

THE INDEPENDENT VOTER.

IT SEEMS TO BE generally understood, or believed, that what is called the independent vote is increasing...

As between them, their records, their platforms, their candidates, their policies and plans and purposes, he must choose. For this purpose the truly independent voter first clears himself as far as possible of preconceived and inherited notions...

This independent voter has been and is the subject of scornful scoffs by the party organs; he is ridiculed, denounced, despised; and yet the truth is that he is the political salt of a Republic like ours.

SIZE AND WEALTH NOT ALL.

THE CHIEF ASPIRATION of most American cities is for mere bigness. The chief if not practically the sole aspiration of most of their business men has been to make a good deal of money.

How many look at anything but figures—those disclosing a city's population, commerce, manufactures and improvements, as spell in dollars? Few.

tention to mills that we have given no thought to art? Have we been so intent on making money that deserving charities have been neglected?

No, most residents of busy and growing cities think little or nothing of any of these things. They are too busy or indifferent to anything else but making money and the most material growth of their home cities even to think of or at least to work and strive for better municipal government.

THE BIG FIGURE IN RAILROADS.

WHEN considering the matter of real figures in the railroad business what is the matter with Edward Henry Harriman? Here is a man who is now at the head of the biggest syndicate of railroad enterprises in the country...

Mr. Harriman has played his cards with remarkable skill, ability and foresight. His mainstay and reliance has been the German bondholder. In his policy, the wisdom of which has not always been apparent, judged from purely local standpoints, he was governed by the point of view of the foreign bondholder and in the end, by deserving it, succeeded in obtaining his complete confidence.

With powerful rivals practically eliminated or relegated to territories which they can justly claim, with a free swing in the territory which is naturally tributary to his lines, he may now enter on a period of expansion and development, rapidly extending the sphere of his influence until he is left unrivaled in his chosen field of effort.

There may be others, but at this stage of the proceedings Edward Henry Harriman appears to be distinctly and emphatically "it."

CAUSES OF PHYSICAL DETERIORATION.

THE SUBJECT of the physical deterioration of the working classes of England is attracting much attention in that country, and even in the United States.

Assuming then that such deterioration has taken and is taking place, what are the causes? The answer generally agreed upon is: Neglect of proper housing, insufficient food, bad habits, lack of opportunities to better conditions, and of stimulous to ambition; and generally of "right training."

This physical deterioration of the "lower class" of Britons was brought sharply into view when armies were being raised to fight the Boers, the London Spectator saying: "An alarmingly large proportion of the men who wished to go on active service were found to be physically unequal to the task."

A recent report of a parliamentary investigating committee, while insisting that there has been much exaggeration of the evil, admits that the alarm is not entirely unfounded, and goes carefully into causes and remedies.

Chief among the former are overcrowding of population, resulting in uncleanness and foul air, and bad sanitation. Ignorance and neglect on the part of parents are given as

another principal cause. It was determined that carelessness, callousness and lack of a sense of responsibility on the part of parents, especially mothers, is increasing, and is resulting in a physically low grade of children and young adults.

Drink is another prominent cause of degeneration. The craving for drink is largely a result of the other causes mentioned; is both a result and a cause. It was discovered that drinking habits among the women were also increasing.

We have not space here to go into proposed remedies in detail, but the mention of these causes will suggest them—plenty of air, as pure as possible; plenty of plain, nutritious food; regular work, but not overwork, and good habits, abstention from or only moderate indulgence in liquors or tobacco, particularly, in the case of juveniles, cigarettes.

But for multitudes in such a great city as London some of these things are impossibilities. How are the poorer classes of laboring men and women to obtain plenty of room, fresh, pure air and a requisite amount of good food? These things being impossible, how can they be kept from carelessness and callousness in the matter of raising children, and bad habits that become their only solace?

In a less degree the same conditions exist in our greater cities, particularly New York and Chicago. But this deterioration, if it is taking place in the United States, is not and will not be for a long time, if ever, so noticeable, perhaps taking our whole population into view will not be even appreciable to expert investigators, because the "poorer classes" in our large cities are but a very small fraction of us, because we are increasing in population so rapidly, and new, fresh blood is constantly being added, and because, finally, we have such a vast, magnificent domain, both in area and in variety of soil, climate, resources and opportunities.

Yet even in this country the poor, the ill-housed and ill-fed, the careless, callous and irresponsible, the idle and the vicious, in our large cities, constitute a great and growing problem, one to which far too little attention is paid.

