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Radium

It must be remembered, says *The Electrical World and Engineer*, that when one hears the word radium, it really means a salt of radium, generally the chlorid or bromid, since no has yet obtained enough of the precious substance to risk in attempts at reduction to the metallic form, so far as we have yet heard. In fact the metal when obtained might not possess radioactive properties at all, or might only possess them in a small degree and it might very possibly turn out that radioactivity is characteristic of the decomposition of an unstable radium salt. This being so, it is certainly not impertinent to enquire whether the radium gas is a general emanation from the radium salt as a whole, or from a possible component. The derivation of helium from radium gas gives one no proper license to talk about the transmutation of metals. That all the so-called elements are derived from some parent substance or substances is an old theory, and one which in itself is probable enough, but all the data heretofore at hand indicate that the resolution of its elements is unlikely to be a simple or spontaneous process. Hence, it is well to go slowly in this radium-helium affair. The demonstrated facts taken merely at their face value are interesting and important enough without indulging in speculation.

The Sealers' Claims

A report has been made to the Dominion Government on the efforts to assess the Canadian claims against Russia for seizures made in the Northern Pacific. There were six vessels seized altogether, and the net result of recent discussions in London is that the Russian agents have intimated their willingness to recommend to their Government the payment of damages on account of only two vessels, the *Carmelite* and the *Vancouver Belle*. At the beginning of the discussions the Russian representatives introduced the matter of pelagic sealing and endeavored to secure a reopening of the regulations. To this the Canadian agent, Mr. Little, acting upon the instructions of the Ottawa Government, flatly refused to agree. The discussions of damages for the six vessels was then entered upon, two by two. In regard to the first two, it was claimed by the Russians that the vessels had been warned against encroaching in Russian waters. The ships thereupon returned home, and, as there was no seizure, the Russians held that there could be no claim for damages, it being a principle of International law that no remuneration could be made for a prospective catch. In the case of the next two vessels there was a direct conflict of testimony between the Russian commander who made the seizure and the Canadian skippers. Two Russian commissions in succession investigated the seizures and found that they were legally made. Finally the claim filed in respect of the *Carmelite* and *Vancouver Belle* was taken up, and the Russian agents expressed a willingness to recommend payment of the cost of the vessels and their equipment and of seals on board, with interest from the date of seizure. As in the case of the others, there was a refusal to consider damages for the prospective catches. The Canadian Government will shortly take up the consideration of the report which has been made on the subject.

Corrupt Methods and Responsibility

The trials for fraud in connection with the last municipal election in Toronto have revealed the existence of wide-spread and systematic corruption, and have resulted in the conviction of five men, on charges of fraudulent action. These men who have thus been sentenced to prison—three of them for two years and two of them for one year, had ranked as respectable citizens. These men will suffer justly, but it is quite certain that they are not the only ones who deserve to suffer, and it may be that they are not the chief offenders. If all had their deserts it is very probable that men who profited by the crimes of which these men have been found guilty would share their fate as prisoners, or one still more severely. The responsibility for fraud in elections, both civic and political, is very widely extended. These men who are going into prison and disgrace in Toronto are not so much more guilty than a multitude of others who endorse, countenance or wink at fraudulent acts and corrupt methods in elections, but who nevertheless wish to be considered eminently

respectable. One of these men as he stood up to receive his sentence, said "I only now realize the seriousness of the offence." One can easily believe that. Why should a returning officer be expected to regard as a very serious offence such acts as civic officials and legislators are willing or anxious to have done in their own interests. If all the men who share with these men of Toronto an equal moral responsibility for the corruption of civic, provincial and Dominion politics, were required to share the penalty which has been imposed upon them, it is much to be feared that there would be some awkward vacancies in high places. It would be a happy thing for Canada if the day could come when neither the instrument, nor the instigator of corrupt methods could escape such penalty as has fallen upon the men who have been convicted of fraud in connection with the municipal elections in Toronto.

Population of the United States

The Census Bureau of the United States Government has issued an estimate of the population of the country for 1903, based upon the assumption that the annual increase is one tenth of the decennial increase between the last two censuses. According to the statement issued by the Census Bureau the population of the United States, not including Alaska or the islands, was in 1903, 79,900,389, an increase of nearly 4,000,000 since 1900. The population of New York State according to the estimate, exceeds 7,500,000, Pennsylvania exceeds 6,500,000, Illinois has passed 5,000,000 and Texas displacing Missouri, has more than 3,000,000. In regard to cities, New York of course leads with 3,716,139 inhabitants. Chicago comes next with 1,873,880, and Philadelphia follows with 1,367,716. There is no other city within the Union with half the population of Philadelphia. St. Louis which now comes next, having passed Boston, has not quite 600,000. Baltimore has 531,313 and Cleveland 414,950. The other cities with 300,000 and over are, in order of their population, Buffalo, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Pittsburg, Detroit, Milwaukee and New Orleans, and Washington has almost reached the 300,000 mark. In Mississippi, North Carolina, South Dakota, Wyoming and Oklahoma, there is no city having a population of 25,000.

A Disgraced Senator.

