VARIOUS

THE ARENA. VOLUME 4, NO. 20, JULY, 1891

Various
The Arena. Volume 4, No. 20, July, 1891

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=35501403
The Arena / Volume 4, No. 20, July, 1891:

Содержание

Various
The Arena / Volume 4, No. 20, July, 1891

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

BY GEORGE STEWART, D. C. L., LL. D

To the year 1809, the world is very much indebted for a band of notable recruits to the ranks of literature and science, statesmanship and military renown. One need mention only a few names to establish that fact, and grand names they are, for the list includes Darwin, Gladstone, Erastus Wilson, John Hill Burton, Manteuffel, Count Beust, Lord Houghton, Alfred Tennyson, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Each of these has played an important part in the world's history, and impressed the age with a genius that marks an epoch in the great department of human activity and progress. The year was pretty well advanced, and the month of August had reached its 29th day, when the wife of Dr. Abiel Holmes presented the author of "The American Annals" with a son who was destined to take his place in the front line of poets, thinkers, and essayists. The babe was born at

Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the centre of a Puritan civilization, which could scarcely have been in touch and harmony with the emphasized Unitarianism emanating from Harvard. But Abiel Holmes was a genial, generous-hearted man, and despite the severity of his religious belief, contrived to live on terms of a most agreeable character with his neighbors. A Yale man himself, and the firm friend of his old professor, the president of that institution, who had given him his daughter Mary to wed (she died five years after her marriage), we may readily believe that for a time, Harvard University, then strongly under the sway of the Unitarians, had little fascination for him. But his kindly nature conquered the repugnance he may have felt, and he soon got on well with all classes of the little community which surrounded him. By his first wife he had no children. But five, three daughters and two sons, blessed his union with Sarah Wendell, the accomplished daughter of the Hon. John Wendell, of Boston. We may pass briefly over the early years of Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was educated at the Phillips Academy at Exeter, and subsequently entered Harvard University, where he was graduated, with high honors, in 1829, and belonged to that class of young fellows who, in after life, greatly distinguished themselves. Some of his noblest poems were written in memory of that class, such as "Bill and Joe," "A Song of Twenty-nine," "The Old Man Dreams," "Our Sweet Singer," and "Our Banker," all of them breathing love and respect for the boys with whom the poet studied and matriculated. Young Holmes was destined

for the law, but Chitty and Blackstone apparently had little charm for him, for after a year's trial, he abandoned the field and took up medicine. His mind could not have been much impressed with statutes, for all the time that he was supposed to be conning over abstruse points in jurisprudence, he was sending to the printers some of the cleverest and most waggish contributions which have fallen from his pen. The *Collegian*,—the university journal of those days,—published most of these, and though no name was attached to the screeds, it was fairly well known that Holmes was the author. The companion writers in the *Collegian* were Simmons, who wrote over the signature of "Lockfast"; John O. Sargent, poet and essayist, whose *nom de plume* was "Charles Sherry"; Robert Habersham, the "Mr. Airy" of the group; and that clever young trifler, Theodore Snow, who delighted the readers of the periodical with the works of "Geoffrey La Touche." Of these, of course, Holmes was the life and soul, and though sixty years have passed away since he enriched the columns of the *Collegian* with the fruits of his muse, more than half of the pieces survive, and are deemed good enough to hold a place beside his maturer productions. "Evening of a Sailor," "The Meeting of the Dryads," and "The Spectre Pig,"—the latter in the vein of Tom Hood at his best,—will be remembered as among those in the collection which may be read to-day with the zest, appreciation, and delight which they inspired more than half a century ago. Holmes' connection with the *Collegian* had a most inspiriting effect on his fellow

contributors, who found their wits sharpened by contact with a mind that was forever buoyant and overflowing with humor and good nature. In friendly rivalry, those kindred intellects vied with one another, and no more brilliant college paper was ever published than the *Collegian*, and this is more remarkable still, when we come to consider the fact, that at that time, literature in America was practically in its infancy. Nine years before, Sydney Smith had asked his famous question, "Who reads an American book? who goes to an American play?" And to that query there was really no answer. Six numbers of the *Collegian* were issued, and they must have proved a revelation to the men and women of that day, whose reading, hitherto, had almost been confined to the imported article from beyond the seas, for Washington Irving wrote with the pen of an English gentleman, Bryant and Dana had not yet made their mark in distinctively American authorship, and Cooper's "Prairie" was just becoming to be understood by the critics and people.

Shaking the dust of the law office from his shoes, Oliver Wendell Holmes, abandoning literature for a time, plunged boldly into the study of a profession for which he had always evinced a strong predilection. The art and practice of medical science had ever a fascination for him, and he made rapid progress at the university. Once or twice he yielded to impulse, and wrote a few bright things, anonymously, for the *Harbinger*,—the paper which Epes Sargent and Park Benjamin published for the benefit of a charitable institution, and dedicated as a May gift

to the ladies who had aided the New England Institution for the Education of the Blind. In 1833, Holmes sailed for Paris, where he studied medicine and surgery, and walked the hospitals. Three years were spent abroad, and then the young student returned to Cambridge to take his medical degree at Harvard, and to deliver his metrical Essay on Poetry, before the Phi-Beta-Kappa Society. In this year too, 1836, he published his first acknowledged book of poems,—a duodecimo volume of less than two hundred pages. In this collection his Essay on Poetry appeared. It describes the art in four stages, *viz.*, the Pastoral or Bucolic, the Martial, the Epic, and the Dramatic. In illustration of his views, he furnished exemplars from his own prolific muse, and his striking poem of "Old Ironsides" was printed for the first time, and sprang at a bound into national esteem. And in this first book, there was included that little poem, "The Last Leaf," better work than which Holmes has never done. It is in a vein which he has developed much since then. Grace, humor, pathos, and happiness of phrase and idea, are all to be found in its delicious stanzas:—

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,

Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets,
Sad and wan;
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone!"

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said—
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago—
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin

Like a staff;
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,
Let them smile as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

In 1838, Doctor Holmes accepted his first professorial position, and became professor of anatomy and physiology at Dartmouth. Two years later, he married, and took up the practice of medicine in Boston. In 1847, he returned to his old love, accepting the Parkman professorship of anatomy and physiology, in the Medical School at Harvard. While engaged in teaching, he prepared for publication several important books and reports relating to his profession, and his papers in the various medical journals attracted great attention by their freshness, clearness,

and originality. But it is not as a medical man that Doctor Holmes may be discussed in this paper. We have to deal altogether with his literary career,—a career, which for its brilliancy has not been surpassed on this side of the Atlantic.

As a poet he differs much from his contemporaries, but the standard he has reached is as high as that which has been attained by Lowell and Longfellow. In lofty verse he is strong and unconventional, writing always with a firm grasp on his subject, and emphasizing his perfect knowledge of melody and metre. As a writer of occasional verse he has not had an equal in our time, and his pen for threescore years has been put to frequent use in celebration of all sorts of events, whether military, literary, or scientific. Bayard Taylor said, "He lifted the 'occasional' into the 'classic'," and the phrase happily expresses the truth. The vivacious character of his nature readily lends itself to work of this sort, and though the printed page gives the reader the sparkling epigram and the graceful lines, clear-cut always and full of soul, the pleasure is not quite the same as seeing and hearing him recite his own poems, in the company of congenial friends. His songs are full of sunshine and heart, and his literary manner wins by its simplicity and tenderness. Years ago, Miss Mitford said that she knew no one so thoroughly original. For him she could find no living prototype. And so she went back to the time of John Dryden to find a man to whom she might compare him. And Lowell in his "Fable for Critics," describes Holmes as

"A Leyden-jar full-charged, from which flit
The electrical tingles, of hit after hit."

