

About People and Social Incidents.

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Indirect legislation project as a trivial and fantastic side issue. It is clear that the referendum cannot be applied in national politics. Its uses are local. How, then, can a national party rationally insist on introducing and enforcing a procedure which can be of value only in cities and in states? Mr. Bryan is, on occasions, a vigorous champion of state rights. By what logic can he reach the conclusion that the chief mission of the Democratic party in the nation is to compel the people of this or that state to apply the principle of direct local legislation? Every state must follow its own volition in this matter, and it is the height of absurdity to say that the Democratic voters in a state controlled by the Democracy must be expelled from the party unless they supplant the indirect method of legislation by the direct. The referendum may be in its way a valuable piece of political machinery. But its installation for local uses cannot be made a national organization's primary article of faith.

BOSS RUEF.

We cannot tell whether Boss Ruef is a hero in San Francisco to-day or not. We do not know enough about the San Francisco temperament to estimate the effect of his extraordinary plea of guilty, but the man who was certainly demonstrated that at least he once knew the San Francisco mind and heart clearly expected that his little speech to the court and his subsequent statement would change him from an outcast to a hero. "Last night," he says, "I reached the conclusion that there might still be an opportunity to make some effort to restore myself in the public favor and be a power for good." Isn't it extraordinary? A self-confessed corruptionist desires to be a power for good, "to help overthrow the system which has made possible the terrible corruption of public officials!" Ruef knows something about his San Francisco, for he had hardly got through his speech when the District Attorney "shook him by the hand warmly" and said: "You did a manly thing. I want to tell you now that anything the prosecution can properly do for you will be done willingly, 'kiddly.'"

THE NEWS THIS MORNING.

FOREIGN.—It was learned that members of the Czars' personal staff were involved in the plot against him. A Madonna with the plait, by Albrecht Dürer, was mislaid in Italy, and may have been sold abroad. The Moroccan Foreign Minister commented on the Sultan's decision to comply with his demands. Chinese officials, at a dinner for Consul General Rodgers in Shanghai, said that the famine relief had healed all breaches between China and the United States. Satisfaction was felt in England over Italy's announced attitude toward a discussion of limitation of armaments, as it is felt to concede practically all that the United States has demanded. International spies which tried to sell plans of Bizerza was caught in Paris. Lieutenant General Zacharias, vice-president of the International Permanent Geodetic Commission, died at Copenhagen. The Nicaraguan Congress approved the peace treaty with Salvador.

DOMESTIC.—Plans were accepted at Albany for the new State Education Building, which will cost over \$4,000,000. The Senate, after a bitter debate, passed the Wemple bill extending the corporate existence of all railroads having outstanding indebtedness. The Senate, after a bitter debate, passed the Wemple bill extending the corporate existence of all railroads having outstanding indebtedness.

CITY.—Stocks closed lower. General Kuroki and staff visited West Point, while half of the crews of the Japanese warships were seeing the city. The District Attorney's office, it was learned, had evidence of still another forgery by the international committee employees. It was said that the grand jury would find an indictment against at least one Metropolitan Life official. William Madison, the dismissed commissioner of Public Works, issued a statement attacking Borough President Ahearn. A jury in the Supreme Court found that C. C. Shays, a fund-raiser, was sane when he executed the codicil to his will. District Attorneys Clark of Kings and Coles of Nassau expressed some doubts as to their power to act on the new anti-gambling idea of Mr. Jerome.

THE WEATHER.—Indications for to-day: Fair. The temperature yesterday: Highest, 74 degrees; lowest, 56.

We desire to remind our readers who are about to leave the city that THE TRIBUNE will be sent by mail to any address in this country or abroad, and address changed as often as desired. Subscriptions may be given to your regular dealer before leaving, or, if more convenient, hand them in at THE TRIBUNE Office. See opposite page for subscription rates.

THE REFERENDUM TEST.

The editor of "The Commoner" expresses surprise that the New York newspapers were somewhat nonplussed by his assertion that belief in the efficacy of the initiative and referendum was the ultimate test of the orthodoxy of any professing Democrat. According to our contemporary in Lincoln, the newspaper editors of this city should have remembered that "this is not a new subject with Mr. Bryan." If they had had their wits about them they would have recalled the Nebraska fusionists in 1893 adopted a state platform which favored, among other things, "the initiative and referendum system as an aid to securing government of the people, for the people and by the people." Not understanding that this deliverance of a convention most of whose members were Populists was to be binding forever after on the party of Jefferson and Jackson, the New York editors foolishly "thought they had discovered a new issue—'taught it redhanded just as it was making its exit from the Brooklyn banquet after a savage attack on the life of the Democratic party.'" All this commotion, "The Commoner" points out, would have been avoided if commentators here had realized that "the doctrine which alarmed them was not new at all."

Reassurance in times of perplexity is always welcome. But it seems to us that "The Commoner's" attempt to clarify the situation is not altogether successful. Mr. Bryan did not say at the Brooklyn Jefferson birthday dinner that there was a certain warrant for holding belief in the initiative and referendum to be good Democratic doctrine because he and his Populist followers had put it into a Nebraska platform eleven years ago. He went much further than that. He admitted that other Democrats might differ with him on a great many issues. They might safely dissent from his views on the tariff, coinage, impertinent and even the control and regulation of the instrumentalities of interstate commerce, but when it came to the referendum they would find him adamant. On that issue either he or they would have to quit the Democratic party. It may be admitted that the referendum idea was not "new." But certainly its use as a test acid for Democracy was a perplexing political novelty.

We notice that few Democrats of prominence have subscribed to the theory that the referendum is the cornerstone on which the Jeffersonian faith is to be built. Senator Hayner and Colonel Waltham have recently dismissed the

don before letters could be sent out, arrival there before noon would count for little. The people for whom they were intended might not get them before Monday. Hence a small delay would often result in the loss of a day and a half in receiving them.

Moreover, if a prompt reply was desirable it could be posted in the one instance in time to catch the Sunday steamer from Queenstown. In the other case it might wait until Wednesday or Thursday, and even then be carried by a slow vessel. To the majority of Europeans, perhaps, such inconveniences are irritating. A further development of the policy of averting what is now recognized as a needless hindrance will be highly appreciated in this country.

For several years mail has been dispatched from New York to Europe on four days every week. A large part of that going on Saturday has been sent by the American Line. The adoption of the sea postoffice by the Cunard Line, which has always had a share of the patronage, will give the United States government "two strings to its bow" and will also materially better the service from England to America. Wednesday's mail has invariably gone by the White Star Line. The fast German steamships which leave on Tuesday and Thursday have sea post-offices, too, but up to the present time the vessels of the French Line (whose sailing day is Thursday) have not been so equipped. The proposed innovation will enable them to compete on more favorable terms than formerly with their Teutonic rivals and to realize more fully the advantage of the high speed which some of them now develop.

COINCIDENCES.

According to recent findings of professional observers, one of the distinguishing peculiarities of man is his habit of discovering and interpreting coincidences. As far back as the Assyrian epoch men were known to possess this trait. Thus the soothsayers of Assurballpai, and even those of earlier potentates, conducted a sort of double entry bookkeeping whereby they recorded the varying successes of the King's armies and the kind of weather and sky colored they inferred the operation of natural laws. If there had been an eclipse of the sun on a day when the Hittites drubbed the hosts of Assyria, the soothsayers would assume that the former event caused the latter and would accordingly warn their Imperial master against going forth against the Hittites again on an eclipse day.

Men now laugh at such "childish" reasoning, yet, in the words of an eminent philosopher, the whole history of human progress is describable as the finding of just such coincidences and the separation of fortuitous from significant ones. Simple as progress seems when thus described, the whole elaborate mechanism and logic of modern science are devoted to just these two apparently easy tasks. Even to-day science, with all its trappings, finds it exceedingly difficult to determine whether the disappearance of a hard cold two days after using Uncle John's Syrup of Surocath is a coincidence pure and simple or the working of some hidden law of nature. If the skeptic will take thought he will find himself confronted in daily life with scientific difficulties as great as this.

There is the strange coincidence, for instance, between twenty-one drafts received by James McCleery, a municipal painter, and twenty-one deposits credited to the account of William H. Walker, Superintendent of Public Buildings and Offices. McCleery's drafts correspond exactly in amount with the same number of deposits made on the same days the drafts were drawn and placed to Walker's credit at the Greenwich Bank. Walker expressed surprise at this weird conjunction of incidents, pronouncing it an astonishing coincidence. Now, in a case like this the average man inclines to settle the matter in the childish manner of the Assyrian soothsayers. Finding on twenty-one occasions a double coincidence—in sum one coincidence—between two wholly distinct business transactions, he is prone to infer the operation of some mysterious natural law. Perhaps he will cover up the infantile haste of this conclusion by imposing mathematical calculations showing that the probability of an exact coincidence between a draft and a deposit being approximately 1 in 100,000,000 under the most favorable assumptions, therefore the chances of a series of 21 such coincidences must be roughly only 1 in 100,000,000,000. As this last number would require 163 figures to express it, the ordinary man infers that the odds in favor of mere coincidence are not even as good as the chances of winning in a poolroom. And if our amateur scientist is particularly anxious to cover up his bad logic he will call your attention to the fact that the chances of the earth's falling into the sun in the next twenty-four hours are several million times better than the above odds for coincidence.

