

wrong one, but how much more are they to be admired than we who stand alarmed but helpless before a rise of prices, mumbling only some fatalistic gibberish about "operations of the market," "law of demand and supply," "gold standard," and so on. These wise women in France have risen above our superstitions. They realize that they are not in the grasp of unchangeable and inscrutable forces, but are dealing with simple matters which can be understood and controlled. The fact that many of their proposed remedies are foolish and impossible has nothing to do with the case. There was a time when doctors denied to typhoid patients the least drop of water. To admit that this was wrong is not to admit that typhoid is incurable. Let the people who say the French food strikers are wrong in their methods propose better methods for our relief. But if their only remedy be the foolish Musselman "Kismet,—it is fate" they class themselves with the people who accepted as inevitable the recurrence of the plague.

It may be true with regard to any particular dealer that he must charge his customers high prices because he has to pay high prices. But that is no answer from that whole line of business to the whole public. Mme. Gallois is right,—if the difficulty be that they pay high prices, then let them pay less.

The extremely wise person who reads this will say, "What folly!" But will that wise person permit me to hook a finger in his button hole and claim his attention for a moment?

Does this wise person know, for instance, what is the cause of the present outbreak against high prices in the United States? He tells me a lot of stuff about Taft, Carnegie, free trade, gold standard and so on. I admit that these persons and things have their place in this situation. But I can tell him that this agitation is just exactly such a strike as that

which is now going on in France. It has no simple-minded seer of verities to explain it as Mme. Gallois explains what she and her companions are doing. But if the agitation could find a voice, it would use almost exactly the wise Frenchwoman's words,—if dealers who pay high prices must charge high prices, then let them pay less and lower their prices to us, that's all.

There would have been no such agitation against high prices in the United States as there is to day but for the fact that the big managers of affairs did not know of one unwritten law of that country which they cannot change and whose effect they did not foresee. That law is that the price of a newspaper shall be one cent. Mr. Hearst, with all his enterprise, Mr. Pullitzer, with all his generalship, and Mr. Bennett, with all his experience, cannot evade or modify that law. Congress cannot amend it, and the courts cannot disallow it. And poor Uncle Joe Cannon realizes (and states that he realizes) that he has run against it to his great disadvantage. A merger could be formed in steel and the added prices passed on to the consumer. And so with wool, and so with rubber, and so with everything else. But when it came to a newspaper the unwritten law stood in the way—no man or combination could make the public pay a fraction more than a cent. The United States people said to the newsdealers as Mme. Gallois says to the butchers. "If you pay so much for newspapers that you must raise the selling price, then your remedy is not to raise the price you charge, but to lower the price you pay." The word was passed back to the newspaper publishers. What then? Well, the newspapers had to lead in the agitation against high prices, and this they have done. It is a big job, for political policies, tariff schedules, Congresses and Presidents have to be re-arranged. But this is in course of accomplishment.