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NOT THE SPOILS SYSTEM.

There have been rumors of late of wholesale removals from the civil service in order to provide places for more or less impatient well-wishers of the present government. That there may be many applicants for stalls at the public crib, and that such of them as have influential friends may try to convince Mr. Laurier and his colleagues that their services are essential to the prosperity of the country, we can easily believe. It is also quite possible that certain changes may be made in one or more of the departments, and we may take it for granted that the new appointees will be on the Liberal side. But that the present government has any intention of introducing the spoils system in order to satisfy the more unfortunate place-hunters or to gratify old grudges, we do not credit. To turn out a qualified, diligent, honest civil servant on account of his opinions, in order to make room for another person whose views are more in harmony with the powers that be, is a proceeding which all right-thinking people would condemn. And to multiply such instances, as, according to report, it was proposed that the government should do, would be nothing more nor less than to set up the spoils system in an aggravated form. There are some who look upon that system as an American institution. But it is only American in the sense that our neighbors having inherited it from the past, openly professed and practiced it as a sort of corollary of popular government. Not, indeed, in the early years of the Republic, and never without strong dissent from an intelligent minority of high moral ideals. The mistake of the founders of the American commonwealth was that they did not foresee, or, foreseeing, make provision against such an abuse of power. The fact is, however, that the principle of a stable and impartial civil service is not only modern, but recent.

The idea of opening up the civil service to merit, apart from influence—generally, of course, associated with the party in power—may be said to have first become fruitful after the Reform Bill of 1832. In England patronage was deeply rooted in the mind of the ruling class. It is curious that almost the first act of war against it by an English statesman was the check that Sir Robert Peel imposed on it in connection with the organization of the Metropolitan Police Force—a body which perpetuated his name, if not his fame, in its popular designation of Peelers. That was among the first—if not the very first—occasion on which personal qualification in a public officer was made to take precedence of every consideration that had hitherto prevailed in such appointments. It marked the first strong tendency in Great Britain to the decline of partisanship in relation with offices of high responsibility to the people at large. But it was not without a most determined struggle with that ingrained prejudice against innovation which made the old-school English Tory set his face against every reform that the advocates of the improved system won their victory. Nevertheless, they found help in an unexpected quarter. During the closing years of the reign of William the Fourth, after the triumphs of the preceding decade had inspired the better class of public men with an enthusiasm for reform, some of the higher officials

took courage and complained of the helpless inferiority of the departmental clerks with which patronage had burdened them. Hitherto they had borne the infliction in silence as one of those evils for which, being in the nature of things, there was no cure. But, now that the axe had begun in earnest to be laid at the root of all these overgrown abuses, they confessed that the public work could not be done under such a system of appointment. They incurred no small resentment by such outspokenness. The members of Parliament were indignant at the presumption that dared to reflect on their use or abuse of their privileges. In self-defence the heads of departments devised a scheme of examination for testing the fitness of candidates. They had two tests of capacity—one to ascertain how many of all the applicants had attained the minimum of qualification. From those who passed through this ordeal they selected, by competition, the men best suited for the vacant positions. This solution of a difficult problem—though it is so familiar and seems so simple to us to-day—had some surprising results. Hearing of it, twenty-nine cities and towns adopted the same plan for filling their civic offices, thus giving the system of patronage its quietus. This reform in local administration was as noteworthy as any improvement in the departments of state. Of course such reform did not imply a diminution of party spirit. The two great parties fought their battles as vigorously as ever, one of them going so far as to interfere with Her Majesty's personal preferences. Nor did patronage go under when proof was offered that choice by desert was better for the public service. Though its power was diminished, it was by no means dead. Nor did it lack able defenders. There were statesmen who held, years after the century had passed its noon, that, while examination might be depended on to disclose one style of qualification, patronage, when honorably used, was in the end a surer test of a more acceptable class of fitness for public service. Where ministers or members of either House made a point of recommending only persons whom they knew by some measure of intercourse, their selections, it was urged, were more likely to be judicious than where a departmental martinet subjected several men of whom he knew nothing to the test of written or oral questions. Some English public men never admitted that the change was a reform. Had patronage been moderately and wisely exercised, it might indeed have yielded fruits worthy of the defenders' highest ideals. But unhappily, such a use of the privilege existed only in Utopia, and when it was finally pitted against open competition, the latter was destined to win the day.