The cautious scientist, however, knows this is all vanity. Mere coincidence proves nothing. If it did we should have to believe that the Oxford-Cambridge boat races are controlled by suspects, for it is on record that Oxford always wins when the spots exceed a certain number and loses in every other case. A natural connection can be established, as a rule, only when all contributory circumstances are under the watchful control of the observer. It is safe to say that if such control is to be exercised in the Walker-McCleery case, the coincidence would suddenly cease. That would obviously discredit all suggestions derogatory to those who govern us for revenue only.

THE CITY AND ITS WATER.

The elaborate statement concerning the New York watershed which the State Health Commissioner has made to the Governor in consequence of the Croton region is in a measure illuminating and suggestive, but we cannot regard it as entirely convincing in its contention that the city should guard its own water supply and that the State Department of Health cannot be expected to do much in the matter. It may be that the city erred in declining to provide a sewer system for Mount Kisco, but that place, though probably the worst of all, is only one of many danger spots widely scattered over an extensive region. It may also be that the city could compel abatement of nuisances through an appeal to the courts, but that would be a slow and uncertain process. Prompt and effective action could and doubtless would be taken, as it formerly was taken in many cases, through the condemnation and purchase of the offending property by the city, were the city permitted to pursue that course, but it is now specifically forbidden by law to do so.

There can be no doubt that within its own corporate limits, and also in the outside domain of which it is the owner, the city is the proper guardian of its water supply. But beyond those limits, within the bounds of other municipalities and on land which it does not own and which it is forbidden to acquire, it appears to us that the city has a right to look for relief to that state authority which is not limited by town, city or county lines. Indeed, it would seem that the State Health Department existed largely for precisely such purposes, and this view is supported by the Commissioner's own statement, in which we are told that some weeks ago—when The Tribune made known the shocking and dangerous conditions in the Croton region and the widespread prevalence of typhoid fever—he gave peremptory orders to the local health boards of Mount Kisco and elsewhere, and one of his inspectors was directed to see if the orders were obeyed and the work was done.

What that inspector has reported, if anything

does not appear. But in the issuing of those orders the State Health Department certainly seems to have acknowledged its responsibility and to have asserted its authority in the premises—precisely such responsibility and authority as we have all along assumed it to possess. It is inconceivable that the Commissioner would issue "peremptory orders" unless he had power to do so. Either such orders have been or they would be much more than we can venture to hope—then the nuisances are abated and the danger is removed. If the latter, then it would be interesting to know why they have not been obeyed and how the city can hope to exert more effective authority than the state. It is scarcely responsible that "peremptory orders" of the State Health Department are mere blank cartridges, making some noise, but producing no other effect.

With the Commissioner's suggestion of filtration for the whole water supply of the city we are in accord. That is a plan which The Tribune has long advocated. But we doubt if many competent engineers would regard it as practicable to install a satisfactory system of filtration in less time than four or five years, while what is needed is immediate relief within the next few weeks instead of years. Moreover, we should consider it most unwise to let pollution of the Croton go unchecked, trusting to filtration to render it innocuous. Filtration should be the ultimate resort, after all possible efforts have been made, through local sanitation and policing of the watershed, to keep the water pure at the source, and these efforts should be continued after filtration is in action just as thoroughly as before.

These breaks in the Colorado River which resulted in flooding the Salton Basin were far from doing anybody any immediate good. The national government has found a way to turn them to account, however. Systematic observations of evaporation from the inland sea that has been formed in Southern California are about to be undertaken under the joint auspices of the Weather Bureau and the Geological Survey. In this manner it is hoped that data may be obtained which will be useful in computing the benefits to be derived from the storage reservoirs of the reclamation service. The water to be impounded by those great engineering works will not all be available for irrigation, of course, and hence it is a happy thought to try to determine with precision the losses which should be anticipated.

Either through accident or by design—probably the latter—the Adriatic was able to reach Sandy Hook yesterday almost exactly at the instant when the tide was highest there. Atmospheric conditions were not equally favorable to progress up the harbor, but the maiden voyage of the newcomer ended without detention of any kind. This is an auspicious beginning of her service.

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