His lyrical pieces are among the best of his compositions, and his ballads, too few in number, betray that love which he has always felt for the melodious minstrelsy of the ancient bards. Whittier thought that the "Chambered Nautilus" was "booked for immortality." In the same list may be put the "One-Hoss Shay," "Contentment," "Destination," "How the Old Horse Won the Bet," "The Broomstick Train," and that lovely family portrait, "Dorothy Q—," a poem with a history. Dorothy Quincy's picture, cold and hard, painted by an unknown artist, hangs on the wall of the poet's home in Beacon Street. A hole in the canvas marks the spot where one of King George's soldiers thrust his bayonet. The lady was Dr. Holmes' grandmother's mother, and she is represented as being about thirteen years of age, with

Girlish bust, but womanly air;
Smooth, square forehead, with uprolled hair;
Lips that lover has never kissed;
Taper fingers and slender wrist;
Hanging sleeves of stiff brocade;
So they painted the little maid.

And the poet goes on:—

What if a hundred years ago

Those close-shut lips had answered no,
When forth the tremulous question came
That cost the maiden her Norman name,
And under the folds that look so still,
The bodice swelled with the bosom's thrill!
Should I be I, or would it be
One tenth another, to nine tenths me?

Soft is the breath of a maiden's yes,
Not the light gossamer stirs with less;
But never a cable that holds so fast
Through all the battles of wave and blast,
And never an echo of speech or song
That lives in the babbling air so long!
There were tones in the voice that whispered then,
You may hear to-day in a hundred men.

O lady and lover, how faint and far
Your images hover, and here we are,
Solid and stirring in flesh and bone,
Edward's and Dorothy's—all their own,
A goodly record for time to show
Of a syllable spoken so long ago!
Shall I bless you, Dorothy, or forgive
For the tender whisper that bade me live?

It shall be a blessing, my little maid!
I will heal the stab of the red-coat's blade,
And freshen the gold of the tarnished frame,

And gild with a rhyme your household name;
So you shall smile on us brave and bright,
As first you greeted the morning's light,
And live untroubled by woes and fears
Through a second youth of a hundred years.

Dr. Holmes' coloring is invariably artistic. Nothing in his verse offends the eye or grates unpleasantly on the ear. He is a true musician, and his story, joke, or passing fancy is always joined to a measure which never halts. "The Voiceless," perhaps, as well as "Under the Violets," ought to be mentioned among the more tender verses which we have from his pen, in his higher mood.

His novels are object lessons, each one having been written with a well-defined purpose in view. But unlike most novels with a purpose, the three which he has written are nowise dull. The first of the set is "The Professor's Story; or, Elsie Venner," the second is "The Guardian Angel," written when the author was in his prime, and the third is "A Mortal Antipathy," written only a few years ago. In no sense are these works commonplace. Their art is very superb, and while they amuse, they afford the reader much opportunity for reflection. Elsie Venner is a romance of destiny, and a strange physiological condition furnishes the key-note and marrow of the tale. It is Holmes' snake story, the taint of the serpent appearing in the daughter, whose mother was bitten by a rattle-snake before her babe was born. The traits inherited by this unfortunate offspring from the reptile, find rapid development. She becomes a creature of impulse, and her

life spent in a New England village, at a ladies' academy, with its social and religious surroundings, is described and worked out with rare analytical skill, and by a hand accustomed to deal with curious scientific phenomena. The character drawing is admirable, the episodes are striking and original, and the scenery, carefully elaborated, is managed with fine judgment. Despite the idea, which to some may at first blush appear revolting and startling, there is nothing sensational in the book. The reader observes only the growth and movement of the poison in the girl's system, its effect on her way of life, and its remarkable power over her mind. Horror or disgust at her condition is not for one moment evoked. The style is pure and ennobling, and while our sympathies may be touched, we are at the same time fascinated and entertained, from the first page to the last. Of quite different texture is "The Guardian Angel," a perhaps more readable story, so far as form is concerned, much lighter in character, and less of a study. There is more plot, but the range is not so lofty. It is less philosophical in tone than "Elsie Venner," and the events move quicker. The scene of "The Guardian Angel" is also laid in an ordinary New England village, and the object of the Doctor-Novelist was to write a tale in which the peculiarities and laws of hysteria should find expression and development. In carrying out his plan, Dr. Holmes has achieved a genuine success. He has taught a lesson, and at the same time has told a deeply interesting story, lightened up here and there with characteristic humor and wit. The characters of Myrtle Hazard and Byles Gridley are

drawn with nice discrimination, while the sketch of the village poet, Mr. Gifted Hopkins, is so life-like and realistic, that he has only to be named to be instantly recognized. He is a type of the poet who haunts the newspaper office, and belongs to every town and hamlet. His lady-love is Miss Susan Posey, a delicious creation in Dr. Holmes' best manner. These two prove excellent foils for the stronger personages of the story, and afford much amusement. "A Mortal Antipathy" is less of a romance than the others. The reader will be interested in the description of a boat race which is exquisitely done.

In biographical writing, we have two books from Dr. Holmes, one a short life of Emerson, and the other a memoir of Motley. Though capable of writing a great biography like Trevelyan's Macaulay or Lockhart's Scott, the doctor has not yet done so. Of the two which he has written, the Motley is the better one. In neither, however, has the author arrived at his own standard of what a biography should be.

Mechanism in thought and morals,—a Phi-Beta-Kappa address, delivered at Harvard in 1870,—is one of Dr. Holmes' most luminous contributions to popular science. It is ample in the way of suggestion and the presentation of facts, and though scientific in treatment, the captivating style of the essayist relieves the paper of all heaviness. A brief extract from this fine, thoughtful work may be given here:—

> "We wish to remember something in the course of conversation. No effort of the will can reach it; but we say,

'wait a minute, and it will come to me,' and go on talking. Presently, perhaps some minutes later, the idea we are in search of comes all at once into the mind, delivered like a prepaid bundle, laid at the door of consciousness like a foundling in a basket. How it came there we know not. The mind must have been at work groping and feeling for it in the dark; it cannot have come of itself. Yet all the while, our consciousness was busy with other thoughts."

