

The Morals of Tammany

BY LOUIS SEIBOLD

Has New York's notorious Tiger been permanently tamed? A leading political writer reveals some salient facts about the Manhattan machine and its relation to Governor Smith

CONSIDERING the long, picturesque and disreputable record of Tammany Hall, the nomination of its present dictator has been as audacious a bid for power as any in our political history. Less than a generation ago the mere suggestion that the party of Jefferson, Jackson, Cleveland and Wilson might accept as its Presidential candidate a professional politician, tutored solely in the Tammany school, would have been contemptuously rejected.

In the closing weeks of the campaign it has become apparent that the Republicans estimated more accurately than their opponents the damaging possibilities to Democracy of the Tammany trademark on the Smith bandwagon. Hence, regardless of the outcome of the election, Tammany's morals will remain for a time in the focus of greater national curiosity than most political machines, no matter how hardened, would care to endure. Wherefore, two pertinent questions are these: What caused the change in Democratic appraisal of Tammany as a handicap in a national campaign? And to what extent can

Tammany's claim to reform be accepted?

A FAIR answer, perhaps, is that public opinion, of which Governor Smith is a keenly responsive student, has in fact compelled Tammany to discard the more flagrant practices of former years. Whether Tammany has fundamentally mended its ways, or whether the reformation is no more than a veneer over the same old black and yellow stripes, remains to be seen; but there is little reason at present to reject the claim of Tammany's defenders that the outwardly visible improvement in its morals is genuine.

The crude looting of the city, the unrestrained preying on commercialized vice, which flourished only a few years ago, now figure only remotely in the Tammany system. The open bartering of public franchises and the illegal award of municipal favors to corporations dealing directly with Tammany bosses have either been discontinued or are negotiated with such subtlety as to evade public scrutiny.

True, recent disclosures still reveal

sporadic graft and the padding of payrolls as in the days of Tweed and Croker. Collusion between corrupt officials and dishonest contractors still exists. Whether these forms of municipal immorality are more general or offensive under Tammany than in Republican-governed Philadelphia and Chicago is uncertain. Any difference is probably a matter of degree. New York City's vast size and wealth offer greater opportunities for exploitation.

Yet both New York City and State have been apparently fairly well satisfied with the sort of government that Mr. Smith has provided for the State and that which the Tammany organization, over which he exercises tremendous if not absolute power, has recently given the City. The average New Yorker doesn't seem to mind what sort of government he gets as long as he is permitted to live the way he wants and is allowed the maximum of personal liberty.

THE recent career of Mr. Smith has reflected a sincere determination to relegate the old standards of Tammany to the scrap heap and to chart a course of loftier ideals for both himself and the Tammany organization. He has provided convincing proof that he is capable of doing his own thinking, formulating his own policies, and that he is not lacking in courage, aggressiveness and political sagacity. But before he won his Presidential plumes Mr. Smith was just a plain, ordinary "Tammanyman". He played the game with faithful regard for its rules and was generally servile to his bosses from whom he accepted and obeyed orders without question. If he had not done so his political career

would have been short-lived. In breaking away from the influences of his early tutors he has won for himself greater respect than was ever achieved by the men who preceded him in the higher councils of Tammany.

INDEED, in the hundred and thirty-nine years since Tammany was organized as a "benevolent, patriotic, and charitable" enterprise, very few of its leaders except Governor Smith could be characterized as either benevolent or patriotic. Incidentally, these avowed purposes of the Tammany Society have permitted an amusing camouflage, to the confusion of public opinion. For instance, during a recent session of the committee of the United States Senate charged with the investigation of Presidential primary expenditures, George W. Olvany, Tammany's titular though not actual leader, testified that "Tammany is not in politics". The honorable Senators, presumably possessing little knowledge of political distinctions in New York, appeared to be satisfied with this disingenuous explanation. They had directed their inquiry solely into the affairs of the "Tammany Society or Columbian Order", and Mr. Olvany replied in kind. He did not think it worth while to define the difference between the Tammany Society of lofty and patriotic pretensions and the rigidly disciplined army which goes by the same name.

Any political correspondent could have pointed out the difference in an instant. The "Society of Tammany or Columbian Order" has a membership of around 800. The Tammany political organization has a voting strength of approximately 1,000,000 in the five boroughs of New York City, subject

to control under a sort of gentlemen's agreement between the leaders of the borough clans, and dependent entirely upon the satisfactory distribution of municipal patronage.

The political Tammany, appreciating the sentimental value of its relation to the Tammany Society, uses the latter for window-dressing purposes on the Fourth of July and other patriotic occasions. But less than one per cent. of the members of the Tammany political organization are Sachems, or members of the Tammany Society. The political Tammany maintains branches in every one of the sixty-three Assembly Districts of the greater city. Most of these institutions are styled "Tammany Clubs". In the boroughs outside of Manhattan these clubs are designated as "Democratic". The difference is in name only, because the Tammany machine of Manhattan virtually controls the other borough organizations after the fashion of a holding company. In former days quarrels among the leaders of borough clans were the rule. Now the systematic distribution of patronage and other gratuities keeps the borough satellites in line.

