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LARGE NUMBERS.*

BY PROF. HERMANN SCHUBERT.

Some years ago, at a geographical congress in Hamburg, Dr. Von den Steinen delivered a lecture on the country and people of the vicinity of the Xingu, a southern tributary of the Amazon, which he explored in 1884. In this lecture he tells us of a tribe called the Bakaïris, dwelling near this river, who could express in words the numbers from 1 to 6, but cherished such tremendous respect for larger numbers that, when they wished to express them, they pushed their hands through their thick, bushy hair and uttered during the act a word which we should probably translate by "numberless." Our travellers tell similar things of the wild tribes that inhabit the northeastern part of Australia. As these savages possess numerals up to the number six, they would feel insulted if they were told they "could not count up to three." But there does actually exist a people that cannot count to three, in the truest sense of the word. This people is a tribe of Indians of the lowest civilised type, living in Brazil, between the Rio Doce and Rio Pardo, called the Botocudos.

The Botocudos really possess only two numerals, namely, *mokenam*, for the number one, and *muhu*, for every number greater than one, no matter how great. While it would be very difficult, perhaps, to translate Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" into the Botocudo tongue, it would be a matter of no difficulty whatever to translate our multiplication-table up to "one hundred times one hundred is ten thousand" into the Botocudo language. The translation would begin with "mokenam times mokenam is mokenam, mokenam times muhu is muhu," and then the significant rule would be repeated, without end, "muhu times muhu is muhu," that is to say, "many times many is many." Surely, our children would have just reason to envy the little Botocudos, if they could hear that the latter's multiplication-table consisted of only three mnemonic rules! The Botocudo finds no necessity of conceiving as essentially different, numbers greater than one. His need of numbers is vanishingly small, and he is, consequently, wanting in the faculty of representing to himself numerical quantities.

With a smile and a shrug of our shoulders we look down with exalted contempt upon such low needs and incapacities, and revel in the comfortable consciousness of being ourselves the vessels of a civilisation which deals, almost unconsciously, with millions and billions. Yet, let us not forget, in such moments of exultation, to exercise a little criticism of ourselves, and to remember that even millions and billions are mere zeros, compared with many numbers to which the events of the world lead us: to remember, too, that also our need of numbers was formerly smaller and is even now in process of development; and, finally, to bear in mind that in the average man of our own civilisation the power to grasp correctly large numbers, or at least to draw correct conclusions in the province of large numbers, is still very imperfect! As the Botocudo deems the distinction of numbers greater than one unessential, so, to many a civilised man, the distinction of billions from trillions seems immaterial, although a billion* is to a trillion as one yard is to five hundred and sixty-eight and two-eleventh miles.

That our need of numbers in early times was smaller than now, is proved by the late origin of our names for large numbers. First, with regard to the number one thousand, it must be remarked that the words which the chief languages of the Indo-Germanic peoples possess for this number show no trace of phonic relationship (*χίλιοι*, *mille*, *tausend*), while the numerals up to one hundred in all these tongues are very nearly related. We can justly conclude from this fact that it was not until the separation of the Indo-Germanic nations that the need arose to express in words a number as great as one thousand. The words "million" and "billion" sprang up several thousand years later, namely, at the beginning of the seventeenth century.† Adam Riese, the great calculator of the sixteenth century, whom we still often cite as authority for the correctness of arithmetical examples, was not acquainted with the word million, although he frequently was obliged to operate with numbers having more than six

* From the German, by μκρκ.

*The word "billion" is used in this article in its German and English sense of a *million* of millions, and not in its French and American sense of a thousand millions.

† But the word "million" was used as a numeral as early as 1362, by Langland, in *Piers the Plowman*, Text A, iii, 255; see *Century Dictionary*, *sub voce* "million."—*Trans.*

places. When in such a strait, he was wont to employ the phrase "a thousand thousands" for our word "million." Of still more recent origin is the word "milliard," for a thousand millions; this most recent member of the numeral family probably did not see the light until the year 1830.

