THE EVENING NEWS.

Saturday, - - February 24, 1872.

WANT OF MORAL PRINCIPLE AMONG MEN IN POSITIONS OF TRUST AND POWER.

A Sermon by Rev. J. H. Bayliss, at Roberts' Park Chapel, Indianapolis Ind., Sabbath Evening, Jan. 14.

[CONTINUED.]

PROVERBS xvi. 12: "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness."

1. *There are some who think the evil will cure itself.* New York has been robbed beyond endurance, and in the presence of these stupendous outrages just now exposed, there is an outbreak of popular wrath which makes even the defiance of the chief robbers quail. They see that they have gone a little too far. Lynch law has been talked of, good men are dreaming of vigilance committees, revolution and popular force to administer the law which the courts are charged with having neglected. And there may be something in this. It may be that these monstrous crimes, by the vastness of them, will shake from the public conscience the apathy which smaller wickedness has failed to affect. There may be a reaction in favor of integrity. I verily believe there is. Politicians may learn that there is a limit beyond which it is not safe to ignore conscience in the management of public affairs. Voters may learn from these startling revelations that personal integrity in candidates is of higher importance than party supremacy. The whole country may get a new intimation of that very wise adage—which few among us ever seem to think of—that "honesty is the best policy." If something of this kind should result, we may have reasons to thank these famous robbers for the indirect and unintended service which they have rendered us. It will lead those who have most interest in seeing municipal affairs honorably conducted to maintain a closer scrutiny of them. It will encourage the press of the country, to which New York is very largely indebted for these exposures, and this, at least temporary, suspension of wholesale peculations, to ferret out and denounce crime in all public places. Dishonest men in places of trust and power will have reason to quail before the aroused moral conviction of the nation, heretofore too latent and dead. Thus the crime itself may bring us a measure of redemption from its own curse.

2. *We must learn to punish large and conspicuous as promptly as we do small and obscure ones.* Why should a sneak thief who steals a string of pearls from a lady's dressing room, be chased like a beast of prey, and run down and sent to prison, and the robber who fairly gleams with diamonds which he has bought with money stolen from a too-confiding public, be allowed to live unmolested in his stolen palace, and revel in luxury supported by fraud? It does not amount to much simply to leave such men out of office at the next election. They do not expect to be in office forever, and they are rather willing to go into affluent retirement, if by so doing they can escape all other penalty for their misdeeds; while their escape is an inducement to their successors to do as they have done. If the ten dollar thief is incarcerated in the common jail, to be devoured by vermin, the ten million thief should go into the cell adjoining. If the one is incarcerated on well grounded suspicion, so should the other be. We shall escape some of the vast thefts which now curse us, when the money thus made fails to screen the thieves from the rigid enforcement of law, and when it has no power to give them respectability. When such men as have lately amazed us by their tremendous frauds are incarcerated in the common jail and treated as common felons, there will be some hope for us. But who looks for it? Who supposes that this infamous New York quaternion will serve a term of fifteen years each at Sing Sing or Auburn? Of course they will not. These institutions are established for another class of offenders. It is too much to expect that men who have been in the habit of looking through plate-glass, and walking over velvet carpets, and sleeping on rose wood bedsteads, should come down to stone floors, dark and damp, and iron beds and grated windows. But while this aristocracy of money can dominate us here as everywhere, defy the judge and the jailor, screen criminality, send millionaire thieves into drawing rooms, and elect them to the Senate instead of the dungeons—so long as the only penalty visited upon such men is newspaper thunder and ejectment from their places of abused power, and they are compelled neither to disgorge their ill-gotten booty nor step inside a prison door, just so long will small criminals curse the inconsistency which condemns them and lets the others go free; and just so long will great frauds disgrace our places of power.

3. *We must learn to spot men who are willing to spend money freely to get office.* Such men mean to get their money back. They are not putting all this money a voluntary offering on the altar of public good. They are investing it for returns and everybody who thinks a moment can see the eminent probability that this is so. There may be a man now and then who does it simply to win; he has plenty of money, and is willing to pay it out freely to have his own way. But with these men as a class it is not so. They put money freely into the campaign because they expect to get it freely out of the office; if not in salary, in perquisites. Such men are fit candidates for popular condemnation and defeat. But you will say: "We cannot help ourselves; the politicians shut us up to this alternative: we must vote for these men or nobody." Not exactly. In this country you can vote for whom you please. Who gave to party conventions the authority to dictate to sovereign voters? A ticket, written or printed, according to law, must be counted. You can vote for honest men if you choose. But further, the one question with politicians in nominating candidates is, who will win? Now let it be understood that a man's moral reputation is going to lose him votes, and that moral reputation becomes at once a factor in the politician's problem. He must recognize it, and will do so. And with a high toned conscience among voters, a high toned officiary is one of the easiest things in the world. Let good men go to the primary meetings and control the nominations.

To be continued.

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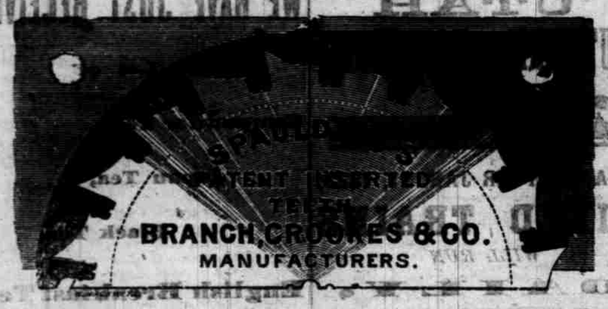

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