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**OBSERVATIONS.****Farming.**

Allied for concerted offensive action against Crokerism at the next New York election are the Citizen's Union, the City Club, the Greater New York Democracy, the Brooklyn Democracy, the New York County Republicans, the King's County Republicans, the German-American Municipal League and the American-German Independents. Mr. Croker is in Europe and professes to be entirely indifferent to the movement, gathering volume every day, against himself and his exploitation of the citizens of New York. It may be that his "cold-blood" is not assumed and that he is satisfied to permanently retire from New York where he has made enough to support himself in good style in Great Britain. All signs indicate that Crokerism will be defeated at the coming election. Tammany is overwhelmed, once in a cycle, by the plundered, deceived, disgusted citizens of New York. It is indicated that such a rising of the voters is about to occur. And it is likely that Croker has read the writing, although he does not read much.

It is idle wasting any oburgations on him. The tax payers of New York who have allowed Croker or Platte, or both together, to farm out the city for their own benefit for so many years, deserve to be plundered. Their excuse is that they are too busy to attend the primaries. Some of them say they can better afford to be robbed by Croker than to spend time enough in politics to drive out the robbers. Relying upon this preoccupation, the machinists have enjoyed, ever since the renaissance of Tammany after the disorganization caused by the Tweed trial, undisputed access to the treasury of New York

city. But it is impossible to have the law on Croker, or on Dowie, or on any body who, unlike a gambler, extracts money from the public not by games of chance, but by politics or the fanaticism of the credulous. Dowie and Croker would have to work for a living if it were not for the credulity of their clientele. I believe there is a statute against taking advantage of a crazy man, or of an imbecile or of a drunken man; but against the peculiar kind of idiocy manifested by the Dowieites, for instance, there is no recourse against the operator who induces the people to voluntarily donate him their property. No commission of insanity would pronounce these people insane. On examination they reason as well as the average man, but the submission of their wills and of their property to an India-rubber fakir like Dowie is a sign of insanity. If the sane survivors should at any time decide that it is expedient to shut up the people who give away their money to confidence men like Dowie, they must needs imprison them in tents, and it is doubtful if in such a case there would not be more people on the inside than the outside of the tents. There are no more false prophets now than in the time of the Pharaohs, so their kind is not increasing. The populace railed at them then. We rail at them now, but vituperation is not fatal to the object of it and the fakirs are not exterminated. They will continue to flourish until the far-distant day when they cannot find gullible fools to fool.

**The Cultivation of English.**

Mr. Alfred Ayers, an essayist in one of the month's magazines, says that he knows from observation that in Germany, France, Spain and Italy the knowledge of the mother-tongue is reckoned the most desirable of all the polite accomplishments. Complicated as the German grammar is, Germans of refinement speak it correctly. "How different in the most cultured English-speaking circles! True, one cannot, without attracting attention, use seen for saw or done for did, or put two negatives in a sentence; but one can misuse the auxiliary verbs continually, misuse the tenses, use adjectives where adverbs are required, misuse the cases, use lay for lie, since for ago, without for unless, the indicative where the subjunctive is required, and so on and on without attracting attention, unless there chances to be a stickler for purity present."

The last clause of the preceding sentence is purely subjunctive and should read: "Unless a stickler for purity chance to be present." But the subjunctive, because of this very carelessness, which Mr. Ayers so poignantly regrets, is passing out of use. The simplification of the English language has been accomplished by this anglo-saxon tendency to do

everything in the shortest time and with as little fuss and feathers as possible. The German language is still burdened with gender. Even inanimate objects like dipper and inkstand have a gender, and which of the three dipper is can be known only to the native or to the man with a marvelous memory. The German is slow, a trifle heavy and he takes his language as he does military service, as something which cannot be changed. The impatience of the anglo-saxon has cleared a lot of rubbish out of the way of the North American school-boy. Little German boys are still spending years learning the gender of objects, genders bestowed upon them during the Cesarean period of the Sprache, when the superstitious herders personified everything and referred to things respectfully as he or she and sometimes it. The dead hand would not have held live English rigid but the Germans speak the speech their fathers spoke conscientiously and patiently. We escape our custom easily. In Germany it marries, buries, or consigns a youth to five years service in the army and his parents never think of combining with several thousand other parents to change the law. So it is likely that German children for the next thousand years will spend their time trying to learn the gender of pots and pans, beer glasses, policemen and maidens. The descendant of the anglo-saxon has wiped out the three declensions (or is it four?), he is rapidly making the subjunctive case obsolete, and he is making more and more fashionable the simplest forms of the verbs. Only the most fastidious use the subjunctive in speaking, and of the few who use it in writing, their punctilious printers put it right back in the indicative. To this taste for simplicity and compactness the English language owes its use by all nations. If in the process of simplification the speech loses feminine endings, the subjunctive case and some irregular tenses, we can afford it. For the sake of the larger use of our tongue by the peoples of the earth we are prepared to sacrifice a part of the indicative, and it is not unlikely that, before we get through, we shall be called upon to do it.

Writers assume that our language is more jealously guarded by Englishmen than by Americans, in spite of the fact that foreigners cannot tell how an English proper name is pronounced until it is vocally pronounced for him by a native or by some one whom the native has taught, so far has the pronunciation departed from the sound of the letters which originally were indicated. Of course these changes have come about from the ground up. Scholars keep a language from changing too rapidly. They act as a drag or anchor; they are not an active force in changing it. Changes come about by means of those who are playing the game from year to year. The umpire settles dis-

puted points for the time being. He is not an agent in the development of the game. An expression that was slang ten years ago has now a certain dictionary standing, if it was good, picturesque, expressive slang. Mr. Ayres' plea for cultivating the English language contains sound advice and valuable hints. Some of the paragraphs are somewhat unfortunately composed, as: "There are a few words that by well nigh everybody are very much more frequently wrongly used than they are rightly used." "Mastery in the use of any language is beyond the reach of all but a very few; proficiency, however, in the use of one's mother-tongue is within the reach of most of us; and that proficiency, it has always seemed to me, is beyond compare the most to be desired of all the polite accomplishments."

Any discourse on language, however, is embarrassed by the writer's own technical imperfections in its use. Only a genius can play upon a language, express his ideas, and produce no discords, no examples of the very solecisms he is declaiming against. The editor of these pages frequently discourses about the deplorable English used by the public school children, although there are mistakes on this page that the children would be ashamed to make. But there are so few geniuses. Those that are born here do not stay here, and if it could not be said until a master said it, it would not be said at all. In the meantime the Lincoln teachers might think they were really teaching the pupils in the public schools to speak, read and write the English language correctly, the pupils would grow unwarrantably complacent, and the parents would cease to be dissatisfied; all this would happen and more besides if the editor of this paper ceased to apprise the people once a week that things educational, things political and things religious are going to the dogs.

**The Fourth of July.**

Small boys are quiet only when they are asleep. Their noise is a serious inconvenience and trial to grown people all the year through, but on the Fourth of July they are a menace to life as well as to nerves. I know it is the latest note in child study that a boy's system demands noise, and that in entering a room of studious people with a wild whoop which sets the nerves a-quiver, he is but fulfilling a law of his nature which the child professors say it would be dangerous to interdict. It has been my unhappy fate to know and endure some of the children of professors of pedagogy, physiology, and child study (none of them residents of Lincoln.) Considering that they were only experimental apparatus and had had one system after another tried on their protesting little entities they were remarkably good children. But