

AMERICAN PRECOCITY IN POLITICAL WISDOM.

The retirement of men of ripe years from our National Councils is a fact of which the increasing prevalence can hardly fail to be impressed on the attention of all who were contemporary with the earlier political history of the country. There was a time when some maturity of age, if not in itself a prerequisite for political preferment, was at least considered no disqualification for such offices of trust and honor as demand for their due discharge some maturity of life.

Since then the Lion Tamer has visited Dubuque and the editor of the Express of that city gives the following interesting recognition:

"Last evening we, with two companions, walked up street with a very worthy farmer from within one mile of Potosi, Wisconsin, who talked about his 'pigs, geese, and ducks,' and with what success he tilled his farm. As an instance of his successful tillage he stated that he sold the produce of fifty feet square of his farm, of which he kept an account, for forty-three dollars. Hence it may be seen that this farmer, Herr Driesbach, has some skill as well as pride in his farming. Our chief object in taking this walk was that the Herr desired us to witness a meeting between himself and his old pets of the menagerie, which had not seen for more than a year, and which, of course, we were most anxious to witness, to see whether time, travel and change had obliterated from their recollections their old master. On entering the canvass, which was before the audience began to collect, Herr desired us to stand before the cage of the Bengal tiger, he remaining at the door the while. This tiger, from some old sore, had just as old a grudge against him, and managed to give a marked demonstration of the fact. This cage was selected for the first test of recognition. While we were stationed immediately in front, Herr came sauntering along carelessly, habited in a farmer's costume, and as he neared the cage the tiger's eyes began to glisten with great brilliancy as they bore directly upon him, and at the same time, a low guttural growl began to raise in his throat, which burst out into a furious howl as he leaped at the bars to get at him when he passed by. This experiment was tried several times with the same result, and when at length Herr spoke to him, his rage knew no bounds, leaping at the bars, he dashed his paws out to tear him, and only ceased when his old master walked out of his sight.

A modern prophet, unlike the prophets and wise men and law-givers of old, rejoices with an exultant joy that power is about to pass into the hands of the young men of the age. Thus new life is to be given to liberty and freedom and to all moral and material prosperity.

It is true that youth itself is radiant with hope and promise; it is rich in faith, trust, and confidence; it is fresh and manly in its strength; it is generous and devoted in its views, ardent in attachments, and prompt in executions. But, as a crown to all its virtues and attractions, it is most beautiful in its submissiveness and obedience to the just authority of its elders. This is the chief glory of a young man—to learn wisdom at the feet of his father, to be formed after good examples, and to yield a ready deference to the advice and commands of his elders.

We do not believe in conferring power exclusively upon young men; nor do we deem such pretended spontaneous movements the harbingers of a better age. Young men, having little experience and great hope, are apt to be over-confident. Not being schooled in the arts and tricks of designing men, they do not suspect them, and are often deceived. Without large observation, they are likely to give undue prominence to a few instances of limited resources in statesmanship; they are easily disengaged, and, unused to the reverses and reverses of fortune, they become impudent and impulsive. The young and the old are mislead in the "ways of life" so they should be educated in the administration of the State, all in their proper place; the old to give counsels and counsels by their experience and wisdom, the young to give energy and vigor by the ardor of their ambition and the promptness of their execution. The qualities of the one may thus supply the defects of the other; the young men will be learners, while the old are still actors, and the State may thus enjoy that authority which follows old men and that popularity and favor which are the companions of youth.

The world-wide statesman, who addresses either young or old as a distinctive class, is more a seeker for self-aggrandizement than a friend to the young or to the State. He who so wisely flatters the young is to be feared as a demagogue; he is a corrupter of youth and a perverter of nature. Such appeals are the offspring of a shabby head and a wicked heart.

The red men of the forests—those dwellers in the light of nature—would look upon that *braw* as a monster of wickedness who should halt the progress of their old men from the council-hires of their nation as the harbinger of a better time. The eye of nature would see nothing in such a spontaneous movement but a sudden conquest over all good by the mischievous spirit of all evil.

The chieftest poet of ancient and perhaps of modern times, when he would represent an authority fitted to calm the animosities, soothe the morbid passions, and heal the fatal dissensions among the young men of the camp or State, exhibits to us the aged Nestor; who had ruled for two generations, and was still upon the stage with the third.

"Experienced Nestor, in persuasion skilled,
Worlds sweet as honey from his lips distilled."

Two generations now have passed away,

Wise by his rules and happy by his sway;

Two ages of his native realm he reigned;

And now the example of the third remained."

This is the spontaneous sentiment of all right-minded, pure-hearted men, in all time and all over the world. Every ingenuous young man is prone to learn wisdom and virtue and action from his fathers; he looks upon the old with veneration and respect, and as his natural superiors and rulers. He does not rejoice with an inward joy when in the course of events the fathers are gathered to the grave and power and trust fall into his hands, but, formed by their example, he mourns that it must be so, and accepts the rule with indifference and regret.

