

violation was made a misdemeanor, it was found that houses might be constructed with serious defects; and, before any legal measures could be taken, the houses would be occupied, and the health of the occupants imperilled. In order to assist the health department in the enforcement of the law, the city works commissioner passed a rule that Ridgewood water should not be furnished to any new house until the plumbing-work was completed in accordance with the sanitary rules. For five years this rule has been enforced, and has been of great aid to the health officials in their endeavors to have houses properly sewered. Recently a row of houses has been constructed in which the soil-pipes were of light iron, in violation of the law; and, as the health department would not accept the work, no water could be obtained. On an application for a mandamus to compel the city to furnish water, one of the judges of the supreme court granted it, although the soil-pipes are of such weight as not to comply with the regulations. He holds that the city must grant permission to introduce water entirely irrespective of the regulations of the health department, and that, if any of these are violated, there is a remedy provided by the law. The result of this decision will be to embarrass the health department, temporarily at least, although ultimately it will doubtless find some way of speedily punishing offenders against the law.

IT SEEMS THAT the 'bogus butter issue,' as the politicians call it, is not confined to the United States. A similar agitation to that recently witnessed here is taking place in India; and a bill dealing with the adulteration of *ghee*, or clarified butter, hurriedly drawn and introduced in response to the urgent demands of the native community, has recently been passed by the Bengal council. The scope of the measure is very broad; and it applies, not to Calcutta only, but to all municipalities in the province. The result will be, it is hoped, the subsidence of the panic which has prevailed for several months. The reason for the panic is apparent, for *ghee* enters into the composition of every kind of cooked food used by all classes of the natives, and its adulteration with beef or pork fat meant loss of caste to Hindoos, and defilement to Mohammedans. So great has the panic been, that the wealthier natives have been importing *ghee* from Persia, while those unable to afford that have been abstaining altogether

from cooked food. The subject has attracted such general attention, that it will probably be dealt with as part of a general act, applicable to all India, to prevent the adulteration of food.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE COAST SURVEY.

THE administration of President Cleveland presents no greater enigma than the contrast between the high standard of public fidelity which its head has infused into most branches of the public service, and the unending succession of personal quarrels, charges, and counter-charges which he has allowed to discredit the administration of the coast survey, and impair its character and efficiency. The present condition of that work is such as almost to make us forget that there was a time, and that within the memory of every reader, when it was the model branch of the civil service, enjoying a world-wide reputation for the perfection of its organization, the standard of its work, and the character of its assistants, and cited by the advocates of reform as an example of what the civil service might become under an improved system of appointment to and tenure of office. One wanting to know on what system a scientific bureau ought to be administered cannot do better than study Bache's administration of the coast survey, and note how he combined the greatest liberality with the most scrupulous regard to the forms of law, the responsibilities of a public officer, and the requirements of a disciplined service.

Fifteen months have now elapsed since this dream of perfection was suddenly interrupted by the alleged discovery of grave irregularities and the forced resignation of a superintendent. Men were not unprepared for the latter result. It had become widely known that physical and mental infirmity, intervening at the end of a long and honorable career in the public service, had incapacitated the superintendent for the proper execution of his office; but wise and thinking men reserved their judgment when they were assured through the public prints that general corruption had eaten into the vitals of the organization, and that the work made famous by Bache had become a nest for speculators of the public funds.

The first act of the administration after learning of the seemingly demoralized condition of the survey was the appointment as superintendent, of the man on whose report of irregularities that office had been made vacant. For such an appoint-

ment there could be but one apology. The President and his secretary of the treasury were responsible to the public for the conduct of the survey; and it was their duty to take every measure for discovering any irregularities which might exist in its administration. A searching inquiry into the past disbursements of the officers and employees was eminently proper under the existing circumstances. Mr. Thorn, as head of the investigating commission, was well qualified for the inquiry; and we may charitably suppose it was on this account, and this alone, that he was made superintendent. Such being the case, the course prescribed by every principle of public justice and governmental policy was quite clear. An old and reputable branch of the public service was on trial before the President, for grave shortcomings in the conduct and character of its employees. Sound policy required that it and they should be conceded that same right to a speedy trial and a public verdict which an individual enjoys when accused of crime. For more than a year a body of men of high professional attainments and unstained reputation have felt themselves wounded by imputations on the service to which they belong, of which they once were proud, and of which they sometimes hope to be proud in the future. After waiting so long, they cannot but feel it a public wrong that the head of the government takes no measures and announces no conclusions which will indicate his verdict upon their official characters.

In this connection let us think kindly of Mr. Thorn. No one questions the honesty of his intentions or the purity of his motives. Circumstances not of his own making imposed upon him a disagreeable duty, in the performance of which he has spent more than a year. He has done as well as possibly could be expected of a man without administrative experience, placed in charge of a great public work in the capacity of prosecuting attorney. Gradually compelled by the force of circumstances to conduct the office in accordance with long-established custom, and to trust the men whom his predecessors have trusted, he now sees the very accusers of former administrations, who put him into power, turning against him, and even going so far as to file charges of malfeasance in office with the public prosecutor of the District of Columbia.

In the *Washington Post* of Monday last we find a statement by him so conclusive of the whole question, that we should doubt its authenticity did it

not bear every mark of being given in his own words. At the conclusion of a long reply to the charges we have mentioned, he alludes as follows to the testimony of last year, on which the survey was condemned, and Mr. Hilgard compelled to resign:—

“The testimony, which the present proceeding is said to be intended to revive, has been out of my custody and in that of the department much more than a year. It is mainly *ex parte* affidavits, some true, some false, some mistaken, some since retracted, and more or less wild gossip since disproved. The publication of such material against people who were not confronted with the witnesses, and did not cross-examine them nor appear by counsel, and the spreading of it before the public, who can know nothing of the credibility or motives of any of the witnesses, or of the probable value of their testimony, would be simply an indiscriminate assassination of character.”

Such an admission is most creditable to him, and must gratify every lover of purity in the public service. It must require a rare endowment of moral courage and respect for truth and justice to move one to speak thus of testimony which was collected by himself, and which formed the only basis for his appointment to one of the most important offices in the gift of the President. If we accept Mr. Thorn's statement, we shall see why the present condition of the survey tends to demoralization. It is a public establishment, in the prosecution of which the *esprit de corps* of its members is as important a factor as it is in the army or the navy. But the revival of the old pride in the service is impossible under the conditions which now prevail. The survey is in danger of losing the services of its best men, whose incentive to work is not salary, but professional pride in the honorable character and public utility of the work they are doing. That vacancies can be filled by men of equal promise under the conditions which now prevail, no one acquainted with the case can for a moment suppose. There will, of course, be a crowd of applicants for every vacancy, but the number really fitted for the places will be small, and will be sure to be passed over by any one but an expert in the selection of men for such a service. A year or two more such as the last will leave nothing worth preserving of an organization which was once the pride of American applied science, and a connection with which was a letter of introduction to similar organizations the world over.