



The Independent

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SURVEY OF THE WORLD.

The Census Bill.

The bill providing for the Twelfth General Census, to be taken in 1900, which has been prepared by the House Census Committee, has been reported. It endeavors to meet the difficulties presented by the last two censuses in the fact that the official report of the Tenth Census, 1880, was not completely published until nine years after the gathering of the Census; and that of the Eleventh Census, 1890, was not published until eight years and three months after the work of enumeration had been completed. This bill provides that the final report shall be published complete within two years; that the Census shall be begun on the first day of June, 1900, and that the work of enumeration shall be completed within fifteen days in the cities and thirty days in country districts. It provides for the appointment of a director at a salary of \$6,000 per annum, an assistant director at \$4,000; the necessary number of heads of geographical divisions at \$3,000, a chief clerk and a geographer at \$2,500 each, and other clerks at salaries ranging from \$1,800 to \$600; the precise number in each grade to be determined by the needs of the bureau. There are to be five grand divisions: Population, mortality, manufacturing, mechanical establishments and agriculture. The enumeration districts are not to comprise more than from 1,500 to 2,000 population, in order that the work may be completed within the necessary time. To meet the expenses the bill carries an appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the current year, leaving it to the next Congress to provide funds for the continuance of the work. It has been decided by the committee not to include the employees in the classified civil service, inasmuch as the enumerators, who will form the larger part

of the force, are necessarily such persons as cannot be found in that service, and therefore it is thought best not to apply those rules to any class of employees.

The Army's Beef.

Commissary-General Eagan has been found guilty by the court-martial appointed to try him, and has been sentenced to be dismissed from the army. But the court adds a recommendation that clemency be shown to him. His defense was that he was so greatly excited by the testimony of General Miles that his mind was not in its normal condition. Much additional evidence as to the bad quality of a considerable part of the army's beef supply has been published; the testimony of sixty-three officers (including that of Major-General Lawton), representing a dozen regiments, on this point has been laid before the War Inquiry Commission. Secretary Alger has testified before the Commission that the Department received no complaints from the army as to the condition of the beef; but it has been shown that on September 20th an order was issued from the Department to all the commanding generals, directing each regiment to report concerning the beef rations, and it is known that many reports were received in response to that order. There have been published in New York a series of private telegrams which appear to have been sent by one G. J. Brine, the Washington representative of the beef packers, to the manager of the leading firm of packers in Chicago. The authenticity of these telegrams is admitted. They were forwarded after General Miles had testified concerning the beef, and they indicate that friendly relations existed between the agent and General Eagan and at least one member of the

decision, rendered on the last day of December, and the Court had jurisdiction. But before New Year's day was done, Malietoa Tanu was in hiding, Tamasese in a boat, lying under the sides of the British warship "Porpoise," and all the machinery of the native government in the hands of the adherents of Mataafa. The Chief Justice retired to the "Porpoise," and then the German officials declared his office vacant, apparently upon the ground that he had deserted Samoa and the three powers and "gone to England." They therefore installed the German President as Chief Justice, he being authorized by the treaty to act in case of a vacancy. These latter proceedings were manifestly unlawful and will doubtless be disavowed by the German Government. The treaty furnishes the full measure of the rights of all, and is our complete safeguard in this episode.

It should, however, be remembered that there are almost always two sides to every

controversy, and we have not yet heard Consul Rose's. He is a man of large experience in the German Foreign Office and in important stations abroad, and of mature age and ability. Judgment may well be suspended until we have all the facts, and we can rest assured that President McKinley, without haste or indiscretion, will eventually cause all our rights and those of the Samoan people and of the Supreme Court under the treaty to be made secure. If German officials in Samoa exceeded their rights, as now seems quite clear, their acts will be disavowed and they will be recalled. Let the treaty stand. Let us hold fast to what so many years of diplomacy have secured. Amend it so as to remedy defects which experience has demonstrated, but hold on to it. If the engine does not always work smoothly this is no good reason in maritime law for scuttling the ship or throwing the cargo overboard.

