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YESTERDAY'S WEATHER—Maximum temperature, 40; minimum temperature, 33; precipitation, 0.

TODAY'S WEATHER—Cloudy and threatening, with occasional rain; winds mostly southerly.

PORTLAND, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31.

JAPAN AN ASIATIC POWER.

It has been the cue of Japan to encourage the belief that her purposes in Asia are in keeping with the interests of the United States. To an extent this is true; for any change in Corea or China in the direction of freer trade is for our good; but there is one aspect of this great Oriental struggle which so far has been almost wholly ignored. We refer to the Asiatic nature of the Japanese people and their ambition to Japanize China.

The persistence with which guileful Russian diplomacy hangs on to Manchuria has been thoroughly exploited, by reason of the interested activity of British news and diplomatic agencies; but only vague hints have been let fall of the dreams of Asiatic power that are secretly cherished by Japan. These are believed to look to the organization of the Chinese armies by Japanese officers. Dim as these hopes are now, they need but the impulse of a successful war to set the Japanese nation upon China as the British have taken hold in India and Egypt.

The next great awakening of Japan would be the vision of a Japanized Asia. The military genius of Japan is great. Her soldiers are perhaps the best in the world. Her diplomats and military officers understand China completely. With their similarity of race, religion, history and Oriental ideals, the two peoples might readily be fused into a military entity whose power, once aroused and mobilized, would dwarf into insignificance any horde of conquerors the world has ever seen. With Japanese statesmen erecting a framework of efficient government upon the ruins of the present Manchu dynasty; with "Asia for the Asiatics" brought out from its seclusion to serve as the slogan of China's hitherto inert hosts, at length directed by acumen, energy and newly roused ambition, the plans of Europe for a partition of that ancient empire would fall away like a house of cards before a breath.

The Western world cannot forget, throughout this impending conflict, that while Japan is heathen, Asiatic, Mongolian, her opponent is Christian, European, Caucasian. With all the mystery and terror with which legend has surrounded the Russian bear and the great white Czar; with all the legacies of Catharine and the Alexanders; with all the tragic memories of nihilistic outrages and Hebrew massacres and Siberian tortures, unhappy Poland and wretched Finland, there must also be thoughts of the heroic undertakings of Peter the Great and Nicholas II and Sergius de Witte to lift the unhappy millions of their countrymen out of the depths in which barbarism bound them up to higher levels of enlightenment and comfort.

In a binary system composed of China and Japan, the center of gravity will be more remote from Western influences than Russia is, with her relationships to England and France, her century of friendship with America, her thousand ties of interest and sympathy with the capitals of Europe. The contest is on in the Orient. Blood may be shed and it may not. But the year on which we have entered is the beginning of an irrepressible conflict in which each side calls potently upon our sympathies. We have friends and interests on either side; and upon neither should we seek to arouse the feeling that here where freedom and justice are believed to dwell, a national struggle for life and light must reckon with a foe.

The notable Americans who died during the year 1903 include Charles G. Leland, Cassius M. Clay, ex-United States Senator Dawes, Abram S. Hewitt, Richard H. Stoddard, the poet; Bishop Clark, of Rhode Island; ex-Congressman John E. Russell, of Massachusetts; Paul Du Chaillu, Edmund Kirke, Frederick Law Olmstead, Joseph Haworth, actor; Mark Smith, actor; Frederic R. Coudert, ex-United States Senator McDonald; Rear-Admiral White, U. S. N.; Rev. Dr. Brooke Herford, William Coggswell, portrait painter; Andrew H. Green, Rear-Admiral Gherardi, U. S. N.; John Dolph, painter; Stuart Robson, Luigi Arditi, Bishop Keane, of the Catholic Church. The famous painter, Whistler, was an American by birth and education, but his whole professional career was spent in London and Paris. Among the Union soldiers who held high rank during the Civil War the death roll for the year includes Major-Generals Alexander McDowell McCook, William F. Smith, William B. Franklin, Frank Wheaton, Eli Long, Charles C. Gilbert; Brigadier-Generals William P. Carlin and Stephen Thomas. The eminent Confederate dead are Lieutenant-General A. P. Stewart, Brigadier-General Bradley T. Johnson and Brigadier-General George H. Stuart. The list of notable foreigners who have died during the year includes Legouve, the oldest French Academician, who died in his 97th year; Pope Leo XIII, Professor Mommsen, the aged historian; Herbert Spencer, W. E. Lecky, the historian; Archdeacon Farrar, Sir Charles Gavin Duffy, Sagasta, the Spanish statesman; the Marquis of Salisbury, Cardinal Vaughan and Cardinal Espinosa, King Alexander of Servia, William E. Henley, B. L. Fargeon, Zanardelli, ex-Premier of Italy.

