The Sun.

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Did Roosevelt Mean Leonard Wood?

The *Forum* of March, 1899, had an article entitled "Is Our Army Degenerate?" written by Col. ALEXANDER S. BACON, now of 37 Liberty street, New York city, in which Col. BACON said:

"No one should be permitted to hold the position of General or Colonel or to serve on any division or brigade staff in the Regular army unless he be a graduate of the Military Academy or have shown special fitness during years of army service and have passed a rigid examination in strategy, tactics, logistics and military engineering at least—the foundation stones of military learning."

Col. BACON thereupon received the following letter:

"STATE OF NEW YORK,
"EXECUTIVE CHAMBER,
"ALBANY, March 8, 1899.

"Col. ALEXANDER S. BACON, 36 *Wall street, New York City:*

"MY DEAR COL. BACON—I have just read your piece in the *Forum*. I would give a great deal if every blessed member of the Cabinet and every Senator and Congressman could be compelled to learn it by heart and then forced to apply what it taught.

"With warm regards, believe me, faithfully yours,
"THEODORE ROOSEVELT."

The despatches from Washington have had it for several days that Dr. LEONARD WOOD is to be "whitewashed."

The Monroe Doctrine Intact.

There are truths that it seems needful to reassert from time to time, owing to the reluctance of some persons to recognize indubitable facts. Among these truths is the verity that our fidelity to the Monroe Doctrine is in no wise lessened or obscured by our acknowledgment of the independence of the Republic of Panama. That there should still be current any misconception on this point can be explained only on the hypothesis that some American citizens have never read, or have forgotten the words in which the doctrine known by his name was promulgated by MONROE in his memorable message.

We are moved to return to this topic by an editorial article published on Nov. 27 in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, wherein it is alleged that the Panama affair has weakened the belief of Latin-American republics that their interests would be safeguarded by the United States in the event of attempted encroachment upon them by any European country. The *Ledger* adds that, in its opinion, the Latin-Americans have reasonable grounds for their doubts and fears. The *Ledger* should reconsider its opinion, for it is utterly without foundation. In the first place, there is no proof that any Latin-American commonwealth has any doubts or fears regarding the effect of our recognition of the new State of Panama on our future construction of the Monroe Doctrine. In the second place, it will be easy to show that the Monroe Doctrine has nothing to do with conquests, revolutions, partitions or secessions that may take place in Latin-America, so long as the movements are in no wise due to European influence, or calculated to extend the European system to this hemisphere.

The canal treaty which has been negotiated by Secretary HAY and the representative of the Republic of Panama is, of course, a death blow to the plans of those who have favored the Nicaragua route. It would not, therefore, have been surprising had the republics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, wrought to feverish resentment by their disappointment, protested officially against our recognition of the Isthmian commonwealth, whose gain will mean for them a grievous loss. As a matter of fact, however, no such protest has emanated from the Nicaraguan and Costa Rican governments. Neither has a word of remonstrance been heard from the Government of Mexico, although the completion of the Panama Canal will administer a quietus to the project of interoceanic communication by means of a Tehuantepec railway. Silent also is Colombia's neighbor Venezuela. The assertion that the Government of Ecuador has expressed sympathy with Colombia is a mere rumor based on an unconfirmed telegram from Guayaquil. Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay have not been heard from. As for Brazil, it has hastened to express a willingness to enter into diplomatic relations with the new American republic. Even Chile, which was not over friendly to the United States during the Harrison Administration, has not a word of criticism to utter on our attitude toward Panama on the one hand, and toward Colombia on the other.

Such are the facts. Obviously, they do not justify the allegation that our action in the Panama affair has weakened the belief of Latin-American republics that they would be safeguarded by the United States against any attempted encroachment by a European Power. Evidently our Latin-American neighbors have a more distinct and correct conception than have some United States newspapers of the scope and purport of the Monroe Doctrine, and of the relation thereto of our historical proceedings with reference to internal political changes in Central and South America. They see that the Monroe Doctrine bound us to expel the French from Mexico. They recognize with equal distinctness that it did not bind us to protest against the dissolution of the Central American Confederation and its partition into five independent States. They see that our acknowledgment in 1826 of the independence of the Colombian Republic founded by BOLIVAR imposed upon us no obligation to withhold recognition from Venezuela and Ecuador, which seceded therefrom. They see that we would not have been justified in withholding acknowledgment of the independence of Bolivia on the ground that the country now known by that name was originally a part of the Viceroyalty of Peru. They see that the Monroe Doctrine was in no wise impaired by our recognition of the Republic of Uruguay, although the ownership of its territory had long been disputed by Brazil and Argentina. We have witnessed the conquest and mutilation of Peru by Chile; we have witnessed the dismemberment of Paraguay by Argentina and Brazil; yet nobody has ever suggested that the Monroe Doctrine should have constrained us to protest against those transactions.

