

## THE CUSTOM-HOUSE AGAIN.

THE New York Custom-house, as all our readers know, has been the very citadel of the spoils system. The possession of it has been for fifty years, in the eyes of spoilsmen all over the country, both the sign and the reward of victory. No triumph was of much value as long as the enemy held the Custom-house, and could garrison it with his janissaries. To be able to "name the Collector," when a new administration came in, seemed in the eyes of the workers almost the pinnacle of human greatness. This interest in the Custom-house was not due in the least to the fact that it was a vast financial institution, through which there flowed a large proportion of the annual revenues of the Government; nor was it due to the fact that it furnished, more than any similar establishment in the world, an opportunity of showing the foreigners who used it a great illustration of the promptness, efficiency, purity, and skill which Americans brought to the management of public business. It was looked on as the place in which the largest number of small party politicians could be quartered on the public treasury.

It is no exaggeration to say, that for two generations at least the New York Custom-house attracted the attention of political men only in a subordinate degree as a great financial institution—that its main function was in their eyes the supply of bread and butter to electioneering agents. The successive collectors who took charge of it during nearly half a century found themselves invariably, on taking office, confronted not with the problem of improving and simplifying methods of collecting money, but with the problem of providing salaries for a swarm of men whom no private employers would hire. Their daily business was not the supervision of inspectors, appraisers, and weighers, but the division of the places among the workers, one stream of whom was constantly pouring out of one door and another pouring in at another door, on the principle that each man was entitled to "his turn" at the public crib. Nearly all the men employed under each Administration in this city to look after the party vote were quartered in the Custom-house as a matter of course, as if it were a public lodging-house. In the bad times some of them never went there except to draw their salaries. In the best times numbers were always absent canvassing or stumping. In fact, there was nothing quite like it out of Turkey. It was a national shame and disgrace, and its rescue, until President Cleveland came in, seemed almost hopeless. Mr. Hayes was something of a reformer, but he could not touch the Custom-house. Mr. Arthur was something of a reformer, but some of his worst betrayals of reform were perpetrated in the Custom-house. In fact, when Mr. Hedden was appointed, and began his activities by substituting a dog-fighting, prize-fighting liquor-dealer for a gallant soldier and experienced officer in an important place, reformers were almost disposed to despair about the Custom-house. The outworks were in their hands, but the citadel seemed impregnable.

We think, however, we are not rash in say-

ing that the place has at last been captured, and is now for the first time in hands of those who believe, with the President, that public office is a public trust, and that Government offices are meant for the transaction of public business, and not as lodging-houses for party tramps. The new Collector, Mr. Magone, is the first since Jackson's day who has not only expressed entire devotion to the principles of civil-service reform, as reformers understand them, but carries them out rigidly in the conduct of his office. Any one who goes into the Custom-house today will see a great Government establishment employed simply in the collection and safe-keeping of Government funds, and the politicians who are still on the premises, are either preparing to go, or expecting any day to have to go. The huggermugging and the winking and nudging about offices and claims among the workers have ceased. The practical men have stopped shaking their heads and smiling over the theorists. They are grave, and full of care, and the world seems very dull to them, for to them there is no place on earth so like home as an old-fashioned custom-house or post-office.

That President Cleveland, who began his administration by giving back the New York Post-office to the nation, should not have been equally prompt in letting it have the Custom-house, is, we admit, regrettable, but it is not surprising. He has had to feel his way in a novel work, in which the difficulties were great and the assistants few. But we have ourselves never doubted that in hewing a path through the spoils system he would at last reach the Custom-house and make a wholesome clearing round it also. Hedden was probably most useful as an experiment. He was probably the best that could be done on the old plan. When he failed, as he did very promptly, it was plain that nothing would do but a new principle of selection, and that somebody would have to be put in charge, like Mr. Magone, who believed in reform, not officially, as a doctrine held by his superiors, but personally, as the only doctrine on which an honest and patriotic man could administer a public office.

## THE REAL OBJECTION TO THE CANDIDACY OF HENRY GEORGE.

THERE are a good many intelligent people in this city, not manual laborers, disposed to look on Henry George's candidacy either with contempt or with amiable indulgence. There are some, even, who are proposing to vote for him because they happen to agree with him about the nationalization of land, about free trade, or about taxation. They know that his election is hardly possible, and that even if he were elected, he could do nothing directly in the Mayoralty to promote his peculiar opinions. But they think that a strong vote in his favor would be a striking demonstration in support of them. So that, even if they do not vote for him themselves, they are not sorry to see others do so in considerable numbers.