Although the words milliard and billion are known by name to almost every one, yet the significance of the numbers so expressed is by far not so distinct and familiar to many as the meanings of the smaller numbers. This may be seen—to cite but one way—from the frequency with which the public puts to the editors of newspapers the question, What a milliard or a billion in its exact sense means. And how often do we still encounter the error that a billion is two millions? Yet even those who know that a billion is a million times a million often do not reflect that every distance which is a million times a given unit must be regarded as vanishingly small compared with the distance which is a billion times such a unit. For example, if the breadth of a street is represented by a million units, a billion of such units would give a distance equal to that from Hamburg to San Francisco. If this is not remembered, we are apt to get very erroneous impressions, especially of astronomical phenomena. As our earth measures in its greatest circumference only about 25,000 miles, while the planets are distant from the earth and from each other spaces varying from twenty-seven million to forty-six hundred million miles, accordingly most of the distances which confront us on the earth are to be regarded as vanishingly small when compared with the distances which confront us in the planetary system. On the other hand, the nearest fixed stars have distances from the earth, and, consequently, from any point in our planetary system, as great as from twenty-seven billion to forty-six hundred billion miles; for example, Sirius is eighty-three billion miles distant. Consequently, as in the consideration of the distances of fixed stars we have to deal with billions, while in the case of planetary distances we only deal with millions, of miles; also, all the distances of the planets from one another must be regarded as vanishingly small when compared with the distances which confront us in the realm of the fixed stars. In other words, viewed from Sirius, not only the earth or the sun, but our whole planetary system itself would appear as an indefinitely faint point of light, exactly as Sirius appears to us as a luminous point.

The reader will readily appreciate that the number billion is generally conceived too small, when we tell him that the German Emperor, William I, on his eighty-ninth birthday had lived the actual number of 2,808 millions and 518,400 seconds, but that a *billion* seconds have not elapsed since the origin of the human species, reckoning the age of humanity at 30,000 years. It will also seem hardly credible that a billion new American twenty-five cent pieces, placed one on top of another, would reach an altitude of over 1,000,000 miles, that is to say, would form a cylindrical pile over four times as high as the moon is from the earth. On the other hand, we are very apt to fall into error, when, on hearing of a length of this magnitude, we attempt to state the area or the cubical space which a billion of such small objects would fill. For, only a surface of about 223 square miles is requisite for placing side by side a billion twenty-five cent pieces, while it would take a space only 99 metres* in length, breadth, and thickness to receive this enormous sum of coins, if packed together; as will be at once intelligible when we reflect that a space one hundred metres in length, breadth, and thickness contains 1,000,000 cubic metres, while a cubic metre can contain over 1,000,000 twenty-five cent pieces.

The reason we so easily err in the estimation of numbers which exceed a hundred or a thousand millions in magnitude, is the fact that commercial, industrial, and even technical calculations seldom take us into the domain of figures of more than nine places, and that it is really only the mathematical, astronomical, statistical, and physical sciences in which such large numbers occur and need to be correctly estimated. In these sciences, consequently, the need has arisen of forming a nomenclature which extends beyond millions and billions, but is based on the same doctrine of formation as they. Thus, for a billion millions, or a number consisting of the figure one and eighteen appended ciphers, the term "trillion" is used; for a trillion millions, or a number consisting of the numeral one with twenty-four appended ciphers the term "quadrillion" is used. And so we may continue with the employment of the Latin numerals, still further; making use, for example, of the term "centesillion," for a product of one hundred factors, of which each is a million, or for the number which is expressed by the figure one and six hundred appended ciphers. The question of the mass of the earth in kilogrammes, for example, carries us into the domain of quadrillions, for it has been determined that our earth weighs from five to six quadrillion kilogrammes.

The fact that the results of modern exact science first required of language the formation of names for large numbers, might lead us to believe that the people of early times never made use of very large numerical statements. But this is not the case. More than 2,000 years ago there lived a people, who, from pure motives of amusement, exercised their faculties in this domain. In India, where our present numeral system was invented, names existed, even in Buddha's time,

* About 107 yards.

for all numbers up to one hundred thousand millions, and Buddha himself, it is said, prosecuted the formation of numeral names up to the number which we now denote by 1 and fifty-four appended ciphers, and might call nonillions. Also, the old national epic of the Hindus, in which numbers up to one hundred thousand millions frequently occur, as well as the old Hindu folk-tales, are evidence of the love of the Hindus for excessively large numbers. We are told there of a king who stated his wealth at thousands of billions of jewels; of a battle with ten thousand sextillion monkeys, or with more monkeys than could be put in our whole planetary system; of twenty-four thousand billion deities; and of six hundred thousand million sons of Buddha, or four hundred times as many sons of Buddha as there are now human beings on the earth.

We find no such tendency among the other nations of the earth to portray in such a way wonderful and exalted things. It is true Homer makes the wounded Ares cry like ten thousand men. But there is no exaggeration in this statement, as a Greek might very well expect of his god of war a cry equal to that of from ten to twenty battalions of soldiers. The Greeks were too sincere friends of the real world to be led to indulge in the use of fantastically large numbers.

