

The Open Court.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL

Devoted to the Work of Conciliating Religion with Science.

No. 250. (VOL. VI.—23.)

CHICAGO, JUNE 9, 1892.

Two Dollars per Year.
Single Copies, 5 Cents.

COPYRIGHT BY THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.—Reprints are permitted only on condition of giving full credit to Author and Publisher.

UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF ETHAN ALLEN.

BURLINGTON, Vermont, 25th of August, 1788.

SIR :

I have just returned from Quebec, have had an admittance into the company and conversation of Lord Dorchester and Judge Smith, the first civil magistrate of the province, etc., and to sundry gentlemen of the army, and other civil officers, merchants, etc.; but they have no very rare intelligence. The newspapers contain the whole. I have held a share in a considerable round of European and American politics but all of it amounts merely to theory, and most of it was inspired by good wine and punch. Sometimes the conversation touched lightly on philosophical subjects, but you know that most of our gentlemen, (not including the commander in chief, Judge Smith, and two or three more,) are above such dry and insipid conversation, besides most of them are wise enough to apprehend, that should they attempt to handle such subjects, they would discover their weak side; the giving and drinking of toasts, talking on subjects of gallantry, and putting on the outside of the gentlemen, better suits their capacity and inclination than to examine into the nature and reason of things. Sir, since our interview at Burlington I have almost caught an idea of a mere spirit, or embodied soul, but not quite. I apprehend you could help me to it if any man. When we are all on the very point of discovering invisible beings they vanish from our imaginations, and leave us gaping and staring after them, with eyes of flesh like fools. We are told by enthusiasts and lunatics that they hold a correspondence with mere spirits, particularly with the Holy Ghost; weak minds make their silly imaginations pass for reality though sensible and learned persons cannot thus impose on themselves nor be imposed on by others. A competency of knowledge in the sciences, is therefore our only bulwark against superstition and idolatry. The superstitions part of mankind, which by one means or other are far the most numerous, are but the dupes of church and state; at their command they cut one another's throats, as they suppose for God's sake, and commit all manner of cruelty and outrage. So much for superstition. I have something to say of the merit

and sense of Dr. Samuel Stearns of Brattleborough; on whose behalf I understand that sundry worthy gentlemen have wrote to you desiring that he may be honored with a diploma, from the seal of your respectable college, constituting him a doctor of law, I presume he would do honor to your institution as well as be honored by it; he is a great mathematician, astronomer, and physician; and has a general knowledge in natural philosophy; and in the moral sciences excels most of the learned Christian philosophers of my acquaintance; I therefore recommend him to your favor, and am, with due respect and esteem, your most Obedient and

Humble Servant,

ETHAN ALLEN.

To the Hon. John Whelock, President of Dartmouth College.

A STUDY OF PLAY.

BY E. P. POWELL.

HAVING a litter of Scotch Collie puppies I was interested in observing the beginnings and progress of the idea of play. It is the most wonderful fact in nature that all things have their sports. These pups had for the first few days of their lives nothing to do but to eat and sleep. Even their senses, apart from taste, did not seem to be awake. They not only did not see, but they had no apparent consciousness of sounds. But before their eyes were opened there were impulses to sport.

The first that I observed was when they were about ten days old. A puppy quite full of his dinner would crowd another from its teat, but had no appetite to take his place. This began a series of pushings and tumblings which I knew would in due time be a frolic. Then followed pushings and nosings when not at the teats. After the eyes were opened this rapidly passed into a general tumble about. When they were four weeks old square wrestles took place; and at six weeks these were full of mischief and fun. The first nibbles seemed to be under a mistake. Their half blind impulse to suck led them to sometimes get hold of the wrong thing—another puppies ear or leg; and the toss away was afterward followed by purposeful nips

of the same sort. In fact I think the play was originated in blunders largely.

When six weeks old the mother recognised that it was time for frolics, and she would enter into the game with curious delight, and evident effort to lead them. The Collie instinct was strong to keep them herded, as she would herd sheep. If one wandered she rounded him in. Then jumping out of the middle of the nine puppies she would drop down and tempt them about her again. Soon the game, much like boys game of tag, became extremely lively—but all the time she never neglected herding. Here were two instincts coöperating, or perhaps conflicting, the one acquired from civilisation and domesticity; the others much older. At about two months of age the pups began to show some marked individualities both in play and otherwise. One or two sought human friendship much more markedly than the others, running to me to be fondled rather than to wrestle with their mates. Two from an early age manifested a quicker sense of sport than the others; and would challenge the crowd, dashing about with tails wagging and with growls, and dancing into any pup they met.