FIREPROOF BUILDINGS IN CONFLAGRATIONS.

BALTIMORE, Toronto and Rochester have been Waterloos for many "fireproof" creations the past year. Builders had begun to arrogate confidence in the presence of earth's mighty destroyer, fire.

Fire protection has become a great science. Forefathers supplanted wood with stone when permanence was sought. Our generation cannot move with such facility. Towering sky-scrapers do not permit of the ponderous style; inflexible economy practiced by the multitude, today forces the use of combustible materials.

After gathering data and carefully collaborating it, fire protection engineers are just reaching conclusions on the recent great conflagrations. Baltimore has been the scene of most careful observation. Facts brought out there are guiding our greatest builders. Underwriters have published many valuable tracts on the failures and triumphs demonstrated by this \$300,000,000 blaze.

Mr. Stewart concludes that steel columns and girders must be protected. He found many terra cotta casings fell away from their columns, partly because of faulty construction and partly because of inherent weakness.

SORROW AND DESTINY

By MAURICE MAETERLINCK

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WELL might it be said that from century to century a tragic poet has wandered through the labyrinth of destiny with the torch of poetry in his hand. For in this way has each one, according to the forces of his hour, fished the soul of the annals of man, and it is divine history that has thus been composed.

It is in the poets alone that we can follow the countless variations of the great unchanging power, and to follow them is indeed interesting, for at the root of the idea that they have formed of this power is to be found, perhaps, the purest essence of a nation's soul.

derlie this idea, or that the idea is in itself the manifestation of a force.

Does man develop in the measure that he recognizes the greatness of the unknown that aways him, or is it the unknown that develops in proportion to man? Today the idea of destiny would seem to be again awakening, and to go forth in search of perhaps an unprofitable quest. But where shall it be found?

To go forth in search of destiny what is this but to seek all the sorrows? There is no destiny of joy, no star that bodes of happiness. The star that is so called is only the star of forbearance. Yet it is well that we should rally forth at times in search of our sorrows, so that we may learn to know them and admire them, and thus even though the great shapeless mass of destiny be not encountered at the end.

Seeking our sorrows we shall be most effectively seeking ourselves, for it may be truly said that the value of ourselves is but the value of our melancholy and our disquiet. As we progress so do they become deeper, nobler and more beautiful, and Marcus Aurelius is to be admired above all men, because, better than all men has he understood how much there is of the soul in the meek, resigned smile it must wear, at the depths of us.

Thus is it too with the sorrows of humanity. They follow a road which resembles the road of our own sorrows, but it is longer and surer and must lead to cathartisms that the last comes alone shall know. This road also has physical sorrow for its starting point; it has only just founded the fear of the gods, and today it halts by a new abyss whose depth the very wisest of us have not yet sounded.

Each century holds another sorrow dear for each century discerns a new destiny. It is certain that we no longer interest ourselves, as was formerly the case, in the catastrophes of passion and the quality of sorrow revealed in the most tragic masterpieces of the past is inferior to the quality of the sorrows today.

It is only indirectly that these tragedies affect us now, only by means of that which is brought to light on the single accidents of love and hatred they reproduce by the reflection and new nobility of sentiment that the pain of living has created within us.

There are moments when it would seem as if we were on the threshold of a new pessimism, mysterious and perhaps very pure. The most redoubtable sages, Schopenhauer, Carlyle, the Russians, the Scandinavians and the good optimist Emerson, too (for there is nothing more discouraging than a willful op-

timist) all these have passed our melancholy unperceived.

We feel that underlying all the reasons they have accepted to give us there are many other profounder reasons, whose discovery has been beyond them. The sadness of man, which seemed beautiful, even to them, is still susceptible of infinite ennobling, until, at last a creature of genius shall have uttered the final word of the sorrow that shall perhaps wholly purify.

In the meanwhile we are in the hands of strange powers whose intentions we are on the eve of divining.

At the time of the great tragic writers of the new era, at the time of Shakespeare, Racine and their successors the belief prevailed that all misfortunes came from the various passions of the heart. Catastrophes did not hover between two worlds; they came hence to go thither, and their points of departure are known. Man was always the master.

Much less was this the case at the time of the Greeks, for then fatally reigned on the heights, but it was inaccessible and none dared interrogate it.

Today it is fatality that we challenge, and this is perhaps the distinguishing note of the new theatre. It is no longer the effects of a disaster that arrest our attention, it is dis-

aster itself, and we are eager to know its essence and its laws.

