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DEVOTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, AND THE DISSEMINATION OF MORALITY, LITERATURE, AND NEWS.

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For the People's Journal.

STRANDED SHELLS.

A little boy roamed on the shore of the far off Pacific, where it rolls its sun bright waves toward the long line of coast that bounds the Western limits of the New World. Not far from him was the site of an ancient ruin, at which men cavilled and wondered—over which they built great theories, and spent a whirlwind of breath to no purpose, for they built them without any of the toil-some and profound research—they talked without that studious investigation which is so necessary to the finding out of any of these time-hidden mysteries connected with the ruined cities of the Old and New Worlds.

Still near to that little one, stood a half-built, yet already half-ruined city of the last two hundred years. A mingled multitude of "All the nations of the earth" crowded that changing city, and their busy hum filled the still air. But it was faint and far off sound to that child on the Ocean's shore—so faint and far off it was lost in the hoarse rush of the ever murmuring waves. It was not Leon's native land. He first opened his great wondering eyes beneath the pale blue of our wintry sky, and the wind among our mountain pines had sung his cradle song; but a few months to a young child are longer than many years to an old man, and so the mountain home and the cradle song were half forgotten dreams of very long ago to Leon; and now the tropic sky and southern tongue were as his own.

The sun drew near his setting and the thousand leagues of waves were like fire, and their rays shot through the air like bundles of shining arrows. The golden brightness of his northern curls flashed back the tropic sunlight, and danced in the cool sea breeze. The world of land "lay green behind"—the world of waters spread before, and within lay that strange unexplored world of a little child's ideas. There were dull pebbles and shining ones upon the sands beneath his feet, but brighter than these shone the stranded shells strewn over them. One large bright, winding one caught the eye of the little wanderer, and he brushed away the sand with his little tiny hand, and mounted his trophy on his shoulder with the air of a workman shouldering some heavy load. The opening of his winding chamber turned toward his ear and the hollow echoing sound, so much like the pine song of his native land, struck a familiar chord in his soul—familiar, yet so near forgotten that he knew no cause for its tones seeming so home like, and so dear. He was too young to think much but he felt, as children often feel, that he was in the presence of something as well known as his mother's voice, yet so incomprehensible that its wondrous strangeness seemed oppressively vast to his struggling mind.

"Home! Home! Dark old pines—Solemn woods sleeping on the aternal hills—Deep shaded rivers flocked with fallen lural flowers, and winding through narrow valleys—Noises of a far-off land—Love lit eyes peeping over the cradle edge—Flowers as unlike these, as feeling is unlike passion—Soft winds that have not brought a thousand legends, from the secrets of old Ocean's floor, but are full of bird-songs and leaf-words—Does Leon remember the pine-tree cradle song of his own land?"

The sea shell sung no words but its monotonous voice called up the feeling belonging to those memories, without the remembrances themselves. Leon did not know what it was thus strangely moved him, and half wondering, half afraid, he dropped the shell, and when the song was no longer in his ear he looked up in a sort of bewildered trance forgetting where he was without know-

ing why; he wept—and the gleaming arrow of the sunlight transfixed his tears, so that though they filled his eyes they did not fall. How strangely looked that flood of shimmering light to that half spell-bound boy! Its familiar face had departed, and it seemed strange and new. The "rush and recoil" of the unquiet waters made a sound as of some giant, wrestling with his monster foe, who were familiar heroes of oft heard tales, but whom he met now for the first time. So many new sensations filled him with awe, and he looked up again in wonder and surprise, when suddenly the whole outward world looked like itself again! With a long sigh of relief as though some burden had been removed from his spirit, he ran on again, laughing in his joy of heart, as though no wonderful and beautiful revelation of one of the soul's most mysterious secrets had not been made to him.

A few months passed and Leon was back in his native woods again, and his vision by the sea side, and the winding shell with its song of home were alike forgotten, or buried with old things far down in his heart as though they were not there. Leon grew up to manhood—the golden curls on his head grew rich and dark, and the wondering, bewildered look of childhood had changed to the fixed and glowing light of a man's thoughts and aspirations. He was again far from his native home, in a great city—jostling and crowded in the busiest mart of busy life—eager, emulous, ambitious, life's purposes were to him as they are to others—his only thought: and like others he mistook too often a worthless passion for a worthy purpose.

