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DELUSIONS OF COINCIDENCE.

BY F. L. OSWALD, M. D.

MOSES MENDELSSOHN, the philosophical kinsman of the great composer, used to maintain that every age of the human race has a physiognomic type of its own, and that the bull-neck and the jovial cheeks of Vitellius were as characteristic of his own era as the hag-ridden visage of Louis the Saint was of the early Middle Ages—so much so, indeed, that the history of mankind might be recorded in a collection of caricatures.

A chronicle of popular delusions would answer almost the same purpose. In every epoch of human progress science has had to contend with a peculiar type of epidemic superstitions, and the prevalent fallacies of the Middle Ages might be defined as delusions of preternaturalism. The chief sources of our latter-day superstitions might be summarised under the head of *Misconstrued Coincidence*. The amazing delusions of our forefathers were founded on erroneous premises; modern fallacies arise chiefly from erroneous conclusions; in other words, science has corrected our data of general knowledge, but has failed to train the masses in the logical use of those data.

A curiously prolific source of delusion consists in the error of ignoring the most important factor among these or more coincident events or conditions. A fertile island is settled by a colony of prosperous immigrants, who happen to persist in their sentiments of loyalty to the government (or the creed) established in the land of their forefathers. Affluence naturally coincides with the development of abundant resources, and incidentally coincides with conservatism; yet the colonists prefer to ascribe their sleekness to their loyalty. Their equally prosperous republican neighbors attribute their affluence to the blessing of liberal institutions. There were observatories before the time of Mr. Lick, and some monkish astronomers had not failed to notice that the phenomenon of shooting stars became most frequent whenever the earth reached a certain point of its yearly orbit. They also remembered that those periods coincided with the festival of a special saint. That circumstance they accepted as the essential feature of the coincidence, and described the annual meteor-showers as the "fiery tears of St. Laurentius."

Happily the feasts of St. Laurentius were none of the "movable festivals," and a much more serious delusion arises from the circumstance that catarrhs and habitual indoor life coincide every year with a period of cold weather. Millions of our fellow men notice that the disorders of their pulmonary organs become most grievous whenever a low temperature obliges them to pass their nights and half their days in stove-warmed rooms, but of a thousand such sufferers nine hundred and ninety-nine ascribe their troubles, not to the lack of fresh air, but to the influence of a low temperature. Nomads are free from that delusion, because winter fails to afflict them with coughs and catarrhs; but on the other hand, bedridden invalids are equally apt to modify the popular theory because summer fails to relieve their trouble, unless such complications as fainting-fits and sick headaches should force them to open their bedroom windows.

Another very prevalent form of the coincidence fallacy is the proneness to misconstrue the importance of an incident by associating it with a wholly independent, but more or less unavoidable event. A striking instance, and at the same time a most effective *reductio ad absurdum* of that disposition is the belief in the miraculousness of the "white horse omen," alias, the "red-girl mystery." "See that red-haired girl? Now let us test the matter by a practical experiment," says your pseudo-scientific friend; "you watch that window of the street-car, and I the other; now let us see if we really come across a white horse again, or not.—Now didn't I tell you? Look this way—there it is: The fifth time the omen proves true in five trials. Let's compare these entries"—taking out his notebook and reading the record of his "experiments," with a sort of trembling exactness: "Four test-cases: four times a white horse was sighted within five minutes after appearance of the premonitory red female." "White and red," he continues, "agree pretty well from an artist's point of view: shall we assume that Nature delights in the arrangement of chromatic effects? At all events you can no longer presume to ascribe it to a fortuitous coincidence? Try it yourself, try it a hundred times, if you like, but be at last honest enough to admit that there are more things between heaven and earth than"—etc., etc. "The credulity of sceptics is often wonderful. Can you be

lieve in 'accidents' of that sort? Don't evade the point, but say yes or no."

The simple answer is: "No." The coincidence is not accidental, nor yet miraculous, and the simple explanation is this: In a big city there are a good many white horses. In a single street of a medium-sized town like Richmond, Virginia, an observer counted 342 of them between morning and noon, and in riding from street to street of a city like Philadelphia or New York one such horse is almost sure to be sighted within any five minutes of the twenty-four hours. The circumstance that before that time the observer happened to see a red-haired female of his species is a wholly irrelevant incident, and the "omen" would have proved as true if he had seen a blue kite or a black poodle.

