

THE SHEATH OF CUSTOM.

HAVE WE REACHED THE VERY BEST METHODS OF LIVING?

Our Propensity to Honor Customs and Practices Simply Because Everybody Else Does—How Much is Reasonable and How Much is Merely Arbitrary?

Every human being grows up inside a sheath of custom, which enfolds it as the swathing clothes enfold the infant. The sacred customs of one's own early home, how fixed and immutable they appear to the child! It surely thinks that all the world in all times has proceeded on the same lines which bound its tiny life. It regards a breach of these rules (some of them, at least) as a wild step in the dark, leading to unknown dangers. The elders have always said (and, indeed, it seems only reasonable) that by this time of day everything has been so thoroughly worked out that the best methods of ordering our life—food, dress, domestic practices, social habits—have long ago been determined. If so, why these divergences in the simplest and most obvious matters? And then one thing after another gives away. The sacred, world-wide customs in which we are bred turn out to be only the practices of a small or narrow caste or class; or they prove to be confined to a very limited locality, and must be left behind when we set out on our travels; or they belong to the tenets of a feebly sect; or they are just the products of one age in history and no other.

Are there really no natural boundaries? Has not our life anywhere been founded on reason and necessity, but only on arbitrary customs? What is more important than food, yet in what human matter are there more arbitrary divergences of practice? The Scotch Highlander flourishes on oatmeal, while the English Sheffield iron worker would rather starve than eat the fat snail which the Roman country gentleman once so prized now crawls unmolested in English or American gardens; rabbits are tabooed in Germany; frogs are unspeakable in England; sauerkraut is detested in France; many races and gangs of people are so constituted that they would die if deprived of meat; others think spirits of some kind a necessity, while to others again both these things are an abomination.

AND YET, WHY NOT? Every district has its local practices in food, and the peasants look with the greatest suspicion on any new dish, and can rarely be induced to adopt it. Though it has been abundantly proved that many of the fungi are excellent eating, such is the force of custom that the mushroom alone is ever publicly recognized, while curiously enough it is said that in some other countries where the claims of other agencies are allowed the mushroom itself is not used. Finally, I feel myself (and the gentle reader probably feels the same) that I would rather die than eat such an insect, such as the deep-seated disgust we experience toward this class of food. Yet it is notorious that many races of respectable people adopt a diet of this sort, and only lately a book has been published giving a detail of excellent provender of the kind we habitually overlook—hasty morsels of caterpillars and beetles, and so forth.

And, indeed, when one comes to think of it, what can it be but prejudice which causes one to eat the periwinkle and reject the land snail, or to prize the lively prawn and proscribe the cheerful grasshopper? Why do we sit on chairs instead of on the floor, as the Japanese do, or on cushions like the Turks? It is custom, and perhaps it suits with our other customs. The more we look into our life and consider the immense variety of habit in every department of it—even under conditions to all appearances exactly similar—the more are we impressed by the sense of an arbitrary necessity. In the forms we ourselves are accustomed to. Each race, each class, each section of the population, each unit even, vaunts its own habits of life as superior to the rest, as the only true and legitimate forms; and peoples and classes will go to war with each other in their assertion of their own special and peculiar rights. The question that rather presses upon the ingenious and inquiring mind is whether any of us have got hold of much true life at all.—Home Journal.

Italians Not Good Soldiers. Italians, the veteran diplomatist goes on to say, may become good diplomatists, sound jurists and successful merchants, but they will never be soldiers in the true sense of that word. Take the splendid fleet of ironclads, for example, and marshal it in battle array against a French, English, Russian or German squadron, commanded by a French, an English, a Russian or a German admiral, and the disaster of Lissa will be rehearsed over again. Much of this incapacity for successful military achievement is due to want of training on the part of the officers. In Italy there are many military schools that are well attended, but in them, as in the universities, there is a fatal lack of severity in the examinations, and once the student has left school he is never afterward seen with a book in his hand. It is for this reason that we find the officers in command of the Red Sea expedition committing precisely the same errors that their predecessors fell into in 1849 and 1866. The Italian officer seems to be concerned about only one thing—the effect that he is producing on the women and on the bystanders in general, and I have seen veterans covered with decorations, who never fought, before going into the street, to arrange their hats and to look into a glass.—Paris Cor. New York Press.

Good Advice to Speculators. Speculation is a business that must be studied as a specialty, and though it is popularly believed that any man who has money can speculate, yet this ordinary man, without special training in the business, is liable to make as great a mistake in this attempt as the man who thinks he can act as his own lawyer and who is said "to have a fool for a client." The common delusion that expert knowledge is not required in speculation has wrecked many fortunes and reputations in Wall street, and it will very probably do the same in the operations and liltory achievements.

Professional advice in Wall street, as in legal affairs, is worth paying for, and costs far less in the end than the chief "points" that are distributed profusely around the street, thick as autumn leaves in Vallibusrosa, and which only allure the innocent speculator to put him where he is almost certain to lose it. My advice to speculators who wish to make money in Wall street, therefore, is to ignore the counsel of the barroom "tippers" and "tipplers," turn their backs on "bucket shops," and when they want "points" to purchase let them go to those who know.—Henry Clews in the Cosmopolitan.

REPUBLICAN PLATFORM.

The republicans of the United States, assembled by their delegates in national convention, have on the threshold of their proceedings to honor the memory of their first great leader and immortal champion of liberty and the rights of the people, Abraham Lincoln, and to cover also with wreaths of imperishable remembrance and gratitude the heroic names of our later leaders who have been more recently called away from our councils, Grant, Garfield, Arthur, Logan and Conkling. May their memories be faithfully cherished. We also recall with a grateful and prayer for his recovery the name of one of our living heroes whose memory will be treasured in the history both of the noble soldier and favorite child of victory, Philip H. Sheridan.

The republicans of these great leaders and of our devotion to human liberty, and with that hostility to all forms of despotism and oppression which is the foundation of the republican party, we send fraternal congratulations to our fellow Americans of Brazil upon their great and successful struggle for the abolition of slavery throughout the two American continents. We earnestly hope we may soon congratulate our fellow citizens of Brazil upon the peaceful recovery of home rule for Ireland.

WE AFFIRM OUR UNSWerving DEVOTION to the national constitution and to the indissoluble union of states to the autonomy reserved to the states under the constitution, and to the rights and liberties of citizens in all states and territories is the union and especially to the supreme and sovereign right of every citizen, rich or poor, native or foreign born, white or black, to cast one free ballot in the public elections and to have that ballot duly counted and to hold a free and honest popular ballot and just and equal representation of all people to be the foundation of our republican government and demand effective legislation to secure the integrity and purity of elections which are the fountains of all public authority. We charge that the present administration and the democratic majority in congress owe their existence to the suppression of the ballot by the use of the machine, the constitution and laws of the United States.

We are uncompromisingly in favor of the American system of protection. We protest against the destruction proposed by the present administration and his party. They serve the interests of Europe.

WE WILL SUPPORT INTERESTS OF AMERICA. We accept the issue, and confidently appeal to the people for their judgment. The protective system must be maintained. Its abandonment has always been followed by general disaster to all interests except those of the insurer and the speculator.

We denounce the Mills' bill as destructive to general business, labor, and the farming interests of the country. We cordially endorse the consistent and patriotic action of the republican representatives in congress in opposition to the Mills' bill. We demand that the democratic party to place wool on the free list and insist that the duties thereon shall be in full and adequate protection to that industry.

THE MORNING QUESTION.

The political power of the Mormon church in the territories exercised in the past is a menace to free institutions too dangerous to be long suffered. It is therefore a duty of the republican party to appropriate legislation asserting the sovereignty of the nation in all the territories where the same is questioned, and to bring about the speedy and complete abolition of the Mormon church in all the territories.

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country, promote trade, open new and direct markets for our products, and cheapen the cost of transportation. We affirm this to be far better for our country than the democratic policy of the present administration's money without interest to "pet banks."

FOREIGN RELATIONS. The conduct of foreign affairs by the present administration has been distinguished by inefficiency and cowardice. Having withdrawn from the senate all pending treaties effected by republican administration for the removal of foreign burdens and restrictions upon our commerce and for its extension into a better market, it has wither adjusted nor proposed any others in their stead. Professing adherence to the Monroe doctrine, it has seen with idle complacency the extension of foreign influence in Central America and of foreign trade everywhere among our neighbors. It has refused to charter a canal or to encourage any American organization for constructing the Nicaragua canal, a work of vital importance to the maintenance of the Monroe doctrine and of our national influence in Central and South America, and necessary for the development of trade with our Pacific territory, with South America, and with the further coast of the Pacific Ocean.

FISHERIES QUESTION. We arraign the present demagogic administration for its weak and unpatriotic treatment of the fisheries question, and its pusillanimous surrender of the fisheries to which our fishing vessels are entitled in Canadian ports under the treaty of 1818, the reciprocal maritime fisheries of the Monroe doctrine, and which Canadian fishing vessels receive in the ports of the United States. We condemn the present administration for its failure to secure the democratic majority in congress towards our fisheries as unfriendly and conspicuously unjust and leading to destruction of our national industry and an indispensable resource of defense against foreign enemy.

The government of American applied alike to all citizens of the republic, and imposes upon men alike the same obligation of obedience to the law. At the present time the administration is the property and safeguard of him who wears it, should shield and protect him whether high or low, and should not be a party to his degradation. It should and must afford him protection at home and follow and protect him abroad in whatever land he may be on a lawful errand.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM. The men who abandoned the republican party in 1861 and continue to adhere to the demagogic party have deserted not only the cause of honest government, but of sound finance, of freedom and purity of the ballot, but especially have deserted the cause of reform in civil service. We will not fail to keep our pledges for they have broken theirs, or because they are afraid to do so, we therefore repeat our declaration of 1881, to wit: The reform of civil service unopposedly begun under the present administration should be completed by a further extension of the reform system already established by law to all grades of the service, to which the principle of merit and of purpose of reform should be observed in all executive appointments, and all laws at variance with the objects of the reform legislation should be repealed, and that the duty of free institutions which rest in the power of official patronage may be wisely and effectively avoided.

THE GRANT OF THE NATION TO THE DEFENDERS of the union cannot be assured except by laws. The reform of civil service unopposedly begun under the present administration should be completed by a further extension of the reform system already established by law to all grades of the service, to which the principle of merit and of purpose of reform should be observed in all executive appointments, and all laws at variance with the objects of the reform legislation should be repealed, and that the duty of free institutions which rest in the power of official patronage may be wisely and effectively avoided.

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