

The *Century* for this month contains a very interesting short story entitled, "The Longworth Mystery." The scene is laid in the editorial rooms of a great newspaper, and the descriptions of the various vexations of a newspaper man's life, put humorously as it is, makes very interesting reading. Any one seeking to "kill time" merely for the killing can not do better than to read it.

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The publishers of "Looking Backward" must find it difficult to keep their announcements of the edition up with the sales. It leaped from the seventy-fifth to the hundredth, then almost immediately to the hundred and twelfth; and now the hundred and twenty second edition is on the market.—*Literary World.*

The above is at least one argument why one should read Edward Bellamy's book. It is wonderfully popular—to read it is fashionable; some even go so far as to exalt Bellamy above all living authors. But seriously the book is one that will repay careful reading. As for the story, it is worthless, except as a means to bring out the real object of the book. There is nothing startling in the tale of "Julian West." People (in fiction) have often slept for one hundred and thirteen years, and have awakened to find conditions existing as strange as those which West found on his returning to consciousness in the year of grace 2000. All this is simply a more or less ingenious way to place West (and the reader with him) in a position to "look backward," which is but another way to "look forward." That this position is not gained in a better way is one of the weak points the book. But still if more care had been expended on the machinery of the work, the idea might have become entangled, and then lost. It is the social scheme outlined by Bellamy, that has made his book so popular.

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And that scheme is elaborated in a series of conversations between Julian West, the resurrected man of a bygone age, and Doctor Leeth, the product of the new order of things. West in relating his experiences, and detailing the social, political and industrial conditions of his time furnishes a cause for the change. The desirability and the advanced condition of the civilization of one hundred years from now are shown by the contrast between 1887 and 2000 A. D. National control of labor and capital is the principle laid down. Instead of howling and raving against the corporation principle, Bellamy only enlarges that idea, until the whole nation is one vast corporation, with peace, goodwill, and prosperity for its subjects. The mighty power of the nation is brought to bear on the perplexing question of this country and the men of one hundred years from this time live for their fellow men, not for themselves. The way this was brought about was something as follows. From the time when money became massed enough to deserve the name of capital, the tendency had been to combination. Trusts, pools, combines, with a tendency toward still greater combinations, increasing vastly, the wealth-producing power of capital, were the result. This of course necessitated the loss of individuality in the citizens. A single laborer was a very small drop in a very large ocean, and to gain the attention he felt himself entitled to, he was forced to unite with his fellow laborers. Hence the labor organization. From this state of things, this antagonism between concentrated capital and organized labor, grew strikes, lockouts, and the manifold evils of the nineteenth century civilization. But although bitterly opposed, and cordially hated, capital went on combining, till all the railroads, telegraph lines and great industries were in the hands of a few men. From this

it was but a step to the time when "the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons, at their caprice and for their profit, were entrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as the one great business corporation, in which all other corporations were absorbed became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists; the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all persons and lesser monopolies were swallowed up; a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared. The epoch of trusts had ended in the great trust. In a word, the people of the United States concluded to assume the conduct of their own business, just as one hundred odd years before they had assumed the conduct of their own government, organizing now for industrial purposes on precisely the same grounds that they had then organized for political purposes. At last, strangely late in the world's history, the obvious fact was perceived that no business is so essentially the public business as the industry and commerce on which the people's livelihood depends, and that to intrust it to private persons to be managed for private profit is a folly similar in kind, thought vastly greater in magnitude, to that of surrendering the function of political government to kings and nobles to be conducted for their personal glorification."

So without bloodshed or violence, but by the simple working out of a tendency in the institutions of the nations, the great change was accomplished. Wages of course were regulated, and fixed, each citizen receiving the same as his fellow; the nation fully believing that one man's best efforts are as worthy of reward as another's. The necessities of life as well as the luxuries were supplied by the government. In short the whole daily life of the individual citizen was under the direct control of the government. Bellamy very ingeniously describes the many ways in which those things are accomplished, and the labor saving appliances which were used to render them efficient. If there are any points in which his scheme seems farfetched or impractical, they are to be expected, not set down as grave mistakes, for it is no easy task to describe in detail an ideal form of government.

It does seem, however as if Bellamy has been too sanguine, for at the time his story opens, 2000 A. D., the ideal government had been in operation nearly a hundred years or since "early in the 20th century." It seems hardly possible that in twenty, thirty or forty years from now, anything like so marvelous a progress should be made. Bellamy admits that he is peculiarly sensitive to the secret and subtle forces now existing in society. May it not be that he has overestimated the growth of public opinion, that he has ascribed to influence and tendencies, a power not theirs, and that he has placed his "millennium" too near the Hay Market massacre and the Illinois strikes. But the effort made, in "Looking Backward," to depict an ideal, and to show us how that ideal may be reached by the use of materials ready to our hands, is far more worthy of commendation, however weak that effort be, than the selfish, morbid spirit which proclaims the constantly increasing depravity of man, and yet does nothing to check or retard its growth.

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