

# THE SATURDAY READER.

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BY MRS. C. L. BALFOUR.

## MAMMON.

WE continue from last week's *Reader* our remarks on the influence and doings of this puissant deity. On the American continent, and to a less extent in Europe, Benjamin Franklin may be regarded as Mammon's chief, high-priest and apostle, and his writings as the Mammonite Koran, or Golden Book rather, to borrow a title from another fanatical sect. As the Mahomedans have a formula, embodying their confession of faith, so the children of Mammon ought to adopt, as their motto, "Mammon is great, and Franklin is his prophet." If that shrewd, clever, worldly man had robbed heaven—by the aid of a piece of twine and an old doorway—of something more valuable than a flash of lightning, and had also robbed half a dozen tyrants besides poor, crazy George the Third, of their sceptres, the benefits so conferred on mankind would not repay the mischief inflicted by a portion, at least, of the doctrines inculcated in his works. Materialism and the accumulation of money constitute the religion of the gospel he preached; nor have his teachings been in vain, for his spirit still pervades his own country and has extended to other lands. It is curious to reflect how frequently common-place men, aided by circumstances and strength of will, have impressed their own character on the age in which they lived and on future generations. The Mormon impostor, Joe Smith's success in that way is not a solitary instance of the truth of this assertion. But *à nos moutons*. The burthen of our discourse has been that, in this country large fortunes are all but useless to those who make, and often a curse to those who inherit them—a sentiment which many a disgusted reader will laugh to scorn, and spurn, yea even with his heels. But as another sage moralist once said, strike but hear us. In addition to the examples we have already given of the abuse or uselessness of much money, we shall state one more of a somewhat different sort. There are among us persons who, indefatigable in the acquisition of money, spend it as fast as they make it, and faster, too, sometimes. These delight in rich equipages, grand houses, rich furniture, and in feasting all their fashionable friends and acquaintances. They might do worse after all; they certainly might do better; for

Even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,  
The heart misdoubting asks if this be Joy.

They generally fritter away their means on persons for whom they care little or nothing,

and their reward is often the envy or ridicule of most of those whom they so ostentatiously entertain. We have heard such people's guests sneer at their host with the dew of his champagne still on their lips. Heavy members of the Upper Ten of both sexes, idlers, garrison hacks, and Lieutenants and Ensigns of marching regiments are the staple of these fashionable reunions. The end usually is pecuniary shipwreck; for Mammon is a jealous god, who allows no divided worship in his votaries. If he does not require them to pray, he requires them to watch, and that incessantly, or he turns away his countenance from them, either in anger or contempt. So it will be seen that this class of the community derive no great benefit from the possession of money. What, then, it will be asked, must one do with his superabundant time and gold? On that point, it is not necessary for our argument that we should give an opinion. Every man, in this respect, must be guided by his own taste, feelings and sense of duty.

But it will be insisted that it is by this accumulation of wealth that great States are formed, and that it is to it that such countries as England and the United States chiefly owe their power, influence, and station among the nations of the world. We think that there is a fallacy at the bottom of this proposition. Sparta, when in the zenith of her glory, did not know the use of money; and the fall of Rome is, in a great measure, attributed to the riches which poured in upon her from Africa, Egypt, Greece, Asia, and the other countries she conquered and despoiled of their treasures. England was not the possessor of very much of her present wealth, when she won the great battles of Cressy and Poitiers, conquered Spain, and forced back Pedro the Cruel on his reluctant subjects, nor when she gained the victory of Agincourt, and placed her own king on the throne of France. Were the United States to increase her present wealth a million fold, it would add nothing to her strength for defensive purposes, though it might for aggression, which would be no benefit to herself, and might be injurious to her neighbours. England certainly must have wealth, for it is on a large and expensive navy that her safety mainly depends.

A nation is only an aggregate of individuals, and what is bad for the few cannot be good for the many. We have already referred to the Yahoos. These foul creatures, as we said, are described in the terrible satire of Swift to be incessantly in search of certain round pebbles, consisting of common stone, and for the possession and retention of which they cheat, rob, mangle and slay each other. Those pebbles are to the Yahoos what gold is to us. There is an insect in the Pacific seas, vulgarly called the coral worm, myriads of which have been at work for countless ages, and the result of their labours is the creation of a continent. A being called man has, for some centuries, inhabited that same continent, a portion of which has been erected by the said worms. We give up the Yahoos, as the offspring of fiction; but which of the other two creatures is the more useful and respectable in the economy of nature,—the insect or the man? We vote for the insect, which builds for eternity, while the work of man perishes with him, being nearly as ephemeral as he is himself. Where now are Thebes, Nineveh, Babylon, Palmyra, Carthage, Rome? Gone the way of all human handiwork, while the coral worm's edifice lasts for ever. We are sorry we must surrender the Yahoos, because their passion for their stone money is so fearfully Anglo-Saxon, which it resembles at once, and caricatures. In these remarks, it ought to be

remembered, that we simply exemplify the scriptural doctrine which declares that money is the root of all evil, by attempting to show that men exaggerate its value, as well to individuals as to nations. The love of gold, as we stated in our former article, is the great blot on our existing civilization; and we feel assured that that which is destined to succeed it will be less gross and material in its principles, tendencies and practice. Man, fashioned after the image of his Maker, was created for nobler ends than to pass that "summer of a dormouse," his life, in the sordid pursuit of wealth which he can neither enjoy nor carry with him whither he is going, when he departs from the scene of his earthly labours. We place, we say, a fictitious value on it, both as respects ourselves and others. This secret was well known to the monks and church-men of old who, instead of hoarding their gold, erected with it these grand churches and other buildings, many of which still remain—the magnificent monuments of the liberality of their founders. In the United States, even, where the "almighty dollar" finds so many devotees, the same spirit largely prevails; for we daily hear of persons divesting themselves of their superfluous wealth for educational and similar public purposes. We might instance Mr. Gerritt Smith, Mr. Peabody, and several such as among those who do not consider it either right or wise to cling to money which they do not want, until death loosens their hold of it. These men are the harbingers of the higher civilization which is yet in store for the world, and of which Mammon shall not be the presiding deity.

## CANADIAN AUTHORS.

WE published, in our last issue, a few stanzas from Mr. Chas. Sangster's "New St. Lawrence and the Saguenay," and our readers will agree with us that, should the poem possess equal merit throughout, Mr. S. has produced a work which will reflect high honour on Canadian literature, and must obtain a far wider than Provincial reputation. We are informed that Mr. S. has thoroughly re-written and extended the original poem, and added notes where necessary. Each Rapid has now a distinctive character of its own, and legends and historical incidents have been added in order to give solidity and increased interest to the whole. We shall be glad to welcome Mr. Sangster's new work, and trust it will not be long ere it see the light.

We are also informed that Mr. Henry J. Morgan, already well known as a Canadian author, is engaged upon a new work. He has chosen for his subject, "The Past and Present Condition of Literature, Science, and Art in British America,"—a wide and interesting field, affording full scope to the industry and research of the author. Mr. Morgan expects to publish in the spring. In connection with this subject, we are glad to reproduce the following extract, from the *Dumfries* (Scotland) *Observer*, written by the Scottish Poet Aird:

"We have much pleasure in introducing our readers to Mr. Sangster as a Canadian poet well worthy of being known in the mother country. The little volume before us is full of thoughtful beauty and rich musical expression. 'Hesperus' and 'Into the Silent Land' are imaginative pieces of no common order. 'Marilene' is simple enough, but how charmingly idealised! True to rural life, yet how exquisitely ideal, is the Cantata of 'The Happy Harvesters.' We quote from it the following song: