

## TOPICS OF THE TIME.

## The First Century of the Constitution.

THE month of September, 1887, naturally suggests the completion of the work of the Convention of 1787, just a hundred years ago, in its successful formation of the Constitution of the United States. The difficulties which attended the Convention's work are detailed elsewhere in this number of *THE CENTURY* by a distinguished historian, and a discussion of an important feature of it occurs in two Open Letters, one by a lawyer of Indiana, and the other by one of our leading historical students. It may be well for us, with the light of a century's practical experience of the Constitution, at the end of which that instrument fits the new nation as comfortably as in 1789, to consider what the difficulties of the Convention would have been if it had been called upon to frame, with prophetic vision, a Constitution for the United States of 1887.

The strongest argument which the "Federalist," and the defenders of the new Constitution in the State conventions, could advance in favor of ratification and in justification of the expectation of the practical success of the Constitution, was the comparatively small size of the country. Hamilton, in the "Federalist," lays down this rule: "The natural limit of a republic is that distance from the center which will barely allow the representatives of the people to meet as often as may be necessary for the administration of public affairs." He estimates the length of the country, from north to south, at  $868\frac{3}{4}$  miles, and its breadth at 750, adding this comfortable comparison: "It is not a great deal larger than Germany . . . or than Poland before the late dismemberment." In another place he says: "If there be but one government pervading all the States, there will be, as to the principal part of our commerce, but one side to guard,—the Atlantic coast." With what feelings would he and the Convention have set about their work, if they could have realized that they were in reality framing a scheme of government for a country which was to stretch from north latitude  $25^{\circ}$  to  $49^{\circ}$ , and from the 67th to the 125th degree of west longitude, 2600 miles by 1600 through the center, to say nothing of Alaska, in itself two-thirds the size of the country of which Hamilton was speaking? That the commerce for which they were caring was to whiten the waters of both the Pacific and the Atlantic, of the Gulf of Mexico as well as of the Great Lakes? That the Congress which they were providing was to deal with an *internal* commerce greater than all the *foreign* commerce that the country has ever known; with a manufacturing capital of \$2,800,000,000 and an annual product of \$5,400,000,000; with a population of 60,000,000, instead of 4,000,000? That the time would come when a member of Congress would be compelled to travel 6500 miles in going to the Federal Capital and returning to his State? It is a fortunate thing for the United States that the Convention which framed its Constitution knew nothing of the future, and devoted its care and energies to the establishment of a government for the country which it knew.

The Convention sent forth the instrument which it had framed to meet the future, and the most marvelous feature of its first century of trial has been its apparently inexhaustible power of accommodating itself to the growth and changing necessities of the people. Its judiciary system has expanded in its territorial jurisdiction from thirteen districts to sixty; its Presidential office has had control of a million of armed men; its imports have risen from \$22,000,000 to \$640,000,000, and its exports from \$20,000,000 to \$720,000,000; steam, electricity, and all the other forces which modern civilization has harnessed for the service of man, have altered the life and needs of the people; and still the national government established by the Constitution remains unchanged in substance. The natural divergence of its lines has brought larger and still larger fields within their scope; the few employees of 1789 have increased in number until they are an army; but the Treasury officer of 1789, if he could examine the organization of to-day, would still be able to trace clearly the lines of the original formation, though he might be bewildered in the effort to follow out all the ramifications by which the system has met the requirements of later development. The case is the same in every department of the national system: it has developed, but it has not changed. The Convention of 1787 could hardly have provided a more satisfactory system for 1887 if, with prophetic vision, it had been able to forecast the needs of 1887 and adapt its work to those needs.

Nations, like individuals, can live but one day at a time, and their business is to live that day as wisely, honestly, and justly as may be; not to essay the part of a Providence, and attempt to legislate for millions yet unborn. They cannot legislate for posterity: they can only provide the molds into which following generations must be poured; and, unless those molds are wise, just, and honest for the generation which makes them, they will assuredly be broken by some succeeding generation, or they will compress and mar the whole life of the people. In this sense, we, who stand on the threshold of the second century of the Constitution, are as actually constitution-makers as the members of the Convention of 1787. Let it be our care to make our institutions wise, just, and honest for the people of 1887, and to hate and repudiate every proposition that savors of dishonesty or of injustice, however it may seem to our temporary advantage, knowing that we are thus doing all that man can do for the people of 1987.

## A Great Teacher.

THE teachers of men are many; the teachers of young men are few. To turn the faculties of a mature mind to the education of youth is something willingly undertaken by many, but success does not depend upon willingness or knowledge, or even enthusiasm. The art of teaching is a gift and an inspiration equally

with poetry and music. In the vast majority of even good teachers, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that they become accommodated in their own minds to the minds of their pupils. Sympathy being the essential requisite, they unconsciously fall into the habit and scope of thought of their students,—“subdued to what it works in, like the dyer’s hand.” It is the fatal tendency in teaching to shrink towards the capacity of those taught—a tendency that able teachers resist by constant watchfulness and severe studies.

