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CIVILISING THE SABBATH.*

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THE historical and religious import of the Sabbath is briefly illustrated in the following lessons which we quote :

I. FROM A "BABYLONIAN SAINTS' CALENDAR," PROBABLY THE EARLIEST MENTION OF THE SABBATH.

"The seventh day a feast of Merodach and Zirpanit; a festival: a Sabbath. The prince of many nations the flesh of birds and cooked fruits eats not; the garments of his body he changes not; white robes he puts not on! Sacrifice he offers not. The king in his chariot rides not. In royal fashion he legislates not. A place of garrison the general by word of mouth appoints not. Medicine for his sickness of body he applies not. To make a sacred spot it is suitable. In the night in the presence of Merodach and Istar the king his offering makes. Sacrifice he offers, raising his hand to the high places of the God he worships."—Translated by Professor Sayce.

[The same formula is repeated for the 14th, 21st, and 28th day, but instead of Merodach and Zirpanit the deities are, for the 14th, Beltis and Nergal; for the 21st, the Moon and Sun; for the 28th Hea and Nergal. The Assyrians called the seventh day the *Sabatu*, or Sabbath; the syllabaries explaining *Sabatu* as the "Completion" of the week, and as a "day of rest for the heart" (see a useful article on "The Sabbath Day," in *The National Reformer*, September 11th, 1892). It is probable that this idea of "completion" was afterwards extended to the creation of the world by Jewish adapters.]

II. FROM TACITUS.

"Many authors agree that when once an infectious distemper had arisen in Egypt, and made men's bodies impure, Bocchoris, their king, went to the oracle of Amman, and begged he would grant them some relief against this evil; and that he was enjoined to purge his nation of them and to banish this kind of men into other countries as hateful to the gods. That when he had sought for and gotten them all together, they were

left in a vast desert: that hereupon the rest devoted themselves to weeping and inactivity; but one of those exiles, Moses by name, advised them to look for no assistance from any of the gods, or from any of mankind, since they had been abandoned by both, but bade them believe in him as a celestial leader by whose help they had already gotten clear of their present miseries. They agreed to it, and though they were unacquainted with everything, they began their journey at random. But nothing tired them so much as the want of water; and now to a great extent they laid themselves down on the ground, as just ready to perish, when a herd of wild asses came from feeding, and went to a rock overshadowed by a grove of trees. Moses followed them, as conjecturing that there was some grassy soil, and so he opened large sources of water for them. That was an ease to them; and when they had journeyed continually six entire days, on the seventh day they drove out the inhabitants, and obtained those lands wherein their city and temple were dedicated. . . . It is generally supposed that they rest on the seventh day, because that day gave them rest from their labors. Besides which they are idle on every seventh year, being pleased with a lazy life."

III. FROM ISAIAH.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn

* A discourse given at South Place Chapel, London, Nov. 6th, 1892.

to do well ; seek justice, relieve the oppressed ; judge for the fatherless, plead for the widow.

“Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness.”

IV. FROM SPINOZA.

“Reason is my enjoyment, and the aim I have in this life is joy and serenity.

“It is superstition that sets up sadness as good, and all that tends to joy as evil. God would show himself envious if he took pleasure in my impotence and in the ills I suffer. Rather, in proportion to the greatness of our joy do we attain to a greater perfection, and participate more fully in the divine nature.

“Joy therefore can never be evil, so long as it be regulated by the law of our true utility. A virtuous life is not a sad and sombre one, a life of privations and austerity. How should the Divinity take pleasure in the spectacle of my weakness, or impute to me as meritorious, tears, sobs, terrors—signs all of an impotent soul ?

“Yes, it is the part of a wise man to use the things of this life, and enjoy them as much as possible ; to recruit himself by a temperate and appetising diet ; to charm his senses with the perfume and the brilliant verdure of plants ; to adorn his very attire ; to enjoy music, games, spectacles, and every diversion that one can bestow on himself without detriment to character.

“We are incessantly spoken to of repentance, humbleness, death ; but repentance is not a virtue, but the consequence of a weakness ; nor is self-abasement one, since it springs in man from an idea of his inferiority. As to the thought of death, it is the daughter of fear, and it is in feeble souls that it sets up its home. The thing of all others about which a free man least thinks, is death. Wisdom lies in the contemplation, not of death, but of life.”