But it must still be mentioned that Archimedes in his famous sand-computation (ψαμμίτης) undertook to calculate how many grains of sand would fill the world on the supposition that the world was so and so many times as large as the earth; and that the numbers which he reached were so large that owing to the lack of appropriate numeral expressions he was compelled to resort to prolix circumlocutions. But Archimedes did not undertake his sand-computation as the Hindus did, for the pleasure of revelling in large numbers, but to show that it was incorrect to speak of "countless" grains of sand and that therefore the domain of numbers was an unlimited one, although language was able to express only limited series of them.

But aside from this sand-computation of Archimedes, real calculations with large numbers are to be found before our era only among the Hindus. This strange passion of the Hindus found fresh material for exercise when in the fourth century of our era the principle of our present numeral system was invented by Hindu Brahman priests, and the easy methods of computation based on this system diffused over all India. It was now possible to multiply with facility numbers of twenty places with one another and to be sure of the correctness of the results. Nay, in the seventh century in India, arithmetical tournaments were held, at which, as now in our chess tournaments, the great masters of arithmetical computation gathered together, and he was crowned as victor who outstripped all competitors.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

LIBERTY.

II. A CONTEMPORARY STUDY.

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY.

"The people do not care about Liberty; what they want is Equality. Those who care for Liberty are a few peculiar persons."

However unpalatable, we must make up our minds to the fact thus stated by Napoleon and illustrated by Napoleonism. We must abandon the legend that revolutions are inspired by a popular passion for liberty. Revolutions are not made by the masses, but by the gentry. In the congress that declared America independent of England nearly every member was a wealthy aristocrat, and the revolutionary leaders in France were of like social rank. The freedom fought for in such movements is not human or personal freedom, but freedom to exchange one master for another. When America threw off the yoke of England, its citizens were not quite so free as before: they were subjected to more rigid Sabbaths, their theatres were closed by act of Congress, and they were compelled to accept paper money for their goods. As individuals they were given up to the uncontrolled despotism of their respective colonies, whose supremacy represented an irresponsible power, not claimed by any monarch or even legislature in Europe. The fallacy exposed by Thomas Paine in 1804, when the Louisianians demanded freedom to make men slaves, is still widespread. Provincial liberty is not personal or even human liberty. A majority of the Irish people claim self-government by an Irish legislature in the name of Freedom. "Home Rule" may be valuable on other accounts, but it is fallacious to suppose that it has anything to do with human liberty. My native State, Virginia, maintained for more than eighty years a self-government which meant slavery for nearly half of its inhabitants, and a fetter on every mind that would protest against the oppression. Self-government accorded to any locality, means the right of a merely local majority to coerce the local minority, although this minority may represent the majority of the nation and of the human race. Every concession of self-government to a section, or people in a lump, is the admission of a judge to sit in his own case, whenever the issue is raised between individual right and sectional interest. It is based on the principle that the majority is always right; whereas the history of every truth proves that the majority is generally wrong. The Greek poet, Hesiod, said, "Consider well that in which many peoples agree, for there is a certain divinity in this." This wise thought has been perverted by ages of demagogism into the saying, "*Vox populi, vox Dei.*" What Hesiod said is true: the consensus of many peoples, or even a majority of them, not being liable to the prejudices or selfish interests of any locality, represents

the broad view and judgment of humanity, but the voice of any one people, as expressed by a majority of numbers, represents a sectional bias and interest unchecked by the unbiassed. For this reason local self-government can never be conceded by a nation without damage to liberty, unless under such charters, bills of rights, and constitutional guarantees, as those which formerly secured the people against the tyranny of individuals, and in future can alone save individuals against tyranny of the masses, represented in the brute force of the majority.

There is no real difference between the tyranny of a class (e. g. hereditary nobility) and that of a popular majority. A political party is a class. Indeed, so far as personal liberty is concerned, it is less likely to suffer from a privileged order, than from an elective majority; for the latter rules by patriotic sanction. It is easier to deal with an aristocracy of birth, too timid to be aggressive, a thousand times easier to grapple with an individual tyrant, than with a tyrant majority, entitled to use all the means of the minority, as well as its own, to carry out the will of a part as that of the whole. With the decay of hereditary authority, the majority is now steadily acquiring the ancient powers of a Privileged Class. John Stuart Mill was a true friend of the people, even friend enough to tell them the truth. He recognised their infirmity, their readiness to coerce individuals, and predicted an increase of governmental invasions of liberty in England as the people acquired more possession of the government.