RIGHT SORT OF REFORM BILL.

It has been the undoing of every currency reform measure since 1893, with the exception of the act of March, 1900, that it covered so much ground as to multiply enemies by virtue of its very comprehensiveness. In the effort to secure inviolable the integrity of the standard, to minimize the silver and the greenback burdens, to impart elasticity to the currency, and to lay the foundation, through payment of the National debt, for a scientific bank circulation in lieu of one secured by bonds, the forces of civilization have done for the barbarians of financial heresy what they could not do for themselves—made them unite.

The measure of Representative Hill, of Connecticut, on which a favorable report is expected from the House committee on banking and currency, avoids this error by confining its purview to a few simple proposals whose desirability, except in one or two possible exceptions, is conceded by all intelligent observers of our currency. Mr. Hill proposes: (1) The deposit of customs receipts as well as internal revenue in depository banks; (2) repeal of the inquitous restriction of $3,000,000 a month upon National bank note retirement; (3) recoinage of silver dollars into subsidiary coins; (4) withdrawal of silver certificates and their reissue into other denominations; (5) $10 gold certificates; (6) removal of restriction upon the proportion of $5 notes in National bank issues; (7) substitution of half a cent a year on average bank circulation for the present tax of 1 per cent.

We are unhesitatingly in favor of every part of this bill, with the possible exception of the scheme as to denominations of notes. We regard it as extremely doubtful whether the smaller denominations should not be more and more restricted to the silver certificates and Treasury notes. It is of the highest wisdom to coin the dollars into subsidiary silver; but according to the same admirable purpose of minimizing the silver burden, the small notes, which lose themselves in the circulation and are with difficulty collected for presentation at the Treasury, should be representative of the silver hoard, still upwards of $500,000,000, in the Government's custody. Instead of this, it is proposed to enter the $10 field with gold certificates, to let banks issue as many $5 notes as they choose, to let the silver certificates be changed from small denominations to large. The aim here undoubtedly is, in connection with the other sections referring to bank notes, to stimulate the issue of banking currency in the interests of elasticity. This is a commendable purpose; but elasticity is a poor thing to advance at the cost of absolute safety. It is more important to protect the parity of our silver and the paper based on silver than to facilitate bank issues or withdrawals. We hope to see these sections modified or omitted from the bill before it becomes a law.

It is a pleasure to The Oregonian to see so ardent and advanced a currency reformer as Representative Hill taking now a position which has been consistently maintained by The Oregonian for these seven years in which banking reform has been agitated—namely, that to reduce the silver menace and alleviate National banking restrictions gradually as public opinion is educated affords a far safer and wiser course than any of the ambitious currency reform measures of comprehensive scope and radical method. Such also is the matured judgment of Senator Aldrich. A banking system cannot be made in a day. It is the product of a slow and evolutionary process. Step by step we shall eliminate our dangers and reach toward the true currency, resting upon the credit of business and not the public debt or taxes wrung from the people.

NOT A PARTY QUESTION.

The Democracy is beginning to see that they cannot afford to make the ratification of the Panama canal treaty a party question, for the Southern States, that are more deeply interested in the construction of an inter-oceanic waterway than any other section, would not permit their representatives in the Senate to vote against it. The leading papers of Atlanta, New Orleans and other Southern cities urge the ratification of the treaty, and the Louisiana Legislature on the eve of adjournment unanimously passed a resolution instructing Senators Foster and McEnery to vote for ratification. The Legislature of Mississippi, which convenes early this month, is reported to favor ratification. The Legislatures of Maryland and Kentucky meet this month and are not likely to be indifferent to the commercial importance of a quick completion of the Panama Canal. Governor Terrell, of Georgia, on Christmas day at a public banquet, upheld the President in his recognition of the independence of Panama, and said that the ratification of the treaty is not and cannot be made a party question.

