

### "AESCHROECERDIA."

Questions of ethics, fundamental in their nature, involving the great phenomenon of moral order in the universe, have arisen and are under discussion by the people of Chicago as a result of the Iroquois fire horror. Few seem to regard the fearful punishment inflicted on people seemingly innocent, chiefly on women and children, as an indictment against the prevailing spirit of the American people; few, perhaps, are able to extract from the situation as it has been disclosed by the holocaust the slight comfort it affords in demonstrating that there is still in the world a mighty force, not ourselves, working for righteousness.

The Greeks had a single word for that covetousness or greed which is regardful only of self in the present. It may be rendered into English as "aeschroecerdia," with the accent on the "i" before the final letter. It is translated as "sordid love of gain," or, in Paul's noted injunction to Timothy in its adjectival form, as "greedy of filthy lucre," with even more regard for its etymology. Sophocles uses it with great force in the "Antigone," Plato reprobates it; and the ancient Greeks, at least, like Paul, had the full consciousness that it sums up the root evil of civilization, the somewhat that destroys individuals and nations alike. It signifies that shameless anxiety for material possessions which sticks at nothing, and is even stronger as a word than that "love of money" which Paul, in the same epistle, declared to be "the root of all evil."

We all see clearly now, as some of us saw before, that the condition of affairs that brings the constant attention of theatrical managers to the box-office where money is to be found, and permits them to dismiss as unworthy their attention all thought of precautions for preserving human lives, is essentially a greed for gain that is sordid to the point of filthiness. Some of us are saying that the loss involved in the destruction of property, the damages to be assessed for human lives destroyed, and the closing of playhouses and dance-halls subsequent, is greater than the amount needed to have

guarded both lives and property. But it is seldom that the moral comes so quickly on the heels of the narrative; and the realization of the connection of the two is not even half of the comprehension necessary for grasping the great principles involved.

It is easy to see a fault in another; difficult to turn the criticism for another's wrongdoing home upon ourselves. "Yet—  
Seest thou a fault in any other?  
Look in, not out: he is thy brother;  
Thou hast it, too—and yet another.

And this is a time for individual searching of hearts, and for inquiry into the hearts of the community, and how far it is prepared to purge itself of its greed for filthy lucre. Beyond that we must reach the heart of the nation itself, for Chicago, the most American of cities, is typical of the country as a whole. History repeats itself, and there is no people in the past that has not gone down into the dark because of this sin. Byron writes:

There is the moral of all human tales;  
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the  
past,  
First Freedom, and then Glory—when  
that falls  
Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism  
at last.  
And History, with all her volumes vast,  
Hath but one page.

In Chicago there is "graft"—that modern equivalent for "aeschroecerdia"—everywhere; not alone among politicians, but in all the walks of business and professional life men and women are actuated by that "lively sense of future favors," if not favors in the immediate present, which is a part of this crime against righteousness. Christmas has had its best significance prostituted to this end. "Charity" needs to be placed in quotation marks, because that real charity, which is human sympathy, is out of fashion. Lawyers, upon whom both Bryce and De Tocqueville found our institutions to depend, can be found in and out of the legislatures of the land to defend any villainy—and found in direct proportion to the emoluments. The principles of plunder actuate all politics—and Reid was right when he observed that statesmen are merely dead politicians—to such an extent that no voice was raised assignable to

public sentiment when McKinley first and Roosevelt afterward threw down the barriers of civil service that alone stood between the public pirate and his prey. Many of our courts are a laughing stock among great masses of the people because a corruption more subtle than that of mere gold has actuated them in recent decisions of the most revolutionary character, and a Yates can be found to put back in place a judge deliberately rejected by the people of Chicago in the most solemn manner. The New York World is fully justified in its saying of more than a year ago that when making money the American people could not be expected to think.

As reflected in national political platforms, from 1864 when the Republican party asked the suffrages of the people to aid in preserving the nation and setting the Negro free, for thirty-six long years until the Democratic party asked for votes in 1900 to keep us from enslaving an archipelago of men and women of darker color, there was practically no issue before the citizens of this country that was not essentially sordid in its nature and designed on both sides to catch votes by an appeal to selfish interests. High tariffs and high wages, low tariffs and smaller prices, gold and national honor, silver and more money for the commonalty, these have been the catch words in which a long generation of Americans have been educated.

During this same period the character of immigration has changed completely. From the Germans who came over to this asylum of the oppressed because of a hearty love of liberty and all that it implies, from the Irish who left a dearly loved home to escape British tyranny, we have descended to those who seek our soil for the mere betterment of material conditions. To-day the Jew fleeing from Russian despotism is the only immigrant who looks for asylum as distinguished from dollars. And the sole qualification placed upon entry to this favored land is the ownership of so much wealth: love of freedom is not even considered. And who is there to call a halt?

Neither from the American of old descent, who has been elevated into the status of a governing

class by the character of immigration in this time, nor the American by adoption, who is content to be governed if only he be allowed to make more money than European conditions render possible, is help to be expected. There are some signs that a partial awakening is at hand; but this, alas, is merely because one or the other or both of these classes is to be pinched in his pocket-book. Therefore we offer a hecatomb to Moloch in Chicago, and the offering at that altar is the offering of the nation.

