On The Edge of The Future

When Every Man is a Trust

WHEN sitting on the sharp edge of the future, as we are, the pain of the moment prevents a really calm consideration of the beneficent way in which that sharp edge is going to cut when it gets to moving.

There never was a generation yet that did not feel acutely conscious that it was sitting more immediately on the edge of the future than was any previous generation. If one were to judge by the troubled and noisy remarks of ourselves, for instance, one might suppose we were the only ones who ever had a real future ahead of them.

But, as a matter of fact, our "problems" have been almost figured out. Already a great proportion of the figures that are to give us the quotients and sums of the completed calculation is written down. The sufferers who had the real problems before them in a jumbled mass of horrifying figure-tangles, with all the methods of doing the sum still to learn, were the pupils who sat in the school of the Nation three-quarters of a century ago.

The Americans who welcomed the New Year of 1825 sat on a real sawtooth edge of a future. It was then that old schoolmaster Time set for his class a course of brain-racking study in which we of 1905 are nearly ready to be graduated.

Octopuses, Lawless Organizations, Monopolistic Corporations, Imperialistic Schemers, Robber Industries and Greedy Labor Unions were on every man's tongue then; and if ours are infinitely fatter, theirs were infinitely more agile and unrestrained.

The Good Old Times.

Three-quarters of a century ago, as in our day, the country was booming. Factories stretched from the sea to the frontier. Banks sprang up everywhere and everywhere the corporations pushed for elbow room. Insurance companies, steamboat companies, transportation companies confronted the common people on every side. A man could not use a road, turnpike or canal without paying toll to a corporation.

The workingman called for help to save him from getting poorer while the rich grew richer. An appeal to the Pennsylvania Legislature about 1825 read literally that new laws were needed to "prevent the rich from swallowing the inheritance of the poor," and to prevent "the injurious consequences to the community of individuals amassing large landed properties."

They nominated workingmen's tickets throughout the country. The corporations and "other vested interests" replied that the tickets were "prepared by persons who scoff at morality and demand a system of public robbery." In New York the workingman's ticket was dubbed "The Infidel Ticket" by its opponents. The churches were dragged in and took a heated and, in the case of some ministers, a savage part in the discussion. When the New York workingman's ticket was found to have elected a candidate for the Legislature by a striking majority in 1829 the cry was raised that "all the horrors of anarchy had arrived," and the Legislature was actually called on to unseat him.

Labor Versus the Octopus.

Weavers from New Jersey and New York State marched to the New York City Hall and gave battle to a mass meeting called by the business interests to agitate against a tariff. They routed the people, wrecked everything in sight and were barely defeated by the police in time to prevent them from tearing up the City Hall by the roots.

By 1825 the workingmen, who had struck and instituted "turnouts" many times before that, began to formulate their demands clearly and went into politics to enforce them. Their primary demands were for shortened hours of labor; higher wages; better treatment; payment in honest money and not in depreciated bank scrip, and a free public school education. In a number of states they demanded the abolition of the militia and a union shop.

The "rich" uprose in horror. Time after time they defeated the proposition to establish public school in state after state. They declared that it struck a deadly blow at the very foundations of the Republic; that it was unconstitutional to "tax a free people for the support of schools" as they put it in Illinois; it "horrified the citizens to declare a tax for school purposes" in Maryland; in Pennsylvania the opposition was so fierce that the law had to be repealed in 1826.

What free schools there were were run on the principle that the children who attended were the children of the poor, and the workingman fought year after year against this pauperization, and year after year in vain.

Cobblers, carpenters and other laborers began work at 4 A. M. in the Summer and work till sunset. Carpenters' wages were 5 shillings a day. There was not a single mechanics' lien law in all the United States. In a number of states he was disfranchised. His wages were paid in paper of wildcat banks, which were as plentiful as blackberries. He had to accept the stuff at face value and exchange it at market value. He often got counterfeit bills and bills of broken banks in payment of wages, and no law protected him, nor was there a way by which he could sue without expensive lawyers.

