



SUNDAY OPENING.

And Sundry Other Openings of Which We Have Heard.

(Carl Reynolds in "Bonfours.")

BEAUMARCHAIS, through his *Figaro*, consents the wisdom of L. King, from the start, all things with a laugh, for fear of having to weep over them. Sound advice, no doubt, if we desire to go through life with some comfort, but advice hard to follow, even for the philosopher of some composure, in the face of prejudice, which is usually another name for error and tyranny obscuring truth and liberty—mere prejudice when the moving sentiment is sincere, but when it is not, that most detestable thing, hypocrisy. But laugh or weep, philosophize we must, if, having eyes, we see, and, possessing brains, we think. Alas! we must emphasize the *if*, for seeing and thinking under the most favorable circumstances as a natural conclusion only in theory. For man, as a rule, is bent on considering all questions only from his own personal point of view, that which is suggested by his own personal interest, may more, by his own vanity—vanity being in all things, if we reason down to the prime factor, the true motive of most men's thoughts and acts. How seldom it occurs to us that we may, perchance, be wrong and others right; that others have, as we have, rights that should be respected, say, preferences entitled to as much consideration as our own? No, we are ever ready to lay down the law, as we desire to do it, to our neighbors, fully convinced that we are right, simply, though we may not realize it because our opinion is ours, and that our neighbors are wrong because their opinion is not ours. We are ever ready to command, and never to obey; to exact and never to grant; to dictate and never to listen. Why? Because we think so and so, whatever may be our ignorance. *Wz*, and that is sufficient. *Sanctus similitudo, omnia eximitis*. Never so correct as saying: "Triumps, perhaps. Hardly so, however, does our acts do not show that we admit them as such; the consequence being that, if we cannot plead ignorance, we are moved either by vanity or by spite (we have the choice, albeit an unpleasant one), coupled, in either case, with an absolute disregard for the belief, opinions, preferences or comfort of others. A striking example of this reprehensible method was given recently by the public discussion of the proposed barroom and saloon "Sunday Opening" measure. The *New York Herald* put the question to a vote among its readers, the result being 31,105 votes in favor of opening and only 969 against. This would seem to be every satisfactory result as proof of an overwhelming preponderance of liberal ideas, and it is to be hoped, in the interest of what is true, frank and morally

healthy, that the same view of the question will prevail in Albany when the time comes.

But, as a matter of fact, it is really startling to notice, when reading the numerous letters from voters published by the *Herald*, how deficient these effusions are as to argument, common sense—plain, sound, common sense—and consistency, not to say clarity. The principal argument on both sides, if the letters be analyzed and the numbers gathered from them, seems to be this: We should have Sunday Opening, or we should not—because I think so. The *I* evidently carries all before it.

More startling still! All the gentleness, consideration, toleration, spirit of concession—and charity appear to be on the liberal side, that of the 31,105 run-sellers (so-called) and their friends who voted *yes*; while, on the other hand, all the bitterness, selfishness, intolerance, fanaticism and hate, seem to emanate (with a few exceptions, which it is a relief to find) from the 969 "vocal gentlemen and their followers" who voted against Sunday Opening. Thus liberalism and bigotry are well defined, and we are forcibly reminded of Moliere's line in "Tartuffe":

*Tout de fiel entre-t-il dans l'ame des devoirs?*

But the most astonishing feature in the discussion is this: Nobody has stopped to question the propriety or the obligation of closing during certain legal hours" on Sunday. This starting-point seems to be admitted by all. The reason is, no doubt, want of reflection—the natural bent of man to accept certain things as correct and immutable because he has found them as they are, just as some men have no opinion until they have adopted, believing perhaps it is theirs, the opinion advanced by their newspaper or by the speech of some office-seeking politician.

Let us, however, examine the question, not with a view to attacking religion (so-called, for oh! how the word is misapplied) or of extolling unbelief, but of the pure light of common sense, philosophy and consequent impartiality.

Wherein lies the obligation of observing Sunday as the Sabbath? In a consensus of mankind? The population of the world is estimated to be some 1,400,000,000; of these only 400,000,000 are Christians or Hebrews. We have already, then, over two-thirds of the world's population who are non-Sabbatarians. In the 400,000,000 above, we have 3,000,000 of Jews whose Sabbath is not Sunday but Saturday, and 194,000,000 Catholics with 86,000,000 Greeks, or 280,000,000 together, for whom Sunday, while being a day of religious observance, is also a day of rest through enjoyment. Therefore 1,200,000,000 men who do not consider Sunday as a day for dulness and moping, against 130,000,000 of Protestants supposed to be strict Sabbatarians. If we are to take for granted that one-third of the world's population has all the wisdom extant, so

that none is left for the remaining eleven-twelfths, the argument must end here. It is not going too far, however, to say that such a proposition is hardly admissible, especially in a country like ours, where the majority is supposed to be right and, at all events, to rule.

