

# GRAFTING IS THE NATIONAL SIN

## A Merciless Analysis of Its Cause, Development, Ramifications, Magnitude and Consequences.

THE BROOKLYN EAGLE, after a canvass of the opinions of prominent citizens of every profession and business, in all parts of the country, announces that "grafting" has reached the proportions of the great national sin. The views on this subject have been summed up in the Eagle by Frederick Upton Adams, in the following article which is notable for its analysis of "graft," "grafting" and "grafters."

The grafter is the extortioner of an official representative position and employment. It is the purchase price of an unfair favor; an accepted bribe in consideration of which the tender is permitted to do what he would not do otherwise. Graft is money stolen in perjury to a confidence reposed in a representative. It is the price of official dishonesty. It is a dishonest prerequisite. Graft is the meanest and lowest form of thievery. The pickpocket betrays no confidence, and the cautious man can guard himself against this nimble-fingered species of thief. The burglar and highwayman risk their lives in their plunderings. They are open and avowed enemies, and boldly defy its laws and dare its penalties. They ask no need of respect from those they would rob. They quarrel not that society brands them as criminals. The forger operates against those who are trained to be on guard against his villainy.

Compared to the grafter, the pickpocket, burglar, highwayman, forger and others who aim to secure money without returning a fair equivalent in goods or services are deserving of some degree of respect. The grafter deliberately robs those who have elevated him to a place of power or honor. Ignoring that splendid instinct which impels a gentleman to do more for his neighbor than he would do for his own pleasure or preference, the grafter plunders those who have given him the guardianship of their property, the watching of their interests. The guest who steals from the table of his host the silver spoons which are placed by his plate has in him the making of a successful grafter. His crime, though mean, is small compared to the public official who robs not one friend, but an entire community of his fellow citizens.

There are janitors who exact graft from tenants and landlords; the street laborer bribes his way into his employment and shirks his work; the street railway conductor purchases the influence which makes him a collector of fares. The confidence of the street railway corporation in its employees is evidenced by the fortunes expended in cash registers and in the services of detectives and police. The engineer of many a power plant reckons as a fair part of his income the commissions he receives on coal, oil and everything purchased for his use. The commercial traveler bribes the trusted representatives of his customers, and there is a legend that some of them are not above exacting that item of graft which is concealed in a distorted expense account. The policeman buys his place on the force and is disciplined by removal to a precinct or district where there is less opportunity for graft. The contractor blocks the public streets with building materials and feels secure from the enforcement of the law whenever he has bribed those whose influence will permit his disregard. Bootblacks and newsboys pay blood money for permission to ply their trades on certain corners. Railroad passes, issued to members of the clergy, are found in the offices of "ticket scalpers." There is hardly an occupation or a profession which does not afford opportunity for that systematic thievery which goes by the name of graft. The time has come when graft is a recognized and conventional factor in determining the incomes of those who profit thereby. When a position is under consideration the question is blandly asked, "How much is there in it outside the salary?" The suspicion that an individual is taking dishonest advantage of his office or employment may become a certainty without seriously menacing his standing or reputation. Society frowns only on the detected and exposed grafter, and has more of contempt for his stupidity than of scorn for his knavery. One offender bears remarks expressive of envy or admiration for the successful grafter rather than of condemnation of his methods. It is unreasonable to hope for the honest conduct of public affairs so long as the business and professional grafter is looked on not with contempt, but with admiration. The tolerance extended to the grafter demonstrates the existence of a deplorably low public moral tone.

