

# THE SUN.

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THURSDAY MORNING.....MAY 31

## THE REASON AND THE RESULT OF CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

This was the title of the lengthy address delivered by Mr. Geo. Wm. Curtis, on Wednesday evening, before the National Civil Service Reform League. We printed brief extracts from it yesterday morning and only lack of space prevented us from giving it entire. It is a thoughtful, earnest effort, moderate in tone, yet unsparring in denunciation of the evils of patronage, and should be read by every intelligent voter.

To the average professional politician it seems a monstrous proposition that the civil service as a whole should be uninfluenced by party contests. He regards the national patronage both as a proper weapon of offense and defense to be used by the party in power and as the fitting and natural reward of the party which shall succeed in obtaining power. Indeed, some of the bitterest attacks upon President Cleveland have come from within his own party and have been based on the ground that he did not replace political opponents with party friends in the civil service with sufficient celerity. Yet in this theory of patronage lurks a grave danger to the integrity of this Republic. England, in the eighteenth century, was the scene of a desperate struggle between political freedom and party patronage. The spoils system was beaten and to-day in England the civil service is practically independent of party vicissitudes. The same struggle has now begun in this country and every thoughtful American must hope that the reform principle may triumph here.

We should like to comment upon Mr. Curtis' address point by point, but the limits of our columns forbid. We must close by quoting his terrific indictment against the spoils system.

Under the system which has so long subjugated the country, the newly-elected President compelled by the demands of his party to turn out the great body of public officers, agents and employees, and necessarily ignorant of proper persons to appoint in every part of a Continental Republic, depends for information upon Senators and Representatives, upon whom also the success of his administration depends. The executive and legislative authority carefully separated by the Constitution, becomes dangerously confused. Representatives demand the patronage of their districts and Senators practically usurp the power of nomination. From the executive and legislative commerce in places arises a huge office-holding hierarchy ascending in regular gradation from the lowest employees to the highest officer, each dependent upon the other and all united in a common purpose to control general and local politics for their personal advantage. An organized political class independent of the great body of the people practically absorbs the authority of the people. By mercenary control of caucuses and conventions they nominate candidates and require implicit obedience to their will as the condition of political preferment. By assessing the salaries of their subordinates the leaders of this class levy a tax upon the public treasury for their own benefit and that of a party. The voters of the party submit to their sway because refusal seems to mean the success of the opposition. Party ceases to be a voluntary union to shape public policy and becomes a faction to promote private gain and gratify personal ambition. Politics degenerates into mere place-hunting and venal jobbery. Self-respecting men withdraw more and more from public life. Honorable ambition disappears. Bosses replace statesmen. The young American is taught that the qualifications for public service are not integrity, intelligence and industry, but sycophancy and servility, cheating and bribing, and every kind of disorderly violence and unmanly conduct. He must be a parasite or a parasite's head of a man. In such a situation the condition of public employment, the evil system multiplies enormously unnecessary places. It stimulates reckless extravagance in public expenditure. It controls the vast contractors of the government. It transforms the highest officers of administration into brokers of

petty place. It subsidizes the press, defiles the American name, debauches the national character, until under its degrading mastery the power of the people passes into the hands of a venal oligarchy, and a Presidential election ceases to be a contest of differing policies determined by free argument before the people, and becomes a ferocious and desperate struggle for the emoluments of place.

President Cleveland reviewed two monster memorial day processions yesterday.

As this page goes to press the first news from the Raleigh convention arrives, showing Fowle in the lead on the first ballot, with Stedman a close second. It is anybody's race yet.

Anyone who feels inclined to grumble, because a little rain has fallen in Asheville lately, should read the reports of terrific hail, rain and thunder storms in other parts of the country and be thankful for our pleasant weather.

The plan for merging the Southern in the Northern Presbyterian Church bids fair to end in talk. It seems clear that an organic union between these branches of this church, as well as of others, is desirable, yet there is no immediate prospect of obtaining it.

Yesterday was a National Holiday and was generally observed as such throughout the country. Little attention was paid to it in this city, however, we regret to say. It would be no loss in the end if the business of Asheville were more generally suspended on the legal holidays constituted by the State or the General Government.

In 1890 will end the term of 100 years during which the cities of Boston and Philadelphia have each enjoyed the revenue from a bequest of \$5,000 made by Benjamin Franklin. The money was to be loaned out to young married artificers, and the trust has been executed, although the lapse of a century requires a new disposition of the funds. It is significant that while in Boston the \$5,000 has grown so nearly \$328,000, in Philadelphia the \$5,000 has become only \$70,000.

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