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MONISM AND AGNOSTICISM.

BY AMOS WATERS.

I HAVE several times ventured in the liberal press of England and once in the columns of *The Open Court* (No. 261) to deplore the feud between agnosticism and monism as understood by their respective exponents, and to deny that such feud was irrevocable. To me it is profoundly disturbing, this exuberant dissidence of dissent, this quibbling and squabbling anent frigid technicalities which after all are but as skeletons at the intellectual feast. No doubt the Egyptian revelers at the banquet renewed in conjecture the blood and breath and being of the skeleton there, and each with individual fancy would fulfil the external graces which depended erstwhile on the dry bones and covered them with beauty. The result would differ as mentalities differed, discussion might arise wrathful and pointed with innuendoes. Then would be forgotten the flowers and fruits and choicest viands; each guest would be clamorous for *my* opinion, *my* conception, *my* objection. Peradventure then some obscure but reflective spectator would witness for peace and compromise. "Good friends," he might observe, "this disharmony is unworthy. What are our petty *mys* but the successive ripples of a wave of impression which is running its course and will presently merge into communal memories? Truth is this to one and that to another, and truth it is to either. Let us imitate the gracious charity of truth and content ourselves with the thought that while the arrogant lust for absolute truth is not to be allayed with possession, yet each may select one aspect of the immortal mystery and cherish his selection into loveliness. And meanwhile let us justly asself whatever is commendable on these tables."

So might speak the ancient peacemaker, and so in similar accents might speak any wishful to reconcile the wordy strife of two parties of modern thought, with so much yet so little to divide them as dwells in the barriers industriously upreared by the militant adherents of monism and agnosticism. So too with kindred aim I am disposed in these columns—subject to editorial hospitality—to plead for a better understanding between the rival schools, to remove from the one some

misapprehension, and to strive with the other for the excommunication of bias and the dissolution of wrath.

The inception of monism and agnosticism may equally be resolved along with other philosophies of recent date into a spirit of reaction against mere unbelief. The development of either has strengthened the moral sinew of protest against the distemper of negation. The sheer negation of simple unbelief was necessary and righteous in the appointed days, but a realm of new ideas has replaced the old order; the mania of anarchism is spent, and the modern spirit demands a positive speculation which shall redeem the powerful ethical fervor of the great orthodoxies and supply a fresh sacredness of contemplation in the inevitable problems of the spiritual world. It is necessary at this point to disclose my own particular private impression of the approximate meaning of the two controverted terms in question.

I. *Monism.* Monism is a philosophical conception which resolves the "whole of reality, i. e. everything that is 'into' one inseparable and indivisible entirety"; a unitary conception of the world which always "bears in mind that our words are abstracts representing parts or features of the One and All, and not separate existences." Roughly speaking, matter and mind, soul and body, atoms and molecules, God and the world, are all abstracts which if true "represent realities, i. e. parts, or features, or relations of the world, that are real, but they never represent things in themselves, absolute existences, for indeed there are no such things as absolute entities. The All being one interconnected whole, everything in it, every feature of it, every relation among its parts has sense and meaning and reality only if considered with reference to the whole." And the essential principle crowning this conception is the unification or systematisation of knowledge.* The foregoing summary may be regarded as orthodox in that it is official. If we seek to verify this authentic and concise statement in the ampler regions of individual exposition the trouble begins. To accept at random a signal instance of divergence, we find Dr. Carus and Professor Haeckel vitally—I had nearly said fatally—differing not merely in detail but

