

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF AUGUST 19.

It is pretty generally acceded to that Terry's friends in the committee had to log-roll and stuff the box in order to save him. I know that some of the most conservative of that committee hurried Terry aboard the *John Adams* at two o'clock at night to save him from

the vengeance of the more rabid faction. The committee yesterday had a grand jubilee, and for the time being are retired from the public gaze, but nobody can doubt that in any case of danger to themselves they will again come on the tapis.

Your affectionate brother,
W. T. SHERMAN.

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

The Christmas Century.

FOR the first time in many years THE CENTURY greets its readers with a regular old-fashioned Christmas number — with a difference. The difference may be felt in the absence of some of the approved conventionalities; but the Christmas quality, we think, will also be felt here and there throughout the number both in illustrations and text — sometimes ostensibly and objectively, sometimes subtly enough.

As one grows older in this world of realities, one begins to stiffen the back against the sentimental. True sentiment is upheld with force and arms against sentimentalism. As one grows older, still, in this world of realities, the back does not always so quickly stiffen even against the sentimental — even against the sentimental Christmas, even against the sentimental Christmas number. The present can hardly be said to be the "sentimental Christmas number"; but if the Christmas reader finds in it, and is pleased to find, a godly share of the true Christmas sentiment, how well content will be those who shall have — then successfully — gathered together the art and literature of the CHRISTMAS CENTURY!

Charitable Reform of High Public Value.

THE State Charities Aid Association, which has done so much during the last nineteen years to improve the condition of the inmates of poorhouses, almshouses, and other charitable institutions in the State of New York, is engaged in several new movements, all of which are most commendable, and two of which are of such vital importance that we wish to call special attention to them. Surely no time more fit could be chosen in which to speak of the humane work of this Association than the Christmas season.

Let us say at the outset that it is to the organization mentioned that the State owes the passage of the humane and most desirable law transferring the pauper insane from the county poorhouses to the State institutions provided for such patients. This was merely the culminating reform in a long series, beginning in 1872, when the Association was formed, and including such notable achievements as the initiation of tenement-house reform, the establishment of the first working-girls' clubs, and the establishment of municipal lodging-houses, all in New York City, and the establishment of temporary homes in Ulster, Westchester, and Queens counties. It should be borne in mind that the Associ-

ation is a voluntary body, and is supported entirely in its work by voluntary contributions. In other words, it is a body of humane men and women who have voluntarily given their time and energies to the task of making more comfortable the lives of the most helpless of their fellow beings, relying entirely upon the sympathetic aid of other humane men and women to defray the pecuniary expense of their labors.

It is to an association of this high and unselfish character that we call the attention of THE CENTURY'S readers, in the hope that needed assistance may thereby be encouraged from many quarters. The first of the two objects of the Association upon which we wish to dwell especially is the establishment of a State institution for epileptics and their removal from the poorhouses and almshouses. There are at present about five hundred such patients in the county and city institutions, in which there is for them no special medical treatment, little employment, and no training or education. Under such conditions of neglect and idleness the result is almost inevitably to make the victims of the disease permanent paupers. Under skilled medical treatment it cannot be questioned that some of them might be restored to health, and others might be so far benefited that they could be restored to their homes or friends. Many of them, either because of their infirmity or lack of training, have no occupation, and are unfitted to compete with able-bodied laborers in case they are discharged from the almshouses. If they were taught some useful calling while in them, their prospects for making their own way in the world, and leading happy and useful lives, after leaving the institutions would be greatly brightened.

The epileptics are almost the only defective class for whom society has made no especial provision. In an earnest plea for separate asylums for them which Dr. Frederic Peterson, a high authority on nervous and mental diseases, made a few years ago, he said:

The sufferer from epilepsy has been left to shift for himself, often an outcast from his family, usually expelled from the schools, denied industrial employment, shunned to a great extent by his fellows, left to grow up in ignorance and idleness, companionless and friendless, a prey to one of the most dreadful and hopeless of maladies, refused admission to general hospitals, and only at last given refuge in either an almshouse or insane asylum.

He is driven to find shelter in an asylum, not, as a rule, because he is deprived of reason, but because there is no other place for him to go. There are thousands of epileptics in insane asylums to-day who do not belong there, for many will be found among them who are not

insane, and it is an injustice to them, as well as a detriment to the insane, to associate the two classes.

When we take into consideration the fact that a large majority of these unfortunates are gifted with as much intelligence as ordinary human beings, that they are as capable of education, as well adapted for every-day pursuits, quite as able to be self-supporting as most people, the unutterable woes of this class become more apparent. But the conditions under which they may secure their proper mental development and their need of occupation must be such as combine medical supervision with wise industrial teaching and training.

