

hygiene and the recognized claims of our higher nature; while as a countercharm to brutish appetites, we have intellectual pleasures which our rude ancestors never knew. With the action of these rational influences a revival of that which is now truly superstitious could only interfere. The natural concomitant of Lent is a carnival, that is to say a wild outbreak of the sensual nature, indemnifying itself beforehand for the restraint which it is about to undergo, and which has no more of reason in it than the outbreak. The Mahomedan, after fasting strictly all day in the Ramadan, and having whetted his appetite to the utmost, gorges himself like a hog at sunset. Comic stories used to be told of the breakfasts of Oxford Ritualists on the mornings of the Sundays in Lent, when the Church relaxed her severe ordinance for the day. The present revival of Lent, remarkable and curious as it is, may be set down as part of the general attempt to call from the grave of the past the religion of the middle ages, the destinies of which, and of other artificial revivals, it is sure in the end to share. The Church of England is in the main the Church of the fashionable world, and is thus able to impose the observance of its ordinance, or some shadowy semblance of observance, such as fish *ménus* and high dresses, upon gay society. It may be a good thing to dine for a time upon *turbot à la reine* in place of *beef à la mode*; it is certainly a good thing to rest for a while from the dizzy whirl of dissipation. But it would be better all the year round to take no more food than nature requires, and confine ourselves to that genuine recreation which renews the brain and cheers the heart. Superstition now gives upward effort a false direction, perhaps not in the case of physical abstinence alone.

WHEN next a social preacher wants a theme, he may address himself with advantage to the growing itch for publication which now spares neither friendly intercourse nor the social hours, and unless it is checked, will soon destroy the freedom of all conversation and poison the pleasure of every genial meeting. Disregard of social rules in publishing what ought not to be published, is naturally attended by equal disregard of strict accuracy in the report. If people want to know any man's real opinions, they had better look for them in his acknowledged utterances and writings, especially if he is a man whose habit, in his acknowledged utterances and writings, is frankness and not dissimulation.

A BYSTANDER.

HERE AND THERE.

MANY are the theories suggested as to the origin of "All Fools' Day," which is yet associated with the first of April, and still no definite solution of the absurdities which characterize the day has been arrived at. The custom of sending people on empty errands on this anniversary is common in every European country: in France it is designated *poisson d'Avril*, in Scotland "hunting the gowk,"—a gowk usually signifies a cuckoo, though now used in the sense of a fool. Oriental scholars ascribe the custom as an innovation of the Huli-feast amongst the Hindoos, which takes place on the 31st of March, when a similar absurdity prevails. Others maintain that it comes from a celebration of Christ's being sent about to and fro between Herod, Pilate, and Caiaphas, as referred to in the miracle plays; while there is not wanting a theory which traces the custom to Noah, as sending out the dove on such a quest. However, it may safely be concluded that the ridiculous absurdities now in vogue on the first of April were not practised by the ancients, as no reference to All Fools' Day ever occurs in the earlier writers. France seems to have fathered the freak, and by some it is attributed to the change in that country, in 1564, of New Year's day to the first of January, which left the first of April destitute of anything but a burlesque of its former festivities. The very name of April in connexion with the fourth month of our year is also another subject for dispute, yet a derivation may reasonably be attributed to the Latin verb *aperire* "to open up," when as Varro says of the month, *omnia aperit*, "it opens up all things." On antique monuments April is represented as a dancing youth with a rattle in his hand.

THE proposal to re-instate Colonel Valentine Baker in the military position in the British army which he forfeited some years ago is a topic of great interest in England. The *Standard* claims to have received some two hundred letters from ladies urging that the erring officer should be forgiven. The *Telegraph* devoted an editorial to advocating his pardon and re-admission to the service. In a very pretty poem *Punch* makes Private Hayes beg in the name of "the boys" that the 10th's old colonel be given back his command. Forgiveness is the virtue which most men usually specially associate with what Mr. Disraeli called "the angels," but to ask that Valentine Baker be pardoned and re-admitted to society would,

to say the least of it, be a dangerous precedent. The safeguards upon female honour are none too strong, and those who remember the scene in a certain railway carriage, and those who are not carried away by sentiment, are not likely to sympathize with the whitewashing of even the best cavalry officer in the world—if he be that. A correspondent to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, writing about the deluge of appeals in behalf of the soldier of fortune, says: "It brought to mind the familiar couplet of Pope:—

Men, some to business, some to pleasure, take,
But every woman is at heart—

Let those finish the quotation who will."