The traditional policy of the Democratic party should make them all ardent expansionists in the matter of the President's Philippine policy, and should make them all champions of the quick construction of a trans-isthmian canal. The Democratic Administration of Pierce was deeply interested in the matter of a trans-isthmian canal, and the statesmen of the South have as a rule always recognized the fact that their section of the country would profit more by an inter-oceanic waterway than any other. There are thousands of Democrats who will vote for Roosevelt simply because he is a representative of the hereditary Democratic policy of National expansion and opposition to ratification of the Panama treaty will give Roosevelt thousands of Democratic votes. Free silver at 16 to 1 was the worst and most far-reaching blunder that the Democracy made in 1896; opposition to expansion and our Philippine policy was another very bad blunder, made in 1900, and opposition to the ratification of the Panama treaty will be a fatal blunder for 1904.

The Democratic party will never be victorious upon the stupid plan of finding out what the Republican party proposes to do and at once filing a dogmatic negative. Mere negation will never be accepted as statesmanship. The people will say: "The Republicans know what they want to do, while you do not pretend that you know anything in particular. You are ready to file a negative to anything the Republican party proposes, and you are never ready to do anything else." The people are tired of the Democratic party rising up in court and saying: "I object." The Democratic party is become nothing but a perennial objector to the Republican policy, and yet has no policy of its own.

BASELESS FEARS OF MERCHANTS.

It is not at all to the credit of practical business men that their judgment is so often far astray when they leave the beaten track of buying and selling. It is a curious fact that the bankers and jobbers of Colorado and Utah were as enthusiastic for free silver in 1896 as the lawyers were. On so prosaic a theme as tariff, business men divide on party lines. Prominent maritime men are active on both sides of the subsidy question, and free wool has no more ardent advocates than Democratic sheepmen. A striking example of the limitations of the business mind in the field of political thought is the attitude of traders toward the threatened war in the Orient. A Singapore merchant, interviewed in Portland, said:

> In the event of Japan's success she would absorb Corea and throw it open to civilization. There is a menace in the prospect of Japanese ascendency. It is not at all improbable that out of it would come her absolute mastery of China. In that event she would awaken the sleeping empire and set her to work civilizing herself. This would prevent the development of China by European or American capital, for with her wonderful resources and cheap labor she would defy Caucasian competition.

This utterance is welcome for the pause it may give to those whose prejudice against Russia induces them to pray for Japanese success; but it is quite as ill-advised as the cries of the Russophobes. It is past comprehension that a thinking man can interpret the history of Japan as evidence that "wonderful resources and cheap labor can defy Caucasian competition." The promise that Japan would outsell us in manufactures by reason of her powers of imitation, cheap labor, etc., is now almost ten years old. But the result has been otherwise. Awakened Japan has actually increased her purchases from us more than her sales to us, as the record shows:

Year.	From Japan.	To Japan.
1895	$23,000,000	$ 4,000,000
1896	25,000,000	7,000,000
1897	24,000,000	13,000,000
1902	37,000,000	21,000,000

There is reason to expect that with Japanese ascendency in Corea or in China a movement would ensue similar to the movement in Japan itself, since her awakening nine years ago. There is a racial and political aspect of the question which we have treated in another article on this page. But the idea that either Russian or Japanese control and exploitation of China is fraught with menace to our trade interests is absurd. Whoever fears it has only to reflect upon the medieval enormities of the Chinese regime which are set aside by the treaty we have already ratified with her, and which we are now moving heaven and earth to induce her to ratify. What we need is the opening of China; and our chances for leadership in development there are probably greater under either Russian or Japanese control than under control of more skillful European rivals, like Great Britain or Germany.

THIS ISSUE OF THE OREGONIAN.

The review of the progress of Oregon in the year 1903 published in this morning's Oregonian proves that the wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year which were made a year ago today have been fully realized. The forecast of what is in prospect for the state in the year 1904 justifies confidence that the same good wishes, which are now renewed, will also be fulfilled in good and abundant measure.

