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***The Curmudgeon Philosopher***

WE are wiser in many ways than our savage ancestors; we are wiser than the savages of today," said the Curmudgeon Philosopher, with the air of one making a great concession; "yet for every folly or vice of uncivilized man I can show you a corresponding one among ourselves. In the matter of religions, for example, and of religious rites and observances, we have, mixed in with our better faiths, vestiges of all the primitive superstitions that have marked the childhood of the race. Vestiges, did I say? Why, sir, in many instances we have the veritable thing itself in all the vigor of its perennial prime."

The Reporter ventured to express a conviction that a crude and primitive religion could have no devotees among so enlightened and cultivated a people as ours.

"Sir," thundered the Adversary of Presumption, turning a delicate purple, "races

The Reporter asked what fetish worship might have the hardihood to be.

"Fetish worship," replied the Curmudgeon Philosopher, "is the most primitive of religions. It is the form that belief in the supernatural takes in our lowest stage of intellectual development—the adoration of material objects. A stone or a tree supposed to possess supernatural powers of good or evil, or to have some peculiar sanctity, is a fetish. Idolatry and the worship of living things are not uncommonly confounded with fetish worship, but in reality are another and higher form of religion, belonging to a more advanced culture.

"You have seen the proposal to transport Plymouth Rock about the country for a show? It is in the morning papers, one of which I had the back luck to pick up while at breakfast. Hate the morning papers!"

The Timorous Reporter signified his regret.

"I hope it will not be done," continued the Curmudgeon Philosopher, ignoring the apology. "In the first place, the Rock is devoid of authenticity. It is indubitably a rock, and it is at Plymouth, but its connection with the landing of the Pilgrims was supplied by imagination. That is all right; by imagination we demonstrate our superiority to the novelists. Historians and scientists are credentialed by imagination; through imagination the philosopher attains to a knowledge of the meaning and message of things. Without imagination we should be as the magazine poets that perish."

With obvious satisfaction in his character of cynic the Curmudgeon Philosopher again mitigated the austerity of his countenance—this time by something that may have been honestly intended as a smile.

"We have seen bands of children taught to march about a cracked bell, throw flowers upon it, sing hymns to it. When it stopped in the several cities that it was carried through on a triumphal car the populace turned out to worship it. It was supplied with a guard of honor.' Bands played appropriate music before it, and mayors 'delivered eulogies.' No popular hero or august sovereign could be accorded a more obsequious homage than this lifeless piece of cracked

metal—nay, its progress is more like that of a Grecian god. This was fetishism, pure and undefiled.

“If this new project is carried out the people that worshiped a bell will worship a stone. True, the stone weighs several tons.”

Proud of his generosity in making so great a concession, the Curmudgeon Philosopher looked over the top of his spectacles for the applause that came not to his hope.

“Sir,” he concluded, his great fist falling like a thunderbolt upon the table at which he stood, “we are Pottawattomies!”