CURRENT COMMENT

The Republican Convention

It should be very evident to impartial students of events like the recent Republican convention at Chicago that the capacity of people for fooling themselves or each other is practically unlimited. We are supposed to be cultivating and developing democratic conceptions and plans of government on this continent, and democratic government is supposed to be the embodiment of Abraham Lincoln's phrase, "of the people, by the people, for the people." Any person who could delude himself that the candidate chosen to bear the Republican banner was selected by the people must have been born elsewhere than Missouri. On a straight popular vote by proportional representation it is probable that Herbert Hoover or a similar well-known and able man would be found to have a majority in his favour. The gentlemen who devised the electoral college had not heard of proportional representation or they might have adopted it, but it is too late now, and their ancient ideas are now crystallized into a political engine which may be removed but can never be remodelled. The astute gentlemen who assembled in Chicago had every intention of "putting it over each other," but the most astute among them were able to nullify the activity of the others by playing them off against each other. The candidates with the big majorities gored each other to death, and a respectable nonentity won the prize they strove for. A certain group, it is boasted, had him in view from the first to do their will, and if elected to promote their policies. He is not yet elected. The Republicans could have swept their country with Hoover, but Harding is a horse of another color. Hiram Johnson is by no means satisfied, and a third party may go to the people and wreck the Republican hopes by "splitting the vote." The vote is not really split in such cases, but the independent public who are disgusted with and refuse to vote for a machine candidate, are given an opportunity to say what they think, and they do so. It is not now considered the crime it once was "to vote against the party" because it is understood that in most instances "the party" is the particular interest that has got hold of the party machine for the time being and that possesses no claim to the allegiance of any voter whatever.

The Ontario Coal Problem

It is not too early to begin discussing the winter's coal, and the intelligent householder who has his supply already locked up in the cellar is quite ready to listen to anything that promises a reduction in next year's prices. We have been assured that the coal movement is normal, but it is difficult for the simple-minded citizen to regard the coal movement as normal which requires the payment of $17 or $18 a ton to get it moving. The premier has assured the House of Commons that the United States will be gracious unto us, and "give the most reasonable consideration in their power to the interests of this country." We believe this to be true, but it is a difficult question to say what is in their power. It is admitted that the coal supplies of our neighbors are appreciably lessening, that labor is scarce, expensive and intractable, that transportation is a most difficult problem and deliveries uncertain. The warning is sent out once more to citizens to get in their winter supplies as soon as they can. Some effort is being made by the Government to move coal in Canada from the western and the maritime pits to the central areas. Marine freight is being engaged to some extent, and as a means of hastening transport the Belleville route by lake steamer from Oswego is commended, having been found most expeditious. What is needed for Ontario however is a coal mine in the north such as Saskatchewan and Alberta have in view. Western engineers are firm in their assertions that there is coal in the Hudson Bay district. They say the Ontario Government geologists never admit anything till it is shown them and that Cobalt and Porcupine would still be lying fallow had the opinion of the Government experts been followed. An Alberta expert declares that there is coal without any doubt in northern Ontario. Perhaps the Minister of Mines will look over the situation once more.

The League of Knavery

News from Persia has been as disturbing as in any part of the world. The Bolsheviki raided the province in which Resht is the capital, on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, and declared the formation of a Soviet republic and the repudiation of the monarchy. This may mean little or much, according to the demeanor of the people, and that depends to some extent on the prestige of the Allies, chiefly represented by Britain; and the influence that may be exerted by Enver Pasha, Djemal Pasha and Talaal Bey, who have been plotting with Berlin and subsequently in Moscow. These precious rascals are busily engaged trying to beat Lenin and Trotsky at their own game. The forlorn hope of western Europe appears to be in the principle that when thieves fall out honest men come by their own. It is doubtful if the League of Knavery is so timid of its hopes or fearful of its convictions as the League of Nations appears to be. There is quite as bad blood among some of the western Allies as among any of the friends of the former Central powers. Even in France the bitterest sort of agitation against Britain has been organized by certain journalists and politicians, so that we need not be astonished at some of the things that happen in the United States, especially when ranters like Lindsay Crawford run around telling gullible Americans that Canada is ready to follow the example of the Sinn Feiners and declare a republic. It is conceivable to some people that a Canadian republic will be established as soon as an Irish one, and that Lindsay Crawford will be the first president, which brings us back to Persia again with its ancient civilization, its rare art and literature, its complete antithesis of all that Bolshevism represents. It is to be desired that both Persia and Ireland recover their ancient ideals, and have rest from the wicked who cease not to trouble them.