So much for our historic attitude with reference to internal revolutions, partitions and secessions in Latin-America. In spite of the self-generated changes that we have witnessed and acknowledged in that part of our hemisphere, the Monroe Doctrine remains unimpaired. It is less likely now than ever to be challenged by any European Power, in spite of some recent misguided attempts to discredit it here at home in the house of its friends.

Dr. Dix's Gloomy Outlook.

Among the clergymen of New York Dr. MORGAN DIX, the rector of Trinity parish, is conspicuous for his learning, his conservatism and his strict regard for the proprieties of his office. He never courts applause and never seeks to provoke public attention apart from the purely religious sphere; yet Dr. DIX, in a series of Lenten sermons some years ago and again in his Thanksgiving sermon at Trinity on Thursday, dealt with social tendencies, as he observes them, in a way which in a less conservative cleric might have seemed sensational. His method of treatment was heroic, even savage in some of its features; for, to his mind, the social ulcers are large, deep seated and of terrible portent.

It is not extraordinary that the outlook of the venerable rector of Trinity on contemporary society is despondent. At all times the pulpit has been full of forebodings concerning social tendencies, and reasonably, for evil influences in society have always justified pious lamentation. Along with much to be thankful for in the progress of mankind there is always much to provoke impatience in the preacher because of the slow forward movement and the incidental setbacks which accompany it. The clerical philosopher sees poverty and evil, war, selfish struggle and misery due to an evolution from savagery still in its initial stages only. The millennium seems to recede further and further into the impenetrable distance of the future.

"Class alienation," "the insolence of wealth" and "riotous living" were inveighed against by the Trinity rector; yet in the early days of New York they were relatively more reprehensible than they are now and their amendment was seemingly far more hopeless. Wealth has increased greatly in this country, more especially during the last generation, with the consequence of more luxurious living, but coincidently the progress of the vast mass of the people in comfort has more than kept pace with it. Never was there a feast celebrated in any great community which found so large a part of the people in a condition to participate in its festivities as was this New York Thanksgiving. They are in homes, even the humblest, where they enjoy comforts denied even to the richest a generation ago. The distinction between rich and poor is more in superficialities than in essence, for happiness is a democratic blessing not limited by the mere accident of greater or less material possessions. The happiest people in New York on Thursday were not the luxurious rich.

"The misuse of money and its reckless squandering on pleasure and pride"? Yes; but this squandering is not confined to any special social sphere. It runs through all society. No end of money which might have been put in the custodianship of savings banks was spent for merely fleeting pleasure and for the pride of display, on Thanksgiving. People wore finer clothes than their necessity required and ate richer dinners, and drank beer or wine when water alone would have been sufficient to satisfy a healthy thirst. A company of paraders passed this office in gayly decorated open carriages. They were strong men able to walk and save the livery hire. Women wore kid gloves, beribboned gowns and feathers in their bonnets, though they could have protected themselves against the weather in far cheaper raiment. The theatres were crowded: was it "reckless squandering"? Except for popular "pleasure and pride" where would be civilization with its diversified industries?

"Education without religion"? Is it demonstrable that moral conditions were practically better when there was no education without religion?

Here are some questions asked by Dr. DIX after making a recapitulation of contemporary evils as he discerns them:

"What can be done to stop extravagance and display and show? What can be done to make very rich people economical and modest in dress and conduct, and saving, in order to give abundantly where gifts would help the community? What can be done to stop fools from running after each new light and taking up each new gospel? What can be done to stop married people from putting away each other as soon as they get tired of each other and adding to the sin of unfaithfulness the fresh sin of rushing into the arms of the partners of their guilt? What can stop the woman talkers, the woman preachers, the woman agitators, the clamorers for women's rights?"

Nothing, Dr. DIX, can be done to stop these inevitable manifestations of human nature. Sumptuary laws proved in a past period as inefficacious as they were tyrannical. Introduce a reign of economy and there will be a lamentable setback in human progress. Gifts to help the community? The true public benefactors are men of science patiently working to discover and utilize the secrets of nature, great inventors and the founders and organizers of new industries, and never before more than now did these "give abundantly when gifts would help the community."

How can people be stopped "from running after each new light and taking up each new gospel"? They have always been attracted by that sort of novelty. The early centuries of Christianity were filled with heresies and schisms. Methodism, in its beginning in the eighteenth century, seemed to the usual Anglican rector of the period a delusion of "fools"; yet now it is the strongest division of Protestantism in America.