Grafting has become a science. It is the besetting sin of the American people. In this world of speculation there are three distinct divisions, viz: Those who receive the graft, those who tender the graft, and those who aspire to be grafters. Allied with these is a fourth class, which, while not participating in the proceeds, looks upon the system, not with honest abhorrence, but as a trifling and necessary evil. There has been stealing in all ages, and as far back as we can look in the records of nations we learn of men who have attained wealth and position by taking mercenary advantage of places of trust and honor. There have been those who, like Walpole, defended corruption as a conservative force which tended to protect vested rights. Alexander Hamilton is on record in a speech delivered before the convention which framed the Constitution of the United States as endorsing in part Walpole's position, and certain of his critics claim that he made practice of his theory. Certain it is that during the seven desperate years when we were struggling for our national independence there were not wanting those who in devious ways fattened on the public revenues. Our soldier forefathers went ragged and hungry because contractors and bribed officials had stolen the funds raised for the support of the men who fought at Saratoga and Trenton. The first act of the regularly constituted congress—the refunding of the public debt—was a search for speculation and corruption. But such instances are rare in the early history of the nation. There is nothing to show that the system of petty and wholesale thievery, which now goes by the comprehensive name of "graft," had yet been established. It was fashionable to be honest. When a man betrayed a public trust he became an outcast. If the Benedict Arnolds of today in a city of the size of New York or Chicago were to march in solid ranks past the respective city halls, it would take them a long time to pass, and it is to be feared that they would be greeted and applauded by throngs of admiring and envious followers.

Before making the serious statements which follow I desire to insert a preface. The vast majority of those who fill positions of trust in this country are honest and honorable men. Of the thousands and tens of thousands who fill political places in the national and state capitals and in the cities, towns and villages between the two oceans, the overwhelming majority receive no money which they do not fairly earn, and in numberless instances they are, but ill requited for their services. There is an army of

hardworking men and women who have spent the best years of their lives in faithful service in our public departments. They will retire in their old age with nothing but gray hairs to show for weary years spent for barely enough to maintain a respectable existence. There are scientists, specialists and professional men holding official positions who work with an earnest, disinterested zeal which would bring them fame and material reward if devoted to other than the public welfare, and the reputation of such as these is smirched by their forced contact and association with the grafter. Let us look the truth fully in the face. Is it not a fact that the public holder or aspirer to a public position renders himself liable to the suspicion that he is or would be dishonest? Is it not a fact that men who value their good fame and name above all other considerations hesitate to accept or compete for public office for fear that their honor will be tarnished? Is there not much of truth in the assertion that while all officeholders are not thieves, all thieves would be officeholders? Is it not a fact that the mercenary violation of public duties and of private positions is more widespread in this country than in any other? An unbiased study of the facts will compel one to answer all of these questions in the affirmative.

The grafter rules in the political world, and he has extended his sway into hundreds of the avenues of business and finance. The inexorable law of supply and demand governs and determines in the world of graft. As naturally as water seeks its level, and as instinctively as rats discern the scent of cheese, does your grafter locate and reach out after the positions that are most profitable. Since there are more grafters than opportunities for grafting, there is engendered a lively competition between those who would gain at public expense. Thus there is established a market price for official positions. At times a combination of grafters will sacrifice one of these positions to an honest man in order that in an election the influence of his good name will place or hold them in power. But as a rule these places are sold to the highest bidder, the position being shown to those whose personality adds to that popularity necessary to the winning of votes. No investment yields so large returns on money expended as that which establishes one as a grafter.

Experienced politicians usually estimate the profit at a minimum of 100 per cent.

If a man spends \$10,000 in order to secure a political job he expects to make as much or more each year out of the position, the risks are high because the risks are great. There ever looms up the shadow of the jail. It will not be claimed that official salaries are too high in city, county, state or nation. On the contrary, they are too low. It will not be claimed that there is longer any honor in serving a community which is open to attacks to every officeholder. A capable man can make more in a civic position than he can in a public one, and his reputation stands in no danger. It may, therefore, be fair to assume that the man who pays his way into an office purposes to rob the community through it. No other inference is logical.

It is conceivable that an honest man of great wealth might pay as a campaign assessment a sum of money equal to his salary for the entire term to which he aspires, but in doing so he evinces a sad lack of delicacy and sets a most deplorable example. But we may quickly dismiss these figureheads who stand as the standard bearers of the party. They may or may not be intending grafters. As a rule they pay campaign assessments, and large ones. In England, France and Germany such indiscretions are not permitted. But what shall we say of the alderman who pays in assessments many times the amounts of their salaries?

