

The Golden Era
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The New Wildcat Religion

Another spiritual investigator—G. C. DeMerritt—passed his examination today, after a faithful attendance on the seances of the Friends of Progress, and was shipped, a raving maniac, to the insane asylum at Stockton—an institution which is getting to be quite a College of Progress.

People grow exasperated over these frequently occurring announcements of madness occasioned by fighting the tiger of spiritualism, and I think it is not fair. They abuse the spiritualists unsparingly, but I can remember when Methodist camp meetings and Campbellite revivals used to stock the asylums with religious lunatics, and yet the public kept their temper and said never a word. We don't cut up when madmen are bred by the old legitimate regular stock religions, but we can't allow wildcat religions to indulge in such disastrous experiments. I do not really own in the old regular stock, but I lean strongly toward it, and I naturally feel some little prejudice against all wildcat religions—still, I protest that it is not fair to excuse the one and abuse the other for the selfsame rascality. I do not love the wildcat, but at the same time I do not like to see the wildcat imposed on merely because it is friendless. I know a great many spiritualists—good and worthy persons who sincerely and devotedly love their wildcat religion (but not regarding it as wildcat themselves, though, of course.)—and I know them to be persons in every way worthy of respect. They are men of business habits and good sense.

Now when I see such men as these quietly but boldly come forward and consent to be pointed at as supporters of a wildcat religion, I almost feel as if it were presumptuous in some of us to assert without qualification that spiritualism is wildcat. And when I see these same persons cherishing, and taking to their honest bosoms and fondling this wildcat, with genuine affection and confidence, I feel like saying, "Well, if this is a wildcat religion, it pans out wonderfully like the old regular, after all." No—it goes against the grain; but still, loyalty to my Presbyterian bringing-up compels me to stick to the Presbyterian decision that spiritualism is neither more nor less than wildcat.

I do not take any credit to my better-balanced head because I never went crazy on Presbyterianism. We go too slow for that. You never see us ranting and shouting and tearing up the ground. You never heard of a Presbyterian going crazy on religion. Notice us, and you will see how we do. We get up of a Sunday morning and put on the best harness we have got and trip cheerfully down town; we subside into solemnity and enter the church; we stand up and duck our heads and bear down on a hymn book propped on the pew in front when the minister prays; we stand up again while our hired choir are singing, and look in the hymn book and check off the verses to see that they don't shirk any of the stanzas; we sit silent and grave while the minister is preaching, and count the waterfalls and bonnets furtively, and catch flies; we grab our hats and bonnets when the benediction is begun; when it is finished, we shove, so to speak. No frenzy—no fanaticism—no skirmishing; everything perfectly serene. You never see any of us

Presbyterians getting in a sweat about religion and trying to massacre the neighbors. Let us all be content with the tried and safe old regular religions, and take no chances on wildcat.

(Source: Twainquotes.com, <http://www.twainquotes.com/Era/18660304.html>)