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A GRAVE QUESTION.

HUMAN affairs are rapidly attaining a condition of incomparable perplexity. Before a great while, judging from the shape events and conditions are assuming, this important question will be forced upon mankind: Is human wisdom adequate for the gigantic task of legislating so as to effectively control human avarice?

That this ability exists in man aside from direct communication with the Creator in the light of the general drift of mortal concerns, may well be doubted. The human ingenuity equal to the formulation of laws for the proper regulation of society is constantly met and overcome by a counter ability to evade their application.

That this question is a living one is not only suggested by the multitudinous instances of the grasping for self and power by one class of people, all over the world, to the detriment and misery of the others, but also by attempts that are being made to meet the subject and grapple with it. Republic though it be, in no country is the unscrupulous pursuit of wealth and its concentration among classes more conspicuous than in this; hence the increasing agitation of the subject relating to the prevention or curtailment of massive fortunes. Men are thinking of methods that will cure the financial wrongs that are growing every day more and more glaring, but no suggestion has been made that will so much as touch the subject.

Some of our readers are aware of the discussion that is going on in this country in reference to the advisability of inserting a clause in the Constitution for the purpose of limiting fortunes, by providing that no person within the boundaries of the United States shall own or possess beyond a stated amount. Although this question has been recently agitated the subject is not new, having, as we understand it, been suggested nearly ten years ago, by Robert Rodney, paymaster of the United States Navy. That gentleman formulated and gave to the public, as a proposed constitutional amendment, on February 2, 1870, the following:

"No citizen or resident or investor, in any of the States, Territories or District, comprising the United States, shall be permitted to possess, in all kinds of property, an aggregate value of more than ten millions of dollars: which sum shall be the limit of private property in any individual, joint individual, guardian, trustee, or other form or device of private estate ownership. And whenever or wherever such private ownership, or holding, shall be found to exceed the limit above named, the surplus shall all be condemned as a public nuisance and a public peril, and be accordingly confiscated into the United States Treasury; from which it shall be, from time to time, apportioned among all the State Treasuries. And the States, etc., shall, each and all, enforce the amendment by necessary or penal legislation: failing which, Congress shall so enforce it."

The author of this proposed patch upon the Constitution appended the following in the form of a note:

"Archcoveters, under the above compulsion, would divide their surplus among their relatives and friends, and stop the excessive absorbing. The framers of the Constitution would undoubtedly have provided some such common-sense restriction, had they foreseen the evil. Unlimited greed would not then have indulged in five thousand millions railroad-watering; for which, by corresponding fares and freights, we must be taxed till doom."

It is evident that Mr. Rodney's mind has, on this subject, taken up one line of thought and investigation—the intended effect of such an amendment. Had his mind been a double-lens arrangement, he would have been able to see that the man of mammoth fortune could evade by the very process he prescribed for him, the operation of such an enactment—the distribution among relatives and friends. This being a day of trusts and combines it would be easy for the American Croesus to make his relatives and friends so many receptacles for his wealth, that such an amendment and enactment made in conformity with it could be overridden or evaded by the constant conflict going on between the ability to legislate for the regulation of affairs and the ingenuity to evade laws made and provided for that purpose.

In its general affairs the world appears hastening to a crisis. The culmination will doubt-

less demonstrate the futility of the efforts of mankind without divine direction to govern themselves. Out of the coming troubles will arise a new and better condition. This will be when, after the ordeal of terrible experience, men will be ready to be taught of God the true principles of government, and seeing their beauty, readily conform to their conditions.

SUCCESSFUL TYPE-SETTING MACHINE.

In the manufacture of paper, and in every branch of the printing and publishing business, save that of type-setting, great improvements have been made, especially during the present century. But the art of type-setting is substantially in the same condition today, in most printing establishments, that it was when movable types were first used. Many inventors have racked their brains in the effort to devise a machine which would replace "the intelligent compositor." Wires, levers and springs have often been arranged in such a manner as to grasp the meaning of "copy," as well as many of the genus referred to appear to do; but the obstacles which have most puzzled inventors, are the distribution of the type after being set and used, and the "justifying" of the lines. In other words, several machines have been invented and used which would set the type, but it has been necessary to distribute it, in the old way. Another portion of the work of setting type, which has hitherto been done by hand exclusively, is the "justifying," or spacing out to the proper length of the lines.

