

Scientific American.

ESTABLISHED 1845.

MUNN & CO., Editors and Proprietors. PUBLISHED WEEKLY AT No. 261 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

O. D. MUNN.

A. E. BEACH.

TERMS FOR THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1882.

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No. 337,

For the Week ending June 17, 1882.

Price 10 cents. For sale by all newsdealers.

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LEGISLATIVE ATAVISM.

While studying the variations of plants and animals under domestication and also in the state of nature, Darwin observed a tendency more or less persistent and active to revert to earlier and less specialized forms. Instead of exactly reproducing the parent in type and behavior the offspring would more closely resemble some ancestral form, perhaps far remote in time and in the scale of development. This reversion he called "atavism."

The same characteristic appears also among men; and the scientific historian finds in this "atavism" an explanation of those otherwise unaccountable outbursts of wild barbarism among partially civilized communities, as shown in relapses to the bloody rites of ancestral religions and the like; and of those equally unreasoning outbursts of race animosities among more highly civilized peoples; such, for example, as may be witnessed to-day in Russia and on our Pacific Coast.

It is largely through this national or local atavism that history repeats itself; and because of it the experience of one age or generation counts for nothing when a later generation relapses and insists upon repeating the old, it may be fatal experiment.

Under new and widely different conditions, the old phase of thought and feeling revives, and, with the passionate unreason of the earlier day, men repeat the ancient folly and re-enact the ancient injustice.

Compare the recent act of Congress against the immigration of Chinese laborers with the laws against free negroes enacted a few years ago by South Carolina and other States of the south and west. The parallel is discreditably close, and the disgrace of Congress is greater than that of the earlier legislators in that Congress in its unwarranted invasion of the dignity and inherent rights of all honest labor, acted less from conviction than from a contemptible fear of offending a class in the far west, whose votes may be needed on some future election day; a class whose moral and economical thinking exactly reproduces that of the earlier day, as exhibited in this typical provision of the Constitution of Oregon, to wit:

"No free negro or mulatto, not residing in this State at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall ever come, reside, or be within this State, or hold any real estate, or make any contract or maintain any suit therein; and the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws for the removal, by public officers, of all such free negroes and mulattoes, and for their effectual exclusion from the State, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the State, or employ or harbor them therein."

The new law which disgraces our statute books makes it unlawful (for the space of ten years from August next) for any Chinese laborer to come within the limits of the United States, or for any person to aid or abet them in coming; the words "Chinese laborer" covering skilled as well as unskilled workers. The law provides:

(SEC. 2) That the master of any vessel who shall knowingly bring within the United States on such vessel, and land or permit to be landed, any Chinese laborer, from any foreign port or place, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars for each and every such Chinese laborer so brought, and may be also imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year."

Section 10 provides "That every vessel whose master shall knowingly violate any provisions of this act shall be deemed forfeited to the United States, and shall be liable to seizure and condemnation in any district of the United States into which such vessel may enter or in which she may be found;" and

Section 11: "That any person who shall knowingly bring into or cause to be brought into the United States by land, or who shall knowingly aid or abet the same, or aid or abet the landing in the United States from any vessel of any Chinese person not lawfully entitled to enter the United States, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall on conviction thereof, be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year."

This would be an exact echo of the South Carolina law against the introduction of "free negroes or persons of color," if it only had a clause providing for the sale into slavery of the obnoxious Chinaman. The spirit is the same; and the excuses offered for so barbarous and anti-American an invasion of the common rights of humanity are substantially the same to-day as they were half a century ago.

The free person of color was of an alien and degraded race, incompetent of citizenship and unfit to blend socially or politically with the Caucasian. At the same time his presence was a source of social peril, in that it threatened the stability of the prevailing industrial system. The same charges are now brought against the Chinese, and with slighter grounds for justification. Southern society survives and thrives with the negro free; before the ten years' limitation of Chinese immigration ends it is safe to predict that the nation, as a whole, will discover that its hazard from Chinese labor is infinitely less than from the wrong done to all laboring men by allowing local clamor to secure the general ostracism of any class of honest laborers.

The national shame of this enactment arises not so much because it involves a breach of good faith with China, to whose subjects we have just agreed by treaty to accord "all the rights, privileges, immunities, and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored

nation," as because it legalizes a positive and offensive discrimination against certain laborers, skilled and unskilled, as laborers. It is not the Chinaman, but the Chinaman who works, who is to be excluded, and for whose exclusion the law was specially passed.

