

McClure's Magazine
April, 1905

New Jersey: A Traitor State

Every citizen who cares for his country, his state, or his city, should know the facts in this article. When we began to investigate New Jersey we thought we knew something of political and commercial corruption. We had charted some of its submerged depths but here we have found ourselves at times off soundings and the leadsman has reported no bottom. This is the longest of Mr. Steffens' articles and the most important; yes and the most interesting; this unrelenting story of sordid things. And if the reader feels as we do, how old, how intelligent, how sure the corruption of the state has been, let the truth serve to arouse a courage equal to the task ahead.
THE EDITOR.

PART I.—THE CONQUEST

EVERY loyal citizen of the United States owes New Jersey a grudge. The state is corrupt; so are certain other states. That the corruption of those other states hurts us all I have tried to indicate by tracing the corrupt origin of the senators they send to Washington to dominate our national legislation; and there is nothing very exceptional about the senators from New Jersey. But this state doubly betrays us. The corrupt government of Illinois sold out its people to its own grafters; the organized grafters of Missouri, Wisconsin, and Rhode Island sold, or are selling, out their states to bigger grafters outside. Jersey has been bought and sold both at home and abroad; the state is owned and governed today by a syndicate representing capitalists of Newark, Philadelphia, New York, London, and Amsterdam. The offense which commands our special attention, however, and lifts this state into national distinction, is this: New Jersey is selling out the rest of us.

New Jersey charters the trusts. Now, I am not "antitrust," and I have no words to waste upon an economic discussion of the charter-granting function of government, state or national. Citizenship is my theme, the character of a "sovereign people" and the effect on the nation as a whole of the failure of any part—ward, town, county, or state—to do its full duty. And the point to fix in mind at present is that when, a few years ago, the American people were disposed to take up deliberately and solve intelligently the common great trust problem, some of the American people seized it and settled it alone; when the states united were considering whether to maintain the system of competition, which was called the "life of trade," some of the states declared for monopolies; when the United States was contriving to curb the growth of overwhelming combinations of capital, New Jersey, for one, sold to the corporations a general law which was a general license to grow, combine, and overwhelm as they would, not in Jersey alone, but anywhere in the United States. Maybe this was wise, but that isn't why Jersey did it. She not only licensed companies to do in other states what those states would not license; she licensed them to do in those other states what she would not let them do in Jersey. No, our sister state was not prompted by any abstract consideration of right and wisdom. New Jersey sold us

out for money. She passed her miscellaneous incorporation acts for revenue. And she gets the revenue. Her citizens pay no direct state tax. The corporations pay all the expenses of the state, and more. It was “good business.” But it was bribery, the bribery of a whole state; and it was treason. If there is such a thing as treason by a state, then New Jersey is a traitor state.

Disloyalty an Old Charge Against Jersey

Nor is this the first time she has appeared in that character. Way back in the middle of the last century public opinion in the other states was declaring Jersey a “foreign country,” “out of the Union.” In New York they spoke of “the United States and New Jersey,” and Philadelphia sang a street song calling her “Spain.” The grudge of those olden days was the grudge of our day: her “liberal policy” toward corporations. She maintained a railroad monopoly which exploited interstate commerce. It exploited her also, as we shall see, but her chief loss was her good name, and she was paid for that. states, like cities, have specialties. When I was studying municipal corruption I found that most of the big cities had near them lesser towns, to which the vicious could retreat when, during “reform” or other emergencies, the cities had to be “good.” St. Louis had its East St. Louis; Pittsburgh, its Allegheny; Philadelphia, its Camden; and New York has had Greenwich, Hoboken, Jersey City, and now Brooklyn may play the part. What these retreats are to the vices of their cities, New Jersey is to the vicious business of the states—a resort, a commercial road house, a financial pirate’s haven. New Jersey is the business Tenderloin of the United States.

And that is her history. From the moment the family of states was formed, the fathers have gone there to do things they dared not do at home; beginning with Alexander Hamilton. Every American child knows how this great statesman stole off to Jersey Heights to fight his fatal duel with Aaron Burr. He had gone there before. He had gone there on business before. He was the founder of the first great Jersey corporations, and his charters initiated the liberal policy of the state toward corporate business. It was Alexander Hamilton who discovered the uses of New Jersey. Lying undeveloped between two thriving cities, New York and Philadelphia, New Jersey, in the early part of the last century, was a barrier between the East and the South and West. How to get over or around Jersey was a national problem; as it still is. Geographical then, it is political now, and it has come down to us political and unsolved because the old solution was political. The geographical barrier was turned to commercial advantage by political power under the lead of Hamilton. He foresaw that the state was to be a national highway, and that the key to its control was the Hudson shore opposite New York. So he interested the governor, an ex-governor, a future governor, and other leading citizens of New Jersey, and they formed, in 1804, The Associates of the Jersey Company—to protect the public interest? Not at all.

Founded on the Hamilton Theory

Hamilton had a theory. He honestly believed that the people could not govern themselves. Thomas Jefferson believed they could, and he organized the Democratic party, which stood, for a while, for a representative democracy, a government representing the common interests of all the people, with special privileges for none. Hamilton, who led the Federalist party, held that, since there was no king and no nobility, the Republic must be built upon the grateful loyalty of a specially interested business class. Hamilton’s theory has prevailed. It is a condition now in every

state that I have studied. The Jeffersonian idea still lives here and there, as in President Roosevelt's platform, a "square deal," but wherever it is revived—in Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, or in the Congress—there is trouble. There is no trouble in New Jersey. Hamilton himself nursed the infancy of that state.

The great Federalist from New York and the leading citizens of New Jersey combined to have and to hold "the gateway of the continent" as private property, and Hamilton's charter not only gave his company governmental powers and rights and privileges, troublesome to the commonwealth down to today, it taught the "best people" to rule and, ruling, to use the state for private business purposes. The lesson was well learned. In 1830, when a railroad was projected from Camden to Amboy, the promoters, being pioneer railroad men, were doubtful of the success of the scheme; but they were leading citizens of the state, and they went to the state for aid and easy terms. Though the route chosen was the shortest way through Jersey from Philadelphia waters to a water connection with New York, they talked in modern terms of "developing the resources of the state," and the legislature of 1830, to which they applied, met full of popular enthusiasm to grant all that the company might ask. And this is all that it asked: a monopoly forever of the New York-Philadelphia traffic; exemption in perpetuity from taxation; a state subscription to their stock; and plenty of time to build. And they got all this. What return did they make, these leading Jerseymen, for the generosity of their own people and the substantial aid of their own state? Gratitude? Loyalty? Hamilton's theory is a modern theory; this question is a modern question; only the answer is old. These men made the same return to their state that such men so favored have made in our other states: political corruption. So far as I can make out, our privileged classes are not grateful; they are disloyal. The very favors granted them make our leading men enemies of the Republic.

