

**THE INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT IN
NEW YORK AS AN ELEMENT IN
THE NEXT ELECTIONS AND A
PROBLEM IN PARTY
GOVERNMENT**

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The independent movement in New York as an element in the next elections and a problem in party government by Dorman B. Eaton

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DORMAN B. EATON

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QUESTIONS OF THE DAY. No. 1

[Foster, Norman Bridgman]

THE

INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

IN

NEW YORK

AS

AN ELEMENT IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS AND A
PROBLEM IN PARTY GOVERNMENT

By JUNIUS [1880]

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PREFATORY.

THAT disaffection toward Republican party management, showing itself first in New York, and there by far the most serious, has for some time existed, and that it has rapidly increased during the past year, are significant facts of which the country has taken notice. Nor has it escaped attention that distrust, tending to hostility, is most developed among the younger men, or that it has, more and more, of late, manifested itself in other States, and especially in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

It is not, however, so well known from what causes this disaffection has first arisen in New York, or from what elements, if neglected there, it may grow into a serious peril to the Republican party.

Having stood in its ranks since the Republican party was organized in New York, and having never co-operated with the Independents (as the leaders of the disaffection movement are styled), I have thought I may fairly present the issue between them and the

party managers, and I have hoped that these reflections may now serve a useful purpose by attracting more attention to a subject of national importance.

I have not the least right or intention to assume to speak for the Independents. It is certain, on the other hand, that I shall offend the Republican managers; for my intention to be just to the higher sentiment of the party will compel me to condemn much for which these managers are responsible.

There will, doubtless, be those—no matter from what motive—who will charge that such admissions of mismanagement and weakness as these pages contain, are not compatible with fidelity to the Republican party, or with a desire for its success at the next elections. To all such charges I can only interpose an emphatic denial of their truth, and declare that the faith of no man in the principles of the Republican party, and the wish of no man to see them not only sustained in the coming elections, but made supreme in our politics, can be more earnest than my own. But dangers are not avoided by closing our eyes to them; we must see things as they are day by day. It is the part of statesmanship, while comprehending the sources of existing evils, to adopt a policy that will arrest them. And I must add my profound conviction that the strength needed to ensure Republican victories is most likely to come to us through a better understanding of the causes of our waning majorities during some late years,

and not yet wholly regained; through less blind faith in names, passions, and prejudices, and greater fidelity to principles and to pledges; through less reliance upon management, patronage, and all selfish influences, and more upon open and manly appeals to the intelligence and virtue of the country. We need a policy which shall commend itself to honest and enlightened voters, and not a policy dictated by manipulating politicians and executed by domineering officials and packed primaries and conventions.

It is because a just presentation of the "Independent Movement in New York" involves not merely the conditions of success in that great State, but the very foundations of stability in the Republican party in all those particulars, that I have thought the subject peculiarly worthy of discussion at this time. I believe the Republican party at the North—even after having, within the last few years, lost so many worthy supporters—yet embraces by much the larger portion of the moral and intellectual elements of the country, and that in the support of the principles to which it is pledged are the germ and the conditions of a possible growth with which the highest interests of the nation are identified. But will the party now show itself worthy of its history and its opportunities? Will it rise to the level of its pledges and its duty, or will it surrender to the leadership and control of scheming partisans and arrogant politicians? Will it, by an honest and

statesmanlike adherence to principles, and by a reasonable compromise of preferences, put an end to its dissensions and make a victory possible in the coming election? On the answer to these questions I believe its fate depends.

The very nature of the issues to be considered—requiring as they do a candid estimate of the positions of bodies, which, while standing in an attitude of distrust, if not of antagonism, yet both claim to be the true representatives of sound Republican principles and policy—makes it proper that the facts and the reasoning should be presented upon their intrinsic merits, without the least prejudice or reinforcement from the personality of the author.

But why take the great name of *Junius*? Not in the least from any pretense of his ability, and so all criticism on that point will be needless. It is my wish, rather, to call attention to the crisis and the lesson of his time, in so many ways analogous to our own; to a contest in which the higher sentiment and the demand for freedom in elections and for honesty and fidelity in political life—uttered ably and courageously through the public press for the *first time*—contended successfully with all that was vindictive, tyrannical, and corrupt in a partisan oligarchy which seemed impregnable; to a victory in behalf of good administration, so important, and upon which Junius declares “the ruin or prosperity of a State so much depends,” that its sal-

utary effects have been felt down to our own times. Then, as now, the freedom of elections from partisan coercion was a vital question; and Junius, in dedicating his work to the British people, said, "I cannot doubt you will assert the freedom of elections, and vindicate your exclusive right to choose your representatives." *

Junius, as a first example in British politics, boldly arraigned the great politicians of his day for prostituting the appointing power and making merchandise and spoils of offices and places in the shambles of patronage and favoritism.

Junius, in describing the reckless partisans of his time, and in defining the situation which called forth his letters, uses this language, so fit to be adopted, and so apt to bring before us the duties and the leaders of our day: "No man laments more sincerely than I do, the unhappy differences which have arisen." "The hearty friends of the cause are provoked and disgusted. The lukewarm advocate avails himself of any pretense to relapse into indolent indifference. *The false, insidious partisan* who creates or foment the disorder, sees the fruit of his dishonest industry ripen beyond his hopes, and rejoices in the promise of a banquet only delicious to such appetite as his own. *It is time for those who really mean the cause and the people, who have*

*Junius's Preface to his Letters.