The originator of the delusion may have intended his hypothesis as a satire on the credulity of his neighbors, yet an exactly analogous fallacy underlies the "Evil Eye" superstition, which once pervaded the Christian world from Naples to Antwerp, and still prevails in the East of the Mediterranean coast-lands. Reginald Scott's "Discovery of Witchcraft" and Frommann's treatise on "Fascination" prove that the problem was investigated in scientific earnest, and many private investigators may have refused to accept the belief on hearsay and tried to verify its truth by practical tests. Mrs. So and So was reputed to possess the power of the Evil Eye, i. e. the "ability of injuring others by looking upon them." The evidence of public opinion did not satisfy sceptics, but the result of repeated experiments put the truth of the report out of question. The experimenter or his family had actually experienced trouble of some sort or other every time they met Mrs. S., though a resolute spirit of scientific inquiry had emboldened them to put themselves in the way of the reputed witch at least twenty times. Once or twice the result might have been ascribed to accident, after the tenth test the evidence amounted to what lawyers call a "violent presumption," and the outcome of the twentieth experiment seemed to leave no room for the slightest doubt. Sceptics thus convinced could not help applauding the verdict of the Witchcraft Tribunal.

Three out of five witches probably forfeited the tolerance of their neighbors in that very way, but the Turks go further and are said to attribute the gift of the evil-working eye to all unbelievers and even to many kinds of wild animals. A jackal sitting at the roadside and cackling in your face is supposed to taunt you with his prescience of impending trouble. The natives of the Austrian Alps cross themselves at sight of a spider dangling in an open doorway; the old Romans looked out for bad luck on hearing the cry of certain birds; Swiss peasants consider it an ominous

sign if a rabbit crosses the road from right to left a little way ahead of them; modern French travellers dislike to enter a railway-train that reaches the station in a shroud of black smoke or comes to an abrupt halt, as if checked by an unseen hand; the light-hearted Sicilians feel glum if they meet an old crone early on New Years morning. At the same time they hold that bad luck cannot be averted by passing the critical day indoors.

Perhaps they are right. Fate does not need the assistance of an evil eye, and the explanation of all similar superstitions can be found in the circumstance that life abounds with troubles, and bad luck and death, like the pale horses of our metropolitan streets, will turn up as a sequence to almost any omen. The optimistic instinct of man shrinks from the recognition of that truth and prefers to consider ill success as a consequence of abnormal circumstances, till the grim logic of experience dispels that illusion, and Time evolves that expression which, according to Arthur Schopenhauer, may be read in the wrinkles of every old man's face, and can be best defined by the word disappointment.

Fortunate events are much more apt to be accepted as a matter of course, with the exception of recovery from diseases of the self-limited class, which terminate in spite of, but as the patient prefers to believe, because of the liberal use of drugs. The *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy—the disposition to mistake sequence for consequence—maintains the credit of the African rain-maker and makes the fortune of countless quacks. The let-alone plan might often save time, as well as money, but there are non-self limited diseases, and the belief in the existence of wonder-working chemicals is too pleasant to be easily renounced. What?! achieve our own salvation by reforming our habits, if we can keep on idling, raking and gormandising, and for a few shillings a bottle purchase a miraculous specific that will protect us from the consequences of our sins against nature? Rather than relinquish the consoling belief in the efficacy of such elixirs, the heir of many ills pays the price of consistency and manages to strengthen his faith by sticking to his medicine-man even in the crisis of disorders which he more than half suspects would have subsided sooner or later without any drugs or ghost dances whatever.

On the treeless plateaux of central Africa, serpents and other reptiles retire to their subterranean hiding-places during protracted droughts and re-appear only after a good rain. In the midst of a heavy shower snakes as thick as a man's arm may be seen gliding the roads, apparently revelling in the abundant moisture, but often with a wholly unintended result. Whenever the natives can catch a good-sized serpent of that sort they cage it up and carefully preserve it for the

possible emergency of a severe drought, which they think can be broken by exposing their rain-loving prisoner to the full glare of the sun. That expedient they think, will soon cover the sky with clouds. Did not a good shower coincide with the former appearance of the snake? Instead of ascribing that appearance to the rain, they attribute the rain to its magic influence. In other words, they mistake the effect for the cause.

Yet even that ne-plus-ultra fallacy has its analogue in the delusions of various Caucasian nations. Woodpeckers and their congeners frequent dead trees in quest of insects, and thus often prevent those insects from hatching a noxious brood of larvæ. Our rustic wiseacres have not failed to notice the coincident phenomena, but ascribe the decay of the tree to the visits of the bird, and a small American variety of the picus tribe is consequently known as the "sap-sucker."

The destruction of insect-eating birds is invariably followed by the increase of noxious insects; but equally invariably the prohibition of harmless recreations is followed by an increase of vice. British patriots ascribe the neglect of archery and other games of merry old England to the epidemic increase of drunkenness. Is it not decidedly possible that the increase of drunkenness has been caused by the suppression of better pastimes?