What is play? I will leave the question unanswered until we have studied in other directions. Our puppies still further furnish an excellent field for observation. We will waken them after they have had a good meal and a good sleep. There is no sensation of hunger, and none of weariness. Each muscle is elastic, and every one full of spring. They would go off of themselves if there were no head nerve centre to direct them; that is they would move in accord with an unconscious propulsion to stretch out and contract. The puppy is a bundle of springs and elastic bows. He opens his eyes at first dully; but they grow bright with a consciousness of himself and his surroundings. He is not only a bunch of springy muscles; but every other pup is a challenge to use his springs. Now comes the curious part of sport. Rab walks a few steps toward Cæsar, gives him a nip; this is returned. They roll over in a wrestle; nipping and growling; suddenly Rab springs off sideways, and then gives three or four more leaps, stopping to look about; when his tail wags, and he is ready for a more regular bit of sport. Spontaneity thus alternates with purpose; and it is not directed at all by the animal's will or conscious intention. This is not only a characteristic of puppies but of all young creatures, including the human babe. It moves largely spontaneously; and it is quite along in years before it has reduced its actions entirely to conscious direction. Indeed it is doubtful if we ever quite get over the possibility of originating; and become completely subject to association of ideas and orderly processes of thought.

The nature of these movements of our puppies are

worth looking into. You cannot say that they lack in grace. If you notice the same actions in lambs, and in kittens, you are also pleased at the graceful lines on which their bodies move. You speak of them sometimes as gambols; sometimes as dances. There is indeed a very close likeness to a dance in the sudden springs sideways, and round and round, and the graceful attitudes. It seems to be the germ of the more simple but conscious dances of human beings. Where is the music? Not far off I assure you; for the puppy emits at the same time certain spontaneous barks or growls, full of fun, if not quite melodious. They are at best in harmony with his motions. Almost every animal not only leaps in this manner but utters sounds of a spontaneous sort.

As our puppies get a few weeks older you notice that they adopt these spontaneous movements and sounds, and use them purposely. A game of two puppies is now full of motion. They make a dozen pretences; they spring forward and then backward and then sideways. They leap high in the air, and dodge, and come and go with complex rhythm. Discords get in; but it is usually a very fine harmony.

Here then is what we find in this study of play:

1) Instinct; the animal instinctively finds its food as soon as born; and later its frolics are evidently instincts derived from all dog nature, and modified by later acquired instincts. These collies are descended from wolves but they are not wolfish, because of the overwhelming force of later instincts. But if you abuse one pertinaciously you will in time awaken the wolf. From the outset the peculiar education that the collie breed has had for many generations prompts them to pursue cows and sheep, endeavoring to drive or to herd them. I do not know such a bundle of acquired instincts as a Collie dog.

But (2) we have found spontaneity; something that, at least in part, lies back of instinct and is involved in all living tissue. The lowest cell-life moves first of all by physical necessity. Every living organism moves by the force of life, that is of composition and decomposition—assimilation and waste. Our puppies certainly are acting in part automatically. This part of play or of action is most important; for in its contact with instincts and its modifying power lies the origin of freedom. The puppy is not left a slave to inherited tendencies.

3) We have found comparison of sensations, comparison of instincts, and thereby a certain necessity for choice. In this manner also arises freedom of will. Spontaneity does not lose its power when our animals are fully grown; for Dido the mother, in her plays with me manifests it in large degree. Under high excitement her leaps and gambols manifest very slightly the directive force of will. Comparison of

sensations is the germ of con-sentience or consciousness. Comparison of instincts and consequent choices is the germ of self-consciousness. So far we come with the study of play.

The human child acts in the same manner. His motions which were at first spontaneous, are adopted by his will; and his emotions get to be brain recorded, compared, and directed. The sounds that he uttered pass into words; and while those words are mostly nonsensical they have some form. Children's play words do not correspond to any end but play. There is no meaning in "intra, mintra, cutra, corn, apple seed, apple thorn," only that the jingle suits the child's spontaneity. It is the first step from play to logic.

Play has its roots in unconscious nature. Reason has its roots in play.

The worst possible thing is to prevent or check spontaneity in a child. It is to sever his connection with nature; it is to cut off the roots by which he gets power of life. The measure of absolute health is play. In growing youth the joy of motion is increased in games that are formal and thoughtful, complexed but made orderly by mind. If physical activities are unhindered they will probably remain wholesome and honorable. It is in a constrained life that congestion sets in; and there follow inflamed organs and passionate outbreaks. Passion is largely the result of fettered or biased spontaneity.

