

enough indicated the vehemence of the current excitement.

The crime of the half-crazy Guiteau disclosed to a horror-stricken people the possibilities of the situation.

In my researches of the congressional literature of which I have spoken, I have found several allusions by spoils orators to the circumstances under which the Pendleton bill became a law. Here is one of them :

"In 1883 the civil service law was enacted in a burst of hysterics following the assassination of Garfield."

It seems to be a pet notion with the enterprising members who favor either the entire abolition of the merit system, its serious curtailment, or its gradual extinction, to ascribe the passage of the Pendleton bill to hysteria in the congress over the death of the president. The story is recent, but the orators have blundered as to its facts. There was no hysteria until the people had been heard from ; and then it set in with great violence in congress, especially in the lower house. The president was murdered in July, 1881. The Pendleton bill was not passed till January, 1883. Mr. Curtis, in one of his annual addresses to the league at Newport, has told the story in these words :

"When we met here a year ago, congress was still in session. The Pendleton bill had been reported to the senate, but no action had been taken. The house of representatives, with ribald sneers at the project of reform, had contemptuously granted the president three-fifths of the pittance which he had 'urgently' asked, to enable him to continue efforts of reform which had been begun. The record of the proceedings upon this subject in the house of representatives last summer is one of the most disgraceful passages in the history of congress. Members wholly ridiculed the suggestion of reform in administrative methods, but they summarily swept aside the president's veto of extravagant appropriations. At the annual meeting of the league I venture to say that they were singularly ignorant of the tendency and force of public opinion, and that reckless defiance of public intelligence was a perilous record on which to go to the country. The issue was plainly made, and an appeal taken at the polls. The result of the election was startling and impressive. The most conspicuous enemies of reform were dismissed by their constituents from the public service ; and, though it is not always easy precisely to define the significance of a general election, it was universally conceded that whatever else the result might mean, it was a clear and decisive demand of the country for civil service reform.

"The response of congress was immediate, and never was the flexibility of a popular system more signally displayed. The congress which had adjourned in August, laughing at reform, heard the

thunder of the elections in November, and reassembled in December. If members had been draped in sheets and had carried candles, they could not have borne a more penitential aspect."

Having detailed at some length the congressional proceedings, ending with a vote of 155 yeas to 47 nays, by which the bill was passed, Mr. Curtis adds :

"The house was so eager to make the bill a law that it would not tolerate debate, and loudly cheered the proposal of an immediate vote, was the same house that five months before had derisively and angrily refused to give a paltry sum, and to aid a single experiment of reform. Members, who could not laugh loud enough at the ridiculous whim of transacting the public business upon business principles, now tumbled over each other in their breathless haste to make that whim the national policy."

I commend this study of congressional hysteria to the spoilsmen of the present congress.

Does it not seem a far cry from the edifying attitude toward civil service reform so graphically described by Mr. Curtis to that of the congressional prophet who now threatens the republican party with being "torn and scattered by a cyclone of public indignation, born of justice and love of liberty," unless they relinquish the worship of the demoralizing merit system ?

Then the house would not tolerate debate. It had heard from the people. Today its successor sits and listens—apparently with patience, if not with pleasure—to wild outcries against the system which, no matter with what haste the house adopted it at the last, had been before the people for years, and which then, as now, though not by so large a majority as at present, had with it the intelligence and patriotism of the country.

From a large assortment of pebbles gathered hastily and at random from the stones lately thrown by the spoils orators in congress I cull the following. They have all been flung at the friends of the system inaugurated by the Pendleton bill. Separately stated one might doubt whether they were not intended as compliments. So I hasten to assure you that the context indicates quite the reverse :

Apostles, high priests of the civil service cult, eunuchs and sissies of American politics, missionaries, canting prelates, pious and holy gentlemen, pharisees, monopolists of wisdom, foul political demagogues, self-appointed guardians of Christendom, gentle shepherds, of hope and progress, charlatans, drillmasters of Providence, hypocrites and pharisees, squaw men, wet and dry nurses.

I stop there.

Of the merit system we learn that "it was conceived in iniquity and born of hypocrisy, has been administered

infamously, and is sustained by cowardice and demagoguery."

The spoils system is described by the same orator as "the wise and patriotic policy that obtained from Washington to Grant, inclusive."

Gentlemen, these are samples of perhaps a hundred pages of congressional oratory ; and, smile at them as we may, we must ask what they mean. Has the federal civil service law broken down ? Has it proved a practical failure ? Is it true that the people are tired of it, and want it either wholly repealed or seriously curtailed of its powers ?

If neither of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then what is the explanation of the late *emeute* in congress ?

Has the law proved a failure ? On the contrary, there is an absolute consensus of testimony from presidents and secretaries and bureau chiefs, from every officer responsibly connected with its execution, that, wherever it has been honestly executed, it has stood the test of experience and has been a success. By this I do not mean that in every instance it has given a better result in actual service than the former system of patronage. Nobody claims that it has done this : nobody ever claimed that it would do this. But it cannot be successfully denied that, on the whole, it has given us a better official service ; that it has relieved the president and other appointing officers from much harassing impotency, and made it fairly possible for the president to live out his term ; that it has also greatly relieved members of congress from their most irksome and dangerous function ; that it has brought peace into the ranks of the hard-worked employees, and it has saved to the government a large amount of money. The moral effects upon officers and people, upon elections and government, may not be so easily seen ; but we may rest assured that every office rescued from the corruption fund of politics is a gain. Every man who obtains a place by competitive examination on his merits, and not by a "pull," must be a more self-respecting and independent man than he would be if compelled to get it the other way. Every man who knows he is safe from removal, and that the wolf cannot reach his door or his flock so long as he does his duty, must be a better official than he would be if he held his place at the mercy of political campaigns and dependent upon party or personal influence. In the nature of things this must be so.

Why, then, for the first time in years has an assault been made in congress upon the reform system—an assault, too, chiefly by republican members ?

The answer is easy. There has never been a moment when the active politicians and "workers" of either party were in favor of the reform law.

This ought to go without saying, and should disturb nobody. These are the