When a great man gives himself to teaching young men, and successfully resists this tendency, and when also he has the gift or genius for teaching, we have that rarest of men—a great teacher. This century has furnished two eminent examples: Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, and Dr. Hopkins, of Williams College. There have been other great teachers, but these two men pre-eminently wear these marks,—greatness and genius in their work. Dr. Arnold taught boys, but he kept even with his own powers, and was as great as if he had spent his days at Oxford or in Parliament. Dr. Hopkins taught young men, but it is difficult to conceive of him as greater in any other possible sphere. The success of each is due to the fact that they preserved the full measure of their mental powers, and at the same time had the faculty of laying powerful hold of the young mind. A great mind, enlisting young men, and drawing them by the secret charm and power of his divine gift up to himself without descending in his own mental habit to them,—such was Dr. Hopkins.

It would not be quite correct to say that Dr. Hopkins had a theory of teaching. Great men do not work by theories. He taught spontaneously, out of his own nature; and here lay the value of his work. He carried into the class-room the free action of his own mind and also its total action. Many men are able to do this who fail as teachers, but Dr. Hopkins possessed the knack of bridging the space between his own lofty thought and the mind of the pupil, and so getting him up to his own level. This is true teaching—inducing in the pupil the thought and feeling of the teacher.

But Dr. Hopkins did far more to get his pupils to share in his thought and ideas: he taught them to think in the same fashion. It was not a prime or even a subordinate purpose with him to induce his pupils to agree with his opinions. He rather aimed to get them to thinking in a certain way. His idea was that if he could arouse the nature of the man to the full, and start him into vigorous natural action, he would think safely. Hence he taught principles, and, above all, the nature of man. Scholasticism, formal logic, dogma—these were remote from his methods, as they were remote from himself. “Know thyself” is the heathen phrase which he put to a use that carried his pupils to the heights of Christian morality. It is for this reason that his teaching and his pupils wear the plain marks of freedom and catholicity.

It was also a distinguishing mark of Dr. Hopkins’s instruction that it had a peculiarly germinant quality. Teaching by principles and by the nature of man, and avoiding a too close deduction, his pupils were left free to develop in their own way. Dr. Hopkins taught the catechism for many years, but the students carried away more of their teacher’s breadth and rationality than of the dogmas of the Confession.

It was a characteristic of his teaching that it had a directing rather than a binding influence. Room was left in it for growth, for variation, and adaptation to new conditions. He founded no school of philosophy, but did the better work of grounding young men in the fundamental principles of thought and feeling and conduct. If his teaching had a specialty, it consisted in unifying truth; the truth of one realm was the truth of all realms. Thus a well-taught pupil stood with the whole earth under his feet and all heaven above his head.

Dr. Hopkins’s long life was spent in one of the most rural parts of New England, and one of the most remote from the centers of culture. Shut in between the Hoosac range on the east, and the Taconic on the west, miles of untouched forest on every side, in a little village that clustered about the college as cottages nestled at the foot of a friendly castle, he drew to himself, like a medieval teacher, pupils from all parts of the country, kept them about him for four years, and sent them out, stamped with his impress, to the towns and cities to repeat in themselves what he had taught them, and to convey far and wide something of the keenness of thought, of moral earnestness, and religious wisdom which they had learned and felt in him. Such a life is at once great in its humility and in the breadth and power of its influence.

#### Shall we Plant Native or Foreign Trees?

THE relative value for planting in America of native and foreign trees is a question of wide and deep and of rapidly increasing interest; yet it is one to which the public has scarcely begun to give the attention it deserves. As the destruction of our native forests progresses, planting for the sake of timber must be ever more largely engaged in; and this destruction cannot but progress with considerable rapidity, even though the legislation which is so greatly to be desired as a check upon it should soon be brought to bear. Year by year, too, it becomes more desirable that the worn-out fields of our Eastern States should be put to arboricultural service, and that the settlers on the prairies of the West should be accurately informed as to what trees they may best set out. And as our love for art increases we shall wish to do even more than we are doing now in the way of private and public planting for ornamental purposes. In short, there is no American who is not interested, directly or indirectly, in the question as to the kinds of trees which are best adapted to American uses.

The extent to which we have hitherto planted foreign trees is probably ignored by a great majority of our readers. Not indeed in very earliest years, but ever since the first advent among us of the nursery-gardener we have given them the preference, in our more thickly settled districts, over trees of native origin. The first nurserymen were Europeans, and brought both their stock of knowledge and their stock of plants from the Old World; and even when their knowledge had extended itself their stock remained largely the same; for, from some inexplicable reason, a great many species of European trees may be far more easily raised, and therefore more cheaply and profitably sold, than our own. Thus the private planter, getting his materials from nursery gardens, has generally been led to