

North Shore News-Letter

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EDITORIALS

SHIP SUBSIDY AGAIN

The sum which the United States has to pay to other lands for marine transportation is much smaller than is usually calculated," says George Paish, editor of the Statist, in the course of an extended inquiry into what becomes of our trade balance.

Over ninety per cent of our exports is carried in foreign vessels, but we do not pay the freight on these outgoing shipments. The foreign purchaser pays it. We do pay the freight on that portion of our imports—eighty-five per cent of the total—which is carried in foreign ships. Mr. Paish points out, however, that those ships buy in our ports coal and provisions for the outgoing voyage and thus return to us part of our freight money. He concludes that our net payment to foreign countries on account of ocean freights is about twenty-five million dollars a year. We ought to build American ships, the advocates of ship subsidy, and keep this freight money at home.

We have no capital of our own with which to build ships. We haven't enough capital to carry on the enterprises in which we are already engaged. Mr. Paish concludes that we are now using six and a half billion dollars of foreign capital—invested in our railroads, mills, mines and so on—upon which, after all credits and deductions, we pay Europe two hundred and twenty-five million dollars a year in dividends and interest, or nine times as much as we pay for ocean freight.

Not having enough capital to carry on our present enterprises it follows that if we go extensively into the new enterprise of ship-building we shall have to borrow the capital abroad. On the capital so borrowed we should pay interest without any deduction for coal and provisions sold to foreign ships. Instead of meeting the payment in part with goods sold at a profit, we should meet it all in cash.

Moreover, capital invested in ocean transportation, without a bounty from the public treasury, earns a comparatively small return at best. With high-priced ships, built of protected materials, the return would be still smaller. The ship-subsidy proposition is that we should borrow capital at five per cent to invest in a business that pays three per cent—with, however, a great deal of profit to certain favored individuals.—Selected.

WHERE OUR MILLIONS GO

There is a little comfort in whiskey figures, but only a little. In the five-year period ending with 1910 consumption showed a slightly smaller ratio of increase than in the five-year period ending with 1895; yet it did show an important increase. Consumption of spirits per capita—taking the country over—is just about what it was a generation ago, while consumption per capita of malt

liquors has trebled. It is a melancholy fact that, so far as conclusions can be drawn from statistics to date, hard times are the only really powerful agency in promoting temperance.

In the three lean years 1894-96 the average annual consumption per capita fell off twenty-two per cent, but in the three boom years ending with 1907 it rose again more than thirty-three per cent. The industrial reaction of 1907 brought some decrease. Nearly a gallon and a half of spirits a year for every man, woman and child, and twenty gallons of beer, represent a rather staggering waste, however, the Government derives a revenue exceeding two hundred million dollars annually. How shall we deal with this problem? That we deal with it badly most people admit. Why shouldn't the Government take it up; investigate and report? From its recommendations a better handling of the liquor traffic might result.

GOOD NATURE AND CRIME

Two very distinguished authorities—the British Medical Journal and the London Lancet—have recently pointed out that murderers are usually the most good-natured of men, not for mild manners and a general desire to make themselves agreeable—except, of course, when they are professionally engaged. If it be shown of a man accused of capital crime that he was ever especially gentle and courteous in bearing, a most considerate and charming companion, "that, to the psychologist, is the most damning evidence that could be brought against him."

It does not follow, as we understand it, that if a man promptly resigns his seat in the street car to a homely woman with an armful of bundles you are warranted in suspecting that he has just strangled his wife; and to a lay mind the reasoning of our learned contemporaries seems a bit unconvincing in spots. If they mean that good nature is sometimes only a thin disguise for arrogant, cowardice, few observant people will disagree with them. The softness that is mortally afraid to offend anybody openly, that cannot stand any adverse opinion, that wilts under ridicule, probably leads around logically enough to murder under certain circumstances. A hungry dog, without the courage of his needs, is a fine type of good fellow. All he asks is that you will kick him only once at a time. We should hate to be in a leaky boat at sea, with our hands tied, accompanied by a man who could never say "No." Don't cultivate a no-less companion within your own breast to go to sea with. Some day he'll push you overboard.

