

tempting is an elevation of the people to a higher intellectual and moral level. If he means all he says, he must think that the stoppage of trains, the "killing" of engines, the mobbing of "scabs," and the expulsion of Chinese, are the dawn of a higher civilization, and that ignorance of the boycott will yet be looked upon as one of the features of the dark ages. But perhaps he does not mean all this, so let us return to his actual advice. He says the most pressing need of the time is that the Government, under the right of eminent domain, shall purchase all telegraphs, telephones, and railroads, and no longer allow any corporation to transport intelligence, passengers, or freight. This will require an immense increase in our army of civil servants, and unless they are faithful and trained men, our property will be mismanaged, our lives risked, and perhaps we may still be plundered as badly as ever. The word "perhaps" is brought in with great rhetorical skill. It would hardly do to tell the Knights categorically that things could be worse under their policy than they are now. But they can stand such a statement as this: If when Government manages the railroads all the engine-drivers, switch-tenders, and train-starters are appointed and discharged on the recommendation of pot-house politicians, then *perhaps* things might be as bad as before.

These are not all the cogent appeals for administrative reform which the letter urges upon the Knights. Their attention is pointedly called to the low character of the politicians at Washington and Annapolis, and their gross neglect of their legislative duties. "There are fifty measures which you (Knights) want passed at once," and which you are sending delegations to urge, but instead of attending to this business, the politicians talk of nothing but "petty personalities which are not of the slightest concern to the laboring classes." So, the Knights must vote for civil-service reform, and then we shall have men who will at once proceed to legislate. The first of the fifty measures to be taken up must be that for the purchase of the railroads and telegraphs. How fast the other forty-nine will be passed is not indicated, but we are sure that less than one a day would show a lack of energy to which the civil-service reform Knights would never submit.

We must congratulate Dr. Ely that his letter appeared in the nick of time to prevent a possible insinuation against his motives on the part of his more bigoted opponents. On the very morning of its publication came a press despatch from Reading, Pa., stating that some seventy cigar factories could not sell their products in the West unless they bore a label showing that they had been made by Knights of Labor. From stopping the sale of all cigars not made by Knights to stopping all teaching by political economists not licensed by the Knights to teach, would be a very short step to a power which wanted fifty measures, like those just alluded to, passed by Congress at once. Had the letter not appeared till after this announcement, there would have been room for the insinuation that Dr. Ely wanted to be on the right side when the Knights decided who should teach political economy. Happily there is now no ground for such a suspicion.

#### PLUNKITT'S "PROPOSITION."

MR. PLUNKITT has introduced in the State Senate a bill, which has been read twice, providing for the submission to the electors of the State of a proposition to "abolish the office of Civil-Service Commissioner and the Civil-Service Commission, and to repeal the laws relating thereto." It enacts that a vote shall be taken at the election of this year for or against this proposition. This bill has been introduced at the instigation of the Tammany opponents of the Civil-Service Law from this city, as the only means of overcoming or getting around the opposition to its repeal which they encounter in the Legislature every year. They calculate that if they can get a majority at the polls in favor of the proposition, the fear of "the reform club," under which even the worst legislators now live, would be removed, and they would make haste to restore the offices to the spoilsmen, whose importunities they now find it so difficult to withstand.

But why should they expect a majority at the polls? it may be asked. For the simple reason, which they have constantly in mind, that it is very hard to call out a full vote of the electors except on plain, pressing, and practical questions, possessing a strong public interest, which the election will decide, such as the election of high officers and the adoption of Constitutional Amendments. On "propositions" submitted by the Legislature merely for the purpose of ascertaining the drift of popular opinion, that great mass of the electors who are busy with honest industry, will not take the trouble to inform themselves, or even to go to the polls. But the other kind of voters, to whom "politics" means simply a struggle for the offices, and to whom the Civil-Service Law is, therefore, odious, would take the deepest interest in the proposition, and would drag to the polls every one whom they influence, and might possibly get a majority on a light vote. At all events, what the supporters of the Plunkitt bill count on is the apathy of the friends of the reform and the great activity of its enemies, in what would probably be their last chance to strike a blow at it.