The literary reputation of Dr. Holmes will rest on the three great books which have made his name famous on two continents. Thackeray had passed his fortieth year before he produced his magnificent novel. Holmes, too, was more than forty when he began that unique and original book, "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," one of the most thoughtful, graceful, and able investigations into philosophy and culture ever written. We have the author in every mood, playful and pathetic, witty and wise. Who can ever forget the young fellow called John, our Benjamin Franklin, the Divinity student, the schoolmistress, the landlady's daughter, and the poor relation? What characterization is there here! The delightful talk of the autocrat, his humor, always infectious, his logic, his strong common sense, illumine every page. When he began to write, Dr. Holmes had no settled plan in his head. In November, 1831, he sent an article to the *New England Magazine*, published by Buckingham in Boston, followed by another paper in February, 1832. The idea next occurred to the author in 1857,—a quarter of a century afterwards, when the editors of the *Atlantic Monthly*,

then starting on its career, begged him to write something for its pages. He thought of "The Autocrat," and resolved, as he says, "to shake the same bough again, and see if the ripe fruit were better or worse than the early windfalls." At a bound "The Autocrat" leaped into popular favor. The reading public could hardly wait for the numbers. All sorts of topics are touched upon from nature to mankind. There is the talk about the trees, which one may read a dozen times and feel the better for it. And then comes that charming account of the walk with the schoolmistress, when the lovers looked at the elms, and the roses came and went on the maiden's cheeks. And here is a paragraph or two which makes men think:

> "Our brains are seventy-year clocks. The angel of life winds them up once for all, then closes the case, and gives the key into the hand of the Angel of the Resurrection. Tic-tac! tic-tac! go the wheels of thought; our will cannot stop them; they cannot stop themselves; sleep cannot still them; madness only makes them go faster; death alone can break into the case, and seizing the ever-swinging pendulum, which we call the heart, silence at last the clicking of the terrible escapement we have carried so long beneath our wrinkled foreheads.
>
> "If we could only get at them, as we lie on our pillows and count the dead beats of thought after thought, and image after image, jarring through the overtired organ! Will nobody block those wheels, uncouple that pinion, cut the string that holds those weights, blow up

the infernal machine with gun-powder? What a passion comes over us sometimes for silence and rest!—that this dreadful mechanism, unwinding the endless tapestry of time, embroidered with spectral figures of life and death, could have but one brief holiday! Who can wonder that men swing themselves off from beams in hempen lassos?—that they jump off from parapets into the swift and gurgling waters beneath?—that they take counsel of the grim friend who has but to utter his one peremptory monosyllable and the restless machine is shivered as a vase that is dashed upon a marble floor? Under that building which we pass every day there are strong dungeons, where neither hook, nor bar, nor bed-cord, nor drinking vessel from which a sharp fragment may be shattered, shall by any chance be seen. There is nothing for it, when the brain is on fire with the whirling of its wheels, but to spring against the stone wall and silence them with one crash. Ah, they remembered that,—the kind city fathers,—and the walls are nicely padded, so that one can take such exercise as he likes without damaging himself on the very plain and serviceable upholstery. If anybody would only contrive some kind of a lever that one could thrust in among the works of this horrid automaton and check them, or alter their rate of going, what would the world give for the discovery?"

"The Autocrat" was followed by "The Professor at the Breakfast Table,"—a book in every way equal to the first one, though, to be sure, there are critics who pretend to see diminished power in the author's pen. It is, however, full of the same gentle

humor and keen analyses of the follies and foibles of human kind. It is a trifle graver, though some of the characters belonging to "The Autocrat" come to the front again. It is in this book that we find that lovely story of Iris,—a masterpiece in itself and one of the sweetest things that has come to us for a hundred years, rivalling to a degree the delicious manner and style of Goldsmith and Lamb. In 1873 the last of the series appeared, and "The Poet" came upon the scene to gladden the breakfasters. Every chapter sparkles with originality. "I have," says Dr. Holmes, "unburdened myself in this book, and in some other pages, of what I was born to say. Many things that I have said in my riper days have been aching in my soul since I was a mere child. I say aching, because they conflicted with many of my inherited beliefs, or rather traditions. I did not know then that two strains of blood were striving in me for the mastery—two! twenty, perhaps, twenty thousand, for aught I know—but represented to me by two—paternal and maternal. But I do know this: I have struck a good many chords, first and last, in the consciousness of other people. I confess to a tender feeling for my little brood of thoughts. When they have been welcomed and praised, it has pleased me, and if at any time they have been rudely handled and despitefully treated, it has cost me a little worry. I don't despise reputation, and I should like to be remembered as having said something worth lasting well enough to last."

There is much philosophy in "The Poet," and if it is less humorous than "The Autocrat," it is more profound than either

of its fellows in the great trio. In it the doctor has said enough to make the reputations of half a dozen authors.

"One Hundred Days in Europe," if written by anyone else save Dr. Holmes, would, perhaps, go begging for a publisher. But he journeyed to the old land with his heart upon his sleeve. He met nearly every man and woman worth knowing, and the Court, Science, and Literature received him with open arms. He had not seen England for half a century. Fifty years before, he was an obscure young man, studying medicine, and known by scarcely half a dozen persons. He returned in 1886, a man of world-wide fame, and every hand was stretched out to do him honor, and to pay him homage. Lord Houghton,—the famous breakfast giver of his time, certainly, the most successful since the princely Rogers,—had met him in Boston years before, and had begged him again and again to cross the ocean. Letters failing to move the poet, Houghton tried verse upon him, and sent these graceful lines:—

"When genius from the furthest West,
Sierra's Wilds and Poker Flat,
Can seek our shores with filial zest,
Why not the genial Autocrat?

"Why is this burden on us laid,
That friendly London never greets
The peer of Locker, Moore, and Praed
From Boston's almost neighbor streets?

"His earlier and maturer powers
  His own dear land might well engage;
We only ask a few kind hours
  Of his serene and vigorous age.

"Oh, for a glimpse of glorious Poe!
  His raven grimly answers 'never!'
Will Holmes's milder muse say 'no,'
  And keep our hands apart forever?"

But he was not destined to see his friend. When Holmes arrived in England, Lord Houghton was in his grave, and so was Dean Stanley, whose sweetness of disposition had so charmed the autocrat, when the two men had met in Boston a few years before. Ruskin he failed to meet also, for the distinguished word-painter was ill. At a dinner, however, at Arch-Deacon Farrar's, he spent some time with Sir John Millais and Prof. John Tyndall. Of course, he saw Gladstone, Tennyson, Robert Browning, Chief Justice Coleridge, Du Maurier, the illustrator of *Punch*, Prof. James Bryce who wrote "The American Commonwealth," "Lord Wolseley," Britain's "Only General," "His Grace of Argyll," "Lord Lorne and the Princess Louise,"—one of the best amateur painters and sculptors in England,—and many others. Of all these noted ones, he has something bright and entertaining to say. The universities laid their highest honors at his feet. Edinburgh gave him the degree of LL.D., Cambridge that of

Doctor of Letters, and Oxford conferred upon him her D. C. L., his companion on the last occasion being John Bright. It was at Oxford that he met Vice-Chancellor Benjamin Jowett, the Master of Balliol College, Prof. Max Müller, Lord and Lady Herschell, and Prof. James Russell Lowell, his old and unvarying friend. The account of his visit to Europe is told with most engaging directness and simplicity, and though the book has no permanent value, it affords much entertainment for the time.

