

## SOLOMON RAY.

A hard close man was Solomon Ray;  
Nothing of value he gave away,  
He hoarded and saved;  
And he pinched and shaved;  
And the mere he had the more he craved.

The hard-earned dollars he toiled to gain  
Brought him little but care and pain;  
For little he spent,  
And all that he lent,  
He made it bring him twenty per cent.

This was the life of Solomon Ray,  
The years went by, and his hair grew gray;  
His cheeks grew thin;  
And his heart within  
Grew as hard as the dollars he worked to win.

But he died one day, as all men must,  
For life is fleeting, and man but dust;  
And the heirs were gay  
That laid him away;  
And that was the end of Solomon Ray.

They quarreled now, who had little cared  
For Solomon Ray while his life was spared;  
His lands were sold,  
And his hard earned gold  
All went to the lawyers, I am told.

Yet men will pinch, and cheat, and save,  
Nor carry their treasures beyond the grave;  
All their gold some day  
Will melt away,  
Like the selfish savings of Solomon Ray.

Eugene J. Hall.

## The Coming Financial Crash.

A PICTURE OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE  
BEEN AND WHAT MAY BE.

[From the Editorial Columns of  
the Chicago Forum, July 13, 1874.]

(Written several years ago by a prominent Wall Street banker and litterateur.)

We devote the larger portion of our present issue to news from the scene of the great disaster. While the whole country is stricken by the terrible calamity which has befallen its commercial metropolis, the people of Chicago, so closely affiliated to those of New York by every possible tie, are especially overcome with horror and prolonged apprehension.

## THE DESOLATED CITY.

The midnight telegrams, although somewhat involved, assure us that a measurable degree of quiet has settled down over the desolation and mourning of the devoted city. The carnage and destruction are at an end, but only after the most heroic sacrifices of patriotic blood, the decimation of the murderous hordes, and utter extermination of their frenzied, defiant leaders. Our first and third pages are occupied by the personal report of a correspondent, who was at his post in New York throughout the perils of last week, and who now sends us the first succinct account of all that one man could observe, tossed hither and thither by the riot's hideous ebb and blow. Nothing can be of more thrilling interest to our readers than even this partial narrative of events, which are the absorbing theme in every city, hamlet, and household of the Republic. The land is bowed down with the humiliation of its peerless and beautiful metropolis; of the spot which, to a degree beyond mere local attachment, has been the glory of Americans, at home and abroad—the centre of finance, culture, science, and the arts: but which, alas! nurtured within itself those elements of ruin and death, that have finally overwhelmed it with the fate which a world is chronicling to-day.

We therefore make no apology for surrendering our editorial columns to a brief summary of the causes which originated and matured this frightful Rebellion of the dangerous classes. By such a name we must designate the movement; for, although gathering in its course all the criminal and outlawed masses of the populace, the growth of the brutal forces which developed it was commensurate, as all now plainly see, with the growth of the despotism of lawlessness in the great city. The wise have predicted some such climax to the events which have marked the history of New York and its government for two decades. Men of thought and reading have foreseen it. The press has done its duty, again and again sounding the alarm. Prophecies and admonitions have been uttered by all journals not in the base employ of the scoundrels who are leading the city to its doom—themselves gorged to the full with plunder and ill-gotten power. But such utterances have been of

as little practical avail as the ravings of Cassandra in Troy Town, or the despised warnings of Mr. Recorder in Bunyan's "Man-Soul."

How could men believe that such a catastrophe was possible, aye, even near at hand? This stately and cosmopolitan city, spread in the bright noon-day of modern life—how, at a busy, practical, common-sense epoch, could it be reserved for such horrors as befel great capitals of Europe in a barbarous Middle Age? At the height of our national supremacy, and at a time of profound peace with other countries, how could this American city be devoured by fire bursting from its own entrails, and repeat the tragedy of Paris after the German siege? It was too incredible to think of it; it was the cry of partisan alarmists. "Not in our day, at most." Yet it came, and with darker horrors than the gloomiest dared predict. It came on the birth-day of the nation and before the light of another morning, plunged the whole country into wrath and dismay. Even now we scarcely can believe the record; yet it is all too true. Thousands of our American fellow-citizens are slain; women, our fair American sisters, have met cruel mercy at the hands of imbruted men; the princeliest houses are in ashes; the churches of God are destroyed; millions upon millions of property are scattered to the winds! We have not heart to look beyond this awful catastrophe. New York, though she recover all her greatness at some future time, can never again be to this generation as she has been—the queenly city of our ancient affection and delight.

