

## THE MAYOR'S POWER OF REMOVAL \*

ONE word in reference to the pathetic appeals that are continually being made, nominally, upon behalf of the people, or of democratic ideas, whenever we try to introduce a responsible system of government. It is really extraordinary that it should be necessary to point out again and again that the people are to elect the mayor, just as they now do the aldermen and mayor, and that when the people elect the mayor, the resulting system of government is quite as popular in character as is the government by the aldermen. Members pretend to fear (for I do not believe they really do fear) that if the candidate runs at large, instead of in some special district, as a result, the wealthy men, the so-called plutocrats, will outvote the masses—the working men—and elect some representative of their own class mayor. This is sheer nonsense; if this can be done at all, it would also be done with the aldermen as well. It is not the first slight step in the direction of taking away our system of popular government; it does not infringe on it one hair's breadth; on the contrary, it takes away from the politicians the power it gives to the people. There is, sometimes, a good deal of more or less fictitious excitement indulged in over the possibility of there growing up in this country an aristocracy, or to speak more accurately, a plutocracy. There is not the least chance of our ever suffering from such an outgrowth. I agree fully with my colleague, the

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member from New York [Major Haggerty] in his estimate of the absolute worthlessness and ridiculousness of the few people who would try to set themselves up as aristocrats in this country. And no one realizes more sharply than I do their absolute harmlessness, for no body of aristocrats that is simply a butt and a laughing-stock will ever be a source of danger to the community; and such is the estimate which people have of the little body of anglomaniacs who style themselves the "upper ten" in this country. But there is a body of men who do, in reality, constitute a standing menace and a standing danger to the community, and that body can truly be called the aristocracy of the bad. This is the class of office-holders; it is composed of men who fatten in the public offices upon the plunder wrung from the working man and from the taxpayer alike; who hold their grip upon us by means of the patronage that we, like the fools we are, leave in their hands; who unite themselves with every bad element in the community; who unite with those who live by trading on the vices of the community; who can count with absolute certainty upon the support of the lowest liquor-sellers; who can count upon the support of all that is vile and bad throughout our great cities—for men such as these are the professional politicians of the lowest type. It is against these men, and not against any imaginary foe like an aristocracy, that we are to direct our efforts; and in no way can we direct our efforts more intelligently against them, than by putting their representatives where the full light of public opinion will be concentrated upon them, and where they can be held responsible to the public for their deeds. The reason that the office-holders have been able to keep us down, as they have kept us down in time past, and as they

will keep us down in time to come, if we do not show more wisdom in dealing with these matters than we sometimes do show, is because they are protected and hidden by their own obscurity; because the mass of the people do not wake up to the fact that these individually insignificant men, that these creatures who spring from the reeking slime, bred of their own corruption, are those who are able to do us the most fatal injury that man can do society. If you make a bad man sufficiently prominent, I have trust enough in the American people to believe that they will tear him down from his prominence, will remove him from the place in which he stands, and will take from him the powers which he abuses. I have no fear to be put under the power or dominion of a tyrant if that tyrant has to return to the people for his election every second year; I have no fear of a despot who depends for the continuance of his despotism upon the free suffrages of the citizens. I do fear the continuance in power of a multitude of unknown tyrants, safe in their own littleness, whom the people cannot get at to remove; for then the people can only struggle blindly, conscious that they are oppressed, unconscious who their oppressors are. It is not the time, as has been well said, to speak of Jefferson and of those who lived with him, the fathers of our nation. But I wish to call the attention of those who so greatly admire what is past to the fact that you cannot hold any of those men who formed this country, and that, least of all, can you hold Jefferson up, as models upon whose advice we should now shape all our actions. Probably but few men in this hall would dare to declaim against the Constitution of the United States—would dare to declaim against the system of government under which we now live—and yet they would do

well to recollect that the strongest opponent of the adoption of the Constitution—that the man who most strenuously opposed and doubted its wisdom—was Thomas Jefferson; that we got our Constitution, not because of, but in spite of, Jefferson and his followers; that we owe it rather to Washington, Adams, Hamilton, and the now almost forgotten party of the Federalists.

I do not intend now to go into a discussion of the historical parallel between the powers of the mayors of our cities and the powers of the President of the United States. All I wish to say again is this: the President at Washington appoints his own Cabinet and removes them absolutely. No power can keep any Cabinet officer in if the President decides to take him out. There is no complaint that we do injustice to any particular Cabinet officer when we give the President power to remove him at will. We largely judge the President by the actions of those he appoints; when we condemn the Cabinet officer we at the same time judge the man who has appointed him; the President—be he Grant or Hayes; be he Garfield or Arthur—is judged largely by the men who act as his subordinates; who are really his deputies—appointed to take up certain subdivisions of his work. If the board of aldermen made a habit of confirming the mayor's appointments in every case, as is the invariable rule with the Senate as regards the President's appointments, except in some such case as that of Mr. Stewart, where the appointment was manifestly illegal; if that had been the custom in time past; if boards of aldermen had done their duty, not always, but even in the majority of instances; if they had not constantly and on every occasion done that which they ought not to have done, and left undone those things

which they ought to have done, then it would have been well enough to keep the power in their hands; but the facts bear out no such supposition. We must take away their power because experience has shown that they will always abuse it; exactly as if we found that the Senate constantly rejected the appointments made by the President and refused to confirm them, unless a consideration in the way of money or patronage were given them, then that power should rightfully be taken away from the Senate of the United States. I do not fear to depart from our theory of government, when experience shows that the theory in some particular case works badly.

I trust the bill will be sent to the committee of the whole. If the powers given are harsh or excessive amend it; make them such as you deem wisest; but, at any rate, give us some substitute for the present cumbersome system that prevents the mayor exacting from his subordinates the attention to duties and the honesty and efficiency that the people demand he should get from them.