Civil Service reform in the Mother Country was followed by the adoption in the colonies of the new methods with modifications deemed to be suited to their circumstances. When the experiment was first tried in 1853, many parts of Great Britain, which are now virtually independent states, were governed from Downing Street. Canada had her full share of that official despotism, but gradually one department after another—Customs, Public Works, Post Office, Militia and Defence, &c., were freed from swathing bands and, with responsible government, came control of our civil service. Confederation brought a complete reconstruction of departmental administration, and admission to the civil service was placed on a new basis. All improvement in this sphere must be gradual, however cut-and-dried the system may be. In one of his admirable farewell speeches, Lord Dufferin gave the following counsel:

"It is necessary that the civil service should be given a status regulated by their acquirements, their personal qualifications, their capacity for rendering the country efficient service, and that neither their original appointments nor their subsequent advancement should, in any way, have to depend on their political convictions or opinions. If you will take my advice, you will never allow the civil service to be degraded into an instrument to subserve the ends of any political party. . . . Happily both the great political parties of this country have given in their adherence to this principle. And I have no doubt that the anxiety manifested by our friends across the line to purge their own civil service of its political complexion will confirm every true Canadian in the conviction I have sought to impress upon you."

If this advice was timely in 1873, it is no less timely in 1896. Indeed we should be at a loss if we presumed to improve upon its clear and pointed pertinence and truth. Nor, it one of the two great parties should fall from the grace of so excellent a profession, ought the other great party to find in such deception any excuse for a like descent.

The secretaries of the Irish Feis Executive Committee are anxious to learn the names of players on the ancient Irish harp and pipes. It is intended, if possible, to give a place on the programme to players on these instruments, and to offer substantial prizes for competition in this department.

THE FREE SILVER CRAZE.

For some years past the periodicals and newspapers have given much of their space to the discussion of what is called the Silver question. Sometimes it is called bi-metalism, as opposed to mono-metalism—a dual as opposed to a single standard of value. The conflict of opinion which these terms imply is no new thing. The history of it is really the history of money. We all know what money is and yet we might find it difficult to give a definition of it which would be thoroughly comprehensive—that is, applicable to every class or form of money and yet would comprise nothing to which the name could not be justly applied. Generally speaking, we know that money is a medium for exchange and a measure and standard of value. It is a development from the barter of primitive communities, relics of which still prevail in all societies and especially in new settlements and rural localities remote from business centres. Gold and silver (with bronze, copper, nickel, etc.) for the smaller values, have long been recognized as the most convenient materials for money. Their adoption marks a distinct advance in civilization, for they were preceded by a great variety of substances—skins, shells, oxen, etc.—some of which are still in use in Asia, Africa, and among our own Indians. The Latin word for money (*pecunia*), indicates that cattle (*pecus*), was once the chief standard of wealth. The precious metals, when accepted as measures and standards of value, were stamped for purity first, and then for weight. In the Bible Abraham is said to have possessed gold and silver. Herodotus ascribes the first coinage to the Lydians, and states that the earliest Greek coinage was at Aegina. It is, indeed, easy to follow the course of Greek and Roman civilization by the progressive improvement in their coins. Under the Roman Empire, the head of the state alone had the prerogative of coining money, and this became the rule among the monarchies that rose from the ruins of that mighty fabric. As the necessities of trade required a less cumbersome system than the transfer of large quantities of coined metal, banking was devised, with bank notes or bills, cheques, and other machinery now familiar everywhere. Still for ordinary purposes a metal currency was in constant use, save in exceptional periods, such as the long paper money regime that followed the civil war in the United States. The depreciation of the currency has in past centuries been a frequent cause of complaint. Lord Macaulay has vividly depicted the evils of England's depreciated silver currency in the latter part of the 17th century, and Ireland was a still worse sufferer from the same cause. In this connection the ratio of value between gold and silver comes under consideration. When the New World was discovered a new era began in the history of these metals. The opening up of the silver mines of Peru and Mexico gradually affected the ratio, raising it from 11.3 in 1492 to 13 in 1600. A century later it had risen to 15.1, and three-quarters of a century afterwards it attained the proportion of 16 to 1. Five years more brought it up to 18.39, and during the succeeding decade and a half it kept rising till it stood at 31 to 1. At this moment an ounce of gold is worth 31 ounces of silver.

