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Eggs and Egg Logic

The egg of the guillemot is one of the wonders of nature. It is laid on the bare rock, but it is so shaped that when a gust of wind sweeps the rock the egg is not carried away. It simply turns in a circle described by itself. The centre of this circle is the smaller end of the egg. The most furious storm may come from the ocean, but the egg is still there—at one moving and immovable.

This device whereby the egg is kept in safety, though it is a most exposed place, is at least as remarkable as any mechanical or engineering device invented by man. It is as wonderful as the bridging of Niagara or the making of the aeroplane. And an attempt to explain away its wonder—after the manner of asserting that only such and such things survive—would not be convincing.

The cuckoo lays a very small egg. In fact, reckoning it in proportion to the size of the bird, the egg should be four times as big as it is. This laying of a small egg is an artful trick on the part of the cuckoo. It is done to deceive the confiding hedge-sparrow and the other birds upon whom the cuckoo bestows the privilege of rearing its—the cuckoo's—young. The cuckoo is a fraud and an exploiter. It lays its villainous, speckled eggs, for example, in the midst of the beautiful pale blue eggs of the innocent hedge-sparrow. One is tempted to think that bird innocence is as perilous a virtue as human innocence.

Eggs, in a way, suggest the character of the birds to whom they belong. The egg of the kestrel, is most sinister in appearance. One would not need a great deal of imagination to get the impression that such an egg could only belong to some ferociously destructive bird. If I may so put it, it speaks for itself. Its mottled coloring suggests the coloring of certain snakes. You feel that it contains a threat of death.

The appearance of the egg of a sparrow-hawk, has a like effect, though not so marked.

The egg of the golden eagle is colored in much the same way as the egg of a kestrel. But the effect of it is not so sinister, though the order of bird that the golden eagle belongs to is a ferocious as that of the kestrel. Still, there is a difference, and a marked one. You would see it were both eggs put side by side.

I am convinced that the suggestion that eggs give out the character of the birds to whom they belong does not depend upon association of ideas. Even if you knew nothing as to the birds who laid the eggs, you could still sense the difference between those of the birds of destruction and other birds. Of this I feel sure.

The egg of the wren is very beautiful. It is white with dark spots and spots of dim red gold. It is very small, weighing but a sixteenth of an ounce. It certainly suggests the lovable little bird who sings when the summer sun is with us, and sings again when the snow is on the ground. The dear little when. It is the most likable of all our birds.

The egg of the common or garden fowl possesses as little individuality of aspect as the bird itself. At a glance it would be obvious that this egg belonged to no daring pirate of the air. It would look singularly out of place in the flat nest of a sparrow-hawk. It would be as a naked babe in the lair of a wolf. The egg of the farmyard-fowl is the most commonplace egg of all—though the most useful.

The egg of a duck is also undistinguished in appearance. But it looks solid and sterling, even as looks the toothsome bird itself. There is an air of comfortableness about the egg of a duck.

A goose egg is as stately in appearance as the bird itself. Whenever I see it, the picture of a stout City alderman comes to my mind. It is at once rotund and respectable and imposing. I once had the hardihood to eat one, and I was filled with a deep and profound contrition afterwards. I had taken a liberty that I ought not to take.

Goose eggs in an advanced state of maturity would make most effective arguments at election meetings. Indeed eggs generally are the most potent of all convicers on these auspicious occasions. They resolve into a nothing the most logical and unassailable statements. And the impact of a well-aimed and highly-matured egg will fatally squelch the loftiest oratorical flight. Eggs and oratory do not mix.

I was once, I may say, at a political meeting where egg-logic came well to the fore. A certain speaker, who was afflicted with the infirmity of always orating in an intensely earnest manner, was trying to tell a rowdy audience what it did not want to hear. He was a friend of mine, and I was trying to help him to get into Parliament so that he could do Britain a bit of good. I had spoken just before him,

and the reason I had managed to get through safely was not because I was related in talent to the classic Demosthenes. It was because I cracked rude jokes in a simple manner. If you can make an audience laugh you are always safe.

As I was sitting, listening with a pained and strained interest to what my earnest friend was saying, I saw something of a beautiful whiteness describing an arc through the air. It was an egg. A coming egg! And, alas! it seemed to be badly aimed, for it was coming towards myself—the party who was guiltless. On and on it came. I ducked, and some person behind me—who was even less guilty than I was—got it. Two eggs now came together, and I am pleased to say that this time they found the guilty party—the earnest orator.

The meeting dissolved. Egg-logic was not to be withstood.

One might call the egg the natural enemy of the orator. And I have often wondered what Parliamentarians really think of it. Does the sight of one ever conjure up unhappy moments that may come again? It surely must be so. It surely must be that there are members of Parliament who sadder whenever they see an egg, however fresh. I'll wager a pound to a penny that there are orators at Westminster who cannot summon up sufficient courage to eat one—even when it is hard-boiled!

