seek to justify national greed and rapacity by claiming for it the scientific sanction of evolution. "Evolution" is a much abused word, and the climax of its absurdity is reached when its authority is invoked in the case of such international calamities as the overthrow of the two South African republics by Great Britain. The writer in the Westminster has no difficulty in showing that acts of war on the part of civilized nations derive no support from the teachings of evolutionist philosophers, and he quotes largely from the writings of Herbert Spencer in support of his position. Although Mr. Spencer has not been on all questions a perfect model of consistency, it is satisfactory to find that his teachings as contained in his works dealing with social evolution, touching the question of wars in general, and his latest specific utterances on the question of the Boer war in particular, are in complete accord. Yet there are many fireside philosophers and pothouse jingoes in Great Britain and America, of the retail order, who pervert the elastic phraseology of Spencer and Darwin so as to cover all sorts of moral failings, individual and national. For example: A big nation makes war upon two little nations, all professing the same religion and on nearly the same plane of civilization. The big one, with an army and resources ten times as great as the small ones, ultimately destroys them after a gallant struggle and a great deal of slaughter. The verdict of these self-approving philosophers is something like this: "All very well, you know, this national independence idea, but it must go; it can't be helped; nature's law must take its course—survival of the fittest." Or again: A thief robs a safe. A policeman attempts to arrest him. The thief shoots the policeman and escapes. Verdict: Survival of the fittest. The astonished philosopher may well exclaim: "To what vile uses may we not return" on seeing how his doctrine has come to be applied.

Now, evolution is either a physical law, like gravitation, or it is nothing. If it is a physical law it cannot be, at the same time, a criterion of ethics. Evolution teaches that there is a constant struggle for life going on throughout all nature, mankind included. It does not say by what means the struggle shall be carried on; all it stipulates is that there shall be a struggle. Evolution, when it comes to deal with man, finds barriers which limit its severity and determine its course. These barriers are supplied by the moral law. Every "thou shalt not" of the decalogue is an interference with the severity of the evolutionary struggle; it is not a stoppage of the stream, but merely an alteration of its direction. Evolution under moral law takes the shape of competition in right-doing. Under the physical law it takes the shape of brute force. The extent to which a nation obeys the moral law in preference to the physical law is the measure of its civilization. What then is a war between two civilized nations? It is an appeal from the moral law to brute force; it is a temporary retracement of the steps by which it ascended the ladder of civilization. In the one case as in the other it is the fittest that survives, but the meaning of the word "fittest" undergoes an alteration. Under the moral law it means the most righteous, but under the physical law it means the strongest. The meaning of the word alters with the conditions under which the struggle is carried on. To attach a fixed meaning to the word so as to make it conformable to one's policy is to bring bad logic to the rescue of bad morality.

The weekly country newspaper has not as a rule much improved in its editorial department upon the country newspaper of half a century ago. In wealth of personal gossip, known as local news, there has been a notable advance. Few things happen now within the field of a country weekly's circulation, from the miring of a farmer's heifer in a slough to the marriage of his daughter and the birth of his grandchild, without being reported by the indefatigable village correspondent. But most country editors are hopelessly weak when it comes to editorials. This is not because they cannot write. It is because they dare not think. We recall an exception in a country paper recently published at Waukegan by James H. Malcolm. Mr. Malcolm's disposition to think was equal to his ability to write, and he made a paper worth reading. As the paper did not last, however, country editors might reason that thinking does not pay in country journalism. Possibly they are right. But it is also true that thinking, if it happen to be unpopular, does not pay anywhere. What must be borne in mind is that vigorous thinking, even if unpopular, does pay in the long run. It is to be hoped that this idea will be cherished by the editor of the Sumner Herald, of Pierce county, Washington. For with the single exception of Mr. Malcolm's paper, it has never been our fortune to come across a country paper so strong in its editorial department. There is everywhere a field for local papers of the high order of the Sumner Herald. Though their merits may not be at once recognized, country weeklies that treat their subscribers as thoughtful men and women, instead of mere gossips, are certain in time to make themselves genuine organs of local opinion.

