

bridges, structural material, etc., they are paying from \$125,000,000 to \$150,000,000 annually as a bonus to steel manufacturers.

If it be asked why the railroads, which are not benefited by the tariff, put up with this extortion, here is the answer: Twenty-three directors of the United States Steel Corporation are in control or on the directorates of 55 per cent of the railroad mileage in the United States.

And this is only one of the smaller and more indirect tariff robberies.

E. J. BURKE.



## THE COFFEE QUESTION.

We are finding out why the price of coffee has doubled within three or four years. It appears that there is a reason; it is not one of the things that just happened. Nor is it due to any phenomenal advance in wages; a remarkable fact, when we consider that such things as coal and railroad rates and many others would never go up at all if it were not for the demands of the insatiate laborer. Coffee has advanced in price, although the production has doubled, because the market supply has been artificially restricted. The Brazilian government is in the operation and participates in the profits to the extent of an export duty of three cents a pound, and American bankers are financing the scheme.

From all this a prominent New York journal of the conservative stripe draws the inference that government regulation of prices is dangerous. Now in the first place there is very little demand in this day and generation for a government control of prices that will make them higher than they are now. If a government does control prices and the people control the government, the people can control prices and there will be no danger that a consumer will have to pay fourteen cents for a commodity which costs the producers eight. But if a trust controls prices and the government can't control the trust, or if the trust controls the government and the people can't control either, then the consumer may as well be philosophical. Let him read the accounts of the Taft-Roosevelt scrap and try to forget his woes in innocent hilarity.

It may as well be understood that the export duty of three cents adds nothing to the price of coffee. If the government had kept out of the matter entirely except to the extent of seeing that the coffee planters and their American bankers were allowed a free hand in squeezing the consumer, a coffee trust could have restricted the supply; the price would be just what it is now and the planters' profit would be what it is now plus

the three cents a pound which the government collects now.

The coffee revelations throw no light whatever on the question of government regulation of prices in the direction of lowering them. They certainly afford no argument against the abolition of special privileges which foster monopoly and thus burden the consumer, nor against government ownership and operation of industries in which competition is impracticable.

WM. E. MC'KENNA.



## AGAIN—THERE IS A LAW.

A pyramid standing on its apex must be maintained in position by supporting props on every side. The principle of gravitation, aided by every wind that blows and every vibrant motion in the vicinity, tends constantly and powerfully to bring it down. All additions to the structure, however in themselves adapted to improve it, but offer new points of vantage to the subversive forces which strive against such a violation of the natural law of mechanical stability.

Having conceived the idea of a pyramid painfully propped in an inverted position, we must suppose its continuance thus upside down to be considered of vital importance. On this assumption we see what toil and pains would be bestowed on the constant readjustment and renewal of the supports and the placing of additional ones as need should appear. And the principle of gravitation being obviously the cause of insecurity in the threatened structure, this principle would be loudly decried as necessitating so much arduous toil to a progressively difficult and ultimately doubtful end.

Some among the topsy-turvy mechanics would unquestionably go beyond merely bemoaning the evil tendencies of gravitation, and would seriously propose its total abolition as the only means of permanently solving their difficulties. Eloquent orators would declaim that until they had put an end once for all to the depressing and destructive action of gravitation it were vain to expect their pyramid to stand securely and hold its broad base aloft and unwavering in the face of approving heaven.

Not to pursue the simile unnecessarily, let us consider now our troublous society, which is not inaptly typified by the inverted pyramid.



Our democracy is built upside down. Its base is not established on the solid earth. Proclaiming