I remember once having a discussion concerning this painful subject with an orator who in the end became a Cabinet Minister. He confided to me the fact that he feared an egg, when he was telling the tale, many times more than he feared a brickbat.

He was a man of real courage, however. For he liked them when they were fresh and tried lightly on one side.—Bart Kennedy, in London New Witness.



BARNYARD GOSSIP

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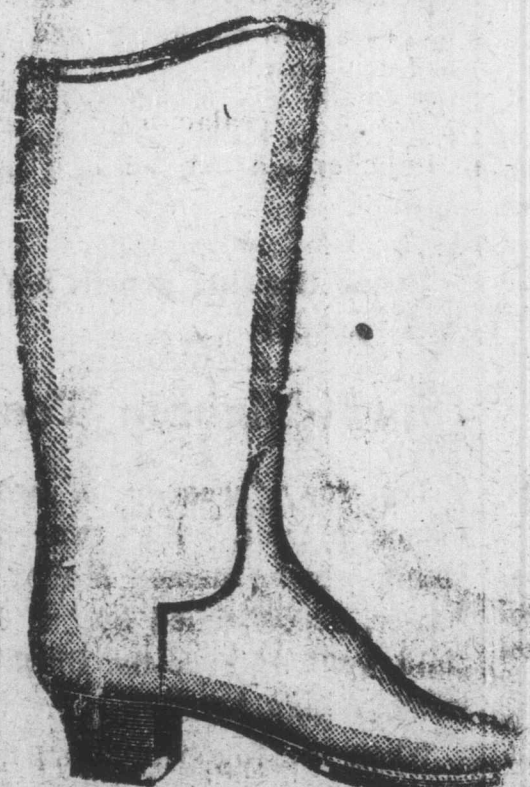
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Paying the Cost of Prohibition

Already there is some murmuring because the restriction of the liquor traffic is reducing the revenues of the general and local governments. "Where are you going to get your revenues when you have crushed out this great industry?" is being asked. In the Pathfinder we have often emphasized the fact that you can't have betterments or reforms of any kind without paying for them. We ought to be willing and glad to pay for them, for assuredly a reform is worth only what it costs.

The federal receipts from the liquor traffic last year were about \$230,000,000, or in other words this traffic pays about one-third of all the expenses of the national government. If this source of income is cut off, naturally something will have to be done to make ends meet. The people of this country will not stand for cheapening and government; they want more instead of less done by the government. So the revenue will have to be made up by some other form of taxation.

And that is right and proper. The users of liquor claim they they do more than other citizens to support the government. If that is true it is not fair to them, and the condition should be remedied. But it is not true except in a very superficial sense. It is a general principle that the burden of taxes is pretty well distributed among all the people in the end, regardless of who pays them in the first instance.

This is particularly true in the case of liquor taxes, for the entire community eventually has to foot the bill for the evil. This fact ought not to require argument. It is a matter of common knowledge, that the existence of the liquor evil requires and more public expenditures of many sorts. No one can estimate the immense cost of the liquor vice to society in indirect ways, for the evil effects of it ramify everywhere and no one is free from them.

In thousands of crimes of the worst nature the plea is made that the perpetrator was drunk—as if that excused him. Men will do things when under the alcoholic influence that they would never do in the full possession of their faculties, and society has to suffer for all their misdeeds. Drink lowers a man's vitality and usefulness, and thus the victim of the drink habit is wronging society in two ways at once, for he not only squanders his money and makes himself a menace to his fellow-beings, but at the same time he lessens his producing powers and becomes a drone.

No matter what it costs, the evil must be rooted up; and no matter what you or I may think on the subject, it is going to be rooted up. The betterment is going to be made, and some way will be found to pay the bill. The economic gain to society will not only pay back the present taxes but it will pay them many times over.

For one thing, this will be a better and safer country to live in and bring up children in, and that will be one compensation. Millions of men in Europe are fighting for their country, and should we not be willing to make a little sacrifice for our Fatherland? Heroism and duty and patriotism are displayed not alone on the field of war; indeed they are exercised in their finest form in the everyday life of a nation.

The people of Europe have been taxed to the limit to support militarism and they will be taxed for many years to come to pay for this war; they are willing to make desperate sacrifices to overcome their enemy—and we should not grumble if we are called on to do a little something extra in order that the common enemy the drink evil, may be conquered.

If your taxes have to be raised a little to make up for the cost of prohibition, don't complain against it; shoulder your share of the burden and carry it proudly. If soldiers who march to the fighting front to kill their fellowmen are proud of their action, then we should, like them, be glad to suffer for the common good in a cause which has for its object the saving and not the destruction of life.

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