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***Everett Colby, The Gentleman From Essex***

AMONG the new political leaders whom a reviving democracy is raising up to beat the bosses (and perhaps the real rulers) of the republic is Everett Colby, the state senator from Essex County, New Jersey. Born in 1874, he was only thirty-two years old when he “busted” his boss; he shows what a young man can do. The son of Charles L. Colby, builder of the Wisconsin Central Railroad, he inherited wealth and the associations of big business; he shows what a rich young man may do if he rises above his class. And the gentleman from Essex was brought up in a class.

Imperial Kipling has raged at the “flanneled fools” of England. Did you know we had them? We have. There is a constantly growing class of rich men’s sons who can throw as much strength, nerve and concentrated intelligence into sport as their fathers put into the game of life; but, having been brought up only to play, they can’t work—“can’t,” not “won’t.” They don’t know how; they don’t know anything but games, and they cannot learn. Everett Colby was headed straight for this fate when a man got hold of him—J. A. Browning, a teacher who teaches. He took a small class of boys who had busy fathers and loving mothers: Harold and Stanley McCormick, Percy and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Everett Colby. Everett Colby was in the worst condition. The boy could only play. “He played hard,” says Mr. Browning, “but it was sport, not work. He couldn’t read till he was fifteen; he couldn’t fix his attention. I got into his mind through his hands. He liked to play with tools. I let him. It was play till once I set him to making a bookcase for his mother. He finished that, and it was good, and it was work.”

Young Colby was prepared for Brown, where he went to college with young John D. He still “played hard.” He was a splendid young male when he entered; he went in for all the sports: tennis, golf, baseball; and, making the team, was captain in his senior year of the best football eleven Brown ever put into the field. But he worked, too, and he was graduated with his class, ’97. In the next year, after the death of his father, he made a tour around the world; then he studied law and played polo; then he married and settled down in Llewellyn Park, Orange, New Jersey. He didn’t mean to stay there, but he got into politics. He became a Wall Street broker, but it was politics that saved Everett Colby.

Now, young Colby meant to go into politics. As a “little shaver” he used to go along with his father, who campaigned in Wisconsin as a railroad man. He dreamed that when he grew up he would be a politician, and, because the dream persisted, he went in for debating in college, and afterward for the law. But it was the scenic side of the game that appealed to him, the crowd and the excitement, the fighting, the speaking and the cheers. He says so himself. He was after glory, and maybe that is all he is after now. He doesn’t pretend to know. But there lies the peculiar significance of the career of this rich young gentleman in politics. He simply wanted to go into politics not to accomplish anything in particular; not to reform politics; not even with the thought of being practical in politics. He went in on the machine side, and he served “the party”;

he put in his money; he took orders; and he obeyed the boss till he saw what politics meant. Even then he didn't revolt right away; he objected as a gentleman to doing things a gentleman couldn't do, but he "went along" till he discovered as an insider what we have discovered from the outside: that the evils of politics, so-called, were all parts of one system which is perverting our government from a representative democracy to a plutocratic tyranny. When this was beaten into his head, Everett Colby fought like a citizen and a man. Wherefore his experiences are not only the story of a new political leader, but an inside view of the System in action.

When young Colby spoke of going into politics, somebody advised him to see Carl Lentz. This German-American was the Republican boss of Essex County. Bosses were as natural to our young American as the north wind or the road to Newark, and he went to Newark and he saw Carl Lentz. He says the boss talked to him a long while. Colby doesn't recall what was said, but I can hear the boss drawing out and smacking his lips over an attractive young man of means; free with his money and, therefore, "useful"; the son of a railroad magnate and, therefore, "safe"; attractive and honest, therefore promising as a "good man" candidate, and cheap. All the boy wanted was to "make speeches"; he thought politics was oratory.

"He let me speak," Colby says. "Small meetings for a while, then I held the crowd at larger meetings. I spoke till the advertised speaker came, when, amid the shouts for him, I sat down unnoticed, but well satisfied with myself."

He was in politics, and having got in as many another fool young American has got in, he was taken up and taken in, as the rest are. Lentz flattered Colby; then he passed him on to Governor Voorhees, who flattered him. "Seeing the governor" was honour enough for the year 1901, but when the governor asked him if he wanted to get into politics and the young man said he did, and the governor offered to appoint him to an office, the novice was overwhelmed with gratitude and modesty. He didn't know that to be a commissioner on the state Board of Education was simply to be put to a harmless test—by the machine. Colby thought of his education and worried about his fitness, but he took the place, and he did very well, very well, indeed. Then Boss Lentz made him chairman of the executive committee of the Republican organization of West Orange.

"I thought Lentz was a great fellow," he says now, "a great man." Lentz loomed as large to Colby, probably, as Durham looked to a Philadelphian, Cox to a Cincinnati Republican, Ruef to a San Franciscan, or Murphy to a New Yorker. The bosses live on the images we create of them, out of our own silliness.

The chairmanship—"actual practical politics, with great responsibility"—came in 1902. Of course, young Colby had to spend some of his own money, and he did. He was all right, Colby was. In the next year Lentz offered him the senatorship from Essex. That was too much. The young man, modest now, was sure then that he could not be a senator. In the first place he was under the constitutional age. That didn't matter. Lentz could "have that fixed in the Manual," where the statistics of legislators are kept. This sounded a little queer, like a rather unusual north wind or a bad road to Newark, noticeable, but still a perfectly natural phenomenon. Colby refused to go to the Senate; but he consented to go to the Assembly, so Lentz had him nominated, and elected, an assemblyman from Essex.

The education of this young legislator was begun promptly, and it resembled very closely the course of his education as a boy. He saw things with his eyes long before he saw them with his mind; he saw facts separately, but failed to combine them into the truth. He failed, as so many of us fail, for want of imagination, and his story is the story of thousands of young men

who go into politics and go along till some day they wake up and find that they are part of a corrupted government.