WHILE this system is satisfactory to Tammany it is rather expensive to the taxpayers who merely desire good, clean government and are not interested in the distribution of municipal spoils. The present annual cost of the city government is \$474,000,000 — an increase of \$75,000,000, by the way, during the last two years. This is about one-sixth of the cost of conducting the business of the United States Government, including the Army and Navy. The cost of the New York State Government last year was \$219,000,000.

The perfectly natural explanation of the high cost of Tammanyism in State and City is that its professional adherents have to be cared for. There are approximately 115,000 persons carried on the city payroll. It is quite unnecessary to say that 99 per cent. of these persons are Tammany men. It also goes without saying that a great many of these Tammany men were appointed largely for political reasons and that some of them render service of dubious value.

THIS policy of caring for its own is one of the most ancient and binding of Tammany traditions. The men who get out the vote for Tammany are rewarded at the expense of the city in proportion to their political skill. The practice differs from that of other city machines perhaps chiefly in its long-standing efficiency. In the old days friends of Tammany bosses secured fat jobs or contracts without being called upon to return any actual service beyond sharing their profits with their patrons. At present most of the Tammany men on the municipal payroll undoubtedly do some sort of work. A recent survey estimated that this class approximated 65 per cent. Roughly translated this means that about forty thousand of the servants of the city render little, if any, service for their salaries.

Richard Croker, boss of Tammany twenty-five years ago, brazenly told a legislative investigating committee that he "worked for his own pocket all the time". The district leaders who fought their way to supremacy in those days with clubs and brass knuckles were permitted to prey upon commercialized vice, maintaining a profitable partnership with the police.

The district leaders wielded such tremendous power in their respective spheres of influence that the supreme Tammany boss was virtually at their mercy.

THOSE were the most colorful and fascinating days of Tammany rule. The district leaders were a jovial, rollicking lot who kept saloons, gambling houses, and other resorts. They were generally illiterate, but were shrewdly skilled in the art of ward politics. They consumed vast quantities of French champagne but really liked lager beer better. Some of them made immense sums of money by means that would not be countenanced today and spent it with lavish hands.

"Big Tom" Foley, the "political godfather" of Governor Smith, was one of them. "Whispering Larry" Delmour was another one, The McManus a third, "Dry Dollar" Sullivan a fourth, and "Uncle George" Plunkett, the defender of "honest graft", another. Plunkett gained wide fame by frankly admitting that he had grown very rich because he "seen his opportunities and took 'em". Most of these men were personally rather likable, ruthlessly partisan, and frankly predatory.

During the reigns of Fernando Wood, William M. Tweed — member of the "Forty Thieves" Board of Aldermen, which outraged public sentiment by openly selling public franchises — and Richard Croker, such district leaders wielded a much greater power than those of the present day. The district leaders of the so-called "New" Tammany are not nearly so important as their illustrious predecessors, some of whom are named above. Few district leaders now are

known outside of the bailiwicks for which they are held responsible. They are still accorded membership in the Executive Committee and participate in the fiction of selecting the leader, or boss, but under the Murphy régime and since the ascendancy of Governor Smith they merely ratify decisions. On the other hand, they are held strictly accountable for political conditions in their respective districts and are really a hard working lot of men, because Tammany does business 365 days in the year and doesn't indulge in any holidays when it comes to the matter of recruiting.

THE present day district leaders for obvious reasons do not enjoy anything like the privileges and perquisites of their predecessors. They are not only political organizers but neighborhood advisers, counsellors, and Samaritans. Some of them actually maintain plots in local cemeteries of various denominations to save many unfortunate constituents from the ignominy of the potter's field. They frequently treat their constituents to picnics and chowder parties, get them jobs, lend them money and perform many other friendly offices. In return, of course, they demand and get loyalty and votes.

It is of more than passing interest that Governor Smith was one of the most tireless of these workers in the Tammany organization while he was winning his spurs. Mr. Smith is credited by some of the old-timers as having gotten more jobs for charwomen, janitors, inspectors, bartenders, waiters, and others in humble callings than "any young fellow" in the Second Assembly District where his patron, Foley, wielded the power of boss.

As already said, the emoluments of district leaders of the "New" Tammany are far below the scale in effect a quarter of a century ago. Most of the money raised for political campaigns is now turned over to a finance committee which presumably keeps books for its own information but doesn't impart any of it to the public.

IN THE good old days of Tweed, Kelly and Croker, a "Wiskinkie" was one of the most important officials in the Tammany organization. It was his job to go around and collect money wherever he could get it and split it up among the district leaders. He rendered such accounting as his conscience dictated. Under present conditions the method of raising money has been reduced to a more systematic basis. The finance committee decides how much money shall be spent in each Assembly District. It sets aside a "Dough Day" four or five days before an election contest. The District leaders go to Tammany Hall and receive the amounts that in the judgment of the finance committee are necessary to get out the vote.