He scared the country when he began to articulate his wrongs. A speech that swept the country said "We find that the voracious appetite of monopoly is insatiable; the more we give up, the more we are required to abandon. The motto of a manufacturer is monopoly—his purpose to put down all competition, to command exclusively every market, to compel every one to buy at his prices and sell at his prices."

This was in 1827—not in 1904.

The people who wriggled on the sharp edge of such a future as this seemed to portend, were living in a country which seemed hopelessly materialistic and sordid. William Cullen Bryant contributed 30 poems to the United States Literary Gazette in 1825 and was glad to get $2 each for them. Contributors to a great library of biography got 70 cents a page, the historian Prescott earning exactly $44.60 for his share.

The states that didn't want tariff threatened to boycott all products of other states, levying imposts that would make them inaccessible and giving privileges to English-made goods. Kentucky abolished its own courts because they declared some legislative enactments unconstitutional. Altogether, in this period, 13 states, on purely commercial and selfish grounds, had threatened everything from civil war to secession.

In the 20 years between 1810 and 1830, 190 amendments to the Constitution had been proposed, and they aimed at everything from breaking the Federal Courts to muzzling the President.

Yet out of all this appalling, hopeless mess, there came no disruption of the Republic. The poor have not become poorer since then, but a lot of the poor have become the rich who have become richer. The workingman got his shortened working day, his higher wages, his better treatment, his payment in honest money, his laws and his public schools, despite all the indignant opposition of all the "corporate and vested and conservative interests" that ever were, and he got them in the very face of the fact that the corporations were growing mightier every year.

The militia didn't disappear. The banks were not abolished, as a political platform of New York demanded in 1829, when it asserted that bankers were the "greatest knaves, paupers and imposters of the age." Land-ownership was not wiped out, as another big element demanded in a platform declaring that landownership was "barbarously unjust." The collection of just dues was not stopped, although a labor party elected a candidate to the New York State Legislature on a ticket declaring for the abolition of all laws for the collection of debt.

The monopolists did not keep their grip on the canals and the turnpikes, though they fought for it through political, social, business and even religious channels. The monopoly of steamboating transportation was wrested from the Hudson River "trust" despite the fact that at that very time the country was full of cries that the Legislatures were hopelessly deaf to the rights of the people and hopelessly corrupt.

The right things were done and the wrong things remained undone. The grinding of 75 years has made our edge of the future nice and smooth. Compared with the edge of 1825, ours is upholstered with cozy-corner cushions.

Then the fights were legion, and they were between individuals arraying themselves at will in arbitrary lines, and each fighting for his own single interest. Out of these selfish contests have come clearly-drawn issues. They are still based on selfish considerations. But the selfishness is not paramount. Gradually through these past 75 years, the individual interests have given way to organized interests—organized capital, organized labor, organized finance, organized enterprise, organized science, organized art.

America has not abolished industrial and social war, any more than the world at large has abolished military war. But as the private wars and private tariffs of the robber Barons has been abolished in Europe, so the private wars of America have disappeared.

Today those who wiggling uneasily on the edge of the future, look gloomily at the "new" menace of vast organizations, forget that the organization began more than 75 years ago. It had to come; for only by concerted effort could right purposes (and wrong purposes, too) could the lines of battle be established.

And of all the vast seething and blind confusion of the early part of the 19th century still worked out to make the right things come true and the wrong things to fall, is it conceivable that the truly United States of 1905, unselfish, patriotic, clear-headed and educated by hard knocks and at a high price through more than 75 years of stern schooling cannot handle its clearly stated problem?

Why, the answer to most of it is written already, clear to all eyes! Its first figures were written when the first body of employers met as an association to treat with workers as an association. Its solution approached with a leap when the first employers' association first voiced the wish that labor associations incorporate so that they should become responsible parties to contract.

Rivals, Not Enemies.

Capital and labor are agreeing on the principle that both must suffer by war, and both will thrive by rivalry. There will come the time when a corporation that wants to build a railroad or open a mine or build a city, will make its contract with a corporation that consists of the trackmakers or the carbuilders or the bricklayers or the miners. The one corporation will agree to pay so much while the other will agree to furnish the labor, and contract that the work shall be done exactly and perfectly, and within a given time. The labor corporation of the future will guarantee not only the doing of the work, but its quality; just as the corporation that furnishes steel guarantees not only the delivery, but the quality of its material today.

