

[From the New York Times, April 6.]

## IS IT IMBECILITY OR TREACHERY?

Congress met nineteen weeks ago. Gold, which is the only real barometer of national credit and public confidence, then sold fifty-two per cent, over the money of the Government. It now sells at seventy-four per cent. over. What has been the cause of this weakening of the national credit? Not disaster in the field. We have had none. Not any loss of our military strength. Our armies have never been stronger than to-day. Not any diminution of the resources of the North. Northern industry was never so active or so profitable. What, then, is the cause of it? The cause is to be found in the south wing of the National Capitol—there and nowhere else. It lies in the flagrant unfaithfulness of those who were sent there to be the Representatives of the people.

The Constitution declares that "all bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives." It thus devolved upon that branch of Congress the special responsibility of maintaining the public credit. The Executive branch of the Government, through its financial head, Mr. Chase, on the fourth day of the session presented a detailed and clear statement of the financial necessities of the Government, and urged in strong language that they should be early provided for. It declared, and with unquestionable truth, that measures of taxation must be the chief means of effecting this, laying down the broad principle, "It is hardly too much, perhaps hardly enough, to say that every dollar raised for the extraordinary expenditures, or reduction of debt, is worth two in the increased value of national securities, and increased facilities for the negotiation of indispensable loans. The Executive did its full duty in exhibiting the financial situation, and invoking prompt legislative action to meet its requirements."

With all these tremendous responsibilities resting upon it, the House of Representatives has yet done nothing. December, up to Christmas, it spent in introducing resolutions, and letting off a large amount of buncombe generally against the rebellion. It then adjourned for twelve days, without any decent reason. There can be no decent reason why Congressmen, alone of all public servants in the land, and alone of all people above the condition of loafers, should abandon all work for twelve days when the old year goes out and the new year comes in. The merchant, or the lawyer, or the mechanic who should quit business or work for so long a time, with no better reason; would be despised. January was largely employed in concealing and spouting over some more resolutions. Toward the latter part of the month there was some blood-and-thunder talk about confiscation, and a decision to branch out in that line as soon as there was an opening. The subject was about as appropriate to the actual situation, as if it had related to property in the moon. In February the main attention was given to the whisky tax. A pretty good beginning was made toward putting a proper tax on this article, but in a little time, by some unaccountable influence, the whisky interests carried the day. So nothing was made by that. The other matter taken in hand was the Senate Enrollment Bill, which the Senate had passed in order to give the former law practical effect. The House nullified it all by reducing the commutation back from four hundred to three hundred dollars, and by making that commutation exempt for three years instead of for the particular draft. In March, a bill for the establishment of a Bureau for Freedmen was passed. The little Gold Bill was taken up and rejected by a strong vote, and with characteristic consistency was passed a few days afterward by a vote just as strong. The bill regulating and perfecting Secretary Chase's system of national banks was taken up, and clobbered over with all sorts of incongruous amendments, and turned into such a piece of botchwork that it was kicked out of doors in disgust. Since April came in we have had a foray upon the Camden and Amboy Railroad that has come to nothing; a fulmination of loud words against the Emperor Napoleon's operations in Mexico; and a Quixotic, disgraceful raid against the freedom of debate.

We defy any man in that House to put his finger on a solitary measure passed by it, calculated to increase the financial strength of the government one iota. The thing has not been seriously attempted. The nineteen weeks have been utterly wasted in empty speech-making, or in dawdling over irrelevant matters, or in working positive mischief. The body has shirked all serious work. Upon no question, save when, as in Long's case, some uncommon folly was to be committed, have more than two-thirds of the members voted; and for much of the time, it has been almost impossible to keep up a quorum. In the face of such flagitious unfaithfulness on the part of the legislative branch to which the financial concerns of the country are especially intrusted, the wonder is that our financial credit has not been even more grievously weakened—that there is not even a wider hiatus between gold and greenbacks.

