

When one reflects upon the literary associations of Hartford, and the number of things in which it has shown excellence or commendable energy—on one side its humane establishments, including that where the deaf-mute children lead with so much good cheer their life of silent imagery, and on the other its hum of factories, producing all manner of things, from paper, pins, paper barrels, to machinery, revolvers, and Gatling guns (the invention of a Hartford citizen) — one is led to ask what is the cause of it all. Perhaps the character of the place is in part explained by the fact that of Rev. Mr. Hooker's company "many were persons of figure, who

had lived in England in honor, affluence, and delicacy," but likewise did not shrink from the hardship of their journey hither on foot through the wilderness. They knew how to build up the centre of a commonwealth with force and enterprise, as well as with refinement; and their spirit has survived. But be the causes what they may, Hartford offers perhaps our best example of what an American city may become, when it is not too large for good government, when it avoids stagnation, preserves the true sentiment of a democracy, cares well for education and literature, and has had two centuries and a half of free and favorable growth.

#### A PRIEST OF DOORGA.

**R**AM LAL, of the cowherd caste, living in the village of Aheeria, in Central India, followed the occupation of his forefathers as a professional wolf-killer. He was a man of great courage, and famous all over the country for his skill in setting traps, and it was said of him that he imitated the voices of beasts and birds so well that there was not a single wild thing, whether in fur or in feathers, that he could not decoy to its death simply by calling to it.

Sometimes to amuse his friends he would hide himself behind a screen of grass and leaves, and howl and whimper like a wolf. A hungry wolf, mistaking him for one of its own kind, would suddenly slip out from the shadows of the crops, and stand there foolishly in the moonlight looking about it. And then Ram Lal would pretend to be a kid that had seen the wolf and was frightened, and would bleat and cry; and the grim gray beast, thinking itself very clever all the while, would come stealing along the ground, like a shadow itself, creeping from brush to brush and tuft to tuft, and then just as it got to the screen behind which Ram Lal was bleating, the ground would give way with a crashing of twigs under the wolf's feet, and it would go plump into the pitfall that was waiting for it. Sometimes, too, he would take neighbors into the mohwa grove, and after they had all tired of looking for the bear which he said was in it, he would quickly walk up to a particular tree, and there sure enough was Bhaloo sitting with a cluster of mohwa berries in his mouth.

His friends said it was "magic," and even Ram Lal himself—for he was only a poor ignorant Hindoo—had come to believe in his superstitious way that his skill was not altogether the result of a life-long experience in wood-craft. For though he was so clever at killing wild animals there was one beast that he could not injure, and that was the old man-eating tiger that lived in the cave on the Kalasungum Hill. For Ram Lal believed that the man-eating tiger was his own great-great-great-grandfather, and that it was all owing to the tiger's good-will toward him that he had such luck in the jungles. So he would often take the dead bodies of the beasts that he killed and leave them at the mouth of the man-eater's cave for the feeble, worthless old tiger to eat.

Now Ram Lal had a wife whose name was Motee, which means a "pearl," and she was very precious indeed to him. And they had one child, a boy, called Gunga, after the sacred river which we call the Ganges.

And soon after Gunga was born the family priest of the village had taken a rupee and cut it into three pieces, and had blessed each piece, and had hung them round the necks of the child and his parents, saying as he did so, "If you ever take these off, bad luck will follow you through thirteen worlds." So Ram Lal and Motee were very careful indeed that they and the boy always wore them.

Now one day, when Gunga was nearly three years old, his father had started off to the neighboring town with his load of

wild beasts' heads and tails to get the reward which the government gave for killing dangerous animals, and Motee had gone down with the other women to the pond to wash clothes, and Gunga was sitting playing with some marigold flowers under the banyan-tree close to the village.

