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DEFENSELESS CONDITION OF OUR SEAPORTS.

The need of fast war vessels was well illustrated by the recent incident in the harbor of San Diego, when a Chilean cruiser belonging to the insurgents entered the bay, anchored, took on board recruits, supplies of provisions, ammunition, and then sailed away. This ship, under the laws of nations, was in fact a piratical vessel, and as such was seized by the government authorities at San Diego, and a United States marshal placed on board in possession. But the Chilean rebels paid no attention to the laws of the United States; they may be said to have captured the place. When they had obtained all the supplies they wanted to assist them in carrying on war against a friendly nation, they upheaved anchor and steamed away, carrying off as a prisoner the official representative of the great republic. This was a small ship called the Itata, carrying four guns.

Report has it that the government is mildly indignant at this occurrence, and has ordered the United States war ship Charleston, at San Francisco, to sail in pursuit of the Itata and recapture her if possible. Allowing this could be done, and the Itata could be destroyed, it might be dangerous to attempt it. The Chilean rebels would be maddened and might retaliate. There is nothing to prevent them from sending in other boats to capture or bombard San Diego or other towns along the coast. Indeed, while the Itata was taking on supplies at San Diego, other vessels of the rebels were hovering outside the harbor.

We have no navy worthy of the name, and nearly all our seaports are without proper defenses. Like San Diego, they are at the mercy of any single piratical boat that chooses to enter. This is a very humiliating position for a country like ours to be placed in. The indifference of Congressmen to the naval defense of the country is astounding. They waste their time over party squabbles, vote billions of money for schemes intended to help bring votes to their respective sides on election day; but as to the immediate creation of an enterprising, prompt and effective navy, which is of vast importance to the country, but little is done, and that little very slowly. All told, we have a pair of small torpedo boats, half a dozen or so of smaller cruisers, and an equal number of larger vessels.

There should be fifty ships where now there is one. Every harbor in the country should be guarded by efficient sentinels consisting of vessels of high speed, ready for instant action, to maintain and enforce the authority of the republic.

CHARLES PRATT.

On the evening of May 4, Charles Pratt, eminent as a philanthropist of the best type, died from a sudden attack of heart disease. While much that he did in the endowment and support of institutions is known and has made him famous as one of the world's benefactors, a great deal of the good he performed was known to few besides himself. Thus it is said that his last business transaction before he died was the signing of a check, as a donation to the Brooklyn Board of Charities.

He was born in Wilbraham, Mass., October 2, 1830. At the age of 19 he engaged in the paint and oil business, beginning at the foot of the ladder. As one of ten children he was obliged to work for his own support, and succeeded so well that in 1857 he was able to come to this city and start as a member of the firm of Devoe, Reynolds & Pratt. This firm dealt in paints and oils. Soon afterward Mr. Pratt started on his own account in the refining of petroleum. His brand of kerosene, known as astral oil, is known everywhere. Later his firm was absorbed by the Standard Oil Company. Of the latter corporation Mr. Pratt was a leading member up to the day of his death.

His great wealth was devoted largely to the cause of education. The Adelphi Academy, of Brooklyn, N. Y., practically owns him as its father. He found it a private school, and by his donations, and advice and direction, brought it up to the standard of a high grade incorporated literary and scientific college. His donations to this cause exceed a quarter of a million of dollars. A few years ago the Pratt Institute, of Brooklyn, for manual training and scientific instruction generally, was opened to the public. This was entirely his creation. It is familiar to our readers, having been illustrated in this paper. Upon the Pratt Institute over one million of dollars was spent by its founder. Large additions to the Institute were contemplated, which it is to be hoped may yet be carried out.

Upon the principle of the Peabody buildings in London, Mr. Pratt established a large flat house in the Greenpoint district of Brooklyn. It is 200 by 135 feet in size and contains 120 suites of rooms upon its six floors. The building affords homes at moderate cost. It contains a reading room and library for the use of the occupants. The income derived from it was devoted to the maintenance of the Pratt Institute.

