

OUR CHICAGO LETTER.

Chicago people are asking each other the ominous question: "Is the end of the world at hand?" It is little wonder that such a question obtrudes itself when one takes up a morning paper and reads such headlines as the following:

THIRTY-THREE KILLED.

Dreadful Havoc Wrought by Cyclones in Northern Illinois.

Sixteen Persons Killed by a Cloud-burst Near Earlville, La Salle County.

Six Children and Their Teacher Meet With a Sudden and Awful Death.

The Tornado Completely Destroys the Town of Paw Paw, Causing a Frightful Loss of Life.

Hundreds of People Injured by a Storm Which Struck the Village of Sublette.

Much Property Destroyed and a Large Number of Persons Hurt in Livingston County.

Disastrous Floods Ruin Crops and Cause a Partial Suspension of Railway Traffic.

This is only a sample of what is occurring in Illinois. Disasters of this kind are becoming so frequent that the energies of several large communities are completely prostrated. From Nebraska comes news of "Destructive Cyclones," "The Villages of Pleasanton and Sweet-water Demolished by Storms," and so on for column after column. Where are our men of science, those sages who can foretell the flood and the storm, who can baffle the elements and bottle the electric spark? Now is the time for them to show what is in them, and in their potent arts. They laugh at the man of simple mind who prays to the Controller and Director of these elements. His homely orison they call superstition. But in the face of such calamities as we now witness the highest science is tomfoolery.

Some few years ago while visiting the Hot Springs in Arkansas, I heard a man repeating the words of Ingersoll, who made horse play of Job polishing his ulcers with a piece of burned clay. The verbose infidel held that up as the medical science of prophetic times, and then triumphantly pointed to our medical colleges and learned professors. But what struck me as practically ludicrous was the position of this scientific infidel. He was suffering from inflammatory rheumatism. All the stores of science he had exhausted. He was now bathing in a pool termed locally "The Mud Hold," and rubbing from time to time handfuls of sand and mud from the bottom of the pool to his swollen knees. I asked him how much better off he was than Job as far as science was concerned. Was he not scraping his sores with mud as Job was with a piece of crockery? I remember that the scene so impressed a friend of mine, that he produced some rhymes which struck me more for their simple truth than for their artistic poetry. I don't know that a better sermon could be preached on Nature and Nature's God than these few simple lines:

Let science boast its regal power.
And druggists prate about their pills!
Let infidels with faces sour,
Trace life to wasps and whippoorwills;
Let minds romantic or profound
Phantasmal theories promote;
Tis mine, while Nature's balm flows round
To treasure what the Prophets wrote.

Come heartless, scowling sceptic, tell,
Was it caprice, or chance, or whim
That caused you boiling, bubbling well
To heal the pained, ulcerous limb?
Come Tyndall, Darwin, Huxley, say,
Is not your science cautioning rant
Beside the health-restoring spray
Which bounteous Heaven here doth grant.

These wooded glades let scoffers see
And taste of Nature's mystic bowl,
And learn what is Divinity
And what a God created Soul!
Here halt, and blind, and lame, and sore,
And sinner, saint and wild commune—
E'en Eros' son, beareyed and hoar—
All find alike the sought-for boon.

Behold with what impartial hand
Klud heaven her blessings fair bestows;
Even on the unregenerate band
Whose carnal tastes have wrought their woes.

Alas how weak a thing is man!
His grandest science mimic play,
Compared with Nature's balm, which can
Work miracles even today.

And miracles were certainly worked in the way of healing by those waters. Men whose ulcers and sores were many times more hideous than Job's were completely cured.

To come back again to the elements, we are not alone threatened with destruction by these, but news of cholera and yellow fever now reaches us. We are advised to put our house in order, for these grim visitants are on the way. In addition to all this, turmoil and disorder are creeping into politics and religion. The school question is sure to be made an issue. That will drag in religion, and then what next? God alone can tell.

The Republican party in the Northeastern States seems to be engaged in a triangular fight just at present, with three very powerful interests. These interests are the Prohibitionists, the Personal Rights men, and lastly, the Free Educationalists. The Prohibitionists have long since characterized the Republican party as the child of Belial, the beer drinking Personal Righters look upon it as hypocritical and insincere. But the grand old party as if inspired by the genius of disaster herself has actually courted calamity by its interference with the German Catholics and Lutherans as regards their educational matters.

No attempt was made to show that compulsory education laws, with the offensive clauses so often mentioned of late, were required in either Illinois or Wisconsin. It is true that the German language in these States holds second place to the English, and in commercial matters it dominates the English. Storekeepers in employing salesmen and travelers must of necessity hire persons who speak German. A German merchant would as soon think of buying from a man who could not converse in his dearly loved guttural as he would of committing suicide. In fact he would do the latter more cheerfully upon smaller provocation.

The German has many reasons to dislike the English language. First he himself speaks it with a decided-

ly foreign flavor, and in a dialect which brings on him the ridicule of the comedian and press humorist. Naturally enough this creates a certain measure of ludicrousness for him, even in the minds of his own children. Secondly the German regards the average American newspaper and book as unfit reading in a family household. Even the German beerhalls and wine-cellars look upon the American newspaper as below their standard of morality and esthetics.

The only explanation that can be given for the Illinois and Wisconsin education laws is that they are attributable to the anti-Catholic movement started in Massachusetts a few years ago. The battle against parochial schools there made political capital for the Republican party. But there only French and Irish Catholics could be contended with. And on the question of public schools the Irish Catholics are not a unit in opposing them. The fact is two thirds of the lower grades of teachers are of Irish parentage and certainly an Irish parent could not object to having his children educated by his own countryman's son or daughter. With the French matters are a little different. The French are clannish and narrowguaged in their ideas, especially the Catholics. As a factor in the American republic they are nothing. Little colonies of them are to be met with in towns and cities, but scarcely figuring in trade or industry. They are mostly cooks, waiters, factory hands, cheap carpenters, indifferent tradesmen and so on. There are no colonies of them settled on lands, and that is why as a race they will fade away and become absorbed. As to the Irish Catholic he has got so much in the habit of being abused that like Pat Ford of the *Irish World* he looks around for somebody else to abuse in turn and thus give himself a status. He, too, like the Frenchman, will disappear as a race because he hugged the city and the gin-mill, instead of spreading on the land. With such elements to contend with in the Eastern States it is little wonder that the Republican party gained a partial victory.

In Illinois and Wisconsin the dominant foreign race is German. Unlike the others, the German, though largely represented in cities and towns, is still more so in agriculture. The fact is the German Catholics were, until forced into it, remarkably non-aggressive. One might mix a whole year with a community of them and not know they were Catholics. The writer is personally cognizant of cases where Irish Catholics were discharged from shops purely on sectarian grounds, and Germans hired in their place, on the belief that those Germans were Protestants, when the fact was and is they are better Catholics from Church and doctrinal views than the Irish. The worst race in the world to support the Catholic press is the Irish in America, the Germans the best. It is a rare thing to find a purely Catholic newspaper in an Irish Catholic home; it is as rare to find a German Catholic home without one.