Whence does it come? Whether does it get why does it descend upon us? These were problems to which the Greeks barely gave a thought. Is it written within us, or is it born at the same time as ourselves? Does it of its own accord start forward to meet us, or is it summoned by conniving voices that we cherish at the depths of us?

If we could but follow from the heights of another world the ways of the man over whom a great sorrow is impending! And what man is there that does not laboriously, though all unconsciously, himself, fashion the sorrow that is to be the pivot of his life?

The Scotch peasants have a word that might be applied to every existence. In their legends they give the name of "Fey" to the frame of mind of a man who, notwithstanding all his efforts, notwithstanding all help and advice, is forced by some irresistible impulse toward an inevitable catastrophe.

It is thus that James I, the James of Catherine Douglas, was "fey" when he went, notwithstanding the terrible omens of earth, heaven and hell, to spend the Christmas holiday in the gloomy castle of Perth, where his assassin, the traitor Robert Graham, lay in wait for him.

Which of us, recalling the circumstances of the most decisive misfortunes of his life but has felt himself similarly possessed?

Be it well understood that I speak here only of active misfortunes of those that might have been prevented, for there are passive misfortunes, such as the death of a person we adore, which simply come toward us and cannot be influenced by any movement of ours.

Bethink you of the fatal day of your life. Have we not all been forewarned, and though it may seem to us now that destiny might have been changed by a step we did not take, a door we did not open, a hand we did not raise, which of us but has struggled vainly on the topmost walls of the abyss, struggled without vigor and without hope against a force that was invisible and apparently without power.

The breath of air stirred by the door I opened one evening was forever to extinguish my happiness, as it would have extinguished a flickering lamp, and now when I think of it I cannot tell myself that I did not know. And yet it was nothing important that had taken me to the threshold. I could have gone away shrugging my shoulders—there was no human reason that could force me to knock on the panel. No human reason—nothing but destiny.

From the London Times. The government returns of the acreage under crop in Great Britain were first collected and published in the year 1868. The extent of land under wheat was then returned at 2,452,188 acres. In 1884 it rose to 2,888,217 acres, which is the largest total on official record. The general tendency since then has been in the direction of decrease, though with numerous oscillations from year to year. Never before, however, has the area under wheat in our island returned at so

low a level as 1,375,284 acres, which is the outcome of the returns officially collected throughout the country in the first week of June, 1904. Last year the wheat crop was grown upon 1,885,587 acres, so that this year there is a decrease of 510,303 acres, equivalent to 13 per cent. It would be interesting to know, if the means were available, what proportion of this year's crop was spring sown and what proportion autumn sown. In all probability, however, it would be found that the proportion of spring sown in the season of 1903-4 was greater than ever before.

Down to the present year the smallest area of wheat on record in Great Britain was that of 1,411,423 acres in 1895, the decline to the extent of half a million acres in that year having been brought about by the miserably low values of wheat which prevailed over the autumn sowing season of 1894, in which the weekly average price of English wheat fell to 17s 6d per imperial qr of 480 pounds, the lowest on record. As recently as the year 1892 the acreage of wheat in Great Britain was larger than that of either barley or oats. On the other hand, in each year since 1899 the

acreage of wheat has continuously been below that of barley, and still more below that of oats. This year, for instance, we have only 1,375,284 acres of wheat, as compared with 1,846,683 acres of barley and 2,553,974 acres of oats. Barley and oats together thus occupy nearly four times as many acres as wheat. Moreover, the present wheat area is less than the land area of each of such counties as Lincoln, Devon and Perth. It thus appears that all the wheat fields of Great Britain could be crowded into such a county as, for ex-

ample, Devonshire alone, and still leave space. There are possibly 18 members of the Nez Percé tribe alive. There will be many Indians present at the big powwow, following the death of old Joseph, but they come from other tribes, the Colvilles, Walla Wallas, Cayuses and the rest. They go to the potlatch because of the feast.

And may leave for the Nez Percé camp when they feel like it. "The position of chief nowadays is merely an honorary title. The government recognizes in but a small way the power of the head tribesman. "Other tribes of the northwest are cut up as badly as the Nez Percés. At Passov a dozen Indians are out a miserable existence. They are all that is left of old Homly's people, once the powerful Walla Walla, whose domains stretched from the Columbia river to the Snake river on the Idaho boundary."