

HARVARD MEN IN POLITICS.

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A fair proportion of the men who have graduated from Harvard during the last twenty years or so have gone into public life. In a certain sense it is of course the duty of every Harvard man to do this. He is false to the tradition and spirit of Americanism if he does not conscientiously and faithfully perform his political duties; I do not mean merely vote, but take an active interest in politics and do his part in controlling the political organization to which he belongs; or, if he belongs to none, do his part, in company with others who feel as he does, in helping as far as may be the political movements or the political candidates in which he is interested. He can accomplish a certain amount by criticism if his criticism is intelligent and honest, but he can of course accomplish infinitely more by action; and possibly it may be of interest to Harvard graduates to point out the kind of work that is done in politics by those of their number who are men of action.

Massachusetts usually leads in any good movement, and so it is not surprising that we have to turn first to Massachusetts when we think of Harvard graduates in public life. There are at this moment many who deserve well of their Alma Mater; and these are among both parties, and are to be found in the public service of both the nation and the state,—men like Governor Russell and Congressmen Andrew and Hoar, or like Assistant Secretary of State Wharton, Congressman Lodge, and ex-Congressman Greenhalge, not to mention the many Harvard men who are at the present moment members of the Massachusetts state or of the Boston municipal legislatures. Speaking only of that with which I am most familiar, I wish to point out some of the ways in which Harvard men have been able to do peculiarly good work in the national Congress during the past few years.

Often much of the best service that is rendered in Congress must be done without any hope of approbation or reward. The measures that attract most attention are frequently not those of most lasting importance; and even where they are of such importance that attention is fixed upon them, the interested

public may not appreciate the difference between the man who merely records his vote for a bill and the other who throws his whole strength into the contest to secure its passage. A man must have in him a strong and earnest sense of duty and the desire to accomplish good for the commonwealth, without regard to the effect upon himself, to be useful in Congress in the way that men like Lodge, Greenhalge, Andrew, Hoar, or George Adams of Chicago, are useful.

Take the work that these men have done on subjects like the Copyright Bill, the building of the navy, legislation in the interest of scientific bodies, such as the Smithsonian Institution, and various bills affecting Civil Service Reform. There is great popular interest in certain quarters about the navy; but I am sorry to say that I do not think that this interest is always sufficiently keen to make the public intelligent in backing up the men who strive to make our naval policy consistent and steady. There is no kind of legislation more intimately connected with the national honor than that affecting the navy; yet during this very session of Congress we have not only seen narrow-minded Congressmen from interior dis-

tricts strenuously opposing the building of the navy, but also at least passive help extended to them by certain representatives from districts which are intelligently interested in our maritime supremacy. It would be difficult to overestimate the amount of good work done, without any hope of recognition therefor, by the men who have taken the chief part in preparing and pushing through the naval legislation, first on the naval committees of the two Houses, and then through the legislative bodies themselves; and this is peculiarly a work unselfish and patriotic, and which Harvard College ought to be most anxious to foster and most prompt to recognize when done by her graduates.

So it is with the Copyright Bill. Every reading man, every man interested in the growth of American literature, and finally, every man who cares for the honor of the American name and is keenly anxious that no reproach shall be rightly cast upon it, must rejoice that we have the present Copyright Law. It was won in the teeth of a violent and ignorant opposition, and in spite of the fact that many who had been supposed to be its friends turned against it at the last moment,

on the shallow pretense that it did not go as far as they desired. It certainly should be a matter of congratulation for Harvard that her representatives were among the leaders in the fight on its behalf.

In the copyright struggle, as in all other Congressional contests, there were many different kinds of difficulties to be encountered. In the first place there was undoubtedly a kernel of dishonest opposition to the bill, due to the presence of an active lobby, subsidized by certain third-rate newspaper and book concerns. In the next place, there was a mass of inert indifference to be overcome. Thirdly, the friends of the bill had to meet the bitter opposition of perfectly honest and very able, though, as we believe, entirely misguided, opponents of the measure,—men like Roger Q. Mills, for instance, whose character and capacity rightly gave them great weight in Congress. Finally, there was the need of guarding against the crankiness of certain friends of the measure, which actually threatened to defeat the whole bill merely because it contained some features to propitiate the printers,—features which were absolutely essential to its passage, and which were entirely non-

essential when viewed from the standpoint either of abstract right or of expediency. The Senate passed the bill in one form; the House passed it in another, after having first rejected it in yet a third. Then in the very last hours of the session a most strenuous effort had to be made, after having persuaded the conference committees of the two Houses to agree upon a common measure, to persuade the Houses themselves to pass the conference report. No one who was not himself present in the Capitol during these final, vital hours of the fight can appreciate the tact, resolution, energy, and downright hard work of the men who were prominent in passing the bill. This had to be done with absolute disinterestedness. No man did anything for the Copyright Bill from selfish motives. It was pressed by a body of men without political influence, and it was passed solely as a measure of justice, and from the highest motives. The men who were instrumental in passing it deserve to receive the credit always attaching to effective and disinterested work for a worthy ideal.

In no respect has our government done better work than in its scientific departments. The different government publications on

scientific subjects rank very high, and it is through these that many of the most eminent American scientists have been able to render their most distinguished services. No work that has been done by us as a nation has been more creditably performed, and the scientific bureaux are peculiarly worthy of being well sustained by both the Congressional and Executive branches. The work they do, however, is of a kind which can apply only to the higher intellectual faculties, and both the demagogue and the honest ignorant man always select these bureaux as peculiarly vulnerable objects of attack. There is not any very widely extended public interest in them; the newspapers devote but small space to them, and there are no districts where there are any bodies of voters whose interests are in any way bound up with theirs. In consequence, they must rely for support upon the wholly unselfish, and usually unappreciative, efforts of a number of men in both branches of Congress, who do recognize the importance of the work that is being done, and are willing to take great trouble that it may not be stopped. A Harvard graduate who has been bred and trained to the knowledge of the usefulness of public scientific

and artistic institutions can with difficulty realize the enormous number of people to whom such institutions, when supported by the public money, are objects of positive dislike. It would be a revelation to the readers of this paper if they would turn to the Congressional Record and read some of the speeches made against the Smithsonian and kindred institutions in the last session. These speeches were so effective, and the forces to whose feelings they gave utterance so powerful, that at one time it looked as though all our scientific work would have to be stopped. The calamity was averted only by the strenuous endeavor of several of the Congressional leaders, who took not only an active and intelligent but very resolute part on behalf of the menaced institutions. Among these men, I am happy to say, one or two of the most prominent were Harvard graduates. Yet I doubt if the mass of our graduates even understood that there had been a struggle, far less that they felt any particular gratitude towards the men who had staved off Congressional action which would have amounted to a national disgrace.

So it is with the unending fight over Civil Service Reform,—a fight waged so equally

against the active and interested opposition of the great army of political place-hunters and against the indifference of that numerous class which is incapable of high ideals or of sensitiveness to any cause that does not at the moment appeal to their pockets. The best work for Civil Service Reform that has been done in Congress of recent years must be put to the credit of Harvard graduates; who at the time, be it remembered, were also taking prominent part in the conflicts waged over those questions in which the whole public are interested, such as the tariff and the currency.

These are but samples of the unrewarded and yet all important tasks which every Harvard man who goes into public life will find ready to his hand, and if he is worthy of his college,—as those men whose names I have given above, and scores of others like them, most assuredly are,—he will not shrink from these tasks, but will rather choose them gladly, because of the very fact that most public men will be glad to leave them to him, and because by doing them he will render most honorable and useful service to the State and nation.

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