Now, those who in the United States advocate the free coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1, argue that an abundant and stable currency is best attainable by a double standard on a fixed ratio, with a paper currency redeemable in either metal. They take it for granted that the Government's decree or enactment would establish the respective values at the ratio desired and that 16 ounces of silver, which in the world's markets to-day represent little more than half an ounce of gold would henceforth be accepted as being worth an ounce of that precious metal. Free coinage of silver on this basis being made legal, sixteen ounces of silver of the American mint standard—that is 900 parts of pure silver to 100 of alloy—could, at the rate of 412½ grains to the dollar (the weight of the present standard silver dollar) be coined into \$18.60 in silver dollars. An ounce of gold of the usual American coin standard could be coined into gold coins of the same amount. But whereas the gold coins would have a real corresponding to their nominal value, the 16 ounces of silver could be purchased in the world's markets for \$9.94. If a free silver coinage act were passed, therefore, the person who brought the 16 ounces of silver to the mint would have a profit on the transaction of \$8.66.

The goldmen, or as they consider themselves, not without reason, the advocates of sound currency, maintain that, if the free silverites have their way, just as soon as their system goes into operation the American silver dollar will be rated in the world's markets, not at its stamped value, but at its true value of fifty-one or fifty-two cents. Every person that has a dollar in gold will keep it, while he will pay his debts with the silver dollars, worth little more than half their face value. The result will be that in time all the gold will be withdrawn from cir-

ulation. It is a principle long since recognized that bad money drives out good money. And the purchasing power of such money being naturally impaired, the greatest sufferers would be the wage-earners. Those who are in the higher ranks of commerce and industry, and who make a study of financial questions, would probably know how to indemnify themselves, but they would be the few. A vast number of persons would be victimized in spite of every caution. For, the bulk of the gold being withdrawn from circulation, the banks would be unable to pay their depositors in gold, and many of them would be compelled to close their doors. Employers, losing credit, would be forced into bankruptcy, and workmen would be left on the streets. Such, according to the upholders of sound money, would be the consequences of free silver coinage.

But even though the picture be somewhat exaggerated, it stands to reason that the legal existence of two kinds of money, one much less valuable than the other, must be attended by serious inconveniences and must entail loss on those whose services are paid in the depreciated coin. We had some experience of debased silver—though long before its rating had sunk so low as it is to-day—some twenty-five years ago, before Sir Francis Hincks and Mr. W. Weir cleared out the foreign white metal—the "silver nuisance" as it came to be called. But the state of things from which we were rescued then would be nothing to that which awaits our neighbors if the advocates of free silver coinage succeeded in carrying the Presidential elections. Some of the upholders of that system are, it is true, able men and doubtless sincere in urging that their policy would be advantageous. But logic and common sense and experience are all, it seems to us, on the other side, and for the American people to support the silver craze would be little less than suicidal.

BOERS AND UITLANDERS.

The trial of Dr. Jameson and others for invading the Transvaal, an autonomous South African State under British suzerainty, is attracting considerable attention. Some account of the circumstances under which Dr. Jameson's raid took place may, therefore, prove of timely interest. The settlement of South Africa, like that of our own country, is not without its romance. Just now Canadians are looking forward to the 400th anniversary of the discovery of this part of North America, by the Cabots, under the commission of an English King, Henry VII. Next year South Africa will also be commemorating the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, by Vasco Dagama, just four centuries ago. Our histories may thus be said to have a common starting-point, the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Breton having been first discovered by Europeans in the same year—1497. In point of colonization, however, Canada takes precedence by some fifty years. It was not until 1652 that a band of Dutchmen made the first attempt at settling the Cape country. Having once secured a footing, they gradually extended their domain as far north as the Orange river. The attention of Great Britain was drawn to South Africa just a century ago, by the Prince of Orange, who had taken refuge in England after Napoleon's invasion of Holland. Britain held the colony for him until 1803, when it was restored to the Dutch. War again breaking out, it was once more seized by England in 1806, and since then it has been a British possession. The Boers or farming population troubled themselves little about the change of masters until 1835, when slavery was abolished in the Cape as it had previously been in the West Indies, with this difference, that the Boers received no compensation. Ruin staring them in the face, they determined to pass beyond the borders of the colony and to seek a new home in the boundless wilderness. The Great Trek, as the migration of the Boers is called, was, for daring and endurance, without precedent in the annals of modern colonization, and the memory of what they passed through in that time of trial is as dear to the Boers as the name of Plymouth Rock is to the Pilgrim Fathers. After perils without number and fearful conflicts with countless hostile natives, the emigrants at last found security and a livelihood fairly free from molestation. By the Sand River Convention of 1852, the Transvaal Republic was recognized by Great Britain. A quarter of a century later, an uprising of the surrounding tribes threatened the very existence of the little Republic, and in their distress the survivors and children of the fugitives of 1836 sought the help of the British authorities. The result was the recognition of British supremacy. As to the treatment of the Boers by the representatives of the British Government accounts differ. Some writers maintain that the Boers themselves were satisfied enough, but that the agitation against British rule was begun and kept up by the Hollanders of Cape Colony and Natal, whose project of a great Dutch Republic of all South Africa was upset by the annexation. Others assert that the Boers had real grievances for which they were