"O Roma! Roma!  
Non e piu come era prima."

## THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

Yet, who will deny that warnings, more ominous than mere words of their approaching calamity, have been given to the citizens of New York? Events are recorded, each of which, like the striking of the clock in "The Masque of the Red Death," has made men shudder, pause, turn aside for a moment from the whirl of business and pleasure, and ask each other, "How will all this end?" But, as the immediate danger has gone by, the dance has been renewed; responsibility has been shifted from one to another until that final punishment has come, which, history shows, is always inflicted upon a people who withhold their individual services from the maintenance of the public weal.

The Draft Riot of July, 1863—a dastardly uprising, which sent fear throughout the loyal States, and was worth a dozen victories to the South—revealed the treacherous nature of the undercrust of New York. Enrolling offices were demolished, public edifices burned, obnoxious mansions sacked, negroes and whites hunted down or hanged at the street corners. For a time, men held their breaths; nor was the revolt suppressed, until soldiery had returned from the front, and cannon had belched their volleys down a score of streets.

The warning had been given; it came and went. Such a thing, people said, could happen only in wartime. Soon the game of speculation, the pleasures and vices of an upstart society, went on as briskly as before, and in a season the city politicians were again catering to the prejudices of the very classes which had enacted the bloody drama.

## THE BALLOT AND THE BLUDGEON.

Men know why New York, through all these years, was governed so entirely in one interest; that, while taxpayers were defrauded, the dangerous classes got any privilege they clamored for, though growing more rapacious with each demand.

They were the Praetorian Guards, the Janizaries, the horde upon whose votes rested a villainous power of theft and despotism, held by the most shameless, profligate, and brutal adventurers that ever clutched the reins of government in any great city of ancient or modern times.

Yes, this colossal mob-power, which has at last devoured the wealth upon which it fed, were shielded by aldermen and justices from the penalties of crime, bribed with moneys, encouraged with civic patronage, and so emboldened as to swarm beyond the control of their purblind masters. Of all bravoes, they were the most debased and reckless. Never before has there deliberately been formed so large a number of political "gangs," made up of drunkards, gamblers,

prize-fighters, and rowdies at large, of all ages, and consorting with women as foul and dangerous as themselves. Neither the slums of London nor the sewers of Paris could vomit forth such a loathsome multitude as have now burst the barriers and overwhelmed New York with a judgment of slaughter and fire.

## THE FINANCIAL SATURNALIA.

And this brings us to the chain of correlative events which hastened such a result. While political fraud and outrage characterized the city government, a speculative debauch was going on among bankers and capitalists down town, which could only have some extraordinary and disastrous ending. The *parvenu* brokers who had suddenly accumulated wealth during the war for the Union, had introduced a gigantic system of financing, by which they obtained control of vast railway properties, and managed them to the confusion of stockholders and their own aggrandizement. Moreover, the solid capitalists, who acquire such properties by more legitimate means, invented methods of consolidation before unknown; stretching their corporate dominion clear across the continent, until single individuals governed hundreds of millions of wealth, and became more powerful than the Dukes of feudal times. Farther and farther spread the grasp of the true Railway Kings—the Vanderbilts, Scotts and Drews; while a swarm of magnificent adventurers, among whom the gasconades who seized and held "Erie" may be selected as familiar types, aped their finance, and far exceeded them in ostentatious display. All this became possible through the policy of the Government, which extended the period of money inflation for years after the war. It really seemed as if the bubble never would burst; although in 1871, to such an extreme had over-construction been pushed, the number of miles of railway in the United States exceeded that of ten years before, when compared with the totals of wealth and population at the respective dates, in the proportion of two to one. These movements centred in New York City, the financial heart of the country, and every Wall street banking house was stuffed with bonds for sale, or had a railway loan of its own to offer the public; the pretensions of these "investment" securities varying with the credits of the vendors. As to the State, County, City and Township bonds offered and placed—their name was legion. No preceding inflation has been so extensive and prolonged; none in England, France, or America has ever had so large a field of expansion, or been so disastrous in its collapse.