"There is considerable jealousy of direct interference, by the legislative or the executive power, with private conduct; not so much from any just regard for the independence of the individual, as from the still subsisting habit of looking on the government as representing an opposite interest to the public. The majority have not yet learned to feel the power of the government their power, or its opinions their opinions. When they do, individual liberty will probably be as much exposed to invasion from the government, as it now is from public opinion."

I do not bring this as a reproach against the people. Unhappily, the larger proportion of them are commanded by a power stronger than Bonaparte,—Necessity,—by which they are organised into an army fighting for physical life. The freedom they struggle for is freedom from want, for their families. Every man will struggle for his own freedom: he cannot take to heart an oppression he never felt. What mental or moral liberty is denied to the toiling masses? They are forbidden to gamble in public places, which they have not the means to do; they must not write or publish immoral literature, which they cannot do; they must not open workshops on Sunday, which they do not want to do. Where do they feel the pinch of oppression? Simply in too much hard work, or in low wages; and in restraints which prevent them, when on strike, from dealing with the situation on military principles. The strikers who would prevent by force others from working in their vacated places, regard those men from the military point of view, just as we should all regard a countryman who should aid the enemy in time of war by services that were praiseworthy in time of peace. Inadmissible as such military method is for industrial unions, there is in it more intelligent direction of means to ends than is usually visible in popular commotions. Some philologists believe that the German *Volk* (people) and *Wolk* (cloud) are fundamentally the same, and, if true, the similitude were not unexpressive of the way in which masses of men are sometimes driven by the blind winds of external necessity and storms of elemental necessity, and the lightning-like wildness of some of their strikes. The "industrial army," of which we sometimes hear, is a contradiction in fact and phrase. Military order is industrial disorder. While the masses are thus driven by the forces of want, by demons of cold and hunger and disease, knowing no chains but those of physical necessity, they cannot be expected to study or appreciate the obstructions of religious, ethical, and intellectual development. These are hungers no man can feel while his animal nature is starving.

And when we pass to people free from physical want, but weaving the chains of superstition, those who feel that their souls and other souls are dependent for salvation on certain dogmas, that the world would be wrecked by the failure of their religion,—these also are fighting for their own and only notion of freedom, when they impose their creed on public schools, tax the community for their sectarian edifices (by exempting these from taxes), or close exhibitions on Sunday. They, too, are an army, acting on militant principles, with all the personal liberty they want, and with no inducement to study nice questions of religious or ethical freedom.

If, in any department of human interest, there are obstructions to liberty, they will be found only by those working in that department. Political and social changes are so rapid that society is always passing into new conditions, all of which bear upon personal liberty, but in such novel forms that old principles require restatement in fresh applications. Society can never outgrow the ancient issue between liberty and authority; but authority, serpent-like, slips from skin to skin, and liberty is prone to think that because one form of it has gone the thing itself has gone. Americans denounce the aristocracy of birth, but vote for the aristocracy of dollars, who rob them with tariffs to swell the coffers of a class. Freethinkers rage against an extinct Jesuitism, not perceiving that the venomous thing has crept into a Protestant skin. In all ages the very elect of Liberty have been liable to this infirmity. In the beginning of the American War of Independence,

the two men who above all others recognised the large principles involved, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, framed a new constitution for Pennsylvania, and thought they were securing absolute religious liberty when they provided religious equality for all who believed in a deity. Probably neither of them had ever met an atheist, and considered the exception merely nominal. How far short of the supersacred rights of intellectual liberty they had fallen they discovered, no doubt, when they were presently in France meeting philosophers who regarded the King of Kings as the figure-head of all Royalism. "Who can understand his own errors? Cleanse thou me from my unconscious faults." That was a profound prayer of the old Hebrew. Many a liberal mind, having all the freedom of thought and utterance it requires, may still be sanctioning limitations on the liberty of others, engaged in other departments of thought and action. This opens a field of inquiry which I propose to enter in a concluding paper.

THE MASK OF ANTI-SEMITISM.

BY DR. FELIX L. OSWALD.

When the last troop of Hebrew refugees crossed the Austrian frontier, the agent of the Hirsch committee gave them a day's rest at Cracow, where a wealthy Galician merchant treated the poor wanderers to a farewell dinner.

"The well-wishes of your friends," said he, in reply to the thanks of their spokesman, "will follow you to your new home in a land where there is freedom for all, and where lack of room cannot be made a pretext for persecution."

Persecutors have indeed rarely ventured to flaunt the colors of their actual motives. Nadir Shah impeached his Parsee subjects for the "disloyalty" of their tenets. The first Christian heretics were accused of cannibalism. When the wealth of the Templars began to excite the cupidity of their sovereign, the sycophants of that despot trumped up a charge of devil-worship.

