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## THE WEEK:

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## CURRENT TOPICS.

Slowly but surely the work of civil service reform goes on in the United States. The zeal of the Executive in extending its sphere naturally waxes warm as the close of the term draws near. President Harrison has just now added all post-offices having a free delivery to the list of institutions which come under the operation of the Civil Service rules. This will affect about 550 offices. The employees of the Weather Bureau have also been brought under the rules. The tardiness of the President's action will justly expose him to sharp criticism, but the country is, notwithstanding, the gainer. The important fact is that step by step the territory which has hitherto been sacred to the spoils system is being invaded and brought under subjection to the genius of reform. And since no one any longer thinks it worth while to attempt to abolish the reform system, every advance made is at once secured. Congress would not now dare to pass, or even seriously to consider a repeal bill.

The people are in favor of the reform, and the spoils system, one of the gravest evils in American politics, is being killed by inches.

Col. O'Brien's admirable speech at Owen Sound adds another link to the chain of evidence that a new day is dawning in Canadian politics. Col. O'Brien is unquestionably a staunch Conservative, yet he does not hesitate to denounce boldly the iniquities which have been from time to time done in the supposed interest of the party. He declares himself the determined foe of the gerrymander. He maintains that a gentleman should be no less scrupulously honourable in politics than in any other relation of life. He has done the whole country a service in admitting and pointing out, from the Conservative side, the gross abuses of the country's trust which have been committed in the voting of public money on partisan principles for local purposes. That this has been done to a deplorable extent in connection with railway bonuses, public buildings, &c., is beyond question. That it is a most dishonourable and shameful breach of a sacred trust, as well as a most demoralizing form of bribery, will, perhaps, be made clearer to many who have not hitherto looked at the question save through the hazy atmosphere of the party interests, and who may be led by Col. O'Brien's outspoken words to see the thing as it really is.

Mr. Van Horne's faith in the North Atlantic steamship route and its magnificent possibilities is infectious. There is no Canadian who would not gladly see the enterprise put to the test. To this end no one would object to its receiving from the Government, that is, from Canadian tax-payers, any reasonable encouragement. Mr. Van Horne has intimated that the Canadian Pacific Company would have no objection to work with the Grand Trunk in the establishment and management of such a route. The public would probably be somewhat distrustful of such an arrangement, as it might be regarded as but the first step towards a consolidation of the two great companies, which would have Canada, Government, traffic and all, at its mercy. But it is not easy to see why all necessary facilities, so far as the use of the Intercolonial is concerned, could not be had by both companies, without prejudice to the national ownership of the road. Surely if the northern route has the possibilities of unlimited development which Mr. Van Horne believes, and we know no one whose opinion upon such a question should carry more weight, it should not be difficult for him to induce the company he represents to embark in the enterprise, seeing that the trans-continental railway would receive the lion's share of the pecuniary benefit. That road would certainly stand to profit more by the opening up of such a route than all other Canadian interests combined. But to ask the Intercolonial as a free gift would be drawing too largely upon even Canadian generosity. The country will await developments with mingled anxiety and hopefulness.

The United States Senate, where once Clay, Webster, and Calhoun wrestled for intellectual supremacy, has fallen upon evil days. Some men of force and dignity remain in it, but these are outnumbered by "practical politicians" and by men who owe their seats to the possession, not of statesmanlike qualities, but of great wealth. New York is now sending as colleague to ex-Governor Hill one Edward Murphy, Jr., of Troy. Mr. Murphy is, we believe, a brewer. He is popular in his own city and was once its Mayor. He is quite destitute of legislative experience, and is neither a scholar nor an orator nor yet a man of ideas. Nor does he pose as a man of the people, acquainted with their wants and wishes and possessing the intelligence and the independence necessary to serve them well. His selection to represent the greatest of the States in the chief parliamentary body of the nation is the reward claimed by him for his services as chairman of the State Democratic Committee and "boss" of the State machine, in the election of Mr. Cleveland. That gentleman had the courage and candor to publicly avow his disapproval of Mr. Murphy's candidature, and the better element of the Democracy of the State protested against it, but without avail. The party leaders had spoken, the party whip was cracked, and by grace of the Democratic majority in the Legislature Mr. Murphy is Senator-elect.

Mr. Murphy's election is a signal triumph for the political machine, which, under his own manipulation and that of Senator Hill, has attained almost invincible power in New York. True, it was beaten and rebuked when last year it stepped outside the State and endeavoured to force the nomination of its chief, Mr. Hill, for President of the nation. But its opponents, who comprise perhaps three-fourths of the party, rested content with this victory and allowed the machine to dictate the nominations for the State Legislature. The result was the election of a body of men subservient to the ruling "bosses" and but two or three of whom had the manliness to protest against sending to the national Senate a man without ability or legislative experience and scarcely known outside of political circles. Nor is New York the only State in which the machine is manipulated to send to the Upper House of Congress unfit men. In nearly all the States the fight between the adherents and the opponents of the machine goes on. It constitutes one of the most interesting phases of current American politics. A remedy for the particular abuse of power referred to might be the election of Senators by popular vote. A better one will be found when the people demand from their representatives in the Legislatures and everywhere else independence of action and courage to defy the party lash. We are speaking of the United States. Let no one allude to glass houses, for who ever heard of a Canadian Legislator obeying his party's mandate at the sacrifice of his own convictions or the interests of his constituents?