Profiteering Workmen

There ought to be a strike census. There are two or three new ones every day. The more money some men get the more they want. Some people call it profiteering and attribute it to capitalism, but it is the same complaint wherever it breaks out. The profiteer refuses to sell his goods except at exorbitant prices. The striker refuses to sell his labour except at figures to which the consumer cannot accede. There is a fair price and it can be reached by reasonable methods. The profiteer in either labour or merchandise is unwilling to trust his case to arbitration, and there have been notable instances where an arbitrated agreement has been repudiated by the profiteer. It would be absurd to say that all strikes are the result of profiteering in wages. The strike has been an indispensable and effective weapon for the workmen against unscrupulous and inconsiderate employers. But having found it successful in righteous causes the profiteering spirits have proceeded to employ it in others not so righteous. Then it is the public suffers—and withdraws his sympathy. There is less willingness to work than was formerly the case, and many strikes are declared to be the result of this attitude. The man who does not want to work wants the highest wages he can extract to enable him to live the longest possible period without working. The record of absence is greatest among the highest paid labourers. This is not necessarily an objection to the man himself. But it is undoubtedly the result of ignorance. If everybody quit work the world would soon be in a state of starvation. Because so many have quit work, and so many thousands more are ready to quit, we are forced into an era of non-producing. What the ultimate fate of industry will be under constant and repeated strikes it is difficult to say, but it is lack of production chiefly ails the world of civilization to-day. The profiteerers among capitalists and workers both take advantage of this situation, and the unfortunate citizen starves along as best he may.

THE BRAINBOX

CONDUCTED BY E. GUNN RAMSAY.

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It's never too late to mend."

How many times as a small child did you laboriously copy this cheerful phrase in your school writer Probably often with a fervent wish that it, and similar sayings, had never been invented, for what seemed to you the torment of small stiffened fingers.

But somehow, even though you have felt the term to be now and again misapplied, its philosophy has not always failed you, and there are times when you are glad to remember that certain things can be mended.

Along with this phrase about mending, you were some time taught that "no man can add one cubit to his stature."

It provided an interesting speculation on your part. You reviewed in rumination all the little people you had ever met, the short man who kept the grocery store at the corner. He was somewhat stocky in figure and not much above the height of your own young brother. You reflected that you guessed "he would be glad if he could gain a few inches" and it seemed funny to you to think that there must come a time when you too would stop growing, and that nothing you could do after that would add one whit to your height.

How big are you now?

It amuses you to-day to look back to those far-off times. Muscular, full-grown and active, no thoughts such as these trouble you, but HOW BIG ARE YOU?

And as this question is asked, I want to record alongside another little motto modelled along the line of your schoolboy script: "It's never too late to grow."

There is really no such thing as a limit set to the time of growth for any living man or woman.

When we cease to grow physically, we still go on growing in other directions.

You may grow lean or grow fat, grow pretty and prosperous, or pretty and penniless, ugly and selfish, or generous and expansive.

Grow bigger and better or meaner and mustier and it all depends largely upon your outlook.

How big are you?

Do you want to grow bigger?

It is good to make comparisons sometimes, to pull ourselves up, to take our own measurement mentally, to trace back over the past, noting what measure of progress we have made with the passing years, and gathering therefrom inspiration for to-morrow.

But when it comes to a question of comparison between the reward which the world is handing you to-day and that which is being reaped by the other fellow, let us be very fair, very careful. This is the time to look most critically upon our own endeavors.

How did we measure up?

Here is the challenge for every worker. All are seeking for a more sympathetic attitude between the workers and the employer, but unless one can point faithfully to you and you and to me, and the other fellow, who have dealt faithfully and efficiently in the face of all circumstances, upon what other basis can we ask for a more co-operative spirit throughout?

When you take mental measure of yourself and are inclined at the same time to compare notes with your neighbor, remember: Success is not always to be reckoned by dollars and cents. There is a success which far outweighs and overtips the scale when compared with mere monetary values. The failures of some big souls, did we but know the truth of the efforts behind, are more glorious than the biggest successes of which an unthinking world makes capital.

To dub a man successful who has built up a fortune through the sweat and slavery of his workers or other dishonest methods is ragged honor.

Again there may be some who, looking upon your position to-day, deem you a failure, measuring by the world's standard of accumulation of riches.

YOU alone are the best judge of whether your life is a success or a failure.

YOU alone know whether that ideal which you set out to achieve was a worthy one and how far you have kept the path.

How big are you?

It depends upon your outlook.

If hitherto this has been small, your life made narrow, write it up again: "IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GROW."

A Little Bit of Everything

A FIGHTING SQUIRREL.