The reader will experience a feeling of sadness, when he takes up Dr. Holmes' last book, "Over the Tea-cups," for there are indications in the work which warn the public that the genial pen will write hereafter less frequently than usual. It is a witty and delightful book, recalling the Autocrat, the Professor, and the Poet, and yet presenting features not to be found in either. The author dwells on his advancing years, but this he does not do in a querulous fashion. He speaks of his contemporaries, and compares the ages of old trees, and over the tea-cups a thousand quaint, curious, and splendid things are said. The work takes a wide range, but there is more sunshine than anything else, and that indefinable charm, peculiar to the author, enriches every page. One might wish that he would never grow old. As Lowell said, a few years ago, in a birthday verse to the doctor:—

"You keep your youth as yon Scotch firs,
Whose gaunt line my horizon hems,
Though twilight all the lowland blurs,
Hold sunset in their ruddy stems.

“Master alike in speech and song
    Of fame’s great anti-septic—style,
You with the classic few belong
    Who tempered wisdom with a smile.

Outlive us all! Who else like you
    Could sift the seed corn from our chaff,
And make us, with the pen we knew,
    Deathless at least in epitaph?”

PLUTOCRACY AND SNOBBERY IN NEW YORK,

BY EDGAR FAWCETT

Let us imagine that a foreigner has entered a New York ball-room for the first time, and let us make that foreigner not merely an Englishman, but an Englishman of title. He would soon be charmed by the women who beamed on every side of him. Their refinement of manner would be obvious, though in some cases they might shock him by a shrillness and nasal harshness when speaking, while in other cases both their tone and accent might repel him through extreme affectation of "elegance." But for the most part he would pronounce these women bright, cultivated, and often remarkably handsome. They would not require to be amused or even entertained after the manner of his own countrywomen; they would appear before him amply capable of yielding rather than exacting diversion, and often through the mediums of nimble wit, engaging humor, or an audacity at once daring and picturesque. But after a little more time our titled stranger would begin to perceive that behind all this feminine sparkle and freshness, lurked a positive transport of humility. He would discover that he had swiftly become with these fashionable

ladies an object of idolatry, and that all the single ones were thrilled with the idea of marrying him, while all the married ones felt pierced by the sad realization that destiny had disqualified them for so golden a bit of luck. He would find himself assailed by questions about his precise English rank and standing. Had he any other title besides the one by which he was currently known? How long ago was it since his family had been elevated to the peerage? Did he personally know the Queen or the Prince of Wales? Was his mother "Lady" anybody before she married his father? Did he own several places in the country, and if so, what was the name of each?

The men would naturally be less inquisitive; but then the men all would have their Burke or DeBrett to consult at their clubs, and could "look him up" there as if he had been an unfamiliar word in the dictionary. And these male followers of fashion would, for the most part, distress and perplex him. He would be confronted with a mournful fact in our social life: the men who "go out" are nearly all silly striplings who, on reaching a sensible age, discreetly remain at home.

He would soon begin to perceive that New York society is a blending of the ludicrous and pathetic. The really charming women have two terrible faults, one which their fathers, husbands, and brothers have taught them, and one which they have apparently contracted without extraneous aid. The first is their worship of wealth, their devout genuflection before it as the sole choicest gift which fate can bestow, and the second

is their merciless and metallic snobbery. They have made a god of caste, and in a country where, of all other cults, that of caste is the most preposterous. The men (the real grown-up men, who may hate the big balls, but are nevertheless a great deal in the movement as regards other gay pastimes) watch them with quiet approbation. Many a New York husband is quite willing that his wife shall cut her own grandmother if that relative be not "desirable." The men have not time to preen their social plumes quite so strenuously; they are too busy in money-getting, and of a sort which nearly always concerns the hazard of the Wall Street die. And yet quite a number of the men are arrant snobs, refusing to associate with, often even to notice, others whose dollars count fewer than their own. This form of plutocratic self-adulation is relatively modern. It is called by some people a very inferior state of things to that which existed in "the good old Knickerbocker days." But the truth is, odious though the millionnaire's ascendancy may be at present, that of the Knickerbocker was once hardly less so. Vulgar, brassy, and intolerable the "I'm-better-than-you" strut and swagger of plutocracy surely is; but in the smug, pert provincialism of those former New York autocrats who defined as "family" their descent of two or three generations from raw Dutch immigrants, there was very little comfort indeed. The present writer has seen something of this element; in the decade from 1865 to 1875 it was still extremely active. Society was then governed by the Knickerbocker, as it is now governed by the plutocrat, and in

either instance the rule has been wholly deplorable. Indeed, for one cogent reason, if no other, poor New York stands to-day as the least fortunate of all great cities. Her society, from the time she ceased to admit herself a village up to the date at which these lines are written, has never been even faintly worthy of the name. A few years ago the "old residents," with their ridiculous claims to pedigree, had everything their own way. A New York drawing-room was, in those days, parochial as a Boston or Philadelphia tea-party. There were modish metropolitan details, it is true, but the petty reign of the immigrant Hollanders' descendants would have put to shame the laborious freaks and foibles of a tiny German principality. Now, having changed all that, and having forced the Knickerbockers from their old places of vantage, the plutocrats reign supreme. To a mind capable of being saddened by human materialism, pretension, braggadocio, it is all very much the same sort of affair. Our republic should be ashamed of an aristocracy founded on either money or birth, and that thousands of its citizens are not only unashamed of such systems, but really glory in them, is merely another proof of how this country has broken almost every democratic promise which she once made to the Old World.

It is easy to sneer away statements like these. It is easy to laugh them off as "mere pessimism," and to talk of persons with "green spectacles" and "disordered livers." We have learned to know the glad ring of the optimist's patriotic voice. If we all believed this voice, we should all believe that America is the

ideal polity of the world. And one never so keenly realizes that this is not true as when he watches the creeds and character of society in New York. Of Londoners we are apt to assert that they grovel obsequiously before their prince, with his attendant throng of dukes, earls, and minor gentlemen. This may be fact, but it is very far from being the whole fact. In London there is a large class of ladies and gentlemen who form a localized and centralized body, and whose assemblages are haunts of intelligence, refinement, and good taste. In a certain sense these are "mixed," but all noteworthy gatherings must be that, and the "smart" and "swagger" sets of every great European city are nowadays but a small, even a contemptible factor in its festivities.

Not long ago the present writer inquired of a well-known Englishman whether people of literary and artistic note were not always bidden to large and important London receptions. "In nearly all cases, yes," he replied. "It has been the aim of my sister to invite, on such occasions, authors, artists, and actors of talent and distinction. They come, and are welcomed when they come." He did not mention the name of his sister, knowing, doubtless, that I knew it. She was an English duchess, magnificently housed in London, a beauty, and a star of fashion.

But our New York brummagem "duchesses" of yesterday are less liberal in their condescensions. An attractive New York woman once said to me: "I told a man the other day that I was tired of meeting him incessantly at dinner, and that we met each other so often in this way as to make conversation a bore."

