

## CURRENT FATALISM.

[By Ralph Barton Perry, in New York Evening Post.]

I have been much interested in the condition of public opinion during the last year. The events attending the war have produced, or made conspicuous where already present, a very significant moral attitude on the part of a considerable portion of the American people. The attitude in itself is not unusual, but that it should be called moral, and that it should be assumed generally by a people who are the most recent product of Western civilization, is certainly worthy of remark.

The clearest illustration of what I mean is the public policy of the president. To judge by the words and deeds of our chief magistrate, he is a deliberate advocate of the policy of having no policy. When interpreted strictly, this means that events are not properly to be regarded as subject to the control of men—at least of national office-holders. The true statesman will not try to prevent or bring about events, but will submit to them and do his best to accommodate himself and his constituents to the new situation. The war was "precipitated;" we "found ourselves" at Manila; we must "face new responsibilities;" "there is no alternative under the circumstances." So as a nation we are to feel our way along, on the lookout for new situations and circumstances.

The highest function to be performed by the intelligent is to discover the inevitable, that men may prepare to face it. The patriotic statesman will no longer inquire, "Ought this to happen?" but, "Is this to happen?" The future presents itself as a series of precipitated events capped by destiny. These events may or may not be in the hands of Providence. The important fact for the moral situation of the individual is that he is in no wise responsible for them. The old-fashioned notion of the moral situation was this: "What ought to be, and how may I help to bring it about?" Mr. McKinley's version is: "What is to be, and how may I get ready for it?" This is very properly known as fatalism.

Were this principle only the peculiar political method of President McKinley, it would be an important fact. But whereas in the case of the president it may serve only to conceal a purpose, in the case of press, pulpit and individual opinion it is being widely and sincerely adopted as criterion for judging public affairs, and is a menace to the well-being of the nation. Modern journalism presents a striking instance of this new spirit of the times. The great morning daily follows, often anticipates, but rarely controls events. Since it has become the sole motive of publication, and the business manager has been elevated to the editor's chair, the matter of interest is naturally no longer the man-

ner in which the people should think and vote, but the manner in which they do think and are going to vote. For the most part the newspaper has ceased to be an organ of opinion, and the editorial page has deteriorated into a mass of rapid and colorless gossip. The journals that exist for the straightforward purpose of enforcing ideas and correcting abuses have become the respectable minority.

The pulpit has always been sponsor for a large amount of fatalism served up in the shape of trust in Providence. Indeed, religion is probably responsible for that catchword "destiny." Yet it is perfectly obvious that all the teachings of religion would be vitiated if such an attitude were literally accepted. To trust in the future is well enough, but you must make it at the same time. There could be no more irreligious plea than that made on the score of probable occurrence. Of all men the religious man should be prepared to die in the last ditch for his ideals.

After all, there is involved here the profoundest of all issues—that between the ideal and the actual. Will you be the champion of your ideals, or will you worship the fact, as you may observe or anticipate it? Has it really come to pass that men of respectability and moral integrity can suffer themselves to be swept blindly on by the current of events, and imagine that in so doing they are performing a religious or political duty? Have we so soon forgotten the glory of the individual? Is it no longer true that man's function is to think, to act, to plan, to lead? One is reminded of the strange antinomy exhibited in democracy. The condition of society that gives every individual the same rights and opportunities, decreases the respect for the individual as such. The man is submerged in the majority. Amid the general loss of distinctions, moral distinctions as often disappear as those of rank and caste. Responsibility is easily shifted to the people at large—where it is soon lost to view. In our own day we are witnessing a parallel movement in the business world. Corporations are as little sensitive to responsibility as is the public. So it happens that widespread abuses may exist without any general knowledge or even interest regarding their source. They are accepted as are wars and the suppression of rebellions, as among the inevitable things to be attributed to the will of the people, or the will of Providence, or more properly to no will at all.

Is it not time to protest against this widespread and increasing moral indolence? Is it not time that less was said of "destiny," "the people," or even "Providence," and more of individual responsibility? Public opinion is worth nothing unless private opinion is independent and vigorous. The people are not an abstraction—guided by some

higher law. If the people are to govern well, then individuals must think and act with convictions and the courage of their convictions. The supreme test of democracy is its ability to preserve the sense of individual responsibility, together with the rule of the majority. Citizenship in a republic, far from exempting the individual from moral obligation, increases his duties, and makes it possible that his fidelity to the right, and his pursuit after the wise and reasonable, shall be matters of national concern.

President McKinley's address to the Commercial Club in Boston contained a frank announcement that the protectionist "racket" is played out. "We have quit discussing the tariff," said Mr. McKinley, "and have turned our attention to getting trade wherever it can be found." With something dangerously like plagiarism from his predecessor in office, he added: "We have turned from academic theories to trade conditions, and are seeking our share of the world's markets." This is the very thing which the same eminent economist declared only eight short years ago would lead to national disaster. "The foreign market is delusory," was then his cry. It was the "poorest" of all markets, he said, because "in the foreign market the profit is divided between our own citizen and the foreigner, while with the trade and commerce among ourselves the profit is kept in our own family." If any one says, after reading that profound utterance, that Mr. McKinley in 1890 evidently knew nothing about foreign trade, we agree, with the addition that we do not think he does now either.—The Nation.

## WHY IT WAS CALLED RUBBER.

A recent report from a British consul in one of the Central American states gives the following as the origin of the name rubber, as applied to caoutchouc: An English artist discovered in 1770 that the new gum was admirably adapted for rubbing out pencil marks. He wrote a paper on the subject and informed his contemporaries that a cubic inch of this substance, costing only 3 shillings, would last for years. It was used for no other purpose in England than effacing lead pencil marks for about half a century after this discovery; hence the name "rubber."

After the introduction of the raw material and the scientific description of the plant by Frenchmen it was first manufactured into waterproof clothing in France toward the end of the eighteenth century. Later on the firm of McIntoch of Manchester greatly improved on the French idea and manufactured waterproofs on a large scale, and "mackintosh" is the name by which waterproofs have been known since that time.—Philadelphia Record.