

itch for absolutism should be more explicit when they simulate rational methods of thought.

Civil service reform.

"The most remarkable event since the flood," exclaimed Geo. A. Schilling, acting president of the Chicago board of local improvements, when James M. Grimm and Frank J. Roche refused promotion to higher paid clerkships in Commissioner Schilling's department. Mr. Schilling's exclamation was hyperbolic, but the circumstances were tempting to a picturesque imagination like his. For Mr. Grimm and Mr. Roche had refused promotion, not because they didn't want it, but because another clerk, whose competency as a clerk in the department could not be questioned, was ahead of them on the list. Almost any official would have felt like exclaiming with Mr. Schilling: "This is the most remarkable event since the flood."

We call attention to the remarkable event for a more important purpose than complimenting two clerks in the Chicago city hall, or for any other personal or local consideration. While the self-denying action of these clerks should be recognized and applauded everywhere, to the end that similar respect for the merit system in public employment may be everywhere encouraged, it also has about it a lesson of contrast which will be appreciated wherever the influence of a certain kind of civil service reformer is at all familiar.

An example for the purpose of this contrast is afforded by the circumstances of two other cases in the public service of Chicago. Here is one of them: Mayor Dunne saw fit to remove without assigned cause a member of the board of local improvements who had been appointed by his predecessor. As the position was not in the classified service, he was properly amenable to no criticism as for violating civil service rules. The only question involved was whether he was

willing to continue his responsibility any longer for the official conduct of this appointee of his predecessor. Every merit office should be in the classified service, so that all appointing officials can be held responsible for unlawful appointments; it should not be left to the "spirit" of civil service reform, so that spurious reformers can play fast and loose with it. For unclassified office the appointing power is responsible and should have a free hand. But even if the position in question were within the spirit of the classified regulations, Mayor Dunne would have been following President Roosevelt's example, and exercising what the kind of civil service reformers in question insist upon as necessary for an efficient civil service system (when it suits their purpose), namely, the right of removal for any cause or no cause. The other instance differed somewhat. Mayor Dunne removed an attorney, chosen by his predecessor, who has been acting for the civil service board. The Mayor maintains that this attorney belongs to the staff of the corporation counsel's office, which is not in the classified service. If this is so, the responsibility of retaining or removing is the Mayor's. But the civil service reformers who exemplify our contrast, insist that this particular appointee's tenure of office depends upon the civil service board. Mayor Dunne is clearly right. But if he is wrong, then the attorney in question, being in the classified service, is in it illegally, for he does not get his appointment by competition.

Now, no one should question the right of the cavilling civil service reformers to criticise. That right is inalienable. We ourselves have found it so useful that we should be among the first to oppose its abrogation. But when those reformers marshal all their influence and forces, including their newspapers (or are marshaled by these newspapers, as the case may be), to make a concerted attack upon Mayor Dunne,

as if he had actually violated civil service principles, though they know he has not, yet stand by Roosevelt and Deneen who are clearly more open to such criticism, the good faith of their criticism may be fairly questioned. Do they say that Roosevelt and Deneen's policy has nothing to do with Dunne's case? Perhaps they are right. But it has a great deal to do with their own good faith in criticising Dunne so vehemently. And this faction is brought still further under suspicion by the fact that although Mayor Dunne has conformed more closely by far than his predecessors not only to the merit rules but to merit principles, the pretentious "civil service reform" newspapers which are vociferously hounding Dunne on the two cases noted above, have been as silent as the grave about his fidelity, in overshadowing measure, to the principles they profess to conserve.

The city department which in point of political power is the most powerful—the department of public works—Dunne has turned over without restriction to management under merit principles, in the unclassified and the classified work alike. But no one would know it from the "civil service reform" papers. Even when the head of that department, Joseph Medill Patterson, a Republican named by Dunne in the interest of civil service reform, confirmed by open letter his absolute freedom, in promise and in fact, to enforce civil service rules and ideas, these papers gave scant and obscure space to extracts from his letter, and no comment at all. Similarly they have ignored or minimized Mayor Dunne's conflict with powerful machine leaders of his own party over this very question, his excellent non-partisan appointments to the school board, and the plain fact that the City Hall is now far more completely under the merit system than ever before. They are within their rights, of course; but when they exploit what they choose

to regard as Dunne's civil service delinquencies, and suppress and minimize the far more abundant facts counting the other way, they tarnish the luster of their professedly good intentions, and excite curiosity. Possibly this curiosity might be satisfied by reflection upon the fact that almost without exception these vociferous critics did all they could to prevent Dunne's election, and have since done all they could to baffle his efforts to release the clutch of the traction ring from the city.