This much by way of explanation of Plunkitt's scheme. Now as to its propriety. The people of New York pay the State Legislature \$211,200 for about six months' work, and provide them with a costly building to work in. This work is legislation, and legislation does not mean simply reading bills three times and then voting on them. It means the careful examination of the subjects on which legislation is proposed, within the limits set by the Constitution, and the decision by the legislators, with such lights as they have, what ought to be done about them. That is what they are paid for, and they are paid handsomely. They are, in other words, hired by the voters to attend to their law-making, and to save them the trouble and expense of voting on every piece of business which has to be done for the State. Any legislator who does not feel himself competent for this work, or who feels the need of a popular vote before he can make up his mind about such a commonplace matter as the best mode

of ascertaining the fitness of State employees for their places, ought to resign and go home. If Plunkitt be in need of this guidance, Plunkitt ought to resign. If the Judiciary Committee who have reported this bill favorably, feel the need of it, every man of them ought to go home, and tell their constituencies that they are not up to their work. Their performance is nearly as absurd as that of a bank cashier who insisted on getting the stockholders together every day or two to balance his books. In other words, if the bill is passed, it will be a confession of fraud and incompetency on the part of every man voting for it.

Moreover, the Legislature of the State of New York as created by the Constitution is a law-making body, and not a committee for arranging plébiscites. The sole case in which the Legislature is justified in taking a popular vote on a law is prescribed in the Constitution, section 12 of article vii., where popular approval is required for the creation of a State debt over and above a limited amount. This question was fully discussed by the Court of Appeals, in the case of Barto against Himrod, which arose under an attempt of the Legislature to shirk its responsibility in the same way in the matter of an act establishing free schools. It tried to throw the burden on the people by taking a popular vote on the bill, but the Court of Appeals pronounced the act unconstitutional and void. That decision is not exactly applicable to Plunkitt's proposition, for we do not understand that he thinks a majority vote in its favor will make it a law, but the Court was very emphatic in its condemnation of the Plunkitt principle, namely, that the Legislature "may take a popular vote on the identical question which the Constitution makes it the duty of the Legislature itself to decide." Said Chief Justice Ruggles:

"They have no more authority to refer such a question to the whole people than to an individual. The people are sovereign, but their sovereignty must be exercised in the mode which they have pointed out in the Constitution. All legislative power is derived from the people; but when the people adopted the Constitution, they surrendered the power of making laws to the Legislature, and imposed it upon that body as a duty. They did not reserve to themselves the power of ratifying or adopting laws proposed by the Legislature, except in the single case of contracting public debt. They probably foresaw the evil consequences likely to arise from such a reservation. These are well and forcibly expressed by Mr. Justice Johnson in his opinion in the case of Johnson v. Rich, 9 Barb., 686. 'I regard it,' said he, 'as an unwise and unsound policy, calculated to lead to loose and improvident legislation, and to take away from the legislator all just sense of his high and enduring responsibility to his constituents and to posterity, by shifting that responsibility upon others. Experience has also shown that laws passed in this manner are seldom permanent, but are changed the moment the excitement under which they are ratified has abated or reversed its current; of all the evils which afflict a State, that of unstable and capricious legislation is among the greatest.'"

It was discussed again in the case of the Bank of Chenango against Brown (26 N. Y., p. 470), with like result. The Court again said that the Legislature "cannot delegate to the people the power to vote on the precise question which the Constitution makes it their own duty to decide, that is, the expediency of a given law." It was discussed again in the case of Clarke against the City of Rochester (28 N. Y., p. 633), and Chief-Justice Denio then said:

"The Government organized by the Constitution was considered to be, as it undoubtedly is, that of a representative republic, and no power existed in the Legislature to convert it into a pure democracy. The organization of the law-making power is one of the principal purposes of a constitutional charter of government, and in all communities of considerable extent this must be effected by means of a system of representation by which people at stated intervals delegate to citizens chosen by them the power of enacting general laws by which all members of the State are to be governed. That purpose is expressed in the Constitution of this State by the declaration that the legislative power shall be vested in the Senate and Assembly."