THE BENEFICIAL ASPECT OF CERTAIN ERRORS.

BY JOHN BURROUGHS.

A TREE is known by its fruit, and it may be objected that false ideas in religion cannot be productive of good. But false ideas are and have been productive of good. The idea of sacrifice is now looked upon as a false idea, and has long been dropped from religious rites, but with the ancients it was not a false idea, but an undoubted means of obtaining immediate communion with the life of the gods. The man who offered sacrifices was for the time being a guest of supernatural beings, and he aimed to make himself worthy to sit at their table. The fruit or animals offered up must be without spot or blemish, and the body of the priest who offered it was to be without blemish. Can there be any doubt but that a man's religious nature, his sense of sacred and invisible things was quickened by such a ceremony? Before the victim was slaughtered wine was thrown upon its head that it might nod in token of consent. This too was a false idea, since any strange liquid thrown upon the head of a sheep or heifer, and allowed to run down upon the nose and into the mouth, will cause the animal to toss its head, as if in affirmation, but this only served to clinch the belief of the sacrificer, in the immediate presence of the God.

If one could only believe that the stars were so many eyes of supernatural beings looking down upon him, and beholding his every act, would he not be more careful about doing a mean thing beneath them? Yet such an idea would not be good astronomy. History is full of false or foolish ideas, that have been productive of great good. In our day we should look upon an enthusiasm like that which gave rise to the crusades as very absurd; the notion that was the parent of this great movement was undoubtedly a mistaken one, and yet it is considered that the crusades were a good thing for Europe. Such a mighty impulse of generosity and devotion to an idea, could not be otherwise than good. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him," and the folly of man too. Whatever creates a noble impulse, or quickens our sense of the imminence of spiritual and invisible things is justified by its results, no matter how false or delusive, in itself, it may be.

The religious world of to day looks upon polytheism as a false religion, and relatively to us and our ideas, it is false; we could not be sincere in the practice of it; but was it so to the Greek? Undoubtedly the religion of Apollo has done as much for the Hellenes, some might say more, than Christianity has done for the modern world. The whole culture and civilisation of Greece was the legitimate outgrowth of the religion of Apollo, and can as much be said of our civilisation, with reference to Christianity? Granted that the oracle of Delphi was not what it pretended to be, but its answers were founded upon the widest knowledge and the deepest wisdom possible in those times. As a rule they discouraged unworthy and encouraged worthy undertakings. Moreover, Dr. Curtius says, "The oracles were sought only by those who were inwardly or outwardly oppressed and needy of help, especially by those burdened by guilt. The atonement sought from the priest could not be obtained without humiliation and self-abasement. Confession of sin and repentance were demanded." Delphi was the heart and conscience of Greece.

It is easy to see what a power for good the ordinance of Christian baptism may have upon him who thoroughly believes in it. If when the neophyte feels the water close over him, he really believes his sins are washed away and he is cleansed from all impurities, will he not arise a different man, a better, a holier man? The great point is to have faith. Truly faith can work wonders. The early Christians, the Apostles, and probably Christ himself, labored under the delusion that the end of the world was near at hand. It was a false idea, but it added solemnity and power to their lives. "As long as this error," says Gibbon, "was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expect-

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tation of that moment when the globe itself and all the various races of mankind, should tremble at the approach of their divine Judge."

* * *

It is easy enough to say what God is not, but, ah! who can say what he is? Can he be named or defined to the intellect at all? Probably not. The burden of the old prophets' songs was that God is past finding out,—past finding out by the intellect, by the understanding. We call him an infinite and eternal Being, but in doing so we commit a solecism, we trip up our own minds. The only notion of being we can form is derived from our knowledge of man; God as a being is only an enlarged man, and to make him infinite and eternal is to contradict the fundamental idea with which we start. A being is finite; add infinity and omnipotence and all idea of being disappears. Can we conceive of an infinite house, or of an infinite enclosure of any kind? No more can we conceive of an infinite being. Can we ascribe form to infinite space? No more can we ascribe personality to God.