Organization, thus advancing toward perfection, will mean just the reverse of the "suppression of the individual," which is feared today by gloomy peerers into the future. It will mean a vastly increased importance and market value of every individual worker, skilled or unskilled, manual or mental. The capitalized labor corporation will increase its profits in direct ratio as it finds for each place the worker best fitted to fill it, and finds for each worker the place that needs him.

The fat, gluttonous trusts of 1904 that aim to develop a little more money—a few more millions or tens of millions—out of mere financial combinations, or out of mere insensate raw material, are pitiably stupid things compared to the trusts of the future that will aim to develop the immeasurable wealth that is contained in the brains and skill of every human being.

Capitalized Brains to Come.

When those trusts are formed, every man will be a trust himself. He will be able to capitalize his knowledge, his talents, his ideas—even the latent powers that lie in him.

This need not seem ridiculous. The history of stock company on stock company today tells how men have capitalized an inventor's vague idea—an idea often so involved and technical that none of those who take it up can understand anything of it except the fact that it will pay if it succeeds. Today a large proportion of the great financial enterprises is made possible because the organizer is a great financier, a "wizard of Wall street"—in other words, the stockholders are capitalizing, not his project, but him; not the factories and railroads that form the ostensible assets, but the brains of the one man, which are the real assets.

Capital breeds faster than mosquitos. In our future, capital will have increased so much that it will be hard put to it to find a place for its weary feet. Instead of reading in the financial reports that the money market is tight, we may read that the talent market or the labor market or the idea market is tight and that the rates on money are dropping like lead.

With all that money looking for investment, men with ideas or abilities finally will be able to capitalize themselves. We shall have "Jones, Limited," and "Brown, Incorporated," and "Smith, capitalized at $200,000," offering shares in themselves for sale.

The stockholders and directors and officers in Brown, Jones and Smith may be capitalized by others in turn; and the monopolistic "trusts" of today will be clamoring in Washington for laws protecting them against the "robber individual."

A "Look-In" at a Happy Day.

In that happy day, architects, bricklayers, tailors, painters, farmers, doctors and other producers will not run after work. When something is to be done, from a surgical operation to building a wall, the organization that wants the work done will send to the organization of the workers. And that organization will then select the man or men best fitted to do that particular work in the most efficient manner, just as a steel corporation today selects its steel for a particular job. None of the workers will need to thrust himself forward, for all will get their dividends.

And all this will surely add inconceivably to the efficiency of the work done; for it is an axiom that not money, but the pride of creation and production makes for the highest quality. No man ever did excellent work merely for the sake of money.

A poor worker today wouldn't do good work if he got a thousand dollars a minute. In the perfect future, a poor worker won't get a chance to make a botch of anything. His own organization will keep him at subordinate tasks. But even that will not make for injustice; for by that time every man will be so valuable that society will never cease trying to develop even the most unpromising individual, just as it seeks today in every possible way, by scientific study, expenditure and time, to develop deserts and unproductive places and inferior raw materials everywhere.—(Copyright 1905.)

J. W. MULLER.

First Pay Received by Authors Who Are Now Famous

Mere Pittance to Men Who Today Have Princely Incomes From Their Pens.

IN PERHAPS no profession during the last decade have more startling, more firmly sustained financial successes been achieved than in the world of letters.

Never before has the literary field yielded anything like such prolific, satisfying returns. From an obscure, wholly unremunerative employment, authorship has risen to the front ranks of money-earning professions. It is no unusual occurrence for the earnings for a single literary effort of many a present-day author to run into five figures, while those of not a few others lap well over into the sixth column.