The designs for the buildings of the Lewis and Clark Fair, an enterprise on which the hearts of all Oregonians, and indeed of the whole Northwest, are centered, are published this morning for the first time. They are worthy of their great purpose—the celebration of an epoch-making event in the history of the nation. All being designed by Oregon architects, these buildings themselves will be no mean exhibit of Oregon's genius and constructive skill. The birdseye views of the Lewis and Clark Fair and of other great expositions invite comparison, of which none need be afraid. While not pretending to vie with the Chicago, Buffalo and St. Louis Expositions in other respects, the Lewis and Clark Exposition will far surpass them all in the scenic beauty of its site. This enterprise will assume its final shape during this year, the only question still open being the extent of the Government's participation. Its general scope and the nature of the different exhibits are defined in this issue in articles by the director-general and by the men in charge of the several departments.

The articles on the several leading industries of the state, most of which are contributed by men actively engaged in those industries, reveal a condition of abounding prosperity on all hands. There have been good crops of all the products of the soil, and they have been sold at highly remunerative prices. The only limit to the output of the lumber industry has been the capacity of the mills and that of the railroads to haul the products to market. A great advance has been made in opening up the mining districts. There has been the same expansion in the state's manufactures as in the development of its natural resources, a long step having been made in converting the raw material into finished products within Oregon's borders.

The result of the year's operations in all lines of industry is told in the statistics of Oregon banks. Reports from almost every bank in the state, both National and private, show an increase of nearly $7,000,000 in the aggregate deposits. This is the year's profit of the whole people of Oregon. It is an addition to their accumulated wealth which can be used as capital in further development. With over $55,000,000 as working capital, Oregon no longer needs to borrow in New York; on the contrary, she has money to lend Wall street for the relief of its financial distress.

Facts published in this issue prove beyond cavil that Portland still holds her place as the commercial metropolis of the Northwest. She holds the first place in the value of her exports of wheat and flour. The largest ships sailing from Pacific ports have been loaded at her wharves. As a municipality she has entered upon an era of public improvement, determined to live up to the position of pre-eminence which she has gained.

While dwelling at length on the good work accomplished, The Oregonian has not ignored in this annual review the good work which remains to be done. It was to be expected that, in a land of so many and such various opportunities, some should be neglected. These exist more particularly among the manufacturing industries, and they will be found fully set forth. The conditions favoring success are explained, but the difficulties to be overcome are not ignored, for it is not desired to deceive by telling only half the truth.

The year just ended has been so prosperous that an appropriate New Year's greeting is, May the new year be as good as the old year!

NOT AN EVENTFUL YEAR.

The year that is gone is not so much an eventful year as it is a year that indicates great events for the present year. The Venezuela difficulty, which began with Germany and Great Britain the last month of 1902, was settled without serious trouble. War between Turkey and the Macedonian insurgents has threatened to embroil Bulgaria and Servia, but hostilities ceased in October last, sure to be resumed in the Spring unless Russia and Austria hold the Sultan by the collar. War has been impending for the last six months between Russia and Japan over the question of the evacuation of Manchuria and the occupation of Corea, and at this moment it looks as if the present year would not pass without a collision between Japan and the Czar. The assassination of the King of Servia has not brought peace and harmony to that country, or happiness to his wretched successor. The new departure of Joseph Chamberlain is the most notable event in English politics, measured by its far-reaching consequences to Great Britain and perhaps to the United States, if it is supported by the British people, and by the personal disaster its rejection would prove to the brilliant Secretary for the Colonies.

Deaths of famous men have taken place in Europe, but they were all men whose working days were over, like Pope Leo, Mommsen, Lord Salisbury, Herbert Spencer, Lecky. Captain Dreyfus has a Happy New Year in the prospect that his case will be reheard and his innocence affirmed. In the United States the sudden secession of the State of Panama from Colombia has enabled us to negotiate a treaty with that little state which will probably result in a speedy construction of a trans-isthmian canal by the Panama route at the very time when the reactionary refusal of Colombia to sell us a right of way for a reasonable sum had halted our project. It is quite possible the United States may be involved in war with Colombia in its determination to permit no invasion of the isthmus. Cuba has been placed on a better political basis by the ratification of the recent treaty of reciprocity between Cuba and the United States. The settlement of the Alaska boundary question has strengthened the ties of mutual friendship and esteem between this country and Great Britain.