We would warn members of the Legislature that they will not escape these weighty condemnations by the cheap device of submitting "propositions" to the people, instead of actual bills. They began this plan of shirking their responsibility in 1883 by submitting a proposition about convict labor; but the public will not stand another repetition of this. They will not submit to be saddled with the expense and trouble of deciding questions which they have hired legislators to decide. Therefore, any member of the Legislature who does not feel himself mentally or morally competent to vote aye or no out of his own head on so simple a matter as the question whether the Civil-Service Commission, which the Legislature itself has created, ought to be abolished, ought to resign at once and make way for a better man.

#### POLITICAL SCIENTISTS.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY'S manifesto about the Irish question, published in Saturday morning's *Tribune*, is extremely interesting, as showing what kind of government the modern world would get were the Comtist scheme, of having councils of scientific men set to rule over the nations, carried out. He expresses in thorough Carlylese his contempt for "government by average opinion," which he says "is merely a circuitous method of going to the devil," and demands instead of it "one real statesman" of "the calibre of Pitt or Burke, to say nothing of Strafford and Pym." The only mark of such a statesman that Mr. Huxley furnishes to the English people is, that he (the statesman) would "stand up" and tell his countrymen that "the proposed disruption of the Union [with Ireland] is cowardly wickedness," "an act base in itself and fraught with immeasurable evil." But if this performance is all that is necessary for statesmanship, England swarms to-day with real statesmen. Hundreds of politicians, and particularly Lord Randolph Churchill, have stood up and told Englishmen this very thing, and yet Mr. Huxley says, a little further on, that at the last election "he would have voted for the Conservatives for the first time in his life had it not been for Lord Randolph Churchill."

In Parnell he recognizes a genuine leader of men of the Carlylese sort. He says of him:

"Mr. Parnell has great qualities. For the first time the Irish malcontents have a leader who is not eloquent and who is honest, who knows what he wants and faces the risks involved in getting it. Our poor Right Honorable rhetoricians are no match for this man, who understands realities. I believe that he will succeed, and that success will destroy him, and I am very sorry for him. I respect him. I believe also that his success will destroy English politicians who permit themselves to be his instruments, as soon as a bitter experience of the consequence has brought Englishmen and Scotchmen, and I will add Irishmen, to their senses."

Nevertheless, instead of rejoicing that the Irish have got a genuine leader who "understands realities," and encouraging the English, who have not got one, to listen to him and heed him, he dismisses him with the pleasant remark that "success will destroy him."

Carlylese philosophers discoursing on politics have always been a little obscure. They have never yet furnished the world with a good working plan of government, but we doubt if any of them have been more barren in their utterances than Mr. Huxley. What encouragement is there for public men to "understand the realities," and become genuine leaders of men, when success will only ruin them? Surely if the Carlylese gospel had real salvation in it, it would be the duty of the English public now to throw their own statesmen overboard and buckle to Parnell with all their might. In fact, it seems to us painfully apparent that there is no use in being a real statesman, or grasping the verities, if one does not agree with Professor Huxley on the leading question of the day.

The manifesto also gives no reason for despising "the average opinion," except that on a particular question Professor Huxley does not share it. If it agreed with his own, touching Gladstone's effort to settle the long quarrel with Ireland, it is plain it would be much more respectable. The appearance of Sir John Lubbock at the furious Jingo meeting at Guildhall at which Gladstone and Parnell were hissed, makes the scientific opposition to Gladstone now very complete. Tyndall is as furious a Jingo and anti-Gladstonian as anybody, and we suppose there are other scientists of less note also boiling over with indignation against him more privately.

