

ready money on hand, dollar for dollar, than the payee! While the coin was changing hands from ruler to ruler one way, it was coming back from people to people the other way. This took but a few years, and then began practical preparations on the most comprehensive scale ever designed for a military system whose cost has been almost inconceivable. This embraced not only the rehabilitation of the army and navy but the adoption of a far-reaching system of frontier defenses on a plan entirely new to military science, and this is supposed to be as nearly perfect as it is possible for such work to be. France has spent upon her army alone within the time named the colossal sum of eighteen hundred million dollars! The amount absorbed by the navy is not given, but must be nearly as much more, and the cost of the outposts and unnamed items in connection with the entire defensive establishment would doubtless require many figures to represent it. This is "armed peace!"—the penalty which Germany has imposed upon almost the whole of Europe.

Ever since the declaration of peace between these feudal enemies, France has one way and another been preparing herself as if for others and showing that never again will she be found in a struggle in such a shameful state of preparation—or lack of it—as when Louis Napoleon declared war in 1870. It is not overstating the case to say that she is now better equipped for war than at any time during the century. So also is Germany, and Austria, and Italy; so also would be Russia but for the distressing famine which has not yet let go its hold upon the peasantry. It all leads us to conclude that the dogs of war have not been unleashed on several occasions because of the retarding effect which a contemplation of the awful destruction that would ensue has had upon those who sit in authority.

A NEEDED REFORM.

There are two public holidays which we have permitted to become days of merry-making, of pleasure, and in too many cases of indulgence, when if we would but stop to investigate their character, commencing with their origin, we would at once see how utterly inappropriate if not irreverent it all is. These days are Christmas and Decoration day. They are presumably taken from the common calendar and given a separate and distinct station because commemorative of sacred and sorrowful events rather than those which incite to sensuous indulgence or frivolous observance. One is the reminder of an Immaculate Birth, the other a *memento mori* keeping before our mental vision the forms that went down in the awful whirlpool of war by means of which a nation was bound together more firmly than before. Are these fitting occasions for mirth, wassail and roystering?

The late George William Curtis, who made the "Easy Chair" of *Harper's Magazine* famous throughout two continents, closed his career in that department with a note of warning which is appropriate

to the occasion. The language is simply a plea for Christmas, which Mr. Curtis believes is becoming a sham festival. The tendency nowadays is to make the holiday "a vast and ostentatious expense, a lavish display, a toilsome and exhaustive endeavor to give something to all your acquaintance, a wearisome anticipation and a painful suspicion that somebody has been omitted."

It is observed that a good many people are of this way of thinking, but have not permitted their thoughts to be put into words or actions to make the situation different to what it is. As one writer has it—"The vulgarity with which some construe the customs and traditions of the day is only to be measured—as they themselves would have it measured—by the size of the diamonds, the cost of the seal-skins used in performing the gorgeous rite." A good time to begin a reformation in this respect would be right now with a Christmas but a few weeks ahead of us. The manner in which the day is to be observed will be as it has been for a long time past unless the reformatory agency begins at once and at home. It is a responsibility which we owe to civilization, to society, to the rising generation, to Christianity itself, to check if we cannot at once expunge the vulgar and all but barbarous practices which prevail on what should be a day of grace, peace and repose. Let us reform as to this, not indifferently, but altogether!

POLITICAL PROPHECYING.

The chairman of the Democratic National committee, Mr. W. F. Harrity, has an article in the current number of the *North American Review*, in which he foretells the election of Cleveland and gives the reasons for the faith that is in him. Among the indications upon which Mr. Harrity relies is the historical fact that of late years the drift of public sentiment as shown by the elections for the House of Representatives midway between those for the Presidency has been an unerring forecast of what was going to take place two years later. That the contests for the Presidency have so far resulted in favor of the party which carried the House two years before is undeniable, but that this is a precedent amounting to a criterion is another thing altogether, as that gentleman, being an astute politician, ought to understand. If it were otherwise, and the people this year kept pace with their movement two years ago, Mr. Harrison would not carry over half a dozen states; yet surely no Democrat is so blinded with partisan infatuation as to think anything of this kind. Is it not rather the case that reflecting men on both sides of the political line appreciate the reality that the outcome is more doubtful now than it usually is, that it will be so close; in fact, that a few thousand or it may be hundred votes in New York state will determine the choice? Undoubtedly.

Again, Mr. Harrity being a politician by profession and practice ought to know by observation as well as reflection that a free people in partisan politics means a more or less sickle people, a community intent upon having its wishes obeyed and realizing in the

fullest manner its own supremacy, so that when things don't go exactly right a change of front, rear and both flanks is a thing to be reasonably looked for. In view of such situation there can be no reliable precedents; each case stands by itself or falls in the same way. The people acted very much like an animated avalanche in 1890; they very nearly swept the party then in power in every branch of the government, out of existence in the popular one, at least they gave the opposition such a colossal majority over all that the latter were practically powerless. That did not show that the people had left the Republican party *en masse* and gone over to the Democrats to stay; it merely meant that they were dissatisfied with some of the legislation of the preceding Congress and wanted it recorded in an unmistakable way. It also meant that they don't in these times look with special favor upon any party having unopposed control at headquarters. And thus they made the opposition majority in the House of Representatives big enough to emphasize that fact, understanding that with such a top-heavy preponderance there the other two branches of the government would not only be powerless to enact purely partisan measures, but would also be warned if not to some extent awed by such an unprecedented uprising of the sovereigns. It does not follow that by reason of this they are going to go on as they began, but rather the reverse; having accomplished their purpose they can now afford, and will doubtless prefer, to act with greater consideration and moderation. It may be that they will not completely reverse what they did two years ago and give the House to the Republicans, but that they will materially reduce the Democratic majority is reasonably certain, in fact there are very few Democratic speakers or papers that deny it.

The unexpected happens in politics oftener than in any other department of civilized and enlightened life; and it would be otherwise were Mr. Harrity or anyone else able to establish a gauge by means of which the people's forthcoming action at the ballot box could be determined. They will most assuredly do about as they please to do, especially in those states where the Australian ballot system prevails. We may say with reasonable certainty that no artificial contrivance or ordinary issue will change the customary trend in some of the commonwealths, and thus we figure with reasonable certainty that Vermont will go Republican and Texas Democratic. But such information is a *tuus a non lucendo*; it does not enlighten at all. No human agency can tell us exactly or even approximately how New York will go, and herein is the nucleus of the whole situation; for the Empire state electors will vote for the next President beyond a doubt. If Mr. Harrity's method of determining the outcome were to be entirely relied upon, we might as well say at once that New York will go for Cleveland—one conclusion being equivalent to the other—and who is there, Democrat or Republican, that would care to have a valuable stake, the loss of which could not be replaced, depending upon such an outcome?

It is always safe to be safe, and po