Washington Irving, who was the first American author to reap anything approaching adequate compensation from his writings, realized a trifle over $205,000 from his whole 40 years of arduous authorship, less by several thousand dollars than Hall Caine is known to have cleared from the book and dramatic rights of "The Christian" alone, whereas Lew Wallace's total receipts from "Ben Hur" up to the present moment considerably exceed the $500,000 mark. Yet Irving in his day represented the top notch of money-earning capacity, and for years was looked upon by aspiring authors as an inspiriting example of the rich possibilities that awaited whoever might be fortunate enough to attain a like popularity.

"The Raven" Brought $15.

Poe's masterpiece, "The Raven," netted him the magnificent sum of $15. Hawthorne was glad to accept $3 for several of his "Twice Told Tales," while Longfellow, at one stage of his career, considered $25 for such poems as "The Wreck of the Hesperus" and "The Skeleton in Armor" as handsome payment. Contrast these mere pittances with the princely contract a New York periodical recently closed with A. Conan Doyle for 12 stories, comprising a total of 100,000 words, at $1 per word, and the force of the reversed conditions of today becomes readily apparent.

With few exceptions, the first checks of nearly every writer of note today are remarkable solely for their insignificance; and the story of each author's final achievement of substantial pecuniary recompense bears eloquent testimony to the importance and efficacy of unremitting industry and perseverance.

Doyle First Received $16.

The initial strivings of the man whose prodigious earnings were last quoted form a good case in point. In his early days, Doyle was a struggling physician, who, failing to find enough patients willing to trust themselves to his ministrations, filled in his intervening leisure with the writing of short stories. For a while the same scant appreciation extended to these effusions, but as time was of no moment to the doctor, he pegged away at them, until one joyful day a tale entitled "The Mystery of Sassassa Valley" brought from Chambers' Journal a check for $16.

This opened an entirely new era for Doyle, but it was not until years later, when he began to exploit the wonderful powers of divination of Dr. Joseph Bell in the character of Sherlock Holmes that he laid the real foundation of his present pre-eminence.

Short stories was the medium through which Steward Edward White made his entry into the republic of letters, and $15 was the amount of his initial check. His first serious attempt at story-writing was originally prepared as a literary exercise for Prof. Brander Matthews, of Columbia University, in the Spring of 1895. Professor Matthews spoke highly of the tale, even urged Mr. White to try it for publication. Harper's and McClure's failed to find anything worth while in the story, but fortunately Short Stories viewed it differently, and it appeared in the August number of 1899 under the uninteresting caption "A Man and His Dog."

First Payments Forgotten.

F. Hopkinson Smith freely acknowledges that he has no recollection whatever of his first check, proving conclusively that it came without effort on his part. But then few are privileged to win success in so many diverse fields as this many-sided man, and the mere remembrance of anything so trivial as the beginning in any certain line is too much to expect. Mr. Smith had written nothing for print up to his 45th year. His publishers at that point asked him to write letter press to accompany each picture in a series of water colors, which at first were designed simply as a series of plates illustrating picturesque bits in various parts of the world where he had traveled. Smith wrote some stories and descriptions, and his first book, "Well-Worn Roads," was the result.

John Townsend Trowbridge confesses to a like ignorance of his first blood. "Indeed," he adds with characteristic directness, "I remember nothing at all about my early checks, except that they were small and few and far between." Whatever pleasure his earliest reward might have given him was completely nullified by the difficulties encountered in collecting it, and, even when cheered by success, the sum realized was so insignificant as to ever afterward fill the author with a sense of disgust over its acceptance.

In his 18th year he supposedly won a copy of "Griswold's Poets of America," which an Eastern paper had offered for the best poetical "New Year's Address" of its carrier to his patrons for January 1, 1845. Even the courtesy of acceptance was denied him, but his contribution was printed, he naturally, after waiting a reasonable time, called for the greatly desired volume, and was surprised to learn that it had not been purchased. As call after call elicited the same response, he finally expressed his opinion in no uncertain terms, whereupon he was offered $1.50—exactly half the cost of the aforementioned volume—which, in a moment of weakness, he accepted.

Small Amount Looks Large.