An Oregon reader asks "what relation the national bank circulation bears to the government in its bond security; and whether the bonds are secured by a pledge of money held, or are dependent upon the government's credit." He further asks "in what way this security of the bonds is superior to that which could be placed behind greenbacks of full legal tender," and "why such greenbacks cannot be made to take the place of bank notes and save the people bond interest?" The first of these questions may be answered by reference to the

gold standard law enacted by congress last winter. The government guarantees the payment of national bank notes. Its security for this guarantee consists of government bonds deposited by the banks to the value upon their face of the amount of the guarantee. That is, a bank depositing in the government treasury government bonds of the face value of, say, $100,000 is entitled to issue $100,000 in circulating notes guaranteed by the government. These bonds are not secured by any pledge or deposit of money. Their value depends entirely upon government credit. So far, therefore, as the guarantee by government is concerned, national bank notes are not one whit more secure than the same amount in greenbacks would be. But as the banks are themselves primarily responsible for their notes, bank note circulation is more secure than greenbacks, other things being equal, to the extent of the financial responsibility of the banks. Inasmuch, however, as the financial responsibility of national banks for their notes would be more nominal than real under circumstances which destroyed the credit of the government, national bank notes are practically no more secure than a greenback circulation would be if of equal amount. In our judgment, therefore, the redemption with non-interest bearing greenbacks of interest bearing bonds to the amount deposited by banks as security for their circulation, and the replacement of national bank notes with these greenbacks, would provide as safe a currency as the bank notes do, while saving to the people the difference in interest and cutting off the power the banks now have of arbitrarily diminishing or increasing the money volume. Of course the government would lose the trifling tax on circulation, but that would doubtless be offset by lost greenbacks. The objection urged against this policy is that the greenback system is inflexible—the volume being fixed regardless of demands for currency. That objection is sound only against abuses of the system, and not against the system itself. If greenbacks were made easily interchangeable for bonds and bonds for greenbacks, the volume of paper currency would adjust itself automatically to demand.

There is pending before congress a bill for the regulation of patents, the principle of which ought to have the support of every anti-monopoly congressman in either house. It is known as bill 2941 of the lower house, and is pending before the committee on patents. It is to come up in the house for consideration next winter. The object of this bill is to alter the patent laws so that any person may manufacture patented articles upon paying a limited royalty for the privilege. Whether the specific provisions of the bill are the best possible for the accomplishment of its purpose we do not pretend to judge. But of the principle there can be no doubt. Under the patent law as it exists, the owner of a patent can wholly prevent its use by the public. In many instances this is actually done. To do so would at first blush appear to be contrary to the self-interest of the owner; but what if the owner, wishing to prevent competition, buys up patents on competing machines and then refuses either to use the improved machines or to allow anyone else to use them? Here is a suggestion of one of the many motives for the well-known practice of suppressing inventions by abuse of the patent privilege. The purpose of the patent law is to promote invention and the use of inventions. It offers inventors protection on condition that they give the public the benefit of their discoveries. If it in fact operates to obstruct that purpose, if it enables inventors to violate their part of the contract by keeping their discoveries from the public, then it needs readjustment. To that end the bill in question seems to be well adapted at least in principle and as an initial step. While it protects the inventor, so as to secure him compensation for the labor and expense involved in inventing, it withholds from him power to make an oppressive monopoly of his improvement. He is guaranteed a fair royalty, but subject only to that compensation he must allow the public the full and unrestrained use of his discovery. This modification of the patent laws might fall short of making them ideal, but it would be in harmony with the principle of patent laws and would go far toward putting an end to the monopolies that rest upon patents.

A tax bill which went by the board for the present year upon the adjournment of the legislature of New York, but which will certainly claim the attention of the next legislature of that state, commends itself to the friendly consideration of students of taxation everywhere. We refer to the bill introduced in the New York senate last winter by Senator Nathaniel A. Elsberg. This bill would secure in methods of taxation a fundamental reform of great importance by means of a few simple amendments of existing laws. In the first place it has a local option feature. It would authorize county legislatures to prescribe by uniform rule the class or classes of property which alone should be subject to taxation. But in the next place, and this is what makes the bill unique, it contains a provision for apportioning state taxes among the counties upon the basis of their own taxes respectively laid for local uses. For that purpose the bill would empower an appropriate board to—

> apportion the taxes on the assessed value of the property, for the general purposes of the state in the ratio of the gross amount of taxes for all purposes (except state and school purposes) laid in each county in proportion to all the counties, on assessed values of property, during the tax year immediately preceding the imposing of such taxes.

This measure if adopted would completely do away with the inequalities that are now caused by equalization boards. The state board's duties would be only clerical. It would have to ascertain merely the gross