

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT.

"You are mistaken, sir," says the Herald, by way of heading an editorial for which it takes this much from THE STANDARD of last week as a text:

"Republican government is breaking down in the United States, because the conditions of our people are steadily becoming incompatible with republican government to anything more than name."

And the Herald goes on to say, in that graceful, good natured style which makes its leaders such easy reading -

"This is not the criticism of a careful observer, and we confess that when we read it we rubbed our eyes in wonderment. Henry George does himself great injustice by making it. Republican government breaking down? Why, we have not heard anything crack or give way yet. On the other hand, we have been congratulating everybody that our institutions are built on political hard pan: that the American eagle was never in better voice, and that the people never enjoyed better health or had a brighter outlook."

And so, as is perhaps natural in a paper that has just raised its price from two cents to three cents without the slightest reduction to its vast circulation, the Herald chatters pleasantly on. It tells that when the anarchists were condemned they all said there would be a first-class smash in this country, but the Herald has not seen a danger signal yet! Are not our wage earners better housed, better fed, better clothed, better clothed, better educated than they are elsewhere? Republican government with us may not be quite perfect,

but it is far in advance of other forms of government. "Politics are corrupt?" continues the Herald. "Of course they are. Are they purer, though, in Germany, or France, or England?" "We can't get everything right in a minute, but the common sense of the people is making it right , . . . Republican government is sound in wind and limb, and American politics and enterprise and society and institutions indicate the highest water mark yet reached by the tide of human affairs."

And so, with all this, the Herald says, "Go to, Mr. George!"

In this graceful flippancy the Herald is representative. The chords of national vanity and complacency which it so airily strikes are made to vibrate from a thousand journals and a thousand pulpits, and the pleasant tune of "eat, drink and be merry" is the tune our people most delight in and will pay best to hear. Nevertheless, it is while all thought of danger is lulled by this pleasant tune that the decay of popular government goes on most certainly and most swiftly.

Save when overthrown by external forces, of which there is in this country absolutely no danger, popular government does not go down with a crash. It is slowly undermined, silently transformed - the spirit, the strength, the essence, is eaten out of it while its forms remain, and on the surface all things appear to go on as before, until at last the crash comes and the hollow shell is broken. It was centuries after Caesar ere the masters of the Roman world pretended to rule by any other authority than that of senates that trembled before them. The Huns and Vandals who wrecked Roman palaces, and burned Roman libraries, the invading hordes of fierce horsemen that set the crescent above the cross in the East were not the destroyers of Roman

civilization. They were but the carrion birds who descended upon the carcass from which the life had already gone.

Eternal vigilance, as Washington told us, is the price of liberty. It is not in sudden crash or violent eruption that danger comes to such a republic as ours. It is in the quiet stealing of power from the many to the few - in the gradual growth of conditions inconsistent with a republic.

How far this has already gone, and how fast it is even now going on, anyone who will open his eyes and look about may see. What has become of our faith and our pride in the American republic when a leading journal like the Herald can say, "Politics are corrupt? Of course they are. Are they any purer, though, in Germany, or France, or England?"

And worse beneath if we make the comparison. Does the Herald know of any German city ruled by a saloon keeper as Boss Buckley rules San Francisco? Does it know of any French city where a governing gang of thieves and murderers and ballot box stuffers could receive such an "indorsement" as Baltimore city recently gave to her governing ring? Does it know of any great English city of which it can truthfully say that ex-Superintendent of Police Walling says of New York in his recently published book:

"The city of New York is actually ruled by some twenty thousand office holders, most of whom are taken from and controlled by the very worst element in the community.

"Our judiciary and prosecuting officers are elected and controlled in a great measure by the very elements they are called upon to punish and keep in check.

"Although, of course, all things are possible, yet I would not count among probable contingencies, under the present system of government in New York, the hanging of any one of its millionaires, no matter how unprovoked or premeditated the murder he might have committed."

