

THREE SONNETS.

I.

Self-interest doth hold the world in thrall,
So say the modern pundits; that were well
If honour came not in the case at all
And all mankind were bound to buy and sell.
If courage, love of country, faith, the call
Of high endeavour had no tale to tell,
The world, in truth, were but a trader's stall
Set out with base commodities to swell
The swindler's hoard: the Anglo-Saxon race,
Chief merchants, hucksters, clamorous and
loud,
Immodest, soulless calling to the crowd
To buy their wares and seek no other place.
Napoleon's 'land of traders,' overflowing
The greed of gain on all the world bestowing.

II.

And thou, Columbia, greatest child in sooth,
The chiefest sinner in that sordid crew,
Hast thou fulfilled the promise of thy youth?
Is this the work thou didst set out to do?
Hast set thy foot without remorse or ruth
On all those higher dreams thy founders drew
From out the strife with man and lands uncouth
Seeing o'er all a glimpse of heaven's blue?
The tired world looked to thy virgin field
To breed a race of men—not millionaires
Blind to all higher aims, the hopes, the fears
Of struggling poverty, and grimly steeled
To their own ends: Oh! thou may'st yet be
free,
Whate'er thy faults, mankind hath hope from
thee.

III.

There gleams a star: the wave smote Calliôpê,
Forged through the tempest to the open main,
Saved from the shock of that insatiate sea
Scourged into madness by the hurricane.
Saved; with a message that should solacethee,
Columbia, for thy loss, a nobler strain
Runs through thy sailors of stern bravery
Than prompts the merchant's sordid greed of
gain.
The cheer that from the Trenton's ship-wrecked
crew
Rang through the storm, shall echo through all
time.
Their epitaph, far truer than the rhyme
Graved on a lying headstone, for they knew
No hope; but cheering with their latest breath,
Went down the weltering seas to wreck and
death.

BASIL TEMPEST.

CORRESPONDENCE.

RAILWAY KILLING.

To the Editor of The Week:

Sir,—In your free and independent columns—honorably exceptional in this regard—I have remarked the earnest recurrence of articles in protest of the neglect of railway authorities to provide against accidents, with loss of life, at level crossings. Almost every day, in Canada, we have accounts of such accidents, on rural as on urban crossings; each, in itself, most harrowing. The dead tell no tales! In nine cases out of ten, we hear no more of the matter. The dead bury their dead: *i. e.* bury at some poor family's expense, in doomed silence of grief, and poverty oft; poverty too low to raise its hand, or even cry for right: while the ruthless killer is allowed, by condoning authority, to walk forth in unmarked Cainhood in the high places of our world.

As to the question of legal liability, in civil damages, in such case, there can—I take it—be no reasonable doubt; the courts having by general concurrence so ruled. The difficulty, generally, is in the proof; all the survivors in the tragedy usually being of the other side. In such case the poor widows' and orphans' cause must stand over to the last great day of account; as to which, however, corporations (having no soul) have no fear nor regard: "Thou shalt not kill;" "Life for life," is to them a dead letter. There are many things in the complex nature of modern civilization, from Capel Court to "The Lobby," which, inherently wrong and pernicious, yet have the

egis of a "multitude," (e. g. corporation) "to do evil." I do not pretend to explain the anomaly but simply state the fact.

When Stephenson, with his "Rocket," was asked in Committee of the House of Commons in England, by a member (Dr. Lardner): "What would happen in the case of a cow on the track against a rush, say, of fifteen miles per hour by his monster?" the answer was, simply, "It would be bad for the cow." Exactly! "Bad for the cow" and, at the time, no provision thought of—none provided, at least; not even a "catcher" ("cow-catcher") then. Amongst its first victims was a valuable statesman (noble Huskisson) worth, to the nation, ten thousand "cows."

And so, to this day, is the callousness—the Cain-like "Am I my brother's keeper?"—of railway government; in Canada, at least.

About fifty years ago—forty-five, to be precise—Canada, in introducing a railway system, had a specific provision in her statute *ad rem* for railway, or rather highway gates at level crossings. This, under pressure from railway interests of the day was repealed in the next session. What the law on the subject since has been I do not know. Practically, from general experience, it is obviously a dead letter, or at least, totally inefficient.

