



BUBBLES OF THE PASSING TIME.

Drawn by J. W. Bengough.

The Spoils System*

By PRESIDENT BUTLER of Columbia University

MUCH of the disinclination to engage in active political life that is noticeable among a portion of our people is to be traced, I believe, to the evil effects upon political standards and methods that flow from the debasing and degrading system of treating public offices as a reward for partisan activity, that has gained so strong a hold in the United States. The spoils system is absolutely undemocratic and utterly unworthy of toleration by an intelligent people. Suppose that it ruled the schools, as it rules so many other departments of public administration: then we should expect to see the election of a mayor in Boston, Chicago, New Orleans or San Francisco, followed by hundreds of changes among the public-school teachers, made solely for political reasons. How long would that be permitted to go on without a protest that would be heard and heeded from Maine to Texas? Yet why should we, as good citizens, be more tolerant of such abuses in other departments of the government?

Patriotic men have noted with gratification the progress that is making toward the elimination of this evil. A determined hand have kept the issue before the public for nearly a generation, and now they have the satisfaction of seeing the greater portion of the national service wrested from the defiling hand of the spoils hunter. In the state of New York the people themselves put into their present constitution an emphatic declaration on the subject. The full effect of this declaration, splendidly upheld and broadly interpreted by the courts, is just beginning to dawn upon the foes of a reformed and efficient public service. From this advance of sound sentiment and honest policy we may take every encouragement. But much remains to be done. Public sentiment must be first interested, then educated.

Efficient public service is a mark of civilisation. To turn over the care of great public undertakings to the self-seeking camp-followers of some political potentate, is barbaric. Teachers are the first to insist that incompetent and untrained persons shall not be allowed in

the service of the schools. Why, then, should they tolerate the sight of a house-painter, instead of an engineer, supervising the streets and roadways of a city of a hundred thousand inhabitants, or that of an illiterate hanger-on of a party boss presiding over the public wards of a great metropolis? These instances, drawn at random from recent political history, are typical of conditions that will be found widely diffused throughout our public service. These conditions exist because of bad citizenship, low ideals of public service, and wretchedly inadequate moral vision. They will not be remedied until each one of us assumes his share of the task.

Mr. McBride's Views

HON. RICHARD MCBRIDE, the Premier of British Columbia, was in Montreal on Saturday last on his way home from sitting upon the steps of the Throne. He was welcomed back by the Lafontaine Club, a Conservative organisation in the Mountain City. In his reply to the address he made some unusual remarks which are worthy of special attention.

He pointed out that anything wrong in a provincial administration reflected upon the general credit of Canada, which is a fact well worth insisting upon. There are one or two provincial administrators who have apparently overlooked this feature of provincial life. He believed in fairness in political fights and instanced that he had given the Opposition in his province seven weeks' notice of an election, as compared with two weeks given in some other provinces. He believed that a keen and vigorous opposition was a necessity under the party system. Further, Mr. McBride emphasised the necessity for mutual sympathy between the West and the East. A united Canada could only be based on the fullest knowledge and the most perfect accord on all great principles.

Finally, Mr. McBride made a plea for provincial autonomy or provincial rights. If the Dominion is to be strong and united, the units must be strong in their own strength and each must be untrammelled in its domestic affairs.

*From "True and False Democracy." (Macmillan).