

to degrade political contests to mere struggles for the possession of offices, and to substitute agreement in regard to the distribution of positions in the public service for those agreements in regard to important questions of governmental policy that should constitute the bases of party organization.

#### Lincoln's Warning.

Abraham Lincoln perceived this danger and did not over-estimate it. After the fall of Richmond he pointed to a crowd of clamorous place-hunters with the words:

"We have overthrown the rebellion but there stands an element fraught with far more danger to the republic than the armed rebels whom we have subdued."

We may compare with this the remark of the customs officer to whom James II, the last king of England to claim to rule by a right superior to that derived from the people whom he governed, had issued commands to do all he could to aid in the election of candidates to parliament favorable to the government: "I have," said this servant of the public, "fourteen reasons for obeying the command of his majesty—a wife and thirteen young children."

Spoilsmen and their retainers are the Hessians of political combat. Having no principles more lofty than the desire to secure power and plunder they are free to adopt the popular side of every question and to pledge themselves to whatever policies may seem most likely to lead to success. They do not hesitate to appeal to the basest motives which may temporarily influence the masses, nor to distort the truth and misrepresent fact. When successful in obtaining office they are ready repudiate the arguments with which they have secured the honest portion of their support and to break every promise made during their campaigns. "Platforms" said the railway conductor, "were made to get in on and not to stand on," and the phrase has become a popular one among a certain class of politicians.

"Thou shalt not steal" even though the victims of the theft are taxpayers and the enforced contributions of each are not great in amount. It will scarcely be possible to enumerate all of the various ways in which taxpayers are robbed by the spoils system. One is by the multiplication of unnecessary offices and the unreasonable increase of compensation. It is a matter of public record that at one time under this system there were 3,400 persons employed in the treasury department of whom less than 1,600 were there under authority of law. Of these 3,400 employees 1,700 were put on and off the rolls at the pleasure of the secretary who paid them out of funds that had not been appropriated for that purpose. At the same time there were employed in the bureau

of engraving and printing 958 persons of whom 539, with annual salaries aggregating \$390,000 were found by impartial investigation to be superfluous. It was reported that for years the force in some branches of the bureau had been twice and even three times as great as the work required. The committee that made this investigation decided that in that branch of the public service alone the spoils system had wasted millions of dollars of the people's money.

#### Waste and Extravagance.

A person of reliability and of accurate information testified before a committee of the senate that in one case "thirty-five persons were put upon the lapse fund of the treasurer's office for eight days at the end of a fiscal year to sop up some money which was in danger of being saved and returned to the treasury." That this is merely an instance from many is indicated by the fact that from 1873 to 1883, a decade during which the spoils system was in full operation, the number of clerks in the departments increased from 3,278 to 5,523, or sixty-eight per cent, while from 1883 to 1896, thirteen years during which civil service reform has been, though imperfectly and against many obstacles and with many set-backs, developing a merit system, the number of clerks in the positions now classified actually decreased more than three per cent. During the later period the number of unclassified positions has increased 37.6 per cent and the aggregate of the salaries paid to those who hold them 37 per cent.

If we seek a more modern instance, it will readily be found. In the last congress, on February 20, 1897, the chairman of the committee on appropriations of the house of representatives, spoke as follows:

"In the last congress, in the congress before that, in every congress that I have ever served in, there have been at least one-third more employees than enough to do all the work."

And three days later the chairman of the committee on banking and currency is reported in the Congressional Record as having said of the former committee:

"They reported a bill here carrying about \$25,000 in violation of the law, consciously, deliberately, and doing it to gratify the desire for spoils of us members of congress under this despicable, nasty, vile spoils system. \* \* \* I make the point that this money was spent corruptly because whenever a man is employed unnecessarily, wastefully, in the service, as they said one-fourth of them were, then the members of this house did spend the people's money corruptly."

The spoils system prevents the abolition of offices when in the mutations of time the duties of those that once served a useful purpose become nominal and

the salaries paid to their incumbents unnecessarily burden the taxpaying public. If the abolition of such an office is considered, the incumbent is practically certain to receive a "tip" in advance. Suppose he is the invaluable lieutenant or the worthless relative of a prominent politician. The latter is notified. "Suspend order abolishing office until I can be heard," he telegraphs. Official courtesy demands acquiescence. All possible pressure is brought to bear upon the official who would discontinue the useless office. If he resists, the possibility of cutting the appropriation for work he knows to be essential to the success of his administration of his office is suggested, or the annoyance of a congressional investigation may be hinted. The president may be appealed to. Plausible though mendacious arguments are ranged to prove the utility of the office; they are no longer scrutinized with conscientious care and it is continued.

Senator Lodge is authority for the statement that the application of the merit system to the immigrant department and in the enforcement of the alien contract laws effected an annual saving of nearly \$80,000. He adds as an illustration:

"They had an immigrant inspector down here at Alexandria (Va.) at a pay of eight dollars a day to inspect immigrants who came there. The moment it was put under the civil service it disappeared. As long as it was an excepted place to be filled on request, it was kept although it was not needed."

#### Some Instances.

It is no doubt natural that a person accepting a position, the tenure of which is uncertain and likely to cease after a brief incumbency, for which a present occupation, however unsatisfactory or meagrely remunerative must be abandoned and after which a new business must be developed, should ask some compensation for these hardships and this uncertainty. Economic principles, which are quite thoroughly established, teach that this claim would of necessity be recognized through a higher rate of compensation than would otherwise be paid. This, in addition to other influences that tend unduly to augment salaries. The following facts were related to the last house of representatives by a prominent member of the committee on appropriations (Moody of Mass.)

"We pay the chief engineer on the senate side of the capitol \$2,150 per annum and his assistants \$1,440 each. On the house side the chief engineer receives a less sum—\$1,700 per annum, and his assistants \$1,200 each. In the treasury building yonder the chief engineer receives only \$1,400 and his assistants \$1,000 and \$750 respectively. It costs \$1,200 to run an elevator in this building while a mile and a quarter away in the treasury building, and in all the other