The people have been patient under this up to the uttermost point of endurance. We warn the House to set about their proper business, if they care to escape an outburst of indignation that would politically ruin every man of them. The American people, beyond all free people that ever existed, are tolerant of imposition; but it is not in their nature, nor in human nature, to bear quietly such faithlessness in a crisis so fearful. They know full well

that the only danger in this struggle of the Government is the financial danger, and that this danger must be fatal, unless there be timely and wise action on the part of their public servants. They know, too, that the prices of all the necessities of life are daily becoming more burdensome, and must become insupportable unless the currency is adjusted to a sounder basis. They know that it is the business of Congress, and especially of the popular branch of Congress, to protect the public credit, and remedy every financial evil. They intend to hold the House to that responsibility. They do not intend that their business and industry shall be smothered with worthless paper; that their children shall be bowed down by a mountain of debt; that their brothers in the field shall shed their blood for nought; that the flag of the country shall go down in ruin and disgrace. And they do not intend to put up with this remissness in the National Capitol, which they are fast learning to look upon not as mere remissness, but as infamous treachery.

[From the London Society Magazine.]

## THE GULLIBILITY OF MAN.

Not long since a case of swindling before a London magistrate made known the fact that a livery stable keeper, a man with some opportunity of learning the habits of society, had actually lent a man five shillings and paid for two glasses of gin and water, at eleven o'clock in the morning, on the representation that he was Lord John Russell, in a great hurry to go down to Windsor.

A humorous friend of ours, while boasting of the success of some absurd poem he had published, gravely said the Queen Dowager was so much pleased with it that she sent him a very friendly note to make his acquaintance, and if he came near Bushy Park, she trusted he would slip in and take a glass of sherry.

This, of course, was a jest; but the following, which would betray no less ignorance of the manners and customs of the royal family of England in the middle of the nineteenth century, was no jest; but we can honestly venture to record it as evidence of the extraordinary degree of ignorance which is compatible even with age, experience, and fair standing in society.

A retired naval officer, apt to boast at the expense of truth, a man of good property and standing in the society of North Devon, who also possessed landed property in the Isle of Wight, actually described over a dinner-table a half hour's haggie he pretended to have carried face to face with Her Majesty about some fields adjoining Osborne, which fields he alleges Her Majesty wanted to buy too cheap; but he plainly told Her Majesty that happy as he should be to oblige her, land was land now-a-days; so we parted without a deal.

The remarks we have to make upon a man's gullibility we preface with these instances of ignorance, because where such ignorance is possible, credulity and imposition must of course be possible to the same extent. And whenever anything occurs to startle us with the credulity of the world, we shall find, on consideration, that error is traceable to one of two distinct principles.

The first is that the standard of probability is at fault, the dupe is a poor observer of reality, and a bad judge of truth. The *vraisemblance* of the French, or the *verisimile* of the Romans, are more expressive words than our word probable. These words remind us that probability depends on resemblance to the truth; and, naturally, persons who have an imperfect knowledge of the real must also be bad judges of the counterfeit. They may argue rationally, but from wrong data, which led them to ridiculous conclusions.

The second cause of credulity is, that the greed of money, or other violent passion or affection of the mind, makes us see through a delusive medium. We see only one side of the matter, the mind being dragged so forcibly in one direction that we cannot see the other.

In the latter case it matters not how sensible and sane on other points may be the victim of the temporary hallucination, for it was not a question of wit, but attention; and Bishop Butler very wisely observed, though a man have the best eyes in the world, he can only see the way he turns them.

In the late novel by the author of "Twenty Years in the Church," the plot turns on the clever devices of one Hannah Hagen, a very remarkable adventuress. The scheme is so remarkable that the author vindicates the probability of his story that "he pledges himself that, from his own limited experience, he could name no less than three adventuresses who severally victimized gentlemen of good standing and worldly experience by stories yet more easy to detect."

In all the notable instances of imposture on the one hand and of credulity on the other, we shall find the two sources of error centering in one and the same person. We may trace a degree of ignorance of men and manners, and of the way persons in any given state of society, rank, or character, act under particular circumstances. We may trace, also, a state of mental delusion, an impatience of testing a made up story even by the little experience that the victim happened to possess.