ST. JOHNSBURY, VT.

IRRESPONSIBLE NEWSPAPER WRITERS.

BY CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D.

AN American enjoys thinking as he likes, and when he has thought a thing he wants to tell it and to print it. To put one's ideas into black and white and then to distribute them is an American instinct. Our fathers, a hundred and twenty-five years back, could not even make a National Constitution without establishing for themselves and their posterity an unabridged liberty of the Press. It is astonishing how much printed matter,—not only paid matter but gratuitous matter,—pours in upon one through the mail. I fill on an average two large waste-paper baskets with printing house output every day, and there are thousands of others in the city that are making similar daily contribution to the ragman and the dump-scows. There is a good deal among it that is valuable, and even that which is not is at any rate a relief to the mind that it comes from, so that in the broad sense of the word it is all valuable.

It ought, however, to be remembered that

while the Constitution guarantees freedom of the Press, that guaranty can easily breed mischief, save as the word freedom is construed a little conservatively. There is a certain flamboyancy and rampagiousness about the American mind that makes it hard for it to distinguish between freedom and license. Freedom is liberty under law; license is liberty run wild. Except where liberty is held under the restraint of statutes or public sentiment the tendency is always to break loose into a wider and wider pasture of insubordination.

The matter of determining just where liberty shall stop and law step in is an exceedingly difficult and delicate point. It is peculiarly difficult in the matter of freedom to print. The prerogative is recognized in the Constitution, and a good many Americans are quite as jealous of their civic rights under the Constitution as of their moral rights under the Decalogue. Then also the question of limiting a man's liberty to print

is made difficult by the fact that whatever tends to repress liberty of speech and of printing is liable to intensify the very notions and passions that are repressed, and, in that way, to develop a convulsion or volcano that will break out even more destructively at some other spot.

Nevertheless among almost all people that have some measure of respect for themselves and for their contemporaries there is developing the sentiment that the danger line between the freedom of the Press and the license of the Press has been crossed, and that some kind of pressure ought to be brought to bear that will curb the skittishness and chasten the lawlessness of the men who print. There was a move made in this direction a year ago by the introduction into the Legislature at Albany of the famous Anti-Cartoon Bill. Considerable sympathy was developed in behalf of the measure, and there was a good deal in its professed intent that commended itself to men who believed in decent newspapers and who had little faith in scurrilous attacks considered as means of improving the social and political condition. It was considered, however, that there were grounds for thinking that the bill was not proposed in good faith, that it was not shaped so much with the intent to prevent the papers telling lies about people as to discourage their telling the truth about them, especially picturing the truth about them, and that there were two men in particular whose physiognomies had been served up by the cartoonists with telling effect who shrank from the grotesque publicity given them by such artists as Mr. Bush, and who, while they might make a reputable show under the ordeal of the statuesque, could not, with their distinctive type of beauty, sustain the strain of the picturesque. The bill, therefore, was killed, not so much by its contents as by its animus.

Still there is an easy-going regardlessness in the way in which, by at least a portion of the Press, matters of fact and personal concern are treated that is absolutely intolerable and that cries out for correction. I have wondered whether the existing evil might not be repressed and the prevailing inundation of misrepresentation, libel and lie be dammed up by requiring each news

paper article or news item to be undersigned by the name of the exchange from which it is quoted or by the name of the writer, editor or reporter by whom the article or item is prepared. A scheme like the one here proposed would subserve a number of valuable ends. In the first place, it would locate responsibility. You read an article which abuses you and lies about you, or if not about you about one of your friends, and when you are through with it you are not simply indignant but your indignation assumes a peculiarly mordant acidity from the fact that you do not know whom to be indignant at. There is no relief in being angry with a crowd or in being angry with an impersonality, and not only is there no relief but there is no chance of being able to get at the particular party that your wrath wants to vent itself upon and no promising means of securing redress. There is not one journalistically abused man in ten thousand that will go to the length of taking legal measures against a great newspaper. A big journal represents capital and capital is not afraid because it knows itself to be practically invulnerable. Such a journal also represents a crowd of editorial and reporter workers, and no man is afraid so long as he is one of a crowd. But once let him understand that he cannot sink himself in the mass, but that what he writes he has got to write in the exercise of his own distinct personality, and that he will have to put his name to it as a token of authorship and a guaranty of good faith, and he thereby establishes direct communication with the party whom he tells the truth about or whom he slanders or lies about, or about whom he retails a lot of trashy gossip that no respectable or decent newspaper has any business to touch.

