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Hebraic Inspiration (Continued)

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defectiveness of the establishments which Walpole thought good enough for England was fully proved. Everyone knows that George II. won a sort of victory at Dettingen. Not many know what led to that battle, and the circumstances under which it was fought. King George sought to bring his army into the heart of the German theatre of war. The commissariat broke down; his men were starving and he had to retreat. While retreating Noailles sought to intercept him at Dettingen. King George and his army cut their way through and held on in their retreat. They lost as many men as the French. They left the field of battle and their wounded in possession of Noailles. That was the Battle of Dettingen ("History of Frederick the Great," Vol. V., p. 198). The breakdown of the commissariat is the cardinal fact as to this campaign. There was British valour in abundance; but no management. Military and naval services alike were in a state of chaos. As finale to all the disorganization and incompetence came the defeat of Fontenoy and the disgraceful Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.

One would imagine that after such sore experiences the statesmen and official classes of England would have utilized the ensuing years of peace with all their might in order to get the "war-apparatus" into a condition to do its work. A fresh crisis was evidently coming on. Aix-la-Chapelle had, in fact, decided nothing. The *status quo ante* was thereby re-established, and the great controversies left untouched. The right of England to trade in the Spanish Main had not been settled, nor yet the grand question whether French or English influence should predominate in North America. To the dullest it must have been evident that both questions would have to be fought out and soon. This second war did actually break out in 1755, and the destruction of Braddock's force was the first-fruits of the new harvest of troubles, first symptom that disorganization and chaos still reigned in our fighting departments. Of the unreadiness of England for this war, Carlyle writes as follows:—

"England and France are by this time alike fiercely determined on war; but their states of preparation are very different. The French have war-ships again, not to mention armies, which they always have; some skilful Admirals withal, and mean to try seriously the question of sea supremacy once more. *If an invasion did chance to land, the state of England would be found beyond hope.* How many fighting regiments England has I need not inquire, nor with what strategic virtue they would go to work; enough to mention the singular fact (recently true, and still, I perceive, too like the truth), that of all their regiments only three are in this country or even have colonels nominated. Incredible, but certain. In such posture stands the Envy of surrounding nations at this moment."

How this alarming condition of things was brought to an end we all know. Chatham ended it, and inaugurated the reign of order, activity, and intelligence in those departments of the State which have to do with war. Public opinion during all this unhappy period beat furiously against the Administrations of Walpole, of Newcastle, and of Pelham. Carlyle, who seems

deeply read in the pamphlet literature of the age, testifies strongly to the ceaseless indignation with which the English nation raged against those Governments which spent their money and their blood so freely, but seemed able to do nothing else. At last the nation resolved not only that Chatham should be chief Minister, but that he should be chief Minister with unusual powers. He was, in fact, a sort of informal dictator, to whom the English nation, like the Roman Senate in parallel circumstances, gave the chief command with extraordinary authority. What afterwards happened is a matter of known history. ANGLUS.

SOUND IN POETRY.

In poetry we prefer sound to sense. The best poetry is, of course, that in which sense and sound are interfused, molten into bars of shining verse. But when verse-makers cannot do that, and are still determined to make verses, let them send us things that sing and ring, chiming rhyming verses rather than mere prose divided into shorts and longs. Frankly we could not make sense out of—

"Down in the coombe, where the
marigolds are golden."

Yet, committed it to memory, rapt by the sound of it and the shining words. Sound and sense together meet fused to live for ever in Milton, in Milton more than in any of the world's poets."

"Now came still evening on and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad."

"O nightingale that on yon bloomy
spray
Warblest at eve when all the woods are
still."

"Or flocks or herds or human face
divine"

"Darkened so yet shone
Above them all the arch-angel, but his
face
Deep scars of thunder had entrenched,
and care
Sat on his faded cheek."

But Edgar Allen Poe, too, is amongst the immortals because he has sound; and Algernon Charles Swinburne may be remembered for a long time, because that out of his vast hollownesses he sent forth such grand noises.

By the waters of Babylon we sat
down and wept,
Remembering thee,
Who for ages of agony hast endured
and slept,
And would'st not see.

By the waters of Babylon,
We stood up and sang,
Remembering thee,
How a blast of deliverance in the
darkness rang
To set thee free."

"And with trumpets and thunderings,
and with morning song,
Came up the light."

Yeats, too, is a great lyrical poet by virtue of his mastery over the magical potencies of sound.

"Nine bean rows will I have there
and a hive for the honey-bee."

"I shall go down and live amongst
the Shee
In their old, ever busy honeyed land."

Note this verse, too, in which he seems to reach his highest as a pure singer, especially the first line—

"Shy one, shy one, shy one of my
heart!
She moves in the firelight pensively
apart."

On Yeats's shortcomings some one else must enlarge; not I.