The promoters of the Camden and Amboy foresaw what the people did not, that their monopoly was against public interest; that their exemption would become a public burden; that their success would tempt rivals into the field; and that the development of the resources of the state, which they promised, would make more railways necessary. To protect their precious privileges, therefore, they set deliberately about corrupting the state. And how they did corrupt it! Like the "best people" of Rhode Island, they bought the voters with cash at the polls; they bought the political parties with contributions to the campaign funds; they organized machines and reorganized the government, county by county, town by town, legislature after legislature. They nominated their men for office, petty and important, made themselves and their kind governors and United States senators; they ruled the state. They put the railroad above the state. With the fat profits of their state-granted privileges, they so corrupted the state that the government represented, not the people of New Jersey, but its railroad. It was a national scandal.

New Jersey became known as the state of Camden & Amboy, and that is what she was; and as such she was execrated and ridiculed throughout the Union. The railroad monopoly charged excessive rates, but it was a monopoly; there was no way around it. Canals and waterways were used; the Camden & Amboy fought, then bought them. Other railroads over better land routes were projected, one to Jersey City. When these were forced through, the Camden & Amboy forced leases and combinations, and with one of them acquired the majority stock of Hamilton's old associates of Jersey. Since the associates held the exclusive ferry privilege from all the available shore, the political monopoly was made physical; no other roads could have a New York terminal in Jersey, except by "making land" at inconvenient places.

The period that followed, down to 1873, was one of the most disgraceful in the history of the commercial corruption of American politics. The United States was growing, business was

increasing, and the traffic had to pass over “the highway of the continent.” Other roads had to come, and they did come. The new companies “made land,” dug tunnels, crossed mountains—the physical difficulties were overcome in time; it was the political monopoly, the highwayman state itself, that held up the business enterprise of the whole country. Not that these new promoters were not willing to pay. They, also, were great captains of industry, and they went to Trenton with their pockets full of bribe money. Ask an aged Jersey grafter for the traditions of that time, and a lascivious expression of greedy contemplation will come over his face. “Those were the days!” The new roads paid cheerful blackmail to the Jersey legislature, and the Jersey legislators took money from “the foreigners,” but they stood by the Camden & Amboy, which paid more. And the people of the state were with the monopoly. The people of the United States were back of the new roads, and public opinion ran high, but Jersey was grateful and loyal to the railroad that “made the state.” Jersey had “state pride.” She was a “state’s rights” state. She had a few slaves, and leaned to the South; she is the one northern state that refused, during the war, to let her soldiers vote in the field, and so cast her electoral vote against Lincoln. The state that lets trusts do in other states what those states won’t permit, and what Jersey won’t permit in Jersey, was ever for herself and her own; and in the great “National Railway fight” you find her legislative (Camden & Amboy) orators appealing to the local sentiment against “foreign railroad companies which propose to use the state only as a convenience,” and a “corporation chartered by Pennsylvania in which the state of New Jersey has no particular interest.”

First Bribery of the State as a State

What “particular interest” had the state in the Camden & Amboy? Indignant public opinion in the nation asked and the newspapers found out. In lieu of all taxes, the Camden & Amboy Railroad had arranged with the Camden & Amboy legislature in its charters that the state was to collect so much a head on passengers, and so much a ton on freight carried across the state on the road. In other words, besides the onerous charges for transportation, the railroad was to collect what was called a “transit duty” for the state. It was this discovery that finally enraged the national mind and brought down upon Jersey the old charge of treason referred to above. The “transit duty” was called by the press of New York and Philadelphia an “import duty.” Jerseymen to this day are sensitive on the point. They declare, as Governor Randolph put it in a special message to the legislature of 1869, that the transit duty system was “either persistently misunderstood or willfully misrepresented by the citizens of other states.” The Jersey reasoning is that any tax on a railroad is borne by the traffic, and, of course, this is sound. None the less the “misrepresentation” by the other states was just: the obvious intention of that transit duty, levied only on through freight and through passengers, was to relieve the road of a tax, and let the state take it out of the country at large!

That is New Jersey. That was the spirit of those old transit duties, that is the spirit of her modern corporation policy. Being that, however, being what she was to the Camden & Amboy, Jersey was sure, sooner or later, to let others in unto her. The business which builds a monopoly on political corruption, prepares the way for its own undoing. One by one, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western, the Erie, the Jersey Central, etc., famous bribers all, bribed their way in, fighting the Camden, fighting one another, till, being in, they joined together to fight with bribery belated newcomers who came with fresh bribes. None of these roads, however, could compete for the New York-Philadelphia traffic. The Camden, reorganized as the United Railroads of New Jersey, held that fast, and a National Railroad Company which proposed to

parallel the monopoly was held at bay, session after session, by the state of Camden & Amboy. And to what end?

Sold Out to Pennsylvania Capital

In 1871 the Camden & Amboy was “leased” to the Pennsylvania Railroad. The “leading citizens” of Jersey—a “specially interested business class,” if there ever was one—had not only not been made “gratefully loyal,” they had developed in the state a loyalty to their company, corrupt and sordid, but none the less grateful, and then they turned their favored Jersey railroad over to a foreign corporation, owned in Philadelphia, New York, London, and Amsterdam. Like the Rhode Island captains of industry and politics, those of New Jersey financed their political power and sold it—sacred charters, rights, privileges, property, exemptions, and all—to Pennsylvania capital, whither, apparently, all our curses flow.

New Jersey, dumbfounded, turned to rend the now “foreign” monopoly. The lease was attacked and a just tax was proposed for the road. The National and other railway promoters who rushed with fresh hope to Trenton, were cheered on by the state, and a general railway law to permit anybody to build a railway anywhere was broached. It looked as though Jersey meant to be free. But the “leading Jersey men,” who had delivered over the great Jersey railroad, threw into the bargain their old Camden & Amboy political organization. In other words, with the monopoly, they sold also their people, their state, or, the political machinery which held the sovereignty of the state! This machinery was somewhat run down and the sale had given it a bad jar, but the buyers were men who knew their business. Heavily owned though it is abroad, the Pennsylvania has always been managed by American captains of industry, and they know how to protect their stockholders against the American people; other American businesses have beaten them at times; the government very seldom. They are, and they always have been, masters of American politics. When the Pennsylvania went into Jersey, it went in with eyes wide open. It knew it had to conquer the state, and it did conquer it. The Pennsylvania Railroad completed the corruption of that state, perfected the present Jersey government, and, as we shall see, adopted for purposes of its own the charter-granting system which has produced, for example, the Shipbuilding Trust.

Conquest of Jersey by the Pennsylvania

The conquest of New Jersey by the Pennsylvania was slow but exciting, and to a people once so swollen with state pride, now so meek under their state’s humiliation, the story must be fascinating. Politically speaking, the state was Democratic. Now it is Republican. It was Democratic before and during the war. The soldiers returning home in 1866 made the legislature Republican for two years, but the state was only going back to its own when, in 1869 and 1870, the Democrats carried both houses of the legislature. The preparation for the “lease” was begun in 1870, and the legislature reflected the popular feeling, which was intense, against the “foreign monopoly.” There was nothing for it, therefore, but to take control, and that is the settled Pennsylvania policy: not to buy legislators, but to own the legislature; not to corrupt government, but to be the state. So, while the Jersey men in the proposed National Company were charging up to Trenton to get their charter, the foreign conquerors laid a plan to get New Jersey.

