

KANSAS CITY JOURNAL-POST.

Westbrook, Pettier Says - -

'In Spite of All, Mr. Pendergast Runs a Good Town.'

PEGLER

HERE is a paradox for you. Tom Pendergast, the Democratic boss of Kansas City, gives good, rotten government, and runs a good, rotten city whose conventional Americans of the home-loving, baby-having, 100 per cent type live on terms of mutual toleration with wide open vice and gambling.

Kansas City has been described as an overgrown trading post on the frontier, but that figure does justice to neither the facts nor the town. She is not a post at all, but a great city whose reputation has suffered from the inclusion in her name of the word "Kansas," a word signifying thin-lipped social bleakness, prohibition and an aversion to the pleasures of others. Kansas City is more like Paris. The stuff is there, the gambling joints and the brothels, including among the latter a restaurant conducted in imitation of that one in Paris, more haunted by American tourists than the Louvre, where the waitresses wear nothing on before and a little less than half of that behind. But, like the Parisians, the people of Kansas City obviously believe that such things must be and, also, like the Parisians, are proud of their own indifference.

Mr. Pendergast is an old-time saloonkeeper, and similar in some respects to Frank Hague of Jersey City. He is religious, rich and a benevolent despot in his relations with his loyal subjects, but he lacks Hague's vindictiveness toward those who have the audacity to fight him. They differ again in their attitude toward prostitution, for Hague will not tolerate the business at all, whereas the Pendergast organization treats it as part of the routine commerce of a big city.

Pendergast's men claim he absolutely refused to let his organization accept any graft, or "lug" as it is locally known, from prostitutes or brothel keepers, and would break any subordinate who should, but, of course, that is only their side of the story, hard enough to believe in any case, but the more so when the same men claim that he also forbids the collection of any "lug" from the gamblers. Everybody knows that the gamblers pay off to

the organization and, whatever Mr. Pendergast's personal aversion to dirty money wrung from women, and however innocent his sleep in the big house where he lives among the rich and respectable, there is a presumption which places the burden of disproof on an organization that includes the lowest members of the underworld.

Although he put off his apron and laid aside his beer mallet go, Mr. Pendergast is still operating in liquor and beer, being now in the wholesale way of business as agent for various lines of merchandise, which naturally enjoy a strong preference in the cafes and saloons of the merry city on the edge of the Kansas desert. He generously permits other brands to be sold, but the loyal saloonkeeper knows whose line of grog and brew is whose.

Mr. Pendergast also sells ready-mixed concrete in vast quantities for public and private works, but at any suggestion of monkey business he is prepared to argue that his concrete is good concrete, and that his prices are the lowest and his facilities the best. Runs a Good Town.

The police force is entirely political, and every cop is beholden to some leader for his job, and removable or otherwise punishable on the demand of the same one who appointed him, subject, however, in extreme cases, to Mr. Pendergast's decision on appeal. The firemen are similarly situated and, although they do not have the cops' apparent chance to graft, the cops' opportunities are more a tradition than a practical reality. The individual cop could never have the audacity to demand money from a gambling house keeper, for example. The operator would think he was crazy. He doesn't have to bother with cops. He does business with the organization, and a policeman might as well try to shake down the Santa Fe railroad or a big department store. Neither cops nor firemen have pensions or job security.

But in spite of all this—and this is what drives the opposition wild—Mr. Pendergast runs a good town, with efficient public services and with comparatively little violent crime. Kansas City has adopted the old St. Paul and Toledo system of permitting criminals to relax and frolic without molestation, with the understanding that their activities while in town must be entirely social and in no way professional.

Of course, the machine will steal an election if necessary or just for practice, and as a demonstration of efficient loyalty to Mr. Pendergast. Sometimes the boys steal when

there is no need of stealing, and some outlandish totals have been rolled up when it would have been wiser to stand on an honest plurality.

Daily Poem

'Having Eyes See Not.'

Have you not heard of Holy Writ,

My poor, disheveled sparrow?

You chirp in abject misery Upon my lattice narrow,

While close at hand my cottage wall Has broken in the weather—

You could creep in where icy winds Would not disturb a feather!

FLORENCE HOLT DAVISON.

An eastern judge is trying to discourage drinking by giving liberal doses of castor oil to those convicted of drunkenness. That ought to work.