Having reason to believe—especially from some remarks in the press while reviewing this popular story—that some curiosity has been excited on the subject, we are happy in being favored with the following account of the three facts stranger than fiction to which the novelist referred:—

I. A friend of the author one day told him that an extraordinary adventure in real life, with, with which members of his family had been nearly connected, happened in the following manner:—

One day, about twenty years since, at the end of the session, as Mr. Salter, an Irish member of Parliament, was returning home by the London and Northwestern railway, he became much interested in the conversation of two of his fellow-travelers—a young officer with a lady companion. When the train stopped at the Wolverhampton, the officer came up to Mr. Salter and said, that however strange it might seem, he was encouraged by his profession to reveal to Mr. Salter circumstances personal to himself and lady friend. The fact was they were both on their way to Gretna Green; the lady was flying from a brute of a father who, because she would not be persuaded to sacrifice herself and fortune to some very objectionable suitor, had used her so ill that she did not dare to return to his house again; while the young officer was fired with love, ennobled by pity, at once to rescue a charming girl from the extremity of misery, and (of course, he promised himself,) to raise her to the serenest altitude of mortal bliss and joy without end.

"Well, well!" said the M. P., "no man alive is more ready to help a fine fellow in a strait like this. But—but—you know what the world is made of; you know business is business, there are some ordinary forms and precautions in use among men of the world, and therefore,—not that I suspect anything for a moment, all is too simple and artless; but the long and the short of the matter is, I must just, *pro forma*, have the satisfaction of hearing the sad case you relate, asking a few questions of the lady also."

The story of the fugitive lady seemed to the open-hearted M. P. as simple, as ingenuous, and as transparent as that of the gentleman; and as a striking corroboration of the description which the officer had given of the suddenness of the determination to elope—the lady had no luggage of any kind! Young runaway ladies do usually secrete a bundle by help of the waiting maid, but one pocket-handkerchief and one parasol formed the complete inventory of the lady's superfluities. The officer related that he met the lady of his love that very morning in Rotten Row, attended, as usual, by her maid, and from painful information from that maid received, had hurried the ill-used lady all in a moment to fly from the cruel designs of her most unnatural father on the wings of love and—the London and Northwestern Railway.

The Irish gentleman was quite excited by the tale. He was also, like his countrymen in general, delighted at the dash of adventure and the romance of the movement. What Irishman's sympathies ever failed to take with those who show themselves superior to the stupidities of order or of law?

"My purse," he said, "is at your disposal, but unfortunately at the present moment there is nothing in it. All I can say is, come over with me to Dublin, I then can get at my money. This unavoidable delay, however provoking, will, at all events, baffle all imaginable pursuit, and Gretna will be reached without further impediments of any kind."

The officer and lady accepted the kind proposal, accompanied by his friend in need to Dublin, and received cash quite equal to their necessities. The good friend's wife also volunteered her assistance, and lent articles from her wardrobe to obviate the inconvenience of so precipitate an expedition.

As soon as we had heard the story so far, we naturally anticipated that the end of the matter would prove to be that the Irish gentleman never saw his money, and that his good lady's wardrobe remained *minus* all the garments so kindly supplied. But not so, the money was punctually repaid and the wearing apparel was as honestly returned. That there was a dupe in the case was true enough, but the dupe was the officer, not the friend.

For the officer conducted his bride to his father's house, and as soon as time had been allowed for some kind of overtures to the relatives of the runaway lady to appear only reasonable, all parties were surprised to observe that there was a continued refusal on the part of the lady, who every day found some fresh reason for delay when offers of intercession were forced upon her. At last some one remarked that never once in the morning's distribution of the contents of the letter-bag, there had been a single epistle addressed to the bride—Albeit, a lady of fortune with a large circle of family connections. Surely all her relatives and friends could not be so implacably offended; and if so, displeasure finds its vent in words as often as in emphatic silence.

When suspicion is once excited, the days of imposture are few indeed, and the bride was soon compelled to confess that she had no father, cruel or kind; that she had no fortune, and—it was readily concluded—she had no character; and her pretended lady's maid as little as herself.

And what became of the unhappy officer who had linked himself to an abandoned woman for a life?

Most fortunately, a rigid investigation of her antecedents elicited that she had another husband living, so the second marriage was void; and the threat of a prosecution for bigamy gave the family little trouble for the future.

