

New Jersey Board of Agriculture

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ADDRESS

OF

THOMAS H. DUDLEY

PRESIDENT OF THE

STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE,

DELIVERED BEFORE SAID BOARD,

AT TRENTON, FEBRUARY 2, 1886.

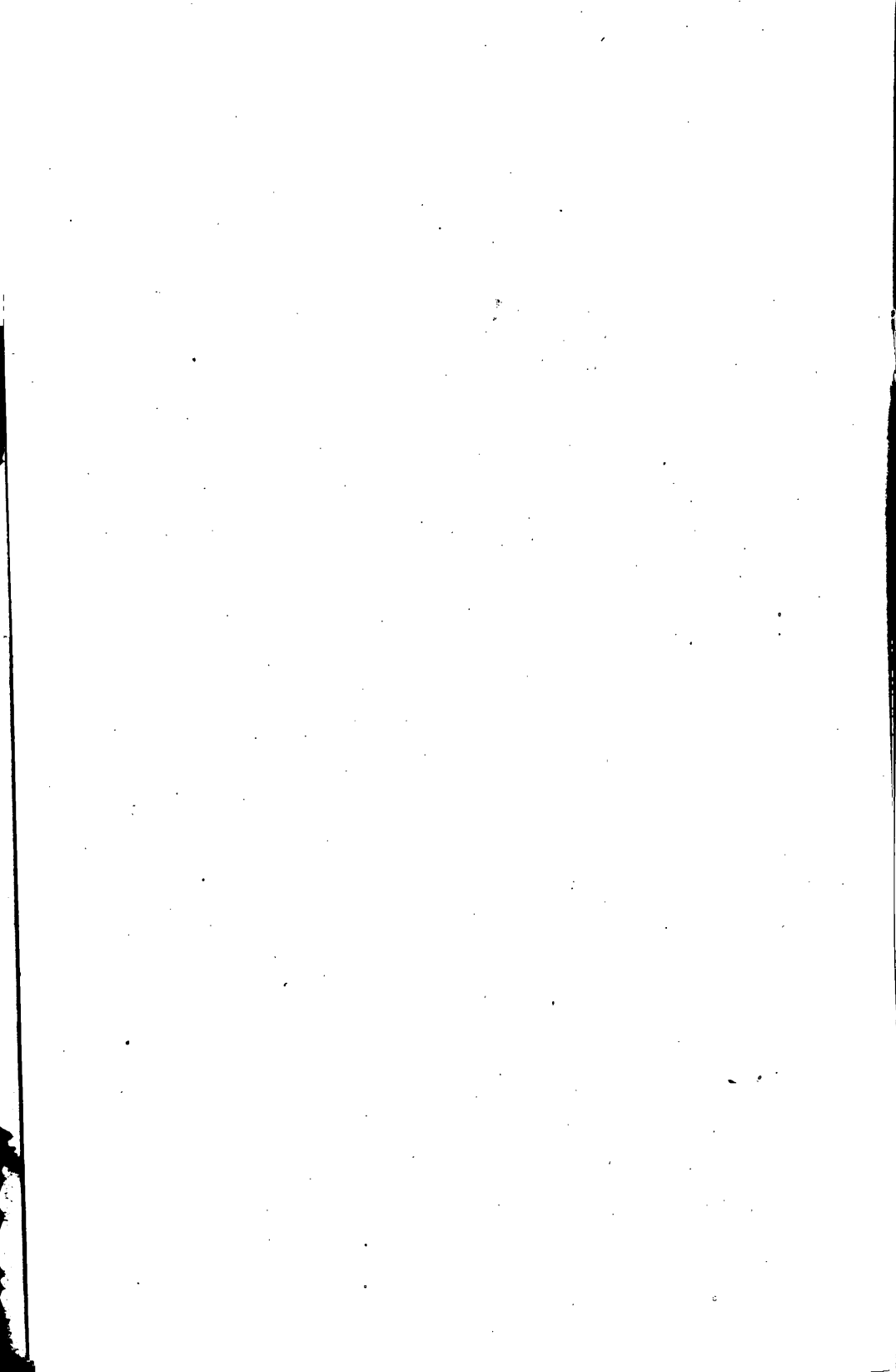
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## ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN :

Another year has come since we last met. The old year, with all its joys, its sorrows and its cares, has gone. The springtime, with its birds and flowers; summer, with blooming fields and gay landscapes; autumn, with its rich harvests and ripe fruits; and winter with its hoar frosts and snows, have come and filled their allotted space in time, as the rolling year has passed away. A new year, with its hopes and aspirations, is before us. There are cares to be met, problems to be solved, and duties too numerous to be mentioned, to be performed.