I need hardly argue that our Sabbath is uncivilised : there is a consensus among liberal thinkers that the notion that one part of time is holier than another is akin to such superstitions as unlucky Friday and seeing a new moon over the left shoulder. Nor need I here argue that the Sabbath ought to be civilised : that is, humanised. Whatever our theories, we all know that the Sabbath is “not a theory but a condition” ; a discussion of its continuance were, at present, somewhat like debating whether bicycles should take the place of horses. The inquiry of interest to us is, why the Sabbath is so much less bred to social uses than the horse, or other agencies of practical life. We cannot improve a thing unless we understand it. A gardener can turn a wild brier into a thornless rose, but only by understanding the brier’s nature, and the laws of its development.

The “holy” Sabbath, as distinguished from the

secular Sunday, has come to us from a time and region of which there are other survivals, but of only curious interest, because they injure nobody. Many close their eyes in prayer, some think, because their ancestors prayed to a tropical sun, of blinding brightness ; they clasp or lift their hands because that was a sign of surrender by which one captured in war saved his life ; they kneel, because that is the attitude of decapitation, and indicated admission that one’s life was forfeit. These conjectural explanations are of only antiquarian interest, because no power exists to force us through that pantomime of barbarians crouching before their conquerors or despots. They show, however, how long, amid civilised government, may linger the conception of an unlimited monarchy in the heavens, and relics of a celestial reign of terror.

In those who kneel these ceremonies of ancient abjectness have as little conscious connection with their origin as a dog’s circuit on a rug, before he lies down, has with that of his wild progenitors, who so made their bed in the prairie grass ; yet under that unconsciousness a great deal of the primitive devotee may survive. The Sabbatarian despotism is a barometer that reports how much of this ancient terrorism of an unconstitutional deity lingers in air too pure for a slave to breathe,—except one day in the week. For it is slavery when the people are locked out of their own houses—their communal museum, art gallery, theatre, library—and forced to beg for a little beauty at the doors of charitable collections and studios. So it is to-day ; to-morrow a like oppression of freedom, in a political or social matter, might cause a revolution.

Superstition is not the sole cause of the injustice, as we shall presently see, but it is superstition that renders it possible—and it is an English superstition. The nations of the continent are as superstitious as England, but such Sabbath laws are unknown except here and where the English race has carried them. Moreover, our curious local Sabbatarianism is comparatively modern ; in the Sixteenth Century England had a fairly merry Sunday. There were stage-plays and dances. How and why a gloomy Sabbath grew in this one island has not yet been explained. The Jews and their Bible are usually credited with it ; but Continental nations have the same Bible ; they find in it no command to close places of amusement on the Sabbath. And the Jews themselves do not prohibit amusements, but only work, on their Sabbath (Saturday) of which our Sunday is the sombre ghost.

Properly to understand this matter we must go beyond the Bible, through which flow Persian streams of faith. In America there is a point where the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers join, and flow in one channel to the Gulf of Mexico. But they run together a long way before their waters mingle ; side by side,

in the same channel, their different colors are distinguished; and when at length they are really mixed, the river is of a color different from either of its great tributaries. Something like this was the union of the Persian and the Semitic streams of religion. At an early period there was an impression that these different religions might be distinguished as that of the Old Testament and that of the New. Thus we find a great English divine, Archbishop Tillotson, writing as follows:—

“The difference between the style of the Old and New Testaments is so very remarkable, that one of the greatest sects in the primitive times, did, upon this very ground, found their heresy of two Gods, the one, evil, fierce, and cruel, whom they called the God of the Old Testament; the other, good, kind, and merciful, whom they called the God of the New Testament; so great a difference is there between the representations that are given of God in the books of the Jewish and Christian religion, as to give, at least, some color and pretense to an imagination of two Gods.”

While Archbishop Tillotson's candour is admirable, criticism in his time had not been applied to the two Testaments equally. There are two different Lords in the New, as there are two different Gods in the Old Testament. There is a humane Jesus loving his enemies, and there is a ferocious Christ consigning them to Hell; just as there is a Jehovah who spares Nineveh, and a Jehovah who massacres the Midianites, a God of Wrath, and a God who pitieth men as a father his children. The two contrarious deities are distinguishable from each other both in the New and Old Testaments, though in both is apparent the monotheistic effort to combine them into one and the same deity. This is done by the device of supposing a powerful prince of darkness, who is responsible for some of the worst evils of the world, especially for moral evils. This, however, could only be done by supposing this dark and evil being to be equal in his realm, and in immortality, to the good power, otherwise the good power would destroy him, and end his horrible works.