Could any remark have more pungently expressed the unhappy narrowness of New York reunions? How many times has the dainty Mr. Amsterdam or Mrs. Manhattan ever met men and women of literary or artistic gifts at a fashionable dinner in Fifth or Madison Avenue? How many times has he or she met any such person at a "patriarchs' ball" or an "assembly?" Has he or she *ever* met an actor of note *anywhere*, except in two or three exceptional instances? True, men and women of intellectual fame shrink from contact with our noble Four Hundred. But that they should so shrink is in itself a scorching comment. They encounter patronage at such places, and getting patronage from one's inferiors can never be a pleasant mode of passing one's time. That delicate homage which is the due of mental merit they scarcely ever receive. Now and then you hear of a portrait-painter, who has made himself the rage of the town, being asked to dine and to sup. But he is seldom really held to be *des nôtres*, as the haughty elect ones would phrase it, and his popularity, based upon insolent patronage, often quickly crumbles. The solid devotion is all saved for the solid millionnaires. Frederick the Great, if I recall rightly, said that an army was like a snake, and moved on its stomach. Of New York society this might also be asserted, though with a meaning much more luxurious. To be a great leader is to be a great feeder. You must dispense terrapin, and canvas-back ducks, and rare brands of champagne, in lordly dining-halls, or your place is certain to be secondary. You may, if a man, have the manners of a Chesterfield and the wit of a

Balzac; you may, if a woman, be beautiful as Mary Stuart and brilliant as DeStaël, and yet, powerless to "entertain," you can fill no lofty pedestal. "Position" in New York means a corpulent purse whose strings work as flexibly as the dorsal muscles of a professional toady. And this kind of toady has an exquisite *flair* for your greatness and dignity the moment he becomes quite sure of your pecuniary willingness to back both. New York is at present the paradise of parvenus, and these occasionally commit grotesque mistakes in the distribution of civilities. Because you chose to "stay in" for a season or two, they will take for granted, if suddenly brought in contact with you, that you have never "been out" and could not go if you tried. Of course, to feel hurt by such cheap hauteur proves that you are in a manner worthy of it; but even though you are not in the least hurt, you cannot refrain from a thrill of annoyance that a country which has boasted in so loud-mouthed a way to Europe of having begun its national life by a wholesome scorn of all class distinction, should contain citizens cursed by a spirit of such tawdry pride. At least the aristocracies of other lands, vicious and reprehensible as they have always been, are yet an evil with a certain malign consistency for their support. Like those monarchies of which they have formed a piteous adjunct, they have always been the outgrowths of a perfectly natural ignorance. Though distinct clogs to civilization, their existence remains pathetically legitimate. Nuisances, they are still nuisances with a hereditary hold on history. Their chief modern claim for continuance is the fact that they were once

authorized by that very "divine right" which is now the scorn and jest of philosophy, and that the communities which they still infest are yet unprepared for the shock of their extirpation. It is clear that they will one day be sloughed off like a mass of dead animal tissue, even if they are not amputated like a living limb that has grown hopelessly diseased. They are as surely doomed by the slow threat of evolution as is the failure to establish trial by jury in Russia. They are tolerated by progress for the simple reason that progress is not yet ready to destroy them. Hence are all imitations of their permitted and perpetuated folly in wofully bad taste. They are more; they are an insult, when practised in such a land as ours, to republican energies, motives, and ideals. Heaven knows, we are a country with sorry enough substantiality behind her vaunts. We call ourselves freemen, and our mines and factories are swarming with haggard slaves. We declare that to be President of the United States is the most honorable office a man can hold, and our elected candidates (except when they have the splendid self-abnegating courage of a Cleveland!) wade to Washington through a perfect bog of venal promises. We prate of our democratic institutions, and forget that free trade is one of the first proofs of a free people, and that protected industries are the feudalism of manufacture. We sneer at the corruption of a Jeffreys or a Marlborough in the past, and concede that bribery riots in our capital, and that the infernal political grist-mill in New York has to-day almost as much nefarious grinding to get through with annually as it had when Tweed and Sweeny

stood the boss millers that fed its voracious maw. And after all, the abominations of New York's politics are only a few degrees more repellent than the cruelties and pusillanimities of her self-styled patrician horde. The highest duty of rich people is to be charitable; in New York the rich people make for themselves two highest duties, to be fashionable and to be richer—if they can. Charity of a certain sort does exist among them, and it would be unfair to say that it is all of the pompous public sort. Much of it, indeed, is private, and when incomes, as in a few individual cases, reach enormous figures, the unpretentious donations are of no slight weight. But charity is a virtue that counts for nothing unless meekness, philanthropy, altruism, is each its acolyte. How can we expect that beings who busy themselves with affairs of such poignant importance as whether they shall give Jones a full nod or Brown a quarter of a nod when they next meet him; as whether the Moneypennys are really quite *lancés* enough for them to encounter the great Gilt-edges or no, at a prospective dinner-party; as whether the latest Parisian tidings about bonnets are really authentic or the contrary; as whether His Royal Highness has or has not actually appeared at one of his imperial mamma's drawing-rooms in a Newmarket cutaway,—how, it is asked, can we expect that beings of this bent may properly heed those ghastly and incessant wants which are forever making of humanity the forlorn tragi-comedy it is? The yawp of socialism is excusably despised by plutocracy. Socialism is not merely a cry of pain; if it were only that its plaints might

have proved more effectual. It is a cry of avarice, of jealousy, and very often of extreme laziness as well. Every socialistic theory that we have yet heard of is self-damning. Each real thinker, whether he be Crœsus or pauper, comprehends that to empower the executive with greater responsibility than it already possesses would mean to tempt national ruin, and that until mankind has become a race of angels the hideous problem of human suffering can never be solved by vesting private property-rights in the hands of public functionaries. But the note of anguish in that voice of desperation and revolt need not, for all this, be confused with its madder strains. The claim of poverty upon riches is to-day a tremendously ethical one. Help—and help wise, earnest, persistent—is the inflexible moral tax levied by life itself on all who have an overplus of wealth wherewith to relieve deserving misery. The occasional careless signing of a cheque, or even a visit now and then among the filthy slums of Bayard and Hester Streets, cannot cancel these mighty obligations. And there are better ways of schooling the soul to recognize the magnitude and insistence of such obligations than by organizing ultra-select dancing-classes at Sherry's; giving "pink luncheons" to a bevy of simpering female snobs; uncorking eight-dollar bottles of Clos de Vougeot for a fastidious dinner company of men-about-town; squandering three thousand dollars on a Delmonico ball, or purchasing at vast prices the gowns and jewels of a deposed foreign empress. Yes, there are better ways. And for people who are solely pleasure-seekers to call themselves Christian is, from

their own points of view, blasphemy unspeakable; since whatever we agnostics may say and believe about the alleged "divinity" of Christ, *they* hold that the Galilean was the son of God, and that in such miraculous character he spoke when saying: "Leave all and follow me."

The American snob is a type at once the most anomalous and the most vulgar. Why he is anomalous need not be explained, but the essence of his vulgarity lies in his entire absence of a sanctioning background. It is not, when all is said, so strange a matter that anyone reared in an atmosphere of historic ceremonial and precedent should betray an inherent leaning toward shams and vanities. But if there is anything that we Americans, as a race, are forever volubly extolling, it is our immunity from all such drawbacks. And yet I will venture to state that in every large city of our land snobbery and plutocracy reign as twin evils, while in every small town, from Salem to some Pacific-slope settlement, the beginnings of the same social curse are manifest. Of course New York towers in bad eminence over the entire country. Abroad they are finding out the absurd shallowness of our professions. Nearly seven years ago an able literary man said to me in London: "I am wearied, here, by the necessity of continual aristocratic patronage. Especially true is this," he added, "regarding all new dramatic productions. Lord This and Lady That are more thought of as potentially occupying stalls or boxes at a first performance than is the presence of the most sapient judges." And then again, after a slight pause, he

proceeded: “But I hear it is very much the same thing with you. I have often longed to go to America, just for the sake of that social emancipation which it has seemed to promise. But they tell me that in your big cities a good deal of the same humbug prevails.” I assured him that he was fatally right; but I did not proceed to say, as I might have done, that our “aristocracy” rarely patronizes first nights at theatres, holding most ladies, and gentlemen connected with the stage in a position somewhere between their scullions and their head footmen.

