

A SHAMEFUL RETREAT.

Exeter New Hampshire

News-Letter Nov. 12, 1897

Hon. Carl Schurz so Characterizes Senator Gallinger's Withdrawal from the Contest Which He so Eagerly Began.

Nov. 12, 1897

To THE HON. J. H. GALLINGER, U. S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Sir:—After having for several weeks been occupied with things more immediately interesting, it is with much reluctance that I take up your last open letter for review. Indeed, I feel as if I owed an apology to the public for noticing it. I have been exposed to a sort of criticism, of which the following extract from the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, a Republican journal, is a fair specimen:

"It seems to us that Mr. Schurz would act wisely in choosing his opponents from men of his own intellectual level. When his opponent is a strong man Mr. Schurz chooses the strongest arguments that can be found. When his opponent is Senator Gallinger his argument shows a tendency to drop to the Gallinger level."

I have this to say in justification of my conduct: To be called this or that by Mr. J. H. Gallinger as a private person, would be to me a matter of absolute unconcern. But when Senator Gallinger seeks to vilify me, using the epithets he throws at my head as an argument against the civil service law, the case assumes a different aspect. Not on my own account, but in behalf of a cause which I regard as one of the highest public interest, I have then to take up the gauntlet. Nor can I, in defending that cause, afford to be fastidious as to the quality of my adversaries. I must meet them such as they are. And you need not, unless you choose, accept it as a compliment when I say that you, Senator, are a faithful representative of the opponents of civil service reform in point of intelligence as well as of veracity. In fact, I address you this time, only to expose once more and in a manner apt to bring the matter to a final issue, the unscrupulousness with which you seek to deceive your constituents by persistently telling them things about the operation of the civil service act which you well know to be untrue.

You had charged that "President Cleveland's last order which swept into the service almost 50,000 employes bears date of November 2, 1896," and that "there is every reason to believe that the order dated November 2 was actually not written until after the result of the election of November 3 was known to the country"—thus conveying the impression that President Cleveland had so managed things as to cover with the extended civil service rules office-holders appointed by his administration, after it had become known that the Government would pass into the hands of the Republicans. It was repeatedly shown to you that President Cleveland's order extending the rules (not over 50,000 but only 31,372 places, at least 12,000 of which had already been subject to the examination system under separate departmental orders) had been issued not on November 2, 1896, but six months before, on May 6th, 1896; and further, that the order did not protect anyone from removal, the protecting order being issued not by President Cleve-

land, but by President McKinley. What do you answer? "That the rules governing that order were dated November 2, so that the order was not an accomplished fact until that time." You knew perfectly well, Senator, when you made this statement that the rules, making the order effective, were dated on May 6, 1896, and printed in pamphlet form shortly after their promulgation on that date. You knew, further, that what you call the order of November 2, 1896, was really no order at all, but only a reprint of the rules issued on May 6, containing the same text with only a few changes of a purely verbal nature. I say you knew this when you made your statement to the contrary, and there could have been no mistake about it in your mind, for you had been explicitly told so in the letters of Mr. McAneny. And what does it mean when you now say: "If it can be shown that that was not so, I will cheerfully withdraw the charge," and when you ask me to "produce the record?" You know now and you knew all the time that what you said was false, for "the record" was as open to you as to me—nay, even more easily attainable to you, for you are a Senator, while I am only a private citizen. What must be thought of a Senator, who, being detected in a deliberate and often repeated falsehood, seeks to cover a shameful retreat by asking a private citizen for an official record open and known to him all the time?

You had charged, evidently for the purpose of making the civil service law ridiculous, that under the orders of the Civil Service Commission applicants for appointment as compositors or pressmen in the Government printing office were required to hop on one foot a distance of 12 feet, and that they had to answer the question whether they were immune to the diseases endemic or epidemic in the Southern States. It was conclusively shown to you that such tests were never applied to pressmen or compositors in the printing office, but only to positions requiring especial physical endurance or, as to the health certificate, to positions in the marine hospitals and similar branches of the service at Southern ports. You, as a Senator, certainly had at your disposal the same information that I have before me in a letter from the Chief Examiner of the United States Civil Service Commission reading thus: "The 'hopping test,' commonly used by physicians to test the action of the heart, has never been required by the Commission from applicants for any position in the Government printing office. No medical certificate has been required by that branch of the public service because the Public Printer has never asked for it." And still you have the audacity to re-affirm your false charge in saying to me in your last letter: "I have data in my possession to show that your criticisms on what I said about the hopping test are equally fallacious." When you first repeated it, you

well knew that your charge was false: but knowing this you repeat it again, to deceive your constituents once more by a dishonest pretence which every man of ordinary self-respect would be ashamed of.

