

same kind, would follow from *any* revision which lowered duties and enlarged the free list, no matter how good the intentions of the revisers might be. In other words, any revision must be an experiment, and if it works badly, of course it would be abandoned.

But it is impossible for the most charitably disposed to resist the suspicion that a great part of the opposition to the Mills bill is due to the belief that the experiment will succeed; that the country will benefit so much by it that it will ask for more of the same—or, in other words, that the Mills additions to the free list will have somewhat the same result as the addition of hides and quinine had.

SOME CHARGES AND SPECIFICATIONS.

WE shall to-day mention a few gentlemen who owe the American people and Gen. Harrison, as the friend of "intelligence and morality," some information or explanation on account of sayings and doings in this canvass. First there is

DEPEW, CHAUNCEY M.—President of the New York Central Railroad, and noted after-dinner speaker. He, with intent to counteract the influence of the President's message, declared, on the authority of "one of the most eminent business men in Holland," that between the years 1884 and 1888 Holland had changed her revenue system from one of protection to free trade, with disastrous results to the trade and industry of the country; the fact being that no such change had occurred, and that Holland had been from long before Mr. Depew's birth, and was at the time of his declaration, the most free-trade country in Europe. All this in the *New York Tribune* of February 26, 1888.

Mr. Depew returned on Thursday from a European tour. Everybody is glad to see him back. We observe that he made some pleasant observations on landing about his experiences in England, and about the deplorable economical condition of Europe generally, but had not a word to say about Holland, and yet Holland must by this time offer a still better illustration than last year of the danger of changing from a protectionist to a free-trade régime, if the story of that "eminent business man" be true. Why did not Mr. Depew look this person up?

Next we have

BLAINE, JAMES G.—Greatest Living Statesman, who on his return home said that the "entire savings" of the wage-workers of Great Britain and Ireland were not so great as the deposits "in the savings banks" of Massachusetts of the wage-workers of that State. On being shown that this was a gross blunder, that he had overlooked the postal savings banks in England, to say nothing of the coöperative associations and Friendly and Building Societies, he went to the 'Encyclopædia Britannica'—to which the *Evening Post* referred him—and there discovered, in the article on Savings Banks, that other people than "wage workers" used the British savings banks. Out of this new information he then actually

constructed, not a retraction, nor even a fresh blunder, but apparently a positive falsehood, for he gave the classes of depositors he found in the 'Encyclopædia,' but withheld the proportion the depositors of each class bore to the whole, as furnished by the official statistics, and substituted therefor a proportion of his own, which, he said, was furnished him by "a man" in England, which made it as low as 10 per cent.; or one furnished by somebody else, which made it as high as 25 per cent. This he did with the official figures before his eyes, which showed that of 1,188,147 depositors, 935,195 were tradesmen or their assistants, small farmers, clerks, mechanics, and artisans, domestic servants, charwomen, nurses and laundresses, minors (including apprentices), dress-makers, milliners, shopwomen, and female artisans, soldiers, sailors, boatmen, fishermen, policemen, letter-carriers, revenue officers, pensioners, railway men and their wives, excluding 138,858 women described only as "married women, widows, and spinsters," a large proportion of whom are doubtless wage-earners also. All this on the 11th of August, in the State of New York, and 24th of August in the State of Maine.

Next we have

PORTER, ROBERT B.—Sometime member of a Commission to report on the tariff, and now editor of the *Press*, the leading protectionist organ in this city, who, with the view of supporting the proposition that low taxation is bad for agriculture, said:

"In view of this terrible loss of the productive force of England, is it surprising that a Royal Commission recently said:

"All increased imports of agricultural produce consequent upon the withdrawal of labor from the cultivation of our own soil, the deterioration of its condition, and the diminution of its products, and all additional tonnage of shipping employed in carrying such imports, are indications not of growth, but of the decay of our productive capacity."

the fact being that no Royal Commission ever said anything of the kind, and that the silly passage he here quotes is taken, not from the report of the Royal Commission, but from the dissenting remarks of a minority of four out of the twenty-two members, and these notoriously the most obscure and least competent of the whole. All this in the *New York Independent* of September 6, with manifest intent to deceive. Next comes

RICE, ALLEN THORNDIKE.—Amateur Boy, and editor of the *North American Review*, who caused or permitted the appearance of a "symposium" on a text furnished by a pretended extract from the *London Times*, the origin of which he had made no attempt to trace, and for the authenticity of which he had no guarantee, and the publication of which, long after such authenticity had been denied, was manifestly intended to prevent the proper and intelligent discussion of American taxation, and substitute therefor ignorant denunciation of a foreign nation, which has no authority, or jurisdiction, or power of legislation in the United States. All this in his monthly newspaper, on or about the 1st of September, 1888.

THE STAMPEDE IN ST. PAUL.