When surprised in the woods, the behavior of the fox squirrel is quite different from that of the gray species. As a rule the former will put forth his best endeavor to reach some hollow in a tree, and into this he quickly scrambles to avoid his enemy, says the American Forestry Magazine of Washington. One may often see them stretched out on a limb as flat as possible, and they will, thinking themselves unperceived, remain a long time in that position as quiet as a mouse. If cornered, but there being no hole handy for him to get into, and the limb he is on is too small to hide him, he will begin barking at the hunter or his dog in the most defiant manner possible. It is said that a fox squirrel can beat off a small dog, and will put up a hard fight if one attacks him.

FLYING FEAT OF GRASSHOPPERS.

The grasshopper would seem to have nothing in common with the seagull, yet they are reported as having been picked up in swarms at sea, in some cases no less than 1200 miles from the nearest land.

The African grasshopper has been known to cross the Red and Mediterranean seas in destructive numbers, and even to fly to the Canary Islands. For the most part they are of a migratory species noted for its great flights. The bodies are about four inches long, and are equipped with large air sacs in addition to the usual breathing tubes. These sacs buoy up the insect so that it is able to stay in the air for days at a time, exerting practically no effort at all. During flight its speed is said to vary from three to twenty miles an hour. When it is tired it rests on the water and is borne along on the waves.

EYES THAT NEVER CLOSE.

All fishes which sleep do so with their eyes open, as they are not provided with eyelids, and cannot, therefore, close their eyes. From experiments made, it was discovered that some fishes have no preference for the night time, but sleep equally well during the day.

They may be observed resting quite motionless for periods, apparently in sleep, except that, having no eyelids, they are unable to close their eyes to exclude all influence from without.

The hare also sleeps with its eyes open, for the simple reason that its eyes are unprovided with eyelids. Instead of these there is a thin membrane which covers the eye when asleep. This membrane, as in the case of certain birds, folds like a curtain in the corner of the eye, and, by an instantaneous action, flies back when sight is required, leaving the eye immediately and fully open for the exercise of sight.

Some birds, such as the eagle, also have this membrane, which, when at rest, lies in the corner of the eye, folded up like a drawn curtain.

ORIGIN OF VISITING CARDS.

Visiting cards were in common use by the Chinese in the seventh century, this also being the time of the introduction of the "red silken cords" which figure so conspicuously on the engagement cards in China. From very ancient times to the present day the Chinese have observed the strictest ceremony with regard to the paying of visits. The cards which they use for this purpose are very large and usually of a bright red color. When a Chinaman desires to marry, the parents intimate that fact to the professional "match maker," who thereupon runs through the list of her visiting acquaintances and selects one whom she considers a fitting bride for the young man. The match maker calls upon the young woman's parents, armed with the bridegroom's card, on which are inscribed his ancestral name and the eight symbols which denote the date of the birth. If the answer is an acceptance of his suit the bride's card is sent in return, and should the oracles prophesy good concerning the union, the particulars of the engagement are written on two large cards and these tied together with red cords.

PISCATORIAL LABOR SAVER.

Uncle Eph Johnson, aged negro, native of Scott County, Kentucky, has invented a machine that reduces to the minimum of labors of the fisherman. 'Tis simple, this invention of Uncle Eph's. It is not patented. On the contrary, its inventor offers it to any and all devotees of the rod and reel. Stick an umbrella rib perpendicularly in the mud on the bank, fasten a sleigh bell near the top and connect the line with this "invention" and you are ready to fish—and sleep. "It ain't nothin' more'n a labor saver," said Uncle Eph. "You see, every time I get a bite the fish bends the umbrella rib and the bell rings. Den I wakes up an' hauls him in."

CENTENARY OF HERB. SPENCER.

The recent sale by auction of the house in which Herbert Spencer was born recalls the fact that 1920 is the centenary of that philosopher. His fame seems to have worn rather badly. Twenty or thirty years ago he was being constantly cited. Nowadays one hears his name very rarely except from soap-box orators, who hurl Spencerian arguments at their audience, evidently without any process of mental digestion and sometimes with rather ludicrous effect. Even in his own day people laughed at him a little. "Every one has written a tragedy, even Spencer," said someone. "Ah," said Huxley, "I know what the catastrophe would be—an induction killed by a fact."

WHY GOLD TARNISHES.

Given the proper conditions gold tarnishes. This is due to impurities in the gold, the alloys used to make it of the desired carats. These are silver, copper, zinc and sometimes nickel. All gold under 18 carat has some of these alloys, and the acid in the perspiration that exudes from the skin will cause tarnishing and discoloration. In the second place tarnishing is due to the gold coming in contact with certain substances. Julius Wodiska, the well known authority on precious metals, cites rubber, sulphur, ointments containing mercury or arsenic, iodine, complexion lotions, some hair dyes, and numerous solutions for cleaning leather and other fabrics, as causing the tarnishing.