But it might be questioned if the most impudent of the Russian Jew-baiters would risk the absurdity of pleading the overpopulation of the Empire. In the populous districts of Odessa and Smolensk the victims of intolerance had always the sympathies of the intelligent natives. In the dominion of the Czar open protests involve the ruin of the malcontent, but it is well known that the citizens of Moscow were, as a class, as much opposed to the inhuman measures of the Government commissioners as the citizens of mediæval Paris were to the proceedings of the Holy Inquisition. The thinly-settled provinces of Olonetz and Vologda, on the other hand, were the scenes of some of the most savage popular outbreaks against the communities of misbelievers. By a special Imperial ukase of October 10, 1892, Jews were forbidden from settling or owning land in the colonies of the Caucasus, where the density of population hardly exceeds that of West Virginia. In Germany the ugliest protests against the toleration of the followers of Moses come from the northwestern turf-moors and the sand-hills of the Polish border. A few weeks ago, when the Swiss Confederation surprised the nineteenth century by voting on the question of permitting Hebrew butchers to kill and dress cattle after the fashion of their forefathers, the liberal verdict of the principal cities was overborne by the heavy adverse vote of the backwoods cantons.

It is true that in the rural district the prosperity of Hebrew tradesmen is apt to form an especially provoking contrast to the results of rustic indolence, but it is a curious fact that the fiercest explosions of popular fury were generally directed against the poor shopkeepers of some village Ghetto, making no pretence to anything but the most modest conditions of existence. Besides, Hebrew country-traders, on the attainment of anything like wealth, are almost sure to remove to a city, where they can rely on becoming the *numina* of an age of gold-worship and enjoying the incense of gratitude, together with other advantages of what Disraeli calls the "celestial prerogative of turning the gloom of distress into sunshine." The certainty of that result has, indeed, been for centuries a main spur to the commercial enterprise of the tribulated Unitarians. Even where they had given up the hope of deserving or imploring tolerance, they could generally rely on the possibility of purchasing its practical benefits. Their key to the Eden of human rights had to be a key of gold, ever since Peter the Cruel suspended the heresy-laws in favor of his Jewish banker. Now and then a Rothschild of the Middle Ages may have shared the experience of the Roman patrician, who gave himself up for lost since his "Albanian estates had informed against him," but, as a rule, the wealth of enterprising Hebrews, instead of being accounted their chief demerit, has been admitted as an all-redeeming circumstance.

And the theory of "Anti-Semitism" is an equally untenable, though more specious pretext. It is true that for a long series of centuries the history of southern Europe has been the chronicle of an irrepressible war of Aryans and Semites, but before the beginning of our chronological era those wars had purely political motives. Rome and Carthage could not agree on the division of the Mediterranean coast-lands, but the destruction of the city of Dido was only a step in the destroyer's progress to the goal of universal empire. Semitic Phœnicians lived for centuries in friendship with Asiatic Greeks; the conquest of Cyrus established a peaceful union of Medes and Assyrians, and the na-

tives of southern Spain decidedly preferred the rule of Carthage to that of her Aryan rival. In Sicily, too, where the Grecian worship of joy survived the spread of a pessimistic creed, the Semitic Saracens maintained their prestige for generations and were much more popular masters than their successors, the Norman swashbucklers,—so much so, indeed, that the intrigues in favor of the exiled infidels had to be suppressed by a judicial reign of terror.

The ancient Hebrews vindicated their civil and religious rights under circumstances of extreme difficulty, but, after all, as successfully as the Greeks themselves, who, indeed, lost their national independence two hundred years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Has exile unfitted the homeless race for the enjoyment of human rights? They did not abuse the hospitality of the Spanish Moors, and have certainly deserved the tolerance of their American fellow-citizens. Rector Ahlwardt's slanders appeal to the prejudices without gaining the credit even of his most bigoted supporters, though there is unfortunately no doubt that the chimeras of the Middle Ages have here and there retained their hold on the minds of besotted rustics. The charge of child-murder, as a religious rite, inflames the passions of the Danubian peasants with all the symptoms of actual conviction, and Gambetta may have been right in suggesting that the *odium laesi*—the propensity of hating those whom we have injured, has a good deal to do with the persecution of a race guilty of deriving its descent from the victims of the Holy Inquisition. Messrs. Ahlwardt & Co. may remember the outrages of their mediæval predecessors and fan their own prejudice with the conclusion that the survivors must be thirsting for revenge.