Divorces are not unlawful. They are legal dissolutions of the marriage contract; and if they are allowed for any cause the principle of the dissolubility of marriage is established and inevitably many causes are made legal. But, practically, in spite of the many American divorces, is there another country in Christendom where the average of domestic morality is so high as here?

Why "stop the woman talkers, the woman preachers, the woman agitators, the clamorers for women's rights"? Haven't they the right of free speech? And if you go back half a century will you not find that they have used it to good purpose?

In a happier mood Dr. DIX will recognize that things are very much better at the close of this year of grace 1903 than they ever were before. Doubtless there will be preachers and philosophers in 2003 to whom the outlook will seem as dismal as it does now to the learned rector of Trinity—and fortunately for the world. If men were not discontented they would not be continually improving their condition; they would still be savages.

The Credit of the Cuban Government.

President PALMA's message to the present session of the Cuban Congress promised a special message on the matter of the Cuban loan. That message was sent in on Nov. 20. The cabled résumé of it does not indicate the communication as either especially important or particularly instructive.

It would seem that Cuba has only one string to her bow, only one banking house which shows a disposition to take the matter up. Apparently, Mr. PALMA does not publish either the name of the concern or the terms which it offers. He does state that it will be imperative, in any case, to effect changes in the basis of the loan as now proposed. We have already called attention to that necessity, which the Cubans should have seen some months ago. Nor does Mr. PALMA inform his Congress of the price upon which negotiations are being based. If he did so, the despatches received have been carelessly sent in their omission of so important an item. If it should be true that the proposed terms are below a figure which such bonds are actually worth, if based as they might be and should be, the Cubans will do wisely to correct the weakness of their proposed security and make another effort. They ought to get better terms.

One matter has undoubtedly worked to her disadvantage in Cuba's effort to place her bonds for $35,000,000. This lies in her neglect to make a prompt and honorable provision for a previous issue, the validity of which was virtually recognized by the first of the Transitory Rules of her Constitution. A little more than $2,000,000 of those bonds, issued by the Cuban Junta, are outstanding. They declare that cumulative interest will be payable six months after the establishment of a Cuban Government. Eighteen months have passed and no step has been taken in the matter. The recognition of validity and the provision therefor in the national Constitution, and the neglect to provide even for the overdue interest payment, leave Cuba open to suspicion of her financial good faith, and the fact has been quoted to her prejudice in the money market.

Cuba has had abundant means in her cash box to take care of this obligation. She could do more to strengthen her national credit by paying her debts than she could by showing a large treasury surplus. Good credit stands less upon the possession of resources than upon a prompt discharge of honorable obligations. Cuba's general credit would be helped by an early recognition of these bonds and the payment of the interest now long overdue.

Suppression of the African Slave Trade.

The news came last week that Wadai, which extends between Lake Chad and Darfur, has finally accepted the protectorate of France. With the submission of Wadai, the last of the independent states of the central Sudan has been brought under the control of Europe. The English and French are intrenched along the southern border of the desert from the Atlantic to Abyssinia, and the last strongholds of the African export slave trade are now in the hands of white men. The events of the past year may be regarded as completing the doom of the murderous traffic in human beings.

At the Brussels Congress in 1890 sixteen of the Powers agreed to cooperate for suppression of this trade. The abhorrent traffic was then flourishing along the east coast for 2,800 miles, from the Zambesi river to the neighborhood of Massowa on the Red Sea. The eastern markets were the islands off the mainland, the coast towns of Arabia, and Persia and Turkey, where black slaves had for centuries been in demand for domestic service, employment in the harems, and work in the fields. The great sources of supply for this trade were the Congo State, German East Africa, and the Egyptian Sudan.

The northern markets were the Saharan oases, Morocco and Tripoli; their sources of supply were the west and central Sudan, from the middle Niger River to Darfur. Since the abolition of the American slave trade these northern markets have drained from inner Africa an appalling number of negro captives. Ten thousand slaves at a time were sometimes centered at Tenduf, the great slave distributing point of the western Sahara, to be sent in detachments to towns throughout Moroccan territory.

The gunboats of England and Germany put an end to the trade all along the east coast. For some years Arab dhows attempted now and then to smuggle a cargo of slaves to Pemba and other islands or across the Red Sea to Arabia; but the uncertainty and dangers of the traffic destroyed all hopes of profit and the coast trade was entirely suppressed. The vigorous measures applied in German East Africa put an end to slave raiding in that large territory some years ago. The régime of the Arab slavers, however, was still extended over all the upper Congo country between Stanley Falls and Lake Mweru. The Arabs were told that they might till the land in peace, but slave raiding must stop; they attacked the whites in defence of the right they claimed to traffic in slaves, and after eighteen months of war all were driven from the Congo State. They have been permitted to reoccupy their banana and rice plantations along the Congo, but slave raiding has been rooted out in all that region.

