

West Shore

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Saturday, July 19, 1890.

ONE not blinded by party prejudice, or become reckless through party zeal, can not fail to recognize in the federal election bill that passed the house and is now before the senate one that contains the elements of more evil and political demoralization than any measure that has been brought before congress for years. The proposition for the government to interfere in the local control of elections is not only subversive of the theory upon which our system of government rests, and utterly undemocratic, but it is directly contrary to the tendency of public thought and progress. It matters not what are the evils this law, in theory, is intended to correct, for one evil ought not to be removed by the institution of another, a greater and a more lasting one. Thousands of good republicans who deprecate national interference in local control of elections seem to think that in this instance it is necessary, and are not aware that their judgment is warped by party bias. They fail to look into the future and see what will be the ultimate and permanent effect of the measure they advocate. Theory and practice are not always closely related, and laws should be studied, not for the theory upon which they rest, but for their practical effect. It is well known that "practical politics" have a firm hold upon this country, that the managers of both the great parties are not above doing anything that may safely be done to secure a party advantage. The democrats believe that a bill passed by a republican congress making a seat in congress dependent upon the certificate of certain election supervisors appointed by the dominant party will be used by the republicans to secure added representatives for their party wrongfully. The republicans believe that were the situation reversed the democrats would so use it; and every sensible student of the history of party politics believes

that both would "work it for all it is worth." These, then, would be the practical results of such a law: The further corruption of politics by increasing the power of party managers; the further loss of confidence in the value of the ballot; the tightening of the hold of machine politics, already too firmly fastened upon the people; more progress in the direction that leads from a local, democratic form of government to a centralized, political government by party managers; and, what is the worst of all, the further sinking of the federal judiciary in the mire of party politics. This evil is not for the present, but will grow in power and intensity year by year, the dominant party using all the power thus placed in its hands to retain control of the government. The popular tendency of the times is in the opposite direction. The desire of the people is to curtail the power of party managers, to break the hold of machine politics, and to get the government as near as possible to the people. This is what the cry for the Australian ballot means; it is what the movement everywhere for the freedom of the voter from corrupting influences means; it is what the growing belief that the president should not be eligible to re-election means; it is what is meant by the increasing demand that a position in the public employ shall not depend upon political services. To be sure, this bill is ostensibly for the purpose of purifying elections, and is supported chiefly with that end in view, but it is masquerading in stolen clothing, and any one who has a thought above party and temporary party advantage can see the long snout and sharp claws of the wolf projecting beneath the wool. No party can afford to make itself responsible for fastening this evil upon the political system of the country.

For the next fiscal year the pension list will exceed \$150,000,000, and yet demagogues in congress and pension grabbers out of it, are urging further legislation. The "old soldier" cry has become more demagogical than the "honest farmer" or "poor workingman" ever was, and the republican party, by making it a war cry solely for the sake of votes, is digging its political grave. Uncle Sam should close the treasury lid with a bang, and say "No!" to those self-created mendicants in a tone so decided that they will know that both he, and all self-respecting old soldiers as well, have become thoroughly ashamed of them.

The president has signed the silver bill, and now all those who expect to have a load of silver dollars dumped into their back yards ought to be happy.

Cuba for \$200,000,000 would come higher than a New York thermometer at midday.