But the main source of that prejudice was revealed by a Russian journal, edited in the interest of the Holy Synod, and which reminded its readers that "no restrictions of their (the Jews') civil rights can outweigh the scandal of their *religious privilege*."

That privilege, the prerogative of rationalism, has never been forgiven by the bondsmen of superstition. The slave's envy of the freeman, the chain-dog's antipathy to the wolf are trifles, compared with the odium of mental emancipation, the bigot's mingled horror and hatred of the Sadducean who refuses to sacrifice his reason upon the altar of faith. They dread the consequences as much as the motives of his intellectual independence; they watch him with the grim mistrust that turns upon the guest who insists on remaining sober in an assemblage of Russian topers.

Hence the rage that hounded the Waldenses from glen to glen of their mountain-homes, and for centuries hurled a charge of sorcery at the head of every freethinker. What might not be expected of an adversary who persisted in keeping his eyes open while his opponents submitted to be hoodwinked by their priests? The unfairness of his advantages seemed to forfeit his claim to mercy in this world as in the next.

The spontaneous development of that form of fanaticism may explain the apparent paradox that a larger measure of freedom has often implied an increased license of persecution. In republican Mexico faith-crazed ruffians fell like bloodhounds upon a Protestant minister who would have been protected by the police of monarchical Spain. The Roumanian constitution guarantees equality of all religions, and Bucharest tolerates even the odious Skopsi, but the Jew-hunts of the Roumanian peasants are far more brutal, if less persistent, than those of the Russian priesthood.

Jews have become the scapegoats of an offence that would be visited upon nine out of ten radical freethinkers, if individuals could not more successfully escape the attention of bigot-mobs than communities with regular and organised systems of worship. Unitarian synagogue-members pay a penalty which isolated converts of David Strauss manage to evade, for the same reason that individual sceptics disregard the Sabbath-laws with an impunity that is denied to a colony of Seventh Day Baptists.

Anti-Rationalism would be the most appropriate name for a mania which has spread the hue and cry of the *Judenhetze* all over Eastern Europe, and for its abatement not only school-teachers, but reformers of a daring and aggressive type have to precede the legislator. The freethought of Hume prepared the way for the free worship of the British Israelites. The fact that the sceptic Voltaire could achieve fame and wealth and die in an apotheosis of popular applause has helped the cause of the French Jews more than the Code Napoleon.

An edict of universal tolerance would hardly terminate the heretic-hunts of the Russian Empire; and though the constitution of the United States protects the religious privileges of our Hebrew fellow-citizens, their main guarantee of freedom is, after all, the superior general intelligence of the American public.

DURGHA.

BY VIROE.

The chase was over; the day was done;
By the side of the tent at set of sun
One little striped tiger's pelt,
With a round rent where death was dealt.

A tethered stallion grazed around;
Moaned in his sleep the kennelled hound;
A cobra hissed by the jungle side;
In a tall pandanus a parrot cried.

The pious huntsman kneels to pray;
But in the jungle, leagues away,

A tigress snuffs at the bloody stain,
Where her beloved cub was slain.

She snuffs; she licks the sacred sod,
Wet with the blood she got from God;
She snuffs; she whines; she scents the air,
Crouching and crawling here and there,

Then, like an arrow from the bow,
She flies, her only thought—to go.
Like two round moons when night is new
The dusk and dark her eyes gleam through;

Her drink, the hope to slake her need;
Duty her full and only feed;
Hers not to harm, nor yet to bless;
For vengeance not, nor yet redress.

The huntsman prays; but fate besets;
He cries in vain that God forgets.
He cries in vain: He will not dare
Do ought with our frail dust but spare.

Karma incarnate, Durgha drew
Her breath in the first wind that blew.
Through the dull ages, broad and deep,
While drowsy Aum awaked from sleep;

And now,—her footfalls drawing near,—
The tethered stallion roars with fear;
The hound starts baying from the sod;
They were as safe with her as God.

When at the dawning Durgha went
To smite the murderer in his tent;
One ghastly stroke twixt gorge and belt,—
Five talon stabs where death was dealt.

CURRENT TOPICS.