What shall we say of candidates for the judiciary who pay the exact same of money in order that they may be elected to the most respected places within the gift of citizenship? The demand is made from pulpit and editorial page that no word of criticism or breath of censure be directed against the bench. They may thus cultivate a respect among the masses, but the damning, practical fact remains that there are communities in which the highest assessments in proportion to the prospective salaries are levied against the judicial candidates. As a rule, with this is the additional and more ominous fact that in many instances these assessments are paid, not by the candidate, but by his corporate and other interests who reasonably may expect to have litigation before the judge whose election is in question. Where there is reasonable doubt as to which ticket will win, it is customary for such interests to pay the assessments of the rival candidates. No fact is better known to those admitted behind the scenes in politics. It is not an agreeable thing to write about, but "graft" is not a poetic topic.

We may accept as a self evident proposition that the man who buys his way into an office intends to steal his way out of it. It makes small difference how he spends his money; it is bribery if it be devoted to the winning of an office. There are ways of bribery other than holding a man by the shoulder and jamming a roll of bills into his pocket. The candidate who lavishly expends money on picnics and entertainments for his constituents, who distributes thousands of turkeys during the holiday season; who pays police court fines and funeral expenses, may be justly suspected in most instances of motives far different from those which inspire the philanthropist. What is more significant is the fact that the recipients of these favors are not in the least deceived thereby. They recognize and accept them as their share of the graft. If the donor be in office they realize that he is spending a small percentage of his station profits; if he be a candidate, they know that for every dollar risked he hopes to win ten.

The type just considered may be classed as professional grafters. They make no hypocritical pretense of a fine-spun morality. As a rule they are no lower in the scale than the elector-grafer, and they are "working for their own pockets all the time," and scorn to deny it. The answer to the question, "What is there in it for me?" determines their action in all things political or governmental.

Equally dangerous and far more despicable is the grafter who poses as a respectable member of society. The grafter from the slums—brutal, ignorant and redolent of the bar room—would not be tolerated for one moment and he not his counterpart in the genteel, educated character in broadcloth who prates of patriotism and asks the blessings of Providence on his speculations. It is to fill the hungry maw of such men that jobs are maintained wherever representatives have at their disposal franchise favors or special legislation. It is to swell their bank accounts that certain corporations set aside corruption funds. By means of iniquitous favors, for which

they received the purchase price, robberies and extortions innumerable are being practiced on the American people. Where is the community which can proudly and truthfully say that it is not being plundered as a consequence of the venality of its elected or appointed officials?

How many boards of aldermen are there which stand so high in honesty as to be above suspicion? In what state do legislatures meet which have the respect, approval and implicit trust of its people?

This is the only nation in the world where the holding of a public office raises a suspicion as to the character of the incumbent. In our great municipalities we esteem it a matter for congratulation if a man of known probity and of recognized character and ability can be induced to stand for office. Derivative names are coined to designate those whose unselfish civic pride impels them to bear the odium of officeholding. We call the man who places honest citizenship above party gain a "mugwump." We term the man who dares defy the cohorts of organized capacity a "rookoo." In most of our large cities and in hundreds of smaller ones it is impossible to elect a ticket composed wholly of reputable men, except at long separated intervals, and disgust with an unusually outrageous misgovernment arouses a municipal revolution.

In other words we have not enough of civic pride to outweigh the energy and influence of the grafter. Surely this is an astounding and deplorable state of affairs. Since it obtains in no other nation on earth, the gloom of the inference is clear that we have reached a low moral plane, which should and which does hold us up to the scorn of all students of these contaminated institutions.

Look the facts straight in the face and attempt to read the secret of this infamy. Who is the ally of the grafter? Who pays the bribe which makes his ceaseless activities profitable? In the answer to these questions is found the secret of the success of the grafter and of the shame of American citizenship.

