

THE WEEK.

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PERILS OF THE REPUBLIC.

"OUR COUNTRY," by the Rev. Josiah Strong, is described by Professor Austin Phelps, who writes an introduction, as "a powerful book." It is a book worth reading, especially as it compresses a great deal of important matter into a small compass. It is one of the many boding utterances of misgiving which come from thoughtful men in the Model Republic. It opens, as American books occasionally do, with a statistical demonstration of the bigness of the country, and the miraculous rate at which the American infant outgrows his small-clothes. If things go on at this pace, the writer seems to think the destiny of the human race will be settled in America within the next twenty years; though Europe might reply that, in spite of the size of the Mississippi, the leadership of thought and science is not yet on this side of the Atlantic. But after the display of the wealth and resources come the perils. They are, according to Mr. Strong, Immigration, Romanism, Mormonism, Intemperance, Socialism, Wealth, and the City. Under each of these heads we get, at all events, a striking condensation of instructive and suggestive facts. We cannot think, however, that all the seven vials are equally fraught with woe. Mormonism is not likely to devour the Republic. It is almost entirely foreign. Wales, we believe, is its greatest recruiting ground, and in the breast of the Welsh peasant it is engendered by a union of fanatical and Apocalyptic Methodism with a craving for that improvement of the material lot which Brigham Young did unquestionably succeed in bestowing on his votaries. It will probably be killed, without cannon, by the westward advance of commerce and civilisation. A great deal is made of it by vote-hunting politicians, who, however, seem to be in no great hurry to extinguish the source of their own moral declamations. The rigid virtue of the Americans is not likely to be seduced into polygamy, at least of the simultaneous kind: of polygamy of the successive kind, under cover of easy divorce laws, there is more danger, according to Mr. Roy; indeed we should have thought that in this quarter, rather than in that of Mormonism, the real peril might be deemed to lie. Intemperance again is an evil, but not one about which an American need be very seriously alarmed, if only the Prohibitionist would let the matter alone. In the country the Americans are remarkably temperate, and the frequenters of the city bars are for the most part unassimilated immigrants. At any rate, the examples of England, and other great nations show that a race may not only live, but be full of energy and power in spite of its drinking a good deal of beer. Perhaps the increased use of opium and chloral might with more reason be pointed out as indicating morbid tendencies specially charac-

teristic of an age of excessive tension and excitement. Wealth, again, can hardly be classed, without qualification, among national perils. Wealth which is pretty equally diffused, and that vast increase of production which places new comforts and enjoyments within the reach of even the humblest labourer, are not a peril, but the very reverse. Luxury is an evil to the luxurious, and the ostentation of wealth is most dangerous, in the present disturbed state of society, to those who are so ill-advised as to indulge in it. The aggregation of vast fortunes is an evil; but it is an evil arising in the most part from the sudden opening of new fields of speculation, the number of which can hardly be inexhaustible; and after all how much mischief has Vanderbilt done? Great corporations are a perpetual source of alarm, and Mr. Strong speaks of them in the usual tone: but when we come to look into these dreadful entities, of what do they consist? Of a number of small property-owners, many of them women, or infants in the hands of trustees, clubbing together their resources in a commercial enterprise, which, if it is profitable to them, is almost always useful to the rest of the community. There are few economical subjects about which greater nonsense has been talked.

Immigration is a real peril, especially as the element of the population in which the republican tradition of self-government resides is comparatively stationary, if it is not actually decreasing; while elements, untrained in self-government, and in many cases revolutionary, are pouring in. Fortunately the German is by nature a good and orderly member of the community; while the Italian, who is now becoming an important factor in immigration, though little civilised and liable to outbreaks of stabbing passion, is not, like the Celtic Irishman, naturally hostile to authority. What effect is to be produced on American civilisation by the negro, who, though not a recent immigrant, is an unassimilable alien, the next generation will begin to see. Mr. Blaine is apparently intending to illustrate the beneficent influence of Presidential contests by getting up, in the interest of his own candidature, an industrial agitation among the negroes of the South. Romanism is also a serious peril, though it may almost be regarded as a phase of Irish immigration; for it makes little progress, we imagine, among native Americans; while there is not in the German, or even in the Italian character, that aboriginal submissiveness to the priests which makes the Irishman so devout a liegeman and, in politics, so faithful a retainer of his Church. Mr. Strong gives a startling account of the increase of wealth, and of the influence which wealth commands, in the hands of the Roman Catholic priesthood; while he shows by an accumulation of evidence, both from Papal manifestoes and episcopal utterances, that the objects and the principles of the grand conspiracy against human liberty remain unchanged. An irrepressible conflict is probably in prospect, though, unless the shadow moves backward on the dial of humanity, it can end only in one way.

That the growth of cities beyond a certain point is an evil, the accumulated misery of London bears sad witness, and thoughtful men are beginning to inquire whether there is anything in our educational institutions which creates a distaste for rural and a passion for city life. But the system of municipal government, of which the boddle aldermen of New York are the natural outcome, is perhaps more pestilential in its influence than the mere increase of population in the city. "In all the great American cities there is to-day as clearly defined a ruling class as in the most aristocratic countries in the world. Its members carry arms in their pockets, make up the slates for nominating conventions, distribute offices as they bargain together, and—though they toil not, neither do they spin—wear the best of raiment and spend money lavishly. They are men of power, whose favour the ambitious must court, and whose vengeance he must avoid. Who are these men—the wise, the good, the learned,—men who have earned the confidence of their fellow-citizens by the purity of their lives, the splendour of their talents, their probity in public trusts, their deep study of the problems of Government? No, they are gamblers, saloon-keepers, pugilists, or worse, men who have made a trade of controlling votes, and of buying and selling offices and official acts." These are the words of Mr. George, quoted by Mr. Strong, and they rebuke the inconsistency of their author when he plays the demagogue himself, and appeals by general promises of public plunder to the poverty, ignorance, and passion, to which the ward politician appeals in a meaner, but not less sordid and practically a much less noxious way. After all, it is not so much great cities that are the seats of danger as the