Buying the Crown of New Jersey

The first step toward getting a government to represent you (whether you are a grafter or a good citizen) is to get a party to represent you. The Pennsylvania plan was to buy at the polls the election of a Republican legislature, for 1871, to represent the Pennsylvania. That legislature would have to reapportion the state upon the basis of the census of 1870, and it could gerrymander the districts so as to hold the assembly for years. The Democrats nearly spoiled the scheme. Getting wind of it, they and the national undertook to anticipate the gerrymander with one of their own. This was “unprecedented”; but a bill was drawn and the Pennsylvania had to fight it with fire. The Camden machine owned some Democrats along the line of the road, and they bought enough more to beat that Democratic gerrymander in that Democratic legislature, even though the Democrats knew it might mean the loss of their power for ten years.

The campaign that followed was one of those tests of democratic government which go to show that the cynics may be right when they say the people can't govern themselves. The issue was plain—monopoly vs. competition—and popular sentiment was strong and all one way. Money was spent by both sides in immense sums at the polls, and voters took money from both sides. No one knows, of course, which party put up the greater amount, but here is the result: the anti-monopoly voters threw out the “anti-monopoly party,” and elected a Republican majority to both houses.

The monopoly victory was so decisive that the National made no open fight in the next session. The Republicans had little else to do but to reapportion the state; and they did indeed reapportion it! I have come upon some interesting gerrymanders in the course of my investigations, never one like this. It amounted to a reorganization of government. Jersey City was a Democratic stronghold. This Republican legislature drew a district shaped like a horseshoe to contain almost all the Democratic voters, made that one assembly district, and divided up the rest of the city so that the Republican minority could easily elect all the other assemblymen. This is but a sample of what was done all over the state. That gerrymander made Jersey a national scandal again, but it “worked”; the Democrats could roll up a majority of 10,000 for a governor without budging the Republicans from the legislature. Nor is that all that was accomplished. The (Pennsylvania) Republicans legislated Democrats out of office, even down into cities and counties, turned local elective officers into commissions appointed by the legislature, transferred purely municipal functions over to Republican boards and so fastened the hold of rings upon cities, towns, and counties that stealing was overdone. Two cities, Rahway and Elizabeth, were run into bankruptcy. One senator who legislated himself into power robbed himself into prison. The ring treasurer of a third, Jersey City, had to flee with \$60,000 to Mexico, where bandits robbed him. The evils were so great, indeed, that the next legislature (1872) had to send a committee to “investigate” Jersey City. The ring wined and dined and otherwise so entertained the committee that their report was a “whitewash,” and, meanwhile, the riot of special legislation went on at Trenton. Governor Joel Parker in his message of 1873 said: “The general laws passed at the last session are contained in about one hundred pages of the Session Laws, while the special and private laws occupy over 1,400 pages of the same book.” The constitutional amendment, forbidding special and private legislation, which the governor proposed, was finally forced through by public clamor, and a timely church raid (which I cannot stop to describe) upon the public treasury.

The First Pitched Battle

We must not blame the Pennsylvania for all this, nor the Republicans. The Democrats were “just as bad.” The governor of New Jersey appoints all but two state officers, all law judges, and all county prosecutors of pleas, so that even when the corrupted people elected corrupted Republicans to the legislature, the corrupt Democratic “state Ring” had the state graft; and that was rich and exhaustive. The Republicans were compelled to resort to the local graft, and the Pennsylvania had to let them have it. As representatives of our ruling special interests have often explained to me, they have no time to rule well; they cannot be bothered giving us good government; it is all they can do to protect themselves. And certainly the Pennsylvania was fully occupied at this period. The National Railway people returned to the charge in 1873, with boodle in their hands, and public opinion at their backs. Both houses were Republican, but the Pennsylvania’s system was not perfected and the Republican legislators were untried; corruption was at that low stage where “money talks”— not the campaign fund, but cash bribery. So you find the press of the day asking, “Do the Pennsylvania people own the legislature, or must they buy it?” The answer was that they owned it, but it was so corrupt that they had to buy it over again. They organized the Senate, but the opposition showed strong in the Assembly.

When the Assembly took up and advanced a National Railway bill, the state was in a passion of delight. The promoters had filled up their directorate with well-known Jersey names, and Jersey turned out to help these honest Jersey men break the corrupt foreign monopoly. The monopoly men had a chance to deliver a crushing blow to this provincialism. Through the legislature of 1872, somebody had “sneaked” an act ostensibly for a small ore railroad up in Morris County. After it was passed somebody else had bought the ore franchise, and had begun to connect a lot of small railroads to make a continuous line from Jersey City to Philadelphia. A section of the act permitted this. The railroad Republicans, “called down” to Philadelphia, declared that that section was inserted after passage. Ordered to prove it, they produced evidence that a certain official had received \$162,800 to put through the job, and that the money came from the National. The Pennsylvania cried “fraud,” but public opinion would not credit such trickery in honest Jersey directors till the Pennsylvania took the matter to court. Just when everybody was rejoicing over the progress of the National’s charter bill, a decision was handed down declaring in effect that there was indeed fraud, and that the National’s franchise steal should not succeed.

The Jersey public was prepared now to turn in disgust from the National, but, after all, as one senator put it, “while some of that crowd should be in state’s prison, some of the Pennsylvania men deserve as richly to be there.” So the fight went on. The assembly passed the National bill up to the senate. There a Pennsylvania bill, authorizing that company to occupy the disputed territory, was introduced. Thirty days’ notice was required for such a bill, but the Pennsylvania appropriated a notice published for another bill. Senator Sewell (Rep.) confessed the trick; Senator McPherson (Dem.), besought his colleagues not to entertain such a suspicion. The Pennsylvania already was getting representatives in the Democratic party as well as in its own, and these two senators were for “the road”; they advanced “the Pennsy’s” bill. There was no expectation of passing it; it was meant only to block the game. And it did, for a few days. Then a belief spread that the National’s bill could be passed. Between bribery and the pressure of public opinion, certain doubtful members were “fixed to vote right.” But where was the bill? The Senate called for it; it was not forthcoming. The committee was asked to report. But the committeeman who had it was missing, too. There was an uproar, and the Senate demanded a report. Senators Sewell and McPherson, in defense of the committee, besought their colleagues

to modify their tone, and “demand” was amended to “request.” Then the Secretary of the Senate produced the bill from his pocket, saying the absent committeeman had ordered him “not to let it get out.” Why? The Pennsylvania had bought back those doubtful senators, but hoped to save them the exposure of a vote. They did their best, but when the lobbyists saw that the roll must be called they stood behind pillars grinning. They foresaw the howl that would rise from the Jersey crowd, but they did not foresee the full force of the rage. The bill was beaten. There was a pause, then the crowd, yelling “Kill him!” rushed at one senator, and he had to be rescued and escorted to his hotel by a bodyguard of lobbyists.

Thus again the Pennsylvania was victorious, but the triumph this time was short-lived. The public was incensed, and the crowd at Trenton was reckless. The old cry for a general railway law was taken up. The sentiment for such a law had been so strong that the Pennsylvania’s orators in the legislature had been using it all through the session, not because “the” road wanted to throw the state open, but to divide the National’s forces. Now the National’s legislators saw their chance to get even and to win. A general railway bill had been introduced early in the session; it had come from an obscure member and been consigned to obscurity in a “safe” committee. In the heat of defeat, the National legislators called for that bill. “The Pennsylvania want a general railroad bill; here they have one.” So, with the sullen citizens looking on, this bill was passed. Some say the Pennsylvania had surrendered in a deal with its rivals; others that the road “couldn’t make its legislators stand up.” At any rate, it was without any open opposition from this quarter that the present general railway law of New Jersey was enacted—amid cheers, speeches, and the firing of cannon. Jersey was a free state!

