

TOPICS OF THE TIME

The Discontented Rich.

THE poor man declares, «If only I were rich I should be content.» He little knows the discontent of the rich. The occasions of discontent among the rich are of various kinds. One frequent cause of uneasiness on their part is on account of their relative poverty. There is with all but one rich man in every community—always some one richer; and to certain minds this is a continual reproach. There is at times a rage for greater and greater wealth that produces a sort of fever in the blood which destroys a good part of the happiness of large possession.

Then there are social ambitions and emulations among the wealthy that tend to discontent. Some achieve riches because the strife for a living for their families is carried on with such conscience and industry that riches are the natural consequence; but some pursue riches from the passion to surpass therein; some in order to shine in a certain social set; some for the opportunity of display in general; some for the love of success; some for the love of power. Emerson says: «The pulpit and the press have many commonplaces denouncing the thirst for wealth; but if men should take these moralists at their word, and leave off aiming to be rich, the moralists would rush to rekindle, at all hazards, this love of power in the people, lest civilization should be undone.» But this love of power, this emulation, and this passion for success, do not conduce to the contented mind.

There is still another cause of discontent among the rich—a discontent occasioned by their very riches. There have always been examples of this unease; but, on the whole, it is a modern ailment, a form of the altruism that had its most notable date some nineteen hundred years ago. In our day the discontent of the rich, of the well-to-do, is probably greater than ever before in the history of civilization, save in exceptional moments of religious revival or mania.

In its extreme form this discontent is morbid and enfeebling; it is moody and self-reproachful, and leads to unreasonable and unwise action. In its more usual manifestation this discontent is accompanied by just so much pricking of the conscience as leads to a keen sense of responsibility, an appreciation of the hard labor behind every piece of money and every bond and security. This discontent is noble, and leads to useful living. It builds hospitals and museums and halls of learning and churches; it builds character and honorable and devoted citizenship; and, as good as all else, if not better, it breeds justice, consideration, and sympathy in trade and in all manner of business.

But there are riches of another kind—riches of inherited faculties of culture and of character—which also produce a noble discontent, and always have done so. It is this discontent that is to-day making itself felt in works of philanthropy and of good citizenship all over the United States.

In no class is this discontent of the mentally and morally rich more plainly seen than in the walks of the higher education, among the professors in the colleges for men and women, and among the undergraduates and the graduates. Civic duties are assumed with enthusiasm, and works of benevolence are entered upon with a wise choice as to individual activities. The University Settlement system is one of the most prominent of the adopted means of public service. Yale undergraduates are noted for good works in many fields. Harvard's «Student Volunteer work» is a wisely guided coöperative effort by young men of the university «to get hold of the thing called charity, philanthropy, social service, most simply and effectively, to secure a real adaptation between it and the condition of college life.» In a word, these fortunate youths are not content to keep unshared their own riches of the mind and of the spirit.

So there are more kinds of riches than one, and there are at least three kinds of discontent to which the owners of riches are subject: a discontent contemptible, a discontent natural and salutary for the race, and a discontent noble and productive of good works. Of this last kind there cannot be too much.

The Fight for the Forest Reserves.

READERS OF THE CENTURY do not need to be reminded of the progress that has been made during the last six years in the direction of a civilized and scientific policy for the preservation of the national forests from the destruction which threatens them from fire, the indiscriminate use of the ax, and the hoof of the sheep. On the meridian day of Mr. Harrison's administration, March 4, 1891, a beginning was made by the enactment of a provision authorizing the President to withdraw from entry and set apart as forest reserves such tracts of the public domain as, in his judgment, should be necessary for the preservation of the timber or for the conservation of the water-supply of agricultural regions. In the closing days of the same administration, at the recommendation of the Secretary of the Interior, the Hon. John W. Noble, the first practical step was taken under this law, in the proclamation of fifteen reservations, amounting to 13,000,000 acres, including chiefly the great Sierra Reserve of California. September 28, 1893, President Cleveland established the Cascade Forest Reserve in Oregon, comprising about 4,500,000 acres. On the 2d of March, 1896, in response to a request by the Hon. Hoke Smith, Secretary of the Interior, the National Academy of Sciences, in accordance with the obligations of its constitution as an official governmental body, undertook the investigation of the public forests through a commission consisting of a body of experts whose superiors for the purpose cannot be found in the country, nearly all of whom, moreover, are familiar, by long experience, with the needs of the West and with the character of the forests to be investi-