George Washington has been dead some time, but his farewell address is still occasionally read by school boys, and his birthday is yet celebrated after a fashion. It was celebrated this year by a banquet at Delmonico's, at which a number of that office-holding class of which ex-Superintendent Walling speaks sat down to a ^{menu} ~~mean~~ that cost \$50. a head. "On the outside of the menu," to quote from the World (before election), "was a handpainted representation of an open fireplace with a pot hanging over the fire. To give a vivid representation of fire a large ruby was affixed to the card under the pot, and for the flame of a lighted candle upon the mantel was set a real diamond." Let the Herald go over the names of these men, and consider the means by which they have risen to power.

Correlative in its significance to such feasting as this is the ~~f~~ feasting of the poor which goes on in all our large cities on holiday occasions. "Feeding the Hungry Poor - Gnawing Appetites Stopped by Thousands of Pounds of Turkey!" In such wise ran the headlines in our morning papers the day after Thanksgiving, and so will they run on the day after Christmas and the day after New Year. If the Herald can see no evidence of bitter and growing discontent among wage workers in the daily news which its own columns furnishes; if

it can be seen no danger signals in such things as the smashing in of the bows of a bark in San Diego by a dynamite bomb the other day, it will certainly see no evidence of political and social decay in the increasing demands for charity. Yet such there is. "Government of the people, for the people and by the people" cannot long exist where any number of the people are fed by charity. Paupers and semi-paupers are always a dangerous class - but they are most dangerous where their votes count. There is a half truth, at least, in the conservatism that would annex a property qualification to the suffrage. No more in the United States than in Rome of old can a republic in anything but form rest upon a substratum of proletarians.

"Thanksgiving," says the World, "takes in the pallid songstress of the shirt, plying her weary and ill-requited needle and thread, as well as the gamin of the street and the shambling wreck of the gutter and the state beer dives. Old and young, thrifty and thriftless, deserving and unworthy, all are included in Dame Thanksgiving's invitation. For all who are not too proud to eat, the turkey is fat and ready; the pie of mince and the pudding of plum have been duly browned."

But it is only upon those too proud thus to eat that republican government can safely rest.

Voters feeding on free turkey, and political bosses dining at \$50. a head, with diamond and ruby studded bills of fare. Is there no relation between them?

The enormous sums that are dispensed in public and semi-public alms giving, the probably far greater sums that are given in private and unrecorded alms are evidence of a vague feeling of the injustice

of existing social conditions. But however amiable may be the motives that prompt it, no form of alms giving can remedy social injustice. On the contrary, it can in the long run but increase the very evils it seeks to palliate. It is like the giving of a dram to the man who shivers for want of proper clothes. This is true even of these modified and cautious charities which, with a view of preserving self respect, require payment or require work. Here, for instance, is the New York house of industry. It spends a good deal of money every year in giving reputable sewing women a little work each week at good prices, selling the product at a loss. If it gave its beneficiaries full work it could only improve the conditions of a few out of many thousands. So, to distribute its benefits as widely as possible, each woman on the rolls is given a dollar or so every week for work which she can do in a few hours, leaving her to make up enough to live on by working for the "slop-shops." These women are paid for the single piece as much as the slop-shops pay for ten or a dozen pieces. But the result is not to increase the demand for the work of the sewing women, nor yet to take any of them out of the ranks of those who compete for it. It is simply by supplementing slop shop wages to permit competition to carry those wages to a still lower point.

In the inquiries into the condition of sewing women - as the Sun styles them, "the white slaves of New York" - which have been recently stimulated by the meetings that Miss Van Etten and her associates have been holding at Pythagoras hall, one of the facts brought into relief is the manner in which wages are cut down by the labor of women partially supported by charity.

So with the charity of Mew Lamadrid who from her St. Andrews coffee stands has furnished in this city during the last year some 700,000 one cent meals, and who, with the co-operation of Manager Palmer, Mrs. Frank Leslie and other kind hearted men and women, proposes to extend her operations. That many poor creatures have thus been fed who would otherwise have gone hungry or been forced to beg is undeniable. But supposing this charity to be extended until every family in the poorer quarters of New York, who wished to, could thus get its food for a cent a head for each meal, what would be the ultimate result?

