Evening Telegraph

MONDAY, MAY 8, 1871.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM.

NOTWITHSTANDING the general expression of public opinion last fall in favor of a Constitutional Convention, empowered to revise and reconstruct the Constitution of Pennsylvania, the Legislature has shown no disposition to provide for such a reform. Several billshave been presented, but they have apparently been suffered to sleep, in committee-rooms, the sleep which knows no waking; and the habitual hostility to all genuine reform which pervades the atmosphere of Harrisburg has stifled a proposition which promised to relieve the people, purify the politics of the Commonwealth, and benefit all its substantial interests. If the legislators wish to establish a valid claim to the gratitude of their constituents they will yet make provision for a Constitutional Convention before they adjourn, and thus afford an of portunity for the best men in the State to meet in council under circumstances which will enable them to tear up the roots of exist-

As a sort of half-way measure, which is, however, insignificant in its scope, the Senate has passed a joint resolution providing for an amendment to the Constitution making the State Treasurer elective by the people instead of the Legislature, and the House Committee on Constitutional Reform proposes to do some additional tinkering to the fundamental law of the Commonwealth by increasing the number of Representatives or Assemblymen to 130-each county, no matter how small, to have one-and the balance to be divided equitably among the counties entitled to more than one. This House amendment also proposes to perpetuate the present stupidly unjust provision, aimed at Philadelphia, which provides that no city or county shall elect more than four State Senators, and thus deprives this city of her legitimate share of power in one branch of the Legislature. For that reason, if for no other, every Philadelphian should opproposition made on the Friday last by the House Committee on Constitutional Reform; but, in fact, the only proper action of the Legislature at this time is to have a Constitutional Convention called together. The whole constitutional machinery is antiquated, and unfitted to the requirements of the times, so that the trivial tinkerings of Senators and Assemblymen, who can at best devote but a few hours of the session to constitutional questions, will in no event do much good. The greatest evil afflicting the body politic now is the Legislature itself, as it is ordinarily constituted, and it is folly to expect that the true remedy will be evolved, directly, from the sore spot of the Commonwealth. The best thing to be hoped for is that there is enough virtue and intelligence left among the members to prompt them to give the people an opportunity to elect able men for the express purpose of reforming the whole Constition. The analogous movement made a generation ago was efficacious in eradicating the peculiar evils developed up to that time, and there would be fair ground for expecting similar results now. But much more is needed than a slight increase of the chances of preventing State Treasurers from speculating with S ate funds and a slight addition to the number of legis ators. There is no use in doctoring a patient with a few weak drugs when his whole system is permeated

with a deadly poison.

GEARY. GOVERNOR GEARY has had enough of the minor honors of the executive chair of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and he is beginning to develop designs upon the Presidency. He apparently proposes to run upon an independent workingmen's ticket, and to give both the Republican and Democratic organizations the cold shoulder. This is well, for Geary's characteristics are too well known both to the Repullicans and Democrats for him to have any great hope of obtaining a nomination from either of them, but if he can rally to his support the various trades unions there may be some chance that one or the other of the political parties will take him up. It will be observed, however, that there is a very large "if" in the way, and the men who manage the trades unions, despite the many foolish things they have done, are scarcely fools enough to pin their hopes to such a brainless candidate as Geary would make. The speech made by the Governor at Harrisburg on Saturday bristles with Presidential aspirations, although the White House is, with the superficial cunning of a practised demagogue, carefully kept in the background. By glittering generalities about the rights of laber and the oppressions of capital, Geary in this speech makes a bid for the suffrages of the workingmen and for the co-operation of the trades unions; but we fear that when the Presidential nominations are made our pardongranting Executive will find that the hardhanded men of toil, even if they are silly enough to put up an independent candidate, will have sense enough to fix upon some one besides a mere trading politician, without brains, without education, without a record calculated to inspire confidence in his future performances, and, in fine. without a single qualification for the office, It is a gratifying fact that hitherto the men who have sought to nominate themselves for the Presidency have uniformly failed to do so, and better statesmen than Geary ever was or ever will be have let their vaulting ambition o'erleap itself, and have seen the choice of the country fix itself upon comparatively unknown individuals who have been content to remain in the background and to accept only such honors as are offerthem. If Governor Geary has destroyed them by his conduct since he

has been in his present position, for he has

demonstrated in the plainest manner possible that he is utterly unfitted by nature or education to perform the duties of any high office of trust or honor. He has alienated men of all parties, and it is too late for him to hope to regain his lost ground by flattering the workingmen, for the workingmen of this country read the newspapers, and they know that he is not to be trusted. Having proved such a wretched failure as Governor of Pennsylvania, it is terrible to think of the mess he would make of our national affairs if he should by any possible chance manage to become President of the United States; but such a possibility as this is too remote to be thought of, and we are pleased to believe that when his present term expires our ambitious Governor will retire to the shades of private life, where he will have ample opportunities to amuse his leisure moments by extracting from his legs those bullets which he bears about with him as memorials of his warlike career. PLEASANTON'S PLEASANTRIES.

