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Bells and Whistles.

THE spirit that fired the hearts of the iconoclasts seems to be breaking out afresh in the minds of the ungodly who, in divers ways make suggestions totally at variance with tradition and the accepted customs of the day. It has been the fashion ever since the days when curfew rang on English soil, to summon the faithful to prayer by means of metal contrivances called bells, which, being made purposely sonorous, emit a loud noise when set in motion. The better to expedite the travel of the sound, it is likewise usual to suspend the bell in a high position so that the sound-waves may the more readily pass to the ears of those thus cheerfully summoned. Indeed so universal has the custom become that one of those instruments is deemed as essential a portion of church property as the minister himself. Those shameless men who advocate the abolition of church bells maintain as excuse for such opinion that the bell is but a relic of barbarism; that when the common mind was steeped in ignorance it may have been well enough to have bells and gongs and other noisy contrivances to apprise the devout that the time was at hand when they were to meet at the sanctuary; but that now-a-days, when every one, matron and maid, old men and sprightly boys; those in the first flush of manhood, and those with whom the shadow is toward the east, are presumably able to read the paper, that the day of the bell has passed, that its usefulness is ended, and that it should be abolished. To those who would meekly suggest that the time when divine service begins is a point of great importance, these scoffers at custom and established usage, say that in these days of cheap watches and clocks, everyone has one of these useful instruments, either in his house or on his person, as the case may be, and hence the old-time bell is rendered unnecessary. So far do they carry their wicked argument that they even suggest that to invalids, nervous people, and so on, the clang and clangor, the noise and vibration of a church bell is as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, and that it is no more needful to keep up such old custom—than to continue to ride to mill with the grist fastened on the horse, just because our respective ancestors did so ordain their gait. To these suggestions seriously their ears do several men incline, and the controversy has even reached the newspapers, the case being simply Bells vs. New Ideas.

While this may excite the approval of the injudicious it must arouse regret in the minds of the truly good; yet in reading the arguments pro and con in a Philadelphia religious paper last night 'twas with a subdued hope that the able champions of the no-bell idea would some day visit Astoria and promulgate some powerful arguments about steamboat whistles. We don't know how Astorians feel about church bells, nor have we a wide insight into their views relative to the morning shrieks that come from the water front, but believe, individually, that it is in the limits of possibility for those boats to get away from this port when the rosy aurora of morning is flushing over the eastern hills without screaming and tooting and shrieking and waking up the whole town in an effort to have it understood that they leave at 6 o'clock. If it were a matter of dispute as to the hour of departure we would concede the necessity of such daily demonstration of the important fact, but why, morning after morning, despite the advertisements that appear in THE ASTORIAN, our marine friends should keep up such a diabolical screeching, is like the peace of God—it passeth all understanding. Railway trains carrying valuable lives and great treasure decorously announce their departure with a modest toot, momentary and decisive. For this we are at a loss to know why such a fuss is made because a boat starts for Portland. There is one craft in particular, that wails and sobs and then strikes a shrill, ear-piercing note that fills the air and has the same effect upon those unfortunate creatures that have nerves, that a dentist's probe has on the victim in the chair. The chief agony about that infernal boat is you don't know when it is liable to break out again, and the suspense is more misery than the few moments of physical torture. But the point is made, and justly too, that everyone ought to be up and "on deck" when these whistles blow. If these unearthly screams are a wisely-ordained punishment to the slothful, and to those lazy creatures who lie in bed when they ought to be shambling around bragging about being "up early" and otherwise useless, then are we in the front rank of those who would commend the continuance of these morning avengers off the dawn. But yet the robust and stalwart majority should concede that the weak and sleep-desiring minority have surely some rights that they (the r. and s. m.) are bound to respect, and in their behalf we humbly suggest that to make a voyage to Portland it is not necessary to make such prefaratory announcement as the present.