Every man has his place in the world, and every one, whatever his rank or station in life, or the pursuit he may follow, has his place to fill, and no person a more important one than that of the farmer. We are too apt to look upon man from the standpoint of the profession or calling he follows in life, and to judge him from that standpoint, and limit his capacity, and to some extent tie him down to that calling or that pursuit, without taking into consideration that the boundless universe, with all its unknown secrets and treasures, is open before him as they are to all others, and the duties and obligations he is under as a member of society to do his part towards exploring and utilizing these for the benefit of mankind.

You are agriculturists, yet there are other duties which rest upon you besides planting and gathering, besides the times of seeding and harvesting your crops, important as they are. You have, as members of society, in common with all others under the government, incurred duties and obligations which you cannot and ought not ignore even if you could.

To some of these I propose to call your attention.

Before doing so I will refer again to the subject of India wheat, which I discussed a year ago. I then told you of the increased production of wheat in that country, how it had grown up within the past four or five years to millions of bushels; that it was being imported in large quantities into England, France and Belgium, and had reduced the price in these countries, as well as here at home, and was then seriously competing with American wheat in all these markets. All that I then said has been fully confirmed. Whilst our crop of wheat was less, their's in India was more during the past year. Ours was computed at 430,000,000 of bushels, being much less than the preceding year, when it was over five hundred millions; the crop in India for 1885 was computed at 286,000,000 bushels, being twenty millions over the preceding year.

It will be observed, that the crop in India is now more than half as much as what we raise in the States. And though our crop of wheat was less, and our shipments to Europe less than the year previous; the prices instead of improving have fallen in Europe. To show you the extent and effect of this competition I will read to you an extract from a letter received by me from a corn merchant in Liverpool. Under date of December 19th, 1885, he writes as follows:—"Our supplies of wheat, despite such reduced American shipments, are superabundant and prices never so low as this autumn, fully three pence; nearly four pence, under last year, and still it comes. India appears inexhaustible. My sons (the active partners in the house) are selling ten times as much Indian as American wheat." Probably there is no house in Liverpool that deals more largely in grain than the one he is connected with, or any man who is better informed on these subjects. The great difficulty in India has been in the cost of transporting the wheat to the ports of shipment. The price has been about double from Delhi to Bombay, a distance of 822 miles by rail, what it is from Chicago to New York, a distance of 911 miles.

But the costs have been somewhat reduced. The price of farm labor in India is from six to seven cents of our money per day. The laborers feed themselves out of these wages. The

railroad facilities are being increased, which will open up large tracts of rich, cheap lands, equal in fertility to any we have for wheat culture, and which heretofore have had no communication with the seaboard. With these large tracts opened, and their abundant cheap labor, there is no reason why in the very near future they will not produce double the quantity of wheat they are now producing. This India wheat can be laid down in the London and Liverpool markets at seventy-five cents per bushel, which is lower than our farmers can do it ; and at these prices it will pay the India farmer a larger profit than our farmers are now realizing on the wheat they sell. This India wheat can be brought to New York by way of the Suez canal for eighty cents, and but for our protective duty of twenty cents per bushel, it could be laid down there at that price. With the duty added, it can be now placed in New York at one dollar per bushel.

With the reduced rates of transporting wheat to the seaboard, which will follow when new and competing roads are built, as they soon will be, opening up and developing the country ; with their cheap and fertile lands, and the low price they are paying for labor, the India farmer within the next ten years will be in the United States with his wheat, competing with our farmers here in our own home markets, unless the present duty of twenty cents per bushel shall be increased. Our farmers should note these facts and take steps to protect themselves. As matters now stand they cannot expect better prices than they now receive, unless a bad harvest, a famine in India, or a desolating war should intervene to put them up.

By the last national census the population of our country amounted to over fifty millions of people. Of these there were but 17,392,099 or 34.68 per cent. who pursued gainful avocations, or in other words earned wages, leaving 32,763,684 persons or 65.32 per cent. who followed no gainful avocation, consequently earning nothing.

A portion of these no doubt lived off of their incomes, but the much larger portion off of those who earned wages. Of those who earned wages 7,670,493 or 44.10 were engaged in agriculture. If we assume that most of the persons who were not earning wages were living, either directly or indirectly, off

of those who did earn them, then we will have out of our population, at that time, of fifty millions, over twenty millions of people who were dependent upon agriculture for their subsistence.

