

**THE FOLLY AND FUTILITY OF FIGHTING EVOLUTION.**

BY LOUIS R. EHRRICH, OF COLORADO SPRINGS.

[Address delivered at the National Currency Convention, Omaha, Neb., September 13th, 1898.]

Mr. Louis R. Ehrich, of Colorado Springs, Colo., spoke at the National Currency Convention on "The Folly and Futility of Fighting Evolution," as follows:

Near the mouths of rivers in Siberia, imbedded in the frozen soil and ice, have been found the fossils of great primeval animals, their heads all turned toward the south. These victims of the glacial period were naturally unconscious of the fact that they were overwhelmed by evolutionary forces. When the future financial historian shall delve in the drift and deposit of our age he will exhume the intellectual remains of old men from the west—principally senators of the United States—who descended into their graves with their faces all yearningly turned towards the remonetization of silver, little realizing that the change in the monetary standard of the civilized nations had come at the resistless command of evolution. To the younger men, whose minds are more plastic, and consequently more ready to recognize and accept a fact, we therefore appeal, asking them to weigh our argument in fair and unprejudiced spirit, and then to determine whether they are not logically forced to the conclusion that the gold standard has come as the result of a vast progressive change in civilization, and that accordingly it is foolish and hopelessly futile to contend against this evolutionary development.

The last five centuries have created a new earth and a new man. The invention of printing and the discovery of America in the fifteenth century—the liberalization of religion in the sixteenth—the re-birth of science in the seventeenth—and the political enfranchisement of man achieved by the American and French revolutions towards the close of the eighteenth—unitedly developed these energizing forces which were to give birth to the age of steam and electricity in the nineteenth century. It is a corollary of evolution that "the greater amount of progress already made, the more rapidly must progress go on." Accordingly, it is only after the middle of our century that the cumulative effect of our progress created those gigantic industrial and intellectual changes which are dazzling almost to incredulity. Today the United States alone has a greater international trade than the whole world commerce of 100 years ago. In 1850 the world's combined imports and exports aggregated 4,160 million dollars. They are now over 17,000 millions. In 1840 the world's railway mileage would not have reached one-fifth around the earth. Today it would encircle the earth over fifteen times. In 1850 the tonnage of the

world's merchant navies was a little over nine million tons. In 1897 it was twenty-six and a half million tons. In 1850 the steam power of all nations was equal to less than four million horse power. At present it exceeds fifty million horse-power. The value of industries now dependent on steam is estimated at over forty-five billion dollars. In 1850 the total annual value of the manufactures of the world was about nine billion dollars. In 1888 it was over twenty-three billions.

In 1850 the length of the telegraph lines was too insignificant for statistical record. In 1897 their length was over 840,000 miles.

In 1876 there were 580 telephones in use in the world. At the beginning of 1897 the number in use in the United States alone was nearly 800,000. The early postoffice statistics are lacking. But we know that since 1881 the increase of postal patronage is at the rate of nearly 100 per cent every seven years, and the magnitude of this development can be appreciated by the statement that in 1895 the number of letters, post cards and papers transmitted was over seventeen billions. So far as education is concerned, whereas the population of Europe has increased only 40 per cent since 1840, the number of children attending school has increased 145 per cent. In 1840 the number of newspapers in the world was about 4,000. At present they number 40,000. An eminent thinker has said that in the forty years between 1835 and 1875 the progress in physical science was as great as during the 1,700 years between Hipparchus and Galileo. In 1850 the wealth of the United States was estimated at a little over seven billion dollars. The census of 1890 placed it at over sixty-two billions.

In the face of such startling facts one must be afflicted with mental blindness who does not clearly see that within the last half century the organization of society has become infinitely more complex, that national and international competition has grown far more keen, and that there has been a marvelous development in what may be called the machinery of life. Money is a species of such machinery. Would it not have been passing strange if, in this age of unparalleled progress, no improvement had been made in this most important tool of commerce? Let us now consider the progress that has been made in the money machinery of the world.

Through what may be called the preservation of the favored metals in the struggle of life, gold and silver became the money standards of the progressive nations. Both metals in high degree possessed beauty, malleability, portability, durability, and comparative stability of value. Gold, however, is the more

beautiful, has greater specific gravity has far greater value proportioned to its bulk, is better adapted for cheap transportation, and has been more stable in value. Mr. Darwin tells us "that the slightest advantage in certain individuals over those with whom they come into competition, or better adaptation in however slight a degree to the surrounding physical conditions, will turn the balance." It might therefore have been foreseen that, if ever gold and silver should compete for the world's acceptance as the single standard, gold would prevail. For centuries the civilized nations tried to work with both standards. Great inconvenience and frequent embarrassment were experienced. But the countries were to a great degree isolated, international trade was insignificant, the world was relatively poor, the stock of money slender, and the devices for supplementing metallic money almost unknown. Mr. Wallace says that "whenever the physical or organic conditions of the country change, to however small an extent, some corresponding change will be produced in the flora and fauna, since, considering the severe struggle for existence and the complex relations of the various organisms, it is hardly possible that the change should not be beneficial to some species and hurtful to others." The expanding commerce of England towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries made the double standard, as the contemporary records express it, "a great inconvenience." After extended deliberation, the act of parliament of 1816 finally reduced silver to the sole purposes of subsidiary coinage. In the battle for supremacy in England gold had won, and the single gold standard theory was now launched.

Mr. Huxley says that the "struggle for existence holds as much in the intellectual as in the physical world. A theory is a species of thinking, and its right to exist is co-extensive with its power of resisting extinction by its rivals." For fifty years after England had adopted the single gold standard the evolutionary struggle continued. When the international monetary conference assembled in Paris in 1867 the remarkable fact was disclosed that although eighteen out of the twenty nations represented were using the silver or the double standard, their vote was a practically unanimous endorsement of the desirability and approaching necessity of the single gold standard. They were doubtlessly influenced by evolutionary facts which were so powerful and so clearly defined as to have become irresistible. In the first place, they must have been impressed with the growing relative instability of the two metals. Silver, which had been worth

AN ERA OF PROGRESS.

record. In 1897 their length was over 840,000 miles.

THE SINGLE GOLD STANDARD ENDORSED.

lectual as in the physical world. A theory is a species of thinking,