The phenomenon is most regrettable, because it will help to increase the growing popular contempt and dislike for "the scholar in politics." The occasional appearances of scientists like Tyndall and Huxley in the political arena are mischievous, because they do not bring with them a scrap or vestige of their scientific equipment. When they get "inside politics," they rant and roar just like any stump orator. This is not all. They go much further in the direction of non-science than any politician, for they demand before they begin their experiments, not the facts as they are, but facts as they would like them to be. Mr. Gladstone did not make modern England or modern Ireland. He found them as they are—that is, what six centuries of causation have made them; and the problem he has to solve is to make the actual Englishman and Irishman, and not the ideal Huxleyan Englishman and Irishman, stop quarrelling. The "average opinion," which Huxley abuses him for regarding, is also one of the great facts of the problem. There is no more use in calling him names for taking it into account than abusing a chemist because alkalis are alkalis instead of being acids, or an artilleryman for allowing for the resistance of the air. In truth, the scientists rarely open their lips about politics except when they are much excited about it, and they then almost invariably reveal their incapacity for political thinking. The difficulty of collecting and arranging the facts of all political prob-

lems, and the noise and confusion through which average opinion expresses itself, shock their sense of order and disturb their judgment. If they were ever to succeed to the government of the world, they would never be satisfied with anything short of a drilled society, from which political opinion would issue in prescribed lengths with official labels of soundness.

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE BRITISH PREMIER.

LONDON, March 27.

MR. GLADSTONE'S closed hand is to remain closed until the 8th of April. On that day he will make a statement and possibly ask leave to introduce a bill relating to the government of Ireland. It is taken for certain that before the statement is made Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan will have retired from the Cabinet. They will retain office, if they can, until the Crofters' Bill is well on its way through Committee; then they will go, and their places will probably be filled by smaller men. As to the nature of Mr. Gladstone's scheme, and the points at issue between him and his colleagues, we have literally no information. We have indeed a considerable number of paragraphs with large-type headings, but the headings have nothing behind them. They are like the scenes run forward while the chief tableau of the piece is being prepared. A vast extent of country is indicated or suggested; secondary characters enter and engage in conversations which nobody follows; the attention of the audience is held in reserve by the mysterious sounds of shuffling and thumping behind. It would be a waste of time to discuss all the statements which have been made this week "on the best authority." They may all be summed up in the phrase of Goldsmith's coffee-house politician, "A certain Minister is reported to cherish secret intentions, but this requires confirmation." Before Mr. Gladstone tells us what his intentions are, your readers may, perhaps, like to know what are the questions which the country will expect him to answer.

First, he will have to let us know in what order he proposes to take the various branches of the Irish difficulty. Is it to be a case of home rule first—Mr. Parnell's one-plank platform of November last; or shall we have a land-purchase measure first—a bridge on which the landlords may cross St. George's Channel before Mr. Parnell comes to his kingdom? This question the Prime Minister will probably meet by demanding to have the two measures considered together. They are indeed so closely connected that neither can well stand without the other. If they are taken together, the effect on parties will be curious. Landlords who have been looking forward with dread to the possible policy of a native Parliament will welcome home rule if it is combined with a generous scheme of land purchase. On the other hand, many Radicals who are willing to grant home rule will object strongly to a scheme for buying out the landlords on the credit of the imperial exchequer.

If Mr. Gladstone proposes purchase, he will have to meet opposition from two quarters. There are the enemies of the landlords, who grudge them the proposed compensation. Mr. Davitt has already been heard to protest against any leniency being shown to an "idle and worthless class." An ardent Home Ruler tells me that he means to echo this protest as soon as he gets a chance—and why? Because he thinks it would be a mistake to turn the landlords out altogether. He wishes to curtail their power and to get as much out of them as possible; but they do serve certain use-