How could its effect be other than that of the "relief in aid of wages" which was such a favorite device of short-sighted philanthropists in the agricultural districts of England in the early part of this century - to permit competition to cut wages down to a still lower level and to increase pauperism? If in New York every one who wished to could get from the St. Andrew's stands a well cooked meal for a cent, rents would increase for this advantage of being able to get a well-cooked meal for one cent would attach to locality, and poor people would flock to New York; wages would diminish, and a large section of our population would become accustomed to relying for a living upon this semi-charity and would sink to the level of the lazzaroni of Italy or the leperos of Mexico. And what would happen, when, tired of bailing the sea, the subscribers to such a gigantic charity as this should conclude to stop?

Such well meaning attempts to alleviate poverty by cheapening to the poor the necessities of life may be somewhat better than indiscriminate alms giving, but they have in them the essential defect

which attaches to Mr. Edward Atkinson's anti-poverty device of a cheap cooking box. Land being monopolized, an increasing population who have nothing but their power to labor (a power in itself utterly useless without access to land) must, in their competition with each other for employment, carry wages down as fast as the cost of living is reduced. Where land is fully monopolized, where the indispensable element of life and labor is the absolute property of one class of the people, what could it avail if some one were to discover a means to enable people to live by eating dirt? Since mere laborers could not get the dirt without the permission of the land owners, competition among them would inevitably carry wages down to the dirt-eating level.

The false assumption in all such devices is that the sufferings of the poor are caused by the scarcity of the things that satisfy want. This is manifestly not true. There is in our civilized society to-day an abundance of all the things that satisfy human wants, or at least an abundant power to produce such things. If, therefore, undeserved poverty exists, it can only come from injustice in distribution; and injustice in distribution cannot be cured either by increasing the quantity of such things or by teaching people to exist on less of them.

"How many poor and unfortunate creatures are to-day standing close to the verge of self-destruction because the world will not give them bread?" says the World, moralizing on one of those bitter tragedies which our daily papers so frequently record.

What world is it that will not give bread? Not the physical

world. Nature is no niggard. This rolling sphere which we inhabit, this broad continent which our sixty millions have as yet hardly begun to scratch, teems with all the materials for food and clothing and shelter. Men, women, and children, weX are to this great natural reservoir and storehouse like scattered mites on the surface of an inexhaustible cheese. Nor is there lack of the power to convert these materials into the forms which satisfy human desire.

So great, in fact, is this power that labor saving machinery is believed by many to be a curse, and we constantly hear of "over production" as though it were a social disease. Yet in this bountiful world, amid this plethora of wealth, human beings are constantly dying because they cannot get food and clothing and shelter; and thousands and thousands live on the dole of charity, and thousands and thousands sell their votes for a few dollars on election day.

Clearly the fault is not in that physical world which God created for man. It is in that social and political world which God has left man free to create for themselves. And no matter how much discovery and invention may increase the power of producing wealth, no matter how free handed may be the charity that strives to alleviate poverty, so long as the cause continues its results must continue. Charity can do nothing to cure evils that flow from injustice. They can only be cured by justice.

TRAMPS.

Coming from St. Louis week before last I found pleasant and instructive company - an old California acquaintance, now a millionaire congressman; a rich man from Colorado going to Europe for recreation and health; a pension clerk from Missouri on his way to

Washington, who had a peculiarly dry way of putting things; and a Denver man who has 640 acres of mineral land patented, and is an ex-Indian fighter, firm in the belief that "the only good Indians are dead Indians;" besides some miscellaneous company. I learned much from my California friend about men and things in the golden state, much that was in its way instructive as well as interesting, and then the conversation became general, and I learned much of Mexico and New Mexico, of the Pueblo Indians and the cliff dwellings, of the buffalo and antelope that used to be, of wild steers and the best way of avoiding them when they come for you with their heads down. Then some one asked if tramps were bad in Denver, and the Denver man said they were, but that his wife kept them away from their house by retaining an old one-eyed tramp to whom she gave food every day and allowed to sleep in the coal shed, and who in return kept other tramps off. And then the California congressman told a story which seemed to me very instructive. He said he was a little while ago at the railway station near his coal oil property in southern California and saw seven tramps clambering down from the top of a freight car on which they had stolen a ride. The man who seemed to be their leader came up to him and said, "Boss, we're hungry and we want our breakfast."