THE Stock Exchange had one of its periodical spasms last Thursday, arising from the passing of a dividend by the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company on its common stock and the reduction of the dividend on its preferred stock. The spasm extended to the whole list of active stocks, including many that show a progressive and undoubted gain in earnings, both gross and net. This feature of the convulsion is nothing to surprise us, since it is human nature to "run" when missiles are falling; and, of course, when we run we drop everything which might impede our flight. "Running" on the Stock Exchange means dropping your property in a hurry. When you have run far enough to see that the missiles were not coming your way at all, you can go back and look for your property, but you will sometimes find that the men who have held it for you while you were away want something for their trouble.

It is not the stampede of the market in general that calls for comment, but the stampede of the St. Paul crowd in particular. It was known some days before the meeting of the St. Paul Directors that no dividend on the common stock had been earned, and the indications were sufficiently plain that if one were declared, it could only be paid by borrowing the money. These facts were published by the *Financial Chronicle* of Saturday, September 8. It is true that the last half of the year is always the period of greatest earnings, and that the returns for this period were not precisely known to the public. But all the indications, and especially the rate wars in the West, pointed to some shrinkage in the last half, if not as great as that of the first. To pay fixed charges and the usual dividends in St. Paul requires considerably more than \$10,000,000, and it was known to everybody who had occasion to know, that the net earnings would not reach that figure, even if the second half year should turn out as well as the second half of 1887, as possibly it may yet do. There would be, even in this case, a shrinkage equal to a year's dividend on the common stock, *i. e.*, about \$1,500,000. But the Street seems to have been buoyed up, in face of the figures accessible, by the belief that the Directors would nevertheless declare the dividend and raise the money to pay it somehow. In other words, the stock was kept up above 70 on the theory that two and two make five instead of four, and it was not until this belief was dashed by a solemn vote of the Directors that the common stock fell five points, and subsequently five more.

The action of the Directors is to be commended, and it would not call for commendation, but would be looked upon as a matter of course, but for the fact that boards of direction often do the very thing that the St. Paul people were expected to do—declare dividends that have not been earned. It is charged that the St. Paul Board has been a sinner in this way aforetime, and has thus fostered a belief that two and two make five in Wall Street, although only four in the public schools. Whether the charge is true or not,

the investing public are to be congratulated that it is not true this time. There is a law in this State which forbids, under heavy penalties, the declaring of dividends not earned; but, like many other laws which look well in print, it is not enforced in any systematic way. If the Stock Exchange would devote some of the superfluous strength which it exhibits now and then in "running," to the enforcement of this law, there would be a healthier tone in the market, and more legitimate business would come to it from the outer world.

The cause of the shrinkage in St. Paul earnings is the same as that which has afflicted the Burlington, the Northwestern, and other roads, which have for their principal field the fan-shaped territory between Chicago on the east and St. Paul, Omaha, and Kansas City on the west. Too much railroad building has been followed by too much giving away of services. So the candle has been burned at both ends. There have been more roads, and consequently more fixed charges, than were necessary, and the rates have been unduly lowered. Some new business has been created, but not nearly enough to recompense the outlay. In this losing game the Burlington and the St. Paul have been the great sinners and great sufferers. It is not for us to apportion the blame, nor is it necessary that it should be apportioned at all, since the punishment keeps pace with it. Unfortunately it does not stop there. The innocent suffer with the guilty. Nor is it easy to say where the guilt lies. Every one of the Northwestern trunk-line managers will tell you that he never built a mile of road beyond his original trunk line that he was not obliged to build. He means by this that, in order to save his own traffic and to head off somebody else who was going to take it away from him, he has been obliged to build all his extensions, one after another. The problem is apparently insoluble. At all events it has not yet been solved, although the ablest men in the country, moved by the strongest of all possible motives, have given their best efforts to it for a great many years. It cannot be said, however, that society at large has been a sufferer from this multiplication of the means of transport. On the contrary it has been a gainer.

The stampede in St. Paul will be less disastrous than it would have been if the Directors had voted for a dividend not earned—that is, for a dividend that would necessitate borrowing, and a consequent enlargement of fixed charges for all future time. The trouble in that case would have been far more serious, and would have impaired public confidence in all railroad management. As the case now stands, each property may rest upon its own merits. The business outlook has not been altered by anything that has taken place inside the St. Paul Board of Directors or inside the Stock Exchange. The only doubtful element in the fall trade—the possible curtailment of the corn crop by frost—has been almost wholly removed. The prospect is, upon the whole, favorable to a large and remunerative trade, and even the St. Paul

Road, as its Vice-President says, will have every car and engine called into the highest state of activity.