refused redress. Messrs. Kruger and Jorissen went to England, but failed to obtain from Lord Carnarvon any promise of release from their duty of allegiance. At last the Transvaal broke into rebellion and troops were despatched to the scene of trouble. How the Boers, accustomed to constant fighting with the natives, surprised and defeated the British troops at Majuba Hill is not likely to be forgotten. Sir George Colley was slain and his little force suffered severe loss in killed and wounded. The first thought of the Government at home was to vindicate the Queen's authority, but this determination was not persisted in. After some time spent in negotiations the retrocession of the country to the Boers left the British settlers in the Transvaal exposed to the taunts of the triumphant insurgents. In 1884 the convention of 1881 was revised in such a way as to make it doubtful whether the Transvaal was still even under "the suzerainty of Her Majesty," though the Republic was to make no treaty with any other nation without the Queen's approval.

Meanwhile, the influx of British immigrants went on increasing—the discovery of the diamond fields and gold fields giving an enormous impulse to enterprise. Uitwastrand, or, as it is generally called, the Rand—a ridge of hills stretching east and west, contains mineral resources of untold value. On the top of the ridge is the golden city of Johannesburg, 6000 feet above sea level, with a population of over 100,000, largely British. Ten years ago this centre of enterprise and wealth had neither local habitation nor name. Then the news that gold abounded there began to attract adventurers and a miner's camp grew up on the Veldt. The people of the Rand are designated Uitlanders (outlanders or foreigners) by the Boers, who have persistently denied them the privileges of citizenship. There is no doubt of the superiority of these aliens to the Boers in those characteristics that make a country progressive. But for them the resources of the Transvaal would have remained undeveloped. There are also doubtless less desirable qualities on which the God-fearing Boers look with aversion. But the main motive of their distrust is the not unfounded fear of being swamped by the new comers. By the old law a year's residence was sufficient to secure the franchise, but after the retrocession the authorities of the Republic, apprehending an influx of strangers with whose rivalry on equal terms they would be unable to cope, extended the period of political apprenticeship to five years. A fresh access of alarm made a residence of fourteen years necessary to obtain full rights of citizenship. While the fears of the Boers cannot be regarded as groundless, and it may be conceded that they are justified in protecting the State that they founded from being wrested from their control by outsiders, it must also be admitted that the enterprise of the Rand settlers entitles them to the same share in the administration of a country whose property and importance they have so materially increased.

An organization was formed for the purpose of pressing the claims of the Uitlanders, if not to equal rights with the Boers, at least to a considerable relaxation of the restrictions on their rights as freemen. But all their efforts were of no avail. The President, his ministers and the Legislature all turned an obstinate deaf ear to the representations of the Uitlanders. Last fall there was much agitation and the demands of the Uitlanders became more emphatic and positive. Other and more disturbing voices began to swell the clamors of the petitioners. These rumors were at first vague, but during the last two months of the year their meaning became more and more clear, until at last information reached President Kruger that a hostile raid was threatened and the officials of the chartered Company were concerned in it. Volunteers from Johannesburg were also said to be ready to join the invaders. On New Year's Day, the forecasts thus made were fulfilled by Dr. Jameson's troopers crossing the frontier and coming into conflict with a body of armed Boers. The raiders were routed and the commander and his lieutenants were taken prisoners. The Colonial Secretary, promptly informed of the occurrence, pleaded with President Kruger for leniency to the captives. In a subsequent dispatch he reviewed the causes which in his judgment had provoked so deplorable a violation of international law. Jameson and his officers were released and taken to London on the troop ship Victoria, and after appearing before Sir John Bridges at the Bow-street Police Court, were released on bail. Meanwhile, suspicion having fallen on the Hon. Cecil Rhodes, Premier of Cape Colony and organizer of the British South Africa chartered Company, that gentleman resigned and betook him to Rhodesia where a fresh rising of the warlike natives required his presence. Such, in brief, has been the course of events that has led up to one of the most extraordinary situations of which modern history has kept a record. It is not without reason, surely, that Messrs. McCarthy, Dillon and Davitt, at a meeting called to urge upon the Government the release of the Irish