The fall of the Mahdists and the restoration of civilized government in the Egyptian Sudan have completely extinguished slave raiding in that vast domain. The capture of Timbuktu by the French put an end to the traffic in the western Sudan, and this year marks the close of the atrocious business in the States of the central Sudan.

When C. H. ROBINSON was travelling in Hausaland, several years ago, he saw about one thousand slaves brought into Kano as the result of a single raid. Early this year the British subjected the Sultan of Kano and a little later ended the supremacy of the Sultan of Sokoto, who profited more by the capture and sale of blacks than any other man in Africa.

The influence of the new mastery is already apparent in the general commercial movement which is tending to the Niger instead of across the Sahara. Sporadic troubles engendered by the slave raiders will undoubtedly occur, but the terrible evil is practically extinguished, and its suppression presages better days with prosperity and peace for millions of Africans.

The Congressional Building Industry.

In spite of the disorganized conditions in the building trades, the builders in Congress display their accustomed activity. They are familiar with strikes, and know exactly what will come out of such attempts to change the existing conditions. They are industrious, persistent, tireless. Never for a moment since Speaker CANNON and President FRYE rapped them to order have they ceased in their labors. All the world knows Mr. ACHESON's enterprise for a Federal building to house every first, second and third class post office. Mr. ACHESON is the wholesale builder—a sort of trust—for there are 4,900 of the offices for which he wants buildings. Give $100,000 for each building, and where is the surplus? A large surplus is a bad thing for the Government.

But the small fish are not inactive. The Congressmen who look only to the positive needs of their districts have proposed 136 new Federal buildings. They have had other things to occupy their minds, too. When Mr. CANNON and Mr. FRYE have arrived at an agreement as to the relative rights of the House and the Senate in legislation, the Senators and Representatives will be able to devote more time to the purchasing of sites and the erection of suitable buildings for Government use at points where the welfare of the republic and the continued political activities of the lawmakers demand them imperatively.

Free Speech in the Catholic Church.

Letters we have printed from Roman Catholic priests complaining of restrictions put on freedom of thought and speech, more especially concerning conclusions reached by modern science, drew out a very caustic rejoinder from a Catholic layman, who related that in his experience as editor of a Catholic paper he suffered from no such hierarchical interference or constraint.

That was a fact pertinent to the discussion and we should have been glad to give it publication if his letter had not contained, besides, injurious reflections on the motives of the correspondents to whom he replied, and if he had not demanded that it should be given in full or not at all.

Now the same correspondent writes accusing us of being "partisan and unfair" and suggesting that "the suspicion is not without grounds that THE SUN, of its own motion, under the guise of anonymous correspondents, is uttering views for which it dare not assume responsibility."

The letters against which he adverts came to us from Roman Catholic priests of high distinction whose superior literary cultivation was made manifest in their writing, and we printed them, as we do letters of voluntary correspondents generally, without assuming any responsibility in the premises. We have also printed replies to them of which the tone was not offensive in its *odium theologicum*.

The controversy is interesting and significant, but the discussion of so grave a question we prefer to leave to Catholic priests. For that reason we must also decline to print able letters which we have received to-day from two Catholic laymen, the one supporting and the other attacking the positions of the clerical critics.

Janitress and Janitor.

In Chicago a momentous question is about to be settled, peaceably if it can be, forcibly if it must be. The organized janitresses and the organized janitors are to have their respective rights determined in solemn conference under the supervision of the Chicago Federation of Labor. The sad truth is that janitors are being displaced, gradually but firmly, by the victorious and encroaching sex. The latter rules in most of the great office buildings. The business agent of the janitresses is confident that they will soon queen it over the department stores, the wholesale houses and the theatres. "The men can't stop us," she says. Of course they can't. King CANUTE had just as much chance of stopping the sea from slopping over his royal toes. The janitresses have just as good a charter from the Federation as the other fellows; and they have immemorial right on their side.

"What business has a man with a broom?" they ask. When did a mop become his legitimate weapon or utensil? "Haven't I tried to teach them how to handle these tools?" cries the business agent, "and haven't I tried to show them how to dust? Let them keep to the pick and shovel and saw."

Yet the janitors are not only unconscious of their inferiority, but they even object to allowing the janitresses to be so styled. "Scrubwomen" is the term which they insist upon applying to their female rivals. The technical term in Massachusetts is "janitrices," we believe; but that is too pedantic for Chicago. The janitresses can be trusted to defend their name and prerogatives. Their business agent will "let the men wash the windows." Merely this, and nothing more.

And if they aren't sufficiently meek they will be thrown out of the windows.

A Soulless Corporation.