For each grafter who receives bribes there are a score or more of men who tender them. These patrons of the grafter, these producers of graft, are, as a rule, men who make pretense of respectability. They are men of affairs. They are business men. They have bank accounts. They employ other men and expect and often insist that their employes shall not vote counter to their interests. They belong to churches, clubs and societies. They are a part of the social machinery of the community. Why are they the patrons of grafters? Why do they vote for grafters in conventions and at the polls? Because, like their neighbor, the grafter, they "are working for their own pockets all the time."

No city on earth has a criminal class so strong or a slum district so populous as to return a majority in favor of political thieves. The grafter is to the fore because criminal business interests have placed him there. He is on the same payroll with the lobbyist, the hireling of respectable rapacity. Whenever a bribe is tendered, four crimes are committed or contemplated. The one who offers the bribe wishes to violate or evade a law. He declares his intent as a criminal. That is crime No. 1. He offers the bribe, or authorizes an agent to do so. This is crime No. 2. The grafter accepts the bribe and money. This is crime No. 3. He violates his oath of office and permits the infraction of a law. This is crime No. 4.

No vicious piece of legislation stands on a statute book but that some selfish and criminal interest brought it and placed it there. There is no grafter of consequence who, in time of stress or danger, cannot demand and speedily receive the support and influence of men who stand high in the world of affairs. The grafter is an effect; not a cause. He is the retainer of dishonest business interests; the henchman of those so carried away by lust of greed that they do not hesitate to plunder their fellow citizens through the bribe cooperation of those who are paid to protect their interests.

In foreign countries, which make no claim to the liberty which is our heritage, they are partly recompensed by the service of officials who find honor and pleasure in the just and careful administration of the duties of their positions. In the great municipalities of England, the citizen who has served his country and amassed an honest competence as a business or professional man, looks forward after middle age to the possibility that the ripper years of his life may be called into requisition by the community of which he is a part. Such men fill the higher elective and appointive positions, serving generally without pay, and finding their reward in the appreciation of those who have honored them by their confidence. The vast engineering works completed in recent years have been planned and supervised by men whose only pay was the great applause of their fellows. The great public utilities of Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and London are in charge of men whose lives and acts raise them beyond the reach of suspicion. Bribery is a crime in England; it is a profession in our beloved country.

We have blurred and well-nigh obliterated the line which separates honesty from dishonesty as a policy and not as a virtue. The shrewd trading and business instinct of the former generations has degenerated in many instances into over-reaching and unscrupulous avarice. The "tricks of trade" had not far to fall to become the crimes of business.

Powerful and seemingly unassailable as is this alliance between criminal interests and criminal officials, it will be ground to powder when once the American people realize the shame which has befallen them. There is brewing a revolution against venality, whether in the tap room or the counting room. When it bursts it will fill the jails with strangely assorted criminals. There will come a day when honesty will be fashionable; when probity will no longer be the subject of a sneer.

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(Chicago Record-Herald.)

Two members of the house of representatives have served longer in congress than Mr. Cannon, the Speaker. Mr. Cannon has answered his name throughout fifteen congresses or thirty years, and Mr. Cannon's record is not far from that of thirty-two years in the lower branch. In length of total service the veterans of congress are:

Senator Allison of Iowa	38
Senator Hoar of Massachusetts	38
Senator Fry of Maine	34
Senator Hale of Maine	32
Representative Ketchum of Michigan	32
Representative Cannon of Illinois	30
Senator Cullom of Illinois	28
Senator Hawley of Connecticut	28
Senator Cullom of Illinois	26
Senator Morgan of Alabama	26
Representative Bingham of Pennsylvania	26
Senator Sherman of Ohio	26
Representative Hitt of Illinois	24
Senator Platt of Connecticut	24
Senator Burrows of Michigan	24

**Perverts.**

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Franklin Fire, of Philadelphia	3,003,373