Joseph R. Burton United States Senator for Kansas, has been convicted on the charge that for pay he had exerted his influence at the Post Office Department in behalf of the Grain and Rialto Securities Company, and has been sentenced to be imprisoned in jail for six months and to pay a fine of \$2,500. He is also disqualified for holding any Federal office. In delivering sentence Judge Adams said: "Your conviction necessarily results in your punishment, but its importance in my opinion is not confined to its effect upon you. Your exalted station in life and the character of your offence give unusual significance to your conviction. It demonstrates that the law of the land is equal to every emergency and that it can be administered regardless of the personality or station of the accused. It also demonstrates to all people that public office cannot be prostituted to self-serving purposes and that public offices is not a sure or safe passport to private thrift. The humiliation attending your conviction and the statutory disqualification resulting therefrom, which forever incapacitates you from holding any office of honor, trust or profit under the Government of the United States, are in themselves heavy punishments for your offences, and leave but little in the way of severity which could be added. It is neither my pleasure nor purpose to impose any unnecessary punishment. I think the majesty of the law will be sufficiently vindicated and the public welfare sufficiently guarded by imposing a single sentence, warranted as it is on any one of the six counts, of the indictment on which you are convicted."

The War.

Another disaster, and one of a very serious character, has befallen the Russian fleet, involving not only the loss of the warship *Petro-pavlovsk* with the larger part of her crew, but also the famous naval commander, Vice Admiral Makaroff, who went down with the ship. The disaster occurred on Wednesday morning outside the harbor of Port Arthur. At present writing the cause of it is still

in doubt. According to the Russian account of the affair, there had been a fierce battle between the Japanese and Russian torpedo boats during the previous night, and in the morning the Russian warships had steamed out of the harbor to give battle to some Japanese vessels which were approaching. As the Japanese were strongly reinforced, the Russian ships retired, and it was as they were re-entering the harbor that the disaster occurred. The Russian official accounts say that the *Petro-pavlovsk* struck a mine which had been laid by the Russians themselves. The explosion was terrible, causing the boilers to burst and making a great hole in the side of the ship, which caused her to roll over and sink in about two minutes from the time of the explosion. Only those who were on deck had any chance of escaping. Three or four officers were saved, among them Grand Duke Cyril, heir presumptive to the throne. The number of men who were saved is placed at from thirty to fifty, and it is believed that about 600 officers and men went down with the ship. Admiral Makaroff, it is said, was at breakfast in his saloon when the explosion occurred. Verestchagin, one of the world's most famous painters, is believed also to have been on board the ill-fated ship. The Grand Duke Cyril received injuries which are said, however, not to be of a dangerous character. The disaster is a heavy blow to Russia, and has naturally caused consternation at St. Petersburg. A good deal of doubt is felt in reference to the correctness of the Russian account of the matter. According to some private despatches, the explosion was caused either by a torpedo from a Japanese boat or by contact with mines that the Japanese had laid. The conclusion that the sinking of the *Petro-pavlovsk* was in some way the work of the enemy is supported by the fact that another Russian warship, the *Pobiedna*, was struck and injured at the same time, but not so seriously as to prevent her returning to her anchorage within the harbor. In the torpedo boat engagement, a Russian boat, the *Bezstrashni* was sunk. On Friday the Japanese fleet bombarded Port Arthur for several hours, but according to the Russians account, without much effect. There are reports of several skirmishes in the vicinity of the Yalu, in one of which the Russians claim to have ambushed and annihilated a company of Japanese about fifty strong. There is also an unconfirmed rumor that the Russians inflicted heavy loss on a body of Japanese landing to the west of the mouth of the Yalu. The story is that after 12,000 Japanese had landed the Russian troops, which had lain concealed, made an attack, driving the Japanese back to their ships with heavy loss of men and guns. The rumor is unconfirmed and probably untrue. The Russians report having captured two Japanese officers at Harbin. They were in the disguise of Tibetan priests and were furnished with explosives and tools to be used in blowing up railway bridges. Since the above was written Admiral Togo's report of the Japanese attack on Port Arthur on the night of the 12th and the morning of the 13th has been published. This makes it clear that the *Petro-pavlovsk* was sunk and the *Pobiedna* injured by mines laid by Russian Torpedo boats the night previous. It appears that the disaster to the Russian fleet was the result of successful strategy on the part of the Japanese. Admiral who crossed the mines to be laid at the mouth of the harbor, in such a position that some of the Russian ships in returning to the harbor by their usual course were pretty sure to come in contact with them. Then the Japanese fleet was lured outside the harbor by the appearance of a number of Japanese vessels. When the latter were strongly reinforced, the Russian commander found it prudent to retire to the shelter of the guns of the fort, and in doing so the *Petro-pavlovsk* met its doom.

—An extract printed by the London *Times* from Herbert Spencer's "Autobiography" which is soon to be published, goes to show that the great philosopher did not have the kind of mind which appreciates the poetry of Homer. "Some twenty years ago," Spencer writes, "I took up a translation of the *Iliad* for the purpose of studying the superstitions of the early Greeks, and, after reading six books, felt what a task it would be to go on—felt that I would rather give a large sum of an read to the end. Passing over its tedious enumeration of details of dresses and arms, of chariots and horses, of blows given and received, filling page after page, passing over too the many absurdities, such as giving the genealogy of a horse in the midst of a battle, and not objecting to the subject matter appeals continually to brutal passions and instincts of the savage, it soothes to say that to me the ceaseless repetition of battles and speeches is intolerable. Even did the ideas presented raise pleasurable feelings, a lack of sufficiently broad contrasts in matter and manner would repel me."