This was not quite half of our population, but there was no other single industry in the country that sustained or supported anything like the number that agriculture did. Since then the country has greatly increased in population.

It no doubt now contains upwards of fifty-six millions of people, distributed among the different industries, and divided as to those who earn wages and those who do not earn wages about in the same proportion or ratio as they did when the last census was taken. I refer to this matter and give these figures to show the important part numerically that agriculturists occupy and the part they play or should play in political matters connected with the government of the country, aside from raising the food upon which the whole population subsists. They feed all the people, and every industry, whether great or small, is dependent upon them for food; indeed, it has by some been claimed that agriculture is the basis or foundation upon which all other industries stand.

Feeding all, and numbering as they do so large a proportion of our population, their influence and power in the government, and in the associations of men, religiously, politically and socially, must of necessity be very great.

This being so, I propose very briefly to call your attention to some of the responsibilities and duties which rest upon you politically as members of society. Living as we do in a government formed by the people, for the benefit of the people, duties and responsibilities are entailed upon all of us, of the most important and weighty character; and on none more than the farmer. No one lives for himself alone, or in a government like ours has a right so to live. He lives, or should, for those who are about or around him as well as for himself. Neither does he live exclusively for the present; his duties to some extent are those of a trustee, and reach far out and beyond his present life; he lives for those who are to come after him as well. He is bound in the proper discharge of his duties in life so to live and

conduct himself as to do as much good as he can, for others as well as for himself, and to do all in his power to perpetuate and hand down to posterity the free institutions of the country unimpaired; and that man who does not so live, and so act, fails in the proper discharge of his duties as a man and as a member of the society in which he lives.

The agriculturists from numbers alone can do much towards shaping public opinion, directing legislation, and giving character and tone to society. They can do much towards eradicating wrongs and abuses which may have grown up. They can do much towards keeping the ship of state, laden as it is with the hopes, the aspirations, the happiness and welfare of the millions who are borne upon it, steady on its course.

The part which they can and should play is so great and important that it is difficult to define or set limits to. They may do great, almost incalculable, good, or if indifferent or neglectful of their duties may be of but little service to anyone, and the world or mankind will not be much the better for their ever having lived. It seems to me that the time has fully come when this great industrial class should come out and take a more active and prominent part in the affairs of the government than they now take, and make an effort to correct and eradicate some of the abuses and evils which exist, and which are threatening if not undermining the system of free government. No people have more interest in maintaining the government than they.

They should see to it that none but such as are qualified and fit be taken up or elected to office; and when dishonest or incompetent people are nominated, defeat them at the ballot-box, it matters not to which political party they may belong, remembering, always, that country is above party, and good government and the happiness and welfare of the people of more consequence than the success of any party and above every other consideration.

In laying down these propositions I do not wish it to be understood that I oppose parties and the formation of political associations; far from this. I believe that these organizations are to a certain extent useful, if not necessary to good government. Constituted as man on this earth is—indeed, formed by

God as we all are, with different ideas, habits and thoughts, no two human beings in the world alike, it cannot be supposed that all will think alike, or act alike, or come to the same conclusions upon any one given topic or subject. They necessarily will differ one with another; some will regard a matter in one way, whilst others, equally honest, will look upon it and see it quite differently. With this great diversity then that we find among men as well as in nature, it cannot be supposed that all mankind will agree upon any set of propositions or principles, either political, religious or social, however just or proper they may be. This cannot be expected, even if it were desired that it should be. But there are many reasons why it is best that things should be just as they are, and that all mankind should not agree.

God, knew what was best when he created all, and what he has done no doubt is for the best, though we cannot at all times so see it.

Opposition in human affairs stimulates and leads to greater efforts.

The water that runs does not stagnate, and the atmosphere itself is purified by the storms. And in the political world the formation of different parties has much the same effect as the disturbance of the elements in the physical world around us. It prevents degeneracy, stagnation and decay in the body politic.

The formation of political parties in a government like ours, therefore, is not only proper and beneficial, but may be regarded as almost a matter of necessity, and so long as they are faithfully and honestly conducted are a great support, as well as safeguard, to the government, and the rights and liberties of the people. If there are two parties, one will watch the other, and expose its weaknesses and errors, and check the abuse of power if attempted.