In the particular case that our medical friends were discussing, the gentleman had tired of his wife. A coarse-grained brute might have thrown her out of the

house, or just gone off and left her, careless in her anguish. The sweet-mannered man couldn't bear the thought of her suffering. Still less could he bear to suffer himself. So he gently administered a few grains of arsenic.

ECONOMY AS A VICE

Economy and efficiency are great words nowadays. They are good words too, but it is possible to overwork them. The question is never how much you can save, but always how much you can gain. There is always a gain. There is always a point where the effort to prevent waste becomes mere waste itself. Not infrequently that point is soon reached.

The American carpenter's waste of material, for example, shocks a European. Instead of piecing together three three-foot scantling to get nine feet, he saws a foot off a ten-foot length and throws away the remnant. He might save considerable lumber, but the time he used in doing it, at fifty cents an hour, would cost more than the lumber; and if you reduced his wages so that his time cost less than the lumber, would that be any social gain? The railroads could haul freight at about half the present rates and make a profit if they handled all freight in the same way they do soft coal; but what would be the value of twenty million tons of fruit and vegetables a year if handled in coal cars or coal-train time-schedules?

There is a sort of waste that is the highest kind of efficiency—waste the less valuable thing in order to save the more valuable. Our carpenter's scrap-heap is bigger than the Hungarian's, but his children are better off. There is no virtue in the economy that looks only to what may be saved. We see no reason to believe that sort of economy is likely to become a prevalent vice in America, and we are right glad of it. The efficient mind easily reconciles itself to waste, the correction of which would produce a net loss.

BLAMING THE WOMEN

Blaming the women has been a popular masculine consolation since Adam's time. "I was ruined by women," said a male citizen some time ago as he was about to leave for the penitentiary. He meant that he left his home and stole his bank's money to riot with females, a majority of whom have been quietly at work in some productive occupation if economic conditions—that are made exclusively by men—had given them a fair chance. Nearly all of them were merely stupid, passive straws borne along by whatever current in a man-run world happened to catch them. If they hadn't been of that sort they wouldn't have been rioting.

Probably four-fifths of the initiative and of effective power are in the hands of men. This is true of society and of most individual cases. If the modern well-to-do woman is more ornamental than useful it is because that status was fixed for her by her father and husband. Men deplore that women brought up in easy circumstances consume much and produce little. Many of the men who deplore it loudest would perish of chagrin if the neighbors should know that their own wives were doing the family washing to save expense. Among the well-to-do, the wife is the token of the husband's gentility. He bemoans the cost, but is secretly delighted to be the husband of a "lady." We write this in the interests of

conservation. A prodigious amount of thought that might produce good social steam wastes itself in mere vapor over the ruin wrought by women. We do not recall a single case, from Adam and Samson down, where a man really up to his job was ruined by a woman.

HEREDITARY PAUPERISM.

A very careful investigation has been recently made in England with a view to determining by scientific inquiry how far pauperism might be dealt with as a transmissible and hereditary evil. The investigation goes to show that pauperism tends to recur in successive generations of the same family, says the Philadelphia Record. It is propagated in large degree by free unions among unmarried persons of moral feebleness and consequent illegitimacy, as shown by backward examination of pedigree. Paupers appear to prefer pauper alliances. The resulting inbreeding tends to the perpetuation of degenerates. Much, of course, may be due to environment as a consequence of herding paupers together in poor-houses or workhouses provided at the public expense, but if heredity be a dominating factor in producing and reproducing through succeeding generations a definite pauper stock, with a native incapacity to live in any other way except as social parasites, the laws should be shaped so far as possible to bring about a means of prevention. There should be sex separation in so far as such a rule could be enforced by state authority. We take great pains to secure the propagation of healthy and superior breeds of domestic animals. There seems to be no sound reason for a failure to protect ourselves as far as we may against the deterioration of the human stock.

Workmen in demolishing an ancient house situated in the Rue de Strasbourg, opposite the old Mont de Piété at Nantes, have made an interesting discovery which is likely to attract considerable attention, since the find was at once dispersed by the men. It consisted of a number of gold and silver coins of different epochs. The most interesting were the effigy of Alfonso VIII, king of Galicia and Castile, who reigned from 1126 to 1158. They bear on the exergue an inscription in Arabic in these terms: "The Emir of the Catholics is aided by Allah, and Allah protects them." The find is interesting in more ways than one, and it is likely that economic writers will not fail to make use of these coins to show the trade relations of Nantes about the period of the Hundred Years War.