What other plans Mr. Pratt had in view for the future is uncertain. The work of his life is of double importance. It has brought about abiding and permanent good and has set a noble example for others to follow.

DR. EDWARD MAYNARD.

Dr. Edward Maynard died on May 3, aged 78 years. A dental surgeon by profession, he won a high standing among his co-practitioners. Some of his work is to-day a standard, and he introduced several new operations in dentistry. Originally a candidate for the West Point United States Military Academy, his delicate health prevented his completing the course. This episode presumably turned his mind to arms, and his reputation as an inventor of fire-arms became widely spread. In 1845 he patented the tape system of primers to take the place of the ever-troublesome percussion cap, an immense advance over the old system. In 1851 he invented the breech-loading rifle that bears his name, subsequently improved and patented at various dates, and forming one of the basic improvements in the development of the metallic cartridge breech-loader of to-day.

One interesting invention was for application to double-barreled guns, allowing each barrel to expand or contract independently of the other, thus preventing the expansion of one barrel when fired or when exposed to the sun from warping the other. As late as 1886 he patented an indicator for magazine rifles, to show at a glance the number of cartridges they contain.

Many other inventions in ammunition and fire-arms were made by him. He presented the interesting example of a man winning high eminence in two widely different fields of work. Various honors were offered him by foreign potentates. The Emperor of Russia, Nicolas I., appointed him court dentist. In the other field of work he was honored by the Kings of Belgium, Sweden and Prussia. He occupied the chair of theory and practice in the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, and also in the dental department of the National University, Washington, D. C.

The Fur Seals in Behring Sea.

Every spring the seals appear in droves from their unknown winter quarters, and settle down on the Pribilof Islands, some 200 miles away from the mainland of Alaska. The males come first, accompanied by the young seal pups born during the previous summer, and choose their respective homes on the rocks. The females follow three weeks later—week little creatures, in steel gray garb, very different from the big brown male seals, with their fighting propensities. Often one seal possesses twenty wives, and he has hard task to defend his home and family from his neighbors. Indeed, the old seals fight like furies, becoming covered with scars and terrible wounds, and sometimes losing an eye or part of a flipper in the fray. Most of the fighting is done with the mouth. The combatants approach each other with averted heads and sly looks, till suddenly they utter a shrill piping whistle, and engage with their sharp canine teeth, the hair flies and the blood flows amid much furious bellowing. The young bachelors—from one to five years old—herd together in their own quarters at a respectful distance, till they are strong enough to fight for wife and home.

A Deep Well.

Some time ago the Wheeling Development Company began drilling a well near Wheeling, W. Va., in search of petroleum or natural gas. The hole has now reached a depth of 4,100 feet. In this distance several veins of coal have been passed, and both oil and gas have been struck, but not in paying quantities. The hole is 8 inches in diameter. It is reported that Professor White, State geologist of West Virginia, has succeeded in interesting the officers of the United States Geological Survey in the exploration, and that the hole is to be continued to a depth of 1,000 feet more, or as far as is practicable, with the idea of making investigations of temperature and magnetic conditions.

Trade Mark—Generic Name.

The Supreme Court of Illinois held, in the case of Bolander vs. Peterson, that a generic name, or one merely descriptive of the article made or sold, or its qualities, ingredients or characteristics, and which may be employed truthfully by other makers or dealers is not entitled to protection as a trade mark, and that words designating a trade indicating that a particular class of goods is dealt in cannot be exclusively appropriated by one as a trade mark or trade name. In this case it was held that the words "Swedish snuff store," or "magazine," could not be protected.

Spectacle Lenses in Photography.

Mr. Lyonel Clark says fair results can be obtained by fixing two meniscus spectacle lenses in a tube, with their concave sides facing each other, and with a suitable diaphragm between them. His general conclusion was that they would not work well enough to cause photographic opticians to put up their shutters, but would do a certain amount of useful work, especially in the hands of those photographers who, on æsthetic grounds, do not like prints sharp all over.