

"BLAINE AND A SURPLUS."

THERE could hardly be a better illustration of the soundness of Dr. Watts's proposition, that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," than the situation in which the Republican party finds itself to-day. It has allowed itself to remain ever since the restoration of specie payments in 1879 without any policy or programme. In its canvass it has treated the voters to nothing better than the more hateful memories of the civil war, and dismal predictions of the national ruin which would follow the transfer of the Government to the hands of a party containing fully one-half the citizens of the United States. All exhortations to the leaders to enter on an affirmative course of some kind—to take up the advocacy of some change for the better, either in State or nation, to deal vigorously with some question on which legislation was possible, to push forward even such meagre proposals touching the tariff and administrative reform as found a place in its own platforms, to send the mere machinists, like Platt and Chandler, and ranters, like Foraker and Tuttle, to the rear, and bring to the front, if it had them, men who, instead of for ever "pointing with pride" to the past, were looking hopefully to the future, and had something to say which would kindle the enthusiasm of young men with the only thing which ever kindles the enthusiasm of men who are worth anything, namely, the prospect of action—all such exhortations were vain. They preferred to fold their hands and jeer at the passers-by, and wait for something to turn up, like impecunious corner loafers.

From this there naturally and inevitably resulted a state of demoralization which has had no parallel in the history of parties. Let us, for the benefit of those who may be disposed to think this is a strong assertion, cite one illustration which is unique in its way. We, at all events, know of nothing like it in the politics of this or any other constitutional country. We mean the boast of the principal organ of the party, the *New York Tribune*, that at the elections in this most important State of the Union, the Republican ticket is always defeated when—that is, because—the Mugwumps support it. Now, this allegation is either false or true. If it be false, what are we to think of the condition of an organization which allows its chief spokesman to print, month after month, statements reflecting so seriously both on the honesty and good sense of its members? It is no answer to this to say—as some do—that the editor of the *Tribune* is an absurd person whose utterances are of no consequence. The fact is, that he is the chief journalistic exponent of the ideas, aims, and aspirations of the party, at least in the Eastern States, and the mere willingness of the party in New York to let him do organ work for it is a symptom which cannot be overlooked or made light of.

If, on the other hand, the allegation be true, consider for one moment what it means. It means that a large body of Republicans in New York are so little interested in maintain-

ing the influence and prestige of the party, or in furthering its ideas and increasing its chances of restoration to power, that they are ready at every election to refuse to vote its ticket if they find that some other men, whom they do not like, are going to support it. Hitherto such motives of action have been confined to the playgrounds of kindergartens. But, according to the Republican organ, so little hold has the Republican party now on the affection, or zeal, or interest, or ideas of its members, that they allow infantile spite and jealousy to govern their conduct on election day, and can rejoice over its defeat as readily as over the failure of a dinner party to which they were not invited. And yet this is a party which once led millions in arms to the battlefield, and to which Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg.

Satan does not long neglect an idle man in a cantankerous state of mind. He soon supplies him with work to do, and plenty of it. Nor does he neglect a party which has long stood waiting for somebody to supply it with an issue, and tried to fill up the time with little sleight-of-hand tricks. The main reliance of the Republican party for an issue has, in fact, for years, been its enemies, the Democrats. In so far as Republicans have thought of the future at all, they have calculated on the Democrats doing something which could be condemned, or saying something which could be traversed. On the possibility of the Democrats doing something which could not be safely condemned, or saying something which could not be safely gainsaid, they did not speculate. Consequently, the President's attack on the surplus, which they themselves have often promised to deal with, has caught them as a squall catches a ship with all sail set and the crew drunk. It has taken them unprepared, and, in the first moments of confusion, allowed James G. Blaine to come on deck and take command, and declare that a surplus is a good thing, and ought to be maintained for the benefit of real-estate owners! So that the party is actually committed to-day, as far as it can be committed before the Convention meets, to the cry of "Blaine and a surplus," as the best appeal it can make to the country in 1888. That is, its stock in trade consists of a thoroughly discredited, very erratic, and mendacious politician, and a novelty in finance so ridiculous that its supporters do not venture to discuss it.

A USEFUL LESSON.

THE news comes from Philadelphia that the receipts of the Executive Committee of the Knights of Labor are not now sufficient to pay the regular running expenses of the order. The membership has fallen off to such a degree that the income of the general treasury, it is said, is not over one-fifth of what it was a year ago. Fears are entertained, too, by the officers that they will have to mortgage "the palatial mansion" in North Broad Street which was purchased and handsomely furnished as headquarters, in order to show the capitalist world that workingmen, too, were going to

have their share of the luxuries of this life. Moreover, the malcontents and secessionists have preferred a charge against the President, Mr. Powderly, and two of his coadjutors, of having misappropriated \$100,000 of the money of the organization during the past year, and they are demanding an itemized account of the expenditure, which it will probably be hard to render, and in default of which they threaten to appeal to the courts. On top of all this sorrow and confusion came the news that Mr. Powderly was laid up with a hemorrhage from the lungs. He is recovering, but we need hardly say that a man liable to hemorrhages from the lungs is not a person who can restore fallen fortunes, whether his own or those of anybody else. Nothing, it is said, has done so much to break him down as the disasters which have overtaken the Order. Their full extent was forcibly brought home to him during a recent lecturing trip he made through the manufacturing towns of New England, when he obtained only very small and unsympathetic audiences. In fact, it is a reasonable expectation that the Order will in a year or two more have ceased to exist even in name.