And while he was sitting there he heard some one cough behind him, and looking round he saw a man, with a basket filled with beautiful toys on his back, walking along the narrow path through the sugar-cane field; and the man sat down on the path and began to arrange his toys on the ground, and little Gunga got up to look at them. But as soon as he came up to the man, the man walked further off, laughing, and holding out such a beautiful toy—all blue and red and gold—that Gunga could not help following him in the hope that he might get it. And then the man went off the path altogether, and into the middle of the sugar-canes. Gunga followed him, and came up to the man, who gave him the pretty toy, and, besides that, he put on him a new dress and a new cap and pretty green shoes with red toes, and he marked his forehead with a teeka of yellow paint so that no one meeting little Gunga in his fine clothes, and with the Brahmin's mark upon his forehead, would ever have guessed that he was the son of Ram Lal, the Aheer of the cowherd caste. And then the man took hold of the child's hand, and Gunga was so proud of his smart shoes and so happy with his beautiful toy that he ran along by the stranger's side till they reached the high-road. And there he saw a fine bullock cart standing, and the stranger put Gunga inside it, where a woman was sitting with two other little children in fine new clothes, eating sweetmeats, and playing with all kinds of toys; and then he tied the curtains of the cart close down all round, so that no one could see the children, and then the two tall white bullocks trotted away along the high-road.

And that was how little Gunga was stolen away from his home.

Now, when her washing was finished, Motee came back and found her child gone, and she searched for him, crying, crying, all over the village. And her friends joined her, and all day long they wandered about near the village, shouting out, "Gunga! Gunga!" But they never found him.

And next day Ram Lal returned with the money he had earned, and a silver

bangle for his wife, and a little green parrot in a cage for Gunga, and some of the hulwa sweetmeats that the child was so fond of, and he found the whole village in consternation, and Motee lying dumb with grief on the floor of their cottage—and Gunga gone!

Then he went out into the jungles with his axe and his long sharp knife, and searched high and low. He went to every wolf's den for twenty miles round, and into all the leopards' holes among the rocks. He searched the river's bank for traces of the child; but clever as he was at tracking wild animals by their footprints, Ram Lal never saw his child again. And one day, as he was sitting on the ground in despair, he suddenly jumped up and cried: "*I know where my boy is. The tiger on the Kalasungum Hill has eaten him. I haven't taken him any food for several days, and so to spite me the tiger has eaten my child.*" And without listening to what his friends said, he picked up his knife and his axe and ran. All day long he ran as if he could never tire, and the twilight began to fall, and still Ram Lal kept running. He heard the wolves howling in the ravine, but he never stopped to kill them; he heard a leopard pass, coughing, over the hill, but he never turned from his path to follow it. On, on, on, he went, as straight as a bird flying home to its nest; and at last, when the moon was high up in the sky, he saw the black cavern on the Kalasungum Hill in which the man-eating tiger lived, and he climbed up the rocks by the pathway which only he and the tiger knew of, and came to the mouth of the cavern, and there, in the full moonlight, stretched out at its full length, lay the terror of the country.

And Ram Lal came close up to the tiger and bowed low. But the tiger never stirred. And then Ram Lal, with his hands crossed on his breast, began, reverently, "Oh, my lord the tiger, why have you killed and eaten my son?"

At the sound of the man's voice the beast turned its head and fixed its dreadful eyes upon Ram Lal, who went on:

"Have I not these many years been as a son to you, oh, my lord the tiger, and knowing you to be too old and feeble to kill the buffalo and to catch the deer, have I not brought you here, to the very door of your cave, the flesh of animals that I have killed, so that you might live? And now

you have repaid all my care with this ingratitude, and have left me without a son."

Then the tiger laid its head down on the ground and roared angrily, and the terrible voice of the man-eater rolled along the hill-side like the muttering of thunder, and silenced every voice in the jungle. And there was a dead hush.

And Ram Lal spoke again. "Yet once more I, your son, have come to you, my lord the tiger, and see, as usual, my hands are not empty. I have something for you"—and he laughed bitterly as he held out the axe, which glittered in the moonlight, and drew his long knife with a sudden flash.

And the tiger sprang to his feet. His fur bristled; and as he snarled a long, low, cruel snarl, his lips were drawn back, showing the toothless gums, and his old blunt claws grated against the rock.

"Forgive me, my father," said Ram Lal, "for what I am going to do. But what is life to me now without my son? If you kill me, I shall only go to him I loved. But my darling can never return to me."

And while he was speaking the tiger had crouched just as a cat does before it springs on the bird, and had gathered its hind-feet under it for the leap. And Ram Lal saw it and knew. And he swung his axe above his head, and planted his feet firmly on the ground, and for a minute they stood looking into each other's eyes. And then on a sudden the hill-side seemed to crack open with a roar! and lo, like a flash the tiger leaped from the rock.

