

Democratic candidate for president are Judge Parker, Judge Gray and Senator Gorman. Of the political opinions of the first the people know nothing; of those of the second they only know that he changed them in Paris to suit President McKinley, and became a Federal judge in consequence; and of those of the third they are well informed.

Advocates of the whipping post may derive wisdom at the expense of gratification from an address before the New Century club at Wilmington, Del., by A. S. Messerve, who has applied the lash in all the whippings at the Wilmington workhouse. Mr. Messerve clearly does not believe that these whippings lessen crime. Referring to prison statistics for corroboration he declared that the prison population in whipping-post Delaware is higher than that of States which do not resort to this degrading punishment.

Secretary Root takes occasion to urge, in his annual report, the importance of teaching the young men of this country to shoot straight. Mr. Root should visit the Chicago jail. He might there look upon four young men who are exceedingly efficient in the deadly accomplishment he recommends. They will probably be hanged for it.

DISAGREEMENT AND VITUPERATION.

The free use of certain words and phrases during the recent municipal campaign in New York has suggested some reflections upon a classification of the words of our language, with a consideration of the use of some of them at all for the purposes that have brought them into existence.

At the base of these reflections lies the question of the purpose of language.

Take any group of human beings with a friendly disposition toward each other—and, in our family, club, civic and national life, each of us is a member of such a group—good as this friendly dis-

position is, it is not so good as the deeper and broader friendship relation of a developed mutual understanding. But the friendship relation of a developed mutual understanding is dependent for its existence upon a common medium of exchange for thought—a common language properly used. It is the purpose of language to promote this relation.

Every language, however, has a large number of words that have more than one meaning; and it frequently becomes necessary, in order to be fully understood, to say, when using one of these words: "I use it in such and such a sense."

Every language has also a large number of words that mean but one thing, or stand for but one idea; and these it is necessary to use with the exactness for which they stand. To arbitrarily ignore that exact meaning, or to refuse to accept it, would be capricious, and foster confusion rather than good understanding.

But, further than this, the tendency of the developing of friendship relation toward mutual understanding must also be a tendency toward substantial agreement; and this substantial agreement lies within the range of the possible, and not, as many suppose, of the impossible. For there cannot be two Rights that are opposites, or rather two opposites both of which are Right. To be opposed, therefore, is to be unfriendly, and to find the common ground of accord—the Right—is to be friendly.

The failure of intelligent persons to understand each other and to come to substantial agreement, arises from the failure to explain the sense in which words of double meaning are used, or from the misuse of words, rather than from the impossibility of agreement residing in the nature of things—in which nature of things our own nature must, of course, be included.

To illustrate by a word having more than one meaning. One might say to another: "Man is an animal," and be understood to mean the male portion of the race only, and that he has the animal nature and instinct and naught else. And the one to whom he should announce this might an-

swer: "I do not agree with you." If, then, the first speaker should hasten to add (recognizing the limitation as well as the range of the term that he had used), "I mean Man in the sense of the race, and not of the male portion only; and I mean that he has the animal organization on the physical side, but not that his nature is the nature of the animal;" provided that these words were the points of disagreement these two would be found at once to be in perfect accord.

To illustrate by a word having but one meaning: Suppose two boys to be looking out across the bay, and one to say to the other: "I see four sloops out there." And suppose the other to answer: "No, there are five." If the latter, thinking only of sailing vessels as distinguished from steam-power craft, has included a schooner among his sloops, and can explain what was in his mind, they will of course immediately come to an agreement.

If in either of these cases, however, the parties concerned should say to each other, "Do not let us discuss our differences; we can never agree; let us 'agree to disagree,'" such an attitude would foster and enforce the idea of disagreement where no disagreement in reality existed, and such a compact would perpetuate the idea and the hostility arising from it.

To the catchy phrase, "Let us agree to disagree," which is so freely used when difficulties arise in conversation or discussion, we owe the perpetuation of countless errors in thinking and much hostility of feeling. It should never be assented to by any who are interested in getting at the truth. Quite different is the proposition to lay aside a discussion for awhile, for lack of time or lack of preparation on the part of either to explain his own attitude fully and fairly.

In addition to the consideration of the use of the two classes of words thus noted—the class having more than one meaning and the class having but one specific meaning—there is the obligation to consider the use of some words at all for the purposes for which they were brought into existence. Among these are vituperative words, when used to char-

acterize men individually or collectively.

Before we raise the question of the rectitude of their use, however, let us note that vituperative words belong to the class of words having a definite, exact meaning, just as do the words "spade", "sloop", "black", or "blue". Whether one or another uses a spade, or for whatever purpose one or another uses it, it is still a spade, according to design and structure, and cannot be called a spoon or a boomerang without doing violence to the law and purpose of language.