I have one personal reason for this belief in the greatness of mere sound: it is that the poems which pleased me as a boy please me still. All the knowledge and experience of a life time have been unable to disturb those primitive judgments. The sounds held me then as they do now.

I suspect we are all made the same way, and that sweet voices rule us all.

"The devil hath not such an arrow
in his quiver as a sweet voice."

Sings Milton—

"Hail holy light! offspring of heaven,
first-born."

But sound was before light in time, as superior to light in essence.

"And God said: Let there be light, and there was light."

HEBRAIC INSPIRATION.

(Continued.)

By FRANCIS GRIERSON in "Celtic Temperament."

Disciples contradicted their masters in almost everything. The truth is, the wisdom of the Greek teachers was not concentrated; they were simple and direct only in the drama, and even here the effort and the inspiration tended towards the scrutiny of the unknowable. The tragedians exhausted themselves on the unattainable. The Greek mind seemed always a little above the level of human needs and opportunity. In the search for the sublime and the beautiful they forgot the world and the people in it. And this is why the Greeks had no Bible of their own, no Book of Psalms, no prophets or seers. The grandeur of Israel is that the prophets and the singers all spoke with one voice. There are no discords, discussions, contradictions, or schisms. From the time that Moses descended from Sinai with the twelve commandments, to the last recorded prophecy, there is but one spirit, one impulsion, one source and aim animating the whole. It requires no stretch of the imagination to think of Moses as being the author of Solomon's *Proverbs*. It is impossible to controvert the laws of the first, or dispute the precepts of the second. And equally so, the character and tone of the seers agree, from the greatest to the smallest. The transition from this unity to the vanity of Greek metaphysics is both disappointing and disconcerting. Among the Greeks we find a free play of fancy in every sphere of thought, without the essential stamina of worldly wisdom and religious aspiration. Every man had his own little world of imagination and theory and the result was philosophical and religious disintegration. The philosophical disputes which arose in the time of Plato and Aristotle increased in intensity until the end of the Roman Empire. With the Renaissance came a revival of scholastic disputation which has continued ever since.

Three things characterise philosophy, as we know it—abstraction, inversion,

and contradiction. The main object of a system is to destroy the foundations of the preceding system. There is not so much inharmony among Christian sects as there is among the diverse schools of philosophy. If all the philosophical works since Solomon's time were bound in one volume, the proper title of the book would be: "The History of Intellectual Folly." We are told that philosophical disputation is good for the mind. But we know for a certainty that the disciples of Plato never change, just as we know that argument has never changed a disciple of Aristotle. If harmony is good for the intellect, just as much so would be the presence, in the house, of a drunken man or a brawling woman. Stubbornness is the mother of disputation. Thinkers who love the subtle, the vague, and the polemical, are superfluous in the economy of the social universe, because they wander from the centre of the knowable, pass out of the orbital sphere, and enter the region of the nebulous. Removed from the centre, intellect becomes eccentric, folly whirls in centrifugal disorder and is finally swallowed up in regions beyond the Central-Sun of knowledge. Vanity and vexation of spirit are the end of philosophical discussion, as they are of personal ambition, riches, and individual strife.

In the writings of the Hebrews humanity is divided into two sections—the good and the wicked; the wise and the foolish. And the maxims are concrete. Let any intelligent man read *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, and he will have to conclude that there is nothing new under the sun save a few mechanical inventions which have added nothing to the essential wisdom of the human mind. For what was true of old is true now, and the fatal blunder lies in concluding that our mechanical inventions bring us more happiness and better inspirations. The Jews on the one hand, and the Celts on the other, are awakening to a fresh appreciation of the realities of life. But the Israelite never lost the sense of unity embodied in the sacred writings of his ancestors. Here, and nowhere else, lies the explanation of the cohesive power of the modern followers of the Prophets. For in spite of the decadence of Jewry, from covetousness, there exists a vital spark of the old inspirations which has helped to enlighten and illuminate the remnants of Israel everywhere. But the covetousness of the Jew is no new thing. The Old Testament is full of lamentations and warnings concerning this vice. While Israel endured as a nation there were but two social elements—the wise and those who followed them, and the fools, with their followers. When men like David and Solomon ruled and taught all was well; when the superstitious and the ignorant were in power all went wrong. How does it come about that the teachings of such men are venerated wherever people have any judgment left, in every denomination throughout the world where the Bible is read? There is but one answer—because of the enduring harmony and fitness of the things uttered.