One day, early in the session, Sam Dickinson asked Assemblyman Colby to introduce certain excise bills. Dickinson was secretary of state and Republican boss of Hudson County, a “great fellow” like Lentz. And, like Lentz, Dickinson probably saw at once the uses of a fine, upstanding young gentleman to “stand for” a piece of dubious excise legislation. Colby looked over the bills; they seemed to him to be merely a weapon to help the Republican machine take away from the Democrats the control of Democratic Hudson County. He hesitated. He went to see the governor about it. Governor Murphy was a gentleman and the father of a friend of Colby’s. The young assemblyman didn’t know that governors are usually mere figureheads for the System; he felt only that he could trust the Honourable Franklin Murphy. And when the Honourable Franklin Murphy pronounced the bills “all right,” Colby was reassured. He introduced them in the House.

Colby’s own pet measure—for every legislator thinks he must put some new law upon the books—was a normal school bill. Then Essex County wanted to have passed a bill providing for the purification of the Passaic River; of course, an Essex assemblyman was for that. But you have to have votes to pass bills, and Colby’s two bills lacked a majority. How could some more votes be got for them? Colby and some others of his delegation went to the Democratic assemblymen from Hudson. Would they help? They would if Colby and his crowd would withdraw his excise bills. Colby would see. He saw the governor. The governor saw Dickinson, and Dickinson consented to the dropping of the excise bills. A bargain was struck; Colby’s and Essex County’s bills were passed with the help of Democratic votes. And then Dickinson asked Colby to reintroduce his excise bills.

The young legislator was astonished. He had given his word, and he wouldn’t break it. Dickinson had somebody else to do it, and when Colby threatened to fight, a caucus was called to bind him to it as a “party measure.” Colby appealed to the governor, and the governor spoke to Dickinson, but in vain. The caucus was held. Colby protested that the party was bound by his bargain; not he alone, but the accredited Republican leaders had given their word to the Democrats.

“Your word to a Democrat doesn’t mean anything,” they told him in those very terms. His did, he answered. There was a scene, and amid cries of “Down with the traitor; up with the flag,” Colby bolted the caucus. The party jammed through the excise bills, but Colby voted against them. He didn’t see the iniquitous part the caucus plays in the perversion of representative government; he saw only his own honor, but that was enough for a gentleman. Wherefore the word of the gentleman from Essex is good with both parties in Jersey politics.

The boy disappointed his own boss, too, in that first year. George L. Record, the man behind Mayor Fagan, of Jersey City, was in Trenton with a primary election bill. This piece of legislation was to play a decisive part in a crisis of young Colby’s career, but Colby didn’t know that, of course. He was for it, as Edward C. Stokes was, because his instincts were right. Stokes, though the Pennsylvania Railroad man at Trenton, took charge of the bill and to him, next to Record, belongs the credit for its enactment. Some of the other ring men saw the danger to the System that lurked in the measure; Lentz especially was aroused; he couldn’t make Stokes see it, but he ordered his own delegation to fight it. And to his young protégé he gave his orders personally.

“Colby,” he said, “you’re going to vote against that bill.”

“No, Major,” said Colby. “It’s a good bill, and I shall vote for it.”

The Major repeated his command, but the young assemblyman laid down the limitation of his subserviency.

“Major,” he said, “you must not interfere with me on any but political bills.”

As if a primary bill wasn’t political! Bosses have their troubles; it takes time and patience to knock all the decency—or, as they would put it, all the poppycock out of a promising young man. Lentz had to stand by and see Colby vote for the primary bill, and that bill became a law. But the honest young legislator, troublesome as he was, had his uses. For example, they won him easily to the support of a bill to require the consent of 20 percent of the stock of a Jersey corporation to bring a stockholder’s suit. “It was an awful bill,” he says now. “It was introduced in the interest of the United States Steel Company, and I knew that. But I was told what a great business this was, the steel trust, and how ‘strike suits’ were being brought against it. Strike suits were bad but that bill was worse. It was so bad, indeed, that even I saw my mistake before the session was over.” It was so bad they couldn’t raise a majority for it, and it was killed that year.

By the close of the session, young Mr. Colby had few friends among the leaders in his own party; they wouldn’t speak to him, and one might have supposed that his political career was over. But this was all part of the game. Since the young man was rich, they couldn’t buy him with money, so they were applying a little discipline “just to show him.” If they could keep him under for a while, they would get him by and by through his ambition; he should have an office and honors. And as a foretaste of what was in store for him, in the next session the Honourable Everett Colby was made floor leader of the Republican majority in the House.

This was taking a big chance on the boy. This was making him responsible for all the dirty party work of the system, but they counted on “pride” and his “sporting blood” to see him through with it. And they handled him very carefully. They didn’t tell him everything, and they didn’t give him his orders harshly. They approached him through men he liked.

For instance, early in this session (1904) Percy Rockefeller came to Colby with the United States Steel’s same old “20 percent consent” bill which had failed in disgrace the year before. We mustn’t blame Percy Rockefeller; he seems not to have known what the bill meant. Indeed, the shocking thought is that he was innocent, and that some of his elders in Wall Street had got this boy to go to his boyfriend, Everett, to ask him to introduce this bill which was so bad that even Francis Lynde Stetson, the great corporation’s greatest counsel, told Colby afterward that he did right to keep clear of it. The System will sacrifice its own children to have its dirty work done! Everett Colby, fortunately, was “wise” enough to the purposes of the bill to explain them to Percy Rockefeller, and he sent his chum back to those who had sent him with the message that not only would he not father the thing, he would do his best to kill it if anybody else introduced it. And somebody else did introduce it, and when Colby, the leader, opposed it, the System sent its other messengers to him, not boys this time. No. Governor Murphy and ex-Senator (now governor) Stokes, “the Penn’s man.” The governor called Colby a “Puritan” for his scruples; he said the great corporations threatened to leave the state unless they were “treated fairly,” And Stokes, backing up the governor, said he, Stokes, would be willing to go on the stump and advocate a 50 percent law!