What appears more real than the sky? We think of it and speak of it as if it was as positive and tangible a fact as the earth. See how it is painted by the sunset or by the sunrise. How blue it is by day; how grand by stars at night. At one time tender and wooing, at another hard and distant. Yet what an illusion! There is no sky; it is only vacancy, only empty space. It is a glimpse of the infinite. When we try to grasp or measure, or define the Power we call God, we find it to be another sky, sheltering, over-arching, all-embracing,—palpable to the casual eye, but receding, vanishing to the closer search; unfathomable because intangible—the vast power, or ether in which the worlds float—but itself ungraspable, unattainable, forever soaring beyond our ken. Not a being, not an entity is God, but that which lies back of all being and all entities. Hence an old writer, in his despair of grasping God, said "God may not improperly be called nothing." Absolute being, is to the human mind about the same as nothing, or no being at all, just as absolute motion is equivalent to eternal rest, or as infinite space means no space at all. Motion implies something which is not motion, and space implies lines and boundaries. Infinite being or power gives the mind no place to rest. One's thought goes forth like the dove from Noah's ark and finds nowhere to perch.

"How can any one teach concerning Brahma? he is neither the known nor the unknown. That which cannot be expressed by words, but through which all expression comes, this I know to be Brahma. That which cannot be thought by the mind, but by which all thinking comes, this I know is Brahma. That which cannot be seen by the eye, but by which the eye sees, is Brahma. If thou thinkest that thou canst

know it, then in truth thou knowest it very little. To whom it is unknown he knows it, but to whom it is known he knows it not."

* * *

Science is rubbing deeper and deeper into our minds the conviction that creation is a unit, that there are no breadths or chasms, that knowledge of one thing fits in with the knowledge of all other things and is a ground of vantage in the soul's progress in all directions. The more active a man's scientific faculties are, the more clear ought to be his view of the grounds of faith; and so it would be if the grounds of faith were continuous with the grounds of the rest of human knowledge. But they are not, they belong to another order of things.

Poetic truth, moral truth, and all other subtle truths are spiritually discerned also, and that there is any other spiritual discernment than is here implied, any other that is normal in kind and valid in reason, is what the natural man cannot admit. Spiritual discernment of the kind he refers to can be communicated, proof of it can be given. A man cannot counterfeit any real intellectual quality, or any real power of the spirit, but the spiritual discernment of evangelical theology, cannot be communicated or verified. A man says he has it, and that is all we can know about it. He says he discerns certain things to be true, but he cannot convey his mode of viewing them to us, so that we shall see them to be true also. Of course a man who has no faculty for music cannot appreciate the charm or the truth of music. No, but those who have this gift can give us proof of it. St. Paul's power of spiritual discernment was no different in kind from that of many other men before and since his time. How did it differ from Carlyle's power of spiritual discernment, or from Schiller's, or from Plato's, or from that of Epictetus? He had no deeper insight into human nature or into the workings of men's minds, or into the mysteries that shroud human life. He had great religious power, great heroism, great wisdom, a lofty spiritual nature, but it was genetically the same as that of other men. Milton did not write his poems out of his Puritanism, out of the kind of spiritual knowledge Puritans are supposed to possess. Wordsworth wrote out of the spirit of his natural religion, not out of his orthodoxy, or *unnatural* religion. Indeed when people have written poetry or composed any other work of art out of what they have called their spiritual life alone, the product has not been such as the world wanted to see live. In any work of prose or verse, of science or philosophy, it is only such things as put us in communication with the natural, universal, and perennial, that gives the work a lasting value. Things that appeal to Christians alone, are soon left behind. The natural man, as much as we

may profess to despise him, is the main stay after all in religion as well as in science. Religious poetry as such, has little value. In fact the only thing that will keep a religious book at all is the salt of the natural man. If this has lost its savor, the work is short-lived. It keeps the Bible itself fresh and makes it appeal to all hearts. What does the world value in Cowper's poetry? his discernment of spiritual truths? or rather his poetic discernment of natural universal truths. The religious idolaters who throw themselves under the wheels of Juggernaut, or offer themselves as victims at the altar of sacrifice, are heroic, without doubt, but the world does not heed and does not remember them, but it does heed and remember the three hundred Spartans who laid down their lives at Thermopylæ. This appeals to and shows the stuff of the natural man.

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"In our early days," says Schopenhauer, "we fancy that the leading events of our lives and the persons who are going to play an important part in it, will make their entrance to the sound of drums and trumpets; but when, in old age, we look back we find that they all came in quietly, slipped in, as it were by the side door, almost unnoticed." The great men of a race or people, the real heroes and saviours, usually came upon the scene quietly and unknown. They do not even know themselves. The remark of Schopenhauer occurred to me in thinking of the advent of Jesus. Nothing could be more natural, nothing more in harmony with universal experience, than his coming, and his life as we may read it in the Synoptic Gospels. There was no prodigy, no miracle, no sudden apparition of a superhuman being, clothed in majesty and power, etc., as the popular expectation indicated there would be, but the Messiah came in the natural way as a helpless infant, born of human parents. Instead of a throne, there was a humble cradle in a manger. It really enhances our notion of his merit, or if you prefer of his divinity, that he should have been rejected by his race and people, that he should have come from a town of proverbial disrepute, that he should have been meek and lowly through life, a man of sorrows, the friend of the humble and the despised, that his kingdom should not have been of this world, in fact, that he should in every way have disappointed expectation. All this seems in harmony with the course of nature and of human life. It agrees with the truest experience. There is a sort of poetic verisimilitude about it. Indeed if a God were to appear this is probably the way he would come. All greatest things have a humble beginning. The divine is nearer and more common than we are apt to think. The earth itself is a star in the sky, little as we may suspect it. Had the record made Jesus suddenly appear as a great po-