Now, we would call the attention of all who are disposed to look at the matter in this way to a view of it which has thus far been forgotten, but which we think will seem obvious

enough when we state it. The labor organizations which have nominated Henry George know as well as anybody that his election, even if they could elect him, would contribute nothing to the realization of the aims set out in their platform. They know the Mayor of New York cannot nationalize land, or compel people to build on vacant lots, or impose a progressive income tax, or hand the railroads and telegraphs over to the Government, or restrict the hours of labor. In fact, there are probably none but the most ignorant of them who consider these things so near realization as to be within the domain of practical politics at all, and the interest the great majority take in them is undoubtedly very feeble. What they are all most keenly interested in, from Powderly down, in all parts of the country, as the experience of the last six months has shown, is the legalization of the "boycott," or, in other words, the securing of impunity for the use of violence or coercion in support of strikes. They have found by experiment that in the present condition of the labor market in this country, it is only in the more highly skilled trades that a strike, pure and simple, that is, a refusal to work for a particular employer, is sure of success. They have nearly all admitted, from Powderly down, that nothing but the boycott, and the use of physical force to drive away competitors, is certainly "effective," to use Powderly's word, in bringing an employer to terms. The object nearest their hearts, therefore, especially in the large cities, is full liberty, without interference from the police, to back up strikes, either by conspiracies to ruin the business of employers or of persons who in any way make themselves obnoxious to Labor, or by open violence directed against non-union men and the property of those who employ them.

Up to last April they thought they had this liberty. During the previous year they had been exercising it with a vigor and boldness which increased as the organization of the Knights of Labor was extended, and the cowardice or apathy of the press became more apparent. The general opinion in this State was that the law put no hindrance in their way, and the newspapers encouraged the view that, even if it did, it was vain to expect its enforcement. They went so fast, however, and were so reckless, both in the choice of their victims, the penalties they inflicted, and in the disturbances they caused—going so far in this city as to barricade the streets under the eyes of the police—that public indignation was at last aroused. When American patience was exhausted, it was soon found that the Penal Code had provided for just this form of lawlessness; and the police, the magistrates, and the grand juries became so energetic in the work of suppression that boycotting with violence, and conspiracies to boycott, soon came to an end. The right of "Labor" to blackmail and to assault and burn was sternly denied, and Labor was sent to jail for so doing in considerable quantities.

Now, the aim and expectation of Henry George's supporters is by a large vote to undo what has been done for law and order. They know, as every one who has lived more than a

year in New York knows, what the effect of "politics" is on most city officials. They know of what base and corrupt compliances they are apt to be guilty in order to placate anybody who can command votes; they know with what difficulty governors, mayors, police magistrates, police commissioners, and district attorneys are screwed up to the point of enforcing the law against anybody who is likely to be able to avenge himself at the polls. They know that in this fact has lain for forty years the secret of the strength of the liquor-dealers, and gamblers, and hackmen, not only in New York, but in every city in the State, in evading or defying the law. They hope, therefore, by polling a large "labor vote," no matter for whom, and no matter on what kind of platform, to carry sufficient demoralization into the Governor's office, and the Mayor's office, the District Attorney's office, and into the police courts and the police stations to secure them a free boycott, or, in other words, to secure the non-enforcement of the law against violence and outrage committed by members of the labor organizations in the supposed interest of labor.

We are casting no imputation on people now in office in this city—for they have done their duty well—in saying that these expectations of Labor are very shrewd and well founded. A large vote for George will undoubtedly diminish the value of the law as a protection for non-union men and for employers in all parts of the country. It will be taken in every labor caucus as a sign that they may make strikes effective by the use of the bludgeon, the pistol, and the torch. It will increase the disposition, even of candidates for high offices, to shut their eyes to violence and disorder which they are told is intended to elevate the working-man. We are at this moment treated to the shameful spectacle of a candidate for the Governorship in Pennsylvania, denouncing the laws which protect citizens of that State from combinations to ruin their property and reputation in order to compel them to hire people whom they do not want, at wages they do not choose to pay, as "but a slight modification of the infamous conspiracy laws"; and denouncing the police which checks rioting, as "representing the employer instead of the public authority." And this license would continue until American patience was again exhausted, and the "fooling with anarchy" was stopped with the strong hand of an awakened majority; but it could not be stopped until enormous mischief had been done.