But a machine has at length been so far perfected that it will do all the work of setting and distributing the type, except "justifying." It is called "The Thorne type-setting and distributing machine," and has been in use for some months in the office of the Hartford (Conn.) Evening Post. We are in receipt of a copy of that paper dated the first inst., which contains engravings and a full description of the Thorne machine, coupled with the statement that all of the reading matter of the issue was set by the machine. As this invention is a great stride in the direction of cheap and rapid type-setting, which means cheaper and more abundant reading matter, we subjoin a part of the description of it given by the Post:

"The Thorne Type-setting machine consists of two iron cylinders, about fifteen inches in diameter, placed perpendicularly one above the other, in the external surface of each of which are cut longitudinally ninety channels or receptacles for the types which are to be used in it. Within the channels of the lower cylinder are inserted 'wards,' or small steel projections extending in various relative positions through their entire length, which correspond respectively with 'nicks' specially made in the type—the purpose of which is, in distributing the letters, to automatically divert each letter from the mass of letters in the upper or distributing cylinder to its appropriate place in the lower or setting-cylinder, so that each channel in the latter shall receive types of only the particular character intended for and adapted to it. The work of distribution is thus carried on automatically by the revolution of the upper cylinder upon its axis, which in rapid succession places the various types in position to be released from the distributing-cylinder, when they instantly drop of their own weight into orderly position in the setting-cylinder, as above indicated. The type setting is performed by manipulations upon a key-board on which the characters of the language are represented, very much as upon an ordinary type-writer. These keys communicate directly with the setting cylinder above mentioned, each stroke of a key releasing a letter, and, by the aid of a revolving disc, transferring it from its channel in the cylinder to its place in the continuous line of reading matter which the operator is 'setting.' This continuous line is broken up into shorter lines and justified to a proper length for the columns of a newspaper or the pages of a book, according to the work on which the machine is employed.

The process of distributing the types is carried on, as before indicated, automatically, and with very much greater rapidity than, and at the same time with the setting. When the setting cylinder is full the distributing cylinder ceases to revolve, but may be started again instantly at the will of the operator whenever it becomes necessary to replenish the former; and thus the distributing mechanism is active or at rest according to the demand made upon it by the activity of the operator. It is an exceedingly interesting feature of the machine, which alone gives it great advantage over hand work, that no time is required to 'fill the cases,' the automatic distributing cylinder rendering the supply of types in the setting cylinder continuous and inexhaustible.

Three persons are required to operate each machine: one at the key-board, a second to break up and justify the lines, and the third to keep the distributing-cylinder 'loaded' and maintain a general supervision. With expert help one machine will set and distribute six thousand ems per hour, or from five to six times as much as the most rapid hand compositor. The work is not particularly laborious, and it is found by experience that intelli-

gent girls are fully as well adapted as men to become efficient operators. The machines in this office have until recently been run by an electric motor; but they are now connected with both the motor and the steam engine which furnishes power for the machinery in the press room, as a provision against possible detention by accident to either source. They are so light running that a single horse power is sufficient for half a dozen machines."

Several leading newspapers in the country are having portions of their type set by machinery, but the Hartford Evening Post is the first to entirely dispense with hand composition. From the success of the Thorne machine it would appear that the days of manuscript-maker's worst foe, the compositor, are numbered; and that to earn a livelihood he must seek some other calling. But this evil, if it be an evil, will probably be in part compensated by the fact that a new employment will be opened to girls and women, thousands of whom are likely to be wanted as operators of type-setting machines.

WILLIAM'S WARLIKE WAYS.

EMPEROR WILLIAM, of Germany, like his illustrious grandfather, evidently supports the Napoleonic theory of Providence being on the side of the heaviest battalions, for certain it is that he seems to rely largely, if not entirely, upon the army as the chief pillar upon which the national structure rests. The number of times and the vast amounts of claims to the Reichstag for money for military purposes is greatly in excess of anything of like nature in the recent history of Germany, and there are no present symptoms of a pause being made in this continual drain upon the people. We believe in preparing for war in time of peace, and it is a fair presumption that the overwhelming majority of William's subjects have no objection to the national defenses being made as nearly impregnable as nature and art combined can make them, or to the army being kept up to a reasonable standard of numbers and immediate availability; but it is also undisputed that as great a majority are dissatisfied with the constant levies made upon their substance in order that the whole German landscape may be flecked with military encampments, that bristling bayonets may glisten on every thoroughfare and an immense war footing maintained in a time that is actually pacific. This doubtless seems to them as it does to most of the remainder of civilized mankind, as carrying the preventive idea to an extreme, especially in view of the fact that the complete mobilization of the entire available forces of the united empire can be effected between two Sabbaths. The question, then, naturally arises, how long will the youthful Emperor be permitted to indulge in his expensive hobby contrary to the existing if not expressed consent of possibly not less than three-fourths of his subjects?