* *Vide prospectus of The Monist.*

in rudimentary principle. This is admitted by Dr. Carus, who at the same time generously says there is "no one, perhaps, who has made a more effective propaganda for the monistic world-conception than he." I am just now referring to a critique by Dr. Carus on the position of Professor Haeckel.* The first named objects that the exposition of the popular naturalist is simply mechanicalism savoring strongly of materialism. He denies Haeckel's proposition that "the wonderful enigmas of organised life are accessible to a natural solution by a mechanical explanation of purposeless, efficient causes," and while granting that "mechanical explanations will serve for all motions that take place in the world," refuses to concede that such are applicable to that which is not motion; and further, that the method, if applicable, would not be desirable. He further acutely objects that feeling is not a mechanical phenomenon, and that an idea being the special meaning of a complex feeling is not a mechanical phenomenon either. The brain motion is not the idea. - And finally he disastrously traversed Haeckel's interpretation of the processes of causation wherever applied. The somewhat hurried and inadequate rejoinder of the Professor in the succeeding issue of *The Monist*, together with the further reasonings of Dr. Carus transparently accentuated the lines of cleavage. I am not concerned to catalogue the details of debate, but merely to claim an adorning moral from the incident. Here we have two of the principal exponents of monism harmoniously endorsing a credal label but strenuously dissenting each from the other as to the import of principle and definition. Just as Huxley and Spencer do elsewhere in connection with another 'ism. Just as philosophers always have done in the past, and in human probability always will do in the future. Just as is sequentially useful if friendly regard continue. There are two eminent thinkers on this planet who, exactly because they happen to entertain opposite opinions as to whether something or anything is Unknowable (with or without a capital *U*), excite the derision of non-reasoning Philistines and unreasonable theologians by mutual disregard. There may or may not be anything unknowable in the abstract but—! "They never speak as they pass by," hum the scoffers.

However, my frank purpose is to select the monistic exposition of Dr. Carus with the ultimate hope of demonstrating that there is no more dogmatic difference between *his* monism and the fluctuating trend of agnosticism in England—perhaps even to some extent less—than between the definitive differences that appear to trail serpentwise over the flowers of the monistic Eden. I confess an initial attraction toward the fragrant liberalism of Dr. Carus, and an invincible preference for the term agnosticism, together with a pious

private conviction that monism and agnosticism equally are but temporary compromises between emotional religion and exact philosophy, either to mystically blend with the twilight guesses of ancient speculation and dissolve their ghostly sparks of truth in the omnipresent illumination of the laggard morning. Previous to the indulgent excursion into the especial pastures of the agnostic monism of Dr. Carus it is pertinent to hazard a review of idiosyncratic agnosticism with becoming brevity.

II. *Agnosticism*. The title was invented by Professor Huxley at a Clapham tea-party, and was by him intended to be "suggestively antithetic to the 'Gnostic' of church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant."* The name was derived from two Greek words *a*, not, and *gignosco*, to know. Consequently, says the witty priestling, *agnostic* means a man who does not know, the plain Saxon of which is *ignoramus*, and serious thinkers have not been guiltless of the witless jest. Now as summarised by Huxley, agnosticism means the uncompromising application of a principle as old as Socrates, and which was justified by Descartes, a principle which affirms the sovereignty of reason in intellectual speculation and negates conclusions not demonstrable. Thus a certain limitation of human faculties is implied, a limitation essentially non-dogmatic in that individual capacity ever varies, as in a larger sense the results of science differ and widen with the growing years. There are problems anent which almost all agnostics reasonably decline to formulate opinions, and this without indolence. The ultimate nature or essence of the universe and of the human mind or soul are inevitably instanced. However, it is pardonable enough to decline to formulate an opinion, but it is not this reticence of which Dr. Carus and his colleagues justly complain. I assume that the quarrel is occasioned by Mr. Spencer's formulation of the limitations of opinions, "The Unknowable" of "First Principles" to wit. Mr. M. D. Conway once excellently said that the creation of this metaphysical spectre was the worst day's work that the respectable philosopher ever did. This magnified and arrogant dogma hospitably and obviously entertains a clamorous and penurious crowd of dependent assumptions. To quietly say *I do not know* is the wisdom of modesty which is agnosticism; to say *IT IS UNKNOWABLE* is the reckless conceit of braggart nescience. What then is the agnostic approach to the supreme secret of all speculation? It is a confession that the ultimate cause of the Universe is yet—not necessarily forever—inscrutable, and the simple confession betrays a more or less concealed consciousness of an Unseen Reality which interweaves through all phenomena and persists through all symbolic changes of

* *The Monist*, Vol. 11, No. 5, pp. 438-42.