While this is so, and the beneficial effects of parties are fully admitted, there is another side to be contemplated; there are abuses which may grow up in parties which may endanger, if not overthrow, the political fabric itself. Like all other good things, through over party zeal, or bad men, parties may become corrupt and debased, and the machinery run for corrupt and

selfish purposes, to the great injury if not danger of the government.

It looks much as if this were the tendency of political parties to-day, as if both were being run on the downward track. Whether this is entirely true, and things politically are as bad as some believe, it must be admitted that there are at the present time indications and evidences of great abuses, and in this State as well as others, to which the attention of the public should be called, with a view if possible to their correction before it is too late—abuses which threaten the foundations of all free government. It is to some of these I wish to call your attention, and first among them are frauds at our elections; and this applies to the primaries as well as to the general elections. Many of the primary elections in the towns and cities, held for the election of delegates, have become a farce.

Money is freely used to secure the election of delegates, and sometimes to influence the judges of election to make false returns. Tissue ballots and in some instances ballot-boxes with false bottoms, have been used, and the grossest frauds perpetrated.

And these practices in many instances have not only been connived at, but planned and carried into execution by men who stand high in society, and fill important political offices of honor and trust. In some localities and communities they have become so common and notorious that they are openly admitted, and constitute the town talk and political scandal of the day. Fortunately for the people, as yet it is believed that these shameful practices at the primaries are confined mainly to the towns and have not extended to the rural portions of the State; and that the great agricultural community are comparatively if not wholly free from them.

This is fortunate, for where the pollution is confined to a part only, there is not so much danger; it is only when the whole becomes contaminated that hope leaves and despair takes her place to mourn over the shattered wreck that remains.

Where there is not a free and honest ballot there is no longer a free government. It may exist in name, but it does not and cannot exist in substance. It is a baseless fabric, a form without

substance, and sooner or later must go down. Such, it is believed, is the condition of some of the political primaries in our State, and if true, it must be admitted they show a deplorable condition of things in politics. Men who will resort to such frauds in their own party, and against their own associates and political friends, will not hesitate to perpetrate the same, if not worse and still more glaring, at the ballot boxes, against their political opponents, when party zeal or interest prompts them to do so.

Educated in such schools as some of the primaries in the cities are, the men connected with them will make apt and ready scholars for all kinds of frauds and crimes at the ballot-box. Unfortunately the tendency of things in our cities is to leave in most instances the management of the primaries in the hands of the worst part of the community, the better part of the people, or those most capable and best qualified, remaining at home, some from indifference and others giving business, want of influence or degradation of politics, as an excuse; forgetting that in a free government like ours it is the duty of each individual to come out and take part in political matters, and that, without regard to his sensibilities, his business or his personal comfort—a duty he owes to himself, to his family and his country, and one he has no right to ignore or shirk. The performance of this duty is a part of the price he pays for the privileges and liberties he enjoys, under a free government, and no man can or ought to excuse himself from it. Indeed, no man's hands are clear of maladministration in public affairs, unless he has discharged this duty, and that without regard to any selfish consequences to himself personally.

The tendency in our towns and centers of population being in this direction, we have only the rural or agricultural part of the country to rely upon. It is said by some that it is the infusion of country blood, from the rural districts, that keeps our cities alive; and it may be, indeed is, quite possible, that the agricultural part of our community may in the future become the vitalizing power that will preserve our free form of government, the source that will infuse health and life in the body politic, and keep it free from pollution and death.

The same frauds practiced at the primaries may be practiced

and often are at the elections,—repeating, personation, tissue ballots, fraudulent returns, and false certificates of election to accomplish the wicked purpose of defeating the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box. It seems strange that people can be found so vicious and depraved as to be willing to violate the law of the land and commit crimes merely for the success of their party, and that often when they have no personal interest in the result. But such unfortunately is too often the case.

Another practice which is equally reprehensible, and which is working great injury and believed to be growing, not only in this State, but throughout the country, is that of buying votes at the elections—bribing the voters. This is done sometimes openly and sometimes in a roundabout way. It is a notorious fact that money is contributed and raised in large sums for this purpose. There are expenses at every election which are legitimate and proper—money to get up public meetings, to pay persons for canvassing, to hire carriages to enable the old, lame, sick and distant voters to reach the polls, &c. And it is no offense but proper to contribute money for any of these purposes, and if used in this way when contributed, no wrong or injury would be done. But alas! the money expended for these purposes is small and insignificant as compared to the large and almost fabulous sums used for bribing voters.