What were the visible effects upon New York social life? Successful adventurers, devoid alike of morals and refined tastes, gave their leisure hours to the most prodigal luxury and dissipation. Their mansions lined the avenues and boulevards, their mistresses out-dressed queens and jostled virtuous women to the wall; in their dinners and festivals they mocked the Roman extravagance. They erected theatres, opera-houses, and hotels for their own glorification and amusement; laid out race-courses; with inherent vulgarity displayed diamonds, each worth a fortune, upon their persons; their yachts covered the harbor; their expenditures seemed to be governed by caprice, and often, in a fit of the spleen, some one of the most unscrupulous would endow a church or establish a charity, by way of touching life at all points. They imported every vice of foreign countries, with none of the safeguards by which an instinct of decency and self-preservation there glosses them over. In short, wherever the dominant financiers and politicians of New York were to be found, there were debauchery, extravagance, coarseness—a social decadence beyond parallel. The press chronicled and satirized it; but such warnings as the press and clergy uttered were so light or hopeless in tone, that few gave ear, and so the revelry went on.

## LES MISERABLES.

But, if the very horses of the tricksters were stalled in marble and iron, the dwellings of the hapless voters who sustained them—of the duped and "dangerous classes"—were meaner than those of the swine. The most forlorn and sodden misery encompassed them, whenever they turned, from doing their masters' bidding, to the sties

and kennels which they called their homes.

No horrors have equalled those of the tenement houses of New York. Think of one hundred and sixty thousand families packed into such tenements as abounded in the Tenth, Eleventh, and Seventeenth Wards—in Cherry, Mulberry, Baxter streets, and the purlieus of the avenues to north and east! Lazar-dens of which the old "Sweeney's Shambles" was a fair example, crowded upon a double city lot one hundred families, "devoid of every appliance for health, privacy, and decency." This multitude of wretches lived over a common sewer, where the ordure of fifteen hundred human beings daily was deposited. Hunger, Drunkenness, Lust, and Crime were the Lares and Penates of their abode. No wonder that human beings bred and existing in such places took to the streets for a refuge! No wonder they sallied forth to ruffianly outrage and crime, deeming, in their illogical misery, the Law their enemy, and the rich men—the representatives of property and order—greater offenders than themselves!

There are two sides to every question. The depraved rulers who now have gone to their own place in the final chastisement, first rendered a communistic uprising possible by their indifference to the ignorance, degradation, and impoverishment of their miserable followers.

Such was the actual condition of New York at the height of the Tammany rule, three years ago. That we have not overdrawn it the events of the closing drama have fearfully demonstrated. Yet what stranger, visiting the metropolis, where everything on the thoroughfares and resorts of those in favor was glorious to the eye, where palaces of stone, brick and iron followed each other for miles, where the pride of architecture and beauty of landscape art were a wonder and delight, what traveler could believe that here was the dominion of profligacy, fraud, corruption, and legalized crime; that all this splendor was flanked on the right and left, and intermingled with the most squalid and loathsome abodes ever inhabited by mankind, where in were seething in wretchedness and vice half a million of human beasts, ready to break forth upon their keepers and make the whole city a wilderness of ruin and despair?

## THE CRISIS OF '73.

From that time it is easy to trace a doleful succession of events, which are fresh in the public mind, and now present themselves with terrible significance. The year 1872 exhibited the first portents of coming financial distress. People began to realize that a reaction, from the colossal speculation and overtrading of preceding years, was close at hand. Fictitious prosperity, caused by the artificial currency inflation, could no longer be maintained. The short cotton crops and harvest of 1872 and '73 hastened the catastrophe. These actual sources of wealth being cut off, the South and West had little to buy with; the New York merchants could not sell their imported goods—worse, could not make collection of overdue bills. Railway companies having no surplus crops, and little merchandize to transport, made huge shrinkage in earnings, and having expended former profits in extra dividends, could declare no more on their grossly watered stock. They were unable even to pay the interest on their debts; and now, for a second time, the monster railway system of America tottered to destruction, spreading the havoc of the crisis in 1857.