* *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1889.

matter, force, and motion. I am conscious of this omnipresent reality, and with Kant am filled with awe when I contemplate its manifestations in the starry heavens and the moral nature in man. And holding the mystery of the first and final appeal to be as suggestive of solemn adoration as the superstructural will of anthropomorphic theism, I am content to accept the designation of reverent agnostic. This ardent neo-agnosticism is not to be confused with "the worship of the unknowable"—a contradiction in terms and sensitive to caricature. It should be clearly understood that the only negative principle concerning which all agnostics are approximately agreed is the determining of certainties by the states of consciousness. From this central assent idiosyncratic differences of speculative exposition are scattered like sparks from a catherine-wheel. Mr. Samuel Laing has a theory of polarity, and Dr. Bithell another of the Spiritual Body. The discouraging feud between Spencer and Huxley has prolific branches. The brilliant editor of *The Agnostic Journal* impetuously transcends the cobweb barriers of exact knowledge and soars into the regions of ineffable vision, ineffably condemned by the critical school of Mr. Leslie Stephen, and these departures prevail to the end of the chapter.

III. *Dr. Carus and Monism.* Turn we again to the personal monistic interpretation of Dr. Carus of the problems vexing the hearts of men. The consciousness of an Unseen Reality previously mentioned is not contradicted by the immediate critic; in truth it is eloquently affirmed. "The religion of science recognises that there is a power, an all-pervading law in the universe, which is not personal, but super-personal. And this super-personal power not only obtains in the motions of the stars and in the relations of cosmic life, but also in the destinies of nations, in the growth of society, and in the fates of individuals. It wrecks those who do not conform to its injunctions."* And more recently Dr. Carus defines God as not only the "sum-total of matter and force . . . but also that quality of the world which the naturalist describes in natural laws. God is the life of the world, he is that feature of existence which makes mind and knowledge possible. In addition he is that which men call progress, the ideal of the future that lives in our souls, and the principle of evolution in nature."† The italics are mine. To this definition I devoutly assent. The words emphasised seem to me to precisely summarise the agnostic apprehension of God, and precisely to maintain that tremulous yet tenacious apprehension against the assumptive comprehension of dogmatic theism. The naturalist unfolds the sequence and details the marvels of natural law, but the "quality"—as Dr. Carpenter once said, the Force Behind—eludes his scan.

* *The Ethical Problem*, pp. 20-21.

† *The Monist*, July, 1892, p. 600.

The "feature of existence which makes mind and knowledge possible"—yes, but even Dr. Carus halts here in positive thought and merely proceeds with poetic expansion. Is not this quality of the world or this feature of existence a mystery which knocks at the gates of sensation but ignores the pleading of knowledge to enter the portals thereof? Surely it is what Mr. Spencer meant when in the misfortune of his life he oppressed all speculation and depressed all aspiration with his boggy-dogma; surely it is what the agnostic means when with fainting heart and faltering tongue he strives in confession with the persistent sense of an enigma which baffles his consciousness.

Take also the kindred soul-problem. And here I am fain to digress a few moments to express gratulation at the great and noble work *The Open Court* is recording for religious liberalism and humanity in this connection. The belief in the persistence of personal consciousness beyond discarnate life is for good or ill one of the most powerful motives in the ethical group. And now that the old animal terrors and the old celestial lusts are insensibly blending in a mist of regretful uncertainty, it is well that in the principal organ of liberal thought a continuity of responsible instructive articles should so luminously reveal whatever was beautifully true and scientifically sane in the vanishing fables. This by the way. Present-day belief in immortality is sweetly chaotic beyond the street-corner survivals of the barbaric creeds of yesterday, you can scarcely discover two people with coincident views of what is going to happen individually when the body shall have descended the narrow grave. Witness the discussions of cremation. These invariably reveal the interesting fact that a number of fervent pietists yet cling to the old-fashioned idea of the resurrection of the flesh—an idea not destitute of scientific truth. Let us take it that the majority of speculators in *post mortem* scrip invest in the notion of ghosthood. Says Dr. Carus, "if you mean by immortality, the soul's existence in the shape of a bodiless ghost, you should first prove the existence of bodiless ghosts."* Exactly the temper of a logical agnostic. And in the same place, when gravely balancing the possibility of the "preservation of the special and most individual contents of man's personality," he is constrained to pronounce that "even an unclear idea of the immortality of the soul is therefore better and truer than the flat denial of it." Which is the position of a reverent agnostic. Dr. Carus accepts the evolutionary view of life and endows it with the gravest and noblest enthusiasm of faith, and speaking with a fair acquaintance of his published writings and knowledge, personal and literary, of the sympathetic elements of agnosticism in England, I have to confess inability to determine any essential

* *Homilies of Science*, p. 181.