After two weeks of holiday, enlivened by rioting, the striking employees of the Chicago City Railway Company went back to work. The company agrees to have the wage scale submitted to arbitration, but on the condition that the wage scale outside and not inside the city shall be the basis of arbitration. The company insists that it gives higher wages than any other street railway company. The arbitration, then, may be but cold comfort for the employees.

The company refuses to grant to the union of its employees that control over it which is absolutely necessary in the view of the leaders of the latter. It will not discharge its non-union men. It will not promise to discharge no employee without the union's consent. It will continue to fix hours and routes and control and discipline the men as it chooses.

Nothing could illustrate better the soullessness of a corporation. If a corporation is to be allowed to hire and discharge its employees and to run its own business, what becomes of the most cherished and sacred duties of the labor boss?

The sum total of the practical value of the automobile for military purposes, in the opinion of Capt. T. BENTLEY SCOTT, the military attaché to the American Embassy at Paris, expressed in a paper on the subject in the last number of the *Outing* magazine, is illustrated in the long trains of army wagons drawn by steam tractors which may be seen daily in Paris wending their way to the great subsistence depots. "After all the enthusiasm, all the talk, all the experiments, this convoy of meat and groceries typifies almost absolutely" the limit of the military usefulness of the automobile. So far, the further use of the machine in armies has been "more in the nature of sport than anything else," and its chief advocates have been "not so much military men as sporting men." That the automobile as a tractor "has come to stay," Capt. SCOTT does not doubt; but after careful and special attention to the subject in France, the country where experiments in its military uses can best be conducted, he concludes that in that restricted sphere alone it "will play hereafter a part intermediate between the railway and the draught horse." This conclusion he reaches after an expert argument which seems convincing.

The dedication to-day of a new church built by the Christian Scientists and situated at the west of Central Park will be an event of much significance as an illustration of the pecuniary strength of that religious cult, not to speak of its artistic cultivation. It is a specimen of ecclesiastical architecture so remarkable, the design of distinguished architects, Messrs. CARRÈRE & HASTINGS, that it has attracted unusual attention among the artists and critics of art of the town, many of whom visited it on Friday by special invitation of the National Sculpture Society. This church was built by the oldest Christian Science organization in New York, at the great cost of $1,185,000, all of which sum has been paid in. Behind the Christian Science movement there is evidently an abundance of zeal, and of money also.

Positive Facts.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In your issue of to-day, on the editorial page, you print a number of items under the head of "Positive Facts About the Settlement of America."

Will you not inform your many readers why you select the facts in this single case as positive when facts are generally understood to be positive?

SPRINGFIELD, Mass., Nov. 27. A. D.

Is our worthy correspondent unaware of the difference between positive facts and negative facts; or, again, of the subtle metaphysical distinction between positive facts, comparative facts and superlative facts?

Shame on Massachusetts!

William O'Brien and the Irish Cause.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* A cable despatch, which appeared in the New York daily papers and was reproduced by the *Irish World*, Nov. 21, states that William O'Brien, M. P., when asked why he refused to withdraw his resignation, answered that he could not explain without going into "horrifying details."

Mr. O'Brien has not only been a public man for twenty years; he has also been a newspaper man—on the *Dublin Freeman*. He is a brilliant man. He knows the significance of the words he uses. Those words signify no petty matter or quarrel. They have a deep and terrible significance.

Father M. B. Kennedy of Fermoy, County Cork, has written as follows: "There is no man within the shores of Ireland whose withdrawal from public life at this crisis can so affect the nation's future as Mr. O'Brien's. * * * For whatever has been achieved in battle against landlordism; whatever has been done toward its restraint in Parliament; whatever doughty blow has been struck at depravity and tyranny in Castle circles in Ireland—all this, for the past twenty years, has mainly been effected by the genius, courage and heroic devotion of Mr. William O'Brien."

These words are none too strong. I have known Mr. O'Brien personally. Especially, I came to know him when he and John Dillon, Michael Davitt, Charles Stewart Parnell and others appealed to me for aid in 1883. But what does Mr. O'Brien mean by "horrifying details"? The papers report that John Dillon and Michael Davitt are opposed to the views of William O'Brien. But I could not believe, even on Mr. O'Brien's statement, that those men could countenance "horrifying details."

However, I tremble at the distrust his words must produce. If he will not withdraw his resignation, he ought to withdraw those words or explain them. MICHAEL CORCORAN.

BROOKLYN, Nov. 27.

False Prophecy Attributed to Tom Geary.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* During the extraordinary session of Congress in 1893 Congressman "Tom" Geary of California expressed his fondness for the President of the United States by a prophetic declaration that Grover Cleveland was the last man of the East the people of the United States would *elect* as their Chief Executive. He made the Alleghany Mountains the dividing line.

NEW YORK, Nov. 27. J. T. ODOERS.