How Corruption Wins When Defeated

Was she? Eternal vigilance, they say, is the price of liberty. It is, and the corruptionists pay it. When the good citizens of Jersey went home, the Pennsylvania went to work. Hence, the Pennsylvania came to rule again. When the people separated, having beaten one bribing railroad with another and opened the way to all bribing railroads, all the railroads got together to beat all the people. They had to. They had privileges and exemptions which were valuable, and against the public interest. Hence Jersey became, not free, but common—free only to the railroads, which had to control the government.

The Pennsylvania took the lead. Being a non-resident ruler, the company must depend upon the loyalty (to it) of citizens of the state. The long monopoly fight had served to test men, and the road used all its machinery, political and financial, to reward and advance those who had stayed bought, or, for any reason, had stood by it, and to punish and retire those who, for any reason, had stood up for the public. General William J. Sewell, the Republican state senator whom we have had a glimpse of speaking openly for the monopoly, was made “the” man. He was a “good fellow.” An Irishman, unlettered, but able; generous, but firm; unscrupulous, but magnificently candid, he never made any bones about the fact that he represented “the road.” He was an officer of the company. The head of a lot of subsidiary Camden & Amboy companies, he was the boss of the old South Jersey Tammany-Republican political machine, and under the eye of the “head offices” of the Pennsylvania Company at Philadelphia he extended his power until he became the recognized Republican boss of the state.

The Pennsylvania’s Jersey Viceroy

General Sewell was more than that. As the representative of that railroad which was the chief source of corruption, he was a power in both parties. His policy was broad. He furthered business, especially privileged business; he encouraged all industry and enterprise, but his chief care was for those that wanted things, favors or protection, and were willing to help bear the expense of corrupting the state. All the railroads were in this governing class, and, though some of them were Democrats, they had so much in common that they exercised eternal vigilance together, i.e., let their lobbies and legislators labor together. For example, Miles Ross, the Democratic boss of Middlesex County, who represented the Lehigh Valley Railroad both in his county and in the legislature (till he went to Congress), was practically a lieutenant of Sewell, and politicians and newspaper men told me that most of the time the election of a Democratic governor and a Republican senate was the result of an understanding between the parties. They fought for the assembly, but even that was to be always "railroad." So Sewell became in time a bipartisan boss and the actual head of the state. That is to say, he, with United States Senator John R. McPherson, a Democrat, but also a "Penn. man," ruled New Jersey in the interest of the Pennsylvania and the other railroads and "business."

Under Sewell's guidance all went well in Jersey for a while. There were troubles, but they were purely political troubles, and we have little to do with "pure politics" in this state. Business prospered, and every American knows that business prosperity is all that men and government exist for. The Democratic state house ring was grafting on the state, and the county rings were grafting on their counties. Miles Ross was financiering his Middlesex; David Baird, Sewell's Camden lieutenant, was making his county pay; Garret A. Hobart was getting control of water, both for power and for life, up in Passaic, etc., etc. The railroads were grabbing water fronts down around Jersey City; the Lehigh had bought and was running down its cheap competitor, the Morris Canal, which the road and the politicians were turning, without a license, into a water supply for towns and factories. I cannot go into all the "enterprises" of this kind that show the beneficence of Jersey's business government in that period of prosperity and no trouble. One will have to do, an incident that illustrates the most points and leads us up to the second pitched battle between Jersey and her foreign conquerors.

By 1880, Sewell's government was so entrenched that both parties represented the railroads, to which both looked for campaign funds, patronage, and other favors. Some of the Democratic leaders showed a dangerous leaning to public opinion, however, and it was decided that the time had about come to elect a Republican governor, and make everything "safe and solid." This would take lots of money, so Sewell and his company looked around for a rich candidate. They chose a suburbanite, Frederic A. Potts, a "coal king" of New York City, with many corporation connections, and a director of the Jersey Central. To bring in the rest of the railroads, and to finance the campaign, Hobart was made chairman of the Republican state committee.

This was a combination of sovereigns, and the Democrats in alarm put up to break it a candidate who was expected to draw Pennsylvania railroad support—George C. Ludlow, a state senator who was a local attorney for "the" road. His nomination was forced, the campaign was a scandal, and there was fraud at the polls, but Ludlow was elected. Mr. Potts declared that the Pennsylvania did go back on him, and when Ludlow's majority proved to be only 861, innocent Republican partisans cried "fraud," and demanded an investigation. Their managers suppressed this move. The Republicans were in no position to investigate, and besides, the legislature was

Republican, and the governor, though a Democrat, was a Pennsylvania railroad man. "Business" would be "safe."

Jersey Produces a Democrat

Much stress has been laid in these articles upon the number of corporation men who are promoted to high places in our government, and the regularity with which they represent their clients is significant. But the exceptions are also significant, and Governor Ludlow was an exception. When he became governor of New Jersey he represented New Jersey. His Republican legislature, with Hobart president of the senate, represented the railroads and the joint session, with "Gardner of Atlantic" in the chair, sent General Sewell to the United States Senate to help do to the rest of us what he was doing to Jersey. A flood of railroad and other business bills were passed, and Governor Ludlow could not stop them. He could speak for the common interest of the state, however, and he did, and in 1882 the Assembly turned up Democratic to support him. The Senate, made up, like Rhode Island, of twenty-one senators, one from each county, no matter what the population is, was controlled by eleven "rotten boroughs." So the upper house held Republican, and again the business bills flowed in. Among them were several (introduced by "Gardner of Atlantic") which separately looked innocent enough, but which together carried a deal. One was to enable corporations to increase their capital stock, another was to "file maps," etc. The first was to help one party in the Jersey Central to vote another out of control, and the others secured to the Pennsylvania a right, disputed in the courts at the time, to seize, hold, and exclude Jersey City (and its sewer-pipes) and others from a certain water front. The Standard Oil was in on this. This company had sneaked into the state underground, with her pipe lines, the railroads and the bosses helping her and holding up rivals. That was her way. The Standard Oil hates to go to legislatures herself, so she sends her railroads. She had property on the waterfront. The Pennsylvania had a branch to it. One of the little "niggers" discovered in this group of bills was a provision to exempt from taxation, etc.—this "ten-acre terminal," which included the Standard Oil property.