But hours of relaxation come some times to the busiest man, and one came to the young man amid his wrestling with the world, in his endeavor to rise above its common tide. He sat alone one evening in the house of a friend—the events of the day—the hopes for to-morrow—dreams—fancies—lights and shadows of the past—all floated dimly and indistinctly through his teeming yet idle brain, in one of those delicious reveries which are to the toiling and weary the Indian summer of the heart. His eyes were fixed vacantly on the mantle ornaments before him, though he was unconscious of beholding them; but as often times much of our lives are influenced by things never recognized by our outward senses or our intelligence, so Leon, though unaware of it, was led by those minute shells to dream of those long gone by days when he walked by the sea side with that mother whose voice yet haunted his ear with unforgotten music. The particular shell on which his eyes were fastened was one of those singular "freaks of nature" which seem to anticipate every contrivance of man. In this instance the musicians scroll seemed to be transformed to the varnished exterior of that little shell. 'Twas all over written with those "mistic dots and lines" which form the written language of the "discourers of sweet sounds."

Leon "had music in his soul" that night. They say that the sea shells sing ever their "song of the sea, though they are borne across mountain and glen—across desert and teeming land—no matter where it might come to lie, the echoes of the voice of its ocean home would ever more sigh forth through the hollow windings of the tinted shell. So, sighed that hollow music scroll, attuning its memory-song to the written characters that marked the instrument. Faint—uncertain—low—like the spent voice of an æolian harp, quivered that sea-song on Leon's ear, affecting it like some sights do the vision of clairvoyants, carrying it away into some unknown or forgotten region and revealing to it mysterious wonders, the mind cannot, or at least does not comprehend, but which the soul ever seeking for a higher and more spiritual life, seizes and feels and has faith in, even while listening to the skeptical caviling of the intellect which calls always for "proof—proof." Leon was one of those who from habit rather than nature, was prone to be dissatisfied with every thing which could not render

a square-and-compass, a bread-and-butter reason for itself. But here he had proof of something, he did not know what—addressed to a part of his own being of whose very existence he was almost unaware. He was one of that very common class of superior minds who confound sensation, feeling, and passion together, and regard all mere emotion without some substantial outward cause, as unworthy of attention. He could understand grief at the death of a friend, after it had happened—that was visible—substantial—But that darkness of the overshadowed spirit which lies under the shade of the coming grief, he could not believe, for, queried his matter-of-fact common sense, "Where is the proof that there is such a thing?" But though a man of the world, living for the outward life—the outward purpose, the physical, social, and intellectual good, as all should partly do, and omitting, as none should, the supplying of the wants of his more spiritual being, he still had that within him, born long ago on the Ocean's shore, which has lain like a dormant chrysalis in his soul ever since, which was now "bursting through cerement and shroud" like a full grown butterfly, whose growth in its narrow cell had gone on unnoticed till its "time was fulfilled." Leon did not know, neither could the wisest philosopher have explained to him; why it was that seawrit music-scroll called up the memory of the dark pine woods, (long since laid in the dust,) which stood like guardians huge and tall around his cradle-home. He could not tell why sweet, fair faces, wreathed around with long, shining curls, seemed to float before him in a sort of warm, silvery, blue mist. He had seen those faces only in treasured pictures when they sung lullabies to the household darling. But now evoked from their dusky hiding place in the soul, they came to teach him, even by their beautiful, ethereal presence, a new necessity of his nature, the need of a higher life. And there were other well-remembered ones, whose faces, despoiled of the time-planted wrinkles of later years, who seemed from their far off home; to come in life's young beauty as they came years ago, and smile their deep, heart-gushing tenderness on him, their much-beloved. All that was good, and pure, and sweet in his past life, seemed to rise up, released from all the material grossness which had enveloped and almost hidden it hitherto, and as a real, glorified presence, stand before him, and he knew in his heart that henceforth this would be to him as a pillar of cloud and fire in his life-long pilgrimage through the world's unknown wilderness, up—always upward toward perfection—that "promised land" of the true spirit's affections.