The postal scandal has been sufficiently picturesque to make the Democracy hilarous on Christmas, and the charge of fraud in the land department probably adds something to the joy of expectancy with which they hail the New Year. Tammany Hall is happy today in the possession of the spoils of victory, and ex-Mayor Low is happy, if the consciousness of duty uprightly performed fills the soul of the executive with felicity. Secretary Root is happy, we assume, because he is about to unsling the knapsack of the War Department and help adjust it to the shoulders of his successor. The year has been signalized by the most awful railroad accident, that of the Duquesne Limited, that has happened for many years, and the terrible loss of life by fire in the Iroquois Theater, of Chicago, is the worst of the kind that has ever happened in this country. Captain Oberlin M. Carter is happier than he was a year ago, for he has regained his liberty, although not his reputation.

None of the notable American dead of the year will be missed from the active pursuits of usefulness, for they were all members of the retired list either through age or infirmity. Indeed it cannot be said that America has lost a man of first rank in literature, science, politics, art, soldiership or the stage. Of course there will always be pessimists who insist that the world is growing worse, but such thinkers as a rule do not know enough about the social history of the world's past to justify them in delivering any dogmatic judgment concerning the present. Every man who has read carefully the history of the world's social morals in the past as told in the novels and memoirs of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century knows that the world is a far better man than it was in 1850. When we remember that we are 80,000,000 and were only 30,000,000 in 1850, no man who can look back forty years will deny that public gambling, drunkenness, prizefighting, cockfighting, are vices that have steadily lost influential ground through the gradual growth of a higher and more humane sentiment in both Europe and America.

Forty years ago men of intellect, education and high public station were not ashamed to gamble all night or get drunk at dinner, but the leaders in politics, law or literature no longer drink to excess or gamble or lead irregular lives. Our American Congress is a sober body, while forty years ago it was disfigured by intemperance and its intellectual leaders, Thad Stevens and George Ashmun, were conspicuous for their devotion to poker. Purer manners and nobler laws form the record of civilization for the last fifty years in both Europe and America. Prizefighting, once the popular recreation of the aristocratic class in England, has been relegated to the ditch and the dogs from which it sprang, and more refined sports attract decent men. Young Corbett is safe to fight himself into "a Happy New Year" in California, but outside of California the states are few and far between where a prizefight can take place that is fought to a finish of ferocious brutality. The world, in its pleasures as well as in its business, is a far better man than it was fifty years ago. There is a great deal more complaint than there used to be, but that is only because there are more people intelligent enough to be sensitive to the existence of better things and because it is safer under law to criticise and complain. The day is not far distant when a prizefighter cannot find a state where he can legally make a match, and then he will be as melancholy as a drunkard without a dime yet raging for a drink.

OREGON'S MOST PROSPEROUS YEAR.

The year closing yesterday was the most prosperous that Oregon has ever known, and Portland, as the chief city and distributing point not only for Oregon, but for a large portion of Washington and Idaho, shared to the fullest extent in that prosperity. This city and state are so far past the era when the wheat crop was the all-powerful factor in commercial life that even the very poor crop of the premier cereal last year had no effect whatever on the general trade situation. Exports of wheat were smaller than for many years, but flour shipments broke all previous records and for the first time in the history of the port exceeded 1,000,000 barrels. Lumber shipments were also the largest on record, and more barley and oats were sent out of the state than in any previous year. The wool clip was large and sold at high prices, and the same was true of the hop crop. With very few exceptions all of the products of the farm and field commanded much higher prices than for several years. These were prominent factors in swelling the jobbing trade of Portland to over $150,000,000, but a contributing influence which was felt last year to a greater extent than ever before was the large amount of money brought into the Pacific Northwest for industrial development. Thousands of men of varying degree of wealth, but commanding in the aggregate millions of dollars in capital, have come into the Northwest and invested in timber lands and farm lands, and are developing them and creating new wealth in sections which a few years ago contributed nothing to state or city. The greatest development in these lines has perhaps been accomplished in the lumbering industry. Scores of new mills have been put in operation within the past year, and as such a large percentage of the disbursements in connection with the industry are for labor, the effect is felt in all lines of trade.