Another more refined method of doing business adopted by the "New" Tammany governs the award of municipal favors. Individuals and institutions seeking privileges fringing the law now employ lawyers instead of depending on the district leaders. They usually know the right lawyer to retain for such service. This method minimizes the possibility of a scandal and leaves the way open for the employment of helpful legal technicalities.

It is quite possible, of course, that some of the old methods of preying upon the unfortunate still survive;

but the resultant graft is inconsequential as compared to the profits of former days. Murphy, through whose favor Mr. Smith was nominated for Governor, once sadly declared that "you can't keep everybody honest". If this lamented human frailty still serves to enrich district leaders and their henchmen, the fact is at least fairly well concealed from inquisitive eyes.

The "New" Tammany, then, is undoubtedly putting its best foot forward and doing what it can to assist the country to forget the record of Tweed, Wood, Kelly and Croker. One of the most remarkable achievements credited to Mr. Smith is that he has compelled this apparent reformation of Tammany's morals with far less destruction of the Tammany morale than might have been expected. Indeed, Tammany has lately increased its voting strength far beyond its normal proportion. This can be accounted for by its opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead law. Another reason for the increased popularity of Tammany is its tolerance of personal liberty in general. There is little question that gambling provides diversion for a great many New Yorkers without interference, while betting on the races is openly conducted despite the fact that a State law prohibits it.

DURING the last twenty-five years Tammany has been defeated but twice in municipal campaigns, though two Republican candidates for President, Harding and Coolidge, carried the city. Mr. Harding piled up an impressive majority of 414,000 over Mr. Cox in 1920. Mr. Coolidge carried the five boroughs of the city by

139,000 four years ago. In the latter contest Governor Smith polled 519,000 votes more than his gubernatorial rival, young Theodore Roosevelt, in the same city districts. These figures are cited to make clear the distinction which the voters of New York City in the past have made between National contests on the one hand and State and municipal campaigns on the other.

ONE of the most serious political charges brought against Tammany is that it has frequently been disloyal to the Presidential nominees of the Democratic Party, selected in opposition to its wishes. Tammany opposed the nomination of Samuel J. Tilden and Grover Cleveland, both New Yorkers. Tammany also opposed the nomination of William Jennings Bryan, Woodrow Wilson, and James M. Cox.

Mr. Bryan fully appreciated the mutually unfavorable opinion that

prevailed between Tammany and himself. He once described it as a "predatory band of corruptionists, more interested in profits than in principles"; on another occasion he declared that Tammany was "a stench in the nostrils of decent Democracy".

IF, IN the present campaign, the "New" Tammany has been heart and soul for Smith, it must be remembered that even before Smith Tammany is for Tammany. So long as Smith can show Tammany how to keep in power, Tammany will be his servant. But Tammany will be the first to desert him in defeat. By the old-timers he is tolerated as a vote getter, but mistrusted as having too "highbrow" and humanitarian leanings. As a Presidential candidate, Smith has been the greatest asset in Tammany's history. Paradoxically, Tammany may prove to have been Mr. Smith's greatest liability.



But Who Killed Miss Gilchrist?

BY PHILIP WHITWELL WILSON

The "Scottish Dreyfus Case," strangest international murder mystery of modern times, still unsolved after twenty years despite the activities of Conan Doyle, the intervention of Parliament, and the vindication of a famous victim

AT SEVEN o'clock on the evening of December 21, 1908, Miss Marion Gilchrist, an aged lady of means who was living alone in a comfortable apartment in Glasgow, sent her maid out to buy a newspaper.

The maid, Helen Lambie by name, closed and double locked the door behind her. She left within a peaceful and familiar scene. Miss Gilchrist sat in the cheerfully lighted dining room, reading a magazine at the table.

Ten minutes later the locked door, to which Helen Lambie alone had the keys and which was the only entrance to the apartment, was opened again upon a scene of horror. With it was opened also a tortuous mystery that is now darker than ever, after twenty years; a mystery that has produced an international *cause célèbre*; a mystery in which Conan Doyle himself played Sherlock Holmes.

When Helen Lambie set forth on her errand that December night, she had first to descend a private stairway leading from Miss Gilchrist's second floor apartment to the street door. This door, according to the maid's statement, she locked after her, as she

had the upper door. She took with her, she states, both sets of keys.

This street door was the only entrance to Miss Gilchrist's stairs. If any one rang the bell, Miss Gilchrist could pull a wire and release the latch, so admitting her visitor to the stairs. As any such visitor ascended the stairs, Miss Gilchrist had plenty of time to look him over from the upper landing and, if she did not like his looks, to close her upper door, with its double lock and chain, against him.

It was well known that she did subject her visitors to this careful scrutiny. She had a reputation of taking no chances. She possessed considerable property, including a small hoard of jewelry, valued at approximately \$6,900.

DIRECTLY below Miss Gilchrist's apartment, there was another apartment on the ground floor. It had its own entirely separate entrance upon the street and would not concern us, save for one circumstance. The lower apartment was occupied by a family named Adams, and Miss Gilchrist had an arrangement with