Not all the strength of a giant could have withstood that awful shock, and though Ram Lal's axe buried itself deep in the tiger's side, as it sprang, he was hurled down the hill, and, stunned and bleeding, fell among the rocks below. But he fought hard. Again and again he struggled up on to his feet, but he had lost his knife and his axe was broken, and again and again the tiger struck him down. And so all through the bright moonlight they went on fighting, Ram Lal with his hands and his broken axe, the tiger with its terrible paws. Though its long front fangs were gone, its jaws were so strong that it could break a man's arm with its bite; and though the claws were blunt, every blow from that terrible fore-arm brought Ram Lal nearer and nearer to death, and at last he could not rise again from the ground. And the moon set, and there was an hour of darkness. And then the sun

rose, and in the early dawn the monkeys, passing along the trees near the cave, stopped in terror, for there, lying on the hill-side among the rocks, they saw a man and a tiger lying together. And more monkeys came and joined them, and as the day wore on they grew bolder, for neither the man nor the tiger moved. They came closer and closer, chattering to each other, and scampering off in a panic at every sound they heard. But at last there was no doubt of it. Both the man and the tiger were dead, and the monkeys jumped about from rock to rock, chattering at the dead bodies, and making faces at them, as if they were glad to be rid of two enemies at once.

In the village, meanwhile, the consternation had grown into dismay; for not only was Gunga lost, but Ram Lal himself had never returned. But what use was it to go and look for Ram Lal? Of all the men in the country he, the brave wolf-killer, was as safe in the jungles as a man could be.

But poor Motee, the pearl of Aheeria! For days she had lain on the ground, refusing to be comforted; and at last, one night, when the village was asleep, she rose up, cut off her hair in sign of widowhood, wrapped the widow's robe round her, and went out and sat down by the well outside the village. Her grief had made her mad, and when the women came in the morning to draw water she reproached them with having drowned her son, and when the men passed by with their cattle on their way to the fields she cried out to them, "Tell me where I may find the bones of my darling whom you killed, that I may burn them by the river, and his spirit have rest. You were jealous of the brave man, Gunga's father, and you have killed him too. But never mind; he will return, and then your wives will be widows also, and your mothers childless."

And she sat all day, reproaching every one who went by—all day, whether it was hot or wet, in the dust or in the dirt, she sat there, her hair growing long and gray, her face thinner and thinner. And they put food and water near her, which she ate in the night just as if she was a wild animal. But she did no one any harm, and all day long, between her reproaches, they heard her sobbing as she lay on the ground, and all through the night they heard her calling her darlings' names.

Years passed. Children grew up to be men and women, and Ram Lal and Gunga had been forgotten long ago, and Mottee was an old woman, and her grief and her madness made her look like a witch. The children were frightened of her, and their fathers and mothers tried hard to get her to go away to some other village or into the jungles. But she would not stir from the well; for she said, "If I go away, how is my son Gunga to find me when he comes home again? or where should a wife wait for her husband but in her own village?" So she would not move.

And where was Gunga all this time?

The tall white bullocks, dragging the jingling cart with its white curtains so closely drawn all round, had carried the children along the high-road that led past Aheeria and many another village besides, over hills and across streams, to the famous temple to the goddess Doorga that stands on the banks of the sacred Godavery River, and there the bullocks stopped at the door of a hut, and the children were lifted out, and the woman, all closely veiled, walked into the hut, and the man led the cart away. And next day little Gunga, of the cowherd caste, with the Brahmin's marks on his forehead and on the palms of his hands, and with his broken rupee hanging round his neck on a Brahmin's sacred thread, was sold to the priests of the temple as a veritable Brahmin's child.