In the face of this national crime it is trivial to discuss the misrepresentations and specious pretexts which the advocates of the measure have put forth so variously to justify their position. If all that has been said against the Chinese were true, it would not justify Congress in thus nationalizing the temporary lapse of a portion of the Pacific Coast people from the national standard of impartial justice to all honest labor, irrespective of the color of the laborer; a standard which hitherto—at least since slavery was abolished—has been our crowning virtue as a nation.

THE SUMMER SOLSTICE.

On the 21st of June, at 8 o'clock in the morning, the sun enters the sign Cancer, and inaugurates the great physical epoch known as the summer solstice. He has reached his extreme northern declination of twenty-three and a half degrees, and, just grazing the tropic of cancer, pauses for a few days in his course before turning his steps from our northern clime. The familiar terms explain the apparent movement, the word tropic coming from a Greek word meaning to turn, and the word solstice coming from two Latin words meaning the sun stands still.

The days remain of the same length, fifteen hours and sixteen minutes, for nine days, from the 16th to the 25th. On the 26th a change comes, and a decrease of one minute marks the southern course of the sun. In a few days the change will be apparent to careful observers. The sunrise and sunset points will swerve slightly to the south, and the sun will not mount quite so high at noon-day toward the zenith. The movement of the sun to the south and his lessening meridian altitude will go on until the 21st of December, when the winter solstice occurs, and the days have reached their minimum length. The process will then be reversed; the sun will move northward, and his meridian altitude increase until he comes round again to the summer solstice of 1883. Observers can see for themselves the changes in the sun's place in the heavens that mark the change in the seasons, and will readily note that the further south the sun rises and sets the shorter will be the days, and the lower the altitude of the noon-day sun the less will be the intensity of the heat.

This oscillation of the sun to the north and south, and his varying meridian altitude are only apparent, the real cause of the movement being the revolution of the earth around the sun with her pole inclined twenty-three and a half degrees to the plane of her orbit, her seasons varying according to the manner in which her surface is presented to the sun. In the north temperate zone the sun's rays now shine with full force, and summer reigns supreme. The mornings and evenings mark his furthest progress northward, the noons show his highest meridian altitude, the evenings bear witness to the period when his beams linger longest above the western horizon after sunset.

It would seem as if our hottest days should occur about the 21st of June, when the sun's perpendicular rays fall upon this portion of the globe. But such is not the case. As midsummer approaches the quantity of heat received from the sun during the day is greater than the quantity of heat lost during the night, and there is therefore an increase of heat each day. The daily increase reaches its maximum at the summer solstice. But the heat garnered up by the process causes an accession of heat each day until the heat lost during the night is just equal to that received during the day. This happens some time in July or August. Our hottest weather for this reason occurs some time after the summer solstice, just as the hottest part of the day is some time after midday, and the coldest part of the night is toward morning.

There are four great time marks in the annual revolution of the earth, the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, the autumnal equinox, and the winter solstice. The summer solstice is the most interesting and suggestive of them all. It is, in our zone, the culminating point of solar power, the gala-day of the sovereign who holds in his hand the issues of life and death for every member of the human race. The earth rejoicing in verdure, the perfection of foliage, the brilliant flowers, the ripening fruits, bear witness to the fertilizing power of his benignant beams. Out-door life furnishes the conditions of enjoyment, and earth, air, and sky hold out separate allurements to increase the number of those who share in the general holiday. So delightful are the charms of midsummer that one longs to make them immortal, to hold back the sun in his course, and perpetuate the present conditions of his reign. But such are not the conditions of human life. The seasons come and go, swayed by an omnipotent hand; at the culminating point of solar intensity the picture changes, the supreme moment passes. Before the sun that rises on the 21st of June sinks below the horizon, his face will be turned from us, the earth will have traveled thousands of miles toward the regions of cold and darkness. A fraction of light will be lost from the longest day, a fraction of darkness will be added to the shortest night.

No one can help mourning over the loss of the first minute of daylight that follows this summer solstice. No one can help rejoicing over the gain of the first minute of daylight that follows the winter solstice.

On the 26th the decrease of one minute in the day's length