London laughs and sneers at New York when she thinks of her at all, which is, on the whole, not very often. If London esteemed New York of greater importance than she does esteem her, the derisive laughter might be keener and hence more salutary. Imagine America separated by only a narrow channel from Europe, and imagine her to contain in her chief metropolis, as she does at present, the amazing contradictions and refutations of the democratic idea which are to be noted now. What food for English, French, and German sarcasm would our pigmy Four Hundred then become! In those remote realms they have already shrank aghast at the licentious tyrannies of our newspapers. England has freedom of the press, but she also has a law of libel which is not a cipher. Our law of libel is so horribly effete that the purest woman on our continent may to-morrow be vilely slandered, and yet obtain no adequate form of redress. This is what our extolled “liberty” has brought us—a despotism in its way as frightful as anything that Russia or the Orient can parallel.

Is it remarkable that such relatively minor abuses as those of plutocracy and snobbery should torment us here in New York when bullets of journalistic scandal are whizzing about our ears every day of our lives, and those who get wounds have no healing remedy within their possible reach? Some one of our clever novelists might take a hint for the plot of a future tale from this melancholy state of things. He might write a kind of new Monte Cristo, and make his hero, riddled and stung by assaults of our unbridled press, find but a single means of vengeance. That means would be the starting of a great newspaper on his own account, and the triumphant cannonading of his foes through its columns. More influential New York editors would doubtless already have forced their way within the holy bounds of patrician circles, were it not that, in the first place editors are somewhat hard-worked persons, and that in the second place they are usually men of brains.

Marriage, among the New York snobs and plutocrats, ordinarily treats human affection as though it were a trifling optic malady to be cured by a few drops of corrective lotion. Daughters are trained by their mothers to leave no efforts untried, short of those absolutely immoral, in winning wealthy husbands. Usually the daughters are tractable enough. Rebellion is rare with them; why should it not be? Almost from infancy (unless when their parents have made fortunes with prodigious quickness) they are taught that matrimony is a mere hard bargain, to be driven shrewdly and in a spirit of the coolest mercantile craft.

Sometimes they do really rebel, however, mastered by pure nature, in one of those tiresome moods where she shows the insolence of defying bloodless convention. Yet nearly always capitulation follows. And then what follows later on? Perhaps heart-broken resignation, perhaps masked adultery, perhaps the degradation of public divorce. But usually it is no worse than a silent disgusted slavery, for the American woman is notoriously cold in all sense of passion, and when reared to respect "society" she is a snob to the core. Some commentators aver that it is the climate which makes her so pulseless and prudent. This is possible. But one deeply familiar with the glacial theories of the fashionable New York mother might find an explanation no less frigid than comprehensive for all her traits of acquiescence and decorum. How many of these fashionable mothers ask more than a single question of the bridegrooms they desire for their daughters? That one question is simply: "What amount of money do you control?" But constantly this kind of interrogation is needless. A male "match" and "catch" finds that his income is known to the last dollar long before he has been graduated from the senior class at Columbia or Harvard. Society, like a genial feminine Briaræus, opens to him its myriad rosy and dimpled arms. He has only to let a certain selected pair of these clutch him tight, if he is rich enough to make his personality a luring prize. Often his morals are unsavory, but these prove no impediment. The great point with plutocracy and snobbery is to perpetuate themselves—to go on producing scions who will uphold for them

future generations of selfishness and arrogance. One sees the same sort of procreative tendency in certain of our hardiest and coarsest weeds. Sometimes a gardener comes along, with hoe, spade, and a strong uprooting animus. In human life that kind of gardener goes by the ugly name of Revolution. But we are dealing with neither parables nor allegories. Those are for the modish clergymen of the select and exclusive churches, and are administered in the form of dainty little religious pills which these gentlemen have great art in knowing how to palatably sugar.

“SHOULD THE NATION OWN THE RAILWAYS?”

BY C. WOOD DAVIS

PART I.—Objections to National Ownership Considered

When the paper published in the February Arena, entitled "The Farmer, the Investor, and the Railway," was written, the writer was not ready to accept national ownership as a solution of the railway problem; but the occurrences attending the flurries of last autumn in the money markets, when half a dozen men, in order to obtain control of certain railways, entered into a conspiracy that came near wrecking the entire industrial and commercial interests of the country, having shed a lurid light upon the enormous and baleful power which the corporate control of the railways places in the hands of what Theodore Roosevelt aptly termed "the dangerous wealthy classes," has had the effect of converting to the advocacy of national ownership not only the writer but vast numbers of conservative people of the central, western, and southern States to whom the question now assumes this form: "Which is to be preferred: a master in the shape of a political party that it is possible to dislodge by the use of the ballot, or one in the shape of ten or twenty Goulds, Vanderbilts, Huntingtons, Rockefellers, Sages, Dillons, and Brices who never die and whom it will be impossible to dislodge by the use of the ballot?" The particular Gould or Vanderbilt may die, as did that Vanderbilt to whom was ascribed the aphorism "The public be damned," but the spirit and power

of the Goulds and Vanderbilts never dies.

OBJECTIONS TO NATIONAL OWNERSHIP

The objections to national ownership are many; that most frequently advanced and having the most force being the possibility that, by reason of its control of a vastly increased number of civil servants, the party in possession of the federal administration at the time such ownership was assumed would be able to perpetuate its power indefinitely. As there are more than 700,000 people employed by the railways, this objection would seem to be well taken; and it indicates serious and far-reaching results *unless* some way can be devised to neutralize the political power of such a vast addition to the official army.

In the military service we have a body of men that exerts little or no political power, as the moment a citizen enters the army he divests himself of political functions; and it is not hazardous to say that 700,000 capable and efficient men can be found who, for the sake of employment, to be continued so long as they are capable and well-behaved, will forego the right to take part in political affairs. If a sufficient number of such men can be found, this objection would, by proper legislation, be divested of all its force. At all events no trouble from such a source has been experienced since Australian railways were placed under control of non-partisan commissions, such a commission, having had charge of the Victorian railways since February, 1884, or a little

more than one term, they being appointed for seven years instead of for life, as stated by Mr. W. M. Acworth in his argument against government control.

The second objection is that there would be constant political pressure to make places for the strikers of the party in power, thus adding a vast number of useless men to the force, and rendering it progressively more difficult to effect a change in the political complexion of the administration.

That this objection has much less force than is claimed is clear from the conduct of the postal department which is, unquestionably, a political adjunct of the administration; yet but few useless men are employed, while its conduct of the mail service is a model of efficiency after which the corporate managed railways might well pattern. Moreover, if the railways are put under non-partisan control, this objection will lose nearly if not quite all its force.