For Doorga, the most terrible of all the Hindoo deities, is a goddess who delights in pain and suffering. To propitiate her, living things were offered on her altars, and all day long animals were tortured for her pleasure. Even the priests were provided by stealing children from their parents, and thus causing bitter grief to innocent men and women. And Gunga became an attendant in the temple, and as he grew up he proved so clever that while he was still a youth he had learned all that the priests could teach him. Anxious to learn more, he started off, begging his way, to another temple, and there too he studied with all his might till he became wiser than his teachers. And then he went out again, carrying his begging bowl, and travelled from temple to temple, learning all that the wisest of the priests had to teach, and from jungle to jungle and from hill to hill, visiting all the hermits who were famous for their knowledge. Thus forty years passed away, and Gunga him-

self had become one of the most celebrated sages in India. No one knew that he was only an Aheer of the common cowherd caste. For he had worn the sacred thread all his life, and so they thought—and he thought so himself—that he was one of the twice-born, a holy Brahmin.

Yet often and again he, Gunga, the great priest of Doorga, the famous pundit of the temple on the Godavery River, the holiest man of all the Brahmins between Benares and Comorin, would sit in sadness and think himself the only wretched one in all the crowd that worshipped him. "Twice-born of the twice-born!" the mob would shout; and yet would Gunga say to himself, "I have no mother!"

"Oh! great son of the Ganges!—ah! mighty one, first-born of the heavenly host!" was the morning salutation of the people; but Gunga's heart would add, "And yet I have no father!"

Every one in the crowd before him, even the poor limping leper who after dark would come and ask his help, even the beggar-woman with her thin bleary-eyed children who would shrink in awe off the path before him—even these were to be envied. They had their home ties, such as they were, at any rate; they had the memories of father and mother, and for each of them there was one spot, their birth-place, dearer than all the world besides. But he, the honored of all India, the water of whose daily ablutions was solemnly distributed at the temple gates for the healing of the sick, the impress of whose right hand upon a wall made the whole building proof against all witchcrafts and evil potencies, he, the high-priest of a great goddess, was alone in the world, without father or mother or home!

And sometimes, in spite of himself, he would wish that he were of low caste, a mere cowherd perhaps, with his family about him, rather than a Brahmin of the Brahmins, solitary in his sanctity. But the next instant would come a shudder of horror. *Low caste! a cowherd!* what more melancholy than such a lot? what more pitiable? Fancy him, who could not go out into the streets without men running before him with bells to warn the common world to get off the path lest unawares they should touch the ineffable sacredness of his body and thus inflict thereon such a wound as hardly blood could atone for—him, for whom no one in all the land was holy enough to draw



water from the well—fancy him of low caste, a mere cowherd perhaps! And at the abominable thought Gunga, the Aheer, though he knew it not, would shudder and pray the defiling thought away.

Indeed, so famous had Ram Lal's son become when his travels were over that all along the roads as he journeyed slowly homeward to his own temple the news of his coming spread before him, and whole villages used to come out to the road-side to see him pass, and the wisest of priests and the holiest of hermits travelled great distances to seek his advice as he went along. In the towns that he passed through, the Brahmins used to beg him to remain among them and teach them, and rajahs used to send splendid retinues to salute him, to give him costly presents, and to beseech him to turn back with them to their palaces, and stay there as the tutor of princes and chief counselor of the kingdom. But Gunga would not turn from that high-road, along which, though he did not know it, he had been carried away from his home as a little child. And so, step by step, all unconscious of it, he drew nearer to his own village of Aheeria, and the well where his poor old mother sat waiting and watching for her darling's return.

And night came on, and his followers went to sleep under the trees by the road-side. But Gunga, as his custom was, stood in prayer for many hours in the shade of a peepul-tree, and all through the night as he stood there he seemed to hear a woman's voice sobbing, and between the sobs he thought he heard some one calling on his name—"Gunga! Gunga! Gunga!" A weak, wailing voice it seemed, but Gunga, though he heard it, thought it was one of the spirits—who often spoke to him in the night—calling to him, and so he went on praying.

And in the early morning they started again, and where poor old Motee lay asleep in the dust by the well, her son, for whom she had waited there forty years, passed by, and she knew nothing of it.

But the voice remained on the holy man's ear, and do what he would, he could not help hearing, at every pause of prayer or conversation, that heart-broken woman calling to him for help. All the next day and all night, awake or asleep, he heard "Gunga! Gunga! Gunga!" He still thought it was a spirit, but with all his wisdom and all his holiness he could not

silence it, and day by day and night by night it grew worse, till he could hardly bear it. But he did not dare to say a word lest his priests should say, "How is this? this man says he has power over spirits, and yet he can not save himself from one!"