This opened a little the eyes of the young legislator. He didn’t see the System yet, but he was learning to. These were the leading men of his state and of his party, and the young assemblyman had great respect for them.

“But,” he says, “I saw then that they all were corporation men, and that they represented in politics the interests of corporations.”

Seeing this, he opposed and he helped to beat that particular bill, but he said nothing. "What could a fellow say?" He went on, and his education went on.

This was the session when the present issues of New Jersey politics were raised in their present form. Mark Fagan, the mayor of Jersey City, raised them. The Christian mayor went to Trenton with his corporation counsel, George L. Record, to ask in the name of his people for relief from the unendurable burden thrown upon them by the railroads. The railroads, with all the best (terminal, waterfront) property in the city, paid practically no taxes to the city, only to the state, and then, on a valuation fixed by their own state board, at rates lower than the rates on other property. Record had drawn a bill to tax railroad property locally and at local rates. They were Republicans, Fagan and Record, and their party was in control of the state, absolutely; so they applied to the leaders of their party, among them, of course, to the Honorable Everett Colby. He liked Mayor Fagan, he says; he didn't like Record, but Mark Fagan, the "man of the people," intent only upon the needs of his city, walked straight into the heart of the rich young gentleman who, so far as he knew, was bent only upon a political career for personal glory. "I liked that man," he says, "and the condition of Jersey City appealed to me. I wanted to help them, and I couldn't; at least, I didn't."

"Why?" he said, repeating my question thoughtfully. Then he looked me straight in the eye. "I don't know that I can tell you, exactly. I will try to explain, if you will understand that I'm not apologizing for myself. There was no more excuse for what I did in this matter than there was for other things I did and didn't do. The bill was bad; it was crudely drawn."

"Record admits that," I interjected. "Record says that at that time he had never heard of the main stem, and had no right understanding of the situation at all."

"Nor had I," said Colby. "But that doesn't let me out. It served me as an excuse at the time. The big leaders, seeing my bent toward the bill, told me it was badly drawn, and I grasped at this reason as at a straw. But why shouldn't I, the House leader, have amended that bill? The need of the legislation was plain. Why didn't I fix the bill? I couldn't. You understand? I, a lawmaker, hadn't the ability to draw a good bill. Why, then, didn't I have some other, older legislator make the bad bill good? There wasn't a man in that House who could have drawn a sound tax bill to meet the most notorious need of the state. We were incompetent. Perhaps some of us might, once upon a time, have been legislators; but boss rule was so old there that we didn't, we couldn't think for ourselves. We had lost the art of independent thought and work. We were dummies. We took orders, we waited for orders, we depended upon orders. Dummy legislators, that's what we were.

"Oh, I was unhappy! I saw all this, but only dimly; I wouldn't let myself see it clearly. You know how a man jollies himself along with lies to save his face. The Democrats drew a better bill, still not good, and Fagan and Record accepted that; they had no pride in their pet measure; and they didn't care whether the Democrats or the Republicans got the credit of authorship. They wanted an income from railroad property in Jersey City. But the bill was buried in committee and I, the leader, should have got it out. I couldn't have got it out. And when the mayor came to me and asked me why I didn't have it reported, I told him the truth. 'I can't,' I told him. I wasn't really a leader. I was the real leader's dummy.

"You understand that the crime was not that we wouldn't pass the bill, but that we wouldn't consider it. I was willing to vote against it, if there were good reasons. I wasn't against corporations. But why couldn't we have the bill out and debate it? That's what Mayor Fagan couldn't understand, and that's what I asked in the caucus. We had orders, that was all; no reasons, except the one I remember they gave me in caucus a year later on a similar bill. When I

asked, 'Why not take it out and beat it in the open if it's so bad?' they answered, in awed tones: 'Why, the Penn would raise hell.' There was the reason, the real reason."

There, too, was the truth about Jersey. When the mayor who represented the people of the second city in the state asked that legislature to consider a bill in their interest, that Jersey legislature couldn't because it represented "the Penn," a foreign corporation. "The Penn" ruled that state, and the ruler would "raise hell." Colby didn't see this. "I didn't want to see it," he says. But Mark Fagan saw it, and he made Everett Colby see it; made him grasp with his mind what his eyes reflected. Mark, the gentle mayor, raised hell. Defeated, with eyes wide open and ears alert, he took in the truth. The thing for a "practical politician" to do was to "take his medicine," and go home and tell his people the lies he heard told to the public. But Mark Fagan had made promises, not only on the stump; he had gone about from house to house and had made his promises man to man, and for keeps. He couldn't go back home to his people with lies. He put the truth to Governor Murphy in an open letter, and this letter was read aloud to the House of Assembly. It was a silent House; the representatives had read in their newspapers what this meek mayor, a Republican himself, had written to the Republican governor about their party and themselves. But they listened again. Colby says that he sat low sunk in his seat, and each separate sentence, as the Democratic leader read it, fell like a whip upon him.

The letter said that the writer spoke "as mayor of Jersey City, and also as a member of the Republican party. . . . The present session is drawing to a close," he said. "Its record is . . . disgraceful. Its control by corporation interests, in the assembly, at least, has been absolute." And those men knew this was true. "For that condition the Republican party is responsible." Everett Colby, leader, knew this was true. And as the letter took up the legislation, bill by bill, to show how everyone that was against a corporation failed, the party leader of the House could recall the orders he had got to make them fail. He heard Governor Murphy's comforting arguments and the bosses' tactful orders. He saw again Major Lentz watching in the lobby. What did it mean? Fagan asked that in his letter to Governor Murphy. "What is the meaning of all this?" And the letter gave the answer, and it is the answer we all must hear as those legislators heard it, writhing. "The answer is plain! A Republican legislature is controlled by the railroad, trolley, and water corporations." So this honest Republican mayor wrote; but he didn't stop there. "And the interests of the people are being betrayed."