Our townsman, General Pleasanton, has made a discovery that will give Darwinism, and science generally, a boost such as it may not get over for a long time. On another page of this paper will be found some account of the General's experiments with blue light upon animals and plants. It appears that light when transmitted through blue or violet glass has a strange increase of vivifying power, and instances are given by General Pleasanton in which grapevines, etc., flourished in an unprecedented manner under the improved treatment. Nor was the General content with operating upon inanimate nature. He tried his blue and purple arts upon the humble but useful pig, and that creature so thrived under the tinted sunlight that a genuine educated hog, something quite different from the make-believe article, may be confidently expected shortly. With poultry the same success is claimed. Particulars are not given, but we are led to infer that the hens laid like clockwork, and that the roosters crew themselves blue in the face. The strangest experiment made was upon a calf. It was such a weak calf that its precious life was despaired of, but in twentyfour hours after being placed under the General's cerulean-roofed stable it took up its bed, or some of it, in its mouth, and walked about with it. A more thoroughly-recovered calf than that calf in a few days you could not find. After detailing the facts of this experiment, General Pleasanton says: - "If by the combination of sunlight and blue light you can thus mature and strengthen animals, you can scarcely conceive of the immeasurable value of this discovery."

It must be understood that we in no way dispute or disparage these results. We are proud that Philadelphia has given one more proof that she is the scientific leader of the country, and that Pennsylvania has so liberal and intelligent a body as her Agricultural Society, through which these important discoveries are certain to receive the attention they deserve. General Pleasanton winds his theory up, however, in a tantalizingly abrupt manner. The first thought of every reader, in learning of these wonderful doings, will be of his own interest and possible share in this reinvenation of the world. If this blue 'ight has so magical an effect on plants and in the lower animals, may not man be expected to get a little good from it? It is quite unreasonable that this magic should be reserved entirely for the cabbage, the goose, the squash, the mule, and not for the Paragon of Animals. For ourselves, we will not believe it. We feel sure that the General builded better than he knew, and that it is impossible yet to say what good may not come to the human race through this improved way of taking its sunlight. The hypercritical will be ready, of course, with all sorts of objections. From the invention of steam down to the time of a Paid Fire Department, every new idea has been assailed with ridicule. The principal objection to the new philosophy is easily foreseen, and may be answered once for all. Briefly, it will not be necessary for men to live in hot-houses. Such an idea would not enter the mind of any one searching for truth for the truth's sake. More or less b'ue glass disposed about the place where the philosopher abides is of course necessary, but that need not derange in any way his old mode of living. Leaving, however, these cavillers, who see good in nothing, let us supply the omissions in General Pleasanton's theory, and look at the possible workings of the blue light theory.

If tried at Washington we should doubtless find the most ordinary men springing up, under the influence of these enlivening rays, into energetic legislators, and possibly-for who can limit the wonders of science?-into honest men. It would be an instructive sight, that of the Senate or the House, with its blue ceiling, and the consciousness ever present that our representatives were voluntarily developing themselves, and were enlisting the forces of nature to call out their sluggish faculties. That would be a humility with some point in it. But not only to Congress could General Pleasanton's Aureole with propriety be applied. Think what an altogether unique attachment it would be to the courts! Our judges, lawyers, juries, and witnesses are actually suffering, although they may not know it, for this new atmosphere, and it may even happen that the General's blue glass will yet so sublimate society that there will be no need of courts, their supporters or surroundings. Blessed day! If the Agricultural Society can do that we ought all of us to become honorary members.