To such an extent is this carried, that the success of the one party or the other, or at least of the one or other candidate who is running, depends in many instances upon the amount of money that is put into the election, so that the election turns, not upon the merit, fitness, or qualifications of the candidate; but upon the money contributed. The man who has the most money to buy votes wins.

Thus men are elected to your legislature and to fill almost every office of honor or trust in the gift of the people—not because they are worthy or qualified to fill the office, or to discharge the duties when elected, or even because a majority of the people desire them elected; but because they or their friends, who it may be want to use them for their own selfish purpose, contribute enough money to buy votes to elect them.

This practice of buying votes has become so common and so general by both of the two great parties in some localities that there is no longer remonstrance against it.

The most you hear is sometimes a feeble protest from a member of the party defeated, that it was shameful the way money had been used to buy votes; but the great mass of the people from custom have come to look upon it with cold indifference, if not approval, and in this way the wrong is permitted and tolerated if not justified. We have laws on our statute-book making it a penal offense to bribe voters, but unfortunately the laws against bribery and corruption are not enforced. They have almost if not quite become a dead letter. And the crimes under them go unpunished. With such doings would it be a matter of much surprise if legislators thus elected should themselves be open to bribes whilst in office? It is a common thing to hear the corruption of the legislatures of the different States of the Union discussed, especially among politicians.

It was but a few years since we claimed that the legislature of our own little State was free from corruption; that our lawmakers were pure and incorruptible. Whilst claiming this for ourselves we were loud and unsparing in our denunciations of those where it existed. But how is it now? In all the elections for United States Senators that have taken place in our State for some years past it has been charged that thousands of dollars have been used to influence the votes to elect. In some instances it has been referred to in the public newspapers—the charges of the use of money to buy votes made openly, to the great scandal of the legislature and those resorting to its use. If these charges are true they constitute a crime which nothing can justify. And the crime is all the same whether the money was paid direct or through others. It was the use of money to influence the vote that constituted the crime, it matters not how or by whom it was paid. If money has been used to influence the members of the legislature in their votes for Senators, may it not have been used to influence votes in legislation as well? Let us hope not; but with the great corporations, and especially the great railroad corporations running through our State, the temptation to use it to influence legislation where these corporations are interested, or imagine themselves to be so, is great.

There is much danger of this, too, where there are conflicting interests between rival roads, and still more where any of these corporations attempt to interfere with the politics of the State, either directly or indirectly, through their officers or agents, whom they put forward, or permit to come forward and take part in politics, or hold political offices.

Railroads are necessary for the proper development of the State and the intercourse between different localities by the people. Indeed, the business of the country could not be carried on without them. They ought, therefore, to receive all proper and necessary protection. No unnecessary restrictions should be imposed upon them, or the exercise of their corporate privileges interfered with. All these they should be permitted to enjoy in full, but beyond this they should never be allowed to go. The people have rights as well as the corporations, and these rights are sacred and should not be intrenched upon. Among these is the right to regulate and carry on the government. No corporation ought to be permitted to interfere with this or to take part in the politics of the State, much less to control or hold political offices. No State or people should tolerate or permit this. Any railroad that acts properly can obtain all necessary protection and legislation in the State, without interfering with politics. The people will always be willing to accord them this, and they ought not to expect, much less ask for, more.

What is right they should have ; what is wrong they ought not to ask.

Situated as New Jersey is, between the two great States of New York and Pennsylvania, our people should watch with jealous care all attempts of corporations in either of those States at interfering with our politics or intrenching upon the rights of the people.

This is all the more necessary from the fact that some of the great railroad corporations of these States have obtained control and are now running many of our railroads. Any attempts of these corporations to interfere or control our politics, either directly or indirectly, through their officers or agents, should be resisted. Our people should say to all of these corporations, you may exercise your corporate privileges and run the railroads, of

which you have obtained control, but you cannot and shall not run our government. We as Jersey men consider ourselves quite competent to do this, and that without your interference.

Our courts have always been regarded, and very justly, as the palladium of our liberties. Whilst charges of corruption have been made against some of the other co-ordinate branches of our government, it has never been made against the judiciary. Thus far it has not been charged that bribery or corruption to any extent has ever reached or influenced our courts.

According to this to the whole country, we claim, and with just pride, that no State has a more pure judiciary than our own. In our history as a State and nation this branch of the government has escaped criticism in this particular.