After the reading, silence hung on that assembly. "I sat where I was," says Colby, "stunned. It was my duty to reply. I was the leader. The others were waiting for me. And I? I couldn't say a word. It was all true, every bit of it. Nobody moved for a dreadful space of time. Then Tom Hillory got up, and he defended us, all of us. I felt mean. I was sore, sore at myself, you understand; not at the governor, not at the Penn; not at anybody else. I was sore at myself. It was true. We were dummies; we betrayed the people who elected us."

"Do legislators commonly understand that?" I asked.

"They must. I don't know. They must and yet, how can they? It isn't easy to explain. A fellow is moved by a lot of mixed-up considerations. Take my case. I saw it as Mark Fagan described it. I had more facts than he had, knew it better than he, but I didn't go right out and fight. Neither did he. Why didn't we? We both supported the Republican party that fall, and the party was not changed. The truth, falling like that, didn't kill; it didn't even change things essentially."

The governor appointed a commission to investigate taxes, and the platform promised some reform, if reform should prove necessary. But the Republican nominee for governor was "the Penn's man," Edward C. Stokes. And Colby and Fagan supported the ticket; they were

“loyal to the party” which one said and the other admitted “represented corporations” and “betrayed the people.” Why did they do it? Why do men like John C. Spooner and Edward C. Stokes “go along”? They know, and their friends say, they grieve themselves sick. Why did Mayor Weaver “go along” so long in Philadelphia? Everett Colby says he had excuses for the world, and some for himself. “The commission was to investigate and report,” and he, meanwhile, threw himself into a study of taxation. He broke away, finally; like Mayor Weaver and Mark Fagan, he made a stand in the end. And why did he do that? And why did Mayor Weaver and Mark Fagan do it?

The way Everett Colby will try, when you ask him, to lay bare his motives is one of the convincing traits of the man. He is instinctively honest, and his candor is obvious.

“You’ll hear,” he told me, “that I wanted to be Speaker, and that my defeat made me turn. There is something in that. I think you understand that. I don’t want to think that that was all, and, as I recall it, I don’t think it was decisive, nor just that alone. That was only one of a score of things that made me see and drove me to act. I simply don’t know the exact weight of any one thing.”

All he knows is, that from seeing things separately, with his eyes, he came to see them all together with his mind. His friends put into his head the idea of the Speakership in the next session (1905). “I didn’t care much,” he said. “I felt I hadn’t done very well, and I was willing to wait.” But he wrote to his colleagues, and enough of “the boys” promised him their support to elect him. When Major Lentz got wind of it, he told Colby he couldn’t have the Speakership. This was the System at work; the House leader hadn’t “made good”; he was not yet “safe”; but that isn’t what the boss said. Lentz said Colby mustn’t run because he couldn’t be elected. With those letters in his pocket, Colby knew it wasn’t his colleagues that would make it impossible to elect him. He didn’t mention to Lentz how many pledges he had; but neither did he bow to the boss as bosses like to be bowed to.

Now political bosses are not really bosses; they are the agents of the real bosses, who are businessmen, and when Colby got a telephone message to come to the Newark office of U. S. Senator Dryden, the young man, his eyes wide open now, realized that he was to see one of the men who represented one of the sovereign interests of his state. Senator Dryden, the president of the Prudential Life, was there, and with him was Lentz. The United States senator was the financial head of the Public Service Corporation in New Jersey; not the president; Thomas C. McCarter is that. Dryden is the man back of McCarter as he is the man back of Lentz; and that is why he was a United States senator; he represented one of the two great sources of the corruption of the state. He told Mr. Colby that he couldn’t be Speaker. Dryden is a pleasant-spoken man, and he appealed to “his young friend’s” good feeling, explaining that since he couldn’t get the votes, it would weaken the prestige of their (Essex) delegation to run and fail. But Colby said he could get the votes. How did he know he could? He knew it because he had them in his pocket; and he tapped those letters. This was unexpected, and the senator exclaimed:

“But Tom McCarter says it won’t do.”

That settled it. Tom McCarter spoke for the trolley business.

Colby consented not to run; he told them it was all right. “But,” he said, “I could be elected if I could have the support of my county.”

Major Lentz approved, as they went away, the obedience of his young protege. “That’s the way to talk,” he said. Colby was “mad”; he hated the fraud of it all. “Why didn’t they give their real reasons? Why didn’t they say they feared that as Speaker I might not represent their trolleys?”

The next session was to be crucial. Colby made up his mind to be a freelance. The Speakership denied him, he would decline the leadership also. Without knowing what he meant to do, he was going to be free to act as he might find it right to act. If Colby had begun his career at the bottom, in local politics, he would have known of two or three separate reform movements that had long been going on in his county, and he could have gone to these, combined and led them against the machine. He does lead them now, but he didn't go to them; they came to him. One of these movements was in Newark, the metropolis of the state. This city belonged absolutely to the business interests grouped about the Prudential Life, the Fidelity Trust Company, and the Public Service Corporation, which, ruling through Major Lentz, gave the city a government in which these special interests came first, the common interest of the city last. The Democratic machine stood in with the Republican ring. Now and then, when James Smith, Jr., the Democratic business boss, had business differences with the Republican business grafters, there was a political fight. But all the opposition that counted at all came from a few young men, with William P. Martin at their head, who, mostly Republicans, got into councils and opposed steadfastly the public utility grabs. Their story is a story by itself, and a good one; suffice it for the present to say these fellows were battling against the enemies of their city, the public service interest, all the while Colby was trying to get along with his party.

