

Americans are inferior for tolerating them. But the whole thing is a farce—a bare pretense for expressing race animosity. The grain of possible truth in it is merely this, that the Japanese and the Koreans can survive better than Americans in a territory which is monopolized by a privileged few. But do Americans prove their superiority by keeping out the Asiatics instead of driving out the monopolists?

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### The People's Mines.

A Washington correspondent predicts a policy on the part of President Roosevelt as to government mineral lands, which, if Mr. Roosevelt adopts it, may become a landmark in American economic progress. According to this correspondent, Mr. Roosevelt intends to establish permanent government ownership of the coal mines now owned by the Federal government—some 40,000,000 acres. His plan is to seek authority from Congress to lease these lands instead of selling them. The official announcement of this foreshadowed plan will be looked forward to with great interest, even if with some incredulity.

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### Mr. Rockefeller and His Press Agent.

In his journey abroad, John D. Rockefeller appears to have taken his private press agent (vol. vii, pp. 417, 475) with him, for all the American newspapers scintillate with sparkling cable reports of Mr. Rockefeller's sayings and doings, his comings and goings, his domestic charm and his philanthropic curiosity. Now he is "carefully studying and comparing means of living and of improving the conditions of the race;" again he is establishing "the most genial relations with every one in the hotel;" anon he questions small boys about how much they earn, and pay for clothes, and give their mothers; and anon-anon at one place he couldn't buy a bath, whereat he "shrugged his shoulders and laughed." Under the deft manipulation of his press agent and at the extra cost of a trifle for cable rates, the saturnine Mr. Rockefeller is fast becoming an affable Croesus.

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## THE SUPERSTITION OF AUTHORITY

All men, with a few unimportant exceptions, possess the faculty of independent reflection. This process of arriving at the judgment of a thing is called "making up the mind." Men are presumed to follow this method in forming an opinion on important subjects concerning their moral and material welfare.

But in reality are current convictions so established? Do we follow customs generally in obedience to these rational processes of independent judgment? If so, how then do popular absurdities survive in face of secret but promptly suppressed suggestions of their unfitness or irrational character? Surely we must seek elsewhere for the source of what is erroneous in the customs and opinions of the time.

From whence then is the great body of error derived? On what recommendation is it accepted and passed current? Where shall we look for an explanation of the fact that these errors prevail as customs long after popular conviction has tacitly renounced them? Out of what mysterious respect for what mysterious influences do such errors survive disproof?

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We shall find the answer in what I have termed the "superstition of authority." Men, or at least the vast majority of men, do not reason, they accept; and they accept upon authority. They violently resist not only the assaults upon established political and economic dogma made by the more courageous minds, but they prefer shibboleths to syllogisms. They resist convictions because these entail thought—and most men are too indolent to think. It is easier to quote.

They would rather ask themselves, "What do the professors say? What do the statesmen believe? Are these doctrines written in the books? Or in the laws? Are they authoritative?" How they became authoritative does not matter. It is characteristic of the tory mind to accept them without question, and almost all minds are at first tory.

"Every boy and girl alive  
Is either a little Liberal  
Or else a little Conservative,"

but mostly conservative. It was the original tory who objected to the scheme of Creation as an unwarrantable interference with chaos.

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Not that there is not a reasonable conservatism. It is well to be conservative of what is true, and it is no defect of truth that it is old truth. But to venerate a thing simply because it is old and long established is like one who would not object to being eaten by a gray wolf if it were old and venerable.

But the worst of all errors is old error—for the new error, simply because it is new, is likely to contain the seed of a truth. But error that is old is tenfold more dangerous because it comes

to us with the weight of authority. It has a gray beard and is venerable. Who would smite the aged?

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The final arbiter of all intellectual truth is the mind; of all moral truth the conscience. These are the authorities, and the duty of subjecting all things to the test of reason and conscience a man owes to himself and his fellow men, and to God. It is the most solemn of all obligations, for truth is the most valuable of earthly possessions. How great a wrong then he commits by a slavish subservience to authority? The fallibility of human reason is not to be disputed—we hear much of it, certainly too much of it. But the fallibility of authority is of an infinitely more tenuous nature. We may indeed decide wrongly by following our own mental processes. But ultimately the path if persisted in leads to truth. Finally indeed we must come to truth. To the rational processes of the mind there is no other destination. But authority is the rock in the way of intellectual and social progress. It is a tyranny that keeps kings on their thrones and fakirs in high places; that moves armies across the prostrate bodies of peoples; that sends Conscience that should rule the world, quaking and trembling into dark corners.

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What credentials has authority beyond its apparel, insignia, gold lace and sounding titles? Can it "point with pride" to its record, or "view with alarm" the results of disobedience to its commands? Has it such achievements to its credit that justify the suppression of conscience and the reasoning faculty to its obiter dicta? Read the record and decide.

Instead of being usually right this most worshipful authority is nearly everywhere wrong. Its history trails with blunders, bristles with fallacies; it is even now pompous with theories long exploded; everywhere it has cheated, humbugged, and tyrannized over reason and conscience. Everywhere the coin of authority, which the stamp alone makes the current money of thought, is ultimately discredited, and the people who have accepted it are made bankrupt in consequence. But there is a new issue and the people part again with the rich jewels of independent thought and conviction for its counterfeit coin.