tentate, or even as a full grown man, as the angels are represented as appearing, or had it represented him as the child of some nymph, like certain other heroes of antiquity, the fabulous character of the story would have been apparent. But he came as a man, lived as a man, and died as a man; was indeed completely immersed in our common humanity. Nothing God-like but his teachings. Even the reputed miracles become him not, they mar his perfect humanity. They belong to the conception of him as a supernatural being, and not as a man. The notion of the immaculate conception also jars upon our sense of the human completeness of his character. He came as the great saviours in all ages have come, and was rejected and denied in the usual way. His lot was not exceptional. His character and mission were not exceptional, except that he spoke more fully to our sense of the Divine than any man has before spoken.

* * *

I have often asked myself, What is the merit of the mingled feeling of admiration and approval which we experience toward people who devoutly hold a religious creed in the truth of which we have no confidence? In yonder house is an aged woman slowly dying of an incurable disease. She can no longer rise from her bed, or even move herself without help. Her son has come from the far West to be with her in these last days of her life. Every morning the son reads a chapter from the bible, and the old Scotch woman lying there on her back in her bed, holds the accustomed family prayers. Her voice is low and feeble, but her faith is strong, her eye is bright and her spirit serene. Long ago she left her native hills for this new country; now she was about to leave this for another country in the existence of which beyond that dark ocean, she had never had the slightest doubt, nor the slightest doubt as to the means to be employed to secure an interest there. What is the merit of the feeling which prompts us to say "how touching how beautiful," and that fills us with a vague regret that such a faith is impossible to us? We could not feel so in the presence of the ancient superstitions, the bleeding victims on the altar, or the devotee perishing in the arms of his idol. Hence our feeling, our regret is not a tribute to sincerity alone, or to courage, or to heroism. It is mainly a tribute to the past, to the memory of our fathers who held this faith, to our mothers who distilled it into our minds in infancy, to the old creeds and institutions which have played so large a part in the culture and development of our race. We are like the western emigrant turning to take a last view of the home of his youth and the land of his fathers. The old ties draw us, we are filled with a deep longing and regret; a little more and we would go back and abide there forever. The new world of faith, the great western

world, which this generation is fast entering, and which the next generation will more completely take possession of, is indeed a new land. Those upon whom the old associations have set the deepest mark will experience the keenest homesickness. The timid, the half-hearted, the irresolute will not go. But much of the best blood will go, is going. The majority of the most virile minds of the century have long since taken up their abode there. And like the other emigration, the men go first, the women and children stay behind; woman, more tender and emotional cannot give up the old faiths, she shrinks back from the new land; it seems cold and naked to her spirit; she cleaves unto the past, and to the shelter of the old traditions. Probably the bravest among us do not abandon them without a pang. The old church has a friendly and sheltering look after all, and the white monuments in the rear of it where our kindred sleep, how eloquent is the silent appeal which they make.

But what can be done? Thou shalt leave this land, the land of thy fathers, is a fiat which has gone forth as from the Eternal. We cannot keep the old beliefs, the old creeds, if we would. They belonged to a condition of mind which is fast being outgrown.

THE NEW INVASION OF THE SOUTH.

BY M. M. TRUMBULL.

THERE is in that remote province called the "South," a corporate brotherhood known as "The Southern Inter-State Immigration Association." In its prospectus which I have read with interest and pleasure, "The South gladly invites a Northern invasion made in the interest of peace and fraternity." To promote that invasion is the laudable object of the Association. It invites an immigration of northern genius, experience, and capital, to assist in developing the magnificent resources of the province.

I do not use the word "province" as a special reproach to the "South," for not long ago the "West" had a convention at which a great many narrow-chested speeches were made, illiberal, and sectional, threatening rebellion against an imaginary despotism vaguely called the "East"; and declaring its purpose to make the "West" not merely a geographical designation, but also a separate and hostile political division. A Provincial spirit and a National spirit cannot flourish together in this land.