A vituperative word is not one thing when one of us uses it and another thing when another of us uses it. It is not ugly and improper when used by Mr. Dowie to characterize the citizens of New York, and beautiful and proper when used by the citizens of New York to characterize Mr. Dowie. It is not ugly and improper when used by Tammany Hall to characterize the Reform party, and beautiful and proper when used by the Reform party to characterize Tammany Hall and the Democratic party.

A vituperative word is one intended to injure. The synonyms given for it are "vulgar", "scurrilous", "reviling". Under the first two of these synonyms would come such language as has received the name of "billingsgate", from its habitual use in the quarter of London bearing that name. And under the last would come such language, mild in itself, but having the unmistakable spirit of contempt back of it, as the mob used at the foot of the cross of Jesus.

To illustrate again: Suppose a man to have committed murder, and to have been tried and found guilty. A just judge condemns the man in the spirit and language of just censure simply, and pronounces the sentence. With this procedure lovers of simple justice are satisfied. Should a judge undertake to do more than this—to berate and villify the victim—lovers of simple justice would resent it as being in the nature of kicking a man after he is down—in the nature of the contempt heaped upon Jesus after he was condemned and sentence laid upon him. It would make no difference that the sentence was just

in the one case and unjust in the other; the language of contempt would be regarded as equally out of place in both.

Fortunately our courts of justice do not permit this language. But outside of the courts of justice undeveloped natures seek to tip the scales of justice so that they shall deal out injustice, by heaping upon the victim, in addition to the sentence pronounced upon him, such opprobrious and vituperative epithets as "vile", "beastly", "brute", "scum of the earth", or such scornful terms as "Aha, you expected not to be found out, did you?"

Every day the temptation to be drawn into this kind of injustice comes to us. But in times of great general excitement, such as a political campaign, the temptation is concentrated upon large numbers at the same time, and many fall under it then who do not habitually yield to it, yet who are not wise enough to appreciate its real power for harm. In the recent mayoralty campaign in New York both the newspapers and our public speakers, especially the the so-called reform side, lent themselves to this temptation.

The language of abuse, of scorn, of contempt, of hate (to say nothing of coarse and vulgar language) can never be justified in use even towards the "vile", by any believer in the gospel of love rather than that of hate; by any believer in the Golden Rule of "Do as you would be done by"; by any, therefore, who have normal respect for themselves. All such words and phrases savor of the Pharasaic spirit, of the I-am-holier-than-thou spirit. They are anti-Christian, for they are calculated to harm the life of the individual or individuals against whom they are used;—unless, indeed, it can be shown that it is no injury to the life of another to make that life harder to live. For if the judgment pronounced upon the person or party is unjust, added terms of scorn increase the sense of isolation and of being misunderstood. And if the judgment is just, added words of scorn increase the burden of the individual or party conscience, and by inspiring the unfriendliness and enmity that prompts them help to sear or crush out that conscience.

Many so-called religious teachers and others suppose that it does a "sinner" good to berate him. But until it can be shown, somewhere in the physical world, or in some other way made to appeal to our reason, that the greater the pressure that holds a thing down the easier it is for that thing to rise or the less likely it is to be crushed out altogether, we should hesitate to give our credence to the teaching that human souls can rise more easily the more they are pressed down by the contempt and scorn of their fellows, or that they will not be crushed out by that pressure.

In all this there is no wish to raise the question of the truth of the charges brought against persons, parties or movements at which vituperative epithets are flung. That is quite another question. My object is simply to maintain that the words and phrases of reviling used to characterize political organizations and to discount their future possibilities, cannot be justified by any code of ethics or morality that the civilization of our century ought to countenance or have a part in.

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EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Washington, Dec. 7.—In discussing in the Philadelphia North American, three months ago, the contest between England, France, Germany, Russia and the United States to see which should have the biggest navy, I said: "The logic of this folly—if the term logic is applicable where such madness prevails—is for each of these nations in their strife for supremacy to go on increasing their navies until every adult male not already enrolled as a soldier shall be manning its warships."

I did not then think that any one could be found to advocate the carrying to its logical conclusion of this fatuous policy; yet the New York Times of November 30 indicates that the reception accorded Hobson on his return from Santiago has induced him to go the "limit" and advocate the logical end of the demands of the navy leaguers. Here is what the Times says:

Richmond Pearson Hobson, ex-commander in the navy, has prepared a bill which he has requested Representative Wiley, of Alabama, to introduce in the house. Its purpose, he says, is to make the United States the first naval power of the world. The bill makes a total appropriation of \$2,750,000,000, a certain portion of which is to be used each year for new ships. Fifty million dollars is made available for the present fiscal year, \$60,000,000 for the next, and so on, increasing