The fable about the fountain of youth in Florida in which Ponce de Leon had faith has been pretty well discredited in this age of progress and skepticism. But it seems there still is belief in the practical value of the famous spring. At least a promoter has secured an option on 60,000 acres of land in the vicinity, with the idea of establishing a colony of Pittsburgh millionaires, the spring being used to generate electricity for power and light for the benefit of the wealthy settlers. This is a diversion of purpose of which the great Spanish explorer never dreamed.

Two of the rare dollars of 1804 have been found. It is affirmed that only four of these coins are in existence, and numismatologists attach great value to them. The last coin sold brought \$3,000. But of course if they continue to be found in this fashion the discoveries are likely to "bear" the market.

Chicago is taking no uncertain stand about dubious theatrical performances. The most cutting criticism of all is that public sentiment is so far behind the critics that receipts are seriously falling off. And the box office is the tender nerve which receives the full shock of the situation.

"Fashion decrees that men must propose on their knees hereafter," says an esteemed contemporary. Fashion is a "dame," all right—or is she a damsel?

Prof. Garner says his female chimpanzee has a vague moral sense. And that is the sort that some folks in high society have.

AMERICA AND IRRIGATION.

Ours is the foremost country in the world in the reclamation of its arid land. To the unraveled easterner the extent of the irrigation of western lands under direct government supervision is unknown. The work of individual and corporate concerns raises the actual reclamation of arid land in the West to an enormous total acreage. Most of this work has been accomplished within the past decade, while each year the plans for still further pushing the conquests of artificial irrigation are extended, says the Pittsburgh Gazette-Times. That the prestige in this important department of home building belongs to the United States is further demonstrated by a request recently submitted to the state department by the Australian government. Australia has several wide extended areas of arid land. The reclamation of much of this has been undertaken, but the first difficulty that confronted the government was a lack of expert knowledge of the actual work to be done and of the means used to secure the largest and surest returns on the money invested. In this dilemma Australia turned to the United States, where irrigation on the "broadest lines" has been ably demonstrated under government control.

The defendant in a case before Judge Bacon, who objected to being described as a gentleman, may be commended on his refusal to be labeled with a term which even Sir James Murray is shy of defining, says the London Chronicle. There is the old legal definition, "all above the rank of a yeoman," and there is Sir William Blackstone's description of a gentleman as "one who can live idly and without labor." There is also, the historic definition given by a witness at the trial of Thurtell for the murder of Mr. Weare as "one who drives a gig." And the cabman probably expresses the average opinion as to what constitutes a man, a gentleman when he says: "You're a gentleman, sir," to the spendthrift who does not ask change for half a crown on a shilling fare.

The inhabitants of the Danish West Indies have renewed the agitation for annexation to the United States, and have sent a petition to the home government asking that the islands be sold to this country. The cabinet, it is said, is not particularly opposed to the proposition, but will not take the initiative, fearing they will be "turned down" by the Rigsdag, or national parliament. The United States is not likely to move in the matter at present, but the incident discloses anew the desire of the Danish West Indies to belong to the big republic. And there are others similarly minded in that part of the world.

Forestry is one of the recognized professions. There are 80 students now in the Yale school of forestry, and this is but one of the agencies at work for turning out experts. Mrs. Harriman's gift of \$100,000 to endow a chair in the Yale school is but the first of many gifts that are sure to come to advance instruction in forestry.

The cinematograph theaters, which are springing up like mushrooms in Berlin and other German cities, are a sociological blessing. Countless thousands who were in the habit of wasting their time, money and substance in beer gardens and cafes are now attracted to the moving-picture shows.

In an attempt to prove a New York man insane they are alleging that he has a poor fist at bridge whist. Probably trumped his partner's ace or renegged, and now they're getting even.

Besides a voice a prima donna almost always owns a dog or a temperament or something of that sort, and generally it is available for use at a moment's notice.

A Louisiana judge, in fining a man \$500 for kissing a widow, told him he ought to have known better. And now the widow is wondering what he meant.

A blizzard will always go out of its way to see that New York is not slighted.