More from habit than design, some of the language of the prospectus is of the antediluvian tone, and the "South" remains a personal pronoun as of old. "Loyal to *its* own customs and institutions; true to *its* honorable past; *it* would gladly forget; *it* upholds the olive branch;" and more to the same effect. This is not progress, but stagnation; and the sentiment is inconsistent with the objects of the society, and especially with its purpose to "enlarge and liberalise the National American sentiment."

"The Southern Inter-State Immigration Association will in October and November 1891, hold a Southern Exposition at Raleigh, N. C., Representing the Resources and Capabilities of the South." This announcement which I copy from the heading of a little pamphlet programme deserves a great deal of attention and respect, because the inspiration of the whole enterprise comes from the angel Industry, the genius of the New South; and because in the prospectus these encouraging words are said: "There is one more instructive lesson to be given to the unthinking and

uninformed world. The negro, the once ignorant slave, stands today in most Northern minds an object of pity; the needless cause of bitter sectional exacerbation. The Exposition will give proof that the negro is no longer in tutelage; that he stands in no need of federal bayonets for protection; that he is no longer dependent on government rations; but that he is a *free, industrious, self-respecting citizen.*"

I mark those few last words because they express the substance of the proud congratulation. If the Exposition at Raleigh will redeem this promise and "give proof that the negro is a free citizen," it will accomplish miracles in politics, and dissipate the clouds of prejudice and misapprehension which have so long hidden the "New South" from the gaze of impartial men; but the proof offered must be full and conclusive that justice has been done, or, at least, that it is being done, otherwise the New South will hobble along like one of its own convicts, a ball and chain to its leg. The "olive branch" offer is a graceful act; but "Equal rights for All," is the only olive branch that Justice will accept, the only bough that can blossom into social or political peace, north, south, or—anywhere.

Among the interesting features of the Raleigh Exposition will be a special department for the colored people, wherein they may exhibit in material form the progress they have made in the industrial and esthetic arts, in literature, and science. This is a hopeful sign, because the motive of the managers appears to be a good one; that is, to arouse the colored people to self-help and self-respect, and to excite some educational ambition among the redeemed slaves by a promise of fair play. It is not for any one to throw suspicion upon this promise, for it is indorsed by representative men in an eloquent and somewhat pathetic "Appeal to the Colored People of the South." This appeal is signed by sixty or seventy colored men, farmers, merchants, editors, doctors, teachers, clergymen, lawyers, an ex-member of Congress, and one or two bishops. It lacks a few names that I would like to see on it, but even as it is, it carries much authority.

In this "Appeal" they say, "The gentlemen in control of the Exposition are making special efforts for the Colored Department. They want it to be a success." This testimony ought to be convincing. Further, they say: "The white South offers its stronger and helping hand to the black South," and "approves of colored labor in preference to that of foreigners." The appeal also declares that, "No politics enter into this question. It is a matter of dollars and cents; a matter of vindication of our ability to prove ourselves worthy of our citizenship"; and it concludes thus: "Let every negro who has the best interests of the race at heart join hands in this laudable effort to place the race in its proper light before the world."

It seems ungracious to be critical of a gift so cheering and auspicious as this reconciliation between the "white South" and the "black South," but there are in that "Appeal to the Colored people of the South," some bits of pride and bits of humbleness that might wisely have been omitted. Like a discord in music it that harsh note about "foreigners." People just out of the house of bondage display a pride fantastic when they seek to put the foreigner down below them in the labor market. In a just and humane social system there are no "foreigners." Perhaps it is only natural that the colored people of America seek the luxury of retaliation, for in all the northern states, the foreign born laborers were the most unrelenting defenders of negro slavery. The most oppressed peasantry in Europe hailed with rapture the land where they could be oppressors in their turn, and they voted "solid" against freedom. Perhaps, also, that was the natural recoil from the slavery which they themselves had suffered.

On the other hand, those colored men made a dangerous concession, when in rash humility, they staked Emancipation on the success of the negro exhibit at Raleigh. They betted recklessly

high and gave enormous odds when they agreed "to refute the charge that the Emancipation Proclamation of Lincoln was a failure"; and that they would "prove themselves worthy of citizenship." The white man is not fool enough to stake his freedom on the test of his fitness for it, and why should the colored man do so? Man is always fit for freedom; he is never fit for slavery.

