

Communications.

For the Times.

Mr. Editor—

Absence has not altered me. Though mutability sits sovereign, and by aid of time, places its mark on all things human; yet, in many respects I am the same I used to be. I still feel a lively interest in all those subjects which aim at public or private good, and love to wield my feeble pen in their behalf. I now, as formerly, take pleasure in arranging thoughts for the perusal of your readers, because among them I recognize some of my good friends. Then why, say you, have I been thus long inactive? My answer is at hand—The article of distance has intervened between us, and other circumstances which now I cannot describe, have either held my hand or directed it in another course. But no change in disposition has marked my character.

Now, sir, I wish to propose a question for you to answer. What has become of your many other correspondents, who used to fill your columns with poetry as well as prose? I well remember two of them, who modestly assumed the title of "Bugs," but many thought their soaring was more like that of eagles than of bugs. I also recollect J. O. P. Q. and half a dozen Greek and Hebrew names, that were often found under articles more or less useful, in your paper. Now, sir, again I ask, what has become of all these? Has time, the revolutionizer of all things helped change to work its mighty work on them? Have they gone the way of 1834, and are they now numbered with those that were? If so, methinks we ought to have their obituaries, and not let their names thus sink into oblivion. But, sir, if they are yet alive and in the vigor and prime of life, let them again take up the pen, and doubtless your readers will be advantaged in the result. With these remarks I give you the following article, hoping its tendency may be good in helping to break down that system of evils which I have denominated popular superstitions in America. I might have said more on this subject—I might have alluded to dreams, and shown what an extensive influence they hold over the minds of our countrymen—but what I have mentioned will be sufficient to suggest the whole, or enough of the system to every ingenious mind.

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS IN AMERICA.

America has long been the favorite theme of the orator. No subject of merit has been called to discuss without referring to it for his best illustrations. Has it been his object to eulogize liberty and exhibit its heavenly influences upon those who exercise it? He has pointed to America and with an air of triumph exclaimed, here is its habitation! This is the country in the very heart of which "Fair Freedom" sits enthroned, and receives the grateful homage of an independent people. Has education been his topic? He has mentioned America as the country where it has been most generally disseminated—where streams of intelligence have been flowing, of all sizes, from the mighty rivers of classical and scientific learning, down to the little gently gliding rivulet of elementary knowledge. Has Christianity been the subject of his discourse? He has cited America as the field where it has flourished best, and shed its richest, its most wholesome blessings. He has delighted to contrast the situation of Americans, basking in the sunshine of liberty, and experiencing all the attendant blessings of intelligence and a pure religion, with the situation of the Greeks and Romans, who, though they boasted of intelligence and freedom, were destitute of a revealed religion, and had their minds cramped with the degraded principles of idolatry and the base services of blind superstition. In short, our character, as painted by the orator, appears almost stainless. Would that this picture were true! But stubborn facts proclaim it false.

In my subsequent remarks I intend showing that America has no sufficient cause for this much boasting—that many of the virtues for which she has been so highly eulogized, exists but feebly while her defects are numerous, and some of them alarming.

In exhibiting some of these defects, I shall pass by the most prominent. I will not attempt to describe the subject of slavery, that pernicious system which deprives a people of liberty, and spreads its demoralizing influences over the farthest portions of our Union; nor will I speak of our cruel treatment of the unprotected red man, whom we have compelled to relinquish the soil given him by the great benefactor of all, and forced to take a last lingering farewell of the spot which gave him birth; nor will I dwell on the great evil of intemperance, which has so long brooded over our prosperity like some dark and dis-

mal cloud, and threatened destruction to every thing we hold sacred. These topics have been ably discussed by others, and community are, to some extent, sensible of their magnitude and blighting effects. But mine shall be the task of exposing those errors which are considered trifling or rather harmless. These may be denominated popular superstitions. If man is not naturally a superstitious being, he is easily made so. There are principles in his nature to which superstitious notions may be successfully addressed; and when these notions are embraced, nothing but the mighty power of true knowledge can eradicate them. The following classes will exhibit the truth of this assertion:

Class first—signs of good and bad luck. Some of these are putting on a garment wrong side out; the breaking of a ring presented by some loved one; the seeing of the new moon over the right shoulder, and many others similar. These have been handed down to us from the ancients. They probably had their origin in accident, and have been perpetuated by individuals endeavoring to bring that to pass which the sign predicted.