Foreign countries have been far ahead of America in extending kindly and sympathetic aid to these unfortunate fellow creatures. Twenty-five years ago a colony for epileptics was established at Bielefeld, near Hanover, in Germany, by Von Bodelschwingh. "It seemed to its benevolent founder," says Dr. Peterson, "that it was feasible to create a refuge where such sufferers might be cured if curable; where their disease might be ameliorated, their intellectual decay prevented; where they might find a comfortable home if recovery were impossible; where they might develop their mental faculties to the utmost; might acquire trades or engage in any occupation they saw fit to choose; finally, to grow into a community of educated, useful, industrious, prosperous, and contented citizens." These ideas have been completely realized. The colony has expanded until it has over one thousand inhabitants, covers more than three hundred and twenty acres of beautiful woodland and meadow, has over sixty houses and cottages, surrounded by pretty gardens, excellent schools, shops of all kinds for selling and manufacturing the necessaries of life—in fact, is a village in all respects like to those of the more fortunate of God's people. Taking this colony as a model, nine others for epileptics have been established in Germany, one in Holland, one in Switzerland, and one in France, all of which are successful. The first of the kind in this country has recently been established in Ohio by the State. Surely New York and other States ought to follow in the good work at the earliest possible day.

The second of the objects to which the Association is bending its energies, and to which we most earnestly beg the attention of our readers, is the enactment of a law which will authorize a better system of commitments to the New York City Workhouse. A bill for this purpose was presented to the legislature last winter, but it did not become a law, though it had the support of all the charitable organizations in the city. The present system could scarcely be worse had it been designed especially to encourage and spread vice and crime. It sends chronic offenders over and over again on short sentences, which are often still further shortened by the committing magistrate in compliance with an order from a single Commissioner of Charities and Corrections. A former matron of the workhouse says of the influence of this system: "The workhouse has been since the first day of opening, and is now, but a place of recruit and a vantage-ground for a perfectly dissolute life. The daily changing element, the ten-day women, keep the links of information open between it and the haunts of vice in the city." The same thing is true of the men. As the Association said in a circular issued on this subject last spring: "It is an outrage against the unfortunate and young in vice that they should be forced into association with the criminal and vicious; it is an outrage against the community that

these old offenders should be allowed to spend their lives vibrating between the workhouse and these places of vice. Instead of being a moral quarantine, the workhouse is a place where contagion is nurtured and from which it is spread."

This is inevitable from the nature of the system. The constant entry and departure of chronic offenders brings about a perpetual changing in the population of the workhouse, which not only prevents all exercise of reformatory influences, but makes moral contamination easy and certain. Classification of a number of men or women who are in for only a few days is impossible. Over one half of all commitments are for ten days or less. A former warden says, with obvious truth, that "for many of the inmates a trip to the Island loses all terrors, and comes to be regarded as a rather pleasant diversion, giving them an opportunity to get thoroughly clean, a needed rest after a prolonged spree, and excellent medical attention." Statistics show that about 4000 persons were arrested, tried, and committed 10,000 times to the workhouse in 1887. As to commitments, the statistics show that about seventy per cent. of the women and forty per cent. of the men each year have been previously committed to the workhouse; 5895 women sentenced to the workhouse during the last six months of 1888 had aggregated since the beginning of the previous year (that is, twenty-four months) 23,126 sentences, an average of four apiece. One woman served twenty-eight sentences in twenty-five months, twenty out of the number being for ten days or less.

This is an outrageous condition of affairs to be found in a civilized community, and when we consider that the system described is in full operation, not in a small community, but in the largest city in the land, the imperative need of the reform becomes manifest. Last year's reform measure proposed a regulation sentence of six months for every case of intoxication, disorderly conduct, or vagrancy, and gave the Commissioners of Charities and Correction power to shorten the term in accordance with the record of the offender. A similar measure will be introduced again this winter, and it ought to be passed without opposition. It ought to be obvious to every intelligent mind that a vice-breeding and vice-spreading institution of this kind in the largest city in the country, a city to which the worst criminals drift as offering the most favorable field for their operations, is not only a disgrace to our Christian civilization but a peril to the well-being of the entire land.

We have selected these two from the list of the reforms proposed by the State Charities Aid Association, not because they were more deserving than the others, but because they seemed best calculated to attract public attention to the invaluable work in the cause of humanity which this excellent organization is doing. It is a work for the helpless and for the victims of criminal associations, and as such it commands very little popular sympathy, most people declining to take any interest in the work of improving the condition of portions of the population who are disagreeable for them to contemplate. For this reason, if for no other, the unselfish efforts of the members of the Association are worthy of the highest praise. There are, we are glad to believe, not lacking in this country, as in others, people who appreciate both the high importance of the work and the noble self-sacrifice of those who are

pushing it forward. We hope that many of our readers, as they contemplate this work, will take to heart the following impressive words, uttered by Bishop Potter at the public meeting of the Association which was held in Chickering Hall last May:

The post of mere observation in connection with charitable reform, if it goes no further, is a very dangerous position. As Bishop Butler, in substance, says, "Passive impressions, constantly repeated, unless they pass over into action, cease at last to touch the conscience or the will." It is a profound truth which no man or woman, in the midst of a Christian civilization like ours, threatened in so many ways, can afford to forget. You and I, my friends, must take the quickened feeling with which we have heard of this heroic work to-night, must be touched and moved by the fine examples of these men and women who, disdaining misapprehension and misrepresentation, without fee or reward, working always and everywhere without that stimulus of the large sympathy, of the more active and emotional sentiment of the community, have held on through all these years with such a fine courage, never losing their faith in the worth of their work, and making that work all the time larger and nobler and more real to every honest man or woman who looked at it.

All persons interested in the objects and work of the association can obtain its documents and other information by addressing Mr. Charles S. Fairchild, treasurer, 21 University Place, New York City.

The "Per Capita" Delusion.

THE *per capita* argument has always been a favorite method for sustaining a demand for cheap money. Such demands invariably arise when times are hard, that is, when money is scarce. The cheap-money advocates, acting on the knowledge that a great many people are wishing that they had more money in their pockets, come forward with the explanation that the real cause of the trouble is the smallness of the monetary circulation, the volume of currency not being adequate for the demands of the business of the country. They point to other countries, like England, Germany, and France, saying that they have a much larger per capita circulation than the United States, and claim that everybody in this country would have more money in his pocket if a great addition of some form of cheap money—either irredeemable paper, or depreciated silver, or sub-treasury notes—were made to the currency.

The fundamental defect in the argument is that it confounds small circulation with small distribution. The trouble is not that the circulation is small, but that so many people fail to get much of it. If the circulation were to be doubled, or trebled, or quadrupled, what reason is there for believing that the people who have least at present would have any more? *How would they go to work to get some of the increase into their pockets?* This, as we said many months ago in one of our earlier articles in this cheap-money series, is the crucial question in all schemes for making money cheap and plentiful. How can a man who wants some of it obtain it except he give labor or goods in return for it? If he have labor or goods to sell, does it make any difference to him whether the volume of currency be large or small? Is it not always large enough to furnish payment for what he has to sell? And if he has anything to sell, would not he rather receive his payment in dear money than in cheap money? Was

there ever a man yet who did not desire to be paid for his wares in the soundest and best money obtainable? Who are the men who hope, in some mysterious manner, to get money into their pockets through a great issue of cheap money by the Government? Are they not, almost invariably, men who have nothing to sell in exchange for it?

It is difficult to see why the per capita argument should influence any one who thinks about it carefully. When we say that the wealth of the country, if divided equally among all its inhabitants, would be so many dollars per capita, nobody is seriously disturbed by the fact. Nobody says that there is not wealth enough in the country. The most usual observation is that it is a pity it cannot be more evenly distributed. But when the statement is made that the circulation is only \$23 per capita, many people are inclined to think that this is not enough, and that if we had more everybody would be in more comfortable circumstances. But would everybody get some of the increase in his pocket? If not, what would be the advantage? If the wealth of the country were to be doubled, where would the increase go? The greater part of it would go to the millionaires and other rich people who have most at present, while the people who have least would get little or none of it. So it would be with an increase of circulating medium. If the per capita were to be doubled, the ratio of the present division would be maintained. The people who had the most before would get the most of the increase, while those who had none before would get none now. The great want of the people who have none is not an increase in the volume of currency, but the discovery of a new method by which they can get some of the currency already in circulation into their pockets.

Statistics published lately by the Treasury Department demonstrate conclusively the fallacy of the per capita argument. These give the per capita circulation for each year from 1860 down to the present time, and show that there has been a steady rise from \$17.50 in 1870 to \$23.45 in 1891. If prosperity is determined by per capita, this country ought to be vastly better off in 1890-91 than it was in 1870, but, as a matter of fact, 1870 was one of the most prosperous years the country has ever known, while 1890 and 1891 will be known in history as years of almost unequaled financial and industrial depression. All through the years since 1878 we have been swelling the volume of currency by coining silver and gold to the amount of \$945,000,000, and have been issuing many millions more of silver notes and gold notes, till we have now a circulation of over \$1,500,000,000 against only a little more than \$655,000,000 in 1870.

Those persons who were complaining a few months ago, when money was scarce, that even this immense volume of currency was insufficient for the business needs of the country, and that if we had a larger circulation per capita there would be no such scarcity, were laboring under a misapprehension. They were confounding contraction of the currency with contraction of credit. Ninety-two per cent. of all the business of the country is done on credit, and only eight per cent. with actual currency. When, therefore, credit is unsettled, as it was by the impending peril of free-silver coinage, which would have lowered the standard of value as well as destroyed its stability, instantly a