But it is not only at level crossings, but in other specially dangerous parts, such as curves, in cuttings, bridges, trestles, tunnels, high embankments, steep grades, etc., there ought to be special provision against danger. In law—as I understand—railway companies are held to not only ordinary, but to extraordinary—all possible—care against danger to life, and property, in the exercise of their special franchise; such care being *quoad* the public, and all private and other interest trenching on by such franchise, the price, or of the very price and consideration of such privilege.

The mechanical appliances—such as automatic gates or bars, signals, etc., may entail extra cost; but this may be compensated by saving in damages, judicial or conventional. In any case, in face of the default in this regard on the part of railway companies, and of the persistent injury to life and property of the public from such default, it is for the government, and failing the government, for the legislature to enforce a remedy.

The power is there: the means there: and it is simply criminal not to use them to such end. "*Salus populi; suprema lex!*"

Aug., 1893.

VIATOR.

THE DAWN OF DESIGN.

One sometimes meets with the opinion in print that primitive man possessed an inherent taste for art. The impression has arisen from incised designs of animal figures having been found among the relics of human handiwork in those caves in the south of France which were inhabited by men at an epoch cotemporary with the mammoth. Examination of the evidence does not however, permit the view to be entertained that "a taste for art" was generally diffused, nor, indeed, that a conception of art was possible to earliest minds.

The vital element of representative art is the power, by means of line and curve of sufficient proportion and accuracy, to convey from one mind to another a perfect idea of the form and action of the living factors in any occurrence which it is desired to commemorate, such ideas having a harmonious mental delight as their primary aim.

Confining our remarks to pictorial representation, but including *cavo relievo* and low bas-relief, which are but pictures drawn with a stylus, it is open to enquire at what stage of the world's progress the element above described became discernible in whole or in part. Byron was right in saying "painting is the most artificial of all arts," and, being so, it demands an observance of its rules to be worthy of its name.

Classification of the mimetic remains that have survived from the earliest centuries of the world may be divided into (1) Mechanical, or single figures idly copied in outline as one would fashion any other toy; (2) Narrative, which may be subdivided into decorative and monumental; and (3) Ideal, to the early stages of which we owe the personification of the supposed attributes of God. The first-named may have been at the vague period of several thousand years before Christ; the second we may safely say from about 4,500 up to 600 or 500 B.C.; and the third since then, through many stages of development (some of them crude enough), to the present time.

The specimens of single figures of animals from which the opinion has been too hastily deduced that a taste for design was diffused among earliest prehistoric humanity, are too well known from published engravings to need linear reproduction here. The principal are a few rude scratches on a piece of ivory tusk found in the cave of La Madelaine in France, and intended to represent a mammoth. This was done, without doubt, in the later days of that animal. The graving tool could only have been a spiculum of flint, and the lines are drawn with uncertain hand. In like manner the outline, on a small scale, of a cave-bear found in Masset cave is, doubtless, cotemporary with the model. In this specimen the outline is bolder, but the proportions are clumsy. In a cave of the reindeer period at Thayngen, in Switzerland, in which among the *debris* were found no remains of dogs or other domesticated animals, two small pieces of deer-horn were discovered, on one of which is incised the outline of a seated fox, one inch in height, and a seated forest bear, one and a half inch, both well done. From the same cave was taken what is considered the best prehistoric etching in the shape of a grazing reindeer, three by one and a half inches, with marks on the quarter that may stand for dappling or shading. Some of the outlines found elsewhere are sufficiently barbarous, but portions of the profiles of reindeer, auroch or bison, and horses resembling Iceland ponies, as also of a fish like a perch, are recognisable. It is observed that all these, including horses, are of animals of the chase, and consequently familiar to the daily life of the designer. Almost all are drawn *statant* or *sejant*. Speaking loosely, the total number of fragments on which any attempt at design is made does not exceed perhaps fifty or sixty in several hundred thousand relics of palæolithic and neolithic handiwork now in collections. This proportion does not indicate a diffused taste. Of course it is likely that such figures were sometimes outlined in pigments—ochre or the juice of berries—and have perished. Further, it is reasonable to hold that from the ranges of animals limned—mammoth, cave bear, reindeer, horse, and auroch—having only appeared at successive epochs, the few specimens of their portraiture that exist were produced at long intervals in a wide extent of time.

Now, no industrial work is ever done without object, if it were only to pass the time or to show one's skill. These outlines on small scraps of horn or stone could serve no object in the life, such as we know it was, of primitive man. Moreover, not everyone of a hand would have even the limited skill to produce them; but some comparatively intelligent savage, whose hand had acquired a certain facility from marking pictorial directions on