The second class which I shall mention, seem to have their origin in man's consciousness of guilt and deserved punishment. Owing to this principle in his nature he is led to explain the singular phenomena of nature to be the forerunners of some disastrous events which are shortly to affect himself, his family, or his country. Examples of this class are the appearance of unusual lights in the heavens, the peculiar whistling of the winds, the curious reflection of moon-light, etc. The stories of haunted houses and the spirits of the dead revisiting earth in human forms, are connected with this class.

I shall notice but one other class, which is the system of fortune telling. This has its origin in a very common principle in our nature, which is, a desire to know our future destiny. In almost every region or neighborhood may be found one or more of these prognosticators of future events, and revealers of mysteries, who indeed are ignorant of almost every thing but the fact that many people are so foolish as to believe them capable of lifting the veil of futurity and explaining their coming destiny. Under this same general head may be ranked the naming of apples and counting their seeds. But some may object to classing this simple and innocent amusement with the family of superstitions, because they think it is a harmless fashion invented only to drive off dull care and kill time, and those who practice it have no faith in its predictions. That this last thought does not accord with truth, every careful observer knows who has watched the flush of pleasure on the fair one's cheek, when, in connection with a certain number of seeds has been mentioned the name of her favorite. Though she may contend she has no faith in the project, yet her sparkling eyes, her pleasant smiles, and her eagerness to practice it, speak a different language.

What I have mentioned are but specimens of the complicated and extensive system of popular superstitions in America. Had I time, I would enter more into detail, and show that though we laugh at the Romans for their absurdities, we are not very far behind them in some respects relative to this article. It is very probable that many of those whose eyes may glance over this essay, are clear of the charge of superstition; but they are connected with a community against which the charge may with propriety be brought—a community, some of the members of which are as much degraded, and their minds as much darkened by the base notions of superstition, as though they had been nurtured on heathen ground. Then it becomes as citizens of this community, as philanthropists and Christians, to raise our voices against such destructive errors, and to use our utmost efforts to put down so dishonoring, so pernicious a system. Some may say I have attempted to throw around this subject an importance ill suited to its character—that to apply such terms as *dishonoring* and *pernicious*, to such a system, is *misapplying* words. For the benefit of such individuals, I would say, that superstition in any form, or to any extent, has a withering influence on the intellect, and degrades the moral powers of the human mind. It sets bounds to improvement, and creates a thousand sources of unhappiness. Then style it not harmless, but rather give it its true character, and class it with those errors at which public disapprobation is aimed. Let it be confined to heathenish darkness till the light of better times shall discover its native ugliness, and procure its expulsion from earth. But while we boast of having burst its bands which hampered the minds of our ancestors, and made them slaves to signs, ghosts, hobgoblins, and other imaginary

evils, and while we profess to have broken away from the shackles of antiquity, and come forth from the darkness of former times, into the splendid light of modern improvement, let not these bands and shackles still hold their victims among us, nor that darkness still brood over us and hold a portion of our citizens in destructive slumbers. Let it no longer be true that the sun of science has arisen and shed his vivifying rays on our happy land, and yet many of our inhabitants are so enshrouded by the double and impenetrable veil of ignorance and superstition as to remain unaffected by this enlivening influence. Let it no longer be true, that a kind providence has given us the written revelation of his will, in which we may learn sound morality, and to fear none of those nonentities which so much affrighten the ignorant, and to place no dependence upon the mean absurdities of superstitious antiquity; and yet the intelligent must mourn over our nation's folly, and regret that some of its members still cling with a lover's grasp to principles unworthy of an enlightened and a Christian people. Let parents and others who have the care and teaching of infant minds, do their duty, and the work will be done. The foul stain will be wiped from our character, and America, in this respect, at least, will be independent.

For the Times.

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT.

Mr. Editor—There are three, and only three justifiable methods of making internal improvements. The first on the list are those of a national character, embracing great roads, and the improvement of the navigation of rivers, passing through several States, with a view to strengthen and perpetuate the Union, facilitate the transportation of munitions of war, and the exchange of the products of distant portions of the country. An appropriation of the People's money for the construction of improvements of this character, would be justifiable. The second class embraces such as a State might be justifiable in making by a common tax on her citizens—such as a canal or rail road, connecting important points in the State in which they are made, which can be finished within say five years, and when completed will certainly yield a revenue to the State sufficient to sink the cost of construction within five or ten years from its completion, and ever after be a source of revenue that would lessen the burden of taxation. If we can make the burden of taxation lighter to posterity, we have the right to do it. But we have no political or moral right that I know of to embarrass the generation that is to succeed us. The last and most equitable method of making internal improvements is by the enterprise of individuals and companies possessing surplus capital, who will always seek an investment in stock of this kind whenever there is a fair prospect of gain.

