

DAILY DEMOCRAT.

Official Journal of the State of Louisiana. Official Journal of the City of New Orleans. Office, 109 Gravier Street. GEORGE W. DUPRE & CO., PROPRIETORS.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

To-day has been set apart by the President as a day of national thanksgiving to Almighty God for the blessings that have been vouchsafed the American people during the past year, and an appropriate observance of it has been commended to the people of Louisiana by Gov. Nichols.

Every year since the war Thanksgiving Day has been regularly appointed by the President and observed throughout the North as an occasion of great rejoicing and with universal expressions of popular gratitude. But during these twelve years with us of the South the day has rather been one of humiliation and prayer than of rejoicing and exultation. During this weary time the refrain that has welled up from the Southern heart has not been a "gambouss," but that saddest and most tragic chorus of the *varietes*. Through these years we have been mute, even as those who sat down by the waters of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion; our harps were "hanged upon the willows," and when "they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth," we could not respond, "For how could we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

But this year we have to celebrate our deliverance. For the first time in twelve long years have we been appointed a day of thanksgiving by a Governor of our own choosing. Heretofore it has been but a mockery to call upon a people for rejoicing whose hearts were full of supplication, and whose heads were bowed in humiliation and sorrow under strokes from the good God's hand; who cried out with one accord, "Oh, Lord! why hast Thou forsaken me?" and who kept their faith only through remembrance that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." To-day, though, all is changed at length, and from a happy and enfranchised people will go up songs of joy and gratitude, while we bend in reverential prayer to the Giver of all good.

IS IT A DROPSY OR A HEDGEHOG?

The illusions of the human mind present some of the most remarkable and instructive phenomena which have excited the wonder of the world and enlisted the attention and investigations of scientists. The medical text books and periodicals of every nation are replete with the fanciful and grotesque ideas, sometimes beautiful, sometimes tender and affecting, and at others disgusting and ludicrous of monomaniacs.

Perhaps no branch of medical science is so rich in facts and so mournfully fascinating as that which treats of these mental hallucinations. Many of them are famous even in history. Eminent statesmen, illustrious princes, and writers whose genius is immortal, have been afflicted by them. In more than one instance they have taken such profound and overwhelming possession of the intellect of individuals that they have wrought the possessed into enthusiasts so earnest and violent that they have become disturbers of whole kingdoms. The members of our medical faculty no doubt remember the case of Joanna Southcote, an aged and infirm English maiden, who, something over a century ago, conceived the idea that she had been embraced by the Divinity; that she was *excitee* and would soon give birth to a son who would be the conqueror and Saviour of the world. By her preaching she made many converts; the people of the neighborhood became infatuated; her fame spread to the utmost limits of the kingdom and won converts in great numbers among the ignorant and superstitious. One of the most eminent physicians of the day examined the old and decrepit girl, and declared that she was indeed *excitee*. This scientific testimony added fuel to the flame, and Joanna Southcote seemed likely to run the English nation crazy. The promised Messiah, however, failed to make his appearance at the proper time; days and weeks rolled on; the enthusiasm began to die out, and finally it transpired that the old woman was afflicted with a tumor or a dropsy, we have forgotten which.

A short time ago a friend of ours belonging to the medical faculty related to us a case, in some respects, more remarkable than that of the venerable Joanna, though it was too absurd to enable the deluded creature, like her, to form a sect or party even among the most ignorant.

Our friend told us that many years ago his father, then a physician in Kentucky, had a patient—an old man—who fancied that he was *excitee*. The conviction was overwhelming, and possessed its victim day and night, for weeks and months. The doctor used every argument, every persuasion to undeceive the unfortunate man, but in vain. Finally the physician determined to attempt to heal the distemper of his demented patient's fancy by humoring his illusion. Accordingly the good doctor examined his patient, determined the time at which he would be delivered and attended him with all the usual gravity and formality. As the eventful day approached, the doctor purchased a young hedgehog and kept it in readiness. The day dawned; the doctor and his attendants were on hand. So powerful was the effect of the poor wretch's imagination that he suffered all the terrible pains incident to his fancied condition, when finally his accoucher told him the child was born and presented the hedgehog to his view. "Ah!" exclaimed the poor fellow, "it is damnable ugly, but it is mine and I suppose I must love it."

We have a case in New Orleans familiar to almost every one, even more remarkable than the two we have related. The *Picayune* newspaper has been for several years afflicted with a hallucination similar to those of old Joanna and the Kentucky lunatic. It has long been afflicted with the illusion that it is pregnant with a "new party." It has preached of its coming young Messiah for several years. The people in every part of the State heard, for several years before the last election, of the promised Messiah that was to spring from the womb of this infatuated and lunatic sheet to save the country. But the miraculous infant came not. There were political doctors by the dozen, who, like the one that was called in to see Joanna, swore the symptoms were unmistakable and that the old lady's prophecy would be fulfilled. But alas! the *Picayune's* party, and its

followers, like Joanna Southcote's Shiloh and her sect, were things which in this country did not strike the public mind, so few were the elect; and the new births of both their state virginities have proved but dropsies taken for divinities.