#### A MODERN INSTANCE.

THE report made by the Civil-Service Reform Association of Indiana, a few days since, on the Indiana Hospital for the Insane, sets forth a state of things which ought to delight the souls of Old-Fashioned Democrats in all parts of the country. We are much surprised that none of them have taken any notice of it. When we read that this institution employs 336 persons in various capacities, and that all of them are selected for political reasons, and that no one is ever examined in order to ascertain his fitness for the duties, and

that changes are made as often as the State Senators desire, and that one Senator has secured the appointment of "a daughter, a nephew, three nieces, and a number of attendants," etc., we have before us a concrete example which ought to warm every Jeffersonian heart in the land. We wonder that the champions of the system have not had a public dinner somewhere to celebrate the triumph of their principles in this great institution. It would be hard to find a more flourishing specimen of the spoils system. We would fain believe that there are not many left, but of this we are not entirely sure. We only know that here is one of the Old-Fashioned sort, and that no new-fangled, un-republican rules, which prohibit American citizens from exercising their political rights, are allowed entrance into the Indiana Hospital for the Insane. On the contrary, the politics of Indianapolis and of Marion County is largely controlled by the employees of the hospital. They took such an interest in the Bynum-Bailey controversy that on the day of the recent Congressional Convention the hospital was almost deserted of attendants.

The hospital is under the charge of three trustees. One of these, Mr. P. M. Gapen, acts as treasurer. Mr. Gapen, however, resides most of the time in Arkansas, where he manages a sawmill. A residence in Arkansas does not disable him from the performance of the political duties for which he was selected, but it prevents him from promptly turning over all the funds that come into his hands as treasurer. A missing check for \$64.77, a rebate on upholstery goods purchased in New York for the hospital, was traced to Treasurer Gapen and then lost sight of, the books showing no corresponding entry. A letter to Gapen calling for an explanation brought the response that the next time he came to Indiana he would have the matter looked up. This is really one of the smallest grievances that the civil-service fanatics complain of. It is only mentioned by way of showing how inconvenient it is for people conducting an investigation to arrive at the truth when the responsible officers are not to be found. Gapen's salary runs on just the same whether he is in Indiana or in Arkansas, although he has been present at only one meeting of the Board since October, 1885.

When the present Old-Fashioned Board came into office, in 1883, the first thing done was to remove the book and storekeeper. The reasons for this step are clearly shown in the sequel. It was hardly necessary to mix ashes and soot with the butter on hand in order to make a case against Capt. Stansbury, the incumbent of the place, yet that is what Dr. Tarleton, the treasurer of the old Board, says was done. Another witness says it was lampblack. The investigation shows that lampblack would have improved the quality of some of the butter that came into the hospital afterward, by killing the animalculæ contained in it. Capt. Stansbury was got rid of on a charge of purchasing inferior supplies, and another book and storekeeper was appointed in his place, but not until one of the trustees had examined him as to his fitness for the place and found that he knew

nothing whatever about the work he was to do. This trustee subsequently presented a protest against his continuance in office, on the ground that he neither kept the books nor received and inspected the goods purchased, these being the especial duties of his office and for which he was paid by the State. The other trustees objected to the protest, but could not prevent its being filed with the minutes of the Board.

A long list of irregularities, resulting in the swindling of the State and the maltreatment of the inmates, are given in detail by the committee. They are not different from many other exposures of the management of asylums and other public institutions controlled by political bosses, and worked for all they are worth in the interest of the party. Some of the facts disclosed are ludicrous and others disgusting. Sometimes the large engines of the workshop are kept running at full speed when nobody is using the machinery. On one occasion a lot of 600 diseased hogs were bought for food. "They began to die rapidly, and at the same time slaughtering went on for the table. It was neck-and-neck between disease and the butcher's knife." In the course of seven months 14,213 pounds of dead hogs were sold by the asylum for fertilizing purposes.

The superintendent of the hospital is apparently a conscientious man, contending against enormous difficulties. He has gone so far as to ask the trustees to establish this rule at once: "Never to keep in the pay of the hospital a person who is useless, and *under no circumstances* to part with one who is valuable." This maxim stamps the superintendent as self-conceited, impracticable, and visionary; a fellow who pretends to be better than his neighbors, and an aristocrat masquerading as a reformer. If his demands were conceded, how would our system of government be better than the bureaucracies of the Old World?

#### WHAT IS A FRIEND OF LABOR?

AN animated discussion has been recently going on in the newspapers over the question whether Mr. Benedict, the new Public Printer, is a "friend of labor." To answer such a question we ought to know what is meant by a friend of labor. The fact is, that, at the present time, a very peculiar technical meaning is attached to this phrase, and one not acquainted with this meaning would wonder why the question was considered of any importance. Such a person would say that Mr. Benedict had a certain definite sum of money appropriated by Congress to expend in the employment of labor; that he would certainly be moved to expend it all, no matter how great his enmity to the laborer; that he could not expend a dollar more, however strong his friendship might be; that the rate of wages which he had to pay was so fixed by law and custom that no change in this respect could be expected, and that the hours of labor were also so fixed by custom or by regulations that Mr. Benedict could not treat his men differently from any other Public Printer. To the unsophisticated person who took this view, it would have seemed that Mr. Benedict could prove himself a friend of labor only by acting on the general principle of the political