Advice of Ye Cobbler of Rye.

Fulle many a Childe yt Cryeth for ye Moone
Wt' Plaine Greene Cheese Contente enough is Soone;
Fulle many a Barde who'd Mounte ye Winged Steede
Contented Driveth now an Humbler Breede;
Fulle many a Man who'd Rule, a Sovereigne Sage,
Is Gladde enough to Rule ye Ledger's Page.
Strive, if ye will, to Hitch yr Waggon to a Star,
But Earne ye while ye Nickell for ye Trolley Car.

EGOMEE.

THE FORBIDDEN RAILROAD.

The Russian Government occasionally supplies to distinguished foreign travellers a document granting to them free passage over all the Imperial Russian railroads in Europe and Asia "with the exception of the Murghab branch of the Trans-Caspian Railroad." The Russians keep this line absolutely secret and permission to travel over it has never been granted to a foreigner.

It was supposed that the comprehensive passes issued to the fortunate few always included the qualifying phrase above quoted. But it was omitted in the permit given to Dr. Sven Hedin when he left Europe for his last years of exploration in Central Asia. When he arrived at Merv he thought it would be an excellent idea to take a run down the Murghab branch, look over the frontier into Afghanistan and have a peep at the region toward Herat; he tells about it in his latest book just published.

He imparted his intentions to the Russian Governor of the New Oasis, who told him that travellers were not carried on the Murghab branch. The explorer at once produced his trump card, an unlimited pass over all lines; but the Governor had in his pocketbook a trump that beat it. It was a telegram from the Minister of War, reading:

In case Dr. Sven Hedin should contemplate going to Kushk, please inform him that that line is closed to all travellers.

This was explicit, and the explorer was further informed that the line was closed to all ordinary Russians, and that only those persons belonging to the garrison at Kushkinski Post, the southern terminus of the railroad on the Russian-Afghanistan frontier, were permitted to travel by it.

This railroad, which branches off from the Trans-Caspian line at Merv, was opened a month less than four years ago. The project was quietly conceived and silently executed, and though the fact that its construction had begun was announced in the London *Times* in 1896, so little has been heard of it that in two magazine articles on the Trans-Caspian line, printed within the past two years, no mention is made of the Murghab branch.

The branch is, of course, nothing more nor less than a strategical railway. It steals south out of Merv, the nearest Russian town of any size, to the Afghan frontier, and winds along the verdureless bank of the Murghab River 190 miles to Kushkinski Post, which is built on the very frontier. Passing through one of the most desolate of deserts, there is not a hamlet along the line. It serves no trading or agricultural interests It is purely a military road, connecting the modern town of Merv, which was entirely built by the Russians, with the strong fort erected at Kushkinski, overlooking the mountains of northern Afghanistan. The Murghab, rising among those mountains, receives all the streams from the northern slope of the Herat highlands, supplies the locomotives of the military road with water, gives fertility to the Merv Oasis and loses itself in the sands beyond.

So Russia has a railroad capable of pouring many thousands of troops in the course of a few weeks along the frontier within thirty miles of the Afghan town of Kushk and within eighty miles of Herat. At present only two regular trains a week are running. They move through the desert at the rate of only ten miles an hour, reaching the Afghan frontier in about nineteen hours.

Russian diplomacy was, of course, equal to the task of explaining the construction of this road when it seemed necessary to say something on the subject. The road was built, it was said, because if the Ameer of Afghanistan should die or otherwise cease to reign there would probably be disturbances in that country which might affect the Russian border districts, including even Bokhara, and which the Indian Government would be powerless to control or prevent. It was necessary therefore for Russia to take precautionary measures.

But to this day the British people accept this explanation with somewhat sinister reservations. Henry Norman, for example, in his latest book a year ago asserted that the Murghab branch was simply a deliberate military measure against Great Britain and served only the purpose of facilitating the invasion of India and of placing Herat at the mercy of Russia.

To-day all is quiet along the Murghab branch. The trains are few and slow, and no tourist cars are switched from the main line to the southern road; but if a war cloud should some day spread over that region, what a transformation would be witnessed along this little road as the bustle of military movement should pervade it from end to end, while Russian regiments were hurrying to the gateway leading to Herat.

Senator Depew's Political Forecast.

From an interview in the Newark Sunday News of to-day.

"There is undoubtedly, among groups of active and influential politicians, a desire for a change, but that is always the case when a second term is involved. There were murmurings of this same kind, which never materialized anywhere, however, before McKinley's renomination.

"But the strength of such a movement must be measured by the ability of its promoters, who find a candidate of Presidential size who is willing to hazard his future on such a chance. No such candidate has been found, though all have been approached. On the contrary, every one who would be thought of in a Republican national convention, has declared openly for Mr. Roosevelt."