One of the noticeable things politically in the Fatherland of late has been the comparative infrequency with which Prince Bismarck's name has been mentioned. His practical retirement has not been the result of old age, infirmities, dissatisfaction or anything of that nature; and the question remains open as to whether or not he has been surpassed in his own methods—if, in fine, he is not out-Bismarcked by his ranking officer. Then another question would naturally arise, as to whether or not so much agreement will lead to a disagreement. Things in this life generally run that way, it being quite frequently the case that the student surpasses the preceptor, and in learning not wisely but too well he produces a result vastly at variance with the one supposed to be reached by the commingling or association of harmonious elements. While it is true that parallel lines never become further divided than at the starting point, it is equally true that when human beings imbued with the spirit of the world, pursuing the same ends by the same methods, are used as similes for such lines, they do not as a rule get nearer together.

Military strength is not what crushed France as an eggshell in a herculean grasp, eighteen years ago. It was a great factor in that consummation, of course—perhaps the greatest; but it was not all, and without the other elements accompanying it, would have been comparatively weak in front of the immense armies of Napoleon. The great ingredients in the power which hurled these back as a tempest sweeps away the leaves of a forest were the unanimity of purpose, the unpurchased and unforced determination, and the unselfish loyalty to their country and their cause which characterized the German soldiers. These qualities, added to a lofty type of courage, intelligent obedience to authority, natural hardihood and superior military skill, made the armies of united Germany invincible. How significant it is that the positions of the two nations have become almost completely reversed! The enforced discipline, unceasing *qui vive* and enormous expenditures have been transferred to Germany; while the quite, patriotic, willing and comparatively inexpensive armament of the nation—always ready but never willing to strike the first blow—are

features which now appear to largely characterize France.

The Spanish rapture with Emperor William's representative and the success of the Russian loan in France, might be called straw indicating from what quarter the wind comes; and putting all things together, it does not require the gift of prescience to enable one to arrive at the conclusion that Europe has not recovered from the great shock of two years or less ago, when for a time the accidental discharge of a peasant's shotgun on the Austrian frontier might have precipitated a war whose outcome would have desolated nations and erased geographical lines as never before; only now the explosive condition is in better control.

A POET'S RELIGION.

Few contemporaneous poets are attracting more attention than is Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Her poems and prose writings express a healthful morality, a deep understanding of human nature, a genuine philanthropy, and a hatred of vice, shams and hypocrisy, in addition to literary and poetic genius of a very high order. An eastern journal publishes what purports to be a declaration of her religious faith as made by herself, which will strike the reader who is familiar with the lady's writings as quite characteristic of her:

"I believe that the universe was created and is ruled by a great intelligence which is the spirit of love—commonly called God. This intelligence desires all created things to live in harmony, industry, gratitude, cleanliness and unselfishness. Whoever departs one iota from any one of these laws must suffer and cause suffering. I believe in progressive immortality, and in a succession of lives here or on other planets. I believe the spirit lives forever and cannot decay or die. I believe that after the death of the body those who have wandered from the laws of the Creator, will be obliged to occupy a low place in the next world and be separated from those who lived true to principle, and that they must begin the dreary labor of reformation alone with their awakened consciences."

Mrs. Wheeler believes certain things which were peculiar to the faith of Latter-day Saints until recent years, and which were first taught to the world in this age by them. The exact and inexorable operation of the laws of truth and justice, and reformation after death, are among the ideas accepted by Mrs. Wilcox, which for a long time were peculiar to "Mormon" theology.

DE LESSEPS WEEPS.

THE dispatches now state that M. De Lesseps has received substantial aid for the prosecution of his Panama Canal scheme, a popular movement having been generated and the government having given legislative assistance. It is announced today that a measure will be introduced in the Chamber of Deputies postponing the payment of the interest on the bonds until 1893. When the veteran canal-builder attempted to tell a gathering of his friends about his good fortune, he burst into tears and they were also affected. There has not, we presume, been any doubt as to Lesseps' honesty and belief in the feasibility of his project; but at this distance, with all the obstacles taken into consideration, it looks as though every phrase in France would have to be emptied before the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific blended in a common receptacle at the Isthmus. The expense and difficulty of the work are beyond ordinary comprehension.

STRIKING DEVELOPMENTS.

ONCE in a while the Parnell commission strikes a witness that sends home some damaging testimony against the operations of the Irish Land League. That was the kind of evidence obtained yesterday from the fellow named Buckney, who stated under oath that he had been hired to assassinate a man named Roach, who had incurred the displeasure of that organization.