There was a heavy increase in the volume of the jobbing trade and in the territory reached by Portland jobbers. A number of new wholesale establishments have come into the field, and these new firms all report an excellent business, and the old establishments handle more trade than ever before. In maritime commerce Portland has shown a remarkable growth on lines which argue well for her future. Within the year the Oregon metropolis dispatched more big lumber and flour cargoes than were ever cleared from any other port on earth in a single year. The channel from Portland to Astoria has been deepened so that lighterage is practically a thing of the past, and ships of 24 feet draft experienced no difficulty in going from Portland to Astoria. Toward the close of the year the Government dredge Chinook was sent to the Columbia for the purpose of deepening the channel at the mouth of the river, and her trial operations have been such as to warrant the belief that the channel over the bar will soon be in as good shape, proportionately, as that in the river.

By no means the slightest evidence of the wonderful prosperity which was enjoyed by Portland in 1903 is the large number of substantial and extensive business blocks that have been constructed during the year. Building of this character as well as residence building has been pushed on a more extensive scale than ever before in the history of the city. Oregon has enjoyed many "fat" years in the past, but the best of them have never equaled that just closed, and one of its best features from a trade standpoint lies in the fact that the impetus given trade has been so great that it goes rushing into the new year unchecked in volume.

SOME CURIOUS DEFENSES.

Dr. Wood in 1886, while attached to Captain Lawton's command as a surgeon, took part in the chase of Geronimo. Of course, he was commended for his participation in the chase by Generals Lawton, Miles and Forsyth, and these compliments to a surgeon are seriously quoted to justify making Dr. Wood a Major-General in the line today, although Dr. Wood continued to practice medicine ten years after he received these compliments. This part of his record was enough to justify making him a Colonel of volunteer cavalry.

Wood's purely military service in the Santiago campaign as a volunteer officer was unimportant, and the rest of his work was not military, but administrative, in its character; the work that any intelligent civilian could have done. Yet Secretary Root counts this civilian service as a distinguished feature of his military career, which is absurd, since it could have been done just as well by any intelligent subordinate of the Department of Justice who had never set a squadron in the field. It is true that President McKinley was guilty of a great mistake when he made his family physician a Brigadier-General in the line, but his successor is not obliged to be governed by seniority in making nominations of Major-Generals. He could have nominated General Bell to this vacancy, a West Pointer of notable service in the Philippine War. Wood could not complain of being jumped with any more justice than Wade and Merriam, who were both jumped.

The argument that President Roosevelt is bound by courtesy to perpetuate the initial mistakes of President McKinley is absurd. Is the welfare of the Army for the future to be sacrificed in order to be courteous to President McKinley's official ghost.

Out of our 2000 volunteer officers who fought their way up in four years of incessant fighting to the rank of Brigadier-General or Major-General of Volunteers only one obtained the place of Brigadier-General in the regular Army, and that was General A. H. Terry, for the exceptionally important service rendered by the storming of Fort Fisher. But then General Terry was not originally a doctor; he was only a lawyer in civil life. Had he been a doctor he would perhaps have risen out of sight in four years' fighting.

The Springfield (Mass.) Republican raises a somewhat novel point in regard to negro disfranchisement. It calls attention to the fact that the Crumpacker plan of reducing the representation in the South in the lower house of Congress and in the electoral college in proportion to the number of negroes disfranchised is under the fourteenth amendment to the Federal Constitution and that it ignores the fifteenth amendment. Disfranchisement because of race or color is not prohibited by the fourteenth amendment. It is only provided that where any male citizens over 21 years of age are disfranchised for any cause except for crime or participation in rebellion, the basis of representation shall be proportionately reduced. Under this amendment the representation of Massachusetts might be reduced in proportion to the number of illiterates disfranchised in that state. Under this clause a state may limit the suffrage as it pleases, only submitting to the penalty. But the disfranchising clause in this amendment was superseded by the fifteenth amendment, which was added two years later. This last amendment provides absolutely that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude." Now the Springfield Republican makes the point that the Crumpacker plan would serve notice "that any state could ignore the last amendment and disfranchise on the ground of color provided that it submitted to a proportionate reduction in representation." It adds: "The upshot of it all would be a general and permanent exclusion of the negro from the elective franchise and his formal reduction to a state of political servitude, leading inevitably to encroachments upon his industrial freedom, and this with the sanction of the Nation."

