

Baltimore Morning Herald
December 10, 1900

Terse and Terrible Texts

According to an ingenious writer in the Biggsville (Ark.) Clarion, the church fair oyster supper is a survival of the time when the entire population of the earth was savage.

“The sacrificial fire,” he says in a recent number of that able journal, “was the parent of the oyster supper. Both of them are of religious significance—the sacrificial fire in that it was built to appease the wrath of the gods; the oyster supper in that it is a device for raising the coin to pay the preacher’s salary. In addition to this striking resemblance there are other points of similarity. One of these is the fact that in both functions flowing blood pays a prominent part. No sacrificial fire was considered satisfactory unless the blood of a lamb were sprinkled over the spectators. Similarly, at the oyster supper lambs are bled. Another coincidence lies in the circumstance that at both functions the spectators must needs go hungry. The sacrificial lamb was never eaten. The oyster-supper lamb is never fed.”

The writer then goes on to discuss the ethical and esthetic aspects of the oyster supper. After pointing out its ill effects he urges the immediate passage of remedial legislation.

“Now that Congress is in session,” he says, “it is high time to secure the enactment of a law making the giving of an oyster supper a felony. The young men of the United States have been robbed long enough. The day has come to call a halt. If the luxury-satiated minions of the rich, who infest the halls of the National Legislature, are deaf to the appeals hurled at them, the sterling youth of the greatest nation in the universe, strong in the conviction that right makes might, should assert their rights and dare defend them, and, with the palladium of their liberties painted upon their banners, should arise like the crusaders of old and march in a solid phalanx upon the modern Babylon and shout defiance at the enemies of the people’s blood-bought liberties.”

The meaning of this last sentence is not clear.

Dr. Thomas Sudler, representative of the Second ward in the First Branch of the City Council, is a gentleman of ample girth, ample geniality and ample influence. He is also the only solon enjoying the distinction of having been born in a town bearing his family name. Sudlersville, Queen Anne county, is the place of his nativity, and Old Defenders’ Day, 1850, was the day that he first took his rank among the people of the United States. Dr. Sudler is remarkable in more ways than one. In the first place, he is one of the few Democrats in the Council who do not look upon the Mayor as their natural enemy. In the second place, he is the great-grandson-in-law of Commodore McDonough, one of America’s greatest naval heroes. In the third place, he does not know the taste of coffee or tea, has never swallowed a single drop of whisky and is acquainted with the flavor of beer only by hearsay. The strongest elixir known to his palate is lemonade. Nobody seems to know why a man of the Doctor’s jovial temperament should eschew the festive cup. In all probability he doesn’t now himself. But that he does eschew

it is a fact which his friends are willing to substantiate by affidavit. According to some of them he is the only adult male in the Second ward who has not swallowed at least one whole bottle of malt extract.

Mr. Josiah A. Kinsey, secretary to the Board of Police Commissioners, is a man of many talents. For exercising them in the interests of the public peace he receives \$3.48 every day in the year and as he is now protected by the civil service rules of the new police law he will receive this sum, unless he resigns-which is unlikely-or neglects his duty-which is impossible-all the days of his natural life.

Thus it will be seen that he has what is vulgarly known as a good thing. But for two reasons nobody casts envious eyes upon his job. The first of these lies in the fact that he is such a good fellow that no one would like to see him out of work. The second is concerned with the circumstance that he is obliged to perform \$15 worth of labor for every dollar he receives. Sometimes he finishes his work by 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and at other times he is at his desk until 10 at night. But no matter how busy he is or how much annoyed, he never fails to be genial Joe. For this reason he has more friends than he knows what to do with. Incidentally it may be mentioned that he is a very good-looking gentleman and slightly bald in front. He is the official receiver of stolen goods.

City Councilman George Stewart Brown, of the Thirteenth ward, is 29 years of age and a Democrat in politics. Also, he is about 5 feet 11 inches in height, a believer in single blessedness, and exceedingly blond as to complexion, with a straight nose and a beardless face. His voice, when he nears the end of a speech, rises nine notes higher than high C, and often, when in the midst of an oration in the Council, his emotions affect it in such a manner that it runs off into a shrill squeak. As a debater he adds much to the gaiety of the First Branch. He is an A. B. of Hopkins, an LL. B. of the U. of M., and a lawyer by profession, and lives at 1037 St. Paul street. Before he was elected to the Council he had never enjoyed the delights of a political job. The color of his hair is that of a well-ripened lemon.

Everybody knows him-the street car philosopher. He stands upon the back platform during the rush hours, with a four-horse-power cigar in his mouth and a genial grin stretching from the suburbs of his right ear to the frontiers of his left.

When a fat woman with a market-basket steps upon his toes, he chuckles merrily; when a curve-greaser with an odorous pot of lubricant crowds him into a corner, he laughs loudly; when a sporty young man blows a cloud of 20-for-5-cents cigarette smoke into his face and ornaments his expensive waistcoat with a scattering of ashes, he fairly roars in joyousness.

It is his mission in life to keep the crowd of mauled and "shoved" and mashed sufferers on the back platform in good humor. Sometimes he tells funny stories. At other times he hums ragtime. At still other times he indulges in extemporaneous witticisms. At all times he smiles.

Most people-even those whom he amuses-look upon the street car philosopher as a variety of polite lunatic. This is the invariable penalty of good humor. The laughmaker, from the days of Moses, has been placed in the class of the phrenologically concave. The court jesters of medieval times were esteemed in proportion to their ability to make up and act like imbeciles. Comedy today, is synonymous with feigned lunacy.

This is not as it should be. The men who make jokes are just as important in the game of life as the men who build empires or write epics or invent steam engines. The jester should not

rank with the court cook, but with the king his master. Some day the world will begin to appreciate this fact. And the monuments will be erected to Tom Hood and the man that discovered the servant girl joke, and the remains of Joe Miller will be resurrected from their resting place in the potter's field and decently buried in Westminster Abbey.