bar to communion—always excepting the disreputable Unknowable!—between *The Open Court* monists and the non-Spencerian agnostics of the respectable majority. I observe with pleasure that Lucien Arréat perceives the imminent extinction of the controverted *ignorabimus*. "I shall be much surprised," he writes, "if the philosophers do not at last decide to wipe out the formidable *Unknowable* set up by Spencer as the ultimate entity. We shall speak no more of the fathomless universe, but of the still unexplored universe; of the unknown, not of the unknowable." *

IV. *Monism-Agnosticism*. Is any reconciliation possible or desirable? Perhaps the affirmative answer in either instance is most admirably supported by the excellently reported account of the farewell banquet to Dr. Carus† prior to his departure from England. Incidentally Dr. Carus mentioned that in his journey through Europe he met Professor Mach of Prague with whom he had previously engaged in controversy, and that personal communion disclosed the fact that each had been using different words with precisely the same meaning. And he claimed that agnostics might "agree with him more than might at first seem probable, if we could come to a closer understanding as to the use of certain words." Always "words idle words" obscuring issues and marring approximate harmony. Is not reconciliation then desirable? This granted, the possibility is surely not far to seek. Nay, I venture to say that the reconciliation is obvious and that the sole remaining difference is one not obliterated by agreement as to reasoned definitions. For above and beyond immediate contention as to one or another formulation, there looms the rising vapors of individual temperament, ever changing the aspect and outlines of the mountain of truth for the spectator. The adherents of monism represent whatever is solid and eminent in physical science, and Dr. Carus refuses to admit any knowledge other than scientific, likewise philosophically demonstrable. But not only agnostics, but many other rationalists in England are mentally prone to mysticism and accessible to aspirations and psychic experiences of which the most austere biologists may yet be obliged to account for in the enlarging processes of evolution. This however by the way. There is a snare of intellectual activity wherein it is difficult not to fall—I mean the relativity of knowledge indicated by Kant and popularised by Mr. Spencer. Indeed to question this apparent truism is to betray astonishing ignorance of the best results of modern thought. Of course this subjectivity is not peculiar to our own time; it is older than Kant and reaches back to the third century of the Christian era as may be discovered in the pages of Sextus Empiricus. The relativity of knowledge—what does it

mean when gravely analysed? Sit down and sketch a landscape. Your eye is keen, your hand is skilful. These foxgloves in the foreground are taller than yon cottage in the middle distance, and the cottage is equal with the angle of the high and receding hill. The flying birds grow large, then almost vanish. That blue-smocked boy with two milk-cans is bigger than the far windmill. Change your position and much is reversed, all is altered. Measure reality by your picture and you are fatally wrong. The relativity is determined by locomotion, and wherever your standpoint, you assume the proportions to be real because you only use your faculties from that standpoint. You suffer the landscape to be subdued by your pervading egotism, and forget that its tranquil assertion is oblivious of your interpretation and is sensitive to another, neither as low as the foxgloves nor as lofty as the windmill, but sublimely overarching all like the soaring azure dome which embraces even you and transforms you. So of the intellectual landscape, your knowledge of it and your incapably loquacious ament the relativity of your knowledge. Suffer your views of truth to blend with a vaster scan and confess your failure to attain finality. This is agnosticism.

* * *

Monism—agnosticism? Recall the tradition of the *λαμπδηφορία*—the race with the flaming torch twofold and controverted. Did successive runners grown weary pass on to eager comrades the burning light to be borne through the darkness of night? Or was it that many swift athletes pressed on with individual link of flame, and he who first with light still burning reached the goal to accept the victorious wreath and be gladdened by the acclamations of the Hellenes? Commentators pronounce for either and both. We, too, monists and agnostics, are running our race with the light of truth as we uphold it for the generations. And whether we are inspired with communal enthusiasm, or choose to individually strive with the swiftest on the path, our aim is consecrated and unique, and should ban all jealousy save that of care for an unsullied ideal.

COLUMBUS AND THE CABOTS.

BY F. M. HOLLAND.

WE ARE all the more bound to honor Columbus, because one of the first results of his crossing the Atlantic was the discovery of North America, on July 3, 1497, by an English ship. The "Matthew" had sailed from Bristol early in May, and followed the track of Leif Ericson, towards what was thought after his time to be a great island near Greenland, and was put down on an Italian map in 1367, as the Island of Brazil. The name "New Land" was also familiar to Norse, French, and English sailors. The path thither seemed lost; but the "Matthew" sailed first to Iceland, and

* *The Monist*, October, 1892, p. 113.