II. The second case of successful imposture to which the author of "Dragons' Teeth" alludes, he has related thus:—

Some years since, while living in the city of

Chester, I became acquainted with a Mr. Buller, (this name will serve) an Oxonian, about three-and-twenty years of age—member of an excellent family, who was reading for holy orders. He was a man of an excellent character, of some accomplishments, especially music, and was generally much esteemed as a man highly honorable and utterly incapable of deceit by all who knew him. After about a year, he went to visit his father and mother—persons of middle age and of ordinary intelligence and worldly experience; and during his absence, a report reached Chester that Mr. Buller was engaged to be married to a ward of Chancery, a lady of noble family and of immense estates in England, with chateau and wide domains in Italy also.

In the course of time, Mr. Buller rejoined his Chester relatives, but only for a visit of a few days, and brought his intended wife and introduced her to my family as among the most intimate of his friends in that city. The morning after he visited us alone, was very communicative, and related incidents in the lady's history more like a romance than sober truth. However, the more strange this adventure, we felt the more impossible that he could be deceived; for, as to staring improbabilities, where we believe the narrator, we naturally think no one would dare utter them unless true. Still, everything seemed to set at defiance the experience of our lives, as also the evidence of all our senses.

1. The lady, he said, wanted a few weeks of being of age, although she seemed to us five-and-thirty at least; but—she had survived an illness so remarkable, and had also an accident which resulted in diminishing the blood of her youthful features.

2. The lady was an accomplished musician; her singing and playing were the envy of professors; but, just at that time there was a reason that she could not give her intended husband a sample of either.

3. She was an excellent linguist, but, when some ladies from the continent addressed her in French as naturally as they would speak English, she drew back at once; she did not deem it consistent with her etiquette of high life to parade her accomplishments by talking French in English society.

In short, a mystery hung over everything; if Lord Eldon (he was the Chancellor) for so she persuaded Mr. Buller—what he was doing with so wealthy a ward, above all, if he dared to marry her before she was of age, he would be imprisoned for contempt of court.

It so happened that the Marchioness of Conyngham was at that time announced as spending a few days in Chester, whereupon the lady at once exclaimed, "I must avoid all the leading streets, for if the Marchioness only catches a glimpse of me, she will tell Lord Eldon to a certainty, and we shall be undone." The end of all was, Mr. Buller was tricked into marrying a woman whose connection with the peerage and extensive estates will be best understood if we say she had once been a servant in the family of Lord —.

This adventuress deceived not only one young man, but all his family, carrying on the imposition over a period of many months. She was even working coronets on a baby's robe when the imposture was discovered! Mr. Buller and his family were select in their society as most country gentlemen, so it has always been unintelligible how this woman ever attained a position even to attempt so audacious a deception as this.

III. The third instance of marrying under a mistake, which the author of "Drawing Teeth" had in view, happened about twenty years since, in the west of England, and at the time supplied points for repeated application to the law courts for setting aside the marriage, but we believe without effect. This case may be very briefly told, though it resembles the plot of the novel aforesaid more nearly than either of the other instances.

A merchant of middle age had, unhappily for him, provoked either the mirth or the malice of a female relative—Mrs. Clyde—who determined to practise on his credulity by taking advantage at the same time both of his vanity and his greed.

It was well known to the merchant that the heiress of large estates was living in Steep street. With this lady, Mrs. Clyde pretended to have become acquainted, and being quite her *confidante* in affairs of the heart, gladdened the ears of the merchant with the news that the heiress had set her affections upon him, fired by his mere looks—a case of love at the very first sight.

The only personal communication the bridegroom elect could be allowed, was on one occasion to kiss the hand of a lady through a half-opened door.

The connection between Mrs. Clyde and the heiress, who in reality was quite a stranger to her, pretended *confidante* and go-between, was established to the satisfaction of the gentleman in a very ingenious manner. While Mrs. Clyde and the gentleman were passing the lady's house on one occasion, the lady was observed at the window. In an instant Mrs. Clyde said she would just run in and bring him a few words in the lady's handwriting. Accordingly, she knocked at the door, ran in past the servants, as if quite intimate, saying:—"Your mistress, I see, is in the drawing-room," pretended that she and the clergyman of the parish were collecting for coal for the poor, and with an apology for the sudden intrusion, said that the loan of a pen would oblige. Pen and ink were produced, when Mrs. Clyde's hand, she said, was so numbed, and would you be so kind as to write these few words for me? From that hour all chance