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CURRENT TOPICS.

A great extension of the suffrage has lately taken place in Holland, as the result of the change of Government which took place two years ago. For nearly half a century the Dutch Second Chamber has been elected by direct vote of those having the franchise, but that franchise has been restricted to those paying a considerable sum in direct taxes. Under the new Bill introduced by the present Liberal Government only paupers and those unable to read and write are debarred from voting. It is believed, according to a recent article in the New York Nation, that the number of electors will be nearly doubled under the operation of the new Act. What is known as the Australian system of balloting is introduced by the same Act. Thus the enfranchisement of the masses is going forward in at least the smaller countries of Europe.

The farm-mortgage incubus is not, it appears, an exclusively American evil. According to statements made by a leading member of the Norwegian Storthing, representing an agricultural district, as reported in the New York Evening Post, the condition of the farmers and land-owners in Norway is becoming almost desperate from the same cause—a secondary cause, of course. This member estimates that the interest on the farm debts at four per cent. now amounts to one-sixth of the total yield of the farms in Norway. It is well known that not only have land values greatly declined in free-trade England, but that in continental Europe high protective tariffs have quite failed to prevent a similar decline. The Christian Union observes that while in Europe these results are attributed mainly to American competition, in the United States the farmers are complaining loudly and truthfully of the same evil. In the East the fall in land values, in the West the mortgages, form the burden of complaint. The report of the Census Bureau at Washington, which is investigating the mortgage question, is not yet complete, but returns for the States of Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas, show that the payments on farm mortgages in 1890 took fully one-eighth of the entire products of the farms.

That some hundreds of the Civil servants of a great and wealthy nation, such as the United States, should be permitted to do their work in an old and rickety building until it finally collapsed, crushing to death twenty-four or twenty-five and bruising and maiming perhaps double that number, was an act of carelessness so gross and culpable that the cry of horror and indignation which has gone up from all parts of the Union is but natural. If, and in so far as the affair was the result of a petty economy, the culpability is, if possible, still greater than if it had been simply the outcome of unmitigated carelessness. The feeling of the nation has been so intense and so forcibly expressed that it is very unlikely that such an event will be permitted to occur again, at least for many years. The Government has no doubt learned a lesson. It would be well for the country if the people would, on their part, lay to heart another lesson which the event seems well adapted to impress upon their minds, viz., the supreme folly of the mad scramble for Government offices which is no doubt one chief cause of the weakness which puts the

officials so completely at the mercy of the Government. Given a set of officials whose positions have been obtained as the result of political pressure, very likely after long periods of waiting, and who are constantly aware that dozens or hundreds are hungry for their situations, while the appointing power well knows the same fact, and we have employees who must almost of necessity submit to any inconveniences or dangers which the carelessness or self-seeking of their superiors may impose or permit. It is unlikely that a self-respecting body of employees, conscious of the value of their services, would have submitted to remain week after week and year after year in a building which they must have known was threatening to topple down about their ears.

The extradition treaty with Russia, which has for some time past been the subject of so much discussion in the United States, has at length been made law. Its contents, as published, unofficially, in the newspapers, indicate that notwithstanding certain modifications, it is still open to serious objection in the two particulars which have been the subject of criticism. Article 3, while providing that extradition shall not be granted for any offence of a political character, decrees that:

"An attempt against the life of the head of either government, or against that of any member of his family, when such attempt comprises the act either of murder, of assassination, or of poisoning, or of accessoryship thereto, shall not be considered a political offence, or an act connected with such an offence."

As an American exchange observes, the term "accessoryship" is susceptible of manipulation. "Any person charged with Nihilism might, in case of an attempt upon the life of the Czar, be viewed and treated as an accessory." The other dangerous clause includes among extraditable offences, "forgery and the utterance of forged papers, including public, sovereign or Government acts." This seems pretty clearly to include the manufacture and use of forged passports, and, as another American paper observes, "to extradite a man for doing that is the same as to extradite any man who runs away from a Russian prison." Of course, it will rest with the United States Government or Courts to say when the evidence in any particular case warrants extradition, and, if the Russian methods of administration were like those of other nations this safeguard might be deemed sufficient. Unhappily, however, these methods