

# MENDING GOD'S LAW

A Baltimore newspaper printed under date of St. Louis, July 24, the following dispatch: "On the body of L. M. Booth, about 60 years old, who was found today in Forest Park dead from chloroform, self-administered, was a slip of paper containing these words. 'Heartily agree with Dr. Osler; an old man and a poor man has no business on earth. I am broke and no one will give me work. They look at me with a smile and say: "We've got a man." This is no temporary insanity on my part.' On another slip of paper the aged man had scribbled: 'Forest Park, Sunday, July 22, 7:50 p. m. The reason I single out this park is because it is so far away from a dispensary, so that I can be gone before they get me to a dispensary. Dr. Osler is all right. I do hope no one will identify me.' Clutched affectionately in one of the cold hands was a baby's shoe, which Booth had evidently carried in his pocket for years."

This is one of the most pathetic of the several similar incidents, and all growing out of Dr. Osler's absurd recommendation. The Osler recommendation, considered by itself, is not in the least serious, but when we remember that the tendencies of the times seem to be strictly in accord with those recommendations, and that in many instances aged men who have taken their lives have referred to "the Osler theory" then that theory becomes of general importance and interest to society.

It would be difficult to imagine anything more pathetic than the death of this St. Louis man. According to his own statement, he was old and poor and he imagined that he "had no business on earth." Because he was aged no one would give him work, and when his body was found in Forest Park we are told that "clutched affectionately in one of the cold hands was a baby's shoe which Booth had evidently carried in his pocket for years."

Many of us will recognize in that baby's shoe a link that should have bound this man to his life until it was claimed by his Maker.

It will be remembered that Dr. William Osler, a man who himself has passed the point which, according to his theory, terminates the period of man's usefulness, was a professor at the Johns Hopkins University. Although he himself was aged at the very moment he gave to the world his abominable and harmful theory he was then on his way to Oxford University where he had accepted a profitable and important professorship.

Dr. Osler is a famous physician. He was chief among those physicians who attended Senator Hanna during his last illness. Speaking at the anniversary exercises of Johns Hopkins University Dr. Osler declared that men are comparatively useless when they become forty years of age, and that they are utterly useless when they reach their sixtieth year. He suggested the plan described by Anthony Trollope's novel, "The Fixed Period," in which the plot hinges on the scheme of a college into which, at the age of sixty years, men retired for a year of contemplation before a peaceful departure by chloroform. Dr. Osler referred to this as "an admirable plan." Men waxed indignant over Dr. Osler's recommendation according to their ages. Those who had but passed the 40th year pooch-pooched the idea that at their age a man's usefulness is comparatively at an end, while those who had passed the sixtieth year were "mad all through," and naturally so, because, according to the Osler program, those in the 40-year class are simply thrown aside to wither and die in idleness, while those who are in the sixty-year class are to be put to death by chloroform.

Dr. Osler may think he perpetrated a fine joke. But the world would have been better had he never lived—at least long enough to become responsible by suggestion for many suicides.

Who can blame the sixty-year old boys for objecting strenuously? Marshall Field, Chicago's merchant prince, has passed the sixty-year limit; yet he is a very active and useful citizen. "Uncle Joe" Cannon is away beyond that limit; yet he is one of the liveliest men who ever held the gavel over the national house of representatives. John Wanamaker, strong in Philadelphia's business circles; J. Pierpont Morgan, one of the most potent factors in financial circles; John D. Rockefeller, the greatest and busiest monopolist in the world's history, have all passed the 60-year limit. If Osler ever established his program, John D. Rockefeller would secure a corner on the chloroform market quicker than the Baltimore physician could bat his eye.

Cardinal Gibbons, President Elliott of Har-

vard, Senator Cullom, Senator Allison, President Angell of the University of Michigan, and Senator John P. Morgan have all passed their 70th year; yet all of these men are active and not even "comparatively useless." Edward Everett Hale, the great preacher, is more than 80 years of age, yet his productions are worthy of careful reading.

Nearly every nation has had its "grand old man," and his best work was done after he had established his right to that honorable title.

"Uncle Joe" Cannon hit the nail on the head when, commenting upon Dr. Osler's statements, he said: "A man is as old as he feels, and I am 37 and frisky every day of the year."

There is, of course, no danger that Dr. Osler's chloroform proposition will be adopted, and therefore the important part of his recommendations relates to the 40-year proposition. This is so because of the growing tendency on the part of great corporations and other large employers to refuse to give employment to men who have passed the age of 40 years and to get rid of such men already in their service as rapidly as possible. If a man is in health there is no reason why he should not be at his very best after he has passed the age of 40 years; and there is no reason why a man should not be in perfect health at that age, so far as the mere wastes of time are concerned.

The disposition to establish the 40-year limit upon the usefulness of men is one of the greatest dangers threatening our civilization. Whenever that limit shall be generally recognized among employers, then it will be quite the proper thing, in all seriousness, to advocate the proposition that the man who has passed 40 years shall be escorted to some secluded spot and put to death.