It happened at one time during the war that there was in my command a regiment of colored soldiers, the 57th United States Infantry, and one New Year's day I ordered a review of that regiment in honor of the anniversary of American emancipation; I think that every man in the regiment had formerly been a slave, and after the review I made a few remarks to the soldiers in which I warned them never to make the concession which twenty-six years afterwards is made by those influential colored men of the South, in the "Appeal" of which I am now speaking. I said, "You are not, according to the cant of the day, on trial to see whether you are fit for freedom, but you are unconditionally free; not because I say so, not because any man proclaims it so, but because freedom is your birthright. Men may deprive other men of their freedom, they may withhold it from them, but they cannot confer it. It is not theirs to give nor to take away." And I am of that same opinion still.

On the face of the returns, the pamphlets submitted to *The Open Court*, and I have no right to go behind the returns, there is good evidence that the Exposition at Raleigh will in its results be beneficial to both races at the South; and it also appears that the white people there are finding out that free labor is better than slave labor. In due time they will discover that well paid labor contributes most to the profit and the happiness of all parties.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE DERIVATION OF SHEENY.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

GENERAL TRUMBULL'S reply to my request for information about the word "sheeny," suggests to me that I ought to point out the facts that argue against the derivation from *chien*.

The word "sheeny" in the sense of "sharper," "Jew," does not belong to English literature. It is not in Shakespeare, not in Bailey's Dictionary (1764) nor in Johnson's (1785-1818), not in Richardson's (1863). It is not in any of the editions of Webster (not even in the new International of 1890) or Worcester, not in Skeat nor in Stormouth. The word is to all appearance an American word and of recent origin. To suppose, therefore, with General Trumbull that it comes from the Norman-French is to suppose that it maintained an existence in England for some four centuries without finding its way into any English book; that it had nevertheless vogue enough among the English people so that it crossed the ocean with some of the early colonists, and that it then existed here for three centuries more without being "spotted" by any lexicographer, and meanwhile died out completely in England. All this is to the philological mind next to impossible.

Secondly: The word is not only an American word but it is a colloquial, slangy word. It has not come into our speech by way of the literary class who dabble in French phrases. But our people do not speak French; when they wish to call a man a "dog" they call him a dog and not a *chien* or a *Hund*. It could only have originated in some portion of the country where our people are in actual contact with the French. But now the word *chien* has in French no specialised application to a Jew, no more than "dog" has in English. How unlikely therefore that some American community should have picked up a French word which in French does not mean "Jew," and has no special vogue as a term of re-

proach, and then should have kept no trace of it in its natural meaning while giving it the factitious meaning "Jew."

Finally the French *chien* does not sound like "sheeny" and would not naturally pass into popular English in that form. Witness *Prairie du chien*.

These are the reasons which make the derivation seem, in absence of any facts going to show how and where the word began to be used, altogether impossible. The small-boy "fact" mentioned by General Trumbull only shows the existence of a popular impression that "sheeny" is derived from *chien*. But the question is whether this impression is correct. Personally I do not think it is, though I stand ready to change my opinion when the evidence requires it.

Sincerely yours,

CALVIN THOMAS.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

DEAR SIR:—I like to read General Trumbull's pithy remarks on almost any question. I fear, however, he has not given Professor Thomas's question that deliberate consideration which it deserves. To me the very fact that the dictionary referred to gives the derivation of the word, "sheeny" as obscure, is sufficient to lead me to thoroughly consider any objection I may entertain before entering my protest. Apart from the authority of the dictionary, I doubt very much that the French derivation of the above word will stand investigation. Who would spell the French word, *chien*, for dog, "sheeny"? I answer, no one. The sound of the word is nothing whatever like "sheeny." I have not time to give the matter that thought which should be given it by the person who would speak with any effect on the subject; but when the other day I saw General Trumbull's remarks on the word, it struck me that perhaps a more reasonable derivation of the word "sheeny" may be found in the Hebrew word *shanih* or *sanih*. In Deut. xxi. 15, "the first-born son be hers that was hated." The Hebrew word *shaney* or *saney*, therefore, means one that is hated. As I have already hinted, I cannot give this matter much thought; but it does seem to me that this word is likely the original of "sheeny," the one in question. The Jew has always, I am sorry to say, been regarded as the hated one by the Christian. It is possible that the word used as a vile epithet means, thou hateful creature. This is certainly a probable derivation; for the spelling "sheeny" is quite near enough to the real Hebrew word *shaney* or *saney*, a word meaning one hated.

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HENRY TRURO BRAY.

THE UNITED STATES AND ART.

To the Editor of The Open Court:—

I BEG to submit a few remarks on General Trumbull's article in *The Open Court* of August 6.

Speaking of the proposed new dies for American coins, the General refers to the very erroneous notion, entertained by the Secretary of the Mint, that "our engraver is the only competent person to prepare these designs." On the contrary there are several excellent American sculptors, such as M. St. Ange and others, who are perfectly able to execute that work artistically, as evidenced by their previous work and their successes here and abroad. Besides, I have some suspicion that the "engraver" referred to as the only American artist who knows how to make designs for coins is not much of an artist, nor even an American. For I remember that the horrible dies in use now to strike American coins, were made by an Englishman; also that the cupola of the National Capitol itself, as well as other trashy frescoes in the same Capitol were painted by an Italian—although there are many good American artists, painters, and sculptors, who would have done the work much better. It really seems to be the policy, or habit, of the government to patronise foreigners in preference to Americans.

True artists do not solicit patronage, nor do they lobby; therefore they remain ignored and neglected by their Country and their Government, whose duty it is to encourage and honor them—not so much for their own benefit as for the intellectual progress and refinement of the people at large. Neglected at home, most of the best American artists are compelled to exile themselves, not only to perfect themselves in their art, but also to meet with the material and moral prosperity they justly deserve.

I must add that the best way to obtain artistic dies is not at all to have them made by an "engraver," but by a *sculptor* who sculps them, as a *basso-relievo* on a large scale. After which they are mechanically reduced to any desired size, and cast in steel; an engraver, or better still, the artist himself retouches and perfects the dies after they have been cast; the author at least must superintend that retouching, which if badly done, would spoil the work.

In closing, I remark, that so long as this country does not possess a department of National Education and Fine Arts (like that of France for instance), America cannot hope to possess any artistic sense and refinement, although I believe that the American people, with such institutions would soon climb to the very first rank among civilized nations.

There are here departments for agriculture, for patents, etc., why not for education and Fine Arts? Material interests are well attended to, why not the intellectual and artistic interests? "Man does not live by bread alone." F. DE GISSAC.

REMARKS BY GENERAL TRUMBULL.

MR. DE GISSAC'S interesting letter is a fine example in "Basso-Relievo" of that plea for native talent which is gradually teaching the proud American to beg. It is to me as if the stately corn, standing like an army of soldiers touching elbows in solid column for a thousand miles each way, should ask for patronage and charity.

Mr. de Gissac drops unconsciously into the ranks of those advocates of native talent who boast of strength and speed while asking for government crutches to help them hobble along. He praises the skill of American artists and then declares that "until we have a department of National education and Fine Arts we cannot hope to possess any artistic sense and refinement"; which is very much like saying that the government ought to build a hospital and a nursery for strong men. Edmund Burke said in the House of Commons that the American colonies had grown to strength and manliness through the "wise and salutary neglect" of the British government. Perhaps that is the reason why the American artists are so "excellent."

"It may be true, as Mr. de Gissac says, that "there are several excellent American sculptors who can execute that work artistically," but the eminent American sculptor, August St. Gaudens, is of a different opinion. When consulted on this very subject, he said to Mr. Leech, the director of the mint, "There are only four artists competent to make designs for coins; three of them are in France, and I am the fourth." This was not vain-glorious egotism; it was only the self-confidence of a man who knew what his chisel was able to do.

Although perhaps he did not notice it, Mr. de Gissac gave to himself and all of us a good lesson in moral economics, when he said, "Neglected at home, most of the American artists are compelled to exile themselves, not only to perfect themselves in their art, but also to meet the material and moral prosperity they justly deserve." This is a confession that foreign countries are more generous to our artists than we are to theirs. In foreign countries according to Mr. de Gissac, American artists are not only allowed to perfect themselves in their art, but they obtain employment also; yet he complains because foreign artists get a little employment here. Shall the United States be less magnanimous than Germany, France, or Spain?

It is quite proper that Mr. de Gissac should complain of work done at the public expense, that it is not well done, if he thinks that way, but his criticism should apply to the work only, and not at all to the nationality of the workmen. It is also true that the farmer is under the patronage of the government, and that the Department of Agriculture is ostensibly for his benefit, but it is hardly worth its cost, and perhaps the farmer would be just as well without it. No doubt the sculptor is as much entitled to government patronage as the farmer; and if the artists had as many votes as the farmers have, there would soon be a Department of the Fine Arts with a cabinet minister at the head of it.

I would not undervalue the esthetic arts, nor their influence in the moral education of a people, for I believe with Mr. de Gissac that "man shall not live by bread alone"; which, by the way, is what the preacher said to the tramp when mixing a little spiritual refreshment with a gift of bread; "Which is verry true Sir," said the tramp, "he needs also a little meat and vegetables."

M. M. TRUMBULL.

NOTES.

The author of the poem "Future Life" which was anonymously published in the last number of *The Open Court* is W. Schuyler of St. Louis, Mo.

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