This dualism, or struggle between good and evil deities, is traceable to ancient Persia. The religion that shaped Europe was not Jewish but Persian. The Bible is only one of the various channels through which there passed into every part of Europe the belief in two great antagonistic personalities. In Russia and other Slavic countries they are to this day frankly recognised as both gods,—Byelibog and Tchorribog, god of light, and god of darkness. (“Bog” meaning god, and the origin of our word “Bogey.”) In some regions they are God and Satan, in others God and Devil. In England, where science has compelled the-

ology to admit the unity of nature, the prince of darkness has been repudiated, and in his place we are told of a disciplinary providence who, in his great mercy, dashes ships against rocks, crushes human beings in railway collisions, spreads cancer, cholera, and other agonies, all of course in loving kindness and tender mercy. Nevertheless, with that theology on our lips we have a host of physicians and charities trying to resist and undo these peculiar providences, all the same as if they were inflicted by a Devil. Virtually and really our religion to-day is the same as that of the Persian Zoroaster, recognising good and evil as essentially and eternally opposed; the one to be enthroned as our Christ, the other to be chained up like an Antichrist.

Without going into the historical development of this Zoroastrian religion, it may be stated that in its symbolism were combined the Solar and Lunar mythologies. There are regions where the Sun is mainly beneficent, subduing the short winter, clothing the earth with blossoms; there are regions where the Sun deals sunstrokes, burns up vegetation, dries up fountains, causes deserts. The moonlight is here friendlier; in the cool night, and beneath the starry host, man finds protection. It was the Lunar races—Assyrian, Egyptian, Hebrew—which formed the month (or moon) of twenty-eight days, and its seven-day quarters, each completed by a Sabbath, or a rest-day. This under a burning sun was grateful enough. As the majority were slaves, their day of rest could only be defended by exacting masters, by some kind of superstition. What the earlier superstitions were we know not. We know only those that sanctioned the Sabbath among the Jews, and equally the seventh year, which it is not convenient for our Sabbatarians to notice. But long before the Sabbath was an institution in Babylon, as we saw in our first lesson.

Now the Lunar worshippers had over the Sun-worshippers one advantage: night-watching and stargazing made those Assyrians great astrologers. In their observations astronomy was dawning, though the earth was neglected. The Solar people knew more about the world revealed by day, its people, its flowers, and birds; but the Lunar devotees knew more about the worlds revealed by night, its galaxies and omens.

Gradually the Lunar month and the seven-day division of time crept up among the more northern races. But for many centuries it was only an imported science. They did not import the religion corresponding to it, and they adopted no day of rest. Yet the Lunar mythology did influence the Solar mythology. Their moon-god was made a prince of darkness, and an evil influence ascribed to the moon. His day of rest, the Sabbath—the seventh day—was ac-

counted evil, and it still bears, as Saturday, the name of the sinister god Saturn, who devoured his own children. In the Gentile world, it would have been impossible for even Constantine to decree any holiness to the seventh day—Saturn's day. He consecrated the day of the Sun—Sunday—as a day of rest from toil, and a day of sunshine, of gladness, of recreation.

The Sabbath god and the Sunday god became thus respectively the potentate of Darkness and the potentate of Sunshine. The assemblages of Jews on their Sabbath was regarded as a kind of devil worship. Jehovah was associated with plagues, and his name suppressed. So was the name of the Sabbath, still rarely heard on the Continent. Christ was the Sun, the Light of the World, associated with all the brighter deities—such as Apollo, Helios, and Baldur the Beautiful.

Some of our theologians claim the early and rapid spread of Christianity in Europe as proof of its divine origin. Nothing, they say, but supernatural assistance could have caused such wide acceptance of the Gospel. But they forget that it was then a Gospel, or God's-spell, of glad tidings. It would indeed have looked like a miracle had the poor serfs and sufferers welcomed a gloomy god, and a gloomy Sabbath, and for them abandoned their tender household deities—Bertha, Freya, and their beautiful Baldur and Phœbus. Not so did Christianity come, but as a release from dungeons of fear; and not the least of its glad tidings was its opening of the prison-house of toil on one day in the week, that the serfs might make merry. There was great opposition by the landlords, the gentry; they did not like this loss of one day's labor on their estates. But the Church insisted: on the Sun's day the human heart leaped for joy. The very churches were used for theatres and festivities. They were also then the art galleries and concert rooms. In fact, in that early spread of Christianity, Ormuzd triumphed over Ahri-man for one day in the week,—all the bright gods triumphed over the gloomy gods,—and it is so now, every Sunday, throughout Europe, with the one exception of England.