Several other movements were underway in the suburbs of Newark—Bloomfield, the Oranges, etc. These were “good-government,” “good-men-for-office” reforms till Tom McCarter aroused these “communities” to opposition to the real cause of all their troubles. Tom McCarter is a fiery, red-headed politician, who, as president of the Public Service, believes honestly that any thing that helps business is right. He was extending his trolley system, and, desiring to go through parks and residence streets, needed franchises. Of course, he must have them, and of course he must have them for nothing, and forever. Frederick W. Kelsey, a park commissioner, opposed him till public sentiment was formed and then McCarter undertook, by the methods characteristic of privilege-seekers, to get what he wanted anyhow. There was scandal and mass-meetings. The New England Society took up Kelsey's old fight against business graft. Could the fight have gone on locally, with McCarter's franchises for issues, it might have developed good citizenship in the Oranges. But both sides appealed to the state.

Tom McCarter, finding that the local council, though corrupt enough and willing, lacked the nerve to vote for him what he wanted in the face of “mobs” of good citizens, decided to appeal to the legislature; and his plan was to create a Greater Newark, taking into the city which he could control the suburbs which were giving the trolley “so much trouble.” And the men of Orange, finding that their representatives in the local council did not represent them (except when watched), determined not to reform themselves and their voters and their council, but to go also to the legislature. Their petition was a very modest one; they wanted “their” state to forbid “their” council to grant any franchise for a period longer than twenty-five years.

The average Jerseyman thinks his state is well governed. His local government is bad, but politicians run that and he sees the results with his own eyes. The state is a government by lawyers, whom he knows by reputation at least; these lawyers are counsel for businessmen, like senators Dryden and Kean, ex-Governor Murphy, and Tom McCarter—the kind of men he knows as good business men, and they tell him the state is all right. When the good men of Orange, finding that Tom McCarter was back of the politicians who misrepresented Orange, set about getting their good state government to check Tom's chicaneries in Orange, the average Jerseyman learned why Senator Dryden and Governor Murphy and Tom McCarter called the



state government “all right.” The state government also represented “business,” and it did not represent the average citizen of Jersey.

The men of Orange had to approach the state legislature through members of that body, and, naturally, they applied to their own Essex County legislators. What was their surprise to find that their own representatives wouldn't, nay couldn't, represent them! One by one they sounded them only to see that no representative of theirs dared touch their bill.

Why? Everett Colby was learning why. The men of Orange decided to ask him to take up their bill, and the Newark fighters were to support them. Would Colby do it? He didn't know. Before his fellow-citizens asked him, he heard of their intentions and he wasn't sure what he should do. He was aware of the feeling between the corporations and the people, not only in Orange but everywhere, and his disposition was not to take a side, but to listen to both, study the subject, and do the fair thing.

One evening ex-Governor Murphy gave a dinner. “Everybody” was there; all the business and political leaders and others, quite a crowd. When they rose from the table Colby went up to Tom McCarter to get the trolley side of the franchise question. He heard, he said, that the New England Society of Orange had a limited franchise bill to offer to the legislature, and wouldn't McCarter like to talk it over with him (Colby)?

“Now, you know,” said Colby to me, “they could have fooled me easily. If they had had any tact, and had given me any reasonable argument, I think, in my ignorance, I would have been taken in. But, no; they ruled and they ruled, not by reason, but by command.”

Tom McCarter did not want to talk it over with Colby. Irascible and dictatorial, the trolley boss bent his head forward at the young legislator, and, slapping his hands insultingly in his face, he said that anything but perpetual franchises in Jersey was “talk,” “child's play”; and, raising his voice so that all in the room turned to hear, he cried: “We wouldn't touch anything else with a ten-foot pole!” With that he turned his back on Colby, and walked off.

“It wasn't a question,” Mr. Colby explained to me, as he recalled this scene, “it wasn't a question of right and wrong as between two interests; it was, and it is, a question of who rules here.”

Colby listened to his neighbours. He explained to them how difficult it would be for them to get any relief from their legislature, how little he could do; but they were agreeing on plans when McCarter drove home the lesson Colby was learning. This time it was at a luncheon at Trenton. The legislature had met, and again all the rulers of the state were present, the rulers and their dummies, the office-holders and legislators. This time Tom McCarter went to Colby; that is to say, the business boss beckoned the assemblyman to him.

“Colby,” he said, “what's this I hear about you introducing a limited franchise bill?” He didn't wait for an answer. Raising his voice, as before, so that all could hear, he laid down the law of the land for legislators. “You introduce that bill,” he bawled in his mad rage, “and you'll lose every friend you have in Essex County.”

What did Tom McCarter mean? His brother made that clearer. The financial rings that rule Jersey often have to smooth over the troubles their quick-tempered trolley president causes with his “honest grafter” blunders. Uzel McCarter, Tom's big brother, and the head of the trust company through which (like the Big Three) the Prudential Life Insurance crowd finances its trolley and other schemes—Uzel, a diplomat, joined Colby that day on a train. He talked pleasantly, even flatteringly, to the young man. By and by the franchise subject happened to come up, and that led, naturally, to Colby's connection with the bill to limit trolley grants. Most unfortunate connection, that.

“We,” said the banker, “we think you have a political future before you, and we don’t want to see you throw it away.”

There was more, but that was the point. Uzel McCarter was taking the young man who couldn’t be bribed with money, or browbeaten by the bosses, up on the mountain to see the cities of the earth, and the young man understood it.

“It was a promise,” says Colby, “and—a threat.”

Undaunted, uncorrupted, the young man came down from the mountain to a study of the situation. He knew a limited franchise bill could not be passed, so he hit upon the idea of introducing a resolution to put the legislature on record. He drew one. He spoke of it to no one except Edward Duffield, the House leader, to whom Colby, as an ex-leader, owed that courtesy. Just before he rose he turned to Duffield and said:

“Now, Ed, don’t be surprised, but watch. And look out that you don’t make the mistake of your life.”

And Colby offered a resolution to the effect that it was the sense of this House that perpetual grants of monopolies to corporations should not be made. Everybody looked to the leader. He sat still. The Speaker hesitated, then, with all eyes on the mute leader, he put the motion. Colby says, and I’ve heard men in other states who know legislatures well say, that if a body of elected Americans are not interfered with by business corruption they will do right nearly every time. That House that night, having no orders from the System and getting no sign from “Ed,” adopted that resolution with not one negative vote!