Official patronage and municipal ownership.

One of the significant editorial comments upon Dunne's removals is something to the effect that they make municipal ownership impossible under Dunne's administration, the implication being that he is a spoilsman and municipal ownership would not be tolerated under a spoils system. This objection to municipal ownership is the invariable mark of the corporation tool or his dupe. It assumes that there is no spoils system under operation of public service utilities by corporations. While the dupes do not know to the contrary, the corporation tools do; and no newspaper ten days old can be credited with being a mere dupe in such a matter. It is true enough that municipal ownership should be under a merit system of operation. But it is not true that the free use of spoils would make municipal ownership a worse factor in politics than corporation ownership is now in every city where it exists.

Consider the traction system of New York, for instance, with its scores of thousands of employes at the mercy of August Belmont. He is a business man, true enough, and will use these employes for business success. But business success with corporations performing a public service under city franchises necessitates a large use of political power. With this amount of patronage at his disposal, Mr. Belmont can mould

political bosses, legislators, aldermen and executives to suit his business needs. He can make appointments and removals at will to accommodate politicians who hunger for patronage; he can coerce newspapers, he can break political slates, he can hold the balance of power in conventions and at the polls, he can gratify lust for loot and can blast ambitions. Public service corporations wield patronage with more blighting effect on public interests, and less possibility of being checked, than the worst conceivable gang of spoilsmen free from all civil service rules but answerable at the ballot box to public opinion, could wield it with an equal number of jobs. The most important reason for municipal ownership is not good service, important as that is, nor financial good management, important as that is, nor a merit system of employes, important as that is; the most important reason is the fact that corporate ownership breeds a corrupt and powerful business and political ring, which is not and cannot be subjected to popular control.

The coming campaign in Great Britain.

American newspapers give but a crude idea, and hardly that, of the principal issue that is shaping in Great Britain for the approaching parliamentary elections. On the one hand the Liberal party, standing for the traditional free trade of England, is confronted with a demand for a protective system. Other terms are used, for the terms of free trade are familiar and hallowed in British sentiment, and this must not be shocked. But the arguments are the same as the protection arguments so common in America, and the wave of economic distress that is sweeping over England helps on the protection crusade. For protection answers the longing for a change which always wells up among an impoverished people. Now the Liberals cannot meet this protection challenge with a mere "let alone" policy. They must offer an alter-

native to protection. And this they are doing. With some timidity yet with much more boldness than could have been hoped for a few years ago, they are demanding the taxation of land values, and making arguments for it that would have thrilled the heart of Henry George. In this way the land question has been projected into British politics. One would hardly suspect it from our Associated Press reports, but it is plain enough in the English papers.

As an example of the radical kind of campaigning the Liberals are making, we may cite the speech at Patrick, near Glasgow, on the 28th of November, by the Liberal leader, who is now British prime minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. After explaining that free trade, good as far as it goes, is not a solution of the problem of poverty, he proceeded, as reported in the Glasgow Herald of Nov. 29:

Let us get at the actual cause of the mischief, for that is our way of effecting improvement. Instead of fastening upon our imports and impaling them, we should ask ourselves whether all has been done that might be done by developing the resources of our own country—(cheers)—among which I include the cultivation of the minds and character of the people. If our Gulliver [Chamberlain], when he comes back from his travels in Laputa land, were to bestow his attention, for instance, on agriculture, which he told us was ruined, and which Lord Onslow, the minister for agriculture, told us the other day had only received from the present ministry six hours of parliamentary time in the last few years, he would be compelled to admit that plenty of employment could be found if the land were made accessible—(loud cheers). To the men who are working and able to work, abundant and potential wealth lies in the fields only waiting to be extracted until greater freedom of security is given to those who would develop it. . . . There is no task, sir, to which we are called more urgently by every consideration of national well-being than that of colonizing our own countryside. (Cheers.) But let us look to the towns. (Hear, hear.) There also will be found causes for non-employment more fertile than Mr. Chamberlain can find in the tariffs of the foreigner. We find a rating [local tax] system which dis-