What was the cause of this exception? Did this climate render people doubtful about the Sun, while certain of the cloud and fog? Charles Kingsley said: "It is the hard grey climate that has made hard grey Englishmen." Was it that which made their hard grey Puritanism? It is difficult to see how Puritanism could so easily have taken root here, and spread like the thistle, had there not been some predisposition in the mental soil. Christianity came to Great Britain with release and joy: it became what was once called "Merry England"; but there are traces of a gloomy and terrible religion here before that—what we call "Druid-

ism," a dark lunar superstition, believed to include human sacrifices. Whether the dismal elements of that pagan Puritanism lingered here or not, certain it is that when the Reformation came, substituting the Bible for the Pope, some gloomy tendency in the country seized on what was gloomiest in the Book, took the side of Jehovah against Jesus,—who, had he here plucked his corn on the Sabbath, would have been haled before a magistrate. On the Continent Luther had protested against all this, saying, "Go to the Jews with your Moses!" Calvin was free from Sabbatarianism, and it is said that when a number of ministers from this region called on him one Sunday they found him playing at bowls. Milton, who liked the political protest of Puritanism, abhorred its hard Pharisaism. Milton reminded the English people that the two things used by the Good Samaritan on the sufferer, oil and wine, were things that did not grow in England, and that we needed to import into our customs and religions just those products of southern sunshine,—more oil and wine, more sweetness, kindness, and mirth. These would soothe and heal humanity. But Puritanism would not heed its one great teacher. The poor toiler, fallen and wounded, is still visited by the Sabbath Samaritan, who takes him to a chapel or drives him to a gin-shop. For oil and wine, for beauty and recreation, the poor man must get what he can from alcohol and orthodoxy.

Thus in the long and wide-spread conflict between Ormuzd and Ahri-man—bright god and gloomy god, winter-god and summer-god—the dark god here prevails—and here only, in Europe, though this country has inoculated America with it. There is but too much probability that the great Exhibition building at Chicago will stand every Sunday as a monument of what retrogression in religion has gone on in four centuries by the side of progression in everything else.* Our anti-Sabbatarians will probably have a slower work than they think in subduing the gloomy god. For his is the last sceptre of idolatry. The power to disregard the reason of the nation, to lock up their treasures of science and art on the only day when the majority could enjoy them, represents a palpable, a visible authority surviving the overthrow of all other forms of divine right. It is the last fortress of ancient idolatry.

But such an oppression could not survive in a free country by mere strength of an Eastern superstition. A practical wrong lives by slipping snake-like from one skin to another. Among the Jews the Sabbath began by claiming that Jehovah founded it because he rested on the seventh day, but later on it got a new lease by

* A citizen of Philadelphia, who had much to do with the Exhibition held there in 1876, the Centenary of Independence (to which on Sundays fashionable people were admitted by printed invitations, while the masses were excluded) told me that the city was then morally a kind of pandemonium on Sundays.

claiming that on that day Jehovah led them out of Egypt. And there seem to have been other explanations. In England these ancient consecrations are little referred to. The superstition now fostered among the laborers is that if the Museum is once unlocked they may all be made to work the whole seven days. I have said that this ignorant superstition is fostered. There are indeed a great and increasing number of clergymen who do not encourage it, and some who even withstand it; but one must be blind not to see that this popular superstition is fostered by many pulpits, which could but do not point out that the open Sunday of the Continent has never been accompanied by enforced labor.

I remember, in early life, expressing some rationalistic sentiments to an eminent Unitarian minister. After listening patiently, he shrewdly answered: "Christianity is a stool that stands on three legs—the ministry, the miracles, and the Sabbath Day. Take away the divine authority of either of those legs and over goes Christianity." What, in London, might result, were the Museums and Galleries open? How many preachers can rival in attractions the wonders of the British Museum, the noblest institution in the world? What would be the condition of the conventicles, of the "Gospel Halls," if darkest England were flooded with the splendor of arts now hid under their bushel of bigotry? Well, for a time, some of our chapels might be rather thin; but gradually their pulpits would be occupied by men able to preach up to an enlightened people, instead of down to benighted people. The clerical intellect would be awakened and stimulated. The whole standard of religious thought and sentiment would be raised. The discourse of the scholar would be interpreted and illustrated by the beautiful Madonnas, the sacred scenes, and lofty ideals, portrayed by the artist and the sculptor.