These bills crept undebated through the Senate and were well on their way in the House, when their rottenness was discovered and declared. Then the railroads sent counsel to defend them and, with the lobby at work, forced them on up to the governor. Tremendous pressure was brought to bear upon him to sign them; the corporations demanded that he be loyal to them, his professional clients and his political creators, and they threatened to ruin him if he was loyal to the state. Ludlow vetoed those bills in a message that aroused the state. No matter. The Republican Senate passed them over the veto, and the Democratic House was doing likewise, when a member rose in his place and, waving five one-hundred-dollar bills in one hand and an affidavit in the other, announced that this money was half of a bribe of \$1,000 promised him for his vote. To "peach" is against the most sacred rules of the game. The House adjourned. A committee was appointed to investigate. That committee heard one assemblyman confess that he had taken a retainer to deliver "three or four speeches" (including his vote, of course) for the bills; another that "Cul" Barcalow, the Pennsylvania's chief lobbyist, had dropped a remark, as he passed him, that it was "worth a thousand" to vote for the bills. So there was money in the business, but the committee reported that the lobbyist's remark was a joke (no lobbyist could mean such a thing seriously); and, as for the cash shown in the House, that could not be traced to a corporation. Nothing was done, therefore. But the "joke" and some sharp maneuvering beat the bills.

Governor Ludlow rendered his state a far greater service than this, however. Whenever a man in public office actually represents the public interest, he revives the Jeffersonian idea, and, as we have noticed before, that makes trouble. Governor Ludlow started the greatest trouble Jersey ever had. He was not a great man and he seems to have had no very definite policy. Like Folk in Missouri, like LaFollette in Wisconsin, and like Theodore Roosevelt now in the United States, whenever he saw an evil head he hit it. That is enough. That brings the special interests out into the light and raises the great question, Who is to govern this country, the people or the few who are corrupting it? It doesn't matter what the particular issue is—a revision of the tariff, a ship subsidy bill, the trial of a boodler, the enforcement of a liquor law, the just taxation of a railroad, or the regulation of railroad rates—let a man press any point that touches the so-called “specially interested business class” and he will arraign against him all the allied forces that are running the government—city, state, and nation—to get privileges from it and to protect those that they already have.

The Perennial Jersey Issue

The particular issue in Jersey is “equal taxation,” and Governor Ludlow raised it. It was the underlying issue in the 'sixties, it is the issue over there today, it is the issue for which, principally, the railroads had been preparing all these years. They “had to.” Every legislature from the 'thirties on that for any reason, honest or corrupt, admitted to the state a railroad with a charter exempting from taxation “all railroad property used for railroad purposes,” made it absolutely necessary, according to business ethics, to help corrupt the government and keep it corrupt. That exemption was a valuable privilege, and it was a burden to the people of the state. As all those many Jersey railroads grew and prospered, the value and the amount of their property increased. They acquired more and more land, more and more buildings, more and more stations, and bigger and bigger terminals. Each purchase, grab, or extension of theirs removed just so much of the most valuable property from local and “equal” taxation. The cost of government increased steadily, of course; the railroads were careful about public improvements, and they permitted very few. But the corruptionists had to let the corrupted local leaders have some money to spend in (and thus appease, satisfy, bribe) their counties. So the expenses went on growing, and, since the railroads could not be taxed, the citizens had to pay; not only, mind you, to meet the normal increase, but the deficiency also, due to the growing railroad exemptions.

Charles L. Corbin, now one of the leading corporation lawyers in the state, summed up the situation at the time. He was explaining how it came about that New Jersey had such a heavy debt and so high a tax rate. It was not due, he said, to stealing. “Although scandalous defalcations have come to light in probably more than half the cities . . . the losses . . . have been made good by bondsmen. No expensive public works have been carried on. No governor of the state has found the cost of the capitol a painful subject to contemplate in his message. There is no state canal, no Brooklyn or St. Louis bridge, no Hoosac tunnel, no Tweed courthouse, to show for all the millions added to the debt of the last decade. I believe there is not in all New Jersey a city park of ten acres extent. . . . The people have been taxed to the limit of their endurance, in some cases beyond it, yet the burden continues to increase. . . . Should another business revulsion take place, the number of bankrupt cities would be greatly increased.” After this picture, Mr. Corbin stated the cause: “More than one-fourth the property of the state is exempt from county and local taxation. That exempted property belongs to the railroad companies.”

Estimating at \$250,000,000 the value of this exempt railroad property, Mr. Corbin showed that “the people of New Jersey were paying an annual subsidy of \$2,000,000 to the owners of the railroad property in the state!” When Governor Ludlow showed himself a free man, this condition was brought to his attention by Mr. Corbin and other men who had been seeking for years to correct it. The governor urged the legislature to take it up, and bills were introduced. The legislature, with “Gardner of Atlantic” presiding over the Senate, killed these bills, and nothing was accomplished in Ludlow’s administration. The question was up, however; the railroads had had to show themselves to beat it off, and with the scandal of “Gardner of Atlantic’s” little bills, to illustrate the methods of the roads, the American citizen had the sensation needed to excite him to revolt.

Jersey was so excited in 1883 that both parties adopted platforms pledging their candidates to tax reform. We all know what railroad platforms are for; in this railroad state the citizens paid little heed to them; they looked to the candidates. A Jersey governor cannot succeed himself, so Ludlow could not run. The Democrats nominated Leon Abbett, the Republicans a judge on the bench. Now, I make it a rule not to criticise the courts, but some lawyer should—and the place to go first for the facts is New Jersey. The judges over there are not elected; high and low, they all are appointed by the governor. Business men and lawyers tell me that is the way to ensure a strong bench. Rhode Island does not prove this, and taking up one by one the appointments to the bench in Jersey, tracing the past records of the judges, and noting the decisions that bore on my work, I got somehow the impression that those courts were part of the Jersey system. As a layman, I asked corporation lawyers in Wall Street for their opinion, and I heard from them that the Jersey bench ranks among the very best state courts in the land. So I should say that “Jersey justice” offers a fair test. Whatever was found to be true there might be accepted with confidence as more typical than, for instance, the results of an investigation in Missouri.

Whatever may be said of the bench as a bench, however, I feel safe in this generalization: judges make poor leaders of a political campaign. They are not democratic enough. They seem to put too much faith in machinery, legal, political, social, and this judge whom the Republicans nominated in their day of trouble left it to the organization to make him governor, as it had made him judge. As he said, he “waited where he was” in dignified silence for the office and the people to come to him, and, while he waited, Leon Abbett, who went to the people, was elected.

Jersey’s Best Man

Abbett had to go to the people. It seems to me that this most interesting man was an instinctive democrat, and would naturally have campaigned the state, county by county, as he did. But no two Jersey witnesses agree about him now any longer, and it is certain that when he ran for governor he was forced by the fury of the attacks on his imperfect record to fight on the stump. Besides the Republican party, some of the state house ring of his own party, and most of the big interests back of both parties, were against him. It is believed that the Pennsylvania’s Republican machine secretly supported him, and he was an old Camden & Amboy legislator. But he was called a “politician,” a “demagogue,” an “anarchist”; and I find that “business” reserves these bad names for men who are brave enough to challenge and able enough to beat bad business; and that was Abbett. There was another charge against the man, however: ambition. His enemies said he cared nothing for the state; which was not true; or for the governorship, which was partly true. They said he wanted to be a United States senator, and believed that by

taxing the railroads he could achieve his ambition. Here was the outrageous truth, I guess: Leon Abbett was one of those “unscrupulous politicians” who want, not money, but office, and who think to rise, even to the United States senate, by serving, not the special, but the common interests of the state. This makes the man interesting to all of us; his career was an experiment in democracy.