To drop the metaphor for a minute. Look at the long record of authority in every department of human activity. Authority supported slavery, and guided the whip in the arm of the overseer

as it fell upon the quivering shoulders of the black; it sounded in the boom of cannon whose dreadful messengers brought death and sufferings to millions of men; its voice is forever on the side of war. And how has it treated the great of the earth? To Socrates it gave the poisonous draught, the Gracchi it stoned, Garrison it drove through the streets of Boston, Giordano Bruno it burned, and Christ it crucified.

It was authority that threw Roger Bacon, the ablest man of his time, into prison, suspecting him of witchcraft. It was authority that in the person of Calvin put Servetus to death. It was authority that lit the Smithfield fires, that presides over the horrors of Siberia. It was authority that exiled Camoens, and the glory of Portuguese poetry saw the light on an inhospitable Chinese coast. Every progressive movement has been a revolt against authority. Every reform was not only the triumph of some independent mind, but was nearly always in rebellion against authority.

Authority taught that the center of the universe was the earth, with the moon and stars obediently revolving around it, their only office being to provide light for the august being, man.

Authority has denounced the teachings of the prophets of all the ages as heretical, from the Hebrews to those of the present day. What a biting poison it is should be obvious to those who reflect how often instantaneously and completely a man is transformed when its mantle falls upon him, and how strikingly it effects a metamorphosis from humility to arrogance.

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And the great ones of the earth. How did they become great? Were they not all rebels against authority? William Tell, Washington, Hofer, Emmet, Garibaldi, Toussaint, Martin Luther. Who among the poets do we choose most to honor? Hugo, Schiller, Shelley, Byron, and that bold champion of individualism, whose whole life was a challenge to authority—Walt Whitman.

Immortality is for the men whose voices are raised against authority. The other day England celebrated the Cobden Centenary. Who was Cobden? A linen draper who urged the abolition of the Corn Laws, the institution everywhere defended in his day by the voice of authority. And where are the authorities of his day? Who celebrates *their* centenary? Palmerston seems a dull enough old prig at this distance of time, and Robert Peel, who defended the institution he was

afterwards forced by popular demand to help in destroying, seems an insignificant figure in comparison to the man who championed the cause of the oppressed against the dictum of the frowning authorities of his time.

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Even in the freest country this tyranny of authority may exist. Terribly oppressive, though unrecognized, may be the silent force of political or economic dogma which men dare not question save in secret. Absolute though unsuspected may be the constraining force of ruling caste opinion, that on a variety of subjects may tend to the most autocratic subjection of independence. Under the freest forms of government a body of opinion may exercise the constraining force of positive laws over the art, literature and politics of a people.

It is the tyranny of authority that keeps the Arab sheik of to-day like the sheik of Abraham's day; that has petrified Chinese civilization; that in the middle ages desolated western Asia from the Bosphorus to Jerusalem. The Dark Ages were the years of undisputed authority, to a degree unknown before or since. It was only due to the timid defiance of authority that civilization was preserved at all through the shrinking temerity of cloistered monks whose souls if not their speech cherished the saving spirit of revolt in the secrecy of their cells. It was authority—government and the mob—that persecuted the philosophers of ancient Greece, that sent Socrates to his death and drove Aristotle from the city. It was authority that in the person of a vacuous member of Parliament to the argument of Romilly for the abolition of hanging as the penalty for innumerable small offenses mumbled the sole monotonous retort: "I am for hanging." Authority always says, "I am for hanging." It was authority that hissed "Jacobin" to every proposition for social reform as now it shrieks "anarchist." It is great in the matter of epithet.

Look at the absurdities of which this same authority is forever guilty. In Egypt it enthroned the cat and made sacrosanct the crocodile. It has been polygamist, monogamist, polyandrist, as suited its purpose. It put kings on white elephants and clothed them in mail of precious stones. It encouraged whole communities to submit to the depredations of beasts of prey, since their destruction would offend the foolish deities they called on men to worship. In the name of the authority of faith men have lacerated themselves, stood for days and nights upon pillars, walked upon sharp stones. It has

invented all kinds of evil spirits from Belzebub to Hobomoko for men to bow before—and industriously have they made obeisance. They have yielded to authority as did men in fabled Athens to the bed of Procrustes, to which they have accommodated the proportions of such independent judgments as they were capable of forming.

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Thought forever outstrips the slow pace of authority in its progress toward truth. Thus today the culture of the world has travelled far beyond the established creeds and institutions of the time. But the palsy influence of authority has outlasted the conviction of belief in its reasonableness. It lays its numbing touch even upon Truth become axiomatic. It is the Dead Hand of the world.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

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## NEWS NARRATIVE

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To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

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Week ending Wednesday, June 13.

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### The Bryan Boom.

At the Indiana State convention on the 7th, the lead of Missouri (p. 227), Arkansas and South Dakota (p. 228) in spontaneously naming William J. Bryan as the Democratic candidate for President in 1908, was enthusiastically followed.

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The press dispatches are unanimous in ascribing spontaneity, harmony and enthusiasm to the Bryan sentiment both on the eve of the convention at the mass meeting addressed by Champ Clark of Missouri, and in the convention proceedings of the following day. In the course of his speech of the 6th, Congressman Clark said of the two political parties:

Among other things we differ widely on the tariff. The dominant idea among Democrats touching the tariff is revenue; the dominant idea among Republicans on that subject has come to be protection. I think this an absolutely fair and accurate statement of the battle lines on which this campaign is to be waged so far as the tariff is concerned.

His mention of Bryan's name evoked a great outburst of applause.

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At the convention, the distinctive feature is described in the dispatches to have been the Bryan