It is amazing to what flights of audacity a newspaper man will commit himself under cover of the fact that his work only appears and he himself remains an impersonality. It is not an uncommon thing for reporters to spin "interviews" entirely from out their own inner consciousness. I have not only seen in print what purported to be interviews with myself, and which from first to last were a sheer invention of the reporter, but I have seen my own name subscribed to

such interviews, and then perhaps the same paper in its editorial page will charge me with talking of things that I know nothing about and taunt me with being a blather-skite. I only allude to cases of this kind for the reason that I am able to speak about them as of my own knowledge.

Of course, there is no use in calling a great newspaper to account for such things, but if the particular man were in sight that such outrage could be fastened upon then there would be somebody within reach whom we might hope to succeed in making miserable, and from the annoyance of whose mendacity we might stand some chance of being able to protect ourselves. There is little good in shooting until we see to a nicety what we are shooting at. Three or four weeks ago a gentleman came to town whose movements the reporters were instructed to cover. He was dogged from house to house; among other houses that he visited was my own. The reporter happened to know that my visitor's views upon a certain matter coincided with my own, and with only that fact to go upon he extemporized our conversation and printed it the next morning in the paper for which he is paid to scavenge. On Newspaper Row that may pass as a clever piece of journalism, but I call it a sneaking, dastardly trick, and it would have been impossible had the perpetrator been obliged to put his name to the stuff that he had manufactured.

It would, however, be injustice to saddle too much of the blame of these things upon the reporters; as a rule, they are not only bright but honorable, and they would be still more honorable were it not for the ignominious uses to which their superiors in the newspaper office put them. It is a common thing to have a reporter tell me: "I am ashamed to rout you out in the middle of the night;" "I am ashamed to ask you questions like those I am putting to you, but I have to—it is a matter of bread and butter with me." Sometimes I have said to a reporter after giving him a verbatim statement: "Now, will you print this just as I have given it?" The answer that I have had a great many times come back to me has been: "I will take it to the office just as you have given it, but how it will be 'doc-

tored' after it gets out of my hands, I cannot say." There would be no more "doctoring" if the reporter's own name were printed along with the interview, for his signature would make him responsible for what goes before his signature, and if called to account he has to face the falsification himself or name the responsible party. In other words, signature affords a distinct point at which to fix obligation.

In another way, also, a system of signed articles would be of great service to newspaper readers. The amount of credence that we at present give to a newspaper article varies with the amount of general confidence we have in that particular newspaper in its entirety. We regard each particular element of its contents with the average regard that we have for the whole sheet. The consequence is that a portion of its editorial and news columns we value at less than their worth, and another portion we value at more than their worth. When I read a news item I am submitting myself to some one's instruction, and I want to know who that "some one" is; otherwise I have no means of judging to what degree my docility is warranted. So when I read an editorial column I am, for the time being, letting some one else do my thinking for me, and to what extent I shall be justified in allowing that vicarious ratiocination will depend, or ought to depend, on my knowledge of the intellectual trustworthiness of the writer who substitutes for me. In order to get from an article neither more nor less than it ought to convey I need not only to know what the writer says but to know also the writer who says it. The man is the measure of the value of what he writes, so that if the reader knows nothing of the man,—as is the case with every anonymous article,—then the reader has no means of gauging the article's value, except to the degree that he is master of the ground which the article traverses; but so far as he is master of that ground the article can be of no use to him.

The system we have advocated would be distinctly in the interest of readers; there are reasons, however, for supposing that it would be regarded with decided disfavor by journalists.

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