"I wish I could answer your question about the first check I received for writing, but alas I cannot," writes Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton. "I know only one fact concerning it. It was a check for $5 and was in payment for a brief sketch. I do not remember the title of the sketch, or in what journal it was published, but I do know that the check made me feel richer than one 50 times as large would have made me feel a few years later. There is no delight quite like the unexpected."

Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman's memory is clear upon every point regarding her opening checks, excepting that of priority. For, unlike most beginners, she knew no rebuffs, no heart-breaking delays, but came into her own, one might say, at a double bound. In other words, recognition came from two different sources, at periods so closely approximating each other as to place the author at a loss, this late day, to determine which payment preceded the other.

Prize Stories Their Start.

In competition for a prize of $50, offered for the best short story, Miss Wilkins submitted "The Shadow Family." Shortly afterward she mailed that touchingly pathetic story, "Two Old Lovers," to Harper's Bazaar. Both achieved success, the latter yielding $25, but whether payment for this or the $50 check came first remains an open question, though Miss Wilkins opines to the former. "One thing I do know," Miss Wilkins tells me, "they both seemed large indeed to me, and my delight and astonishment knew no bounds."

W. W. Jacobs of "Many Cargoes" fame was another winner in a prize-story contest, though in a woefully abridged scale of compensation from Miss Wilkins. His first plunge was made in 1886, capturing from an obscure English monthly the munificent prize of 5 shillings, a ratio of payment, Mr. Jacobs woefully admits, that held surprisingly good throughout the whole introductory years of his literary career. It was an excellent training nevertheless, and there came a time when his "cargoes" took a sudden rise in value, and they have been on the increase ever since.

Big Checks for Novices.

Gertrude Atherton's and George W. Cable's introductory checks were of a size altogether disproportionate to those that usually fall to the lot of novices, $100 representing the amount of the former, $50 the latter. Mrs. Atherton's was in payment for a long story that had as its motif the total extinction of a widely-known English family by the curse of drink. It was then known as "The Randreths of Redwood," but in later years Mrs. Atherton reconstructed the story into that absorbingly interesting book "A Daughter of the Vine."

Although Mr. Cable got but half the sum Mrs. Atherton received, he was infinitely better paid, for his contribution was short, whereas Mrs. Atherton's comprised some 20,000 words. Mr. Cable's first literary fee proceeded from contributions to a weekly column of humorous and critical articles which he prepared for the New Orleans Picayune under the signature of Drop Shot. The literary instinct had always been strong within him, but it was not until he conceived the idea of giving expression to certain phases of Creole life that his first sustained effort at story telling made its appearance.

Literature may be said to have welcomed Mrs. Adeline D. T. Whitney with outstretched hands from the start. The periodicals were so few in those days to which an author could submit manuscripts with any prospect of payment it was inevitable that her earliest offerings should have gone unrewarded. Naturally it was a happy occasion indeed when the Atlantic Monthly considered her verse piece of 1861, entitled "Under the Cloud and Through the Sea," worth even so small a sum as $10. The poem attracted considerable attention. Dr. Holmes especially took great pains to commend it, and it is now included in her small volume of "Pansies."

Doubted Frances Hodgson's Effort.

Urgent need of money actuated Frances Hodgson Burnett in her original publishing venture, making its actual realization of infinitely greater pleasure than the incidental tribute paid her genius.

It was manifest from the outset that Frances Hodgson should become an author, commencing while yet a child to weave romances about her dolls and whoever or whatever appealed to her fancy. It was not, however, until the family finances reached such an acute stage as to necessitate incisive action that the idea of coining her imaginings into money forced itself upon the 14-year-old girl. The favorable magazine replies to correspondents, anent the preparation and acceptance of manuscripts, first suggested the possibility that stories such as she spun might possess a monetary value.

Her eldest sister, to whom Frances revealed her project, pooh-poohed it at the start, but grew to view it more favorably, and later urged Frances to write a story, promising to help pick wild grapes in order to provide sufficient funds for stationery and postage. It took but a short time to compose and forward "Miss Carruther's Engagement," which albeit pleasing to the editor of Ballou's Magazine, was not sufficiently pleasing to warrant payment.