Protestantism of the English type is much overrated. In cruelty, Catholicism was equalled by Protestantism here and in New England. Religiously, the Reformation was no reform, but a relapse from a highly-developed environment of beautiful images and shrines of art, into a primitive temple of unhewn stones; a hard unlovely naturalism that denounced art. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or likeness of anything in heaven, earth, or sea." The revival of that biblical barbarism set our Protestant fanatics to sweep pictures and statues out of our churches, breaking and burning them in the name of the dark art-hating deity. But those beautiful forms reflected the deity of sunshine, of love. In Catholic churches the people were surrounded by saints whose countenances beamed all virtues, all tendernesses. And there are even now, in Protestant lands, vast numbers of people who can receive such exalted impressions only through

the eye. Nor are these only the illiterate people. The great American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, could never be persuaded to enter a church. Such was his recoil from the ugly Puritanism by which his youth was surrounded that he would never listen even to the liberal sermons of Channing, Parker, and others. His religious nature became torpid. But when, in advanced life, he visited Rome and Florence, the sacred history and legend of humanity, as told in statues and pictures, awakened his enthusiasm, and he bitterly lamented that Protestantism should have deprived him and others of these sacred and sublime influences of art. But these elevating forms, swept from our churches, are now in the art-galleries. These are our real cathedrals. There the divine legend of humanity is told. But Puritanism seems angry that even in galleries Moses's hatred of graven images should be disobeyed, and virtually denies them to the working people altogether. It is to thousands a denial of any religious impression or spiritual culture at all. And how much brutality, how much despair, half-drowned in drink, are caused by this pious inhumanity?

Of all the practical issues of our time this of Sabatarianism appears to me the most important. The Anglo-Assyrian Sabbath is the visible keystone of an invisible arch, built of stony uncivilised dogmas and oppressions, all of which would fall with their keystone. It is momentous because it involves the entire free lifetime of the toiling masses. Their time for mental culture is counted by Sundays. It is of paramount importance because it involves religious liberty. And it is vital because it establishes and preserves false conceptions of deity,—conceptions long discarded by the intelligence of the nation,—conceptions that degrade the minds and homes of the ignorant. Should you ask any English scholar, clerical or other, any professor in our colleges, whether he believes that God created the world in six days, rested from fatigue on the seventh, and was so egotistical as to make idleness compulsory on that day for everybody, such scholars would repudiate these puerile notions of primitive man. Should you ask the scholar whether he believes in a deity opposed to art, a deity pleased to have the people deprived of beauty, happier when the masses are less happy, a deity who will reward hereafter those who sacrifice happiness here, that scholar would declare a deity pleased with such human sacrifices to be more like a demon than a God. Such is the voice of English culture, of civilisation. And yet beside our universities is throned this Assyrian Idol,—the Sabbath,—whose ancient literal human sacrifices are perpetuated by the sacrifices of human culture, refinement, and happiness. This ancient idol is as fully portrayed as if his graven image were preserved. He wished to keep man ignorant, lest he should know as much as

himself. Instead of bidding man eat his fill of the Tree of Knowledge, he forbade it, and cursed the human race because man began to gain wisdom. He was afraid of man's progress, and overthrew his architecture at Babel for fear man would climb up into the sky. Jealous of man's knowledge, frightened by man's progress, he is also jealous of man's happiness. He threatens a whole nation because some are too happy on the day of freedom from toil. "You take your pleasure on my holy day," he complains.

Such an arrogant, selfish deity as that could only be established anywhere by bribe or terror. The idol has been maintained here in the past by a popular belief that the self-sacrifice was an investment: those who gave up pleasure on earth were to be paid tenfold hereafter. That notion is extinct. There is now no philosophy of a future life which supposes anybody will be better off in the future because he has been ignorant, or stupid, or miserable on earth, or gave up pleasures here to get more elsewhere.

Such being the intelligence of the country, its civilised culture and thought, it is monstrous that any usage or practical institution should remain, founded on the uncivilised notion of a deity opposed to the tree of knowledge, jealous of man's towers, satisfied with man's gloom, vexed by his enjoyments. The grim idol, the Sabbath, can give no compensation whatever to its victims, except when they rise up from its reeking altar and send it to the Museum, where it may be studied along with Moloch, Typhon, and other antiquities from the same region of time and of the world. Then the people may go to study it or to smile at it on a Sunday that should represent all the gods of sunshine—Ormuzd, and Krishna, and Baldu, and Apollo.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Go you and learn what this means—I will have mercy and not sacrifice." His supposed followers have gone on for centuries without learning what that means; but there now appears some glimmer of the meaning among those who with guilds and heart-charities are trying to make the poor happier. Though, let me say, all such benefits are of small importance—a little melting of the snow here and there while it is still snowing—compared with the glorions summer that would burgeon with the opening of the bounties of Art and Science, at whose barred doors the people sit like Lazarus, with only brutal pleasures to lick their sores.

