

**SOCIAL BULWARKS.**

Whatever may be the view of those orators who delight in painting the condition of modern society as representing only the very rich and the very poor, it can not be denied that in some respects the extremes are nearer together today than ever before. One reason for this is found in the equal facilities for securing information afforded all. Another is the cheapening of the best educational privileges, so that they are within the reach of high and low alike.

These facts have presented themselves to Mr. Walter Besant during his present visit to America, and he has expressed the opinion that we are really in the midst of the most wonderful social revolution. This may be true and still argue nothing special for the age, as it would be impossible to find a time when some social change was not brewing. But the conditions already noticed are worthy of serious attention, forming as they do two of the strongest barriers to the establishment of European classism in this country.

Knowledge has always been the chief weapon of the oppressor. Whenever it happened that a despot was less educated in the arts of men, less cunning, or the master of fewer or equal sources of information with his subjects, his power was always of short duration. The press in this country insures the absence of tyranny. Every day it places a history of the world's doings before its readers. The poorest tramp in the land has the same information, the same comment, the same means of judging public events as the railroad magnate and millionaire. Popular ignorance, the handmaid of superstition and instrument for untold damage when played upon by designing men, passed forever beyond the danger point with the advent of the free newspaper.

Quite as important a bulwark of liberty is found in popular education, which has brought the people where they can understand the duties of citizenship and appreciate the value of an unbiased press. The two agencies go hand in hand. Newspapers would have a meager circulation, indeed, but for the ability of the people to read and understand them. Education would find its field limited but for the co-operation of the press.

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Never before has it been possible to secure an education for such a small outlay of funds as at present. Considering the money and brain required to properly equip and run our institutions of learning, the wonder is that they have cheapened the cost as they have. But the fact remains and can not be shaken. The great number of poor boys and girls who are daily coming to the front as a result of education thus obtained bear eloquent witness to its truth. Even the most impecunious, after the start given in the free schools, find abundant ways opened to work their way through college if they have the proper determination. To neglect the educational advantages lavished upon the people of this country is to throw away opportunity and invite social disaster. With two such friends as these the common people need have no fear of the "oppressor's wrong" or "the proud man's contumely." Education is always on the side of the people, and the press, when it fulfills its mission at all, will be found not far from the same position.