Unfortunately most human beings are far from nature; some of them wholly unnatural. The natural man is or would be the one as simple and true to his powers as the puppies we have examined are to theirs.

One of my puppies I have severely teased, restraining and counteracting his spontaneity; and the result is that I have created for the first time crossness, and a willingness to hurt me. This was not his nature until I made it such. It is not improbable that I could make him irritable and even dangerous by contradiction in his earliest weeks of life. I have seen this done with kittens. A purely physical process leading to a change of disposition.

In children there is apparent precisely the same intellectual and moral perversion by disturbances of natures first spontaneities. My Collie is careful while herding her pups to guide, without checking sport. She is wiser than the mother of Mabel whom I have heard from the child's cradle saying, "Oh Mabel you should not romp so," or "you should not" this, and that, and the other. This mother has also a herding instinct, but it gives the child no spontaneity. Mabel has become a fretted rebel. Most children are rebels by ten years of age. A very few become prigs, and submit to being nibbled into premature formality.

I have a sharp contest also with those social notions that without need constrain natural action. The

aim and end of society should not be to make a child over into a machine. Clearly we should play with our children, and retain to the last our own spontaneity—that is elasticity of mental and physical action. Neither clothes nor diet nor habits of any sort should be allowed to conflict with free action. And it may not be quite impossible for us to get some essential views of what freedom is and ought to be, by studying our pups at play.

Most of us are so constructed that a good many common influences cross our temperaments, and we do not find it easy to fit into society as we find it. A natural born protestant is about every second person. The close association of the physical and moral, or body conditions and behaviour, we have seen in our little friends. While ill health may be overcome by force of will, it is at least unfavorable to manly and generous behavior. Vitiating blood or a disordered organ underlies a vast amount of wrong doing. The reverse also is certainly true in reference to human beings, that diseased habits create a bad physical state. The whole contour of the body and outline of features is altered by vulgarity. Is it possible to emphasise too strongly the need of natural play, and pure spontaneity in childhood to preserve the boys and girls from perverted muscles and morals.

The very worst forms of vice are those prevalent among children,—prevenient, abnormal, self-destructive, vice, that wrecks the nervous system, poisons the blood, demoralises every function and leaves the brain enfeebled for honor. Savages have not been able to devise so many and so pernicious means for self-degradation. Have we as yet any popular conception of what right and wrong are? Do the people generally hold a code of morals that is hygienic, preserving character, and body-saving? The current ethics concern another life, and despair of this.

Richter and Froebel carried us back to consider that the key of all difficulties is in childhood; and Coleridge insisted that "the child is father of the man." "Play," says Froebel, "is incipient work." The child's games are nothing less than the germs of the acts of the mature man. If you wish to educate rightly you must educate games. Instead of taking the child away from plays direct his games in the lines that your experience dictates. Do not fetter the child. Play is his natural unfolding. Only by that means can he become hereafter constructive in material affairs. So the kindergarten is a play house; and higher education, when rightly conceived, is only advanced stages of the kindergarten. The boy of fifteen should never have had his study and play differentiated. If wisely managed all study is sport. That is a false education which gets to be a tedious burden or even a task.

ZEUS: A LITTLE FABLE.

BY HUDOR GENONE.

HEROES and demigods, titans, muses and graces, and all that ilk, having proved, in one way or another, untrustworthy, were discharged long ago by old Mistress Mythology, and poor Zeus, man of all work, compelled to do the chores. When the new tenant Theology moved in there was a deal of house cleaning, to be sure; but Zeus (called by another name "for short") was kept on, and worked harder, and held responsible for more, both good and bad, than ever. Indeed Theology has been such a hard landlady, so exacting and capricious that some of the boarders have begun to "kick," and to say what a shame to put so much on one poor old person!

Recently several of them, whose views Theology failed to meet in the right spirit, went to an intelligence office and fetched back a stout young fellow named Evolution, who, they said, was much better fitted for the work than Zeus.

The result is a pretty quarrel in the house, the mistress claiming the right to regulate things her own way; some of the boarders insisting that Zeus shall be pensioned off; whilst others are more or less satisfied with him, if only (as they say) he would tidy up a bit, and let Evolution do most of the rough work.

If you ask me what I think of this state of affairs, I shall have to say things which may not be taken in good part by any one concerned. In the first place it seems to me as if Dame Theology, having hired the establishment, has the right to run it her own way, certainly so long as she pays her rent promptly to the owners. All will agree that Nature—that wealthy old individual, who controls so much real estate—has never even suggested interference; first or last not a complaint has come from that quarter. Then what business is it of the boarders, I should like to know, how the work is done, so it is done? If they don't like the way the establishment is managed, why, they can leave and go to some other house;—I'm sure there are a plenty to choose from. There's Mr. McQueary left not long ago; I respect him for going, and do most sincerely hope he will find a reasonable place of the kind he likes, though I do confess having doubts as to that.