While reflecting men have trembled over the corruption and venality around them, sometimes even in high places, they have taken courage when they turned to the judiciary.

Confidence is justly maintained in our courts, and we have come to regard them as the sheet anchor of our safety for the present and our hopes for the future.

I have referred to these matters because I think the time has come when all patriotic men, it matters not to what party they may belong, should pause and look squarely at these questions, and I have called your attention to them because you are farmers, and represent numerically, as we have already seen, the largest industry of the country, and consequently at the polls exercise the largest political power or influence.

Sturdy, honest and independent as a class, you have yielded less to the seductive influence of money in political matters. Its corrupting influence has not been much felt as yet in the votes you have given. It is, therefore, to the farmers of our country, so it seems to me, to whom we are mainly to look for the correction of these abuses.

They have it in their power to check them whenever they will determine to do so, and go to work in earnest to accomplish it. Let them in a body, as a class, but resolve to stop it and it will be done. If they determine that no persons but such as are qualified and fit shall be taken up for office; and no one who is not competent and fit to fill the office, or who has secured his

nomination through fraud or corruption, shall be elected, even if nominated, it matters not to which party he or they may belong, they will stop this business and purify the political atmosphere.

I know how binding party ties are. I know, too, the infirmities of poor human nature, and how easy it is to yield our judgment and permit it to be influenced and warped by our party or political associates, and how hard it is for any one to break from these, and to come out and pursue an independent and patriotic course, yet every-one should remember what has already been said; that country is above party, and good government and the welfare and happiness of the people far above and beyond all party considerations or party organizations, or the aspirations or ambitions of any individual, however exalted he may be. If we would but for one moment reflect that parties should only be formed and run for the government, and government never run for the parties, it would be more easy to be patriotic.

From what has been said it must not be inferred that all persons engaged in agriculture are patriotic and pure, or that there are no good and virtuous among the other classes of society. I do not intend to convey any such idea. There can be no doubt but what there are just as corrupt men among the farmers as there are in the other classes; and that there are as pure and upright men in the other branches of industries, either in town or country, as there are among the farmers. I fully admit this. Constituted as society is in this world, there are and ever will be good and bad in all circles and classes of society. There is no condition or calling exempt.

All that is claimed is that which has been before stated; that the agriculturists, residing as most of them do in the rural portions of our country, when taken as a whole or class have not yielded to the seductive and corrupting influences of money in the matter of politics to the same extent as the other classes, especially those living in our towns and the thickly settled parts of the country.

Neither can it be claimed that either of the political parties in our State is exempt from these criminal practices. Unfortunately we have too many examples showing that both of the two great parties are guilty. Both parties have used money to bribe and corrupt the voters; both of the parties have resorted

to fraud to defeat the will of the people as expressed at the ballot-box ; and both of the parties or individual members of the party, as has been charged, have used money to influence votes in the election of United States Senators.

To such an extent has the use of money been carried that it has almost come to this, as is charged ; that the one who has the most money can always win. This is sad and humiliating, and all the more so, because as is claimed both parties are guilty. If one party were free from it, we could then direct all of our efforts against the guilty one, and eradicate the evil ; but when both are guilty it shows a diseased condition of society to be deplored, and one that is well calculated to excite uneasiness, if not alarm, among all who love their country and desire free government preserved and perpetuated. The more deep rooted and general the disease, the harder to eradicate. If permitted, like a cancer it will eat into the core, destroying all vitality and life, and at last the political fabric itself will crumble and fall.

Corruption and decay will soon eat the heart away.

“Twere long to tell, and sad to trace,  
 “Each step from splendor to disgrace ;  
 “Enough—no foreign foe could quell  
 “Thy soul, till from itself it fell ;  
 “Yes ! self-abasement paved the way  
 “To villain—bonds and despot sway.”

If such was the fate of Ancient Greece, whose ruins now only remain to tell us of her former magnificence and grandeur,—in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with all the progress we have since made, with all our education, with all our civilization, may we not expect a different fate for the largest and most prosperous Republic the world has ever seen ?

Upon the people of this great country, and it may be largely upon the agriculturists of the country, the solution of this question depends. Let us all cherish the hope that there may be found virtue and patriotism enough to conduct us in safety through all the perils that beset us, so that we can hand down to posterity, for the benefit of the countless millions yet unborn, the free institutions of the Republic, untarnished and unimpaired ; and thus demonstrate once more to the world man’s capacity for self government.