But before the Speaker declared the resolution carried, the lobby woke up. Governor Stokes’s Pennsylvania man came rushing in out of breath; wanted to know what the thing meant anyhow. “Can’t you give us time?” he begged. Colby knew that A. J. Cassatt would call down Stokes and that Stokes would call down his man, and that the Public Service lobbyist and legislators would catch it; and besides, he didn’t want to join in a fluke, so he said: “Surely; we’ll make it a special order for Thursday.”

The next day a telephone message summoned him to one of the business-political leaders of the state, a man who usually had been able to “handle Colby.” “Everett,” said this man, “our friends are awfully upset by this resolution of yours.” Of course, he said, it had gone too far to be absolutely withdrawn—by Colby—but “our friends will fix up an amendment,” and “if you will accept this amendment, they’ll let it pass.” “They’ll let it pass!” “You don’t mean to tell me,” Colby exclaimed, “that they are to determine what bills shall pass!”

“Now, Everett,” said this gentleman, “you ought to know by this time how all these things are.” The amendments were absurd, ridiculous, impossible. Colby refused to accept them, and he meanwhile had been busy seeing his colleagues. The Speaker and four-fifths of the members were for the resolution. Yet, when it came up again on Thursday, only ten men voted “yes”!

This was only a preliminary skirmish in the long fight of that session of 1905. It was a defeat, but it was better than a victory since it aroused public interest and attracted to Trenton citizens and committees of citizens to take object lessons in a “good business government” in action. The Orange men on hand in force insisted upon having their limited franchises bill introduced, and Colby presented it. It went to committee for burial, but there were hearings on it, and Colby says the sight of citizens delivering carefully prepared arguments to a committee of legislators whom he knew to be dummies with no will of their own, no minds of their own—no ears for anything but the orders which they already had received to “hang onto that bill”—this spectacle, common as it was, and typical of all our legislatures from the youngest state to

Congress itself, the humiliation of it struck deep into the growing intelligence of the young legislator. And evidently it made an impression on Jerseymen; the papers described the scene mercilessly, and the rumble of popular indignation finally scared the rings. Major Lentz is said to have told Governor Stokes that if some bill wasn't reported, "that fellow Colby would make a lot of trouble" for him (Lentz) in Essex. So the Pennsylvania Railroad threw over the Public Service Corporation. Stokes gave orders. A substitute bill was drawn, for a commission to investigate; that was all, but just before final adjournment this old device to gain time was reported and rushed through. And, even then, Tom McCarter told the governor he had no right to let such a thing happen when "our great interests were against it." And Governor Stokes did not sign it for weeks; and then he appointed a commission typified by ex-Governor Murphy, the chairman.

A railroad tax bill, promised in the Republican platform, was introduced with the permission (as I happen to know) of Mr. Cassatt of Philadelphia, but it was in the form prescribed by "the road." It taxed second-class property (buildings and ordinary real estate) at local rates, but not the "main stem" (the roadbed). This would relieve Jersey City somewhat, but it would not satisfy Mayor Fagan or any other citizen who believed in "equal taxation."

And after it was passed, another bill was run out and jammed through, prescribing that the first bill should not materially increase the total tax of the railroads. This was made "the governor's bill," but Colby opposed it and introduced another to tax the main stem like any other real estate. Of course, Colby's bill was beaten, but its defeat left equal taxation an issue in Jersey politics.

Another fight that showed things as they are was over a bill to promote Tom McCarter's scheme to bring into a Greater Newark all the suburbs which did not respond to trolley corruption. Bloomfield was one of these. The people there had held the trolleys at bay; annexation had been proposed to them, and they had voted it down. In this session of 1905 some "leading citizens" of Bloomfield applied to the legislature for another referendum on annexation, and the trolley pretended to have nothing to do with it. But it had. Those leading citizens were stockholders and friends of stockholders in McCarter's company; Major Lentz "steered" them; and for more direct evidence, there was the story of a friend of Colby. This man had been in the employ of the Public Service. He was against the bill, and "they sent for him." This was their bill, they told him. They wrote it, and they needed it as a step in their plan to absorb into Newark all the troublesome suburbs about the city; their employee must get out of the way. Their employee told them he was out of their employ and, being there for free, would continue to fight them with this added information to spur him on.

It was this bill that finally brought about the declaration of war between Boss Lentz and Assemblyman Colby. One day, when Lentz was steering his "citizens' committee" about the Capitol, he introduced Colby to them. And he told Colby in their presence that he must work for their bill. "They contribute to the campaign fund"; that was the reason he gave, and it was bad enough, but Colby knew that the real reason was that Tom McCarter and Senator Dryden wanted to control through Newark the destinies of Bloomfield and the Oranges against the will of the inhabitants of those places.

David Baird came along as they were talking. Baird is the Republican boss of Camden, and the agent there of "the Penn" and the Public Service Corporation. "David," said Lentz, after introducing him, "I want you to get your boys in line for that bill."

"All right, Major," said David, "I will."

Colby wasn't so agreeable. He didn't say much, but Lentz suspected him and his suspicions were promptly confirmed. Colby happened to meet about noon that day the chairman

of the committee which had the Bloomfield bill in charge, and they went together to lunch. When they entered the restaurant there sat the major with his citizens. The boss seemed gradually to work himself into a rage, for after staring angrily at Colby a few moments, he got up, stalked over, and "putting his head in between ours," Colby says, "and spluttering in my face, he demanded to know if I was opposing him in this." So far as Colby can recall, he and the chairman hadn't mentioned the bill, but he was opposing Lentz "in this," and he said so.

"That settles it," said the Major.