These 120,000,000 Protestants are very much divided. . . . But let us remain in our own country, the population of which is, in round numbers, 63,000,000. Of these, about one-third are Catholics, Hebrews, etc., or, say, 21,000,000 which we will eliminate, and we shall have some 42,000,000 Protestants. Of these it is fair to say that at least one-half, 21,000,000, if they are not agnostics, belong to the indifferent class, thus leaving, let us say, 21,000,000 believers. Of these certainly not one-half, but let us say, 10,000,000, are as intolerant and fanatical as the reverend gentlemen whose views are expounded in the *Herald*. Now, will anybody tell us why these 10,000,000, a small minority, one-sixth of our population, should coerce into their way of thinking an overwhelming majority of 33,000,000, who make no show of their evident power, and are perfectly content to live and let live? Of course minorities have rights, but so also have majorities, certainly include respect and forbearance. Is not one of the fundamental principles of our Constitution "All men are born equal," meaning with *equal rights*? Why, then, should this small minority pretend to rule, to enforce its own personal views? The fact of its being more noisy and more aggressive than the majority is not reason sufficient for the overthrow of rights and principles; and the further fact of its being divided, as to other points, into almost numberless warring sects is certainly not convincing proof of its being right as regards the Sunday question.

But the law must be observed. Certainly, until the law is repealed. Right here we might question the constitutionality of any State law as to the so-called observance of the Sabbath. For the articles of compact between the original States, over one hundred years ago, clearly say (Art. I): "No person demanding himself in a peaceable and orderly manner shall ever be molested on account of his mode of worship or religious sentiments." This principle being admitted—and it must be, since it was accepted and indorsed—how can any State, unless our Constitution be changed, by law, constitutionally, force saloons, or hardware, or dry goods or any other stores to close on a certain day of the week in opposition to reasons? Was not one of the answers received by the *Herald* correct?—"I desire to record my vote in favor of the opening of saloons during certain legal hours on Sundays. But I dissent, *per contra*, to record my vote in opposition to the opening of Methodist (or Baptist, or Presbyterian) churches during certain legal hours on Wednesdays (or Tuesdays, Thursdays). . . . When we come to the arbitrary enforcement of personal (minor-

ity) preferences, there is just as much (bad) reason for the one as for the others.

It is not necessary, however, to start so high up in the order of things. The question is: Shall he law as it is, constitutional or not, good or bad, be changed, and *how*? The liberal-minded, who are a majority, say *yes*; let us have the freedom which is the inalienable right of all. The bigots, who are a small minority, reply, *yes*, but let it be made still more stringent, moulded in accordance with the personal prejudices of the few, for whom charity is an oft-spoken word, but only a word, and a thing which does not begin at home.

The former say: The poor man must be able to get his beer in the saloon just as well as the rich man in his club. But this is *mere quib*. For there are innumerable things the poor man, simply because he is poor, cannot get like the rich man. This would be close legislation, a method most objectionable, to say the least. No; the poor man must be able to get his beer on Sunday as well as any other day because it is his *right* to do so, whether the Rev. Dr. So-and-So may think.

The others advance that they wish to cure intemperance. Oh, that they could! For intemperance in drink, a mane though it be, is not as great a curse as it is, taken in its broad sense. We banish intemperance in thought, word and act, even be it disguised under the mantle of charity, which covers, apparently, more than a multitude of sins. And let not total abstinence here be pleaded, for, be the sentiment and the determination sincere, it is only a proof of weakness and admission of: "my sense of duty is not strong enough to make me stop when I should. Abuse in all things is not only wrong morally, but injurious; proper use, on the other hand, is commendable, and proves desirable control of one's appetites.

We are surprised if never struck extremists and fanatics that total abstinence is, in a measure, a sort of insult to the Creator who gave us wine, etc., and a slur thrown on the Scriptures—divine law, we are told—since we see in them that Christ not only took, but made, wine.

Why should intemperance in drink be prevented on Sundays? Because it is the "Lord's day," according to a minority of believers (self-styled)? Liberal minds think that *everyday* in the week is the Lord's day, and should be so acted upon. Is not that a wider and healthier view? Intemperance in drink should be restrained, the self-styled believers say. And the same liberal minds argue that *all* intemperance—meaning in thought, act and language as well as in drink—should be prevented. Which of the two sides is the more righteous? And if we speak of restraint and prevention, we do not mean by reason of certain religious views held by a small minority who would excommunicate all those who entertain, though having the right to do so, different ideas; but because society (taking the word in a broad sense) is a vast majority whose duty