DESERET EVENING NEWS.

Thursday, December 1, 1898

The Deseret Evening News is published daily, Sunday excepted, at corner of South Temple and Richards streets, Salt Lake City. Regular edition at 5 o'clock.

The Deseret Semi-Weekly News is published on Tuesday and Friday of each week.

The Deseret Weekly is published every Saturday.

Daily 10 months	$7.50
Daily 6 months	4.00
Daily 3 months	2.00
Daily 1 month	75
Daily by the week	20
Semi-Weekly 12 months	2.00
Semi-Weekly 6 months	1.00
Weekly 12 months	2.00
Weekly 6 months	1.00

Payment for subscriptions always in advance.

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NEPTUNE'S DESTRUCTIVENESS.

The statement which had its origin among seafaring people and obtained wide prevalence among all classes, that a person's life of this world was safer on the sea than on the land, will at last have to pass into temporary if not permanent disuse. At the time it obtained its widest currency we had been passing through a direct and painfully monotonous period of railway casualties, a common headline in the papers being "The daily accident." At such time the chance of horrors seemed to be exclusively on the land story, shipwrecks and marine disasters generally being only occasional and some distance apart. The expression, also, smacked of that former record and in acceptance a matter of course.

All this is changed now. For a year or more Neptune has been in his wildest, most destructive mood, while the "reaper on rails" has been taking something of a vacation, his destructive work occurring quite infrequently as compared with the time previously referred to. The awful disaster to the Bourgogne has passed, which related to the sea because of having been an earlier time by it, was so horror-provoking as anything of the kind in modern times. Shortly after came one nearly as bad in the British Channel, off the coast of Cornwall, when of a large crew and passenger list of the steamer Mohegan but twenty-four survived. The opening of wintry weather with its attendant conditions of the waves has just transpired and is carrying on a series of awful occurrences off the New England coast, the latest being the total wreck of the Portland off High Head, near Provincetown, Mass., on Sunday last, and all on board, estimated at 120, were drowned. A number of bodies were washed ashore and these will doubtless be the only recoveries.

This last disaster was a peculiar one. It was not a collision, nor plunging into an iceberg or against a rock, nor yet the springing of an unmanageable leak, that caused the disruption. It seems from all accounts that the vessel was caught in the trough of the sea and overwhelmed with the mountainous billows—such an event as happens very rarely. A contemplation of all these things leads to the conclusion that a seafaring life or even a voyage is far from being unconnected with severe risks, especially in bad weather. Undoubtedly the advance of science has done something in mitigation of the terrors of the mighty deep, but these relate more to speed than to additional safeguards or the maintenance of any sort of control over the wrathy element. A trip across the Atlantic is now made in six or seven days, whereas in the sailing craft of former days were four times as long, making it sometimes a great deal more. This means and nowadays one is in the place of danger only one-fourth of the time and therefore has a three-fourths better chance of escape; it does not mean that he is less subject to harm, but that the period which which harm can overtake him has been so greatly reduced that the danger is correspondingly curtailed.

ANGLO-SAXON SUPREMACY.

The passing of the Philippine Islands into the domain of the United States gives special interest to a contribution to McClure's Magazine for December by George W. Waldron, in which the author illustrates by figures and diagrams the growth of the Anglo-Saxon race for the last five hundred years. At the beginning of that period the various dominant races commenced a policy of expansion made possible by the discoveries in the Western hemisphere, and the Latins, represented by the French, Spanish, Italians and Portuguese also were dominant. During the first two hundred years nearly all of America and the East Indies were held by France, Spain and Portugal. England had little more than the New England and Virginia colonies. Holland, alone of the Germanic nations showed any disposition to expand. Russia had just launched on her career under the firm hand of Peter the Great. In 1700 the Latins were about with 6,500,000 square miles and 41,000,000 people. Then came the Slavs with 3,500,000 square miles and 15,000,000 inhabitants. The Germanics had 1,100,000 square miles and 20,000,000 inhabitants. The Anglo-Saxons came last with only 450,000 square miles and 4,000,000 people.