Foolish Francesca

By Olive Wadsley

(Author of "The Forgotten Wedding, Etc.)

CHAPTER I.

AT YOUTH'S GATE.

IT WAS atrociously hot in the compound.

The punka-puller, at no time remarkable for his love of work, had entirely ceased to pretend even to labor, and slept peacefully on his rush mat, his head, covered by a discolored turban, pressed down upon his drawn-up knees, his hands slackly clasped round his thin ankles.

Francesco walked up to him languidly, and very gingerly touched him with her small, rather grimy, white tennis shoes.

"Ai, lazy one," she said in the vernacular, "wake up and work, or the burdah shall be fetched."

Her voice held a curious note. It was soft and caressing and yet oddly vibrant, and in some way alive.

The punka-puller awoke sullenly and gave a vicious twist to the rope.

A very small drift of air reached Francesco. She flung herself into an armchair half filled with cushions in crimpled muslin covers, and pulled out a book from beneath them.

The punka-puller groaned from time to time self-pityingly as he pulled. He stared resentfully at the missy sahib, but brightened a little as he noticed her absorption in the book. He watched her closely, and at last deemed it safe, ceased work once more.

Francesca read on.

At last she put down the book, and, propping her face on her hands, stared out at the quivering, sun-drowned garden with its few straggling, gaudy flowers, and its parched earth.

Her eyes still glowed with the exultant interest the book had awakened in her, her small face was slightly flushed, the thin, beautiful eyebrows met in a frown of concentration. Her mind whirled her on.

There was life somewhere in the world, life which pulsed and flamed.

Music, books, crowded streets, lights aflare against the darkness, the sea washing up in purple waves beneath some silvered sky, restaurants all glitter and smooth hurry, theatres, jewels—and she had never seen anything.

She got up suddenly, her thin hands gripped together, and began to walk up and down the room. Her short, curly hair, her one real loveliness, seemed to attract each flicker of sunshine in the shabby room. It formed an aureole round her pale face.

She wore it quite short, parted at one side like a boy's, held close to her head by a broad band of black velvet.

A frock of some cheap muslin stuff, with the least possible amount of material in it, covered her slenderness. It was cut open in a deep V in front, and above it, encircling her white throat, she wore a string of imitation pearls.

White silk stockings, much and badly darned, and white buckskin tennis shoes in rather a dilapidated condition, completed her attire; her whole appearance was third-rate, in hopelessly bad taste.

She sat down at the piano and began to play over, "You Made Me Love You," which had just reached Chiltihan and was the rage of the station.

As she played she sang softly, and as she sang she unconsciously acted the expression of the words. Her eyes looked innocently alluring beneath the black lashes, her mouth curved into a little smile.

The door opened noisily and a tall woman came in.

She wore a dressing-gown of pale rose silk, obviously a model, obviously costly; but it was dirty and the chiffon ruffles on it were in fluffy shreds.

"Really, Frankie," she said irritably, "you do make a deuce of a noise. Baby has just gone to sleep, and he's so fidgety in this beastly heat."

Francesca stopped playing and regarded her sister-in-law.

"Sorry," she said perfunctorily. "What a sight you are, Phrynette! That negligee arrangement is filthy," she went on dispassionately. "It looks as if you'd bought it at the bazaar jumble."

"Oh, I know," Mrs. Trent said. "It's rotten having no money for clothes or anything. Ever since Paul's death it's been like this; bills, bills, bills coming in and nothing else."

"It wasn't much different when he was alive, poor old dear," Francesca commented.

"Six months, and still that lawyer doesn't settle up things. It's disgraceful!"

Francesca shrugged. "I should say there isn't much to settle up," she said tranquilly. "You know how you and Paul have always spent every sou as soon as it came in."

"I ought to have married a rich man," Mrs. Trent said in a tone of languid discontent.

Francesca's rather thin lips curved a little.

"Apparently that's what that dashing half-caste, Dr. Vlan, thinks. Anyway, as I was saying, the handsome auctioneer appears extremely taken, my dear, and he's got pots and pots of money."

Phrynette twisted her rings round with a conscious smile.

"Of course, it's awfully soon after poor old Paul's death, I know," she said; "but, as a matter of fact, Frankie, Howard has—well, almost proposed."

Francesca's inscrutable eyes gazed steadily at her sister-in-law.

"And you are unable to answer because you do not quite know what to do about me?" she queried. "That is it, isn't it?"