What puzzles me is why some continue to board with Theology when, apparently, they are so discontented? Why do they stay on, knowing that they are not wanted, and keeping the household in hot water by their comments and complaints?

They say Zeus needs help, and has been overworked. Well, what of it? Zeus is generally credited with far more than average intelligence, and,—so far as I can gather,—is amply competent to decide for himself.

Then there is another class whose stand in this matter I don't favor,—the proprietors of other establishments. Why should they be continually gibing at Theology because of the table she sets? There is Mr. Ingersoll, for instance, who keeps a place on the Broadway, and always travels on the 'Ell road from Hurler to Wrecktor Street, just notice how he talks; nothing actually nothing—pleases him. He finds fault with all Theology's accommodations and harps upon his own as so much better. Why, I have heard him denounce his rival for her treatment of Zeus, when it is well known that if discharged this very day, Mr. Ingersoll would probably decline to offer him even the most menial position.

I mention this to show to what extreme lengths some will go in their antipathies. If Mr. Ingersoll and the others keep, as they claim, so much better houses than Theology, depend upon it in time this will become known, and she will wake up some fine morning to find all her rooms vacant.

As for myself, I have a room at Theology's, and notwithstanding all the clamor, as yet see no sure way of bettering myself by a change. We are old and dear friends, and, while I see her faults and admit frankly the stuffiness of the parlors, and the antiquity of much of the furniture, still my own cosy little chamber is furnished in modern style, because I looked after that myself. I ventilate at my own pleasure, and when, as happens occasionally, the meals are not all that might be desired, what harm comes of dropping in elsewhere? None, I am sure, although not to deceive you, my landlady takes strong ground against my taking a meal outside.

I do not see a great deal of Zeus; indeed—so quiet is he—one would hardly suspect there was such a person around; but, finding my room (where Theology never, by any chance, comes) always in order, I do not complain. In fact I am in a way grateful, and now and then leave a quarter on the bureau. To be entirely candid with you I always find that the quarter has been accepted.

THE FUNCTION OF NEGATION.

BY JOHN SANDISON.

"Nor doth the eye itself
That most pure spirit of sense beheld itself
Not going from itself. . . .
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travelled and is mirror'd there."

SHAKESPEARE shows us in the above lines that he was aware of an important truth—a knowledge of which is of the utmost importance to all, viz., the meaning or function of the negative in thinking—because when its full bearing is once understood it frees the mind from all such myths as the "thing in itself" of Kant: the transcendental or merely subjective ego

and leads to a knowledge of the underlying unity of thought and being.

All the purposes and aims of a life which is in earnest with the facts of existence are positive determinations of volitional activity and are founded on a negative arising from a consideration of the fleeting and transient nature of the varied phenomena of the world.

The relative nature of positive and negative conceptions was first clearly brought to light by Hegel who recognised the fact that the negative is not a merely privative limitation, but is on the contrary an essential part of an organic function.

While thought is an activity and an interpretation of the meaning of facts and the bringing of same under known laws—yet this idea of *interpretation* is apt to mislead—it causes us to suppose that the interpreting mind is an independent activity separate in its very nature from these facts and laws, and this is a misconception which is easily overlooked and difficult to overcome even when seen to be wrong.

The real fact is that thought or mind does not develop until it has become conscious of objects and it is only after the reaction from these objects that an awareness of self and the dawn of consciousness takes place,—a positive is developed from a negative—the negative is thus seen to be a factor or necessary step in the growth of thought, and consciousness does not stop short at this negation as Kant seems to have supposed, but it returns upon these objects or phenomena reinforced by reflexion—recognising their laws and causing them to be purposive and full of meaning to itself and a means for the realisation of its ideals,—and this is constantly going on all through life—all criticism in the same way is a return of thought upon itself with the purpose of ultimately attaining a higher positive.

The Monist, Vol. II, No. 2, contains the following words:

"As soon as a system of forms has developed in a sentient being, thus constituting its mind, this system can again be referred to the objective forms of things. In this sense we can say with Kant, that the understanding imports form into phenomena; and this re-importation, this referring the objectively formal to the subjective system of formal thought, is an essential element in cognition."

This is true, the mind certainly goes back upon and imports the thought-forms upon the phenomena, but prior to doing so it has abstracted or developed its mind-forms from the phenomena.