Cicero, in that most delightful as well as profound book of his own old age, gives an instance of a republic prosperous and flourishing in virtue and in wealth till power passed into the hands of a class of rash young orators. *How come this noble republic of yours to be ruined?* It was overrun with a horde of inexperienced, silly, unfeudled scoundrels.

Origin of the Word Loafer.—An American whom I met in a Swiss mountain walk, some five years since, claimed the word, and gave this derivation: An old Dutchman settled at New York, and acquired a considerable fortune. He had an only daughter, and a young American fell in love with her or her dollars, or both. The old father forbade him his house, but the daughter encouraged him. Whenever the old merchant saw the lover about the premises he used to exclaim to his daughter,—"There is that 'loafer' of yours; the idle, good-for-nothing," &c.; and so an idle man, hanging about, came to be called a "loafer."

Notes and Queries.

What is the difference between a pool of stagnant water, and a pewter image of Satan?

One is a *dead level*, while the other is a *lead devil*.

HERR DRIESBACH AND HIS LION.

The Galena (Ill.) Courier publishes a letter from a correspondent in Potosi, Wis., who says: "Tired of this itinerant and Beneck life, about three years since, the Herr took to himself one of the most intellectual and amiable of the Buckeye daughters, and removed to this place, where he had purchased himself a beautiful farm, and where he has retired to cultivate the earth and make for himself a pleasant home."

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The third class of lightnings are remarkable for their eccentricities, and have been made the subject of considerable attention among magnetologists, many of whom have denied their right to be treated as legitimate lightnings, they differ so widely from the ordinary sort of flashes. They exhibit themselves as ovals or globular lumps of fire—not momentary apparitions, but a remembrance which takes their own time, and travel at a rate which exceeds that of the sun. They are well known as electric bolts. It is this uncertainty which gives them their doubtful character, as an electric bolt is supposed to be one of the leading emblems of velocity. Among other anecdotes related of this kind of lightning is the following incident which occurred to a tailor in the Rue St. Jacques, Val de Grace, about the year 1745. M. Babetot was commissioned by the Academy of Sciences to investigate the facts, and reported substantially as follows:

"After a loud thunder-clap, the tailor being finishing his meal, saw the chimney board fall down as if beaten by a slight gust of wind, and a globe of fire, the size of a child's head, come out quickly into the room, at a small height above the floor. The tailor said it looked like a good-sized kitten, rolled up into a ball, and moving without support on its paws. It was bright and shining, but he felt no sensation of heat. The globe came near his feet, like a young cat that wants to rub itself against its master's legs; but by moving them aside gently he avoided the contact. It appears to have played for several seconds about his feet, bearing his body over it and examining it attentively. After trying some excursions in different directions, it rose vertically to the height of his head, which he threw back to avoid touching his face. The globe, elongating a little, then steered towards a hole in the chimney above the mantelpiece, which hole received a stove-pipe in winter, but was now pasted over with paper. The tailor, he said, could not see the hole; but nevertheless this ball went straight to the aperture, removing the paper without hurting it, and made its way into the chimney. Shortly afterwards, when he supposed it had time to reach the top, it made a dreadful explosion, which destroyed the upper part of the chimney, and threw the fragments on the roof of smaller buildings, which were not far from it. The tailor's lodging was on the third story, the lower ones were not visited at all by the thunderbolt."

Lightning when it meets an obstruction in its course frequently shatters the non-conducting object, dispersing and bursting substances asunder in every direction, as if they had been charged with gunpowder. The stone pinnacle of a church in Cornwall was struck by lightning, and one fragment weighing three hundred pounds was buried sixty yards to the southward, another four hundred yards to the north, and a third to the southwest. In 1838 the topgallant mast of her Majesty's ship *Roxbury* was literally cut into chips by a flash of lightning, the sea being strewn with the fragmants as if the carpenters had been sweeping their shavings overboard. Sometimes, in striking a tree or mast, the electric fluid will slice it into long shreds or filaments, so that it will appear like a huge broom or a bundle of raths. Lightning bolts will occasionally dash through resisting objects by tearing great openings, as in a Cornish church, where apertures were made in the solid wall of the belfry fourteen inches deep, and as it cut out by art. In other instances small holes are drilled which are surprising for their perfect circularity of form. Window panes have been frequently pierced in this fashion without affecting the rest of the glass. In forming these apertures, a burr or projection is left upon the edges.

Juvenile electricians are in the habit of making holes in cards by passing discharges through them, when a burr or projection will be observed on both sides of the orifice. Sometimes a single discharge will produce two holes in a card, each puncture marked by a single burr, one on the upper and the other on the under side of the card. In some instances the results are such as to suggest that a flash may be split up into several discharges before it strikes an object. In 1777 a weather-cock of tinmed copper was buried by a thunderbolt from the top of a church in Cremona, and, upon inspection, was found to be pierced with eighteen holes; in nine of them the burr was conspicuous on one side, and in nine it was equally prominent on the other, while the slope of the burr was identical in all.

