

your head about that. After I'd explained a thing or two to old man Nolan he seemed to think well of inviting that young man to board with him until he starts for the Mayo College. Tumble?"

"His poor mother! If only I could have—"

"But you could n't, little woman. Hi! Look quick, Kate! There she goes! The last of Rhatore."

A string of colored lights high up on the hanging-gardens of the palace was being blotted out behind the velvet blackness of a hill-shoulder. Tarvin leaped to his feet, caught the

side of the cart, and bowed profoundly after the Oriental manner.

The lights disappeared one by one, even as the glories of a necklace had slid into a Kabul grape-box, till there remained only the flare from a window on a topmost bastion—a point of light as red and as remote as the blaze of the Black Diamond. That passed too, and the soft darkness rose out of the earth fold upon fold, wrapping the man and the woman.

"After all," said Tarvin, addressing the new-lighted firmament, "that was distinctly a side issue."

THE END.

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## THE GREAT AMERICAN SAFETY-VALVE.



HE Republic is opportunity. It is the birth-right of every American boy to have the chance to be President, and of every American girl to have the chance to be the President's wife. The atmosphere is stimu-

lating to ambition. The desire inspired by the genius of American institutions is "to be equal to our superiors and superior to our equals." But in the midst of universal suggestions prompting the citizen to high ambitions, the ugly fact remains that the positions of political distinction are relatively very few compared to the vast multitude of possible aspirants. The practical politician confesses this in the wail, "There ain't offices enough to go round among the boys."

The intelligent foreigner is much perplexed by this problem. He can understand why the undistinguished classes on the Continent submit contentedly to obscure conditions of life. It is the lot to which they are born. But here every school-boy is taught that the highest stations are open to him; and in a thousand papers, books, lectures, speeches, and sermons he is told that perseverance alone will put the highest prizes within his grasp. What, then, can explain the contentedness of the millions who, as the French say, never "pierce" the level of mediocrity? What is the great American safety-valve for these ambitions for precedence which our national life generates, fosters, and stimulates, without adequate provision for their gratification?

A friend from abroad, without the philosophic insight of Mr. Bryce or the illuminating wit of Max O'Rell, was once presenting to me what seemed to him the serious phases of this problem. I thought myself competent to make

the explanation; but I did not know how to take hold of the subject. We were standing in the office of a large hotel at the time, when an incident gave me the clue.

There walked up to the register a sturdy American citizen, who seized the pen as if he were about to sign some momentous document. Bending over the open page of the book, he scrawled his name, his mouth moving and writhing with every twist of the pen. It occurred to me to look at the record of this new arrival, and this is what I saw: "Hon. Sock Bruitt, Chairman of the Committee on Pumps, Whiskyville, Texas."

Seizing this thread, I proceeded to unravel as best I could the tangled skein of American life as it is organized into social, business, religious, and other associations, all of them elaborately officered.

Until I made the effort to explain the matter to "an alien to the commonwealth," I had never realized the full significance of the non-political office-holding class in our country as a factor in the national life.

Take a city directory and examine the list of organizations usually printed in such a publication: you will see ample provision for the local ambitions of all the inhabitants. Take one of the books issued by a "live" church; examine the list of societies, devotional, missionary, temperance, young people's, Sunday-school, charitable, etc. The matter will be made clearer still if you study the subject in a small village where universal acquaintance is possible.

I made a test case of one small town, and found that every man, woman, and child (above ten years of age) in the place held an office—with the exception of a few scores of flabby, jellyfish characters, whose lack of ambition or enterprise removes them from consideration as elements of the problem.

But mere local precedence does not satisfy the more aspiring minds; hence, nearly all

of the thousand and one societies have State and national organizations. Here is an enormous supply of official positions. Every trade, every profession, every benevolence, every sport, every church furnishes distinctions commensurate in territorial magnitude with our great country.

And still the full measure of American officialism is not attained. There must be international organization. The earth must be girdled; and so, every society aims to plant a few lodges, or posts, or bands, or auxiliaries, or unions, or chapters (as they may be styled), beyond the seas. It little matters how few or scattered or insignificant these foreign plants may be. It is enough that "international organization has been accomplished"—and with it a new set of officials having world-wide jurisdiction.

The grandeur of all these distinctions suffers no diminution in their names. The chief officer is Ruler, Chancellor, Commander, Seigneur, President, Potentate, with many superlative and worshipful prefixes. And in the rituals of the numerous orders the Almighty is habitually referred to as the Supreme Commander, Ruler, Potentate, or otherwise, as the case may be. By this means the American imagination accomplishes an interuniversal as well as an international organization.

A few years ago, in a little country village,

there was instituted a chapter of a certain benevolent insurance order. The Chancellor was subsequently elected Grand Chancellor of the State. Afterward at a national convention he was made Supreme Grand Chancellor of the United States. The next year he was elected Most Supreme Grand Chancellor of the World; and it became his duty, the order paying his expenses, to make an international visitation to the three chapters in Australia, New Zealand, and England that composed the aforesaid "world."

When that triumphal tour was completed, his return home was heralded, and the chapter of his village arranged for a reception of the honorable dignitary. Never shall I forget the feeling of solemn awe that settled down upon the little community as the evening approached when the Most Supreme Grand Chancellor of the World was to arrive. This favored American was a "bigger man than old Grant."

Not only are there offices enough to "go round," but the really capable and pushing American is generally honored with a score. I have heard a busy and overworked man decline to be at the head of an organization because he was at the head of twenty-five already.

Here then we have the great American safety-valve—we are a nation of presidents.

*Walter B. Hill.*



## TRAFFIC.

LIFE, the shrewd lapidary, is rich in wares  
 Whose worth or charm a casual glance may see;  
 And like perpetual purchasers are we,  
 Won by the bounteous opulence he airs.  
 Here shines a pearl of hope; here subtly glares  
 An emerald of revenge; here thrilled we see  
 A diamond of ambition; here may be  
 Some ruby of sin that lures us and ensnares.

Continually above this bright array,  
 As time flows on, we mortals flock to bend,  
 Till body and limbs turn frail, till brows grow gray,  
 Through trading, haggling, bartering without end—  
 While for the inexorable price we pay,  
 Months, years, even centuries, are the coins we spend.

*Edgar Fawcett.*