There is only one way in which the unity of thought and being can be understood viz.: that there is a common ground of both—that the mind-forms are the forms of objective existence—that the real world-ground is the battle field of thought, the fight can no longer be regarded as being waged in a vacant "kingdom of ends" or abstract sphere as Kant supposed.

A knowledge of this principle of unity does not in any way militate against a spiritual or religious conception of the world—it makes everything a means to a higher end, viz. the development of consciousness which is the explaining or interpreting principle in the world; Höffding in his recent work on psychology says:

"However far it may be possible to explain man through the world, the world in its turn is always explained through man for we can go no farther back than that which is to man a necessity of thought."

There is as is known to everybody much in the world which is out of harmony with our ideals, but this should not cause a despair of reason—it is rather the earnest of the evolution of a higher life and the way to conquer the ills of the present is by clearly understanding and acting upon the highest principles known to us. We must not fall into the mistake of Carlyle who condemned in no measured terms and apparently despaired of the world—he did not see that the mind which condemned the actual state of things contained in itself the promise of something higher—all men even the most depraved have some spiritual touch of nature in them—thus again the negative or pessimistic conception is an essential element in the growth and development of the positive. The ideal grows out of the imperfect state of the real and a transforming activity is called into play.

In accordance with the same principle, social unity, ethical laws and customs are gradually observed by the developing consciousness from the earliest year of childhood and the individual consciousness is born so to speak into this ethical world and accordingly all these laws are recognised more or less objectively before they are adopted and acted upon by the growing mind.

The moral categories are thus discovered by means of the return of thought to itself from the social community just as surely as the categories or forms of mind are found in the ordinary facts of existence and these categories or forms are all really in unity—they are spirit-tones—as earnest of an ideal harmony in this work-a-day world which we can all strive in some measure to realise.

THE PEOPLE BY THE SEA.

THERE was a people living by the sea. The men were brave, the women were kind-hearted and the children were educated after the manner of their fathers to be fearless, faithful, and strong. The country was not fertile for it was mostly sand, heath, or mountains covered with trees; and the people were poor. But they were industrious and hardy; and although they were not rich, they had enough to live upon and to support their children. They were anxious to live in peace with all their neighbors, but powerful enemies

surrounded their country who dared to ravage their lands, to harass their towns and to deprive them of the free navigation of their rivers. Being exposed to continual dangers they were compelled to arm themselves so as to preserve their independence; and they kept a constant watch upon their frontiers lest they might be taken unawares by a sudden invasion of their enemies.

Out of their dangers rose a hero wise in council and brave in battle, a chief and a lawgiver whom his people loved. They named him Frederick, which means the peaceful; for they loved peace and there was nothing they wished for more eagerly than that the troubles of war should be spared them. Frederick was a statesman and a warrior, for although he loved peace the enemies of his country made war upon him, and he was compelled to fight many battles to preserve the independence of his people.

There was in his time a division among the nations. Parties were formed, and everyone had to join one side or the other, for he who tried to keep peace was trodden under foot by both parties and Frederick joined that side which was nearest in kin to his own people, and he did so gladly, for his allies opposed oppression and fought for right.

But when the war was done and the enemies vanquished all round, Frederick's allies made peace for their own advantage without consulting him and left him alone in arms against a multitude of enemies. We are now satisfied, they said to him; so look out for yourself, and Frederick had to make peace too, for he had grown old and what was he alone against many? Although he had been victorious in all his battles, he had to make great sacrifices. Deserted by his allies he could not make peace on his own terms, but had to accept the terms offered by his enemies. He signed the treaty of peace with a heavy heart, and feeling his death near at hand he said, "Would that someone would rise out of my ashes to right my wrongs."

When Frederick died his people buried him with his fathers and wept for him; but his enemies said, "a dead lion is no better than a dead dog. He is dust now and all is over with him. We can now prey upon his people with impunity."

And so it seemed, indeed. Years passed by and times became war-like again. Then it happened that the grandson of Frederick died and the son of his grandson was called upon to rule the people by the sea. He was a youth, and his name like that of his ancestor was Frederick. The powerful enemies of the people by the sea smiled, for they said, "The old hero is dead. There is a boy on the throne of his fathers and we shall make an easy conquest of him."

But when the young Frederick went forth to do battle, he smote his enemies with might and though

they were many and he stood alone, he triumphed over them in battle and they fled before him. But his people hailed him and they shouted, "The spirit of the old hero is risen from the dead. He marches before us, he leadeth us to victory again. He is more powerful than before. He was old and now he is young, he was dead and now he is living, we were humiliated and now we are victorious."