"Go you and learn what this meaneth—I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Should England comprehend all the meaning of those words, it would be as if Jesus should this day stand on the steps of the National Gallery and cry: Henceforth let the night of Sacrifice end, and the era of Mercy dawn! You have heard for three wretched puritanical centuries that

man owes a duty to God. I say unto you that Man owes no duty to any being whom his conduct cannot benefit or affect in the least. You have heard that God desires sacrifice,—sheep in one age, self-sacrifice in another. But self-sacrifice is a delusion. If a man gives something to another he does not sacrifice himself, he enriches himself. He wants the happiness of making another happy, and gladly pays for it. Let this old sacrificial phraseology, however well meant, pass away with the selfish superstition in which it originated—giving up one pleasure on Earth to get two in Heaven. You have heard that it is good for a man to suffer, to be afflicted, to mourn. But I say unto you: Be happy! The first and supreme duty of all is to be happy. You cannot be happy while others are miserable, therefore make others happy. You have heard that those who mourn here will be comforted hereafter, the afflictions of time be paid with an eternal weight of glory. For that little children have been cowed, beaten, their healthy spirits broken, as they were once passed through the fire to Moloch. For that even ill-health has been fostered, pious invalidism supposed a providential means of curing the soul. And for that the poor, the toilers, the ignorant, have been told to be submissive to their lot to which God had called them. But now that common knowledge and common sense have destroyed that whole set of superstitions about the blessings of sorrow and the future bliss of the miserable, religion has no object at all but to make people happy in this world. If they miss happiness here they may miss it forever. The future is all uncertain. And almost the only time in which any can minister to their mental hunger is Sunday. Then alone does the wheel of toil on which they are bound stand still. Then alone does the smoke of their torment cease to ascend. It were a worthy task for English civilisation, and for the whole genius of this great nation, to gather in convention and contrive how they can make the people happier; and especially how they can make the day of the Sun a day of resurrection for the masses—the gladdest, merriest day, healing oil and wine for the wounds of six days' toil, a day when museums, galleries, theatres, shall make real once more the glad tidings of great joy.

CURRENT TOPICS.

~No man liveth unto himself alone; and the law of "limit and overflow," on which I claim a patent through discovery, works along in partnership with death silently but continuously throughout the whole domain of social economics, easing the friction among classes, and equalising men. By the law of limit and overflow, I mean that supreme act of parliament ratified and confirmed by nature which limits the rich man's power to consume, and compels a portion of his unnecessary wealth to overflow upon the poor. The only apparent exception to it that I can think of now is Jay Gould; and perhaps if we knew all about

him that might be known, we should find that even he was not altogether a witness and a protest against the law. It may not work as well as it might, and will, but still it works, and will continue to work for ever. I might fill columns of print with instances, but I will mention only this, the two million dollars given by Mr. Armour to establish a free manual training school for boys and girls in the city of Chicago. I make no cynical inquiry into the motives of this benevolence; enough for me that it *is* benevolence, and a splendid illustration of the law. It works in other directions too; as, for instance, in the multiplication of industries, but that is not the part of it that I wish to speak of now. When I said, "in partnership with death," I had in mind the *post mortem* distribution of riches among surviving children and other kindred, but more especially I had in mind the "Wills and Bequests" column of the *Illustrated London News*, wherein I find that millions of pounds in legacies annually overflow upon hundreds of useful and benevolent institutions. Don't weary me now by throwing up to me the passionate exclamation that "Wheelbarrow" made long ago, "We want justice, not charity." Benevolence is not charity in the inferior meaning of the word; and besides, benevolence is an element of justice.