The memory of George William Curtis was recalled by the unveiling of a bust of him in bronze and the formal presentation of it to the New York public library December 7. Mr. Curtis was intended by nature for a pure literary force, but necessity turned him into a writer of political editorials for Harper's Weekly, and he sought to be a leader of the Republican mugwumps against Roscoe Conkling in New York State. But Mr. Curtis was not fit for the coarse work of rough outdoor politics. He had fine powers of oratory, the diction of Wendell Phillips without his powerful sarcasm, and unflinching aggressiveness. Conkling could quell Curtis with his insolent invective, because Curtis was too well-bred a man and of too fine spirit to return blow for blow with a man like Conkling, who had good brains at his command and felt none of the restraints of good breeding in debate. Curtis was a man of sound literary culture, and he cultivated a humane spirit in journalism, but he was like a fish out of water trying to be a leader in practical politics. He was an eloquent, graceful speaker, but he was not a great orator or powerful debater. In an offhand contest for the supremacy of a state convention Conkling was a leader, a general, a debater, while Curtis was an orator for anniversaries, for eulogistic occasions. Mr. Curtis' true place was in pure literature rather than in either politics or journalism; his mind was essentially poetic, hypercritical of men and things; he was out of touch with the plain people, and something of an Anglo-maniac. His mind was critical rather than creative; it was elegant rather than robust or incisive, compared with that of Greeley or Dana or Godkin. If he had lived in the French Revolution he would have been one of the Girondists, a party of orators without a man of governing capacity or common sense in its ranks.

Death in all its hideousness never before wrought such carnage as has hushed the holiday mirth and transformed Chicago into a city of mourning. War and pestilence, earthquake and flood, shipwreck and famine, have claimed their victims at times by the hundreds and even thousands, but never before have so many bright young lives been blotted out under such distressing circumstances. The matinee crowd has ever been a distinctive feature of the brighter side of life in a great city. Made up of joyous young girls and children, with a sprinkling of matrons for chaperons, and a few men who seek a brief recreation from the cares of business life, it would be impossible to picture a similar large assemblage to whom life at the moment would seem sweeter. And in no other manner could the happy maidens and matrons, the innocent, prattling babes and the pleasure-seeking men have met a death which would have caused so much lasting sorrow. Death by shipwreck in midocean, by pestilence on land or on the field of battle is in a measure regarded as unavoidable, and the attendant heartaches of those who are left to mourn are softened to a certain extent by the consoling thought that everything possible had been done to avert the calamity. In this case there is much that "might have been" which will cause lasting regrets and sorrow for those who are left to mourn. To Death the mourning friends of the victims of the Chicago tragedy can truthfully say that "All we know or dream or fear of agony is thine."

Where a large number of people are gathered within an inclosure, sudden approach of great danger deprives them of reason. If fire is the menace, the instinct of self-preservation, made instantly active, overthrows judgment. Men, women and children become as terrified animals. In such disasters as occurred at the Iroquois Theater, fatalities occasioned by the crush of maddened persons far outnumber those by incineration. There can be no safeguard for a frenzied throng who are threatened, or imagine themselves threatened, with death in horrible form. Approved modern architecture lessens danger from fire, but human ingenuity cannot evolve a plan for preventing loss of life under circumstances such as arose in that ill-fated playhouse.

A Lewis and Clark almanac, containing much interesting information in the way of the dates of notable events in the Northwest, has been issued by Woodard, Clarke & Co. Nothing of this kind has been compiled before, and the almanac will prove a convenience to persons desirous of having a compendious date-book. The correctness of the information is vouched for by Secretary Himes, of the Oregon Historical Society.

NOTE AND COMMENT.

Parritch.

Scotland is disrupted. An eminent English physician has flatly declared that "oatmeal is a national curse." He says that the increase of rickets is due to the way in which children are fed on oatmeal porridge. Rickets due to parritch! exclaims the astonished Scot, who may have been fed that universal food as a bairn, and at college have "cultivated the Muse on a little oatmeal." No bone food in oatmeal! What of the retort to Dr. Johnson, who, seeing men eating parritch in Scotland, declared "that's what we feed horses on in England." "And where," asked a listening Scot, "where will you find such horses or such men!" If oatmeal doesn't make bones, it doesn't make anything. Who has seen John Hielanman in kilts must admit that, however lacking in fleshy covering, his bones are of heroic size. Indeed your kilted Scot not infrequently appears to be all knees and shaggy ones at that. But we do not for a moment mean to assert that oatmeal produces bones alone. It makes good flesh and blood, brawn and sinew. An ingenious writer last week gave the result of certain observations of his to a New York paper. Stimulated by the display of girls in metropolitan theaters, he began an investigation into the national characteristics of girls in all climes. After patiently gathering statistics, this savant came to the decision that the girls of each country had some points of preeminence, and that the lassies of Scotland led the world in legs. "Oatmeal," this scientist declared, "runs to legs." Is there any hint of rickets in this? Pshaw! To be sure there are some Scots who will dispute this decision—Scots will dispute anything. They will say that oatmeal runs to brains, but the world will merely smile at them. It seems to be established that oatmeal is an excellent food for legs, and, bearing this in mind, might we suggest to Klaw and Erlanger, Frohman, Kirke La Shelle and the rest, that they feed a few of their companies on parritch before sending them to Portland again.