This second Frederick won many battles and he was honored by all the world. There were many that hated him, but none that dared to withhold from him respect. He ruled wisely many years and he grew old and when the days of his life had been fulfilled, he died in peace and his people wept for him and they buried him with his fathers.

Frederick had no children, and the son of his brother ruled in his stead.

Frederick's warriors had become proud for they were feared by their enemies and all the neighbors kept peace for many years. And while pride had crept into the hearts of men, the spirit of courage had left them and Frederick slumbered in his grave as if he were dead for ever and would not rise again.

Times of tribulation came, and Frederick's warriors were beaten. The enemies swept over the country, they entered the cities and took possession of the strongholds, and the people were powerless to resist them. Even the bravest had given up all hope for they saw the glory of the past fade away, and they thought the spirit of the great Frederick had forsaken them.

But they were mistaken. The soul of a great man does not die, it is immortal. All that is good and true, has the power of eternal life, and if it be crushed to earth it will rise again. The soul may sleep but it will not die. It lies quiet like the seed in the ground, but it abides its time. When its hour comes it will have a resurrection, and when it appears again it will be nobler, stronger, greater.

When the times grew from bad to worse the most courageous men gathered together and said, "We will no longer endure our shame. If we cannot drive the enemy out of our strongholds and beat him out of the land let us do him battle and die sword in hand. It is better to be dead than to live in shame."

It was the spirit of Frederick that spoke in them. And they went forth to battle, and they fought with valor, and they were victorious. They beat the enemy powerful though he was, and they beat him again and again until he was driven out of the country.

Peace was made and it lasted for two generations. Then the enemy had gathered new strength and renewed the war with fresh vigor, but he met strong men undaunted in courage and with strong arms. And

the enemy was beaten more crushingly than ever before and the people hailed him and said:

"The spirit of our fathers is not yet dead, it still lives in our hearts. The souls of our heroes cannot die, unless they perish by neglect. Therefore let us be faithful to preserve the inheritance of virtue, strength, wisdom, and goodwill, that we have overcome from our ancestors, let us preserve their spiritual being in our souls and in the souls of our children, and when we shall die to be buried with our fathers, our souls shall live; our souls are immortal." P. C.

CURRENT TOPICS.

A PUBLIC benefactor equal to Edison will be the genius who shall discover or invent a new adjective a step or two higher in grammar than the superlative degree; a supra-superlative, if possible, or a double superlative, like Shakespeare's "most unkindest," which has not yet been admitted into the grammar; or anything else that will supply the demand for something to relieve the American language from level monotony and tameness. We have so long described ourselves and everything belonging to us, as the "tallest," "biggest," "richest," "grandest," and "mightiest" in the world, that we are in the plight of the man who wears his Sunday clothes every day. We have no "best suit" for a special occasion. We have so long applied the superlative degree to every form of mediocrity, that we have nothing left for genuine greatness. We are like the traveller who shouted "most sublime," to every waterfall and cascade he came to in America, so that he had nothing left for the cataract of Niagara, when he came to that. In Chicago especially, we need a supra-superlative, for we are actually pining away for want of a bit of grammar that shall express a degree of excellence greater than the greatest in the world. As every lawyer is a "judge," and every judge a "jurist," when a genuine jurist appears, we have no description for him because we are out of language. I once knew a lawyer, he was recently from college, who called every jurist a "Justinian"; and perhaps we shall have to come to that.

The argument of the last paragraph will apply to Mr. James K. Polk, once President of the United States, whose will, written by himself, has just been declared void by the courts of Tennessee. Commenting on this case in a well written article which would have been better were it not for our inveterate habit of using the exaggerated superlative, a Chicago journal refers to it as another curious example of the incapacity of great lawyers to make their own wills, although competent enough to draw wills for other people. The failure of Mr. Polk to make a will that would stand fire in the courts, is magnified into a legal curiosity by the astonishing fact that Mr. Polk was such an "eminent lawyer." Had the writer studied for five minutes the history of James K. Polk, he would have seen that it was quite impossible that he could have been an "eminent lawyer" or even a third rate lawyer when he drew the will in controversy. It is true that he was admitted to the bar, and so far as that makes a lawyer Mr. Polk was one, but when he was a very young man, he devoted himself to politics, and in that profession he continued all his life, beginning as a member of the Tennessee legislature, and ending as President of the United States. A man who has worked all his life at shoe making cannot be an "eminent lawyer," neither can the man who has worked all his life at politics. He may be a great statesman but he cannot be a great lawyer. Mr. Polk's will is proof that the man who drew it must have forgotten the primitive elements of real estate law which he learned in his younger days; yet in order

to point a contrast and excite wonder, and because Mr. Polk was once President, we must write about him in exuberant superlatives, and describe him as an "eminent lawyer," and a "jurist."