The infatuation has again seized our venerable contemporary. It is now large with a "new departure." Monday morning its clarion voice rang out to rally its old sect. The trouble a year or two ago was a dropsy or a tumor. But our contemporary has not a particle of doubt that its conception this time is a genuine one, and that it will bring forth a healthy, well-born "new departure." Poor deluded thing! We fear it is not even a dropsy this time, but only a little hedgehog some clever political experimentalist is "putting up" on it. And yet, just see how cantankerously the old lady, or the old man, or whatever else in the very devil it may be, is after "State pap" to nourish its imaginary infant? Is it a dropsy, or will it be a hedgehog?

Louisiana is an example of how much injury can be done by persons, unacquainted with engineering and hydrography, interfering with our natural water courses. Tones' Bayou was lately an evidence of this. Here was the Federal government called on for a large sum of money to repair the damage done by some one cutting a ditch years ago from the Red river to Bayou Pierre, and the trade of a large section of country seriously unaccommodated and interfered with by a wild engineering freak. A similar canal has wrought even greater damage in the western portion of the State. A number of years ago Mr. Ursin Leblanc dug a ditch to connect the waters of Bayou Vermillion with the Teche. This ditch has since grown into a full-fledged canal, and now carries off a large amount of water toward the Teche. It has no opening in the Teche, however, and this water from the Vermillion, instead of pouring into that stream, is emptied into the basin lying between the two bayous and extending to Lake Tasse, in Iberia parish, where it remains until it evaporates or filters away. These submerged lands are situated in the parishes of St. Landry, Lafayette and St. Martin, the latter being the greatest sufferer. More than five hundred citizens of that parish have their lands under water; their crops have been destroyed, their cattle drowned, their houses washed away or undermined. But this is far from all the damage from this water. Having no outlet, it remains covering the ground until it is evaporated by the sun. It becomes in the meanwhile stagnant and generates chills and fevers of all kinds. Unless, therefore, the work already commenced on a canal for the reclamation of this portion of the State from overflow is carried out, it will eventually become an unhealthy swamp. Very little money is needed, the *Atakapas Sentinel* says, to complete the Fuller canal, which will drain this valuable and fertile land.

The Fuller canal was begun before the war. Its original design is perhaps too expensive and grand for us to carry out now-a-days, but even were the work done on a smaller scale it would greatly benefit this submerged district. It is beyond the power of its inhabitants to dig the canal; they are already ruined by the damage the overflow has brought upon them. It remains with the police jury of the parish or the Legislature to finish this work. It is understood that the police jury of St. Martin is well disposed to act on this measure, but think it somewhat unjust that the people of St. Landry should be compelled to perform this work for the benefit of two other parishes, Lafayette and St. Landry. Even were St. Martin to take this burden on itself, it would still need some State aid, as the enterprise is beyond the parish resources. A bill on this subject has already been prepared by several citizens of St. Martin, to be presented to the Legislature. This bill proposes that the levee tax paid by St. Martin be specially reserved for the digging of this canal and the redemption of these submerged lands. At the same time it would be well to prevent the possibility of such occurrences in the future by prohibiting this wild digging of ditches and canals, which have so often brought floods and destruction on our lowlands.

Athena was aroused one morning by the discovery that the Hermes, sacred statues scattered all over that city, had been defaced by some one. Chattanooga has just been somewhat excited over a similar occurrence. The other night the monument dedicated to the Confederate dead of that place was badly defaced and mutilated by some human ghouls. The Republican paper of the town declares that the deed was done by strangers, and that the motive which prompted it was personal vengeance and hatred against the dead Confederate soldiers. However that be, the man who committed the offense was evidently a person of little sense and foresight, as he could have gratified his vengeance much more effectually by defacing the monument to the Federal dead. This would have relighted the fires of Radical hate, and renewed old war feelings and animosities in all their ancient bitterness. The Radical press could then have dished up once more their twice told tales of Confederate outrages on Federal soldiers, dead and alive, and taught the people of the country that in the South so bitter was the feeling engendered by the war that not only living Republicans but dead Union soldiers were proscribed, were outraged and insulted.

The people of Chattanooga, however although aroused and indignant at this outrage, have shown their good sense in not going into a violent passion over it. An investigation of the occurrence is being made, and the malefactors will doubtless be captured and punished. In the meanwhile, there is none of that excitement, that passion, that wild, sectional, bloody-shirt denunciation of everybody else, to which we should have been treated, had this outrage taken place in the North.

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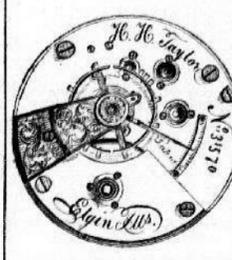
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