Wisely arguing that a story worth printing was worth paying for, Miss Hodgson requested its return, remailing it to Godey's Magazine. Unable to reconcile such a mature, well balanced story of upper English life with the backwoods of Tennessee, Mr. Godey wrote inquiring into its originality, and stipulating as further proof that another story be submitted. With feverish haste "Hearts and Diamonds" was written and dispatched, and after a seemingly interminable period a check for $35 made its appearance—$20 for the former, $15 for the latter. "Hearts and Diamonds" was published in June, 1865; "Miss Carruther's Engagement" the following October.

Salaries for First Work.

The earlier earnings of "Mark Twain," W. D. Howells, Bret Harte and Hall Caine came in the form of a salary for newspaper or magazine work. S. R. Crockett likewise achieved pecuniary recognition on newspaper lines, not by way of salary, but by the devious route of sending his manuscripts the rounds. A batch of short stories eventually made good in the office of a Glasgow paper, and he was rewarded at the by no means despised rate in those days of 7s 6d a column. It was only a question of time, however, when the income from his pen grew sufficiently remunerative to warrant his total abandonment of the ministry for authorship.

In early authorship Thomas Nelson Page wrote his stories on a slate, erasing them without the slightest compunction after reading them to his friends, a particularly happy though rare practice for tyros—one many an author, including Mr. Page, by his own confession, often wishes might have prevailed with some of the things written in more mature years.

As time went on Page's opinion of his own productions increased sufficiently to embolden him to put them into permanent form and offer them for publication. But the editors seemingly held to Page's original estimate, as every composition returned with clocklike regularity. Had time been of more consequence, story writing, in all probability, would have been shelved, but the increased leisure that attended the opening of a law office in Richmond, Va., almost forced its continuance as a means of occupation. As was inevitable, poetry finally had its inning, and, strangely enough, it was a bit of dialect verse called "Unc' Gabe's White Folks" that won out in the end. The check was only $15, yet so great was Page's pride that it was a long time before he cashed it.

James Whitcomb Riley was earning small weekly pay writing rhymes in the advertisements and local news of an Indiana newspaper when money payment for an out and out poem first reached him. Donald Grant Mitchell, then editor of Hearth and Home, sent it for some verses called "Destiny." "The amount was meager enough, something like $3 or $4," Mr. Riley says, "but there came a letter with it praising my poem, which at once served to put my head in the clouds."

Riley speedily dispatched a package of poems to Mr. Mitchell, but they all came back with a note from the editor, stating that Hearth and Home was about to be discontinued. Mr. Riley then sent a selection of his work to Longfellow with a request for a candid opinion. The reply was highly favorable, and this indorsement, when shown to the local editors, was the means of making a home market for much of his early writings.

Helen Gould's Charities.

Her law-school course illustrates another trait in her character. She is careful, judicious, an excellent business woman even in the bestowal of her charities. The misdirected fervor of the sentimental giver of gifts is not here. She is fortunate that it is not. Emotional philanthropy would long ago have made her a bankrupt. Her fortune, at a conservative estimate, is about $15,000,000; if she complied with all the requests for money which she receives, it would take her something less than two years to dispose of it. She receives about 100 letters a day, asking for sums which make a weekly total of about $150,000. She is asked to buy vessels for old sea captains, to raise mortgages on Western farms, to train the voices of embryo Pattis on the prairies, to educate young men for the ministry, to contribute to ladies' aid society fairs in country villages, to endow all sorts of institutions. Herself a strikingly unextravagant woman in matters of dress and all personal expenditure, she is asked by prospective brides to provide sums ranging as high as $2000 for their modest trousseaux. Parents write her enthusiastic letters, describing the charms of young Helen Miller Gould Smiths or Joneses, and saying how gratefully a nucleus for these young ladies' future dowries will be received. In one banner week the begging public—including, of course, the respectable beggars for worthy charities as well as the mere preyers on unsophisticated kindness—asked for a million and a half dollars!—Harper's Bazar.

"Jones is growlin' at the world again." "Why, I thought he was doing well." "So he is; but he wasn't expectin' his good fortune."—Atlanta Constitution.