To forge the pretended opinions of a living man and utter them as genuine, is a pusillanimous kind of libel, but it rises into chivalry when compared with the forging of a letter pretending to express the opinions of the dead. The latter offense is a little below the level even of our unscrupulous and defamatory politics, but party warfare has descended even to that. The forged letter lately published, and purporting to be from General Grant to Roscoe Conkling will stand pre-eminent for meanness to the end of the current political campaign. More criminal achievements may be attempted, but nothing so base. Not only are General Grant's real sentiments falsified in the spurious letter, but it represents him as a peddler of ungrammatical slang, an egotist in affected humility, and a flatterer. It is a clumsy misrepresentation, a deception that ought not to have deceived anybody for a moment. General Grant was not a brilliant nor an imaginative writer, but there was dignity in his literary style, manly sense, and brevity. He was incapable of writing such weak and rickety phrases as "the best interests of the country's good," "our confidential talks," "this is a big country, full of brainy and ambitious men who can serve the country eminently well as its president," "their noble ambition," "the noble ambition to be," "your nobleness," "the status of public sentiment," "to-day you are the peer; to-morrow you may be submerged beneath the wave of public sentiment," "the people who have loved me, and whom I love," "the Maine statesman," "this estrangement between you two," and trigid rhetoric like that. Even after the fraud was fully exposed, papers interested in the "Blaine movement" and opposed to the renomination of Harrison continued to publish the letter under attractive headlines, as if its authenticity had never been denied. This was almost as ignoble as the original forgery.

"Richard Vantyle," said the judge to the criminal, "you have broken the laws: for stealing is a serious crime, but as you have never broken the Sabbath, I shall remit the punishment." That reads like a jest, but it is deeply earnest, for Sabbath worship has become an expiation for sin. Worse than that, we use it as a soothing syrup for conscience, and make it a substitute for duty. We ridicule the theory of papal indulgences, but practice a similar doctrine by granting pardon to ourselves as a reward for keeping holy the Sabbath day. The easy, and sometimes luxurious practice of Sunday religion counts as virtue; and searching the scriptures for a model of conduct, we take the Pharisee. Congress in the middle of a spendthrift carnival, calls a halt for prayers, and as an expiation for a thousand political sins, piously resolves that the World's Fair must not be open on Sunday. The sham and the flam of that was imitated, as it ought to be, by a Congress of sports and smashers which assembled at New Orleans on the night of Saturday, the 28th of May. It was convened in extra session to witness a prize fight between the Hon. George Siddons, member for Louisiana, and the Hon. Johnny Van Heest, member for Illinois. The fight began a little after ten o'clock; and the honorable gentlemen, having tried to kill each other for nearly two hours, unfortunately without success, the "referee," at the end of the 46th "round," made a soulful and improving exhortation, in which he said that as it was getting late, and Sunday morning only a few minutes distant, he was afraid that if they continued fighting any longer they might carelessly "desecrate the Sabbath"; he should therefore declare the fight a "draw."

Speaking of a self-righteous Sabbath, and its uses for atonement, it is valuable also at election times, and if ostentatiously observed may help a candidate. It may be coined into political

capital, but then it becomes the sin of "Sabbath desecration," if such a sin can be. "More in the breach than the observance" was the Sabbath kept by the President of the United States at Rochester, if the papers tell the truth. A theatrical display of Sunday worship breaks the Sabbath into more pieces than visiting the World's Fair on Sunday, either for education or for pleasure. It was the very comedy of religion when the "local committee" called at the hotel, "to escort the President and his party to morning service." The President of the United States going to prayers with an escort, has an oriental grandeur about it that reminds us of royalty as it appears in the Arabian Nights; especially when "the march to the church was a triumphal procession, and the service a patriotic display." The church was given up for the day to the worship of the President; and it was made a fairy spectacle by patriotic bunting for his glory. To complete the caricature of worship, when the President entered the church, "the organistruck up the 'Star Spangled Banner,' instead of a hymn. So intoxicated was the President by this apotheosis, that he actually went to church again in the evening to have the act of deification repeated; which it was, with entirely new scenery and appointments; and "when the President appeared in the aisle of the church, the congregation which crowded the pews, rose and greeted him with clapping of hands." As for the decorations, the Court chronicle informs us that "they were very simple; three large flags were draped along the stairs leading to the galleries, and two smaller flags were draped across the pulpit, and on the floor in front of the pulpit were stacked three rifles," a pagan tribute and offering to Mars, who received a fair share of the adoration in the evening, but not quite so much as was given to the President.