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The flight of Mr. Armour from the country is good evidence that he belongs to that philanthropic legion of whom the poet says, that they "do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame." No sooner was his munificence made known than it was discovered that he had made his escape to England. The prevailing opinion is that he ran away in order to evade the flattery and gush that might overwhelm and smother him. It is more likely, however, that he feared a trial for heresy, and absconded for that reason. The gift of two million dollars appears to be magnificent, but the language in which it is tendered subtracts from it a heavy discount in the estimate made by theological men. Speaking of his enterprise, Mr. Armour says: "There is nothing sectarian about the mission. Its religion will be sixteen ounces to the pound, but undenominational, and it makes no difference to me whether its converts are baptised in a soup bowl, a pond, or the river." The insinuation that we get short weight religion in Chicago, is far from orthodox, and the playful act of comparing the baptismal font to a soup bowl adds irreverence to heresy. That is rather a flippant way of treating the tremendous problem which has divided the Christian world into hostile camps for centuries; and on which, in the opinion of many millions, depends the salvation of mankind; namely, whether or not baptismal grace can by any spiritual potency be sprinkled from a soup bowl? Perhaps Mr. Armour has noticed a sympathetic relation between our short weight religion and our short weight mercantile ethics. That, certainly, is not sixteen ounces to the pound. Perhaps he has observed that many of our most religious butchers buy their meat of him at wholesale on the Avoirdupois plan of sixteen ounces to the pound, and then sell it to consumers according to the Troy or Apothecary system of twelve ounces to the pound; just as if it were medicine, the only article we buy, except religion, of which we try to get as little as possible for our money. If Mr. Armour's institute succeeds in giving us an Avoirdupois conscience, not only in religion but also in other things, it will be the most profitable investment of two million dollars that has ever been made in Chicago.

* * *

It appears from the foreign dispatches just received by special telegraph, that Field Marshal the Prince of Wales, assisted by several generals and colonels has obtained a glorious victory over an army of dangerous pheasants encamped in a park owned by that eminent statesman and lawgiver the Earl of Dudley. More like a spy than a friend, the earl invited the pheasants to accept his hospitality so that he might betray them to the enemy. Four

thousands of the birds were slain, while of the Field Marshal's forces nobody was hurt. The number of the wounded is not given, those crippled and disabled foes who crawled away to die. This victory of the renowned Field Marshal has been sternly censured by the American press as an achievement sanguinary and inglorious. Perhaps, as a fashionable person I ought to hold royal sport in reverence, but in this instance I support the American critics, and I cannot help wishing that the birds had won the battle instead of the men; an impossible wish, I know; for if the birds had been fighters there would not have been any battle, because in that case the Field Marshal would have let them alone. As it was they had no chance. They were treacherously drawn into an ambush, and they were attacked when totally unarmed. Besides, pheasants are not bloodthirsty, nor even warlike, and they pride themselves more upon their beauty than their valor. I must therefore praise this condemnation which I quote from a Chicago newspaper now before me, "The event will strike Americans as peculiarly disgusting." I shall heartily approve that sentiment so long as the sarcasm in it is applied exclusively to the English Prince of Wales. When our own American Prince of Wales imitates the other, and amuses himself in the same way, I will obviously count his dead birds for him, as the American papers do, and flatter his deadly aim.

* * *

Lest the meaning of that last remark may be obscure, I will explain it by referring to a momentous and impressive message lately sent by telegraph from Exmoor, Virginia, to all the daily newspapers in the United States. It bore upon matters of grave national importance, namely, the number of snipe shot by Mr. Cleveland on the previous day. The dispatch was half a column long, and it informed the citizens of Snobdom, sixty-six millions of us by the census, that it was a bad day for shooting ducks, but good for killing snipe. The reason why was given, but I have no room for that, so I will come at once to the more eventful theme; "The long-billed little birds were found in great numbers, and President Elect Cleveland succeeded in bagging 126 snipe in little over an hour's time; and of these 53 were brought down in one spot." As in the case of the Field Marshal, the number of wounded birds appears not in the report. It was also confirmed by the official dispatches that "four black ducks which left the water also fell victims to the fowling piece of President-Elect Cleveland." Please don't forget the "President-Elect," for a man's office in front of his name instead of after it, serves for a personal title, in imitation of the style and dignity appertaining to Lords, Counts, Marquises, and other nobility in the kingdoms beyond the sea. Now, the ethical conundrum to be solved is this, What is the moral difference between the sport of killing pheasants and the sport of killing snipe? A popular excuse for hunting is, the physical improvement it confers by acting as a bracing tonic on the body, promoting health and strength by the natural therapeutics open air and exercise. This apology to some extent is good; but all those healthy benefits may be obtained as well by missing birds as hitting them. I do not criticise the sport of hunting birds; and you may even fire at them if that exercise improves your health, but I do object to hitting them. I have many a time formed one of a hunting party and fired savagely at the sky, but I always missed the birds, a stratagem that brought me ridicule, but gave me inward calm. By means of it I came home as tired and as healthy as the others, but happier in the possession of what Cardinal Wolsey called "a peace above all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience."