That Stranded Shell taught Leon that night a lesson of life eternal. E. C. W.

Missionaries.
"At a missionary meeting held in the Mount Vernon Church, Sunday evening, the handsome sum of \$1055 was subscribed in aid of the American Board of Foreign Missions."—*Boston Paper.*
The thought suggests itself, whether it would not have been as well for said meeting to have appropriated "the handsome sum of \$4055" to assist in defraying the expenses of missionaries to civilize the people of the "South!" for, in our humble opinion, a people who sell their own children (and those who should be their wives) in bondage, stand as much in need of civilization as the Hindoos. Charity should begin at home; and after we have civilized and christianized the heathens and barbarians of our own country, it will be time enough for us to look elsewhere for objects of charity.—*Norristown Olive Branch.*

Their's our sentiments.
Not a bad *impromptu* was got off by one McVicker, at the theater in Chicago, recently. In the play of the *Masquerade Ball*, one of the actors handed to Mac a five dollar bill, as payment for a ticket to the ball. He took the bill, examined it for a moment, and then, handing it back to him, exclaimed, with that tone and manner impossible to imitate, "That's a Nebraska Bill! It won't pass here!" A shout of laughter and applause, which shook the theater, attested the hit he had made on the anti-Douglas feeling of the house.

SALE OF THE PUBLIC WORKS.

We have received a copy of the report made to the Legislature on this subject, and have read it with much interest. We trust the facts embodied in this report will be scattered broadcast through the State. The following extract fully sustains the charge of corruption which has been made against the Canal Board, and calls loudly for reform.—*Ed Jour.*
The public debt is estimated by the Governor at \$10,272,235 01. The annual interest upon this sum, at five per cent., is, in round numbers, two millions of dollars. The multifarious monetary transactions of the several departments of the government, complicate the State finances, and render it difficult or impossible for the tax-payer to understand them; but the whole problem, stripped of verbiage, for the Legislature and the people to solve, is, How shall this debt and interest be met and paid, with least burthen to the tax-payers? It is a debt resting upon the people, for the payment of which their houses, lands, and tenements, and even their honor and good faith, are virtually mortgaged. This interest and debt provided for, all the other obligations of the Commonwealth would be met without tax upon real estate, and a surplus be left in the Treasury.

HOW THE SYSTEM AFFECTS PUBLIC MORALS.

The system of public works exercises an influence more powerful upon the morals, and in some respects, upon the interests of the people, than the government itself. The officials and agents of the system, whose name is legion, extend to all parts of the Commonwealth, a vast engine of political power, unknown to the Constitution, moved by a common impulse, and operating upon the public mind at any time they are so disposed, in State Conventions, and at the ballot box, in solid column and with almost irresistible sway. But it is not as a dangerous political machine that it is viewed in its worst aspects, nor as an exhausting drain upon the public purse; its malign influences upon the morals of the community are even more to be dreaded than all other evils, and powerfully co-operate in making it a festering disease upon the public. At every stage, complaints have been made of the extravagance, fraud, and speculation in the conduct of the works, and the most honorable agents have been stigmatized with odium by an indignant public, smarting under the known abuses and heavy burthens they have generated. Attempts to reform, however loudly professed and honestly made, have been unavailing to eradicate evils inherent in the system. Economy, ever regarded as a cardinal virtue, in public as well as private agents, has too frequently been treated as a secondary consideration. Public servants, whose virtues have commended them to general esteem, have not been regarded as the most fitting instruments to discharge the peculiar duties expected of them.

That practices at war with all the established principles of political economy, have resulted in debt, taxation, extravagance, mortification, and disappointment, is a misfortune, but cannot be a matter of astonishment to the people of Pennsylvania. Thousands have expected and predicted such a result from a system which has set at defiance all the laws which govern business men. Had the object of the anomalous system been to destroy, and not to build up the revenues and morals of the State, it could not have been more ingeniously devised; and therefore it is an extraordinary and unaccountable fact, that with a people so proverbial for practical intelligence it was ever sanctioned and has not long since been abandoned.