"Yes," said the congressman, "but I know you fellows; I've seen lots of you. The reason that you are hungry is that you won't work."

"That's not it," said the leader, a bright eyed, well spoken, intelligent and seemingly well educated young American. "We have been looking for work but we can't find it. If you have got any work to do, just try us and see if we won't work; only give us our

breakfast first."

"Well," said the congressman, "I'll try you. I'll get you your breakfast if you will go off to my place a mile or two from here and go to work. You shall have two dollars and a half a day in coin, but it's hard work."

"Give us our breakfast," said the leader, "and we'll go."

"So I went in," said the congressman, "and told the man who kept the eating place at the station to give them all breakfast, and then I gave them a note to my foreman, and off they went."

"On the third day after that I was driving out to the place, and on the way I met the seven men coming back to the station. 'Well!' I said, 'have you fellows got tired?' 'Yes,' said the leader, 'we've got tired. The truth is that we don't like work, and we've made up our minds not to do any more of it. the world owes us a living and we might as well get it without work as with work. But though we won't *work* we are square. You acted like a square man in giving us our breakfast the other day. We got the money for the work we did and I have collected half a dollar apiece from the rest of the boys to pay you back. And here it is,' said he, producing seven silver half dollars."

"I thought I would try them," continued the congressman, "and I said to him: 'You fellows don't owe me anything; you owe it to the man at the station. I merely told him to trust you and if you didn't pay I would. When you get to the station you can pay him.'"

"Sure enough," said the congressman, "when I went back to the station the next day I asked the man who kept the eating place and found that the tramps had come in and paid him three dollars and a half for the breakfast they had had."

This in southern California, near the shore of that vast ocean on the other side of which is China, and not far from the boundary line which separates us from Mexico.

It is into tramps such as these, and into worse, that, not only in our large cities, but even in our sparsely settled districts, the difficulty of finding employment and the temptation to accept of charity is converting citizens of the republic. Work is hard; it is tension and strain. It is easier at any time to loaf than to work, and as most of us know, it takes all the strength of self-respect to hold a man up at times in the struggle that life brings to most of us. Men willing to work, and needing badly the pay that they get by it, are oftentimes with us unable to find work. Besides the vicissitudes that attend all our industries, the organization of many of them is such that large numbers of men who are employed during some parts of the year are not needed during other parts of the year. Men out of work, but still needing to work, go tramping in search of it. Necessity in many cases at last forces them to ask for charity. It is humiliating at first, but the edge of the humiliation is soon dulled, and they become loafers, vagrants, tramps, who would rather beg and steal than work even if they could get work. In the midst of the highest civilization the world has yet known we are, in part at least reverting to barbarism.

And it is the natural effect of all the charity of which we hear so much and to which our rich people give so much, that it destroys the self-respect on which alone a true republic can be based.

The Christian Union takes a hopeful view. It declares that the parallel that certain people are fond of drawing between Rome in the first century and the United States in the nineteenth is not a true one; that in Rome the patricians resisted every attempt at peaceful progress, while -

"In America, on the contrary, the men of wealth and the men of thought are actively engaged in endeavoring to promote popular progress and prepare for a democracy of industry and of wealth. Not only in the Christian pulpit and in the Christian press has there been earnest advocacy of the rights and interests of the wage working class, but among employers there has been an equally serious endeavor to promote their development and their enrichment."