"Are they sincere?" the correspondent asked.

"I am not going into motives," answered the Senator, "because when a man has stated another's position and follows it out by the emphatic assertion that he thinks such manifestations are sincere, he usually means that he is in doubt about it.

"New York State will send a solid delegation to the convention for Roosevelt. Senator Platt and Governor Odell are in perfect harmony. The Republicans will carry New York State next fall by one of the most strenuous campaigns in which the Republican party has ever engaged.

"New York State will be close, and it will be good fighting ground and potential in the national result."

The correspondent asked:

"As goes New York, so will go the Presidency? Do you mean that, Senator?"

"I would not say so absolutely, but it will be a tremendous factor," was the reply.

Paris Students' Temperance League.

From the Medical Record.

The students of the Latin quarter, or at least, a certain number of them, are getting up an anti-alcoholic league, which will form part of the French league of temperance. The members only abstain from distilled liquors, but drink all fermented beverages, such as wine, beer or cider. The fees for admission and membership are one franc for each member, and the league intends to use every possible means of impressing on the public the importance of temperance, such as post cards, advertisements, tracts, hospital propaganda, temperance restaurants, and later, the establishment of a journal.

One article in the *North American Review* for December, nearly as important as the subject of which it treats, is Goldwin Smith's "Mr. Morley's Life of Gladstone." If a better biographer for Gladstone could have been wished than John Morley it would have been Goldwin Smith. There are three papers on the Panama revolution, the Venezuela arbitration is discussed by Wayne MacVeagh, and the Congo attack by D. C. Boulger. Col. W. C. Church throws light on the canteen question and Sylvester Baxter criticises representation in the Senate. Almost the only non-political article is Mr. Howells's account of Hawthorne.

PRAYER BEFORE SPANKING

Recommended as an Impressive Adjunct to Corporal Punishment.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I was a teacher many years before the rod was prohibited and am well satisfied that moral suasion is "n. g." for reprobate boys. The best teacher I ever had in a country school, one who ruled the great mass of his pupils by tact and love, had to use the rod occasionally. If the present day schools fail to turn out well disciplined scholars—girls or boys—it is due to the absurd prohibition of corporal punishment.

But as "Old Timer" says of Dr. Anthon's discipline, it is wise to invest the ceremony with solemnity. The rod should never be applied in anger. That is sure to defeat the object and no doubt is the chief cause for its prohibition by law. Only in extreme cases should punishment be inflicted on the instant—so to speak. Make such an investigation as is necessary to be sure that discipline is proper, and then appoint a time for it, at least a day later, when any passion that the offence may have caused will be allayed by time and sleep and when the culprit will have no other feeling than dread of the ordeal. The interval between the time of the offence and the execution of the sentence will promote repentance and disarm needless severity. Under such circumstances the culprit will believe, if ever, that the punishment is inflicted for his good and from a sense of duty.

If the teacher is, as he should be, a praying Christian, it is well to precede the ceremony by a brief prayer. It will do no harm and may do great good. The boy must be a "tough" indeed who, after a day or two of meditation on his offence and the coming penalty—the latter preceded by an earnest prayer in his behalf—can go through it all and not be softened into repentance and humility.

"Old Timer" speaks of Dr. Anthon's use of the rattan for bad boys. The rattan is not to be commended—it is too much like a wire. The old time schoolmaster's flat "ruler," made of oak or maple, is better, far better. If the youth is not too large the best mode, so far as my experience goes, is to put your foot on a stool or bench and lay the culprit across your knee, and then apply the ruler to "the seat of his understanding." If he howls and kicks, no matter. The pain will soon subside, and in case the ruler leaves an imprint it will only be temporary. Besides, the boy will not be in haste to show it to his father to arouse sympathy—nor to anybody else. It will be "a closed incident."

Occasionally a boy disciplined in this or some other way will vow to take vengeance on the teacher "when he gets big": but when that time comes he looks at the matter in a different light, and is more apt to thank than to try to "lick" his old master. Such vengeful talk depends chiefly on the thoroughness of the flogging. Few boys will indulge in it who are thoroughly mastered by a judicious teacher. Byron, in "Don Juan," Canto II., gives this advice:

O ye who teach the ingenuous youth of nations,
Holland, France, England, Germany or Spain
I pray thee, flog them on all occasions—
It mends their morals: never mind the pain.

For the word "all" in the third line substitute *most*, and the advice is good.

POUGHKEEPSIE, Nov. 27. P. S.

BRITISH IN WESTERN TIBET.

The Adventures and Achievements of Capt. Deasy's Exploring Party.