MANAGEMENT OF THE WORKS.

Whether it is wise for a State to hold on to the works, and persevere in a system which has broken so many pledges and so totally failed of just expectation, is a matter for the sober and candid judgment of those who have to bear the burthens. Like the unsuccessful gambler, the State has been lured on in the hope of redeeming losses. We have not profited by experience, but from year to year have rushed blindly into new expenditures. Every failure has been followed by the most fallacious calculations to induce further expenditure, and disappointed hopes by increased confidence. In the Governor's message it is stated that in 1852 the work to avoid the Allegheny inclined planes was estimated to cost "the meagre sum of \$591,350." It declares that \$650,000 have been expended since that time, and that over six hundred thousand is still required.

The engineer of the North Branch canal in 1851, estimates the amount necessary to complete the work, at \$773,957 87. The same message states that one million of dollars have been spent, and the Canal Board yet require \$171,058 to complete it. These instances are adduced as speci-

mens of the actual cost of construction compared with estimates. It is believed they are not more unfavorable than the usual average in which the Commonwealth has been concerned. They furnish an additional and lamentable proof that government is and always has been imposed upon, even by honest agents, who, by flattering calculations, are ever anxious to secure the construction of works, which, by zeal or interest, they are apt to over estimate, both in their value to the public and the return they will make on the investment.

If we turn from the construction of the works to their management, we shall find that the Commonwealth has been even more unfortunate. It is not our purpose to point out numerous instances, or to heap up evidences of fraud.

The canal board in 1853, estimate the working of the Allegheny Portage road at \$442,292 35, making due allowance for old debts, &c. In their report to the present session of the Legislature, the actual expenses are set forth as follows:

Appropriations for 1853:	\$415,086 04
Debit still due,	219,727 55
Total expenses and old debts,	\$630,813 59

In 1851, the superintendent of the Allegheny Portage road states that the cost of wood upon that road was \$18,025 22, and he estimates the amount required for 1852 at \$21,835. In his report for the latter year he states the cost at \$30,097 93; and estimates the amount required for 1853 at \$30,500. In his report for 1853 he states the total expenditures for wood for that year (although the estimates were only \$30,500) were \$70,314 17.

We have no data by which we can know whether the full amount of debts are exhibited in the foregoing. They serve to show, however, that the estimates of cost are uniformly as much too low as the estimates of income are too high. That the people should not understand the operation of the public works, and the causes of the heavy outlays, may not be very surprising when the Canal Board, the agents who have them in trust, acknowledge their own inability to expound them.

Every allegation of fraud and profligacy alleged against the present system of management is more than admitted by the last report of the Canal Board. Of the expense of managing the Allegheny Portage road, in 1853, they say it "amounted to the enormous sum of \$492,252." In 1842, they say it "amounted to \$102,195. To this must be added, however, \$54,332, which had not been reported by the former Superintendent, but has since been discovered." Again they say: "could the Board assume that the amount expended in 1852 was all legitimate, there would be little difficulty," &c. "Although the Board have not been able to detect any fraud, yet from the very careless manner in which business has been hitherto transacted there, it is readily perceived how easy it might be to practice extensive frauds, and at the same time the officer be innocent of any corrupt motive. Take the article of wood for example, and it cannot be doubted but that the State has been imposed upon to a large amount." "In consequence of these frauds," says the Board, "they have adopted a plan which, in the item of wood, will save the State twenty thousand dollars a year," adding that "a regard for truth and candor constrains the Board to express the opinion that at least forty thousand dollars have been paid out for wood, within the last two years, for which not one dollar's advantage has accrued to the Commonwealth."

Such is the confession in the report of the Canal Board. Could language more emphatically condemn a system, which, after twenty years' experience, admits of such abuse?

