

THE TIP AND THE BRIBE

Graft Connects the Two and Forms a Burden and a Menace

By

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If You Bribe
the Waiter to
Do His Duty,
It Is a Tip



If You Tip the
Alderman to
Get His Influence,
It Is
a Bribe

is the natural result.

Serious as the accusation may seem, the writer believes that the miscellaneous and lavish tipping habit of this country is largely responsible for the public toleration of bribery and graft. Indeed, on more than one occasion he has heard it argued that bribery, within certain limitations, is perfectly legitimate. "Why shouldn't a corporation pay an alderman for what he does for it in the Council?" is the way it is put. In effect: Why shouldn't

THE American tip is at least first cousin to the bribe, and in some instances the cousins appear so much alike that it is difficult to tell which is which. The influence of the tip, carried to the American extreme, is distinctly evil and leads one easily to the bribe. Between lies graft; so that in their order they come as follows: 1. The tip; 2. Graft; 3. The bribe.

The tip has escaped particular notice until recently, because it is comparatively insignificant; but a little thought will show its relationship to the other members of the family. If you bribe the alderman to do his duty, it is a tip; if you tip the alderman to get his influence, it is a bribe; if you pay the deputy-sheriff something extra for serving papers, it is graft. The tip is a sort of poor relation to the other two. At the same time, in many instances the tip cannot be distinguished from graft, and graft cannot be distinguished from bribery. The tip may be given willingly, or it may be exacted; so also with the bribe. You may find it necessary to give a tip in order to get what you want, and it is said that men inclined to be honest have had the necessity of the bribe method of business forced upon them.

The tip is a nuisance in all countries, and as such it has received attention; but the purpose of this article is to show that in addition to being a nuisance it is, as far as the United States is concerned, a real menace. Its influence elsewhere may be bad, but the American lavishness and lack of system make it unusually serious here. For precisely the same service one man may give a tip of twenty-five cents and another (fresh from the races or the stock exchange) five dollars. The latter receives all the attention to which he is entitled, and some more; the former, thrown into competition with a more lavish man for the services of this particular employee, is neglected.

The employee soon gets the idea that his services (for which he is paid by his employer) must also be bought by others, and that the highest bidder is the one to whom he owes allegiance; the man who gives the tip decides cynically that all men are for sale. Both are the more ready to condone a serious offense in the same line; both are the more ready to commit a serious offense in the same line.

The man who has discovered that it is necessary to tip the waiter, the porter, the janitor, the chambermaid, the bell-boy, the barber, etc., and that the character of the service he gets depends upon the size of the tip, soon discovers that his conscience does not disturb him if he tips the minor public officials in order to get favors from them; and surely it is but a step from this to tipping aldermen, legislators and all others who thus can be influenced.

On the other hand, the man who learns to consider a tip his due may easily become careless as to the nature of the service that he renders for this tip. In any event, both become decidedly tolerant of others who give or accept money for improper favors, and a low state of public morals

an alderman be tipped, just like a waiter? The ethical impropriety (to put it mildly) is lost. The alderman, of course, is paid by the city for his work in the Council; but so is the waiter paid by his employer for his work in the restaurant. There is a difference, but the maze of tips conceals it from the view of many people; they simply hold that every man should pay, and that it is entirely proper to accept payment from anyone who will pay.

For the purpose of illustration, to show how the thing naturally works out, let us take an individual case—say, of the waiter. The tip to him is a comparatively small matter, the purpose of which is to gain a little more of his attention than we might have otherwise. There are many little attentions the waiter can give that will aid digestion by making the dinner more enjoyable; there are also some things that a waiter may do of which his employer might not approve, and he is disposed to do these things for the man who tips him liberally. In a loosely conducted restaurant a man who gives tips regularly will get little extras that do not appear on the check that he pays the cashier. Restaurant proprietors have been known to lose money on the patronage of men particularly favored by waiters. There you have bribery on a small scale—or is it graft?

The waiter is a voter. Is it likely that he is going to be much worried if his alderman or his legislator is accused of expecting tips for what he does? Is he going to be seriously shocked if his alderman or his legislator discriminates against those who are niggardly in the question of "gratuities"? Why, it is the most natural thing in the world to him that a tip should be exacted for anything that another desires done. Remember too, that this is a wholesale subject. The waiter in question is not alone; there are other waiters and other employees—thousands of them—who are receiving the same kind of a tip education, and it creates a pernicious public sentiment. It is in the effect on the many that the menace lies.

The waiter in this democratic country properly may aspire to political preference. Let us suppose he gets into public life through the sheriff's office, becoming a deputy. The deputy-sheriff is no worse than others with equal opportunities, and the conditions could be illustrated in almost any other branch of the public service; but Chicago has had a recent exposure of affairs in the sheriff's office that brings it a little closer to the public. The waiter finds the tip system already installed there; but it is now known as graft.

Nevertheless, it is precisely the same system with which he is familiar. If papers are to be served, he expects a tip; if he fails to get the tip, he is dilatory about the service. He discovers that certain lawyers fee liberally and certain others do not, and it naturally follows that he has his favorite patrons, just as he had in the restaurant. He has

been educated to the tip method of doing business, and so have his patrons. Possibly in some instances they are precisely the same men who tipped him in the restaurant; and he is just as willing to strain a point to oblige them. Some day one of the liberal fellows comes along and asks him to strain the point—to overlook something that he should not overlook, or to do something that he should not do. The lawyer's tip is unusually liberal; the lawyer's continued favor is worth much; the lawyer assures him that no trouble can come of it. The deputy earns his graft—or is it a bribe?

Any man having considerable business with minor officials or employees of the state, county or municipality has learned the value of the tip in expediting business. Many lawyers invest in the favor of these people, and sometimes the favors they secure result in scandals. The majority of these tips are not for improper services, but only to secure that which the lawyer has a perfect right to demand. Nevertheless, they serve to cloud the perception of right and wrong, and in time the employee gets the idea that his allegiance goes with the tip rather than with the salary. Then it becomes easy for him to forget his duty when he is asked to do a favor. Court papers have disappeared mysteriously in Chicago at a time when their disappearance would be most advantageous to some liberal fellow, and have reappeared at a later date in the same mysterious way. Some man was put to serious inconvenience (to say the least) and another profited thereby.

Wherever the tip flourishes some men are securing privileges that are denied to others, and these privileges are often improper ones. When they are not improper, they are secured at the expense of others, and this in itself has a tendency to obscure the dividing line between the tip and the bribe.

The waiter who became a deputy passes easily over the line, and begins to aspire to larger tips. Among other things, he has cheated his employer, the county, of a good deal of his time in order to be of political service to some boss, and now he is rewarded with an aldermanic nomination. And he is elected. Remember, please, that this man has been in the habit of being tipped for practically everything he does. He always has drawn a salary or wages for the work he was employed to do; but (to put it plainly) he always has been bribed to do this work satisfactorily to the briber. At first, this also meant that it should be done satisfactorily to his employer; but that trifling detail has been lost somewhere in the maze of graft.

His consideration now is for the man who tips him, as long as the latter demands nothing that will seriously jeopardize his political interests. Certain things for his constituents he must do without expectation of cash; aside from that, he may do as he pleases. Most of his constituents are in the habit of accepting tips themselves, and certain others always give them. That he should accept a tip from a corporation is not going to worry them