WHAT will be known in history as the Paris *Petit Cercle* club scandal is still the subject of much comment in the French journals, and is yet an unsolved mystery—or crime. *On dit* that a Greek prince and a well-known Viscount have been compromised by the discovery of some papers, but there is not sufficient evidence for the police to act upon. The club has been a veritable gold-mine to "philosophers" for years, although it had the reputation of being most exclusive. The scandal has been the means of calling attention to the furious play that went on there. A Russian noble is said to have lost two millions of francs in one night, and the son-in-law of M. Grévy, M. Wilson, lost, it is asserted, a fortune at *écarté* before resigning his membership.

WHY, wails "A Playgoer," will ladies go to the theatre in big hats? He complains that, after having taken the trouble to book a seat for a performance he had not seen, when he got to the theatre his view of the stage was obstructed by a lady who sat immediately in front of him, who wore "a huge thing called a hat, at least (including the feather) eighteen inches in diameter, and which rendered it absolutely impossible to see one quarter of the piece." We think our correspondent is entitled to say that "to wear such head-gear is indulging in fashionable dress regardless of the comfort of others—a result which no lady would wish, but which is brought about no doubt thoughtlessly."

"CIVIS" sends the following cutting and comments from Quebec:—

It used to be the plan that while the engineer and fireman were resting themselves the locomotive was side-tracked. Mr. James McCrea, late of the Pennsylvania road, conceived the idea of double-manning the locomotives. Thus, while the crew rests, the engine goes on. The saving to the Pennsylvania road by this economy is \$250,000 a year.

"The philosophy of the modern railway system is shadowed forth in the above little paragraph. What the companies will do for profit, they refuse to do for public safety. Nothing but certain duplications of mental and active labour in signalling and despatching will make the lines safe; but in this case only human lives are involved, unless we remember the risk to the rolling stock and freight, and the inconvenience of heavy damages; considerations that may at last rouse these modern arbiters to practical alleviations of what has become intolerable."

FOLLOWING the remarks on dinner *ménus* in the last issue of THE WEEK, it is of interest to note that in England suppers are becoming quite fashionable. This is one result of the ordinary dinner hour being too late to permit of attendance at the theatre afterwards and do justice to the "double event." Wherefore it has become usual to eat very little before going to the play, and to take supper on return. The practice may not be defended on hygienic principles, but it is decidedly more comfortable than dining *à l'Américaine*—at high pressure—and arriving at the theatre hot, heavy, and sluggish. So greatly has the fashion of supper-eating increased in London that at the best houses there is a distinct reduction of the *ménus* at dinner.

WE have it on the authority of Thomas Carlyle, in "Sartor Resartus," that the first sign of man's endeavour to escape from barbarism is his rude attempts to produce decoration. How far, then, must we be at present from primitive times, judging by the devotion of all classes to ornaments? There was a time when nobody but a savage would wear any but bona fide jewellery; and even now that legend obtains to a considerable extent in "upper circles," though it does occasionally leak out that Lord Gothepace or Lady Montecarlo have had their diamonds replaced by paste. But now-a-days it is the exception to see a man or boy who is not be-chained and be-pinned and be-ringed in a manner which would make a squaw or a negress bite herself for envy! It wants but a few steps from these people to the idiotic aesthetes who wear armlets, anklets, and use hair-pins!—and in the process forfeit their manhood. The worst of it all is that, where the articles worn are "Brummagem," it would seem to indicate a false-pretence which does not augur well for latter-day morality. For nobody wears brass as brass, or paste as an imitation diamond, but wishes th