A third objection is that the service would be less efficient and cost more than with continued corporate ownership.

This appears to be bare assertion, as from the very nature of the case there can be no data outside that furnished by the government-owned railways of the British colonies, and such data negatives these assertions; and the advocates of national ownership are justified in asserting that such ownership would materially lessen the cost, as any expert can readily point out many ways in which the enormous costs of corporate management would be lessened. With those familiar with present

methods, and not interested in their perpetuation, this objection has no force whatever.

The fourth objection is that with constant political pressure unnecessary lines would be built for political ends.

This is also bare assertion, although it is not impossible that such results would follow; yet such has not been the case in the British colonies where the governments have had control of construction. On the other hand, it is notorious that under corporate ownership, and solely to reap the profits to be made out of construction, the United States have been burthened with useless parallel roads, and such corporations as the Santa Fe have paralleled their own lines for such profits. It is quite safe to say that when the nation owns the railways there will be no nickel-plating, nor will such an unnecessary expenditure be made as was involved in the construction of the "West Shore"; nor will the feat of Gould and the Santa Fe be repeated of each building two hundred and forty miles, side by side, for construction profits, much of which is located in the arid portion of Kansas where there is never likely to be traffic for even one railway. Much of the republic is covered with closely parallel lines which would never have been built under national ownership, and this process will continue as long as the manipulators can make vast sums out of construction.

A fifth objection is that with the amount of red-tape that will be in use, it will be impossible to secure the building of needed lines.

While such objection is inconsistent with the fourth it may have some force; but as the greater part of the country is already provided with all the railways that will be needed for a generation, it is not a very serious objection even if it is as difficult as asserted to procure the building of new lines. It is not probable, however, that the government would refuse to build any line that would clearly subserve public convenience, the conduct of the postal service negativing such a supposition; and for party purposes the administration would certainly favor the construction of such lines as were clearly needed, and it is high time that only such should be built; and what instrumentality so fit to determine this as a non-partisan commission acting as the agent of the whole people?

The sixth objection is that lines built by the government would cost much more than if built by corporations.

Possibly this would be true, but they would be much better built and cost far less for maintenance and "betterments," and would represent no more than actual cost; and such lines as the Kansas Midland, costing but $10,200 per mile, would not, as now, be capitalized at $53,024 per mile; nor would the President of the Union Pacific (as does Sidney Dillon, in the *North American Review* for April,) say that "A citizen, simply as a citizen, commits an impertinence when he questions the right of a corporation to capitalize its properties at any sum whatever," as then there would be no Sidney Dillons who would be presidents of corporations, pretending to own railways built

wholly from government moneys and lands, and who have never invested a dollar in the construction of a property which they have now capitalized at the modest sum of $106,000 per mile. After such an achievement, in making much out of nothing, it is no wonder that Mr. Dillon is a multi-millionnaire and thinks it an impertinence when a citizen asks how he has discharged his trust in relation to a railway built wholly with public funds, no part of which Mr. Dillon and his associates seem in haste to pay back; their indebtedness to the government, with many years of unpaid interest, amounting to more than $50,000,000, which is more than the cash cost of the railway upon which these men have been so sharp as to induce the government, after furnishing all the money expended in its construction, to accept a second mortgage, and now ask the same accommodating government to reduce the rate of interest—which they make no pretence of paying—to a nominal figure, and to wait another hundred years for both principal and interest. To make sure that the government's second mortgage shall be no more valuable than second mortgages usually are, and to make it more comfortable for the manipulators, Messrs. Gould and Dillon now propose to put a blanket first mortgage of $250,000,000 on this property, built wholly from funds derived from the sale of government lands and bonds, and to pay the interest on which bonds the people are yearly taxed, although Mr. Dillon and his associates contracted to pay such interest. In his conception of the relations of railway corporations to the public, Mr. Dillon is clearly not

in accord with the higher tribunals which hold, in substance, that railways are public rather than private property, and that the shareholders *are entitled to but a reasonable compensation for the capital actually expended in construction* and a limited control of the property; and in this connection it may be well to quote briefly from decisions of the United States Supreme Court, which, in the case of Wabash Railway *vs.* Illinois, uses this language: "The highways in a State are the highways of the State. The highways are not of private but of public institution and regulation. In modern times, it is true, government is in the habit, in some countries, of letting out the construction of important highways, requiring a large expenditure of capital, to agents, generally corporate bodies created for the purpose, and giving them the right of taxing those who travel or transport goods thereon as a means of obtaining compensation for their outlay; but a superintending power over the highways, and the charges imposed upon the public for their use, always remains in the government." Again, in Olcott *vs.* the Supervisors, it is held that: "Whether the use of a railway is a public or private one depends in no measure upon the question who constructed it or who owns it. It has never been considered of any importance that the road was built by the agency of a private corporation. No matter who is the agent, the function performed is that of the State."

Mr. Justice Bradley says: "When a railroad is chartered it is for the purpose of performing a duty which belongs to the State

itself…. It is the duty and prerogative of the State to provide means of intercommunication between one part of its territory and another."

If, as appears, such is the duty of the State (nation) why should not the State resume the discharge of this duty when the corporate agents to which it has delegated it are found to be using the delegated power for the purpose of oppressing and plundering a public which it is the duty of the government to protect?

The abilities of the man who cannot become a multi-millionnaire with the free use, for twenty-five years, of $33,000,000 of government funds, must be of a very low order, and it is no wonder, that after having for so many years had the use of such a sum without payment of interest, Mr. Dillon and his associates are very wealthy, and, like others who are retaining what does not belong to them, think it an impertinence when the owner inquires what use they are making of property to which they have no right. Had the nation built the Union Pacific there would have been no "Credit-Mobilier" and its unsavory scandal, and it is safe to say that the road would not now be made to represent an expenditure of $106,000 per mile, and that Mr. Dillon and some others would not have so much money as to warrant them in putting on such insufferable airs. When it is remembered what use Oakes Ames and the Union Pacific crew made of issues of stock, it is not at all surprising that the president of the Union Pacific should think it an impertinence for a citizen

to question the amount of capitalization or the use to which a part of such issues have been put, some of which are within the knowledge of the writer, so far as relates to issues of that part of the Union Pacific lying in Kansas and built by Samuel Hallett, who told the writer that he gave a member of the then federal cabinet several thousand shares of the capital stock of the "Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division,"—now the Kansas Division of the Union Pacific—to secure the acceptance of sections of the road which were not built in accordance with the requirements of the act of Congress, which provided that a given amount of government bonds per mile should be delivered to the railway company when certain officials should accept the road; and it was a quarrel with the chief engineer of the road in relation to a letter written by such engineer to President Lincoln, informing him of the defective construction of this road, that caused Samuel Hallett to be shot down in the streets of Wyandotte, Kansas, by engineer Talcott. It is within the knowledge of the writer that the member of the cabinet to whom Mr. Hallett said he gave several thousand shares of stock, held an amount of Union Pacific shares years afterwards, and that many years after he left the cabinet he continued to draw a large salary from the Union Pacific Company. Mr. Hallett also told the writer what were the arguments applied to congressmen to induce them to change the government lien from a first to a second mortgage of the Pacific Railway lines, and what was his contribution in dollars to the fund used to enable congressmen to see the force of the arguments.