Our civilization is, indeed, a wretched affair if it has brought us to the conclusion that two score years shall mark the termination of a man's life. Our progress must have been rapid if the business houses, the professional offices, the workshops and the corporation headquarters can best conduct their affairs without that calm and dispassionate consideration, that wide experience, that devotion to duty and that industry which, as a rule, is marked among men who have passed their 40th year, but which is often conspicuous largely because of its absence among less matured men.

Such a rule as the 40-year limit cannot long stand the test of intelligence. It is the outgrowth of the peculiar age through which we are passing, an age described by some as the "age of gold," by others, and without large distinction from the foregoing definition, as the "age of greed," and by others as the "trust age." Corporation organizers, greedy to grasp every penny within or without their sight, are anxious to put all possible pressure upon men whom they employ and obtain what they believe will be the highest possible results. They want not men, but slaves; they want every ounce of result, even though to obtain it they wring the last drop of blood from their hired man's veins. They are mistaken when they think they cannot get the very highest results from the healthy man who has passed his 40th year. But, as the corporationist closes his eyes to the fact that by his oppressions of the people he is laying up serious trouble for himself in the future, he gives no consideration to the history of the human race in all the ages and in all the lands, a history that serves as a stinging rebuke to the rule he now seeks to make against the lives of men.

Better let prevail the good old rule, "A man's a man for a' that and a' that." Better "let every tub stand on its own bottom." Let the man who is capable of earning a salary be given the chance and permitted to draw that salary, as long as he shall discharge his duty faithfully and well, regardless of the number of years he shall have spent in this vale of tears.

If in the average city every man who has passed the age of 40 were discharged, that city's business machine would be at a standstill. While we would, undoubtedly, have a large supply of "young blood in commerce," pay days would be few and far between, and the newspapers—if, indeed, there were any newspapers under those conditions—would be filled with the announcements of business failures.

We are told that the old Hindoo saw, in his dream, the human race led out to its various fortunes. First, men were in chains that went back to an iron hand; then he saw them led by threads from the brain, which went upward to an unseen hand. The first was despotism, iron, and

ruling by force; the last was civilization, ruling by ideas.

Ideas that kill hope and destroy life, ideas that are repugnant to God's eternal laws, can have no permanent place in a civilization worthy of the name. "God never made his work for man to mend." We have been told that "age does not depend upon years, but upon temperament and health; some men are born old and some never grow so." And experience has justified the fine statement made by a distinguished writer that among many men, even when the spirit dies out with increasing age, "the power of intellect is unaltered or increased and an originally educated judgment grows broader and gentler as the river of life widens out to the everlasting sea."

RICHARD L. METCALFE.

## MUST BE OVERLOOKED

The deficit for the fiscal year closing June 30, was \$24,000,000.

Washington dispatches say that the deficit for the first month of the current fiscal year shows a deficit of \$13,537,866.

During the month of July the government received \$49,273,133 and expended \$63,131,000.

Yet we were promised by the republican leaders "a businesslike administration" of public affairs!

But these are some of the things to be overlooked when one yields to the appeal "let well enough alone."

## GOOD WORK

T. W. Norton of Campton, Ky., writes: "Enclosed please find money order for three dollars for club of five. I think I was about five minutes getting up this club, and hope ere long to get more."

Taking advantage of the special subscription offer, S. C. Hefner, Gem, W. Va., sends five new subscribers to The Commoner. Others send new subscribers in number as follows: P. H. Kirwan, St. Paul, Minn., 5; Rev. John W. McLaughlin, Dunkerton, Iowa, 5; A. P. Clark, Sr., Bartlett, Texas, 5; J. H. Board, Mansfield, Texas, 6; George W. Register, Ironton, Mo., 10; N. G. McDade, Fulton, Ky., 5; C. C. Cronbaugh, Belle Plaine, Iowa, 5; John Lovell, Lake Arthur, La., 5; Benjamin Smith, Bellerive, Ill., 5; G. E. Gaines, Comanche, Texas, 5; William Blair, Mason, Ill., 5; R. M. Brann, Anson, Texas, 5; W. W. Porter, Hiramburg, Ohio, 5; A. J. Gibbons, Edina, Mo., 5; A. C. R. Morgan, Weatherford, Texas, 9; J. H. Beard, Carthage, Miss., 7; S. S. Bagby, Felicity, Ohio, 5; N. R. Tucker, Fremont, Ohio, 5; William B. Foster, Wytheville, Va., 5; N. E. Sharp, Norman, Okla., 5; W. D. Wheeler, Almyra, Ark., 5.

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Anyone ordering these cards may sell them for \$1 each, thus earning a commission of \$2 on each lot sold, or he may sell them at the cost price and find compensation in the fact that he has contributed to the educational campaign.

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