* * *

Not only was the Sabbath morning and evening profitably observed by the President at Rochester, but the afternoon also; for then he held a reception, the hint for which was borrowed from the electioneering tactics of Mr. Perker, agent and chief of committee for the Hon. Samuel Slumkey, in his famous contest for a seat in parliament for the Borough of Eatonswill, excepting that in the Slumkey case the plan was not worked on the Sabbath. There was fine statesmanship shown in the afternoon, just after lunch, when "Mr. George Moss of the committee took a newsboy in a conspicuously clean sailor suit to call on the President." The resemblance between that and the Eatonswill case is so very close that the parallel is worth showing, and I therefore quote the following from the Pickwick Papers: "Nothing has been omitted, I hope?" said the Hon. Samuel Slumkey. To which Mr. Perker answers, "Nothing has been left undone, my dear Sir—nothing whatever. There are twenty washed men at the street door for you to shake hands with; and six children in arms that you are to pat on the head, and inquire the age of." The difference between the two cases is one of degree only, not of principle, for in the Rochester case instead of presenting twenty washed men, the member of the committee contented himself with presenting one washed boy, "in a conspicuously clean sailor suit." Mr. Moss was more economical than Mr. Perker, that was all; because, for the purpose, one washed boy is just as effectual as twenty washed men; especially such a curious phenomenon as a washed newsboy, in a clean sailor suit. It was also very good statecraft at this particular time, to treat that washed boy with what the diplomatists call distinguished consideration, for the Court chronicle reports that "he was the only caller the President received."

M. M. TRUMBULL.

NOTES.

We call attention to Dr. E. G. Hirsch's pamphlet "The Crucifixion, Viewed From a Jewish Standpoint, a Lecture Delivered by Invitation Before the Chicago Institute for Morals, Religion, and Letters." It is a very concise and impartial statement of our

knowledge of the life and death of Jesus. The author has availed himself of all the learned materials of critical investigation and speculation, which, in this field, are more extensive than in any other one. Dr. Hirsch accepts upon the whole, the critical results of Christian scholars, adding to them the results that are obtained by a consideration of the often neglected sources of the Mishna and other Jewish traditions. There is apparently no great disagreement between him and Professor Holtzmann of Strassburg, whose lately published "Handbuch" of the New Testament, is among orthodox and unorthodox theologians regarded as the best summary of the best impartial and scientific criticism of the gospels. The question whether the Jews or the Romans crucified Jesus, is, in our opinion, indifferent now, although it was of great importance in those days when prosecutions of the Jews were inaugurated on the sole plea that they had killed Christ. We recommend the pamphlet as an excellent résumé to all those who like to be informed about the present state of critical inquiry, yet are unable to study the voluminous works on the subject. In forty-nine pages Dr. Hirsch presents the case and all its most important arguments in the entertaining shape of a popular lecture.

MR. C. S. PEIRCE has resumed his lessons by correspondence in the Art of Reasoning, taught in progressive exercises. A special course in logic has been prepared for correspondents interested in philosophy. Terms, \$30 for twenty-four lessons. Address: Mr. C. S. Peirce, "Avisbe," Milford, Pa.

THE OPEN COURT.

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY BY

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.

EDWARD C. HEGELER, PRES.

Dr. PAUL CARUS, EDITOR.

TERMS THROUGHOUT THE POSTAL UNION:

\$2.00 PER YEAR.

\$1.00 FOR SIX MONTHS.

N. B. Binding Cases for single yearly volumes of THE OPEN COURT will be supplied on order. Price 75 cents each.

All communications should be addressed to

THE OPEN COURT,

(Nixon Building, 175 La Salle Street.)

P. O. DRAWER F.

CHICAGO, ILL.

CONTENTS OF NO. 250.

UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF ETHAN ALLEN.....	3271
A STUDY OF PLAY. E. P. POWELL.....	3271
ZEUS: A LITTLE FABLE. HUDOR GENONE.....	3274
THE FUNCTION OF NEGATION. JOHN SANDISON.....	3274
THE PEOPLE BY THE SEA. EDITOR.....	3275
CURRENT TOPICS. Abuse of the Superlative Degree.	
Mr. Polk's Will. Forgery as a Political Expedient. Sab-	
bath Idolatry. The President at Rochester. M. M.	
TRUMBULL.....	3277
NOTES.....	3278