This last method seems to me to be the most equitable and just, as well as the most eligible, particularly in new States, whose revenue must be small without oppressive taxation. Let the States then grant charters to companies, under suitable restrictions, to construct canals and rail ways, connecting important commercial points, and whenever the trade and intercourse shall be sufficient to justify it, the enterprise and interest of those who are to be benefited, will, if they have not the capital themselves, invite it from abroad; and thus without oppressing the people, effect the object desired.

But would it be expedient or prudent for the State of Indiana at this time to embark in any scheme of internal improvement requiring the expenditure of more money than the revenue arising from the present rate of taxes, would at least enable her to pay the interest of? Are not our taxes high enough? Is there not some complaint about high taxes? And if the whole people were consulted, would they not call for a reduction of taxes rather than the increase contemplated by the proposition to borrow 2,000,000 dollars, now under consideration in our Legislature, to be scattered or squandered over the State on projects, as a mere commencement or experiment, which will cost to complete them at least ten million more? It is true enough that the resources of the State are constantly being developed, and her industry as well as enterprise, are in a regular and healthy state of progression, and in this respect is like a newly married pair, with every fair prospect of wealth and happiness before them, with well directed industry, enterprise, and economy. But if they imprudently exhaust their capital in the purchase of a fine house and furniture, they will be left with a small stock in trade, and be compelled to labor to great disadvantage to keep

up the present establishment, without increasing the stock of comforts proper for their middle age and declining years. So if by an ill-directed legislative action, our young and flourishing State shall reach out her young and feeble arm to grasp the achievement of objects in her youth, that requires the strong arm of manhood, and the steady nerves of mature age to accomplish, it may require the labor of another generation to redeem her insolvency, and place her upon a footing equal to that she now occupies, and thus cheat posterity out of their just rights.

McADAM.

INGENIOUS ROBBERY.

A poor man recently died in Grand street, New York; and although a Papist, yet his Protestant acquaintances made a collection and defrayed the expenses of a respectable funeral. After the bill for the interment was paid, there was a balance of 75 cents in the hands of the collector, which the friends gave to the widow. Not long after the death of her husband, the superstitious woman pretended that she had seen a vision, or had a dream, in which her late husband came to her, and requested her to have two masses sung for the peace of his soul. In consequence of this folly, she went to Priest —, and informed him of her husband's supposed situation; and begged the Priest to say the two masses for his troubled spirit. That Jesuit immediately asked the woman—How much money have you got to give, in order that you may have the benefit of the church for your husband?—and then demanded one dollar for the two masses! The widow pleaded poverty; and told the Priest, that the Protestants had been so kind to her as to collect money enough decently to bury him. "Go away," said the Priest, "and get more money from the heretics, and bring it to me." The woman replied, that she could not do that for shame, but she acknowledged that she had 75 cents which the Protestants had given her besides the funeral expenses. Upon this information, after long entreaty on her part, and many vain attempts to squeeze 25 cents more out of the poor distressed and deluded woman, the priest finally concluded to send her husband to heaven for 75 cents; which the woman gave to the deceitful priest.

NEWRY.

¶ If Father Mc—, as that Roman Priest is usually called, wishes to know the writer of the above statement, we are authorized to give his name; for he adds in a postscript to his letter—"I am sure of the truth of the information, because I heard the collector of the money tell the circumstance—and if the woman got her husband's soul saved out of hell and put into heaven for 75 cents it was the cheapest job I ever heard of, especially considering that the Priest knew that it was heretic money." This the common method by which the Roman Priests of N. York rob the widow, the fatherless, the orphan, and the poor.

[Protestant Vindicator.]

POPIH PRIESTS' BARTER IN HOLY TRAFFIC.

A confirmation by the Popish prelate of this city, took place some time ago in Brooklyn city, N. Y. The persons to be confirmed were chiefly laboring men, and female servants. To accommodate them, the meeting was held at six o'clock in the morning. After going through the usual edifying mummeries, and talking a deal of monkish Latin, to the no small instruction and edification of poor laborers, and ignorant girls, the bishop thus addressed them in English, that is to say, monkish English. "In laying my hand on ye, mee friends, I have communicated on to ye, ye holy ghost; the very saam holy ghost tat came town on te to apostles, and te to y of pentecost! Tat same very holy ghost I've put ind to ye, even to each one of ye. Now, te holy ghost is in ye; and ye all too need him very moosh. For, ye are all poor craters, and poor Irish kirls, who live ind de Protestant houses; and tees protestants flatter ye, and seem kood natured all of dem; but tey all do hate ye as te devil; and tey will persecute ye all, when they can get the chance, even as if te hell was in dem!"