The enormous decrease in market value of inflated shares, and, especially, the exposure of the rottenness of half the railway bonds which had flooded the country; beggared speculators and investors alike. Terror and disaster held the Stock Exchange, and ran over the country along those moneyed channels whose currents respond to every Wall Street pulsation. House after house went down—not in a single day, but with an ominous "rising average" of failures reported. How few the eminent merchants, the banking nabobs, the railway kings that withstood the storm! The largest resources failed in '73. Truly, the present Administration came in with evil auspices, and under omens not to be averted. The tardy attempt to renew specie payments, which seemed feasible enough with currency then near its par, proved so futile at the beginning of the crisis! It was this ef-

fort, coupled with the return of our securities from Europe, and the run on the banks for gold, that brought on the convulsion, so disastrous to the country at large, of the national banking system. When the crash came, there actually were held in Europe, in addition to over \$950,000,000 of our public funds, more than \$1,000,000,000 of American railway, State, and city bonds—a gigantic foreign indebtedness, an aggregate exceeding two billions of dollars, on which an annual interest of \$125,000,000 was shipped in gold! This item, omitted from the usual statistics of exports and imports, gradually had depleted us (by doubling our annual adverse trade balance) of all the gold we could produce had accumulated in better and less extravagant times. The temper of our British and German creditors proved to be such, that, while American securities were rising in fictitious market value upon the United States Exchange, or even maintaining their ground, they were firmly held abroad and rarely returned for sale. But when our troubles began, a general foreign alarm set in, and they came back by millions and millions—and were sold under cable orders at any price, even the lowest, to save something from the terrible wreck. Those New York houses which had established branches abroad, and, by "kiting" between that city and London at high rates of discount, had kept up a brave front and marketed their bonds, could stand it no longer. Their day had passed, and they went down in the storm, except the few saved by most heroic sacrifices of the private estates—even the lordly homes—of their several founders.

Nowhere, nowhere were these calamities felt as in the prostrate metropolis. The *coup de grace* was that sharp and stunning downfall in the value of city real estate—a kind of property hitherto considered proof against the wildest disaster. But even this had been rated far above its actual worth, and the period of inflation prolonged by the schemeful processes of the Ring. By 1873, the grievous taxations required to meet the City interest and pay the municipal expenses, had impoverished both landlords and tenants, and real estate fell, under these and the commercial troubles, to one-half its actual, and one fourth its capital, value. Only one business thrived—that of the auctioneer, who knocked down under his hammer the choicest and costliest properties. The final humiliation came, when the taxes could not be collected, and the proud Empire City was bankrupt. The operation of a stay-law, which was virtual repudiation, rendered it impossible for her creditors to obtain their overdue interest by civil process; and when the situation was realized, New York City sixes fell, as we have said, from 82 to 40 in a single day. Then followed the run on the Savings Banks, and more than one of these hitherto impregnable custodians of the earnings of the poor found itself compelled to ask an extension from the outraged and menacing crowd of depositors which thundered at its doors.

It may be that the nation has escaped dire calamities by the ruin which has befallen its metropolis. Who can tell what might have been the effect elsewhere—in our own city, for example—had the organized rebellion longer been maintained, even though the sacking of New York were spared us? We do not care to dwell upon this theme to-day. What shall a lawless populace obtain is done is done; but never again such domination over an American city. The lesson of this catastrophe is henceforth deeply graven in the national heart: That social integrity is at the base of all lasting political greatness; and that when the public moral sense is once blunted, so that it basely retires from the contest with what is dishonest and unfair, a career is begun which can end only in the decline, fall, and extinction of the most civilized Capital or State.—N. Y. Graphic.

— Sothern is to appear in California in July, and Joe Jefferson may before winter.

— The aged agriculturist has now grasped the plowshare, and is merrily bounding over the bogs and rocks and roots, and wrenching his joints, and bruising his shins, and swearing copiously. There is no life so free and independent as that of a farmer, unless it is that of a clerk.—Ex.