The last Indian mail brings some interesting details of a British exploring expedition that left Leh in Ladakh in May last, to continue the survey of western Tibet that was carried as far as Lake Horpo Cho in 1896 by Capt. Deasy, a well known explorer.

The party, which returned to Kashmir on Oct. 4 last, was composed of two British officers, Capt. Rawling and Lieut. Hargreaves, and Babu Ram Singh, with a number of attendants and escort. They passed out of Ladakh by the Lanakla Pass, from where they struck out due east for Horpo Cho, a lake which lies about two hundred and fifty miles in a direct line from Leh.

Here the party separated, Capt. Rawling and Babu Ram Singh going forward, leaving Lieut. Hargreaves with the bulk of the baggage and twenty-five ponies, to wait for grain which was to be brought there on yaks. The men who were to have brought the grain deserted, and to add to their misfortunes a terrific blizzard that raged for eight days killed eighteen of their ponies. As soon as he was able, Lieut. Hargreaves set out to rejoin Capt. Rawling at a prearranged spot, which he succeeded in doing with great difficulty, owing to the loss of animals. Fortunately, a depot of grain that had been buried in 1896 by Capt. Deasy at a spot easily recognized by the indications given was found intact and in good condition.

After resting for a week the party started out into an entirely unexplored region, and began the work of triangulation. The survey was extended to longitude 85 degrees east, the highest latitude being 35 degrees 45 minutes north and the lowest 32 degrees 45 minutes; and much valuable data concerning the topography of the country, its minerals and other resources were obtained. Many new salt and fresh water lakes were discovered, the largest having an area of over seventy square miles.

The inhabitants met with, mostly nomads with their flocks, were quite friendly, but when on their return journey Capt. Rawling's party approached Thok Jalung, recently spoken of in THE SUN as a locality where considerable gold deposits are known to exist, they were met by a large party of armed Tibetans, who, in a perfectly friendly but firm manner, advised them to take another route. They were also prevented from taking the road through Rudok back into Kashmir, the officials saying that though they were glad to see Europeans in their country, the orders of the Lhasa Government were very strict as to their exclusion from certain districts.

Immense quantities of game of all kinds were met with, which furnished the party with all the meat they required during their wanderings of nearly five months. The information obtained is said to have been of much political and military value.

Wanted, an Insect-Catching Plant.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* It is a matter of record that whenever any plague or pest has reached a sufficient degree of danger in a civilized community to enlist the intelligence of the people along the line of combating it, some agency has been found to either stamp it out or reduce its destructiveness to a minimum.

Just now, in the cotton world, there is in progress an organization for war against the boll weevil; and it would be commendable in any one who may think he has a suggestion to offer, that might be of assistance in winning a victory, to do so.

Plans and devices as to how this pest may be exterminated or its ravages minimized are many, and I believe I have seen it suggested that some plant more attractive than cotton as food might be profitably introduced into the infected districts. Ordinarily, it would seem that any improvement in the nature of what the weevil feeds on would have a tendency to increase its strength and multiplying powers, and the time would come when such multiplication would be sufficient to devour all of the improved food and necessitate a return to cotton to obviate famine.

Why not consider the reverse of this proposition and try the experiment of introducing into the infected districts *a plant that will feed on the insect?*

That such a plant exists is established beyond doubt, and practical information concerning it may be had by a perusal of Darwin's "Insectivorous Plants." In this book extended reference is made to the botanical genus *drosera*, and its nature and adaptation for catching and feeding on insect life. Concerning the species *rotundifora*, which is indigenous to England, the following observation is made:

"As this plant is extremely common in some districts, the number of insects thus annually slaughtered must be prodigious."

The species *filiformis*, which is indigenous to America, is thus referred to:

"This species grows in such abundance in parts of New Jersey as almost to cover the ground"; and it is further observed, "It catches an extraordinary number of small and large insects."

Further comment in the work above referred to on this subject is:

"The genus is believed to include about one hundred species which range in the Old World from the Arctic region to south India and Australia, and in the New World from Canada to Tierra del Fuego."

It appears from facts known to scientists that there is in existence an annually recurring plant agency capable of catching and killing insects in prodigious quantities, and it may be that this is awaiting a proper application to make it effective against the ravages of insects on other plants. There might be difficulties in the way of establishing it where it is now most needed, such as acclimation and propagation to an extent that would make it operative in any considerable degree, but all this would have to be determined either by those directly interested or by the Agricultural Department, which can command both the energy and means for testing it. The very best result of such an experiment may not be extermination of the pest, but its appreciable reduction, if this could be accomplished would justify the means suggested.

Incidentally, it may be observed that since New Jersey is a favorite habitat of *drosera*, a proper dispersion and cultivation of it might prove to be a great reenforcement in the annual campaign against the exasperating mosquito pest.

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