A Seven-Dollar House.

According to Harper's Weekly, at a recent performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in New York, with Nat Goodwin in the cast, the total receipts were just $7.00.

It surely cannot be
That dear old Shake and me
Are good for only seven bucks a throw;
This is no Summer's dream,
But things are what they seem,
For facts backed up by empty tills must go.

It's pretty clear I'll break,
Unless I shake old Shake;
He's out of date, of course, but backed by me,
I thought perhaps he'd go,
For I'm popular, you know,
But evidently not to such a high degree.

The blatant critics shout:
"Leave farce and leg shows out;
The public cries for bread; don't give it stones."
We give it comedy,
We give it Shake and me,
And the public pungles up just seven bones.

It's pretty tough on Shake,
But he's long past all ache,
It's me that has to make the bunch of hollers,
For my career as star
Will get an awful jar,
If many houses hold no more than seven dollars.

Resolutions.

Before me lies a virgin page,
That's numbered ninety-four;
The one that's turned is full of blots,
But here I end the score.

Perhaps last year the view I took
Of many things was dark,
Perhaps I growled too many growls
At things not worth remark.

But now I'll take a cheery view
Of all that comes along;
I will not growl a single growl;
My life will be a song.

That is if I can hope to sing
With such a cold as this;
It seems if colds are going round,
I'm one they never miss.

It makes me mad to think the year
Should start in such a way;
I never saw such weather come
Upon a New Year's day.

Last year was bum enough, I'm sure,
But this one may be worse—
It makes me feel like sitting down
To curse and curse and curse.

Pan Pipes Not.

Pan pipes not in these Western woods;
Between the firs no dryads peep;
In glassy glades no rings grown green,
Where fairies moonlight revels keep.

The elk's keen ears have never caught
The fatal bay of Dian's hounds;
The waking owl has never seen
The phantom huntsman on his rounds.

Pan pipes not—yet the woodland winds
Their delphic oracles repeat;
The leaves still whisper secrets; still
The music of the woods is sweet.

The Maid.

(Joan of Arc is to be canonized on January 6.)

The King obeyed the lily Maid,
And dared the English lion;
The King received his crown at Rheims;
The Maid is crowned in heaven.

Faith is a great thing. When one sees in an article headed "Twilight Special Service," and dated "San Francisco, December 31," some allusion to Jack Munroe's visiting the office of a New York paper and saying that he intended to leave in time to reach Butte by Christmas day, one realizes the power of the faith that accepts such stuff.

It is cheering to note that both the Japanese and the Russian Ambassadors at Washington are able to assure their governments that the entire sympathy of the great American public is on their respective sides. Both diplomats base their telegrams upon the fact that large numbers of Americans are volunteering for service in their respective armies. The worthy Ambassadors forget that the American volunteers in such cases, not because his sympathy is strong, but because his love of adventure prompts him to take an obvious means of gratifying it.

Reports drawn up by Dr. Woods Hutchinson and his coadjutators are not read by the School Board. It was hardly to be expected, and Dr. Hutchinson, we think, will not be chagrined. The directors, in all human likelihood, are mentally incapable of appreciating his reports, and if they were would probably refuse to act upon his recommendations, alleging some paltry excuse about lack of funds—as if science bothered about funds. Report writing is an absorbing pursuit. It employs all the powers of the mind, besides requiring, in the case in point, great refinement of the olfactory nerve. To have written a good report is satisfaction enough for any man: that it should be read is a superfluity.

WEXFORD JONES.