gated. The commission consists of Professor Charles S. Sargent of Harvard, chairman; Professor Wolcott Gibbs, president of the Academy, *ex officio*; Alexander Agassiz; Professor W. H. Brewer of Yale; General Henry L. Abbot, U. S. A. (retired); Arnold Hague of the Geological Survey; and Gifford Pinchot, practical forester, secretary. For an average of more than three months five members of this commission were in the field, and the first result of its labors (which, by the way, are given without compensation) was to recommend the establishment of thirteen additional reserves, comprising over 21,000,000 acres, the special reasons being given in its report to the Secretary of the Interior, the Hon. David R. Francis, on whose further recommendation these reserves were set apart by President Cleveland by proclamation of February 22, 1897. There remains to be presented the main report of the commission, which will formulate a policy, to be submitted to Congress, for the intelligent care, control, and use of the reserves. When this shall have been adopted a most important reform will have been fairly instituted, which cannot but have an excellent influence on the settled policy of the government toward its forested lands, of which the reserves are but a very small fraction. By this advance the whole country will be the gainer, but chiefly and immediately the regions west of the Missouri River.

Nevertheless, the reservation policy has met with bitter opposition, chiefly from representatives of Northwestern States in Congress, who at the last session went so far as to induce the Senate to attach to the Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill a «rider» annulling the proclamation. The friends of the reserves drafted and procured the adoption of a substitute for the rider, making liberal provision against alleged injuries to actual settlers. It is understood that President Cleveland would have vetoed the bill on account of this rider alone. For other reasons it failed to become a law, and the reserves, as we write, are still intact. It is, however, well known that the opposition is not satisfied with the substitute, and that no effort will be spared, by appeal to President McKinley or by legislation at the extra session, to annul the new reserves. Whether any changes in the limits of the reservations are desirable, a careful discussion of the objections will determine. This consideration apart, the issue is plainly joined between those who, from indifference or interested motives, are willing to expose the public forests to destruction, and those who, with the warnings of history to inspire them, are determined, if possible, to make a new start in the right direction. On the conservative side are two Presidents, three Secretaries of the Interior, and a Forest Commission of disinterested and famous scientific experts, to whose support are rallying the most intelligent forces of the country. And while, doubtless, sincere men and good citizens may be found in the opposition, its mainspring will be discovered to be the interest of certain persons or corporations which have profited, and desire to profit, by extensive and reckless destruction of the timber, inspired by that delusive and fatal maxim of pessimism so prevalent in a new country, «After us the deluge.»

An incident of the contest at the recent session affords an object-lesson of great significance. When the promoters of the rider presented it to the California

senators, they were informed that the new reserves in that State must be omitted from the annulment. This was in strict accord with the well-known conviction of Californians that the reservation of large tracts of high altitude in the Sierra is one of the greatest pieces of good fortune that ever befell the State, insuring as it does a perpetual supply of water to extensive agricultural regions dependent wholly upon irrigation. In fact, the commission, during its visit to California, was fairly besieged by requests to inspect large areas of land which it was desired to include in new reserves. What is true of California time will show to be true of the other States. After a little disquiet and alarm, sedulously fomented by sheep-herders and mining companies, and based on a misapprehension or a misrepresentation of the effect of the reservation policy, it will be found that no previously existing right is endangered, while the interests of the whole local population, present and to come, are to this extent safeguarded against the perils attendant on denudation, such as have overtaken the countries bordering on the Mediterranean.

The prospect of so great a good should stir up the newspapers, the universities, colleges, and other educators, the boards of trade and chambers of commerce, and the farmers and laboring men of the whole country, and especially of the West, to make known to the President and to Congress their desire that the forests should be saved for the people, instead of being left exposed to the ravages of a few. Indeed, had a wise policy directed the government control of its forest and mineral wealth in the past, the franchises from these sources might have relieved us at critical times of the dread of an annual deficit in the national finances. It is not too late at least, to see that destructive agencies do not add to the already strenuous conditions of life in the West a heritage of calamity for generations to come.

Who are the Hypocrites?

THE friends of political immorality, apparently without exception, call the friends of good government «hypocrites.» The phrase is one of their most powerful arguments. They never find political rascals afflicted with this vice: it is only «snivel-service reformers,» «purists,» «high-toners»; that is to say, George William Curtis, James Russell Lowell, Carl Schurz, and men of that type. The bosses, boodlers, spoilsmen, lobbyists, and demagogues; all the men who grow rich on corruption funds, all the men who buy office for cash or otherwise, all the thugs and man-killers in politics, are declared by them to be, on the whole, morally preferable to the reformers, because of the saving virtue of «freedom from hypocrisy» and «dislike of sham and pretense.»

After a close observation of political methods for many years, it seems to us an interesting phenomenon that «hypocrisy» and a «lack of frankness» should assume so loathsome an aspect in the eyes of political immoralists. A personal acquaintance with the principal reformers of the country leads one to believe that instead of being hypocrites, they are about the only men interested in public affairs who tell the truth openly and fearlessly concerning them.

The cant, humbug, and hypocrisy of the professional politician have been the subject of ridicule for ages. If