† *Vide Agnostic Journal*, Oct. 8-15-22, 1892.

then south-west into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The point first seen was the north end of Cape Briton, as is plainly marked on the map made by one of the discoverers. There they landed that same day, set up the flags of England and Venice, and took possession of the country in the name of the King of England.

The importance of this discovery lay largely in the fact that it was made thirteen months before any part of the mainland was seen by Columbus, who in fact died in the supposition that he had not found a new continent, but only some islands near Asia. The first landing of the Spaniards on the shores of North America was in Florida, and nearly twenty years after Canada was discovered by the English. The latter thus acquired a title which was confirmed by the explorations of Frobisher, Baffin, Gilbert, Gosnold, Drake, Hudson, John Smith, and other navigators, until the right of our race to hold North America against the Spaniards was established by the settlers at Jamestown, Plymouth, and Boston. The Declaration on July 4, 1776, was a result of the discovery on July 3, 1497.

This discovery was made at day-break, according to contemporary records, on what was then called June 24, and kept sacred to St. John. The real date, however, was July 3, just as that of the discovery of the Bahamas by Columbus was October 21, not October 12. The false method of reckoning time was discarded by the Pope in 1582, but was kept up in England and her colonies by Protestant bigotry until 1752. When we read how pleasant May Day was in England, in Shakespeare's time, it should be remembered that the festivities were then held on May 11.

The principal question about the discovery in 1497 is whether the credit belongs mainly to John or to Sebastian Cabot. In favor of John Cabot, there is the recently discovered letter, printed in Justin Winsor's "History of America" (Vol. III, pp. 54-55), from the Milanese envoy, who wrote in December, 1497, about the discovery just made by a poor Venetian, greatly skilled in navigation, and named John Caboto, who had sailed in a small ship with eighteen companions, mostly English. No mention of his son, Sebastian, is made in this letter, nor in a previous one by the same author, nor in a third letter, written by a Venetian merchant who says that Zuan Cabot, as he was called at Venice, explored the coast for 300 leagues. A pension, for a sum which would now amount to about \$1000 a year, was granted by the King, early in 1498, to "John Calbot," of Venice, and a patent, authorising further explorations, was issued soon after to the discoverer, "John Kabotto, Venecian," but no provision is made for the inheritance of the money or privilege by Sebastian. In the latter's favor, however, there are a number of books published in the sixteenth century by English, French, Spanish, and Italian authors, who

mention him alone as the discoverer. He is thus mentioned in a book published in 1516 by Peter Martyr, who knew him intimately, and also in one by another personal friend, Richard Eden, whose account appeared in 1555. A third author said, in 1550, that he had met a man who said he heard Sebastian Cabot relate, without speaking of his father, how he had himself set out on a voyage of discovery to which he was prompted by the fame of Columbus. Many other writers have since taken the same ground. Thus Bacon gave the whole credit to "one Sebastian Gabato, a Venetian" ("Works," Vol. XI, pp. 293-295); and Burke said, "We derive our rights in America from the discovery of Sebastian Cabot, who first made the Northern Continent in 1497."

The only way to reconcile these statements is to suppose that both John and Sebastian were on the "Matthew," as is expressly stated on the map which is generally believed to have been made by Sebastian in 1544, and which is in part reprinted in Winsor's History. Both father and son are named in the permission for the voyage, given by the King in 1496. The father is supposed to have then been at least seventy years old, and to have died in the spring of 1498. It is highly probable that he took with him a son who afterwards proved himself an expert seaman. John was undoubtedly captain, at least nominally; but it is possible that the real authority was largely held by Sebastian, whose great talent for leadership soon became manifest. His veracity is less conspicuous; for he seems to have stated the place of his birth to Eden as Bristol, and to the Venetian ambassador as Venice. It is, however, possible that his hearers may have mixed up what he said about the voyage in 1497 with what he said about another in 1498. It may well have been in the latter year that, as stated by Peter Martyr and other authors, he fitted out two ships, at his own expense and risk, after his father's death, and set sail with three hundred men, first to Newfoundland or Labrador, where he landed some colonists who soon fell victims to the climate, then into Hudson's Bay in search of a north-west passage to India, and finally south along the coast as far as Delaware. There is reason to believe that such explorations were actually made by him, and most probably in 1498.

