

SACRED HISTORY AND THE COINAGE QUESTION.

The silver habit, like the drinking habit, leads a man whither he knows not, and into conditions from which he would have shrunk with horror at the start. The exceedingly able Atlanta Constitution began toying with the silver vice under the impression that what Georgia needed was more currency, and that the free coinage of silver would afford this. By the time it reached the problem of the varying value of gold and silver dollars it had completely lost its sense of direction and its balance, and in the state of mind of the belated clubman who sat down on the curbstone and waited for his house to go by, the Constitution got out of the difficulty to its own satisfaction by denying the intrinsic value of the coins. The idea that "gold as money has an intrinsic value apart from its employment as a means of exchange is a fallacy," it says. Of course, this is not altogether coherent, but we take it to be a denial that gold has value other than that given it by the mint, or a denial that gold coins would still be valuable if in some way their use as "a means of exchange" could be stopped. The Constitution might as well declare that wheat has no intrinsic value apart from its use as a subject of speculation on the Produce Exchange. Gold is not only a commodity when in the bar, but it is a commodity when coined, and without value it could no more measure value than a quart cup can measure length, or a pound can measure capacity. If the Constitution would take some means to find out what is the difference between the price of a pound of gold in the lump and a pound of gold coins, or if it would observe that in making international payments bullion is preferred to coins, it would learn something as to the present value of the metal and the insignificant amount of value that the Government coiner adds to the metal. It would probably brush aside this evidence of the value of bullion as something due to the pernicious habit the world has of using gold as money.

But if the esteemed Constitution is willing to go back to the beginnings of things, we will refer it to the earliest essay on geography known to man. There, in the second chapter of Genesis, after a general description of the location of the district, it was deemed worth while to add of the land of Havilah, "where there is gold," followed by the appreciative comment, "and the gold of that land is good." The hunger for gold is a very early appetite, and it long antedates mints and all forms of commerce except barter. And after the Constitution has duly digested this fact we should be glad to refer it to the evidence of sacred history that "unfriendliness to silver" began a long time before 1873, and that Solomon was as guilty as President Harrison or President Cleveland of "depreciating the white metal." In the tenth chapter of 1 Kings it is recorded, ages before Wall Street began to exercise its baleful influence, that "all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. . . . And the King made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones." Although we have slender indications of the ratio between gold and silver under the Hebrew monarchs, it is a matter of some interest that the fine imposed by the King of Assyria upon Hezekiah was "three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." It is so obvious that gold and silver were coined because they were valuable, that it is difficult to understand how some intelligent people have got it into their heads that gold and silver are valuable because they are coined.—*New York Daily Bulletin*.

AMERICAN BOYS AND AMERICAN LABOR.

Shall American boys be permitted to learn trades, and, having learned them, shall they be permitted to work at them? These are apparently simple questions, and the answering of them is apparently a simple matter. Most persons thus interrogated would reply at once: "Certainly they should. Why do you ask such unnecessary questions?" We ask them because under the present conditions of trade instruction and employment in this country the American boy has no rights which organized labor is bound to respect. He is denied

instruction as an apprentice, and if he be taught his trade in a trade school, he is refused admission to nearly all the trade unions, and is boycotted if he attempts to work as a non-union man. The questions of his character and skill enter the matter only to discriminate against him.

All the trade unions of the country are controlled by foreigners, who comprise the great majority of their members. While they refuse admission to the trained American boy, they admit all foreign applicants with little or no regard to their training or skill. In fact, the doors of organized labor in America, which are closed and barred against American boys, swing open, wide and free, to all foreign comers. Labor in free America is free to all save the sons of Americans.

These are neither idle or exaggerated statements. They are sober, solemn truths, expressed with studied moderation. So-called American labor to-day is a complete misnomer, so far as the trades are concerned. How has it come about that the United States, alone among the nations of the earth, has not merely surrendered possession of her field of mechanical labor to foreigners, but acquiesces when the foreign possessors exclude from that field her own sons?—*Century Magazine*.

A PITTANCE FOR CREDITORS.

We would not advise insolvent firms to follow the course of Dr. Talmage's Brooklyn congregation in settling with creditors on a basis of 23 cents on the dollar, if they desire to recover and retain the confidence of the business public. But such leniency would hardly be extended to commercial houses in need of ready cash while they were in possession of valuable property such as the costly church edifice. There are moral as well as legal obligations, and all are uniformly important. A religious society is generally the first to condemn a man for shirking his duty in this regard, and it should set the example by curtailing extravagant expenses and liquidating all debts in an honorable manner. The great rejoicing in the Brooklyn Tabernacle over the settlement, which, by the way, was forced on the creditors, reminds us of Micawber's exclamation of "Thank goodness! That debt's paid!" as he handed Traddles his I O U for £13 9s. 10d.—*N.Y. Shipping List*.

THE BANKING CRISIS IN AUSTRALIA.