Now the Anglo-Saxons are in the lead with 42,000,000 people, or nearly one-third of the entire population of the world. They control over 12,000,000 square miles, while the Latin races hold 14,000,000 square miles with 56,000,000 inhabitants; the Slavs 8,000,000 square miles with a population of 146,000,000, and the Germanics 2,350,000 square miles with 120,000,000 people. That is, in ten years a race once the smallest in numbers now leads, while the formerly leading race is fast disappearing from the world's stage. In another century the Anglo-Saxons may occupy the two Americas, Australia, Asia and nearly all of Africa.

There are many causes for this victorious progress of the Anglo-Saxon race, of the chief of them, it appears, that their institutions, based on what are upon the principles of individual liberty, are best calculated to develop the human race in every respect. The Latin institutions that Napoleon sought to carry out in Europe, and that those now in Mexico are, and that those had in Peru, are notions are inconsistent with accomplishment. The Anglo-Saxons undoubtedly have such a balance of possessions which no other race is qualified to take, and although the balance may not go for perfectly good, in a general way it is to be presumed the world is drawn for the universal rule of the Top of God. The people of the United States and Great Britain would do well never to lose this ability and other and of view. They have become in a sense the guardians of the destiny of the kingdom, as were those the Jews and then the Romans. They are supposed to know something of the foreign nations and place them in reserves and should always their policy accordingly.

MUNICIPAL REFORM MOVEMENT.

At the national conference on city government that met yesterday, Nov. 30, at Indianapolis, a report will be made by a committee that has drafted a plan for the government of American cities. This document, which has been prepared by Horace E. Deming, Esq., of New York, Charles Richardson, of Philadelphia, Albert Shaw and Prof. F. J. Goodnow, of New York, Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff and Dr. Leo S. Rowe, of Philadelphia, and Prof. E. J. James, of Chicago, embodies the reforms believed to be necessary to municipal government. Its provisions are classified under the following four heads: Division of the responsibility to the state, powers of the municipality, procedure in the exercise of municipal functions and the elective franchise and the application of the merit principle of the administrative service.

Under the first head the committee says:

"The inadequacy of the constitutional provisions and of the existing provisions of special legislation has been an experience common to most of our municipalities. The tendency of the Supreme has manifestly been to construe the two main causes of such failure are:

"1. The absence of a definition of special legislation in the Constitution itself, the result of which is to permit such matters classification as is in reality but a special legislation under the guise of general laws.

"2. The narrow power granted to cities which notwithstanding moderate provisions to the legislature for further powers and then systematically denies to cities the exercise of legislative discretion. The committee has therefore attempted to define special legislation and to provide that such shall be applicable to all the cities of the state or all the subdivisions thereof. The reasons proposed requires for such measures the action of an overwhelming majority of the legislature, and in case of the disapproval of any of the cities affected increases the safeguards by requiring that the two-thirds majority shall include three-fourths of the members of the legislature from districts outside of the city or cities affected.

"In order further to reduce the necessity for special legislation the amendment provides for a liberal grant of municipal powers, thus diminishing the dependence of the city upon the state legislature. The committee has felt that the method of regulating special legislation will protect the paramount interests of the state, and, at the same time, assure to the cities all necessary freedom of action. As a further guarantee to such freedom of action, the amendment provides that all cities having a population of 25,000 or over may frame their own charters, subject to the constitution and to such power of the legislature to pass laws under the restrictions of the existing special legislation above outlined.

The section fencing of municipal corporation purposes to abolish fixed terms of office except for officials elected by popular vote. The mayor and the members of the city council are the only officers so elected. Restrictions are further placed on the ability to contract debt, except in cases of urgent need, for the purchase or construction of revenue-producing public works, which are held not to represent a real financial burden, since interest and sinking fund charges are usually paid out of the profits of these enterprises.