And the next year there fell a terrible famine on the land, and the starving people crowded to the temple to ask the gods and the priests for help. Many of the villages were deserted, and the tigers, finding all the cattle dead and the deer all fled from the famine-stricken country, began to prey upon the people, and one man-eating tiger made its den close to the village of Aheeria.

And old Motee, still sitting there by the dry well, keeping life in her no one knew how, heard of the tiger, and mad as she was, chuckled to herself, and taunted the people. "Didn't I always warn you that Ram Lal would come back again; that your wives would be widows and your mothers childless?" And the villagers threatened to kill her; but she only chuckled the more, and cried out the same words louder.

And the famine continued. Gunga had tried his hardest to persuade the goddess to avert the scourge, had prayed incessantly, and had kept her altars heaped with tortured animals. But pain and suffering were Doorga's delight, and so all day long a ceaseless procession of mourners went down from the temple to the river, the starving carrying the dead, and all night long the river-banks were bright with rows of funeral fires. And still the famine continued.

Gunga was in despair. The people clamored against him, and the crowds waited round the temple to curse him, thinking that he preferred to please the goddess by continuing the famine rather than save them by stopping it. One day with the hot red sun flaring down from the brazen sky upon him, Gunga, who had fasted for many days, stood with bared head, faint with hunger, faint with the torturing heat of the sun, praying to Door-ga to take his life and spare the people. But he felt that his prayers had lost their force, for his mind was no longer given up wholly to them. That weak, wailing voice was forever in his ears calling his name, and he knew there was a spirit abroad stronger than he was.

So he went out to the people and told

them that Doorga demanded in sacrifice the most precious life among them, and asked them whose it was. And the people answered with one voice, "Your own." Then he held up his hand to quiet the crowd, and when all was hushed he spoke again: "It is well. Your priest will give his life for the people. It is a vow. But before I die I must bind a spirit which is abroad, and which thinks itself stronger than our goddess Doorga, or else when I am gone it may torment you." For Gunga had no wish to die, and hoped that before such a spirit could be bound, the goddess might spare his life by taking the famine off the land.

But Doorga had heard his vow. Then he went back into the temple and called the priests together, and said: "There is a spirit abroad that thinks itself stronger than the priests of Doorga. You must bind and bring it here and sacrifice it to Doorga. Travelling quickly, twenty koss a day, you will reach on the seventh day a peepul-tree standing at the corner of the high-road, where a village path leads off to the right under some banyan-trees. The moon will be full, and as you stand under the peepul-trees praying, you will hear a voice calling 'Gunga! Gunga!' You must follow the voice, and bind the spirit and bring it here. Take these ropes, and return quickly."

And the priests went, and Gunga and the starving people waited for their return.

They travelled swiftly, and on the seventh day came to the tree. As they stood under it they thought they heard the voice wailing, "Gunga! Gunga! Gunga!" And they followed the sound. Suddenly upon the path before them stepped a tiger. "This is the spirit," they said; "we must bind it;" and ringing their bells and chanting the praises of Doorga, they approached the beast. But it was frightened by their courage, and with one tremendous leap the tiger was gone from their sight. "The spirit has escaped us," said the priests, in dismay. But the next minute they heard the voice again crying, "Gunga! Gunga!" So they followed it, and on the path they came upon a starving man dying. "This is the spirit," they said, and they stooped down and bound him with their ropes. But as they lifted him up to carry him away, his head fell back with a groan, and he died. But still the voice came from in front of them,

"Gunga! Gunga!" So they only said, "The spirit has escaped us a second time; we must follow it." And they went on, and there by the dry well, muffled up in her rags, sat old Motee, calling for her son. And the priests rushed at her and bound her with their ropes and carried her off, and all the way the poor old creature kept crying out for "Gunga! Gunga!"

So they knew they had the spirit fast this time, and returned swiftly to the temple, saying, "We have bound the spirit, and it is here."

And then they uncovered Motee, and the old woman cried out at once, "Gunga!"

And Gunga said, sternly, "Silence!"

At this voice she looked up, startled; as her eyes met his, hers opened wide, as if in terror, and she seemed struck dumb. "A miracle! a miracle!" shouted the priests, as they ran out to tell the people. And a glad cry went up from the people as if the news of some great victory had suddenly been told.