The fool, with his empty words, his ephemeral enthusiasm, and volatile anger, the rush after signs and wonders by the half-cultured, the hair-splitting disputations of the self-sufficient, the vanity of false systems and false gods, absurd hopes and ridiculous ambitions—

there is not a person or a thing, an ambition or a passion, that is not depicted here by a lightning-phrase, as if shot from the quiver of infallible wisdom. Nowhere else is there so much comfort in so small a space. The maxims uttered are living, applicable precepts for believers and sceptics alike. For the thing that happened yesterday is the same that happens to-day, and the thing which will happen to-morrow will be like that of to-day; time and eternity are one; nothing shall change from the beginning to the ending of the world. There is a temporal wisdom and a wisdom of infallibility. Open the book of *Proverbs*, and you will meet the infallible on every page; subtle world-knowledge, clairvoyant penetration, a seeing through appearances, an unravelling of petty passions and cunning avidity, a searching out of the false, and a ruling for the simple and the true;—all the knowledge of the Greeks and the Romans seems but an attenuated imitation of the simplicity and sublimity of Israel. Those who think the human heart has changed cannot do better than read certain portions of the Old Testament. All through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, David, and Solomon, the things described and the laws laid down might have been rendered by a seer or a philosopher of yesterday, so modern is the applicability of the visions, the examples and the maxims. This is one reason why the Bible is the most popular book extant. It is both a surprise and a comfort to know that Jerusalem, the sacred City, was no better or worse than the great capitals of the world to-day. Jewish prophets and historians tell us all that is worth knowing about Jerusalem; and we have it all with us to-day—the same money-lenders, the same oppressors of the poor, the same "folding of the arms to sleep," the same hypocrites, the same mischief-makers, the same drunkards, and the same gossips who poison the air of peaceful homes and spread mischief from neighbour to neighbour.

It is difficult to say what one admires most in the wise sayings of the Hebrews. We lean, now to the beauty of the symbols and the arrangement of words, now to the knowledge of the human heart, the precision, the simplicity, the scientific certainty of the thought. The pestle and the mortar are both concrete, and between them illusion is precipitated from reality. Isaiah and Solomon strip the human frame of illusions as a gust strips a tree of its rotten fruit. Between the wisdom of *Proverbs* and the inexorable scrutiny of *Ecclesiastes* there is nothing left. Beside the residue of Solomon's melting-pot, Attic understanding seems like dross, and Buddhism like smoke and vapour. All other literature goes above, around, or beneath the actual, dallies with theories, soars on chemical wings, or enters dreamland by the portal of vain desires and vanished hopes. We hear the beating of the wings of the world against the gates of Destiny. But the Preacher of Jerusalem makes straight for the things that are. One by one he divests himself of the garments of illusion. In his wisdom and folly he becomes the prototype of the human race. His words are a paradox of terror and consolation.

There is this to be said about Truth: different peoples arrive at it by different methods. Job, Isaiah, Solomon, were

not long in finding the shortest road to the meaning of life. The wisest Jew lived five hundred years before the wisest Greek and about six hundred years after Moses. That all this wisdom was attained at that epoch of the world's history may well fill the modern mind with perpetual wonder.

At the end of it all, work and right living are the only means of obtaining peace and contentment.

And this, at last, after three thousand years, is what is left us.

TO THE EDITOR ALL IRELAND REVIEW.

DEAR SIR—Should not the first letter in your last issue have been headed "Protestantism and Roman Catholicism."

I have always been on friendly terms with my Roman Catholic neighbours, but object to them being given the exclusive right to be called Catholics. I claim to be a Protestant and a member of "the Holy Roman Catholic Church" described in our creeds.

I have to congratulate you on the increasing interest of the A. I. R.

M. C. I.

[Dear M. C. I.—Why then don't you assume and wear the name? It lay derelict for a long time till the other people appropriated it and put it to use.

I confess I could never understand the meaning of Catholic or Universal, when even the whole body of Christians are only a ninth of the inhabitants of the planet.

If it means aiming at the University well so do other Faiths, one of which seemingly would have actually done so only for that stout Frankish warrior, Charles Martel.

I am very sorry that Roman Catholics should object to that fine old historical and descriptive title of Papist, followers of the Papa or Pope. It is not a nickname at all but a description.

Even if it were a nickname the non-acceptance of it looks like weakness. Those who have full confidence in themselves and feel sure of victory never fail to catch up a nickname, glory in it, make it their *crie de guerre*, and march under it as under a glorious standard,—Ed. A. I. R.]

THE DAWNING CENTURY.

OUR BROTHERS—THE DANES.

April 2.—Copenhagen canopied with blue war-clouds, pierced through with fire-flashes, lit by the conflagration of ships and houses, in whose making, sweat stood on men's brows. Houses, men make to dwell in, ships to carry freights, intelligence, and kindness between the nations of the earth. Both now burn in honour of the god Cain. Brave Nelson as officiating priest, whirls his stumpy arm—cheerful child of thunder—rejoicing in the uproar. Far off Sir Hyde Parker runs aloft the signal to retire, but Nelson's flag keeps flying for closer action. The little hero has looked for the signal of his commander in vain, telescope to blind eye, "Keep my flag flying for closer action, nail it to the mast." England's headstrong indomitable darling, who for England and his "brothers—the Danes," might do so much, and has been sent by Addington to do this. Riou stops firing; he must know what Nelson is about, and let the thunder-