According to his assertions the League arranged for the proving of an *alibi* when the bloody deed should be consummated. The witness gave not only some of the infernal details, but the names of parties implicated, so that the story could now be further corroborated, or else disproved by more extended inquiry. The witness coolly informed the commission how he prepared to kill Roach—by the practice of shooting at a stone about the size of a man's head.

Fortunately for Roach, when the opportunity seemed favorable for slaying him, the revolver refused to go off. There was no refusal in that line on the part of Roach, who went off as fast as his legs could carry him, with fear as a strong motive power.

The statement of Buckney that he had practiced shooting at a stone about the size of a man's head created a sensation in the commission. We are prepared to venture a remark to the effect that that sensation

was insignificant compared to the one experienced by Roach when Buckney attempted to practice on a man's head about the size of a stone.

In these days of thunder and blood, murder and secret conspiracy such a sinister incident hardly creates a ripple of sensation beyond the phlegmatic body known as the Parnell Commission. In the days away back, when things are now presumed to have been somewhat dark and benighted, such doings would have caused our grandfathers to wonder that such depravity should exist. Hence the Guy Fawkes plot was handed down as a circumstance at which to shudder. It was held up for a generation or two as something to be wondered at and remembered, especially by the youth. Now the young people can take up a daily paper and read in the topics of the day about events that cast it into the shade, and it won't affect them so much as to diminish their appetite for breakfast.

Thus the world moves apace, and men and women, as a rule, fail to recognize the significance of things as they are, or to reason forward and draw logical inferences as to what they will be.

"BLOCKS OF FIVE."

DURING the Presidential campaign Col. Dudley, one of the lieutenants on the Republican side, took great interest in the result in Indiana; in fact, he confined his attentions to that State. The result was scarcely reached before the New York World created a sensation by publishing a letter from the Colonel—at least one with his name attached to it—to a local manager in the Hoosier State, giving explicit instructions regarding the "floating vote," how it was to be purchased, controlled, etc. Among other things, trusty aids were to be appointed and those whose votes had been duly bought and paid for were to be arranged in "blocks of five," and banded off and rounded up at the polls, not to be released till the Republican ticket had been duly voted as agreed. A mere denial of this would have done no good at such a time, so the World was promised a libel suit for immense damages. This provoked only an outburst of contemptuous defiance from the great newspaper; more than this, it invited, indeed, urged Col. Dudley to press his suit and to bring it at once; but he did not and has not, and the World has been "sending him to jail," so far as headlines can do such a thing, ever since. The grand jury have the matter in hand and it has been announced in the dispatches that an indictment would surely be found, perhaps has been before this. "Blocks of five" has already been quoted so often in the east that it is getting "chestnutty," and whenever our readers see it they will know its origin.

TWO GRAND ARMIES.

THE defection in the ranks of the Grand Army of the Republic, which was so strongly decried by the prominent men of the order, seems to be a reality and one of considerable proportions at that. It was organized and is being carried forward by Democratic veterans, whose cause of action is the claim that during the Presidential campaign the G. A. R. was used as a political machine to aid the Republican cause. General Palmer, of Illinois, who ran for Governor of his State and went ahead of the electoral ticket 10,000 votes, seems to have started the uprising, he claiming, shortly after the election, that the ex-soldiers had been used through the instrumentality of the organization to defeat him, and that but for this he would have been elected. This was followed by an organized revolt in Indiana and an unavailing effort to induce it to disband; so that we have now the regular G. A. R. (practically Republican) and the Democratic G. A. R. Following is the latter's declaration of principles:

"The undersigned, believing that it is the duty of every good citizen to take not only a deep interest but also an active part in the political affairs of the country and the continual prosperity of its institutions, require for their preservation that the policy and character of the government shall be determined, and guided by the principles of the Democratic party, and in order to add to the organized strength of the Democratic party have formed themselves into a Democratic Union Soldiers' and Sailors' Veteran Association of Indiana."

Gen. Koontz, a prime mover in the affair, says with reference thereto that the Republicans have attempted to belittle the strength of the movement, but the Democrats understand the situation. There have been a number of withdrawals from the Grand Army. "I shall withdraw from my post this week," he says. "All the Democratic Grand Army men will not withdraw at once, but they will gradually leave the order and enroll themselves with the Democrats. If any one thinks that he can stay in the Grand Army and also be a member of the Democratic organization, no objections will be offered, but the two orders cannot work in harmony, and separation, absolute and permanent, will finally result. The new association will be beneficial, but the main idea is to advance the interests of the Democratic party, State and National."