Abbett did tax the railroads. He did not tax them as they should be taxed, like other property, but there is an excuse for that failure. He represented the people; the legislature did not. The American people too commonly depend upon one man, the executive, to legislate for them; they neglect the legislature, which was meant to be the representative, law-making branch of the government. The result is such typical situations as that of President Roosevelt and the Congress today (1905), and of Governor Abbett in New Jersey In 1884. The president is urging a law granting to the Interstate Commerce Commission power to regulate railroad rates; the Jersey governor was for a law to tax private and railroad property on the same footing; both men were acting for the common against the special interests. Now, note the parallel of their experiences. Abbett had an equal-tax bill introduced in the Assembly, and it was called the “governor’s bill”; just as the rate bill introduced in the House of Representatives is known as the “President’s bill.” Railroad men rushed to Trenton as we have seen them rush to Washington. Abbett had aroused public opinion, however, and the railroads could not make their assemblymen stand up. Like the House of Representatives, the Jersey Assembly passed the “governor’s bill” with an overwhelming vote up to the Senate. That is as far as the president’s bill has gone up to this writing, but, as it progresses, see if the parallel is not carried out. Public opinion in Jersey was such that even the senators were alarmed. They must do something. When the special interests see that “some legislation” is necessary, they always want to draw the bill themselves. So, the Jersey Senate appointed a committee, with John W. Griggs for chairman; hearings were held; the railroads appeared (United States Senator Sewell for the Pennsylvania), and they pleaded for the sacred rights of (their) property, and the inviolability (by the state) of their contracts with the state. In vain. Some sort of a bill had to be drawn. So the committee drew a bill taxing the railroads, not equally—they were to be put in a class by themselves—still the Griggs bill provided for a tax on railroads. Some of the railroad men objected even to this compromise—“Gardner of Atlantic,” for example. But there was the governor’s bill to meet, and the Griggs bill was introduced to meet it. There was a deadlock. The railroads used all their power, legitimate and illegitimate; the governor used all his, legitimate and illegitimate—patronage, vetoes, even a threat to veto the appropriation bills. It was no use. The Griggs bill might be passed, not the governor’s. As the session drew to a close, the governor was persuaded to take “half a loaf”; the Griggs bill would increase by about \$300,000 the revenue of the state. That was something. The governor consented to make terms with the railroads. In the current discussion of the president’s rate-regulation bill, I notice that railroad men are saying that they would not mind the regulation so much if only they could have a “better,” a “more expert” commission. That was the chief point in the deal between Governor Abbett and the railroads of his state. If the roads must be taxed, then the roads must do the taxing. If laws must be passed against special interests, special interests want not only to draw the laws, but to execute them. Abbett won the present railroad-tax law of New Jersey by making two of the four assessors (Pennsylvania) railroad men.

Some of the roads, left out of the final deal, resisted the law, but Governor Abbett brought them to terms. The Jersey Central appealed to the courts. There was a suspicion abroad that the law had been drawn to be ruled unconstitutional, and, when the Supreme Court so held, the comment through the state was rather excited. This tradition, still believed but unsupported

by evidence, goes on to relate that the governor served notice on the roads that if the law was not upheld on appeal he would “equal-tax” them. Anyhow, the Court of Appeals did reverse the lower court and declare the law sound. Even then the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western would not pay; till the governor discovered that this road, so insistent upon its own rights, had not paid even the taxes it admitted it should pay. In a special message, the governor declared that the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western (whose president, by the way, used to put a Bible in each car) had scaled down the value of personal property and equipment, in twenty years, from thirteen to three millions, and that consequently it had cheated the state out of one million dollars. This set the legislature in motion to take away its charter, and the road offered to obey the new law. The governor demanded now, however, those arrears of taxes also, and, upon the decision of umpires that at least \$300,000 was due, this “loyally grateful” corporation performed for once its duty to the state.

Wrong Road to the Senate, No. 1

Thus did Leon Abbett seize as governor the powers of the governor, and reassert the sovereignty of his state, even over the railroads. This, to get a United States senatorship. Did he deserve the promotion? He was not a “good man,” only a “good politician”; he “dickered” and he “dealt”; to pass that railroad bill he used all the arts of his profession, save only cash bribery, and he showed himself not above that, for, having no money, he paid out public offices; and patronage is simply bribery which the public pays. So Governor Abbett was not the perfect man we are looking for to give us good government. Far from it; personally, Leon Abbett was as bad as William J. Sewell. But Sewell was in the Senate; indeed, it was Sewell’s seat that Abbett was after; and Sewell had got it because he was bad. Why, then, shouldn’t Abbett have it? What was the difference?

There was a difference, and that difference beat Abbett. What was it? I think it was this: while Sewell was bad in the interest of “business,” Abbett was bad in the interest of the state. But let us see: there were other differences between these two men; Sewell was a Republican, Abbett was a Democrat. But Sewell’s Jersey colleague in the Senate at that time was John R. McPherson, a Democrat. We have seen him fighting side by side with Sewell for the Pennsylvania in the state Senate; and all Jersey remembers a certain letter which a certain railroad man wrote to Abram S. Hewitt, a director of the Reading (the old National) Railroad, to warn him of a conversation, overheard at the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia, in which Sewell and McPherson were alleged to have agreed, since both represented the Pennsylvania, that neither should fight for his own party when the other was up for reelection to the senate. That is to say, when Sewell (Rep.) was running for his seat, McPherson (Dem.) was to let the Republicans carry certain doubtful districts, so that Sewell (P. R. R.) could go to Washington, and when McPherson (Dem.) was running, Sewell (Rep.) was to let the Democrats carry certain close districts which the “road” could “influence,” so that McPherson (P. R. R.) could go back.

So long as the senator represented the Pennsylvania, the party made no difference; was it that? Not exactly. When now (1886) Governor Abbett was running against Sewell, the governor saw to it that the Democrats made a fight. One wing of the party, missing the railroad “backing,” wanted to nominate a railroad man for governor, and, since the Jersey Central was angry, not only at the party for taxing it, but at the Pennsylvania for having “grabbed” for itself both “railroad representatives” on the tax board, the railroad Democrats suggested Rufus Blodgett, superintendent of the Long Branch division of the Central. Abbett, by making humiliating

concessions to one of the state house ring, beat Blodgett, won the nomination for his man, Robert S. Green, and with “Green for Governor” the Democrats carried the election. They had on a joint ballot in the legislature a majority, narrow, but sufficient to elect a Democrat to the Senate—if the voting was straight. But the voting could not be straight, and Sewell had hopes. The excitement was intense, the scandal was sordid and loud. Some of the Democrats were purchasable, and if Sewell had had the solid support of his party, the “road” could have bought back his seat for him. But, just as the dishonest Democrats made Abbett’s election doubtful, so some honest Republicans made Sewell’s impossible. They would not vote for him. There was a deadlock. Reluctantly, Sewell had to give up. It was anybody to beat Abbett. The railroad Democrats sent word to the railroad Republicans that they were ready to unite, but only on a Democrat. The railroad Republicans asked for a list of three Democrats to choose from. The railroad Democrats furnished a list, headed by Rufus Blodgett, and the railroad Republicans took him. Thus was Leon Abbett punished by the System which sent Rufus Blodgett to the United States Senate.

