

WITCHCRAFT.

Bringing down to us upon the bells of memory the echoes of the tumult have scarcely died away. So few years have elapsed since even our own fair land was the scene of many cruel deeds, the natural outgrowth of a superstition so absurd. Wars have sacrificed more and better lives, perhaps, but many of these had for their object some grand and noble end; some down-trodden race to lift up into the life and light of liberty and freedom, some shackles of iron to break asunder and set the captives free; or some misguided people to instruct and civilize. But witchcraft had none of these for its object. A superstition, for it can scarcely be dignified by the title of belief, springing up into life without a moment's warning, like wild-fire, none were safe from its ravages. The truest, the noblest and the best were never safe from its attack. Purity and innocence gave way before it. Onward it progressed, sweeping everything before it, and leaving behind it a pathway stained with blood, and strewn with the dying. Arising from some little event in the beginning that could easily have been accounted for by simple common-sense rules of reason, the mania spread rapidly and in an incredible short space of time had extended over so large an area as to be beyond human power to control it. Quiet homes were laid desolate, government was in imminent danger, peace destroyed the strongest, and the most independent and fearless were its early victims. But in our own land, at least, witchcraft in its power has passed away.

There are however other species of witchcraft which, while not so disastrous in their results have nevertheless exerted, at many different times, a powerful influence for evil. Witchcraft in the zenith of its power and glory never more effectually destroyed all a man's capabilities for noble action, than the absurd idea of a

perpetual motion machine.

Precious hours and days, yes, even years, which should have been spent in living nobly for life's noblest ends, have been uselessly frittered away, the strong man's mind becoming weak as a little child's as the mania grows upon him. Home, friends, fortune, sometimes honor and integrity itself, all cast aside while, for the time being, insane, he perseveres in his fruitless efforts. Not only individuals but nations are often attacked by this same peace-destroyer. When a government prosperous and happy, rushes into the heat of a long and bloody war, casting aside and trampling beneath its feet all regard for justice or humanity, and blinded by a love for conquest or the ambition of its partisan leaders, witchcraft is the power at work behind the throne, and cruelly does she wield the sceptre.

But often has the world's verdict on our action been "witchcraft," when really it was the result of profoundest wisdom. All great undertakings at first were scoffed at and their originators called insane. As of old, in the colonial times of our Puritan forefathers, true courage, cool heads and stout hearts, fought the battle bravely and grandly gained the victory. Grand and noble truths have been uttered for which their authors paid as dear a price as Mary Dyar in the days of Massachusetts tyranny. Great names were stained by the breath of slander, which, in the progress of greater liberty and intelligence, have been erased from the rubric of fanatics and inserted light among the aspirants after truth and the martyrs for liberty. And a period shall come "amid gliding years" when witchcraft and superstitious beliefs of every sort shall have passed away, reason shall sit upon the throne, and justice and humanity hold the scepter, while the sunlight of peace shall shed its kindly beams over all.