In what company or bank, or what railroad, except that of the State, could it be possible, for forty thousand dollars to be expended not only without the knowledge of the accounting officers, but "without a dollar's advantage?" It is a matter of congratulation, that a reform, whereby twenty thousand dollars are saved in "the single item of wood," has been discovered even after twenty years' experience! Upon a short road of thirty-six miles, every dollar expended should be rigidly accounted for without difficulty, and the whole system should be simple, accurate, and energetic; but for the want of such a system, thousands have been squandered, forty thousand in a single item—and the Canal Board, alluding to such small items, frankly confess that "it is readily perceived how easy it might be to practice extensive frauds." Who can tell the full extent of imposition on this and other lines, when it is admitted it is so easily practised? The efficient management of the Portage road, was especially referred to by the Governor in his message, Jan. 5, 1853, and of the Superintendent he took occasion to say, "certainly a more honest and devoted public servant could not be found than the gentleman who superintended the operation of this work for the

past year." If under such an "honest and devoted" man these things occurred, what might be feared if they were in hands of men less scrupulous, such as have sometimes crept into office?

The Nebraska Bill in the House.

Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1854.

There is a way when all other methods fail in which the consummation of the Nebraska iniquity can be prevented, and this method of defeat must be resorted to if it becomes necessary to arrest the passage of the bill. The Administration will put the bill on its direct passage through the House when it arrives from the Senate. At least such is the existing programme. This will be met by an effort to lay it on the table, or, if that cannot be carried, to put it into the Committee of the Whole, which is the court of chancery of legislation, a sort of Dismal Swamp, where bills any way weak in their powers of locomotion, get stuck fast in the mud and morass.

If the measure can be carried into the Committee, very well; if not it will become the solemn duty of its opponents to languish together, and by means of Calls of the House and motions to adjourn arrest all further proceedings upon the bill until the majority give way. The minority are competent to do this, and it is understood they are contemplating such a procedure. This course is extra-legislative, and only to be resorted to on extreme occasions. But that the present is one that authorizes and demands it no man can deny. It may excite hostility and lead to impassioned scenes in Congress, but this cannot be avoided. If it should bring on a crisis or a collision, that cannot be helped. Better so than that that crisis should come hereafter, when all may be lost to the free States. There is now an immense stake in issue. Vast interests reaching through innumerable generations are suspended in the balance. To act now will be to light a beacon for posterity in their hour of trial and of struggle. To omit to do it will be to ignobly surrender the vantage ground of freedom, to be recovered only through long years of effort. To resist now is to save the citadel. To put off the evil day may prove to be but to court the chains of the captive.

It remains for the northern opponents of the bill to determine whether this one conclusive thing shall be done when the extremity shall be forced upon them. The justification for the act is ample. The measure is hurried up in the absence of any public judgment upon it. Its consideration entered into the election of no one of the whole two hundred and thirty-four members of Congress. It is one of vital consequence, affecting the interests of millions of the present generation and millions of future generations. To pass it in view of the apparently unanimous opposition to it in the free States would be an outrage. It is a violation of plighted faith, a repudiation of a solemn compact, an invasion of northern rights, a conquest of free territory. Its opponents have a clear right, under these circumstances, to insist on an appeal to the people. If they shall send down a majority to Washington in favor of the bill, let it pass without factious opposition. But until the people have had an opportunity to vote, let its passage be resisted to the uttermost and without regard to consequences.

This is a subject which appeals directly to the whole northern mind, to the press and to the people. Members of Congress are but men. In a great emergency they need the countenance, the support and the sympathy of other men. If the crisis is to come on the Nebraska bill in the manner we have foreshadowed, let all be ready to accord that countenance, support and sympathy, by word and deed. If the North has pluck and backbone, now is the time to show it.

The Sequel to the Plot.

WASHINGTON, March 6, 1854.

Developments may soon be expected which will establish beyond doubt the fact, that the assertion of the principle involved in the Nebraska bill is but the preliminary step toward the execution of one of the boldest and most stupendous conspiracies ever heard of. It proposes no less an achievement than the forcible seizure of Mexico, Central America, and Cuba, during the approaching struggle in Europe, and their conversion into slave States. Here we have the key to the solution of that most inscrutable political enigma of the times, viz: the motives of those who have been most instrumental in springing this portentous question upon the country. It is said that some of the first men of the Republic will be implicated and nearly all the southern leaders.—*Tribune.*

Good.—At one of the missionary stations, the question "What is original sin?" being put to an aged Indian chief, he promptly replied "laziness!"