In the *Nation* for November 30, are some remarks approving the fatherly censure bestowed upon the press by Mr. William Walter Phelps at the Chamber of Commerce dinner in the city of New York. Mr. Phelps, having been ambassador at the Court of Berlin during the past four years, finds, on returning to his native land, that the country has not got along very well without him, and that the moral tone and intellectual character of the American press are lower than they were when he went away. In a vein of dignified reproof he regrets that "our great journals to-day build their circulation on the weakness and vanity of mankind and vie with each other as to which paper shall make the most personal mentions." The criticism is well deserved, but the fault is not in the journals but in their patrons, for it is only by gratifying readers that the journals can "build their circulation." A newspaper is a business enterprise, like a factory or a shop, and so long as weakness and vanity buy more newspapers than sense and modesty, so long will journals adapt themselves to the taste and quality of their customers. It is a sentimental opinion that newspapers are purely educational and philanthropic institutions, benevolent schoolmasters moulding and instructing public opinion in a patriotic and disinterested way. Some of them try to live up to that ideal, and they do live up to it until the editors go to the lunatic asylum or the poorhouse, and then they quit. Editors must fit their patrons just as the shoemakers do. A shoemaker does not fit the feet of his customers but their heads. When a man has a good sized, level head, and wants an easy, comfortable shoe, he gets it; and when his brain is thin or out of symmetry, and he wants a narrow, pinching, foolish, fashionable shoe, the shoemaker gives him that. So it is with an editor; he measures the heads of his patrons, and gives them a newspaper adapted exactly to their mental size. It is not the supply of "personal mentions" but the demand for them that ought to be deplored.

* * *

Worthy of a place in the fine arts is the fabrication of "personal mentions" as exhibited in the *Chicago Tribune* of November 30. The subject is Mr. Alderman Swift, a citizen of high character and good service who happens to be the republican candidate for Mayor, the "personal mentions" of him reaching back to the time when he was a schoolboy at Galena, where, according to the *Tribune* eulogy, he had a propensity to "swing on behind" the farmers' wagons and "hook a turnip or a sweet potato," This precocious talent if properly developed until the middle age of life might easily qualify any man to be a Chicago alderman and even mayor of the city; but it is not the sort of behavior we should expect from a youth who had the distinction to be "in the same Sunday-school class with Fred Grant." If the "personal mentions" are to be believed, as most likely they are not, young Swift was a perpetual worry to the good women of Galena, "because their children would come home with an old broken knife or something else that was useless which 'that Swift boy' had traded off for something better." This premature show of genius in getting the best of a trade, if it has been properly cultivated, is offered as an additional reason why Mr. Swift should be elected mayor of Chicago. These juvenile traits, however, are but the tender little buddings of the full-grown flower; alas, now nearly fifty years of age, the typical alderman, with a full-grown head "hairless as a tooth," and "polished." And lest the important fact might be in doubt we are assured that Mr. Swift has been provided with a nose, "not of the Roman type" says the biographer, "nor the stub, nor the long, thin; it is a nose of character"; but of what character he does not care to say. Mr. Swift is a statesman, too, and this is proven by the fact that "the handkerchief-pocket of his coat is built the same as that of the late Senator Conkling." All those marks of greatness are merely fringe to his mental powers, for it was these that overawed the reporter; especially the ability to do two things at the same time. "Why," says the historian, "he was listening to an important matter the other day, when Ex-City Clerk Van Cleave, one of the wheel-horses of the party, went in. The Mayor *pro tem*, looked up and saluted him, 'Hello Fatty,' and without any change in his countenance he continued to listen to the man who was ahead of 'Fatty'"; an intellectual feat surpassing that of the man who plays two games of chess at the same time without looking at the boards. Those are dreadful specimens of the "personal mentions" of Mr. Swift that filled more than two columns of Monday's *Tribune*. All this insipid flattery was no doubt irritating and annoying to Mr. Swift, who is a sensible man; and very likely it was dreary gossip to the writer of it and to the editor who printed it, but it was "good stuff" to sell. There was a demand for it, and editors must gratify the public taste if they wish to "build their circulation."

* * *

Speaking a week ago about the imaginary "Decline of the Senate," I referred to the amiable tendency of the living to glorify the dead, by contrasting the degeneracy of existing men and manners with the nobler genius and the more virtuous examples of the past; as, for instance, in the scornful comparisons made between the Senate of 1849 and the Senate of 1893. By the inverse law of perspective we magnify mediocrity into greatness as it recedes into the past, expanding politicians into statesmen, and soldiers into demigods. Youth is a luxury beyond the purchasing power of gold, and I envy every man who is younger than I can ever be again, but, after all, an old man enjoys a few advantages which the richest young man cannot buy, and among these is the luxury of travelling in memory over the aerial bridge that spans the intervening space between one generation and another. Marching over that bridge last night, I remembered that in its own time the

