

## THE NEW YORK CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM BILL \*

THE bill merely proposes to do for the city of New York what the Pendleton bill has done for the United States. Its aim is to take the civil service out of the political arena, where it now lies festering, a reproach and a hissing to all decent men, and the most terrible source of corruption that exists in the city; and to apply to the municipal government the same business principles that obtain in every well-conducted private business. To relieve us from the evils under which we labor owing to the present system of appointment, for partisan reasons only, it is absolutely necessary that appointments should be made only after competitive examinations. This is the only way in which to shake off the hold that corrupt political rings and chieftains now have on the public through the civil service, which they and their predecessors have debauched until it has become a crying scandal. To the assertion that injustice may be done by these competitive appointments, I can only answer that for every one such there are a hundred far grosser evils under the present system, and more than this.

My object in pushing this measure is less to raise the standard of the civil service than it is to take the office-holders as a body out of politics. It is a good thing to raise the character of our public employees, but it is better still to take out of politics the vast band of hired mercenaries whose very existence depends on

\* Speech in the New York Assembly, April 9, 1883. *New York Times*, April 10, 1883.

their success, and who can almost always in the end overcome the efforts of men whose only care is to secure a pure and honest government, for in such a contest the discipline of regulars, fighting literally for their means of livelihood, is sure in the end to overcome the spasmodic ardor of volunteers.

The existence of these men as an organized body, existing only for their own selfish interests, is a standing menace to our free institutions, and it must and shall be removed before the people can decide the great public questions that arise purely on their merits, untrammelled by the base considerations that now surround them. And the law must apply to both parties alike. One party practising it while the other did not would afford a parallel to a sparring-match in which one man struck foul blows and the other did not. The man who fought foul would win. My purpose is to make both parties fight fair, and when they do so the people will then, and then only, be able to decide each measure only with regard to the effect it will have on the welfare of the country.