You had charged that "not one item of proof has been produced to show that the service is better now than it was prior to the enactment of the civil service law, and that on the contrary the proof is all the other way." And what have you to say when you are reminded of the fact, which even you have not the hardihood to deny, that since the Hayes administration every President, Republican as well as Democrat, emphatically testified in message after message to the beneficent effects of the civil service law; that one head of Department after another, however prejudiced against the system when he entered upon his duties, changed his opinions in its favor, and that, as is statistically proven, "in the branches of the service under the civil service law more work was done by fewer persons and for less money, while in the branches not under the civil service law the old needless multiplication of offices went on, with an increasing wastefulness of expenditure?" You simply reiterate your original false allegation, and then try to support it with the statement that "the per capita cost of carrying on the government is much greater now than at any former period in our history." This I am aware, is one of your stock arguments which you advance on every possible occasion and seem to be especially proud of.

Do you really mean to make your constituents believe that, inasmuch as since the enactment of the civil service law in 1883 the government has expended constantly increasing amounts of money for pensions, for rivers and harbors, for the new navy, for public buildings and various other purposes, and the incidental cost of administration, this increase is chargeable to the effects of the civil service law? Do you really consider the people of New Hampshire so imbecile that they should not see through so shallow a trick? Do you not offer them a mortal insult by presenting to them such nonsense as argument? And if your constituents were capable of suffering themselves to be deceived by such unspeakable absurdities, or to accept the insult without resentment, would such an attempt at deception under any circumstances be the part of an honest man? Is there really no blush rising to your cheeks when you look at your performance?

These are the three falsehoods which, when writing my last letter, I selected for exposure from a larger number. You have reiterated them, in the face of established facts. At the same time you have informed the public that you wish to withdraw from this controversy "content to let the future settle the dispute." As to the rest of your letter I am willing to let you go, for I cannot deny that my critics, as represented by the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, are in the main right. A Senator of the United States who does not know, or who pretends not to know, the difference between a revenue tariff with in-

cidental protection, and a protective tariff with incidental revenue; who regards, or pretends to regard, a recommendation slipped once into a party platform, like the recommendation of penny postage, as of equal moral authority with a solemn pledge that has been prominent in every national platform for a quarter of a century, like the pledge of civil service reform; who quotes Washington's declaration that he would not confide "an office of consequence" to an adversary, as equivalent to a declaration that he would make the whole service party spoil; who taunts me and other anti-protectionists who last year contributed to President McKinley's election in order to save the country from free coinage and bankruptcy, with having thereby become faithless to their principles as to the tariff, and so on—such a Senator is either too ignorant or too disingenuous a person for a useful debate on subjects requiring intelligent and candid treatment. As to that part of your letter I will, therefore, leave you to that judgment of posterity which you invoke.

But as to the falsehoods you have uttered with regard to the civil service law I cannot permit you to escape as easily. The enemies of civil service reform are at present gathering for a general assault upon the merit system. Their campaign has already begun all over the country, and their principal weapon consists in the unscrupulous misrepresentation of facts. This must and will be met. Among the falsifiers you occupy a conspicuous place, owing partly to your official station, partly to the unblinking perseverance in publicly reiterating allegations which you know to be untrue. I therefore give you fair notice that I shall cling to you with repeated and unsparing exposures of your wanton attempts to deceive, until, either by positive retraction, or at least by silence, you will have admitted the untruthfulness of your utterances. Neither will you have reason to complain of being singled out for such drastic discipline; for others in prominent position who have likewise offended, will in the same manner be held to account. It is a disagreeable duty, but it will be faithfully performed.

Truly yours,

CARL SHURZ.

New York, November 9, 1897.