clergymen—the men

who are recognized as leaders of business and of opinion, but who are not closely allied with any political machine. The preamble of its simple constitution should sharply restrict its operations to the enforcement of existing laws. The league should have frequent public meetings, in which the general facts with respect to the violation of law should be carefully and calmly laid before the public. The newspapers of the neighborhood should also be employed for the same purpose. The league should have a secretary, whose office should be its head-quarters, where information concerning illegal practices could be left by any citizen. It should also have an executive committee of a dozen or more energetic and public-spirited men, who could be depended on to meet steadily at the office of the secretary, and whose duty it should be to collect, through their observation and their conversation, facts relating to the infraction of the statutes, to collate them with those gathered and verified by the secretary, and then to present them, in an official communication, to the police authorities. It is not likely that the information thus presented would greatly enlighten the police; they would already be in possession of most of these facts; but the knowledge that a large body of intelligent and determined men were watching their operations, ready to applaud them when they performed their duty and to call them sharply to account when they neglected it, would have a wholesome influence upon them. Such a society, known to represent the sober and virtuous elements of the community, and to be composed of men who had no political ambitions, and who were far more interested in the maintenance of the law than in the success of either political party, would not be long in existence before its power would be felt in many quarters.

The sheriff has the power to call to his aid the *posse comitatus* in enforcing the law. The Law-and-Order League is a volunteer *posse comitatus*, that does not propose to supersede or embarrass the proper authorities, but to aid them in every possible way in bringing offenders to justice. The shameless violations of law that we witness in many places, and the feebleness of the powers whose duty it is to bring the violators to justice, indicate a large opportunity for public service in this direction. The duty of good citizens cannot all be performed on one or two days in the year; they must learn how to bring the forces of intelligence and virtue to bear directly and steadily upon the machinery of the local government all the year round.

The Lack of Earnestness in American Politics.

NOTWITHSTANDING the increased attention lately given to questions of political reform, and notwithstanding the local temperance agitations and the noisy, recurrent gossip concerning "candidates," one of the most striking facts in American life at the present time is the lack of moral earnestness in public affairs. If we were to judge from this fact, we might conclude that our government was now so well conducted that no further reform was needed, and that our rulers had nothing to do but luxuriate in idleness. But if we look below the surface of affairs, we find abuses enough in our political system, some old, some new, but all requiring to be taken in hand and dealt with vigorously. Hitherto, however, there has been so little