

would today be impregnable. But the most important action which he has taken regarding the subject has been a backward step—and a very long one. After protracted consideration—so that he had not even the poor excuse of having done a foolish thing hastily—Mr. McKinley issued an order restoring to the spoilsmen ten thousand places which had been brought under the rules, and taking down some of the bars which protected those who entered the service by the competitive system.

Mr. McKinley is a shrewd politician. He undoubtedly weighed carefully the gains and losses to come from such a violation of his own and his party's pledges. He made up his mind that only a comparatively small element among the voters felt interest enough in the question to resent a breach of faith, while it would "make him solid" with all of the professional politicians. Looking forward to the campaign of 1900, he thought he could afford the loss of support on the part of the reformers for the increased enthusiasm on the part of the workers.

It is already plain that the president made a bad blunder in this matter, looking at it simply from the standpoint of the practical politician. Even when he took his backward step, it was plain to every thoughtful observer that "our new possessions" made it more imperative than ever before that the principles of the merit system should be maintained. It was perfectly obvious that if the spoilsmen should be allowed to have their way in these islands, there must be misgovernment, extravagance, and corruption; and that the only way to avert these results was to extend the merit system so as to cover them, and then enforce it with the utmost rigor.

Mr. McKinley failed to realize the situation, and he now pays the penalty. The Cuban scandals, which have brought discredit upon the American name, are the direct result of his refusal to carry out the principles of civil-service reform. Everybody today appreciates this, and the country realizes that more disgrace of the same sort will be inevitable unless the merit system is applied, not only there, but wherever else our government exercises authority. Even the professional politicians can now see how much stronger McKinley and his party would be today if he had kept the pledges of 1896, so that in 1900 the republicans could congratulate the country, not only upon the fact that there had been no backward step, but that the reform had been carried "wherever the flag waved."

It is a hard matter to deal with, as the case stands. New pledges from those who have broken old ones will count for nothing. The only thing that will count is action of the right sort. The president can extend the operation of the merit system wherever he chooses, the

statutes authorizing him to prescribe rules for this purpose which have all the effect of laws. The only way in which he can ever convince the people that there is to be any reform of the civil service under him is to issue the orders necessary to enforce it, abroad as well as at home.—New York Evening Post.

#### TRUSTS AND MONOPOLIES.

EDITOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE:

Twenty years ago I said in the Omaha Daily Herald, of which I was then the editor, that there was no such thing as a "railroad monopoly." I think time and events have confirmed that statement as having been grounded in solid truth. More and more railroads and the higher law of competition, which, given time to operate, always beats combination, settled that question long ago to the satisfaction of all rational and candid men. State reduction and regulation of freight rates by statute could not keep pace with the reduction by competition, and regulation by law has had no part whatever in any state, or in the United States, in giving to the people the lowest long-haul railway rates of transportation the world has ever known.

I ask room in THE CONSERVATIVE to say now, in the midst of the same noisy clamor that was heard about railroad monopoly in other times, "that I do not believe in the existence of what are called trusts, or in the monopolies which are said to exist under this name. A corporation is not a trust any more than a partnership between two men in business is a trust, unless this word has lost its meaning. The only real trust with which I am acquainted 'in restraint of trade,' as statesmen of the swashbuckler brand, define it to be, is a high protective tax upon imported commodities that a few manufacturing bounty jumpers may raise prices for them in the home market. In trade, as with the railroads, competition beats combination. In labor, the trust of the unions 'in restraint' of the freedom of free men to sell their labor, is failing and falling on every hand. People talk about the Standard oil monopoly; and also of the Armour-Swift-Cudahy monopoly; which is said to control the price of meats in the stock markets of the country. What is charged upon either the one or the other of these industrial agencies is actually true of neither. Unrestricted freedom of trade finds a regulator of both which permits no trifling, as the Standard oil and meat magnates know to their own cost. If this were otherwise, would the best illuminating oil in the known world be sold to the people now for 14 cents a gallon, when the worst that was ever seen, used to be sold to consumers for 50, 60, and 75 cents per gallon? The guns of an hundred batteries of competition are constantly trained upon the Standard oil corporation including those

of a whole array of oil producers in Russia. And as to the meat magnates, there was never a word of truth in the idea that any one man, or any combination of men, could control the prices of meat in the world's markets for a single day in the rolling year.

GEORGE L. MILLER.

Omaha, Neb., June 15, 1900.

#### AN ENGLISH VIEW OF COFFEE RAISING IN MEXICO.

Coffee in Mexico, as a paying product, ranks with the first in agricultural enterprise. Given the right soil, proper altitude, and convenient situation—and, in connection with the second of these conditions, an altitude must be struck such as to embrace at the same time the successful raising of crops—and 50 per cent. profit should be the result, provided always, of course, that careful and competent management be given to the plantation. The price of coffee fluctuates, as in any market of a commodity which is at times in excess of requirements, and this seems to check the ardour of the planter periodically. The result of this is that he allows his crops to stagnate without care or attention, until the market again rights itself. If the planter consistently pays attention his profits, taking the good and bad years together, should at least show 50 per cent. profit. As before stated, the situation of the property is almost everything in this respect, as if communications are difficult there is greater expense entailed. A planter is a wise man if, within the bounds of reasonable price, he buys land well situated. This can hardly be too strongly advocated. For a man to locate his property away from easy communication, for the sake of cheaper land, is one of the most serious blunders—all too common—that the planter can make. It is necessarily dearer than other land, because, being more remote from all communication by water and rail, profits are swallowed up in transport. Therefore, it is better for the planter to pay \$5 an acre more, and have easy transportation. It must be understood that coffee culture is a business that requires large capital, as the crops require a long time to develop. The life of a coffee-tree is about thirty years, but it must be planted and tended for five years before the first crop can be gathered. Finally, I should say that for large companies, well capitalized, with capable overseers, tropical agriculture in Mexico pays very well. One can only go by the American companies that have made the experiment, most of them having met with considerable success, because they have gone to work the right way, and have put sufficient capital into the business. Without capital, agriculture in Mexico is a hopeless business.—South American Journal, London.