These were the ideas, and they are expressed as nearly as can be recollected, in the prelate's words.

I have two observations to add on this extraordinary *stereotype* address, which this member of Antichrist, makes in the Popish chapel over our State, in what he calls his diocese. 1st. This poor man who knows nothing of practical religion; who may truly say with some of old,—"We have not even heard if there be any Holy Ghost,"—does actually profess to convey the Holy Spirit, and saving grace, by the laying on of his ungodly hands.—2d. These in-

flammatory addresses nurse in the minds of his deluded victims, a deadly malignity against their protestant masters and mistresses, and their kindest benefactors. The spirit of Popery is not that of love. It is the very essence of that spirit of Antichrist, and unreformable malice. May the Lord open the eyes of the abused and trodden down people, and deliver them from the fatal sorcery of foreign Jesuits!

Protestant Vindicator.

A Jesuit in Congress.—This may surprise some of our readers—but it is asserted as a well known fact. A Jesuit Priest for several years had his flock in Michigan so well trained that he was elected several times, Delegate to Congress of that territory. And to detect the delinquency of his subjects he had his tickets printed on colored paper!! What would the editors of political papers say, and say with propriety, if Presbyterian ministers should make political partisans of the members of their churches, and then offer themselves as candidates for representatives of the people in Congress!!!

22d Congress—2d Session.

WABASH RIVER.

On the 13th ult. Mr. Hendricks, from the committee on Roads and Canals, reported to the Senate a bill making an appropriation for the improvement of the river Wabash; which was read the first time.

PUBLIC LANDS.

On the 22d ult. the bill authorizing the relinquishment of the 16th sections of land granted for the use of schools, and the entry of other lands in lieu thereof, was considered in committee of the whole Senate, amended, and ordered to be engrossed for a third reading. On the 23d, the bill was accordingly read the third time and passed.

On the 18th ult. Mr. Clay, from the committee on Public Lands, reported to the House a bill for the survey of certain public land in Ohio; which was twice read and committed; also, a bill to authorize Registers and Receivers of Land Offices to administer oaths, in connection with the entry of lands; which was read the first time. On the 22d, last named bill was read a second time, and after some debate, ordered to be engrossed for a third reading. On the 23d, said bill was accordingly read the third time, passed, and sent to the Senate, where it was read the first time. On the 24th, it was considered in committee of the whole, in the latter body, reported back, and ordered to a third reading.

On the 23d, Mr. Clay, from the committee on Public Lands, reported to the House a bill supplementary to the act granting pre-emption to certain settlers on the public lands; which was twice read and committed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

On the 19th ult. Mr. Hamer submitted to the House a resolution, which was agreed to, instructing the select committee to which was referred so much of the President's Message as relates to the election of President and Vice President, to inquire into the expediency of so amending the Constitution of the United States as to provide for the election of President and Vice President, by a direct vote of the people in districts; the number of districts in each State to be equal to the number of Senators and Representatives to which each State may be entitled in Congress, and each district having one vote—the election of said officers in no event to devolve upon Congress—no person who has been elected President, to be again eligible to that office—and that no Senator or Representative shall be nominated or appointed to any office of honor, trust, or profit, under the authority of the United States, whilst holding a seat in Congress.

REVOLUTIONARY CLAIMS.

On the 23d ult. Mr. Johnson of Ky., from the committee on Military Affairs, reported to the House a bill to revive and continue in force the act to provide for persons disabled by known wounds received in the Revolutionary war; which was twice read and ordered to be engrossed for a third reading.

MILITARY LAND WARRANTS.

On the 22d ult. the bill from the House to extend the time for the issuing of land warrants to the officers and soldiers of the last war with Great Britain, was read twice in the Senate, and referred to the committee on Public Lands. On the 23d, Mr. Poinexter from the above committee, reported back said bill without amendment.

FRENCH SPOILIATIONS.

On the 22d ult. the Senate resumed the consideration of the bill providing indemnity to American citizens, who suffered by spoiliations on their commerce, committed by the French, prior to 1800; when Mr. Shepley took the floor, and spoke at some length in favor of the bill. On the 23d, Mr. Hill