Among the curiosities of lightning are what is termed "fulgurites," or tubes, which the lightning constructs when it falls upon a silicious spot, by fusing the sand. They may be called casts of thunderbolts. In some hillocks of sand in Cumberland (England) these hollow tubes have been found from one-fifth to two inches in diameter, tapering perhaps to a mere point. The entire extent of the tubes may be thirty feet, but they usually separate into numerous branches, and have the appearance of the skeleton of an inverted tree. They are lined with glass, as smooth and perfect as if it had been made in a glasshouse.

The age of a horse is more easily told by his teeth than his years, in this way: After the horse is nine years old a wrinkle comes on the eyelid at the upper corner of the lower lid, and every year thereafter he has one defined wrinkle for each year over nine. If, for instance, a horse has three wrinkles, he is twelve; if four, he is thirteen; add the number of wrinkles to nine, and you will always get it. So says a writer, and he is confident it will never fail. As a great many people have written on the subject, it is easily tried.

The review maintains that the English electioneering proceedings are now quiet and orderly, and he objects to their tameness and insipidity. Yet it is not many months since Kidderminster was the scene of as disgraceful an election riot as ever the annals of English elections can show, and sixty members of the present House of Commons have been shaken in their seats by petitions on the ground of bribery.—*N. Y. Com.*

It is suggested that Proverbial Philosophy Tupper's last sonnet on the Atlantic cable was the real cause of the break. Nothing on earth could stand such a strain as that!

London Punch.

CURIOSITIES OF ELECTRICITY.

The peculiarities of that terrible but mysterious agent, lightning, are made the subject of an interesting paper in a recent number of the British Quarterly Review.

Two clouds are not necessary for the production of lightning, which is frequently discharged from a solitary clump of vapor, when a connection can be established with the earth. A French academician, named Marolle, describes a case where a mere cloudlet, about a foot and a half in diameter, killed a poor woman by dropping a thunderbolt upon her head. It has been shown by Faraday that the electric fluid contained in a single flash might perhaps be supplied by the decomposition of one grain of water alone.

M. Arago has divided the lightning into three sorts. The first includes those where the discharge appears like long luminous lines, bent into angles and zig-zags, and varying in complexion from white to blue, purple, or red. This kind is known as forked lightning, because it occasionally divides into two branches. Carpenter relates a case where a flash severed into three forks, each of which struck points several hundred feet apart. Still more numerous discharges have been reported, for it is said that during a tempest at Landernau, a tiger was struck by lightning three times in rapid succession.

The second class of lightning differs from the first in the range of surface over which the flash is diffused, and is designated as sheet lightning. Sometimes it simply gilds the edges of the cloud whence it leaps; but at others it floods with a lurid radiance, or else suffuses its surface with blusons of a rosy or violet hue.

The third class of lightnings are remarkable for their eccentricities, and have been made the subject of considerable attention among magnetologists, many of whom have denied their right to be treated as legitimate lightnings, they differ so widely from the ordinary sort of flashes. They exhibit themselves as ovals or globular lumps of fire—not momentary apparitions, but a remembrance which takes their own time, and travel at a rate which exceeds that of the sun. They are well known as electric bolts. It is this uncertainty which gives them their doubtful character, as an electric bolt is supposed to be one of the leading emblems of velocity. Among other anecdotes related of this kind of lightning is the following incident which occurred to a tailor in the Rue St. Jacques, Val de Grace, about the year 1745. M. Babetot was commissioned by the Academy of Sciences to investigate the facts, and reported substantially as follows:

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ELECTIONEERING IN ENGLAND.

The Quarterly Review—republished here as the "London" Quarterly Review—for July has a very interesting paper on electioneering practices in England. The reviewer himself seems to have been a candidate for a seat in the present British Parliament at the election last Spring, but whether a successful one or not does not appear. But he evidently writes *en amarre*; probably with the exciting events of the contest fresh in his memory. As with us, so in England, electioneering is not only a political and social activity; it is an act, and it is even a game." There it has been shown that a class of men, an exact counterpart of whom is unknown to us, they make electioneering a profession, and seem positively to have a genius for it. They are most at home in an election contest. It is true that they "know the wires," and yet they are not the "wire-pullers" whose secret manoeuvres and machinations have so much to do with our elections. They operate openly, visibly and directly. It is their business to "manage the election," and they are well known as electioneering agents. Formerly no candidate thought of entering upon a solid election contest without such an agent, who was generally a legal gentleman, and the practice, we believe, prevails generally to this day. This agent is first sent down to the constituency to prepare the way for the candidate's personal canvassing of the voters, and he is at the candidate's side during that canvass, on the day of the nomination and during the voting, ready with his counsel, and his aid. He will do many things that the candidate himself would not feel at liberty to do.

This custom of personally visiting the voters and asking them individually for their votes seems to have been introduced into England about a century and a half ago. Formerly it was the custom for one of the aristocracy desiring for himself a seat in Parliament to address a letter to each voter directing or commanding him to vote according to the writer's wishes. A step in advance of this appears to have been taken by Lord Wharton, famed for his success as an electioneer.

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