The instances which the Christian Union cites as illustrating the tendency it thinks so hopeful are the dedication of a building erected by the liberality of Mr. Vanderbilt at the Grand Central depot for the benefit of the railroad employes, "a dedication in which Mr. Chauncey M. Depew represented the aristocracy of wealth and Bishop Potter the church;" the dedication of a similar building, erected by Mr. Warner at Bridgeport, which was "graced by the attendance of Mrs. Cleveland, the spokesman of the occasion being the Rev. Robert Collyer;" and the erection in a manufacturing town in this state of "one of the most charming libraries, constructed by men of wealth wholly for men without means, one dollar a year giving all the privileges of it." These things, and certain experiments in profit sharing, not only give the Christian Union hope, but show what it means when it speaks of the earnest advocacy of the rights and inter-

ests of the wage working class in the Christian pulpit and the Christian press, "We think" says the Christian Union -

"We think reformers will find it difficult to discover anything parallel to this in the action of either the Bourbon aristocracy of France or the patricians of Rome."

But to say nothing of the fact that even among the Bourbon aristocracy of France there were many who sought in charitable and kindly ways to alleviate the condition of their dependants, the Christian Union need only look over the opening chapters of that great work in which Gibbon has painted in long panorama the decline and fall of the greatest empire the earth has yet seen, to realize that the ancient world afforded instances of civic beneficence on the part of the rich which dwarf anything we have yet to show. Generosity of this kind could not avail to stop the decay of ancient civilization, nor can it avail to stop the decay of ours. Nor yet can any amount of benevolence on the part of employers solve the labor question or still the fierce passions that are beginning to rise. My Lord and my Lady Bountiful are beautiful characters to those most charmed by amiability. But the feudal system has passed and hereditary distinctions have gone, and the American children, even if too neglected and vermin-eaten to be taken on fresh air excursions, are taught, when they are compulsorily sent to school, that in this country we are all political equals.

All that the Christian Union relies on involves a condescension and assumption of superiority that is irritating to the spirit of the times. And back of all this, what is the theory of the Christian Union but an amiable version of the theory of men who believe that

the social reformation is to be wrought by dynamite bombs? Both hold that it is within the power of a certain class of people, sometimes called capitalists and sometimes called employers to make life easier for the masses of men. The Christian Union would persuade them into doing this, the advocates of bomb throwing would frighten them into doing it. The difference is a wide one, but it is still only a difference of method.

As for the faith in profit sharing, it can only serve to amuse amiable people too lazy to think. There is no bottom to it until one comes to ultra socialism, in which the state shall direct all industry and divide all profits. For if some employers were to divide their profits with their men, so as to give them larger wages than the ordinary, could it avail more toward changing the general rate of wages than do the higher prices paid for needlework by the New York house of industry? Could it have any other effect than that of the custom of tipping waiters, the result of which is that in places where it obtains waiters often pay for the privilege of serving? If adopted generally, what would it be but another form of paying wages, which would still leave the laws that determine wages free to act? And if the employers who make a profit are to be more generous to their employes, what about the employers who make no profit, or only enough to pay the very lowest wages on which they can get men to work?

Kindliness, generosity, charity, are admirable virtues, but they cannot take the place of justice. And the attempt to put them in the place of justice, to rely on them to compensate for injustice, is not only to dull conscience, but to make things good in themselves, productive of evil.

If republican government is breaking down in the United States; if under the forms of popular rule the people are really ruled; if we are developing social conditions under which republican government in anything but form must become impossible, it is not because republican government is in itself a failure, but simply because we as a people have not come up to the moral standard which it requires. Our trouble is not that we are too democratic, but that we are not democratic enough. It is not that we give to all citizens the equal right to vote and the equal right to hold office, but it is that we deny them equality of right in things more fundamental and more important. If dangers are thickening around the republic it is because in our laws and in our thought we have ignored those equal rights with which all men are endowed by their Creator - the equal right to exert labor upon the natural opportunities which are indispensable to labor; the equal right to use and enjoy the full fruits of that labor.

If there are among us men who work hard but are poor, it is because they are robbed; if there are among us little children who will perish with hunger and die with cold unless charity feeds and clothes them, it is because they have been disinherited. If there are among us men who prefer to beg or steal rather than work, it is because we have by our laws reversed the laws of nature and given to appropriation the wealth that nature accords to industry. The right of workmen is not to have kind and generous employers, but to have free opportunities to employ themselves. "The rights and interests of the wage-working class" are simply the rights and interest of all citizens.

Signed: Henry George,
December 10, 1887.