We afterwards find him employed by Charles V. to examine pilots for oceanic voyages, and presiding at the conference of geographers which decided, in 1524, that the Moluccas belonged to Spain, not Portugal. Two years later he sailed with three Spanish ships for Brazil, where he put down a mutiny, headed by his principal officers, and then up the Rio de la Plata to Paraguay, where he attempted a settlement and fought a bloody battle with the natives. Failure of supplies from Spain obliged him to depart after spending five

years in South America, where he left the horses whose wild descendants afterwards became so numerous. He then returned to England, and took the lead in organizing the expedition which gave that country direct trade with Russia. The instructions which he issued to the sailors forbade them to offer any violence to the Russians, to tempt any woman to unchastity, or to disclose the fact that England was then Protestant. The last prohibition was necessary to avoid angry disputes about religion.

These facts are presented to show that our national celebration in honor of Columbus might justly be followed by some local celebration in honor of the Cabots in 1897. The erection in 1892 of a triple monument, to Columbus, Americus Vespucius, and Sebastian Cabot, in Boston, was proposed some years ago by Hon. Robert C. Winthrop; but there are obvious objections to ignoring the claims of John Cabot; and much might be said against heaping new honors upon Vespucius. A celebration in Bristol, Enlargnd, of the discovery in 1497, has recently been proposed by Mr. and Mrs. Shipley in their book on "The English Discovery of America." Some such recognition might properly be offered in Boston, on Saturday, July 3, 1897, to both John and Sebastian Cabot, for what they did to make it possible for the settlers in Massachusetts to lay the foundations of this great republic.

CURRENT TOPICS.

WE ARE breaking up into classes and drifting apart; we cannot conceal our social tendencies, nor can any quantity of Thanksgiving whistling keep our courage up. Here is an item from the Chicago *News Record* of Thanksgiving day, reporting some proceedings of the Board of Education: "It was decided to allow the principals to receive contributions of clothing and cash for the benefit of children who would be unable to attend school without such aid. One day in each year will be set aside for the reception of such contributions." It is melancholy enough that in this wealthy city there are little children so ragged that they cannot go to school; but the remedy is worse than the disease. The plan proposed will divide the pupils into castes, for the children clothed by charity will feel their inferiority, while the others will exhibit the airs of a higher order. To lower the self-respect of boys and girls may weaken their characters for life. To exalt the intellect and abase the soul is not education. Many a time have I said with exultant pride, that however much our theoretical democracy might be strained, or even broken, by the stern facts of unequal conditions, on the level floor of the common schools at least, it was a practical reality; and I look with actual pain upon the proposition to put a public mark of inferiority upon any child in the school. The relief proposed ought to be given privately, and not by the official action of the teachers, or the principal of the school. It is not the province of the Board of Education to set aside one day in each year as a day of humiliation for any portion of the children in the schools. The members of the Board meant well, but their action was ill-advised, and it ought to be reconsidered.

* * *

There is a clamorous demand in England that poor school children be clothed and fed by the state, not as an act of patronage or bounty, but as the social *right* of the children which it is the

political *duty* of the government to enforce and provide for. It is claimed that there is no humiliation in this plan, as the element of charity is rejected from it altogether. Whatever degradation is in it is common to all the people, and no particular person is made the subject of humiliation. This is the sentiment of the scheme at least, however much it may be departed from in practice. I do not care to discuss its moral character at this time, but the confident manner in which it is advocated shows how rapidly the pride of self-dependence is fading out of men, as we pray to Our Father the Government, to give us this day our daily bread. Mr. Kier Hardie, a melodramatic member of the House of Commons, has recently demanded of the British government that "all poor school children be supplied with two free meals daily." Through this demand, Mr. Hardie was promoted at once to the head of the class of Socialistic radicals, but he could not hold his place. He was very soon taken down by some other boys who called themselves "a Socialist workmen's deputation." They waited upon the "Board" and demanded that poor school children be given "three good meals a day, with an ample supply of comfortable clothing." This was so far in advance of Mr. Hardie, that he went suddenly to the foot of the class, and unless he can do something, or say something to catch up, he may find himself classified next week among the Conservatives, and the week after that among the Tories. Mr. Hardie may get ahead of the "Socialist workmen's deputation" by insisting that a "good" meal must include roast beef and plum pudding. He may insist upon it, that "comfortable" clothing means broadcloth and linen; and that not less than seven suits, one for every day in the week, shall be considered an "ample" supply.