Not only "that," but everything settled it between Colby and his boss and the bosses of the boss. Tom McCarter had said Colby would lose every friend he had in Essex; Uzel had warned him to take heed for his political future. "It was fight," says Colby now. "I went home from that session burning hot with indignation. But I didn't think about my political future. That had sunk into a small detail of a situation which was bigger than the political ambition of any man. I saw that the legislature, yes, and the government in nearly all of its branches, was ruled absolutely by our Jersey corporations. And despotically, unscrupulously, too; in the interest of their business, they were corrupting all of us. Hadn't they nearly corrupted me?"

The question was what to do. Colby didn't know what to do. He asked me what I would have done, and I pass it on to you who read this: What would you have done? And I ask the question to bring home to you the quandary of this young legislator and of his friends, and of the citizens of Orange and of Newark and of Jersey who wanted to fight. Lentz said Colby should not be renominated for the Assembly, and some of his friends proposed a fight in the party for the county committee. But Colby didn't want to run for boss of Essex; he wanted to make his appeal more to the people. This was an instinct, a democratic instinct which this rich railroad magnate's son has well developed in him. He proposed running an older man for senator, but the older man wouldn't run and the Newark, Bloomfield, and Orange men wanted Colby to lead their common fight. He was in doubt. He wanted to make the fight impersonal, and they adopted his principle to fight the boss, not Lentz; not the man, but the boss as an institution, as an agent of a corrupt oligarchy. But how?

"Then," said Colby, as he told me the story, "then came Record."

There's a good deal of feeling against George L. Record in Jersey. He is the man who came to Mark Fagan when the kindly mayor of Jersey City was at the first crisis of his administration, and Record helped Mark Fagan. From suspecting him, Mayor Mark came to lean upon him for his economic policy, and they and their Jersey City cabinet have influenced Jersey politics and the Jersey legislature more and more healthfully than any other one force in the state. Yet, while none denies the perfect honesty of Mark Fagan, many men distrust George L. Record. And you may recall that Colby, two years before, when he took to Fagan, "disliked" Record. But when "Record came" he told Colby just what to do and how to do it. Colby is very handsome in his acknowledgment of the service Record rendered them in Essex, and his friends confess, though more grudgingly, that Record is a man of resources. But nobody can see what Record gets out of it for Record. They think he wants to go to the United States Senate. I hope he does; this long, lean, thinking Yankee from Jersey City might accomplish something even in the United States Senate. But Record is another story, and it doesn't matter now "what Record is after."

When he came to Colby, he came suggesting that since Colby had made one good fight at Trenton, he should make another; and since he personified all the discontent that opposed the control of the state by the corrupt corporations of the state, he, Colby, was the man to run for senator. How? There was the primary law. Record, the father of that law, suggested the use of it

to beat the Republican boss in his own party. “But,” he said, “don’t stop there. Adopt a platform. Promise specific things and go to the people with these definite promises. And put up a full ticket: senator and assemblymen and county officers, everything.”

Mark Fagan has in Jersey City a “group plan” of government. A picked lot of fellows get together, discuss, and agree upon policies and plans. Colby took that idea, and he accepted also the suggestion to join issue with fighters in other counties. So two groups, one from Essex and the other from Hudson, came together and out of their deliberations grew a platform and what is known as “The New Idea Movement.”

They adopted Colby’s Orange issue: limited franchises; Record’s: franchise taxation; Fagan’s: equal taxation; and Colby, Record and others added one new one: an expression at legislative elections of a popular choice for United States senators.

It isn’t necessary to follow the campaigns, for there were two—the first a fight at the primaries for the nomination for state senator, the second the general election at the polls. Both were anti-boss fights. Colby opened with an announcement of his candidacy, backed by a statement of his programme. The boss and the ringsters laughed. They laughed till the first mass-meeting was held. That was expected to fall flat, but the opera house was filled to overflowing and Fagan, Record, Colby and Martin aroused the crowd to tremendous enthusiasm. But the best thing Colby did was to adopt Fagan’s method of meeting the voters face to face. Fagan told him how to do it. Colby asked him. The young club man thought there was some mystery about talking to workingmen, so he invited Mayor Mark to luncheon to get his secret. The mayor was puzzled.

“Why, Mr. Colby,” he said, “I can’t tell you how to do that. I can tell you when you will find working-men at liberty to listen, and I can tell you how they feel about some of these great questions. But I can’t tell you what to say to them. You must say just what you think, and, Mr. Colby, if you don’t feel from the bottom of your heart a real interest in people you might as well stay at home.”

“And that,” says Colby, “is about the best advice I ever got. The instant he said it I knew it was right. After that I went out to my noonday meetings and I didn’t try to find out what they thought. I told them what I thought about things.”

Colby’s class suffers from class consciousness, as much, if not more, than labor does. If he had gone forth as a rich man to the poor, or as a capitalist to labor, or as a business man offering a good business administration to a people incompetent for self-government, he would have had to buy votes or be beaten. But going as he did, as a man to men, and promising things that were directed at the reform, not of politicians and the police, and dirty streets, etc., etc., but of the grosser vices of his own class, even though he did not mention class, those people sized up “this rich young club fellow” as they sized up the ex-gilder and undertaker, Mark Fagan, and they put their faith in him as the Missourians did in Folk, as the people of Wisconsin did in La Follette, and as the people of San Francisco did in Heney. The American people seem not to know the difference between clean streets and dirty streets, but they do know the difference between hypocrisy and sincerity, between plutocracy and democracy. They’ll help you beat the boss if you’ll show that you see as plainly as they do who is back of the boss.

The machine blundered. The bosses always blunder when, as they put it, “they go up against a new game,” and the New Idea was a new game. Colby made use of Record’s primary law to print his name, as candidate for the senate, after the names of his delegates. Lentz wouldn’t do that. He wanted to elect his delegates, then dictate as of old, all the candidates to be nominated by the convention. Governor Stokes warned Lentz. Colby thought he saw signs of the governor’s interference against him, and he went to Mr. Stokes to ask that “he keep his hands off.”

“Why,” said the governor, “all I have done was to tell Lentz that if he didn’t name a man against you, you’d beat him.”