There would not be much use in drawing the moral of all this for the class of workingmen who contribute their money to build up "noble and holy orders," and pay salaries to "Grand Master Workmen," and buy palatial mansions for "general offices." They, as a rule, give but little heed to what they call the "capitalistic press," and have always to learn their lessons in politics and political economy through more or less bitter experience. But we think we may once more, with some profit, call the collapse of the organization to the attention of those preachers and editors and philanthropists of all grades and callings who persuaded themselves, and tried to persuade others, two years ago, that the appearance of the Knights of Labor on the scene indicated the near approach of a great social and economic revolution, in which the business of running free governments, and in fact the management of industrial production, would be taken out of the hands of the people who work with their heads, and be given over wholly to those who work with their hands and would thenceforward be the rulers of human society. The amount of flatulent sociological speculation, and of vapid warning to the rich to put their houses in order and prepare for the deluge, which this assumption produced, makes one now, on looking back at it, almost ashamed of one's species. A very large proportion of those who indulged in this speculation were what are called "men of education," and it must be admitted that their goings on would go far to justify the contempt with which Powderly and his followers look on brain-work. Let us hope that Powderly's collapse will be profitable to them both for doctrine and reproof.

The error into which they fell was this: All popular government, that is, government by universal suffrage, fails to work perfectly solely because it makes greater demands on

the human nature of the community than it is able to meet. The officials are not as skillful and honest and efficient as they ought to be because the people do not vote more wisely. Justice is not better administered because judges are not more learned and upright. Criminals escape because the police are not more active and acute. Capitalists are overbearing because they are too selfish, and the legislators do not know how, or are too easily corrupted, to restrain them. But one of the great excellences of popular government is, that its demands are made on the human nature of the whole community, and not on that of any one class. Every governmental shortcoming is, therefore, as soon as it is discovered, a notice served on every voter that if he wishes any improvement in politics, he must himself improve—that is, he must learn more facts, reason on them better, and look further ahead. In other words, every popular government is as good as the human nature which lives under it will let it be. The Knights of Labor and their thoughtless admirers forgot this. They acted as if there were among the manual laborers of the country a body of legislators and administrators capable of conducting an organization far more delicate and difficult than any existing social organization. They thought they could set up and work something which would make far greater demands on American human nature than the American republic makes, and get them answered, and grow and spread and cover the land, and oust and reduce to insignificance the State and national Governments. They tried to persuade us that Powderly was wiser and abler than Cleveland, and Litchman and Hayes than Carlisle and Randall; but the only reason they ever gave us for thinking so was that Powderly, and Litchman, and Hayes had at one time worked with their hands.

What has collapsed, therefore, and will probably trouble us no more for some years, is the notion that we have hidden away somewhere, in some class, or trade, or calling, a reservoir of capacity and character which has never yet been drawn on for the administration of our Government and the conduct of our business, and that we can, by drawing on it, run factories and keep stores through elected officers better than the owners now keep them, and that a man who has never saved anything, nor conducted any business of his own, is a better custodian of the public funds than the kind of men who now have charge of our Treasury. It is well to have it demonstrated that there is no such reservoir; that we know exactly what we are all capable of in the way of either legislation or administration; and that any one who pretends that he can cure the ills of society by putting in office men who, under the régime of competition, have remained poor and obscure, is simply a charlatan.

THE WAR ALARM.

A FEW years ago, when Skobelev was the mouthpiece of the anti-German pronunciamentos of the Moscow Slavophiles, we pointed out the importance of the Polish element in any conflict between Slavs and Teutons. In-

fluent Russian voices had at that time been raised in favor of reconciliation between Russians and Poles, in spite of the old feud and the difference of religion between them; and these voices had not remained without an echo on the Polish side, the Poles of Posen and other Prussian provinces being almost as keenly exasperated by German efforts to denationalize them as their brethren in Warsaw and Wilna were by the Czar's cruder oppression. It was then thought that some timely concessions to Polish autonomy by the Russian Government might yet efface from the memory of the younger generation recollections of cruel wrong, and persuade the Catholic and Polish Slav to place himself in the van of the Slavic crusade, flying the Greek cross. We expressed our own belief that that side would win which enlisted the Polish nation, and we supported our view by the following observations:

"Making rough estimates, and deducting the Poles subject to all the three Emperors, the population of Russia is about equal to those of Austria-Hungary and Germany combined. The military forces of these allies are vastly superior in quality to those of the Czar, but this superiority would, in a long war, be counterbalanced by the advantages which the leader in the Pan-Slavic crusade would derive from the aid of nearly 15,000,000 non-Polish Slavs of Austria-Hungary (Slovaks, Czechs, Croats, Serbs, Dalmatians, etc.), as well as of 3,000,000 Ruman subjects of that monarchy, men of the Greek faith—if he could only reach and revolutionize them. Count the Poles among the combatants of the allies, and you not only add 12,000,000 to the material they can draw upon, but Galicia remains a shield of Austria-Hungary, the example of the Poles strengthens the fidelity of the Catholic Slavs of that monarchy (Slovaks, Czechs, and Croats), the Slavic phalanx cannot be formed, the struggle assumes the aspect of a fight for and against the Greek cross, and the war is carried on between the Vistula, the Dnieper, and the Duna, where Russia is most vulnerable. Add the 12,000,000 Poles to the military resources of Russia, and you also open to her the road across the Carpathians, the Magyars become immediately crippled by risings of Ruthenes, Serbs, and Ruman—such as ruined the cause of Hungary in 1849—Slovaks and Czechs follow the Polish lead in preferring the claims of race to those of religion, and the monarchy of the Hapsburgs collapses after a terrible agony."

In the years that have passed, Russia has done her best to alienate more firmly the race sympathy of the Poles, continuing the Russification of the "Vistula Country" with remorseless rigor, and thus completely throwing away the advantage which Bismarck's harsh Germanizing attempts in Posen and West Prussia—a consequence, in part, of his late conflict with the Ultramontanes—so opportunely offered her. She has also done her best, by a series of blunders and provocations, to drive the Slavs of the Balkans into the protecting arms of Austria-Hungary. This empire, on the other hand, has consistently proceeded on the internal pro-Slavic path which it entered when it formally became the ally of Germany in 1879, more and more propitiating the Czechs in Bohemia, and completely surrendering Galicia to Polish rule. At the same time a conflict with her eastern neighbor has from year to year become more imminent, owing to dread of aggression on one side and resentment of provocation on the other, both well founded. Russia's chances of winning over the Poles are now almost entirely gone. Only a

brilliant beginning of a campaign, followed by an immediate declaration of war on Germany by France, and a solemn promise of a partial restoration of Polish autonomy under the Czar's auspices, might yet turn the scales; but as long as Bismarck's Triple Alliance lasts, nothing of the kind can be anticipated. All that remains to Russia in this matter is to prevent the Poles, in case of an outbreak of hostilities, from ranging themselves as a compact national force on the side of the enemy. To that end Russian Poland must be covered with defensive armaments, and preparations made for a sudden pouncing upon eastern Galicia.

That part of Austrian Poland is evidently marked out by geographical and historical reasons as the first theatre of war, if war is to come. The mass of its population, chiefly in the rural districts, is of the Ruthene race and United Greek persuasion. Kindred to the Little-Russian population of the Russian provinces adjoining Galicia on the east, the Ruthenes have, both by open and secret agitations, fostered by Russia, been brought into a state of hostility to their Catholic and Polish fellow-citizens, inhabiting chiefly the western portions of the province, as well as the capital, Lemberg, and other towns in the eastern half. There has been a great deal of sinning on both sides of the line. The United Greek clergy, occupying ecclesiastically a middle ground between Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy, lean nationally towards the confessors of the latter. Animosity towards the nobles, who are almost all Catholic, makes the Ruthene peasantry seditiously inclined, and a rising of them against the richer classes might even find imitation in the western districts, as the terrible events of 1846 show. A sudden Russian invasion, followed by a Ruthene rising, would at once cripple the Polish initiative in Galicia, and put Austria-Hungary on the defensive. There is not the least natural barrier, formed by mountain range or river, to such an invasion from either the north or the east, and the temptation to be prepared for it by massing troops in the Government of Lublin, between the upper Vistula and the upper Bug, must be almost irresistible. These troops would be available alike for defence and repression in Russian Poland, and for the capture of Lemberg, Brody, Tarnopol, and other towns in the Ruthene territory.

That Russia has been pushing forward both infantry and cavalry in that direction, she, as her late official and semi-official declarations show, makes no attempt to deny. Only she explains the fact on the ground of defensive necessities. She pretends to be afraid of an invasion by the forces of the Triple Alliance. The Austro-Hungarian Government distrusts the sincerity of these declarations, and hastens its preparations for the defence of Galicia—with the fortresses of Cracow and Przemyśl as points of support—or, as Russia believes, or feigns to believe, for an aggressive movement. Each Government calls on the other to cease threatening, and the situation becomes threatening indeed. Austria-Hungary's fears are very natural, considering the excessive