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I have been thinking lately that it would be well if the Humane Society could apply a part of its philanthropy to the protection of innocent words; and for a beginning, I wish to offer a petition in behalf of the suffering word "conservative." This has been so cruelly whipped and overworked of late, that with a broken spirit it has degenerated into unmeaning patter and slang. "The conservative opinion of Judge Smith, although qualified a little by the still more conservative statement of Senator Brown, is verified by the conservative figures which Governor Jones has obtained from all the county committees, and from those figures a conservative estimate made by General Robinson, one of the most conservative politicians of Oshkosh, gives Cleveland a majority of about ten thousand in the State of Kalamazoo." That is a slightly exaggerated specimen of the imbecile jargon that passed for political prophecy during the late campaign. I do not see how an estimate can be conservative any more than it can be pink, or yellow, or blue; but the word serves to give a false appearance of candor and moderation to an extravagant and deceptive claim. After the passage of the great Reform Bill in 1832 the English Tories changed their party name, and called themselves "Conservative," as they do still. The new word had such a respectable appearance in every syllable, that many persons were attracted by it, until they saw that it meant the same as "Tory," religious, political, and social stagnation. The old motto of the Tories, *Festina lente*, was the watchword still; and the paradox comes in handy to our Democratic statesmen at this time. They are all chirruping "*Festina lente!*" They are telling us with much affectation of bustle and fuss, that not only do they mean to hasten slowly, but they intend also to make many conservative changes, so that the country may advance rapidly along the lines of conservative progress, until the conservative revolution is accomplished. Speaking of the hurricane that swept the town of Red Bud out of existence a week ago, a morning paper flatters it in this fashion, "It was a conservative cyclone, being only three hundred yards in diameter, and breaking up into gentle breezes as soon as it struck the high bluffs that fringe the Mississippi river." And nearly all the democratic newspapers

and politicians tell us now that the unrelenting storm that buried the Republican party in irretrievable ruin, was a "conservative" cyclone.

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While the Humane Society is extending its protection to "conservative," I desire to ask a little benevolence for "distinguished." Although not so harshly overworked as the other, this word is very tired, and ought to have a rest. It might be relieved by "renowned," "illustrious," "august," or some other adjective equally good and inappropriate. Of course, like most of my brother snobs, I rather enjoy it in the Senate and the House of Representatives at Washington, as the proper and high-toned style, but when it gets down to the "distinguished alderman from the ninety-ninth ward," whom I know to be a prize-fighter, or to "Professor Blackstone, the distinguished colored barber on Seventh Street," the compliment becomes flattery in burlesque. It portends a crisis, and calls for a change. I attended but one political meeting during the late campaign, and that was a Democratic "rally," where the oratorical attractions comprised the Chairman of the Ways and Means committee in the National Congress, and three other gentlemen, candidates respectively for Vice President, Governor, and Congressman at large. I came very near being expelled from the meeting for laughing outright at the serious places, and weeping at the wit; but the way those candidates flattered one another to their own faces, and "distinguished" one another more than a hundred times apiece, was too comical for me; so I had to laugh or fall into apoplexy. Waiving the difference in color, their magniloquent courtesy had a strong resemblance to that of Brudder Gardner at the Limekiln Club, when in good humor he addresses "de distinguished Waydown Beebe," and "de extinguished Markful Smith." Porson Brice, the "distinguished" lawyer of Marbletown, used to express contempt in the language of professional flattery, by describing his opponent as "the distinguished and pusillanimous counsel on the other side"; which is hardly more grotesque than some of the mock politeness prevalent in Congress. Flatteries that are common to all, "distinguish" none. Greatness is not raised but lowered by titles common to mediocrity. When two men mutually agree to "distinguish" each other, they slight the third man, who therefore feels himself offended. I think that mutual admiration should be private, for I cannot help feeling jealous when every man in the company is "distinguished," except me.