Senate of 1849 was branded as the degenerate successor of the more brilliant and patriotic Senate of 1825, and looking into the party literature of 1825, I found the same censorious comparisons made then between the Senate of that period and the Senate of 1806. Looking farther back, I found that the Senators of 1806 were assailed by contemporaneous critics as the ignoble sons of the patriotic sires who flourished in "the good old Colony times." Glancing over the poems of Thomas Moore, I stumbled upon some verses written by him in the year 1806, when he was visiting the city of Washington. He was merely a traveller, observing manners as he went along, and writing of what he saw. We can laugh at his prejudices now, and we can sneer at his dark prophecies, but here is what he said of the Senate:

"Already in this free, this virtuous state,
Which, Frenchmen tell us, was ordained by Fate,
To show the world what high perfection springs
From rabble senators and merchant kings—
Even here already patriots learn to steal
Their private perquisites from public weal,
And, guardians of the country's sacred fire,
Like Afric's priests, they let the flame for hire."

* * *

Yesterday, with impressive martial and civic pomp the statue of General Shields was enthroned in the Capitol, and henceforth he will appear to us as one of the classic heroes of antiquity, a Cæsar, a Pompey, or an Alexander. Standing there in bronze on a granite rock he is transfigured in our sight, and we forget that he was a man of our own time. Dignitaries of high rank were there making an idol of the statue, and worshipping an ideality personified in brass. The Governor of Illinois and Senators of high degree were there, and they gave adoration in clouds of oratorical incense to the effigy of Shields, "warrior, jurist, statesman," as the legend reads that was chiselled on the granite stone. The salutes that came from the military bands were hollow as the drums, and the praises chanted by the statesmen sounded like a penitential psalm, for less than a dozen years ago this hero glorified in bronze was an unsuccessful petitioner for a subordinate office in the very Capitol where his apotheosis was made. Less than a dozen years ago, General Shields, well stricken in years and poor, wanted to be doorkeeper of the House of Representatives but was rejected, and some of the statesmen who then voted against him voted ironically for him yesterday, and were conspicuous among the idolaters at his canonisation. The man who defeated him and won the office of doorkeeper may have a statue himself some day, although among the American people there are not five men in five thousand who, if allowed three guesses, could think of his name. The tribute given to the dead man yesterday was a satire on the living, showing the better chance a hero has of recognition if he will get out of people's way, and die. So long as he lives we will be jealous of him, and we will undervalue him, for he may be a candidate some day, and "run against" one of us for President, or Governor, or Doorkeeper, or something; therefore we will postpone his honors until he dies, and then buy him a statue, not with our own money, of course, but out of the public funds. General Shields was not a great man, but he was a brave man, and an honest man. As a senator he voted with his party, and his party was very often wrong, but he thought its policy would peacefully preserve the threatened union, and when it failed in that, he did his best as a soldier to save it by the sword.

* * *

Mr. William T. Stead, formerly of England, came to Chicago three or four weeks ago and began to puzzle the people with hard conundrums, to be answered at once under the penalty of his displeasure. One of the most tantalising of the problems, as having a spice of sarcasm in it, was this: "What would Christ do if he were in Chicago to-day?" Having fired this riddle at the people, Mr. Stead went away; threatening, however, to return and torment them again if they should fail to give the correct answer, which, of course, was carefully concealed in the idiosyncrasy of Mr. Stead himself, as he alone, and nobody else, knows exactly what Christ would do in the contingency supposed. As very few persons outside of the Sunset Club took the trouble to guess at his conundrum, and as even that intellectual society was compelled to "give it up," Mr. Stead came back, and is working the puzzle again. Some of the citizens who have ravelled their brains with it think that if Christ were in Chicago to-day he would adapt his preaching to the conditions of the time, while others think that as he went down to the "lake front" in Judea, he would go down to the lake front in Chicago, and preach a social economy contrary to the ethics of "law and order." It was generally conceded that in either case, unless he consulted Mr. Stead about it, he would meet the opposition of that rather enthusiastic and sanguine reformer. The more serious question is, not what would Christ do, but what would be done to Christ if he were in Chicago now? He would very likely be "run in" by the police, indicted by the Grand Jury, sentenced by some "venerable jurist" to be hanged, and then be pardoned by Governor Altgeld. M. M. TRUMBULL.

BOOK NOTICES.

The Christmas number of *The Century* is fully as excellent as any of its predecessors. In addition to a varied contents of a high artistic and literary character, including engravings of pictures of Rubens, a Christmas Sermon by the late Phillips Brooks, memoirs and letters of Edwin Booth, we are presented with the beginning of a story by Mark Twain, "Pudd'nhead Wilson," which is at once humorous and pathetic. The first instalment of this story reveals much of its plot, and we have good reasons to believe that it will be the great story of the South, classically describing the conditions and habits of the times before the abolition of slavery.

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