When the priests came back they found Gunga with his eyes still fixed on the spirit's, and the spirit's eyes on his.

"Bind her," said he, "upon the altar, and bring the sacred fire to burn her as a sacrifice to our goddess, and tell the people that rain will fall to-night." And the people when they heard it shouted as if they were all mad with joy.

And when they were binding the spirit, Gunga saw that she had something round her neck. Now in the sacrifices to Doorga nothing made of metal is ever permitted, so Gunga said, "Take it off," and they took off the thing. "It is a broken rupee," they said, and all of them handed it to Gunga. And then they bound old Motee, and laid her on the altar, and Gunga stood before it, while the priests in procession, ringing the bell, brought up the holy fire for the sacrifice.

But Gunga said, "Not yet," and the priests waited for the signal to be given; but Gunga turned away, and, pacing slowly, entered the holiest place of the temple, where no one but he dared to enter, then, tearing off his sacred vest, he wrenched the treasured thread from his neck, and fitting together the two pieces of the rupee—lo! they were pieces of one and the same coin.

His knees trembled beneath him, and he fell down upon the ground before the awful being of the goddess. But his lips

could hardly shape a prayer, and he trembled from head to foot.

How long he lay there he knew not, but suddenly a terrible shout arose from the people outside the temple, and thrusting the broken rupee within his bosom, he went out. The temple was empty. On the altar lay the poor old woman—*his mother*.

In an instant he had unbound her, and leaving the cords upon the altar, he carried her into the holy place, laid her down before the idol, and, stooping, kissed the poor old lips and the sad thin face. And Motee murmured, like a child falling off to sleep on its mother's arm, the name she loved—and died.

And with the knowledge that his mother was dead there flashed upon Gunga the remembrance of the terror of his own position. Was it not written in Holy Writ that the child and its parents are both cursed for a million births if the son neglect to light his father's and his mother's funeral pyre? And how could he, Gunga, the priest of Doorga, son of the Ganges River, the twice-born, holiest among the holy, confess before all India that he was no Brahmin; that all these years he had impiously defiled the temple of the gods with his presence—he the Aheer—had committed the abominable sin for which there is no forgiveness? And the famine—was it perhaps the punishment from the gods, for their outraged worship and their insulted altars?

For a moment he stood there, with his mother's unclosed eyes still fixed upon him, and the myriad horrors of his position swarming round his brain like fiends of torture, shouting one above the other, "Base-born! insulter of the gods! pariah priest!" But above them all his own soul seemed to speak, and its voice was calm and dreadful.

"You must choose at once: confess yourself what you are, and save your mother's soul and your own, or else live on for a few years more the same impostor that you have been, and receive after death the punishment that justly awaits you for murdering her soul and your own."

Another shout from the mob startled Gunga from his trance of agony, and he rushed into the temple. Filling his arms with sacred scented wood and his skirts with costly spices, he swiftly returned, and piling them around his mother, where she lay before the idol, he set the sacred

fire to the funeral pile, and again passing out into the temple, again returned with a second burden of incense and fragrant gum, and flung them down among the flames. Then closing behind him the little door through which until that day none but he had ever passed, Gunga stepped from the altar on to the idol's shoulder, and from the idol on to the trident which it held, and thence, reaching up his hand, opened the skylight, and so passed out on to the lower roof of the temple. Fastening the skylight again behind him, he climbed up the stairs to the upper roof, and thence to the uppermost, and stood there, among the pinnacles above the topmost cupola, looking down upon the crowd that shouted and swayed beneath him.

Every face was turned upward and toward the eastern sky with such a look of wild joy that it was fearful to see. And Gunga knew what it meant. Doorga, the cruel goddess, had heard him vow his life away, and had accepted it, and had answered the prayer for rain. For there, in the sky, far away to the east, was a great dark cloud that grew every minute larger and darker, and before it there came a whispering wind that fluttered the very dead leaves off the sissou-trees and raised little wisps of dust all along the scorching plain. And oh! but its breath was sweet to the man about to die. And then, with a suddenness that seemed to eclipse the sun, the cloud fairly rushed across the sky, and on the instant began to fall the great round drops of the life-giving rain.