But is there less a God in Israel?

Have all our boasts of material possessions, our colonies denied self-government and representation, our voting masses debauched by huge campaign funds and threats of personal loss, our general substitution of quantity for quality, made greed for filthy lucre any less a crime? Have we permitted Moloch and Mammon to usurp the seat of the Most High? Are the heavens obscured because we choose to look at them through opaque plates of gold? Must these women and children perish in vain? And was their slaughter a denial of a moral order in the universe?

A thousand pities it is that such a calamity should be one of God's instruments for awakening human hearts. But greed of filthy lucre is at the root of their destruction, and their deaths are simply a concentrated example of what has been going on for years. In our sweatshops, our factories, our railway service, our ships on the high seas, in our efforts to reduce wages and withhold better conditions from the laboring classes, in our growing love for manifest power, for war, for territory, for fashion and aristocracy, extending even to distinctions of birth based upon ancestral services in the War of Independence, we have a disregard for human lives and for that humanly catholic sympathy that makes such disregard possible by which scores are made to perish every year for one who was lost in the Iroquois theater in open disaster, and hundreds, chiefly women and children, are doomed thereby to a fate compared with which death by fire is humane.

And which of us is guiltless when

we search our hearts? Who is there that does not say, "This law was made for others and not for me," "This is the deed of my neighbor and not of myself"? Not those who are living on investments, whose one anxiety is for the size of their dividends at whatever cost secured. Not those whose chief interest it is to obtain higher wages, regardless of the means taken to obtain them. Class and mass we have forgotten; and Kipling's "Recessional" is good only to be read—in England.

Our literature is rotten with self-seeking. The church is silent. Not hymnology, but secular poetry alone preserves the spirit of humanity—and poetry is not read. But God has not forgotten, nor need man despair. "For," as Thomas Hardy sings:

For, in unwonted purlieus, far and  
nigh,

At whiles or short or long,

May be discerned a wrong

Dying as of self-slaughter; whereat I

Do raise my voice in song.

This much is certain: Whether wholesale death brings us reform or leaves us torpid, all that "aeschrocerdia" implies is death to the individual, to the community, to the nation.

WALLACE RICE.

#### EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

London, England, Dec. 29.—All the reactionary tendencies which you denounce in America are rampant at the present time in Great Britain. But I am firmly convinced that the return swing of the pendulum will take us far in the other direction. Beneath the surface the democratic social philosophy is steadily gaining converts. It is molding the thought even of those who would indignantly repudiate being influenced by it.

As it seems to me, the possession of India has been and is still the main factor in hindering the advance of Great Britain along the path of true progress, civilization and peace. True it is, and ever will remain, that "free nations cannot govern subject provinces." Their own freedom, or a substantial part thereof, is the price they must pay if they attempt to do so. This, indeed, is the Nemesis of history, is the lesson which all history teaches, and which the history of Great Britain sufficiently verifies. For the sake of the future of the world, and more especially of your great country, it is to be hoped that Americans will learn to appreciate its truth before it is too late. They may do so if only some few of your public men remain true to the high

traditions they have inherited from the past.

The mission of the Anglo-Saxon race may be to teach the people of the world how to govern themselves; but this can only be achieved if they themselves remain true to their ideals, and base their foreign as well as their domestic policy on the glorious democratic principles they have as yet accepted in the abstract only, blindly and stupidly disregarding their teachings when they appear to conflict with what they regard as their immediate advantage.

Recent events in South Africa also corroborate this lesson. They certainly seem to have perverted the judgment and deadened the conscience of this nation. The gold of South Africa, which was, of course, the immediate cause of the late war—or rather, perhaps, the prospect of huge accession of wealth without having to work for it—has not only corrupted and debauched large numbers of the upper and middle classes, but has thrown its glamour even over those who have no reasonable prospect of ever receiving any share of it. Hence it is that what is called Imperialism is, as I have said, just now rampant in this country. The big drum of Empire, which always arouses a ready response amongst the ignorant, is being pounded by interested parties for all that it is worth.

It was in the name of Empire, of Imperialism, that the nation was induced to go to war to conquer the Boers. It is in the name of Empire, of Imperialism, that the same men are to-day endeavoring to induce the people to forge chains for their own enslavement and impoverishment. Of course, if they are successful, there will be, as there was in South Africa, lots of plunder for some. But not for those to whom they are appealing, not for those whose labors will have to provide the plunder. They and their children after them will have to pay the price of Imperialism; they and their children after them will have to pay the price of their ignorance.

Needless to add that we are doing what we can to stem the tide. Since July last the Scottish and the English Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values have managed to sell over 26,000 copies of Henry George's classical work, "Protection or Free Trade;" and if only we can secure the necessary financial assistance, we shall sell another 50,000 or 100,000 before another twelve months have elapsed. To my mind this is the best work we can do; for the political education of the masses is, as I take it, the only work to which single taxers can profitably devote themselves for the next few generations. Moreover, this book is not only, as we advertise it, "The cure for fiscalitis;" it is also a cure for the more deep-seated and dangerous disease of Imperialism, containing as it does a lesson in the fundamental principles of democracy. The strain upon our very limited financial