

NANSEN'S POLAR SHIP.

The efforts of the indefatigable Dr. Nansen to reach and explore the North Pole every attentive news reader is more or less familiar with. He has his own ideas of the course and utility of the Polar currents, and his theories, borne out as they are in great measure by his own discoveries and observation, have at least an air of much plausibility. His present intention is to force his way into the great northerly stream, and, trusting himself to a ship which shall be able to resist or endure the tremendous ice pressure that may be encountered, let that stream carry him whither it will. To this end he has been devoting his attention for some months past to the construction of a vessel that shall answer his high requirements. The ship has now so far progressed that an idea may be formed of its general outline. One who has seen it says the slanting sides of the tight little craft strike the eye at once. Under the supposition that the vessel will be "screwed" by the ice, care has been taken that no projecting points or flat surfaces exist. The peculiar design is based on the anticipation that all ice, when meeting the vessel, will be forced down under it, allowing it to be raised so much out of the water. For the same reason the bottom of the vessel is covered with hard and smooth wood—greenheart, 8 to 6 inches thick. Inside, the vessel is provided with horizontal, vertical, and diagonal crossbeams, fastened by hundreds of iron and wooden joints, giving the impression of great solidity. The frame is mostly old oak. Besides the uppermost covering of greenheart, there are two oak skins. The vessel is provided with a steam-engine of 160 horse power. It is rigged as a three-masted schooner and will mainly rely on its sails when in the ice. Its dimensions are: keel, 31 metres; greatest length of deck, 39 metres; greatest width of deck, 11 metres; height from keel to deck, 5.25 metres; when loaded, 4.75 metres; displacement, 800 tons. The hull will be extremely heavy on account of the heavy material used in the construction, yet it is estimated that she will be able to carry 400 tons of coal and provisions, etc. Besides the smaller boats necessary for reconnoitering, etc., two large boats are being built, able to hold the whole crew of twelve men, and provisions for three months.

With such a marvel of solidity, and with the skill and the experience the intrepid Nansen has already exhibited, there are good reasons to expect that the results of this voyage will far exceed those of any that have preceded it. The interest of the whole world will be centered upon it.

A BANKRUPTCY LAW NEEDED.

The time was, in the very remote ages, when an insolvent debtor might be put to death by his creditors; coming along down the shore of time, with the sun of a more perfect Christianity rising higher and higher and an improved civilization growing and spreading among men, the savagery of such laws was finally recognized and they

gave way to measures less rigorous. As far back as the mediæval period, we believe, or say about the time that the good Queen Isabella disposed of her jewelry rather than go in debt to give Mr. Columbus a world-seeking outfit, the more merciful treatment of only imprisoning the man who couldn't or wouldn't pay his obligations was in vogue, and the race has not entirely gotten rid of this relic of modified barbarism yet; still, it is only in a few places where civilization prevails that this is done, and it is not as a rule invoked in them except in the more aggravated cases.

Few things in this life are more genuinely annoying than for a confident creditor who may be in need of his dues to be put off and avoided and himself and his business made to suffer through the default of others; but, like almost everything else in this life, there is another side to the question. Perhaps the debtor, through lack of a business faculty or some stroke of misfortune, has become unable to meet his obligations, and as there is nothing criminal in this, there is nothing to be gained by either the creditor or society at large in punishing the debtor; in cases where there is a criminal or fraudulent defalcation or avoidance, it is altogether different and the law amply provides for dealing with such transactions.

The relation of debtor and creditor has always existed and always will so long as men buy and sell. Immediate payments are practically impossible; besides, even if such things could be, they would create more hindrance, damage and loss than they would avoid. This is an age of refined civilization and comprehensive enlightenment, one in which transactions are not as a rule conducted on the basis of an immediate exchange, but rather on that of a risk or an experiment. The man who buys a stock of goods, for instance, and opens up a store, takes upon himself a risk at the hands of the people among whom he locates; he must conform to their customs and circumstances if he sells anything at all. If they are a farming class who receive money as a rule only after the sale of crops, he must give them credit till after such sales, and in the meantime must keep up his stock without, perhaps, having the ready cash to do it, so he in turn must have credit from the concerns with which he deals. These latter, and the village dealer also, are thus constantly involved in a risk; the people trusted may not pay a sufficient proportion of their obligations at the appointed time to settle with the greater ones, or the farmers' crops may fail altogether and they be thus unable to pay anything at all, in which case the small concern goes to the wall hopelessly and its fall may seriously jostle if it does not completely overturn some one or more of the places from whence came the supplies. This kind of thing or something similar sometimes happens, but not very often; but if it occurred every day, we still could not dispense with the credit system and its attendant risks. Just fancy a store in which a man has dealt for years and always paid up, refusing further credit because it has been determined to

abandon that system of dealing! Or a hotel proprietor demanding the pay for each meal and lodging upon the receipt thereof from a registered patron who presents external evidence of ability to pay! Or a New York merchant refusing to honor a telegraphic order from a reliable firm in Salt Lake until the money arrives, although the goods might be wanted immediately and would steadily diminish in demand corresponding with the delay! Of course no one thinks of such things; and they all go to show to what extent the commercial world places confidence in its constituent particles. Yet this confidence is sometimes misplaced, oftener than otherwise through unforeseen calamities; and this all makes it necessary for each nation to establish and maintain a comprehensive rule of bankruptcy.

A bankruptcy law was passed in this country in 1800 and permitted to live but three brief years. In 1841 it was revived by Congress, (which has the sole power under the Constitution of dealing with the subject), but this time, through political agitation it did not live so long as before, its repeal taking place in 1843. After the war of the rebellion the agitation was again renewed, the pressure at that time being well nigh irresistible through the unsettled condition of business in the country, and as a measure of relief to those who were financially stranded a bill was passed in 1867. It was an *ex parte*, quixotic and most unsatisfactory contrivance, showing that the legislative as well as the business department of the land was in bad repair. It was afterwards amended—and made somewhat worse if possible—and after a fitful existence of eight years it went the way of its predecessors.

The whole country is in need of a just and impartial system governing bankruptcy, but perhaps we need it worse in Utah than do the people of other commonwealths, for we have not, like most of them, even an insolvency law. When an assignment is made here it is upon the principles of the common law and customs prevailing elsewhere, by means of which the debtor arranges things pretty much as he pleases. The subject has been brought up in several Congresses, but nothing could be agreed upon. Let us hope the next one, or the next session of this one, will take the matter in hand and keep it there until completed.

The reflections on this subject herein contained have reference of course to the greater mercantile concerns which are governed by the law of business as well as the law of Congress and the local enactments. There is no design or intention to either excuse or suggest an excuse for private individuals running recklessly into the meshes of obligations from which they cannot honorably escape, Providential calamities being excluded from the computation of the case. The remarks on the subject of debt at the recent General Conference were full of appropriateness and wisdom, and cannot be too emphatically urged upon the consideration of the people in every community of the Saints.