What a cry went up from the people! The temple seemed to rock beneath Gunga's feet at the sound.

And turning toward the temple, the gratified people, wild with the gladness of relief, saw their priest, Gunga, standing among the pinnacles, his white robe fluttering in the rain wind, and they cried to him, "Doorga is great, and Gunga, the priest of Doorga!"

But, as if a flash of lightning had dazzled them with dumbness, the crowd suddenly held its breath. For they saw the great priest reel where he stood, and then, throwing his robe over his face, they saw him fall headlong from the lofty parapet on to the marble of the court below.

And catching their breath again, the people shouted, "He has kept his vow; he has given his life for the people."

And so the famine was stayed.

## OUR PUBLIC LAND POLICY.

THERE is no branch of our political economy more worthy of careful study, of more immediate and vital importance to the people, about which they know so little, and to which they show so much indifference, as that of the management of our public lands. Dignified dissertations, dry as dust, treating of the public domain, are hurriedly glanced over by the reading portion of the public, and laid aside with a vague feeling of helplessness, and a groundless hope that some one will rise up and set the matter right. We read in the newspapers of gigantic land swindles by scheming speculators, whose audacity is equalled only by their success. We read, and turn the page; and yet the most careless observer of public affairs will hardly fail to notice that, however large the slice those who are parcelling out among themselves the public lands may choose, in homely phrase, to bite off, their facilities for mastication and the very efficient aids to digestion which they receive in various ways at some local land offices are so considerable that they chew with ease and swallow with impunity; and if by any mischance the mouthful prove too large, and local practitioners fail in their treatment of the case, then the great healer at Washington may be called upon to prescribe a remedy. A new ruling for the General Land Department, the reversal of some former decision, unusual dispatch in issuing patents, suppression of reports of irregularities practiced in certain cases, and in a twinkling, by a kind of legerdemain, vast areas of fertile prairie or virgin pine forest disappear within the capacious maw of some soulless, unapproachable, unknowable something termed a syndicate.

The laws governing individual titles to real property, while of a nature so dry in the abstract, so difficult to follow, that only those who probe to the bottom may be sure of the condition of the title to any given description, and an expert alone can tell when the bottom is reached, are yet certain and well settled. Not so, however, with our public lands. Titles to these are subject to the dictation of changing officials, to rules and regulations of different Secretaries of Interior, to acts of Congress, and are, in consequence, within the influence of wealthy corporations, and involved in obscurity and uncertainty.

Notable instances bear witness to the truth of this, some of which it will be well to consider. Let us first regard the unsettled ownership of millions of acres of unearned and, by contract terms, forfeitable, if not forfeited, grants to railroads.

In some instances these roads have been partially constructed, in others no attempt has been made to build, yet in all cases the entire grant is claimed, and the lands thus covered are withheld from settlement. The Supreme Court of the United States having decided that "a failure to complete the road within the time fixed in the grant does not forfeit the grant," the lands thus withheld must remain so until by act of Congress the respective unearned grants are declared forfeited. It has been truly affirmed "that title to nearly one hundred million acres of land, rightfully belonging to the people of this country, is in a condition that it may, by crafty entanglement of law, be confirmed in the interest of grasping and corporate monopolies; yet Congress remains passive, refusing to assert the rights of the people, although well advised of the imperative necessity for action."

A fair illustration that the government is or has been in danger of losing these lands is the case of the "Backbone" grant, made in 1871 to the New Orleans, Vicksburg, and Baton Rouge Railroad. One of the conditions of the grant was that the road should be completed in five years. Not a yard of earth was ever moved by this company. They did, however, issue and sell bonds, then transferred the grant to the New Orleans and Pacific road, which company sold its charter rights to the Texas Pacific, reserving its assigned grant, and transferring it to the American Improvement Company. The "Backboners" have repeatedly importuned Congress for confirmation, always meeting with refusal. The culmination of this affair shows how great the power and how little the care exercised by high officials in disposing of or protecting the public lands. During the last few weeks of the retiring administration there was great and unusual animation noticeable in the General Land Department. Extra clerks were busy night and day filling out papers with precipitous haste; and when the present Secretary assumed control of the office the mill was still in full blast, grinding