Colby’s crowd worked early and late. As time went on and the excitement grew, men who never had taken part in politics joined in what they agreed was the “greatest game they ever sat in at,” the great game of politics. Everybody was welcome, and everybody was happy. It was a popular election, every man’s election, and they won. Won? The completeness of their victory at the primaries astonished them. They carried everything. The next morning Major Lentz told Colby the convention was his, Colby’s, and Colby might “run it” to suit himself. Very gracious, indeed, was this defeated boss, but he hoped (and he hopes) to be boss again.

“I’ve been thinking,” he said to the victor, “that maybe I ought to resign. What do you think, Colby?”

“I think you might as well, Major,” said Colby, who thought Lentz meant what he said. But Lentz didn’t mean anything of the kind.

“Well, I won’t,” he answered in a huff. “I didn’t mean to resign the chairmanship of the county committee; I meant as manager of the campaign.” Colby said he and his crowd nearly went to pieces on this very point. They held their convention, and they nominated the whole legislative and county ticket. That had all been planned in advance. But what next? What about managing the campaign? Lentz had the county committee, and the county committee usually ran county campaigns. Colby and his group meant to have their fight made by a joint committee, but their plans were indefinite. “We hadn’t thought it out,” Colby says, “and we made a bad blunder.”

The county committee was to have a meeting, and it was the custom for candidates to go and be presented. Colby left town intending not to recognize the committee, but he was telephoned for by some of his best friends. As a victor he must not show ill-will, etc., etc. So Colby went to the meeting. In the course of the formalities, Lentz said something about the campaign being run as usual, and, Colby says, “I should have jumped up then and there to declare that it would not be run as usual. I didn’t. Don’t know why I didn’t, but I didn’t. I just hadn’t my wits about me, and I let it pass.”

The next day the papers were full of the “Love Feast.” “Colby and the boss were together.” Colby thinks this was a very “bad break,” and so do some of his friends, but mistakes don’t count in these criminal days, and he corrected his promptly. He came out with a letter demanding that his own, not the county committee, should run the campaign. This was a repudiation of the organization. Lentz refused to give up, so he ran one campaign, and Colby’s committee, with William P. Martin for chairman, ran the other. The machine men cut Colby at the polls, but he won in spite of them. The normal Republican majority in Essex County ranges from ten to twelve thousand. Colby’s was 19,986, and some of the other men on his ticket ran a few hundred ahead of him. The election of Everett Colby and his ticket ranked in significance with the victories that fall of Jerome in New York, of Weaver’s ticket in Philadelphia, of Judge Dempsy’s for mayor of Cincinnati, of Tom Johnson in Cleveland, of Brand Whitlock in Toledo, of Pattison in Ohio, etc. They all were anti-boss fights. Some of them, like Pattison’s and Dempsy’s, were minority party fights against the majority party boss; some, like Jerome’s and Whitlock’s, were against “both the bosses” and “all parties”; Colby’s, like LaFollette’s and Folk’s, was within the majority party. No matter how made, these fights were all against the boss, and the boss fell. What next?

The political boss is nothing but an agent of the business bosses back of him. Some of these anti-boss leaders know this; some do not. Those that do may get somewhere; the others

won't. Colby is one of those that can see beyond the boss; that is one reason why he would not make his campaign a personal fight against Carl Lentz. He saw, and he sees, and some of the men with him see, the powers behind Lentz, and he is proceeding now deliberately and intelligently against them, the real enemies of the state, its active rulers, the class which corrupts it, and its officials, and its people for the sake of the privileges obtained or to be obtained from the state.

Look at their programme of bills again. In themselves they might not interest you and me very much, but look behind those bills. To "limit franchises" and "to tax them" these will bring these New Jersey leaders in direct, open conflict with the Prudential-Fidelity Trust-Public Service interests. To "tax the roadbed of railroads" like any other real estate is to challenge a most profitable privilege of the Pennsylvania and other railroads. To let voters pledge their legislators to candidates for the United States Senate—that is to make the United States Senate represent the people. All the resources of the railroads, trolleys, and other public utilities, and of all the "protected" businesses of Jersey and of the United States will be called into play to defeat this kind of reform; for this is real reform. It is not a little tap at superficial evils; it is a stab at the source of all evil in all our politics. It aims at democracy, at the restoration of truly representative government. It is "radical"; it is "dangerous." If the corporations do to Colby in Jersey what they have done to LaFollette in Wisconsin, they will stir up envy and hatred against him; they will befool his followers with false arguments or buy them with money or office or "business"; and they will embitter his life, public and private, too, with misrepresentation and slander. If the fight is fought to a finish, every trick known to expert manipulators of legislatures and public opinion will be tried, but the rings didn't believe it would be fought to a finish. Can you guess why? One of them told me what their faith was founded upon.

"We'll get Colby," he said. "Well get him before the session is over. He wants something. Every man wants something. It's all a matter of finding out what he wants. He may not know what it is himself, but we'll find out; and he'll get it and we'll get him or his crowd, or both."

There is no conceit about Colby, no bluster, and when I told him this, he did not clench his fist and set his jaw. He pondered a moment, then he said:

"I wonder if they will."

Colby knows the tremendous power and the infinite ingenuity of the interests that will oppose him, so he wondered, as you or I may, what is going to happen to him. He is as open-minded to the truth about himself as he is to the truth about corruption, and because he is open-minded, and because he can confess his mistakes when he sees them; because he takes fences as he comes to them, and because he says he "will go any length to put a stop to the corruption of men and government," it is likely that the gentleman from Essex will fight to a finish. What the end will be in Jersey, Jersey men must decide; they will have to watch the struggle and choose between those representatives who represent and those who do not. But the rest of us should watch, too. Everett Colby is a national leader; the Jersey fight is a national fight. The arena is local, but others are making the same fight elsewhere; the fight we all must make, sooner or later: the fight to restore the government of the people to the people.