Mrs. Trent flushed and looked uncomfortable.

"You see," she began lamely, "it would be rather difficult starting house with you and Howard. Baby's there as it is——"

"Still," Francesca said, "he is, after all, Paul's son. You can't very well boost him out, poor lamb!"

She laughed a little without gaiety.

"Don't be so spiteful," Phrynette said sharply. "I'm sure I adore baby, and I think it very heartless of you to treat me like this. It's not as if I'd ever once made a fuss about having you, though lots of young wives would have refused to start life with a sister-in-law tacked on and——"

Francesca strolled over to her.

"It's all right," she said languidly, "you don't suppose I haven't realized things ages ago, surely? That De Vlan outsider was always here even when Paul was alive.

"He was in love with you then, I dare say. It's really all right. I wrote off to old Mr. Fawcett two months ago, asking him if he could get me my passage home. I dare say his answer will be in the mail to-day.

"I shall get work of some sort, I suppose—any sort; I don't care as long as I'm once in London. All my life I've wanted to live in London. Our old nurse, she was mother's maid, lets lodgings in a place called Shepherd's Bush, and she wrote when Paul died, if you remember.

"I shall go there, and try to get work. I could go as a nursery governess—there's my French and music—or as a secretary. I can type—or—oh, stacks of things will turn up, I expect."

"You're so young," Phrynette objected weakly, smitten with the easy, undistressed remorse which attacks those who determine ruthlessly to get their own way despite all opposition, and occasionally find all the difficulties removed without protest or unpleasantness.

"Seventeen next month. If old Fawcett does write this mail, I can go back on the Orava; the Salters are going then."

"A troop ship, too, rather sport."

"We never knew any of the people in Paul's time, so I don't suppose they will flock round us now," Francesca said dispassionately.

Phrynette flushed again.

Only she knew the reason for the regiment's ostracism. Paul, her husband, had only discovered that his wife was an Eurasian after marriage. Her blue eyes, her rose-white skin, her thick, crisp, golden hair, had made even the supposition impossible.

She had been living with her father, they two the only white people in the place, at Ramhet in Burma. Paul had gone up for some sheeting, and the tea-planter had made him his guest.

Phrynette, beautiful, lonely, inflammable, had married Paul within the month; and Francesca, who had been in India since her eighth birthday, had learned fully what it meant to give up her childish, happily despotic power, and be ruled.

She had been ten there, Phrynette seventeen.

She had learned, too, to adopt the easy, slipshod speech and the careless dress of her sister-in-law. Only her definite personality had kept her apart, aloof in spirit at least.

Paul, good-looking, weak and adoring, had not bothered about his little sister; nor had his colonel's suave but frigid welcome of his wife depressed him long. Phrynette was lovely, and in love; and he let her do everything she wanted, and only complained when the servants got especially slack or Phrynette stormed to him about the beastliness of the regiment, and the station in general.

He had died of cholera, and Phrynette had wailed and shrieked for a week, and refused to eat or drink or sleep.

But after the week was over she had eaten excellently and slept correspondingly well, and had begun to interest herself in her clothes again and the frequent visits of condolence made by Mr. de Vlan.

Once again she was in love, and Francesca was distinctly in the way. It seemed to Phrynette to be really rather indelicate to have the sister of her dead husband in the house, when all her thoughts were held by her approaching remarriage.

It was uncomfortable besides, and quite disturbed her pleasant anticipations occasionally. However, Frankie was going; and no doubt in England she would find work or a husband, or both, and everything was being done pleasantly and in a friendly way.

She rose and kissed Francesca, who looked, by comparison, like a rather ordinary bleached daisy beside a big pink rose.

"That's very gracious of you. Thank you," Francesca said. "You've a very nice sense of the fitness of things, my dear! It only remains for you to say you will miss me und so weiter, und so weiter, as they say in the Fatherland; and I ought to let my eyes fill with tears, et voila, everything gone off really well and in the best style."

She looked quizzically at Phrynette through her half-closed lids.

"You will feel so poignantly sad when you trail elegantly into my bedroom after I have just driven off," she said. "All the odds and ends lying about, the empty cupboards—not that there will be many of them; this house was built by a socialist. I should say, who believed in every one sharing everything; it's impossible to keep even a hairpin safely from the servants.

"Where was I? Oh—at the empty cupboards! You'll gaze at them with those huge blue eyes, and feel I have deserted you. It will be a ripping half hour of enjoyable sadness.

(To Be Continued.)

Reptiles rarely die in daylight—usually between nightfall and midnight.

When a Tartar invites an honored guest to eat and drink he will take him by the ear and lead him to the table.