political prisoners, dwelt upon the tenderness which English statesmen had shown for the South African offenders, and the satisfaction with which President Kruger's leniency had been received, and pressed home the argument from analogy which such a reference suggested and justified. Nor is it easy to see how such a plea can be disregarded.

BEWARE OF POLITICS.

An exchange across the border very wisely says:

"That was sound advice that Bishop McQuaid gave to the convention of representatives of the New York State Council of the Catholic Benevolent Legion assembled in Rochester on Tuesday—"Beware of politics." Denominational organizations, whether they be societies accepted by the Church as religious associations or simply social or beneficial unions, should steer clear of politics. Every citizen, though, is bound to take an interest in public affairs, and unless for grave reasons making for a greater good, he should cast his vote at every election for the best candidates and the best platforms. He should not be tied to a party so as to wear its collar and put partisanship above patriotism by supporting unworthy nominees simply because they were put up for office by the party which he usually prefers. The individual citizen, therefore, should take a citizen's part in politics, but societies formed on denominational lines, whether for piety or insurance, should take the advice of the Bishop of Rochester and mind their own business."

This good advice holds good both sides of the line 45°. Politics have either wrecked, disabled, or discredited a great number of valuable societies, that we could put our finger upon without trouble. Indeed, who has not heard the statement: "That society was doing good work and flourishing, but politics crept in and now its usefulness is gone." National and Benevolent associations have been used as catspaws to draw the chestnuts out of the fire for politicians. In that way a great deal of harm has been done, but a still greater damage would be the results of the dragging into the political service of our quasi insurance associations. Up to the present time the C.M.B.A., the Catholic Foresters, &c., have fortunately been well inspired, and kept their organizations clear of political entanglements. Let us hope that such may always be the case. In the heat of political excitement well meaning persons are often the cause of false steps being taken and mutual benevolent associations violate their constitution by stepping aside of their objects, and participating in contentious proceedings upon which their membership is sure to form into different camps.

It is the designing politician, however, that has to be guarded against in a more especial manner. He belongs to every society, and appears to be wonderfully active in the promotion of the interests of each and all of them. Suddenly he looms up as a candidate for a political office, and seeks to use his brethren as powerful factors for attaining his ambitious ends. The Associations should be on their guard against such men. It will require all the time and attention, as well as the honest administration of the officers of fraternal associations, to carry out successfully their immediate objects. Should they permit politics to creep into the workings of their societies, then nothing but disaster awaits them.

VERY REV. MGR. NUGENT is to be the recipient of a public testimonial on his retirement from the editorial chair of the Liverpool Catholic Times, which he has held with eminent success for over 30 years. The good works with which Mgr. Nugent has been connected are so numerous, and their Christian charity so widespread, that all classes and creeds are joining in the tribute to the great ecclesiastic and philanthropist. He has had to face many difficulties in his time, and has been misunderstood occasionally, but his virtue triumphs to-day, and all acknowledge his life of unwearying usefulness. The Rev. Father Berry will assume control of the Catholic Times, and under his able direction the paper will continue its good work, and remain true to its magnificent record in Catholic journalism.

AN American exchange says that "the President, Vice President, every member of the Cabinet, all the members of the Supreme Court, except one, all the members of Congress, except a few scattering Catholics, the two candidates for the Presidency, the forty-five Governors of the forty-five States, are Protestants one and all. His Holiness is surely making a very poor showing towards capturing the political mastery of this country. The A. P. A's. ought to be ashamed of their nonsense. They have eyes, and see not; they have ears, and hear not. The truth of the matter is that they don't fear but hate the Pope and the religion he represents."

How the mighty have fallen, was the remark frequently heard on the grand stand at the Shamrock Athletic grounds on Saturday last, as the Shamrocks won game after game from the once-famous Toronto, who so often carried off the honors on the lacrosse field.