As to franchises, the committee says:

"Careful constitutional provisions have been formulated as to the method of granting franchises. That such franchises should only be granted for a limited period or a prospective that has now received very general acceptation. The application of this principle is of importance in a number of cases, especially Illinois, where the legislative authority is distributed in the constitutional alternative between a local option and a grant of a valuable franchise for an indefinite period is in fact, if not in law, irrevocable. The Illinois Gilbert case such a franchise makes it impossible for a city to substitute an improved system of lighting for the existing. The end which is sought in the law has had in view has been to prevent the franchise grant in the future or to compel the city, if it desires to avail itself of the right of taking control of a public franchise, to pay a reasonable price for the franchise. The Illinois or the Illinois Bell Telephone case, which, in the opinion of the Supreme Court, has been a disaster, if not to Illinois, yet generally speaking, has been the result of legislation in but the limited application of the idea of granting franchises for a term of years, but it seems to be a salutary remedy in the efforts for municipal reform."

The national municipal league was organized in New York in 1894. It is now an organization of about one hundred societies, which are striving for the betterment of municipal government. The league's aim is to promote the permanent improvement of cities as municipal corporations distinguished from issues of state and nation. Hardly, this might be said to involve principles essential to the well-being of the city, the discussion of national party lines is forbidden at its meetings, attention is given to civil service reform, and the application of honest business methods to the conduct of city affairs.

ISLAND-GRABBING.

The war things terminated are going and here gone of the secret to take some of the heavy one of an expression made regarding Great Britain's disposition to seize some time ago—that it was dispensing for islands to be left out over night. Every one of the great powers of Europe has its eye fixed upon some "nation or some doll, some island or some cave" which it is hoped may be secured in possession without stirring up a general row. So strained has become the visit which each nominating put into fishing out for a chance for itself but to observe what all the others are up to, that a purely innocent proceeding some distance away is looked upon with suspicion. It meant so in the case that our British friends were recently falsely accused of stealing a Siamese archipelago southeast of Shanghai and directly at the commercial highway to that great port. Something what was intended to be done is not done because of the strong protest in time, and this may prove to have been such a case, for be that as it may, it has been explained that what was supposed to be the British flag floating on one of the islands was in reality a universal signal set there by a vessel engaged in charting the coast. This is perhaps satisfactory for the present, but the question arises, why, even if it does not find real expression—for what purpose are the Englishmen charting the coast?

The newspapers take different views of the case. One that is nearer to the place is quicker than any other to the contrary or in Europe—the San Francisco Chronicle—holds that the islands would not be occupied by a British objective, and thinks that unwillingness to take Chinese the cause of the group referred to, may be due to the desire not to give France a pretext for seizing Hainan, the island farther south. It may be regarded as the clear intent of the British, if trouble comes with Russia and France, to take Hainan herself and use it as a base of operations against the French possession of Tonquin. With this object in view it is of course, desirable that France should not get a chance now to occupy, fortify and garrison Hainan, which afterward would be hard to take, if not impossible of holding out indefinitely.

But the nearest trouble seems a movement of the British fleet upon Port Arthur, which action is supposed to be entirely diplomatic in its character, but it may be otherwise both subjects heterodox.

It is sometimes ruefully suggested that the United States has no right to object to island-grabbing by other nations, for have those who claims or defend its recently promoted purpose of acquisition such a right. Why not? By what rule of law or of international equity are they excepted from so doing? Is it the case that some people are so narrow of visual and reason—so poor that they judge of all cases indiscriminately? Such judges would make no distinction between the man who slays another to defend his own life and the one who murders for cash. Such are as nearly in their spheres as they would be on the bench. There is no similarity in the cases presented by the United States in acquiring Porto Rico and the Philippines and that of the nation which lies in wait for an opportunity to gather in some unprotected island just for the sake of having it. One is a legitimate proceeding growing out of the early conditions of a war settlement, the other a matter of speculation, the gratification of an acquisitive appetite, or the desire to have and hold strategic points against possible complications and so initiate controls. In our case, the enemy was defeated after a severe struggle and had no money with which to pay the customary indemnity, and it was left as a case of territory or nothing. Besides this it still remains an unanswered question—What else could the United States do than hold the Philippines and be equal to all demands of humanity, integrity and faithfulness? Turn them back to Spain? One of the objects of the war was to end Spain's domination over her oppressed dependencies and to do that would be to create every one of the principles above set out. Leave the rule insurgents in possession and control? They are notoriously of mixed blood and without the power of acting as a self-governing body.