LOOSE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

The last number of the Proceedings of the English Society for Psychical Research is largely given up to French experimentation, and in particular more than one-half of it (151 pages) is the contribution of M. Charles Richet. It has been objected to the English society that its members are chiefly literary men, and that they are for that reason incapable of forming just ideas as to the nature of evidence. M. Richet is a scientific man, a Professor of Physiology of the Medical Faculty of Paris, and the editor of the *Revue Scientifique*; but, in spite of that, he exhibits a plentiful lack of scientific caution in his reasoning processes. It is a first principle of evidence that if testimony is of a worthless character to begin with, it is not strengthened by the fact that there is a large amount of it to be had. But M. Richet is of a different opinion. "Comprendrait-on," he says, "que tous ces recueils, *Sphinx*, . . . *Light*, *Banner of Light*, etc., ne fussent remplis que d'impostures et d'illusions?" Most people would very readily comprehend that it is perfectly possible for a large amount of evidence to exist of such a kind that a car-load of it is of exactly the same weight as the smallest assignable quantity. There are plenty of people in the world whose testimony in regard to matters of any intricacy is absolutely without value, and there is no reason why, if it amuses them to do so, they should not spend their money in securing the publication of their worthless opinions to an unlimited extent. The Boston papers have recently contained accounts of the exposure of a "materializing" medium, a Mrs. Cowen, in a corner of whose room was found a trap-door communicating with an adjoining room by means of a trap-door in that room and a hole in a brick partition in the cellar. They publish side by side with the exposure several long articles from the *Banner of Light* describing the extreme rigidity of the tests under which this medium "materialized," and stating that the most sceptical had been convinced that there was no possibility of fraud in her manifestations. It is never safe to take it for granted that pretended evidence is real evidence merely because it has appeared in print. The ordinary man is by habit and education totally unfit for detecting the tricks of skilful impostors, and M. Richet shows very little knowledge of the capabilities of human nature if he "regards it as impossible that this immense illusion should prolong itself for nearly a century without there being some truth behind it."

There is another fundamental principle that has escaped the notice of M. Richet. It is that coincidences which appear only after the event are absolutely worthless, except to suggest further investigation. There are hardly any two objects in the world which will not be found to have some quality in common if one allows himself to search among all possible qualities. It is only when the quality is predesignate, that is, when one is in search of that particular quality, that its repeated occurrence is worthy of remark. For instance, Mr. Peirce writes down the numbers representing the ages of the first five poets in a Dictionary of Biography, and, by casting about among all possible mathematical properties, finds several curious ones which they have in common. This is not strange; but if the ages of several other poets, when examined for this particular property, were found to possess it, then one would begin

to suspect that there is some law of nature regulating the age at which a poet dies. One of M. Richet's experiments consists in giving a drawing of a globe surmounted by a cross in a sealed envelope to a patient, who thereupon makes a drawing of a chalice. Although there is no resemblance between them, "one will be astonished to see," says M. Richet, that they are both religious figures. But, in fact, hardly any one in his senses will feel the slightest shade of astonishment at this. Two of his subjects are named Alice and Eugénie. Alice predicts, in a state of trance, that one of M. Richet's children will be sick within a fortnight, with a pain in the right shoulder and the neck. Three days later, M. Richet goes to Eugénie, who perceives that one of the children is about to be sick with bronchitis and diarrhea. Nothing happens to the children; they remain in perfect health, but Eugénie's mother has an attack of rheumatism, with pain in the right shoulder and in the neck. The italics are M. Richet's, but he is mistaken in thinking that such a coincidence as this is deserving of italics.

Under the head of *action à distance*, M. Richet relates that he mistakes some one on the street for a M. Lacassagne, who a few hours later actually appears in his office; and again that he speaks with a friend of his of a certain former teacher whom they had in common, and soon afterwards they meet this teacher on the street. These occurrences strike M. Richet as very marvellous, and he proceeds to calculate the probability of their being due to chance. In doing so, he makes an extraordinary blunder—the same in principle in the two cases—which it may be of interest to point out. He says that he has probably mistaken some one else for M. Lacassagne not more than once in ten years, so that the chance of doing so on a given day may be taken to be one in 3,000. As he has actually met him perhaps once in every two years, the chance of meeting him on a given day may be put at one in 700. "Consequently," says M. Richet, "the probability that this day shall coincide with that on which I thought I saw him is one in 2,100,000" (i. e., 700x3,000). As if it were a bit more improbable that he should see him on a day on which he had mistaken somebody else for him than on any other day! In reality, one in 2,100,000 would be the probability of both mistakenly thinking he saw him and actually seeing him on a day previously fixed upon independently by some third person. Such ignorance of the theory of probability as this article discloses can only be paralleled by M. Richet's former article on the same subject, which appeared some five years ago in the *Revue Philosophique*, and which he says appears to him to have now become "à peu près classique."

It is far from being the case that all of M. Richet's experiments are open to such elementary objections as the ones which we have singled out. Some of them have the appearance of being sufficiently "irreproachable," to use his favorite word. But the things which the promoters of psychical research ask us to believe in are so extraordinary, and so contrary to all sane experience hitherto, that it is absolutely indispensable that whoever describes them to us should be totally free from the erroneous ways of thinking which are common to the vulgar. There is plenty of irresponsible testimony in favor of supernaturalism in existence already, and the only reason that the Society for Psychical Research has gained the ear of a wider audience is, that its experimental work has been conducted after the fashion of scientific work of the best kind, and that it has been commented upon by persons