

COMICALITY AND CORNS.

My Dear CYNIC,—

I have always taken great interest in what has been termed—I will not say correctly—the “Comic literature” of the Dominion; but with all due deference to you I would say that the essentially comic element is to be found only in the columns of those pretentious dailies, the conductors of which apparently plume themselves on quantity’s being a good substitute for quality and borrowed jokes, (“reproduced” is the term), being infinitely superior to those of home manufacture.

Entre nous, I have never been able to understand the logic of your pure and simple protectionists, who go in heavily for home industry and home productions, yet never by any chance apply their theories in their own particular spheres of action. I know an Editor who holds his head very high—so high, indeed, that he always appears to be invoking the gods—who never by any chance gives his expectant readers a specimen of his own homely wit. If he essays poetry, he transposes Tupper; if he wishes to be critical, he hunts up the *Athenæum* or the *Round Table* in order to ascertain what they have said on the book to be criticised—if he wants to dovetail and embodies the opinions of home and foreign enlighten the lieges on the politics of the hour he, dexterously contemporary journals. I have sometimes doubted whether the tradesmen’s puffs, which go far to make up his local columns, have not, for the most part, been derived from far-off contemporary sources. On the whole, however, I am inclined to think they must be original, except in so far as they are inspired by the parties directly interested. And yet the broad sheet he wields is of an essentially comic character. Not that he intends it to be so. He has an abiding belief that he is a grave expositor and creator of popular sentiment—a depository of State secrets—an indispensable arm of Government. His poetry (to which he always appends his name) is akin to the sublime. His prose, if not ornate, has considerable pretensions to the didactic, and if the public are not instructed, why—so much the worse for the public. On a memorable occasion the Editor attended a public dinner along with his whole staff. The next morning a tremendous report appeared. The Editor’s name was paraded as having been present, and an introductory essay—the opening lines of which contained a highly poetical reference to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table—was furnished by that gifted sage. I believe that report was reprinted. I have not got it at hand, but if I had I would give you the introductory lines, as a fair specimen of the comic literature to be found in newspapers, which do not pretend to go outside the bounds of ordinary journalistic decorum.

My purpose, however, in writing this letter is to treat on a subject which will come home in even a greater degree to your cynical soul. It is often remarked that it is wonderful with what equanimity a man can look on while another man’s corns are being ruthlessly trodden upon, and at the same time resent even the slightest approach towards his own tender excrescences.

In the *Montreal Evening Telegraph* of Wednesday, a man, signing himself “An Elder,” who seems to be particularly sore about the subject of your last cartoon, gives vent to his wounded feelings in a way essentially comic. He says (and one can almost imagine he forms one of a “resurrected” band of Pilgrim Fathers, and that “grave and godly ministers

and elders” have the power of consigning to the pillory and the stake):

“The only remedy that I see in such a predicament is for the ministers and elders to order every number of *DioGENES* to be burnt, and any one found reading the sheet, or looking at it in the shop windows, to be at once expelled from the church. This attempt to cast ridicule on the ministers and elders must be put down.”

Fancy burning you, my dear old Cynic, publicly in the Haymarket Square, and “godly ministers and elders”—with saintly hearts beating within their apostolic bosoms—standing by in Christian charity and meekness;—or fancy, again, a general expulsion of the members of Knox Church who have been “found reading the sheet, or looking at it in the shop windows!” How many of the faithful, think you, would be left to listen to the “respected pastor’s” ministrations?

The following harrowing picture, drawn by “An Elder,” ought not to be overlooked:

“Only fancy a minister and his elder visiting a family, and perhaps the picture of the one as an organ-grinder or pipe-player and the other as a fiddler, stuck on the wall! How could the children of such a family look up and respect such a minister and elder?”

In my opinion, if the minister or elder was worth his salt, the only result of such exaltation would be a little harmless and transient merriment; but “An Elder” would plainly visit “children,” old and young, with pains and penalties for the much more venial offence of “reading or looking at the sheet in the shop windows!” Verily, the fires of Smithfield are not yet quite extinguished. Let us, in all consistency, have an *Auto da fe*, presided over by the Grand Inquisitor, and incontinently burn, not only your cynical self for a hoary-headed old sinner, but every urchin guilty of having proclaimed your advent last Friday morning, together with your paper-maker, your printer, your artist, and,—not least,—the catfist who had sufficient “influence” over you to turn you aside from your previous “unexceptionable” course. (*Vide* letter of “John Knox” in Tuesday’s *Herald*).

In conclusion, my dear Cynic, I recommend you to find out, if possible, who “An Elder” is, and secure him as a regular contributor. I am sure he would be worth money; and I will bet my boots he has a comic side to his character, which you can easily utilise.

Ever yours,

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM.

“RUBBISH SHOT HERE.”

America is avenging herself upon England, by gradually but surely overturning her aristocratic and hierarchic institutions, by the force of her teachings and example. The principles of civil and religious liberty, crude and imperfect when first brought from England to America, having been refined, illustrated and extended, we return them to the mother country, for her adoption, laden with rich and glorious results. The spirit of American liberty is abroad in England. Her Brights, Gladstones, Forsters, and her whole host of liberal statesmen, are proclaiming the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence, and verifying the saying of a celebrated Englishman, that the American Revolution guaranteed the free institutions of England. We may not live to see England a republic, but I believe our children will. The event can be predicted with as much certainty as any other in human affairs; and it is hastening on, perhaps fast enough, when all things are considered.—*From the “Oration” of Senator Morton of Indiana, delivered at the Gettysburg Celebration.*

NOTE.—It having been found impossible to supply the demand for the last number of *DIOGENES*, it has been deemed expedient to reprint the Cartoon and issue it free of charge with the present number. The Cynic has been moved to this,—first, by a desire to gratify a considerable number of his friends, and, secondly, because he has been informed on undoubted authority that the Cartoon has given umbrage to a few individuals whose friendship is not worth conciliating. The Cynic intends to be very particular in his attentions to any men, or class of men, who take exception to his perfect freedom of action.