Wrong Road to the Senate, No. 2

So any railroad man would do; was that it? Evidently Leon Abbett thought so, for, bitterly disappointed, he set about getting him a railroad. The Baltimore and Ohio, a great corruptionist at home, was coming into Jersey. Under the general railway law, it was free to cross the state. But a bridge over the Kills to Staten Island was necessary, and the general law did not provide for bridges. The legislature had to grant a special permission to bridge the Kills, and the Pennsylvania and the other roads objected. The legislature was theirs. Abbett, as governor, had favored this further “development of the resources of the state,” so in 1889, when the term of his friend, United States Senator McPherson, expired, the ex-governor went after his seat with Baltimore and Ohio “backing.” Abbett’s movements were very quiet, and McPherson had no suspicion of his strength till the Democratic caucus was about to meet. Then it appeared that Abbett had a majority. McPherson rushed forth to sound an alarm; the chairman was his, and the meeting was held up while the McPherson and Pennsylvania agents and Miles Ross “argued” with the members. Abbett’s Baltimore and Ohio “strength” was soon exhausted, and McPherson (P. R. R. Dem.) was reelected to the Senate.

So a United States senatorship represented not only money, but the most money; and not only a railroad, but the sovereign railroads—the organized power in both parties of established vested interests. Was that the secret? That is the suspicion which I have gathered in other states, where it has seemed that the U. S. Senate must be made up of the representatives from each state, not of the people, not even of the state, but of the corrupt system of each state. This would account for much that happens in the Senate, and it is pretty clear that Leon Abbett saw it so. For this remarkable man, undaunted by two defeats, still pursued his ambition. He fixed his eyes on the seat Rufus Blodgett would vacate four years hence, and to win it the ex-governor proceeded with the organization of his political machine, the establishment of a vested interest, and the creation of a System all his own.

Abbet Gets Him a System

During Abbett’s term and that of Governor Green the Jersey Democrats did what the Pennsylvania Republicans had done twenty years before: they gerrymandered the state. The grafters had long ago learned how, by dividing cities and towns into classes, they could evade the

constitutional amendment adopted to prevent special legislation, and the Abbett organization now used their legislature to legislate the Republicans out and themselves into control of local governments. This was to strengthen their party, and, for the sake of the “strength,” the local leaders had to be allowed to loot their localities, of course; a machine has to be built from the ground up.

But a machine, to become a System, must have a vested interest. The Republicans had made one that just suited the Democrats. It seems that when the Democrats, with their “anti-railroad demagogy,” had won the plain people, the Republicans felt the need of “popular support.” The Prohibitionists had developed a vote of some 20,000, which was more than the normal difference between the two parties. So the Republicans had drawn a local (county) high-license bill, which, with the Prohibitionists, the clergy, and the “good people” helping, they had passed through the legislature of 1888. The effect of this legislation was startling. It brought about “bad government” in New Jersey.

“Good” laws commonly make for “bad” government, and good people wonder why. They may see now. Before this local-option law was passed the liquor interest had not been very active in politics; and under the law, the people beat them county by county; prohibition was voted for all over the state. This satisfied the good people, and they retired from politics. But, just as governmental grants of privilege force good men into politics to protect their “business,” so governmental prohibitions drive vicious business men into politics to save their business. The prohibition law aroused the liquor interest; as the people withdrew, the saloons entered the game; and while the good people were rejoicing over the “good government” victories in the counties, the “bad men” went out for representative government in the state. And they went about it in the right way. They wanted a party to represent them. Since the Republicans represented the “good” people, the “bad people” joined the Democrats. Leon Abbett was the Democratic leader. They made him attorney for their Liquor Dealers’ Association. He wanted to be governor again. He wanted the office, as before, only to get a United States senatorship, but they didn’t inquire into his motives. He represented them, and that was all they asked; they backed him and his party. They elected a legislature, which represented them; the party was timid lest the people should resent out-and-out repeal of the prohibition law, so the high-license clause was retained; but local option was “fixed.”

Now see how the good citizens played into the hands of the bad. Even after this victory the liquor interest did not go home. It stayed in politics. Leon Abbett had uses for it, and in 1889 it helped elect him governor again, with a legislature solidly Democratic for the first time in ten years. He was a changed man. He was a boss. Having learned (I understand that he said once privately) that by representing the people he could not rise in a government that represented railroad and business corruption, he had accepted the support of “criminal corruption.” The cost to Jersey was terrible. With the liquor interest had come all that low following of vice that the saloons collect. These interests, by “work” and by fraud at the polls, practically controlled the legislature, which they turned over to the governor. They delivered into his hands all power: appointments, public institutions, the liquor licensing boards, the state militia, a state police, local and county offices and boards; those legislators even resigned legislation to him, passing his bills and adjourning with them in his hands to sign or veto, as he would. In return, Governor Abbett had to let the government represent crime and vice, and it did. That was the beginning of the race-track scandals of Jersey. There was a race-track at Monmouth, others sprang up, one at Gloucester for Philadelphia, another at Guttenberg for New York, and when the railroads (and the Western Union) saw that the betting vice made traffic, they encouraged the location of tracks

in small towns along their lines. With the “sport” came gamblers, prostitution, and all that goes with racing and liquor politics. Jersey became a veritable Tenderloin state.

No matter. Leon Abbett, hardened now, sullen and determined, had a “vested interest” with him. He was pretty sure of election to the United States Senate, but to make doubly sure he reached for another, a more respectable, interest, the railroads. A group of these roads, the Jersey Central, the Lehigh and Susquehanna, the Philadelphia and Reading (and, it was believed, the Delaware and Hudson, and the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western), planned a combination to control the output and price of coal. Seeing that vice, not the Pennsylvania Railroad, was ruling the state, they made overtures to Abbett and his party. And since the Republicans had the Pennsylvania behind them, the Democrats were glad of the chance to get the other roads into their party. The “Coal Combine” bill was passed. The Pennsylvania opposed it, and the newspapers all over the country fought the new monopoly; but Abbett pushed it, and the bill, made a party measure, was put through.

Wrong Road to the Senate, No. 3

And all this also to get a United States senatorship! Did Leon Abbett get it? He did not. Then why not? Because he flinched; when it came to the final test he represented, not the System, not even his System, but the state of New Jersey. When that legislature adjourned, leaving in his hands that “Coal Combine” bill for which he had himself used the whip, public opinion, both in the nation and in the state, continued to clamor against it, and Leon Abbett, the demagogue, hearkened, hesitated, and—he vetoed the bill. This embittered the railroads and the politicians and legislators “in on the deal.” They wanted to get even. He had, likewise after adjournment, refused to sign a race-track bill which aroused public opposition. This had embittered the vice interests, and they also wanted to get even. He was too powerful to fight while he was governor, and the Coal Combine which tried it and undertook to complete the deal without his sanction, was held up by his attorney general, taken into court, and, after a famous fight, was forced by a famous decision of Chancellor McGill to disband—till times were better.