* * *

When I reflect upon the English people and the sacrifices they have made for liberty, their independent character, and their haughty self-assertion, I wonder wherein lies the strength of that hypnotic spell which makes them syncophantic in the dazzle of a kingly crown. I wonder by what process of abasement they have

come to look with interest and admiration at the achievements of royal and imperial idleness. Surely the newspapers would never tell how many birds were sportively killed by the Prince of Wales, unless those who buy the information were hankering to know. I have seen a footman clad in a menial suit of livery ride in servile pomp and vanity behind the carriage of the queen, and for doing so he pleaded that he thereby earned his living. That is a reason worthy of respect, but why should a proud people voluntarily wear a lackey's livery, and figuratively ride in the footman's place behind the royal chariot for nothing? That is a paradox mysterious to me. It may be merely the dregs of custom resulting from a long career of monarchy, and this may serve as an apology for England; but what excuse have we, the citizens of a republic, for doing the same thing, and imitating monarchy? This, that homage to a king is fawning adulation, whereas the worship of a president is only due respect, and a proper compensation for the abuse and ridicule we poured upon him when he was a candidate. Never in any one year have the people of England offered so much homage to the whole body of the Prince of Wales as we have offered within a month to Mr. Cleveland's thumb, which was accidentally pinched in the lock of his gun one day when he was hunting snipe. Every morning a loyal people watched with sympathetic anxiety for the official bulletin which reported the condition of that thumb. Here is one of the bulletins: "President-Elect Cleveland's thumb, which was painfully but not seriously injured yesterday in attempting to lock his gun, has given him but little trouble to-day." The printed speculations about that presidential thumb would cover five hundred acres of land; and yet we ridicule the English people who flatter the Prince of Wales.

* * *

In this country it is always just before or just after the election, and that is one of the blessings of our political plan. The moment after a battle is won or lost we hear the party bugler sounding the call to "boot and saddle," and we mount our steeds again. Mr. Benjamin T. Cable, the commander of the Democratic forces in Illinois, in imitation of other victorious generals, has just issued a congratulatory order to his troops; wherein, to show the importance of keeping what they get, he says: "For this purpose it becomes necessary for us to inaugurate the campaign of 1894, even while the powder is burning with which we celebrate that already gained." This invitation to take a rest after the fatigues of the campaign, is borrowed from the Irish blacksmith on St. Patrick's day, who told his hired men that as it was a holiday they might stop work, and dig a cellar. This call for a renewal of enthusiastic work is made three months before the beginning of Mr. Cleveland's term, and before anybody knows who are to get the offices as wages for the work already done. Until the impatience of those worthy patriots is relieved, that old powder will have to burn without the help of any new supply from them. This reasonable view of it was made so plain to Mr. Cable that he went on an eastern pilgrimage in order to present it for the consideration of Mr. Cleveland. When he returned, he spoke thus to the famishing legions, "I think that the men who bore the burden and heat of the campaign will be provided with appointments." This may be what Mr. Cleveland privately said to Mr. Cable, but it is not what Mr. Cleveland publicly said at the Manhattan club when he proclaimed that, "The American people are attaching importance to party politics rather than to party spoils"; and when he said, "No party can get the support of the masses of the people by merely promising offices, financial rewards, or other attributes of the spoils system." There is irony enough in that speech to make a razor, and it is ominous of disappointment to some of the men who "bore the burden and heat of the campaign." It shows that Mr. Cleveland sees the comic humor in the inconsistent advice given him by his followers who are trying to persuade him that in removing officers he cannot go too fast, and that in reform-

ing politics he cannot go too slow. Those officers expectant want him to believe that as to measures he ought to be dilatory and "conservative," but swift and revolutionary as to men. Mr. Vest, the Senator from Missouri, like nearly all the "distinguished" Democrats, pretends to be nervously alarmed lest Mr. Cleveland should make a "cavalry charge" on the protective tariff. The "consensus" of opinion among leading Democrats now is that Mr. Cleveland should carefully preserve the work of the Republicans, and discharge all the workmen.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

SONNET.

BY LOUIS BELROSE, JR.

Because the bounds new-broken still confine
The spirit moulded to forgotten lore,
And man may touch not, kneeling, as before,
A little heaven of his own design,
May feel no influence of things divine
Across the distance from the mystic shore,
(Though souls aspiring welcome more and more)
Must all the poets starve or bed with swine?
Because we see the starry skies take height,
And Hope take heart to quench the fires of hell,
Seeing that Truth may make us one for right,
Must music pass from word and thought? As well,
When tuneless wings first feel the larger light,
May song bemoan the breaking of the shell.

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