

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

The social evolution of the English-speaking people is marked by three great historic documents, the Magna Charta, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Of these three the constitution is incomparably the greatest. Rightly understood the constitution is founded in the most fundamental of natural conditions. The public life of Thomas Jefferson is also marked by three great acts. Stated in the order of their importance these are, the law for the disenfranchisement of an established church and for freedom of religion and the press in Virginia—in the constitution also—the Louisiana Purchase and last, the Declaration of Independence. To many this may seem rank heresy, but to any such it may be said that the number of Americans who have given serious and critical thought either to the declaration or the constitution, in the present generation, including congressmen, can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. The number who are competent to is very small. A great jurist once said that the declaration was nothing but a mass of glittering generalities.

It is even worse than that. Its esteemed fundamentals are gross misconceptions without foundation in fact. Not only are they gross they are misleading and socially dangerous errors. The declaration is one of those documents in which the letter killeth while the spirit which gave it birth still gives it vitality. In point of fact it was a wonderful stroke of genius. Jefferson word-focused the desire of the people and marshalled them around the idea of freedom, inspiring them with the determination to establish and maintain a free and independent government. But when he said "These colonies *are*, and of right ought to be free and independent states," he uttered as absurd a statement as did the United States senate when it made the same kind of a declaration in relation to Cuba, where the people are, and will remain, under the despotic control of the United States until the majority have either been buried or been driven to the main land of South America. What an absurdity for the fathers to have declared, "these colonies *are* free;" and then "of right they ought to be free" for if free there could be no "ought" about it. It took eight years of hard fighting to show whether these colonies "ought to be free" or not. They were free when they demonstrated the might to make themselves free, and to maintain themselves as a free and independent people. Not before! The Cubans have not that might. They never will have. No Celtic people have ever been free and independent. No people but the Angles ever have shown that ability. The Saxons have not yet shown it. The

people of the United States will maintain themselves as a free republic only so long as the Anglo-influence maintains the ascendancy. Heterogeneity is a terrible danger to freedom in the United States. It will be found far easier to citizenize in the constitutional than to Anglicize in the hereditary sense. Heterogeneous immigration is liable to swamp Anglican freedom in this country. The absurd assertion that "these colonies are free" when they were not finds its foundation in another absurdity expressed in the declaration that "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The absurdity consists in the unfounded assumption of a natural right.

The idea of a natural right is part and parcel of another prevalent error of the "days of '76," an original "social compact." Both errors form the basis of Rousseauism. Jefferson seems to have adopted these errors without reserve and to have been a political John the Baptist to make straight their path on American soil. Never were words truer than that the way is straight and wide the path that leadeth to destruction—than in relation to the assumption of a natural right and original social compact based on that right. The evidence thereof is to be found in the French revolution, the Secession war, and the social discontent and anarchistic threatenings of today. The assumption of a natural right finds its emphatic contradiction in the fact that though "the united colonies declared themselves free and independent," they were not so; that they had no right to a free and independent life, to liberty, or to pursue happiness as they pleased, until they had made themselves "free and independent states" by their might. In other words, freedom is impossible unless the individual, or a people, have the might to make and maintain themselves free. The United States can never give to the Cubans and Filipinos a free and independent government. Such things cannot be given. Hence, free and independent governments cannot exist with "the consent of the governed." Such governments are made, not accepted. The assumption of a natural right, on which is based the assertion of the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and the equality of all men is in direct contradiction to the most universal of all natural conditions; the so-called paramount law of Nature, the survival of the fittest.

If there is one "truth" that should be "self-evident" it is that all men are not created with an inalienable right to life. No right is possible without the might to make and maintain it. Might is right. Might that is wrong is impos-

sible. Were "all men endowed by their Creator" with an inalienable and equal right to life then all men would be equal in might to maintain life at time of birth, and all would either live eternally, or die on the same day. The "survival of the fittest" would be null, at least, so far as man is concerned. Some fools are trying to nullify it. Taking the present standard of fitness, self-maintaining usefulness to others, and considering the number who have that degree of fitness at maturity, say 21, and maintain it through life, and comparing them with those that are born dead, those who die in infancy, youth, and along the course of maturer years and those who have not the might to maintain themselves, including thousands who are supported by others or at the public expense, the utter absurdity of a natural right to anything, and the fundamentals of the Declaration of Independence, should be "self-evident."

"There are none so blind as those who will not see."

FRANK S. BILLINGS.

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A PAMPHLET. THE CONSERVATIVE

has a copy of a very rare pamphlet entitled "The Biter Bitten." It was published some years since in a controversy with The New York Daily Sun and its able editor, Charles A. Dana. By request, if space can be spared, portions of that pamphlet may during the coming year be republished in THE CONSERVATIVE.

The methods of some metropolitan journals may thus become familiar to their readers in the West.

THE REWARD OF ABILITY.

The great leaders of industry in this country are terribly hard-working men. They may get large monetary returns for their efforts, but with many of them this is obtained by such an all-absorbing devotion to their various industrial projects that they are constantly on the verge of a physical or mental collapse.

The late President Thomson of the Pennsylvania railroad began at the bottom and worked his way to the top of the greatest railway system in the country. There was nothing about a railroad that he did not know, but more remarkable still is the fact that he learned it all in the service of the Pennsylvania company. It took him thirty-eight years to do it. In that time he rose from a shop hand to the presidency, and his motive power was his pluck and persistence.

Has such a man no right to the results of his labor? The socialists and communists say "No!"—that all that man had ability given him for was to work to keep alive the sloths and drones of the human bee-hive.