But when Abbett, no longer governor, came into the caucus of his party in 1893 to ask for his reward, everybody “got even.” All “interests” were against him. Some of them pretended to be for him, and there was money back of him; votes were bought for him; yes, that senatorship was bought as for him. But the money was not Abbett’s own, and the men to whom it belonged, the men who owned the votes, cast them for James Smith, Jr., Abbett’s right-hand man, and one of the lieutenants who managed his campaign for the senatorship. As for Leon Abbett, he soon died.

I often hear American citizens say that the national government is “all right—if only the cities could be governed as well.” How can the national government be good? The System is all one thing. In every state where I have been I have noticed that the men who have tried to serve the state were punished. In New Jersey the pursuit of poor old Governor Ludlow is an oft-told tale; the failure of Leon Abbett is a ringing moral lesson to Jersey politicians. Both were made Supreme Court judges, but late, after their lives had been embittered and their failures plain. And as the System punishes, so does it reward. We have been in at the birth of several United States senators, so we can begin, if we are honest, to realize that that august chamber is the earthly heaven of traitors. But senatorships are not the only federal reward of—the System. We have noted that Hobart became a vice-president, Miles Ross a congressman; but let me give you just as I got it, for once, one of the impressions I am getting all over the country. Several times in the

course of this story I have mentioned, without comment or explanation, a certain “Gardner of Atlantic.” I did not do this to mystify; that was the way I heard of the man. Time and time again, after listening to some Jerseyman’s tale of a bad bill introduced, a good bill held up, a railroad deal put through, or an effort of protesting citizens balked, I would ask, “Who did it?” Time and time again the answer was, “Gardner of Atlantic.” The name meant nothing to me; I made no note of it and inquired no further, till one day in exasperation I exclaimed: “Who is this Gardner of Atlantic? And where is he now?”

My Jerseyman was astonished. “Gardner of Atlantic!” he said. “Haven’t you come across him before? Why, that is John J. Gardner, the congressman!”

“Oh,” I said, and, since I have in mind to study some day the national government, I put Gardner down in my long list of “gone to the House.” But while I was writing these pages, the vote on the “president’s” rate bill was taken, and I looked for Gardner. That vote was 326 ayes, 17 no’s. Among the 17 was “Gardner (Rep. N. J.)”

Some of my critics have found fault with me, mildly, for seeking only the evil in men; others, much more indignantly, have said I looked too eagerly for the good and made heroes of men who palpably have human weaknesses. My criterion and that of my critics are not the same, evidently. I don’t know what theirs is, but mine is simple. I ask of a representative, what does he represent? “Gardner of Atlantic” may be an honest man; he certainly has the courage of his conviction; but he is not “Rep. N. J.”; he is P. R. R. I prefer Leon Abbett, defeated, to all the Gardners in Congress, because in his practical, compromising crooked Jersey way, he did sometimes represent New Jersey, and because, though dead and buried, he is still the livest Democrat in that state today. For the consequences of his career have lived on; much of both the good and the bad in Jersey can be traced to him, as we shall see, and, as we shall also see, the effects of his influence have spread all over the United States. Leon Abbett adopted the charter-giving policy of New Jersey. That hurts us, but Abbett didn’t care about us. He was for Jersey. That was his great limitation. When the national press was imploring him to veto the “coal combine” bill, lest it put up the price of coal for the whole country, Abbett snapped his fingers at that argument. He vetoed the bill, as he said, because while he had made a bargain with the combine to except New Jersey and ensure her cheap coal, there was no way to make that exception binding. So we, the whole people, owe Abbett no tears. He was for Jersey. He was Jersey typified.

The live Jerseymen don’t care either how much the Jersey trusts hurt us. They take the same view of them that Abbett did; they are good for Jersey, and they bless him for them. “But,” they told me, a hundred of them, “Abbett gave us bad government.” He did. He left his party machine so reorganized and so strong that in the next Democratic administration (that of a governor named Werts), the legislature represented municipal and county rings and the race-tracks. William J. Thompson, owner of the Gloucester track, and better known as the “Duke of Gloucester,” was an assemblyman from Camden; Carroll of Hudson was a bookmaker at the Guttenberg track; there were many more such men, but the character of that body may be summed up in this fact: the Speaker of the House was Thomas Flynn, the starter of Thompson’s races. The race tracks could have any legislation they wanted, but they didn’t want much. Abbett’s veto of the bills legalizing all kinds of racing anywhere had proved of advantage. The governments of racing counties represented the tracks, and neither the police nor the local magistrates would enforce the law, which served, therefore, only to keep out more tracks and maintain the vice monopoly. They passed such as they desired, and for the rest they looted the state. These creatures stole the very chairs they sat on. This is “bad government.” This is what

your average American citizen means by “bad government,” and it is disgusting. But it isn’t dangerous. It is no more dangerous in a state than in a city, and as I have often remarked before, even Tammany in New York has seen that theft and police blackmail are bad politics.

The government in New Jersey was too bad. It was too bad to last. It became obvious, noisy, a stench, so that even “good citizens” could see and hear and smell it. They protested for a while, which is foolish; the grafters don’t mind protests. By and by, when the race-track legislators fell to quarreling over the spoils and passed laws against one another, the scandal was such that the citizens were driven to the polls. They voted in 1893 against the racing rings, and their votes settled the criminal grafters.

Conquest of Jersey Complete

But what did they vote for? What could they vote for? The people of New Jersey had no party that represented them. They had to vote for the Republicans. This party represents the railroads and big graft, but when its leaders saw the people coming they nominated a “good man,” John W. Griggs, for governor, on a reform platform, and they “exposed” the Democratic (petty) larceny by way of text for campaign speeches. Thus they “caught the honest vote,” and thus, at last, the state of New Jersey was turned over to the Republican party, which delivered it up to the Pennsylvania Railroad. The conquest of New Jersey was complete. Governor Griggs was appointed attorney general in the president’s Cabinet. General Sewell perfected his organization, and sent himself back to the U.S. Senate. He treated the other railroads “right”;—the coal combine is a fact. The Pennsylvania was fair to all “interests.” True, the race tracks were driven out, but the liquor men are quiet, prosperous, and contented. Even the “Democratic Party” is satisfied. There is graft, of course, plenty of it; for the most part, however, the corruption is orderly, respectable, dignified “business.” That is bad, but it is not “bad government.” The Pennsylvania rules and the government represents “the” road, the other roads, and some other interests; but the syndicate that runs the state for the foreign corporations gives Jersey men good government, or, at least, what they tell me is “pretty good government.”

“Oh,” they say, “there are some passing evils in the counties, but in the state we have pretty good government.”

“Good government” is the falsest beacon in American politics. I have seen the cities sail by it, and I know. New Jersey has sailed by it since 1895, and I think I can show in the next article that the “passing evils” the Jersey men speak of in their counties are the vestiges of the wreck of their own citizenship; and that the “good” they point to with pride in their state is their share of the plunder of our business pirates who buy, cheap, her letters of marque, to prey not only on American business, but on American character, and, when caught at their crimes, sail for her ports to purchase cheap, legislative immunity from our laws. Jersey shows, plainer than any other state or city, how we are all betraying one another, and that what we Americans lack is what the poor Russians are asking their czar for—representative government; not good government, not reforms, not privileges, not advantages over one another, but fair play all around and, before the law, equality.