When issues of railway shares are used for corrupt purposes it is certainly an impertinence for a citizen to make inquiries or offer any remarks in relation thereto.

The seventh objection to State owned railways is that they are incapable of as progressive improvement as are corporate owned ones, and will not keep pace with the progress of the nation in other respects; and in his *Forum* article Mr. Acworth lays great stress upon this phase of the question, and argues that as a result the service would be far less satisfactory.

There may be force in this objection, but the evidence points to an opposite conclusion. When the nation owns the railways, trains will run into union depots, the equipment will become uniform and of the best character, and so sufficient that the traffic of no part of the country would have to wait while the worthless locomotives of some bankrupt corporation were being patched up, nor would there be the present difficulties in obtaining freight cars, growing out of the poverty of corporations which have been plundered by the manipulators, and improvements would not be hindered by the diverse ideas of the managers of various lines in relation to the adoption of devices intended to render life more secure or to add to the public convenience. That such is one of the evils of corporate management is demonstrated daily, and is shown by the following from the *Railway Review* of March 7, 1891: "It is stated that a bill will be introduced in the Illinois Legislature, at the suggestion of the railroad and warehouse commissioners, governing the

placing of interlocking plants at railway grade crossings. It sometimes happens that one of the companies concerned is anxious to put in such a plant and the other objects. At present there is no law to govern the matter, and the enterprising company is forced to abide the time of the other." Instead of national ownership being a hindrance to improvement and enterprise, the results in Australia prove the contrary, as in Victoria the government railways are already provided with interlocking plants at all grade crossings, and one line does not have to wait the motion of another, but all are governed by an active and enlightened policy which adopts all beneficial improvements, appliances or modes of administration that will add either to the public safety, comfort, or convenience. It is safe to say that had the nation been operating the railways, there would have been no Fourth Avenue tunnel horror; and Chauncey Depew and associates would not now be under indictment, as the government would not have continued the use of the death-dealing stove on nearly half the railways in the country in order to save money for the shareholders.

Existing evidence all negatives Mr. Acworth's postulate "that State railway systems are incapable of vigorous life."

An objection to national ownership, which the writer has not seen advanced, is that States, counties, cities, townships, and school-districts would lose some $27,000,000 of revenue derived from taxes upon railways.

While this would be a serious loss to some communities, there

would be compensating advantages for the public, as the cost of transportation would be lessened in like measure.

Many believe stringent laws, enforced by commissions having judicial powers, will serve the desired end, and the writer was long hopeful of the efficacy of regulation by State and national commissions; but close observation of their endeavors and of the constant efforts—too often successful—of the corporations to place their tools on such commissions, and to evade all laws and regulations, have convinced him that such control is and must continue to be ineffective, and that the only hope of just and impartial treatment for railway users is to exercise the "right of eminent domain," condemn the railways, and pay their owners what it would cost to duplicate them; and in this connection it may be well to state what valuations some of the corporations place upon their properties.

Some years since the "Santa Fe" filed in the counties on its line a statement showing that at the then price of labor and materials —rails were double the present price—that their road could be duplicated for $9,685 per mile, and the materials being much worn the actual cash value of the road did not exceed $7,725 per mile.

In 1885 the superintendent of the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railway, before the Arkansas State board of assessors, swore that he could duplicate such railway for $11,000 per mile, and yet Mr. Gould has managed to float its securities, notwithstanding a capitalization of five times that amount.

(Concluded next month.)

THE UNKNOWN. [1]

PART II

BY CAMILLE FLAMMARION

The human soul would seem to be a spiritual substance, endowed with psychical force, capable of acting outside bodily limits. This force, like all others, may be transmissible into the form of electricity or heat, or may be capable of bringing into activity certain latent energies while it yet remains intimately united with our mental being.

We propound questions to the table, already impressed with our nervous impetus, on subjects interesting to ourselves; and then we ourselves unconsciously inspire the responses. The table speaks to us in our own language, giving back our own ideas, within the limits of our own knowledge, conversing with us about our opinions and views, as we might discuss them with ourselves. This is absolutely the reflection—direct or remote, precise or vague—of our own feelings and thoughts. All my efforts to

[1] Translated by G. H. A. Meyer and J. Henry Wiggin, from the manuscript of Camille Flammarion.

establish the identity of a stranger spirit, unknown to the persons present, have failed.

On the other hand, attentive examination of different communications leads us toward a conclusion as to their origin. When amidst the Marquis de Mirville's revelations, one is in the full swing of Roman Catholic diabolism—demons, spirits, purgatory, miracles, prayers,—nothing is lacking. With the Count de Gasparin, we are in the bosom of Rational Protestantism, which is absolutely the opposite of the other. Here are no present miracles, no devils, but simply a physical agency, a fluid obedient to volition. In the experiences of Eugene Nus's circle, we find the language of Fourier discoursing about the phalanstery, about racial solidarity, and socialistic religion. Therein are found earthly music chanted in space,—songs of Saturn and Jupiter dictated under the influence of Alyre Bureau, who was the musician for the spiritualist society of Allan-Kardec. Here we have disembodied spirits of all ranks, and this is the apostolate of their reincarnation.

In the United States, on the contrary, the moving tables declare that the hypothesis of reincarnation is absurd and misleading; and it may be assumed that none of the persons present, especially the ladies, would for one moment admit the possibility of being some day reincarnated beneath the skin of a negro. A brilliant imagination, like that of Sardou, will picture to us Jupiter's castles; a musician may receive the revelation of a musical composition, more or less charming; an astronomer may

be favored with astronomical communications. Is this physical auto-suggestion? Not absolutely, since the force goes outside of ourselves, in order to act. It is rather *mental* suggestion; yet an idea cannot be suggested to a piece of wood. This is, therefore, the direct action of the mind. I cannot find a better name for it than *psychical force*, a term, as already stated, which I have used since 1865, and which has since become the fashion.

The action of mind, outside the body, has other testimony, however. Magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion, telepathy prove this every day. It cannot be disputed that here also we encounter many illusions.

Some ten years ago a learned physician at Nice, Doctor Barety, the author of "La Force Neurique Rayonnante et Circulante" (The Radiation and Circulation of Nervous Force) devoted himself to ingenious experiments in the distant transmission of thought as observable in a magnetized person. In these experiments, in which I assisted, it seemed to me that the subject's sense of hearing amply sufficed to explain the results.

Take one case. The subject began to count aloud, while the magnetizer was in an adjoining room, the door standing open between them. At a certain moment the doctor, with all his energy, projected his "nervous fluid" from his hands, and the magnetized subject forthwith ceased counting; yet the doctor's linen cuffs made enough noise to indicate what he commanded, though no word was spoken. During the experiments at Salpétrière and at Ivry, to which Doctor Luys was

kind enough to invite me, I thought I observed that a previous knowledge of the sequence of the experiments furnished a wide margin for the exercise of the personal faculties of the young women upon whom the experiments were made. These suspicions, however, did not prevent certain facts in regard to mental suggestion from being absolutely incontestable.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, купив полную легальную версию на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.