Then, to bring this matter down to the level of our daily lives, it is only necessary for a man to put a blue skylight in his house in order to note the most astonishing phenomena in himself and his progeny. The General has fully matured animals in ever had any chances for the Presidency he twelve months, and as man can do more than any other creature, it follows that under the new treatment we

should have human beings of a year talking politics, joining trades unions, marrying, and in fact going the whole round of the treadmill we call life. There is no evading the logical conclusion of the General's argument if we once accept his seductive premises. Then this most rare Nimbus acts not only upon the physical nature. As it induces with plants and flowers not only a greater quantity but a rarer quality of fruit and fragrance, so man under its influence may be expected shoot into a moral stature little less than appalling to the degenerate sense of the present age. The Good Bishop in Les Miserables, or the popular G. Washington himself, could not have held a candle to the moral completeness of the individual who thinks and acts on the belief that Blue is the only Wear. Then conceive our jails with blue glass roofs. A flippant person may say-"It would be a good thing for the prisoners." So it would, but not as you insinuate. No: let one good hour of sunshine pour through the celestial panes, and the prisoner would have no desire to escape. He would be glad to remain where he felt himself growing in grace every minute. Or suppose a sudden blast be let in upon an old bachelor, that worst pest in a busy world. No sooner does the bachelor feel it, than piff! he is off for the old flame he has lost sight of for many years. In short, the application of General Pleasanton's theory has no limit, and with these hints to guide him, the subject can safely be left to the reader's imagination.

THE MILITIA TAX. Our ventilation of the militia tax swindle has had the good effect of inducing the individuals who have charge of the collection and distribution of the tax to make a statement of receipts and expenditures. This statement, which we find in the columns of one of our Sunday contemporaries, is, we presume, the best that the assessors and receivers of the tax are able to say for themselves; if we accept it as correct, it only substantiates the general assertions made in The Evening Telegraph, According to the figures given, \$22,376.01 were collected from May 2, 1870, to May 2, 1871. One-third of this amount, or \$7295.27, was expended for collecting the tax, and the sum of \$15,080.75 was distributed among the several brigades, leaving a balance on hand of \$2435.81. It will thus be seen that the expenses of collecting the tax absorb onethird of the whole amount, an enormous percentage, and the public certainly do not from the balance of the tax get the worth of the money thus paid to the assessors and collectors. The statement referred to makes no mention of the 15 per cent, which goes into the pockets of Mr. Pearson, the collector of delinquent taxes, nor the \$2.05 charged by that gentleman for "costs," which make his perquisites amount to the nice sum of \$2.20 for every 85 cents paid over by him to the Board of Division. Tsking the figures at their full value, however, it must seem absurd to every one that only \$22,376 01 should have been collected by Mr. McCammon. From a reliable source we learn that in 1870 72,407 persons were assessed. These were those between the ages fixed by law, and it would be certainly a large allowance to say that of this number not more than 22,000 were exempt under the law. This brings down the number of those absolutely liable to the tax to about 50,000, where we placed it in our first remarks upon the militia-tax swindle. Now, we want to know why all these 50,000 individuals were not forced to pay the tax as well as other people? In the first place we know that the assessment is loosely made, and in the second place we know that many persons are permitted to exempt themselves for totally insufficient reasons, and in the third place we know that the tax is waived in many cases where its collection is sturdily resisted, and the party liable shows a disposition to make a disturbance. If the tax is a proper one it should be collected with strict impartiality, and if it is not a proper one, it should not be collected at all. If it is collected, such official public statements of receipts and expenditures should be made as will enable the taxpayers to know where their money goes, and the whole matter should not be left in the hands of men who are responsible to nobody, and who exercise the power of expending thousands of dollars of the public money in secret without being under the necessity of rendering any account of it except to persons who are as irresponsible as themselves. If we must have a militia tax, let it be levied in a proper manner and impartially upon all classes of tax-payers, and let it be collected by the regular Receiver of Taxes, who will inform the public in a proper manner with regard to its disposition. The present tax is what we have called it, a swindle, and the Legislature will do the people of Philadelphia in general and our militia organizations in particular an essential service by abolishing it, and by providing a better method of supporting the home guards.

THE New York sensations of last week consisted of a somewhat detailed description of the process by which the railway magnates of that city victimize ill-fated stockholders, a disclosure of methods whereby panderers to vice conduct their operations on a scale commensurate in infamy with the grandeur of the metropolis, and a touching picture of the universal interest excited by fears that the death of the wife of a shoulder-hitter, through "alcoholism," would postpone a prizefight. This record is worthy of Fisk, Tweed, and Tammany, and if it is well followed up by a development of the movement recently commenced in that city to reorganize society on the basis established by the Commune in Paris, the glories of Gotham will shine forth with a lustre that will well-nigh become a selfconsuming blaze.

-Noank, Coun., boasts of a three-eyed cat, and inquires, "How is that for eye?"

—Rutherfordton, N. C., is to have an "Ivanboe tournament and King John ball" soon. -Yellow amber in large quantities is being found at various points on the Mexican coast.

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