Meetings of the English depositors and shareholders of the National Bank of Australasia were held in London on the 18th May to consider the scheme of reconstruction formulated in Australia.

At the depositors' meeting Mr. C. J. Stewart, the official receiver, presided, and there was a large attendance. The chairman said that at present the bank's bills remitted were £2,865,000; the bills drawn, £2,504,000; and the note issue, £472,900. The note issue had increased by £281,000 since September last. The fixed deposits in Australia were £4,429,700, and in England £1,296,200. During the past year the London deposits had increased by £350,000. The assets, bullion, and cash balances in Australia were £864,700, and in London £14,200, or a diminution of £700,000 since September. Including bank premises, &c., the total assets were estimated to realize £11,199,500, and taking the liabilities as £9,488,700, there appeared a surplus of £1,711,800. Speaking of the scheme of reconstruction, he thought it was framed more in the interests of the shareholders and the current account holders in Australia than in the interests of the depositors in this country. (Hear, hear.) The directors in Australia had agreed to make some alteration. It was hard upon the creditors that after three and a-half years they should rank only as ordinary creditors. By clause 10 depositors were to take two-thirds of their deposits in deposit receipts and one-third in preference shares. If the scheme, as it stood, was adopted, it would be hard on the British depositors as compared with the Australian. (Hear, hear.) He understood that the directors were willing, on certain conditions, that the depositors should take deposit receipts and not be compelled to take preference shares, and that these receipts should be payable in twelve years. ("Oh.") These receipts would bear interest at the rate of 4½ per cent. for seven years and 4 per cent. after that. However, a cablegram had just

been received saying that the directors would be willing to make the repayment in five, six, and seven years, the interest being 4 per cent.

Mr. Dobree, one of the London directors, said that however solvent the bank was—and he believed that, given time, it was absolutely solvent—to attempt to force a liquidation at present would spell ruin to all concerned. (Applause.) He proposed that the scheme should be approved generally subject to amendment.

Mr. Andrew Williamson, Glasgow, said he held proxies from 75 depositors, representing nearly £65,000. He moved an amendment to the effect that the scheme be approved only on the condition that certain modifications be given effect to.

Mr. John Cowan, W.S., Edinburgh, who appeared on behalf of depositors to the amount of at least £130,000, moved that the meeting approve of the principle of reconstruction, and remit to a committee to confer with the directors, and make such amendments as might be necessary in the interests of the depositors.

After discussion the motions of Mr. Williamson and Mr. Cowan were combined, and that of Mr. Dobree being withdrawn, the combined resolution was passed unanimously. A committee was appointed and the proceedings terminated.

At the meeting of shareholders which followed the official receiver again presided.

Mr. Dobree moved that the meeting approve the scheme of reconstruction as approved in Australia, with such modifications as required by the depositors and accepted by the board in Melbourne. After a short discussion this was unanimously adopted.

Mr. Henneker Heaton writes to the *Times*, May 17th, that he has the greatest possible confidence in Australian securities of every form, and no alarm need be felt regarding the financial position of the banks or of Government stocks. "But the time has unquestionably arrived for the amalgamation of a large number of Australian banks. There are hundreds of towns in Australia with from 500 to 1000 inhabitants, and in each are three stately bank buildings, where managers, accountants, etc., are located, and in which one bank would suffice. The sworn value of these bank premises in Australia is £5,840,000. We could do with bank premises of the value of £3,000,000, and here at once would be an asset of £2,840,000, with ample provision for all possible business. There would also be a great saving of official salaries and directors' fees, and we should no longer have the spectacle of Government officials, such as agents-general, adding to their incomes by acting as bank directors in London. One word more. I do not think that in the history of banking we have ever heard a more unfair arrangement than that proposed and carried at a recent meeting of shareholders to turn a seventh of our deposits (of ten millions) into shares in order to reconstruct a bank."

COUNTRY STORES.

Quoting and commenting on the article in our issue of the 18th ult., entitled, "Too Many Stores," the *Northern Advance* says:

"In most of our cities and towns there are too many shops for the business to be done, and, as a result, too large a percentage of them remain unoccupied, giving the places the appearance of business depression, which in reality may not exist. It is true, Barrie has no great deal to complain of in that line, but in many places this shop business is greatly overdone. It is a poor speculation for builders to erect business places in excess of a town's necessities, just as it is courting failure for five or six men to engage in a business three or four times beyond the necessities of the locality. The *Monetary Times* of last week shows that Toronto has committed this mistake. [Here follows part of the article in question.] There are two points here that deserve attention and consideration. 1st. Do not build business houses beyond the needs of the locality. 2nd. Check the centralizing system that is destroying the smaller towns to the building up of the larger cities, and putting the bulk of the country's business into the hands of a few. The first admits of an easy remedy, but how to remedy the second is a pretty difficult problem. Yet it seems that the best interests of the country demand a solution."