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Editorial

THE MENACE OF THE "UNWRITTEN LAW."

There is among the various laws which, like avenging angels, safeguard our moral, social, and political interests, a grisly, terrible shape that now and then arises to slay that which it should defend. The avenging sword cuts with keen edge into that authority, whether moral or civil, which is the basis of all law. While this shape, holding in one hand a sword and in the other the unbalanced scales of justice, riots in unbridled license, Anarchy biding its time, waits patiently in the distance.

The "Unwritten Law" is the great menace to Christian civilization and forms one of its gravest perils. We do not refer to that unwritten law, which, on account of human limitations or other cause, has not been formulated and codified, but which nevertheless may be a true child of that authority which begets only legitimate and humane posterity. Such an unwritten law there may be, and doubtless is. We refer to that unwritten law, which in open, flagrant defiance of formulated positive law essays to perform its work of vindication and protection. What it would vindicate and protect is enmeshed among the very heart-strings of humanity, but its method dulls the edge of justice, overturns the foundations of authority and opens the flood-gates for that torrent which never rolls but to devastate.

The "Unwritten Law" is a bold usurper. It is an iconoclast of the most cruel kind. It lifts its bold front against authority of the State and the solidified sentiment and judgment of generations of the wise and good.

It is found in the domain of business, where in its unholy greed for filthy lucre, it shivers into fragments that decalogue which it wets with tears before the church altar. In the name of business it robs, cheats, defrauds, pauperizes, and damns. According to its prosaic, every-day ethics, everything is fair in that war in which the strong are arrayed against the weak to prove the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, the "fittest" being those who can accumulate the greatest number of dollars.

It is in the domain of politics. It glorifies election laws and exalts to the skies the priceless right of the freeman to vote as he pleases. Yet it winks at the most unblushing corruption, and justifies under what it calls "peculiar circumstances" the utter debauchery of the ballot box.

It is in our social life. It justifies in open court the crime for which the criminal has been arraigned by the officers of the written law. In the name of justice it tears the keys from the hands of the jailor. In the name of justice it batters down the prison doors. In the name of justice it robs the State of its own prisoner. In the name of justice it laughs at the law of the State. In the name of justice, it exhausts the inventions of cruelty in wreaking its beastly, devilish vengeance on a brute who with all his brutishness is subject only to the law of God and his country.

The "Unwritten Law" is to be reckoned with. It is smooth, specious and plausible, but it is

deadly. It wears a mask of comeliness, but beneath are the raw-head and bloody bones.

It is but a truism to say that the best plan for disarming and rendering powerless the "Unwritten Law" is to administer promptly and completely the "Written Law." In order that this may be done, the exponents, protectors and vindicators of the "Written Law" must give forth no uncertain sound. No lawyer and other legal officer, either in defence or prosecution, by direct statement or intimation, should dare to defend that which the law of his country condemns. We were surprised to hear noted lawyers a few days ago, in a celebrated case, in pleading for the defendants, say that there is a crime for which the criminal should be shot down like a dog, law or no law. When the exponents of the "Written Law" speak thus, how can we wonder that the spirit of lawlessness is increasing throughout the land? All honor to the presiding Judge, who, in his charge, rebuked the sentiment which supports the "Unwritten Law," and pleaded for the vindication of the "Written Law" of his country.

The moral and religious influence of the country must be exerted against the baleful "Unwritten Law." This influence is powerful. That pastor of Statesboro, Georgia, who sent to every prominent religious paper in the land a letter condemnatory of the action of the devilish mob which burned at the stake those devilish negro brutes, did a wise and effective thing. The Methodist Church at Statesboro did still better, when it laid its heavy disciplinary hand upon those members who belonged to this mob.

We repeat: the "Unwritten Law" must be dealt with, or it will deal terribly with the hopes and interests of our Christian civilization. Among the menaces to Church and State the "Unwritten Law" looms dark and terrible. Let us meet our peril with calm judgment, earnest exhortation, fervent prayer, and with that adherence to law which is one of the prime conditions of freedom and righteousness.

THE MISS ABBOTT AFFAIR.

A Miss Abbott, of Cincinnati, taught in a mission school near Lenoir, N. C. During her vacation she conversed with a reporter of a Cincinnati paper, and in the conversation gave some instances of ignorance and destitution in the section in which she taught. The reporter described as general what Miss Abbott gave as exceptional instances, and really painted an awful picture of the section. The people were represented as never having heard of George Washington or the Fourth of July, as living on dirt floors, as never having seen a piano, and as having to go thirty-five miles to hear preaching. All of which, of course, was supremely absurd.

The paper containing the write up found its way to Lenoir. It was published in one of the papers there, and, of course, aroused great indignation against Miss Abbott. When she returned to her school a few days ago, she found the feeling against her decidedly bitter. Her plea that she had been made the victim of a sensational and untruthful reporter was unavailing. After a clash between a few of her friends and the faction against her, she left the section last week.

This leads us to make a few observations.

People should be very careful in their conver-

sations with unprincipled newspaper reporters. Such reporters, being on the hunt for news will create their game if they cannot stalk the real article. They generally add horns and cloven hoofs.

Newspapers should be very careful how they publish articles whose authorship and general truthfulness are unknown. The editor of the Lenoir paper republished the article in question with the best of motives. But it is the consensus of opinion among the best people of Caldwell County that the editor made a mistake. There would have been no trouble had this paper not reproduced the article.

Our people are too sensitive altogether. The reflections made against them cannot hurt anybody. Resentment does not do any good in the way of vindication, and only gives their real enemies an opportunity of increasing their capital of hate.

There is not more destitution and ignorance in Caldwell County and any other section in North Carolina than can be found in any State of the Union. All talk about North Carolina's being in any special sense missionary ground is absurd, and the less notice taken of such talk, the better.

THE DANGER IN SPECIALIZING.

This is the time of the year when the question of collections is uppermost in the minds of our preachers. It seems to be a foregone conclusion that the itinerant preacher must be God's tax-gatherer. Some preachers enjoy taking private and public collections. Others do not. We would warn the latter against yielding to their disinclination. To a majority of them their trial will develop them and prove a distinct means of grace. The great Georgia preacher, Simon P. Richardson, started out in his ministerial life with his heart set against taking up a collection, and, for several years, he did not take up any. He never succeeded much in winning souls until he threw away his pride and conquered his prejudice and became a prince among God's tax-gatherers.

The great danger with us as Methodists is not in specializing—that is in calling especial attention to any one interest. This must be done. But the danger is in specializing so that the concentration of interest and effort on one cause means a decrease of interest and effort in another direction.

A special effort has been made within the last few years to develop the missionary conscience and liberality of our Southern Methodist people. This is altogether commendable. We are afraid, though, that the cause of foreign missions has been emphasized at the expense of domestic missions. If this be the case, the situation is extremely unfortunate. No cause among all the collections should be emphasized at the expense of another. All the causes are vital, not excepting the Conference paper. Let all receive adequate attention.

Mr. A. A. Kern, son of our Dr. Jno. A. Kern, of the Baltimore Conference, has been elected professor of English at Millsaps College, Mississippi. Mr. Kern is a graduate of Randolph-Macon College and of Vanderbilt University, and for the last several years has been a student at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md., for his Ph. D., degree.