* * *

When I lived upon the western frontier forty years ago, with Indians for neighbors, I learned how strong is the disposition of the white man to turn red, that he may run wild and free in the woods. In a milder form, the same tendency may be seen even in a great city. The artificial cuticle that we wear with so much vanity, and which we call "civilisation," is very thin. It is a delicate varnish that we ought to guard with care, because to scratch it even mildly may reveal the hereditary savage underneath. The passion for hunting, killing, and eating wild animals is a trait ancestral, strong or weak in certain men, as in their natures they themselves are near to barbarism, or distant from it. It is a small matter in itself, but an important step toward national refinement, that the Queen of England has abolished the barbarian office of Master of the Buckhounds, and with it the so-called "sport" of stag-hunting at Windsor. The royal action is a sign that the spirit of England is less cruel than it was, and henceforth it will not be considered brave to hunt that furious beast, the deer. The emancipation of the deer in Windsor from the fangs of dogs and men, has had its influence already in America, because this world of ours is so extremely small, that a moral action done in any part of it is very likely to exert a salutary force in every other part. In proof of that I quote the excellent remarks of Mr. J. G. Shortall, President of the Illinois Humane Society; "I am glad," he said,

"that one more barbarous institution has been abolished. I hope that Illinois people will see that her majesty's buckhounds are not imported to this country. I have no doubt that some people here would be glad to get them with their master and the tame stags."

* * *

As a fork stabs a turkey, the sarcasm of Mr. Shortall pierces our appetite for game. What "people" does he think would like to import into Illinois the deer and the dogs from Windsor? He may be innocent, but it really looks as if he intentionally aimed his ironical spear straight at the venison barbecue given a week ago, at the Grand Pacific, to three hundred lovers of game. Last Saturday night our old Norse fathers, the huntsmen warriors in Valhalla, looked from the halls of Odin with envious cravings of the stomach, and saw their lucky descendants in Chicago devour sixty-six different kinds of game. The tables were laden with all the wild beasts and birds and fishes that could possibly tempt the appetite of the wildest man; game creatures of every grade, from a cinnamon bear to a squirrel, and from a wild goose to the little starling with red wings. The ceremonial rites began with a very appropriate libation of "hunter soup," made, as I have been informed, from a hunter killed for this particular occasion. His awful fate was very much like that which fell upon the cook of the Nancy brig; who, it will be remembered, was boiled in the broth which he had prepared for the cooking of another. A bowl of that hunter soup inspired the reporter to say that the supper was "fit for a king," meaning that historic monarch known in song as "the King of the Cannibal Islands." Not any king or emperor, not even Vitellius, ever saw such a superabundant feast. No; nor any Indian king, when the prolific valley of the Mississippi was all his own. He may have had four or five of the dainties for a dinner at one time, but hardly more. He may have had "Bear steak," but never with "jelly sauce," as they had it at the barbecue. He certainly had "Ragout of squirrel," for I myself have often enjoyed that luxurious dish when visiting my friends among the Winnebagos, but they never cooked it, or served it "a la financiere." If "Prairie chicken en plumage," means a chicken with all the feathers on, the Indian king, no doubt, when in a hurry, was occasionally compelled to partake of it thus, or go hungry altogether; and if "Partridge an nature!" means a partridge raw, he probably had that; but what I contend for is, that he never had sixty-six different kinds of game at one meal. He could not have eaten half of them; it requires a civilised man to do it. Wild fowl were conspicuous at the barbeque. There was a Wood duck, and a Red-head duck, and a Mallard duck, and a Pin-tail duck, and a Spoonbill duck, and ducks of higher degree than these; a wise provision, for had there been a scarcity of ducks, the disappointed guests might have eaten Mr. Drake, the founder of the feast. There was an elk, and an antelope, flanked by the oleaginous possum, and the luscious coon. The fishes of the sea were few on the table, for although the salmon and the trout reported for duty, the omnivorous company missed the walrus and the whale. The tragedy of the feast came in the awful nightmare time between the midnight and the dawn, when the cinnamon bear, and the black bear, lay upon the bosoms of the banqueters, and hugged them in revenge.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"DOES THE STATE EXIST?"

To the Editor of The Open Court:

In your article "Does the State Exist?" you explicitly use the words society, nationality, or state as synonymous; a moment's thought will convince you that they are not so. Nationality used to apply to those of real or supposed common ancestry: at present it is generally used of those who occupy a certain territory; the use of it is fluctuating and of small importance at any rate, as it

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is unrelated to the matter in question. Society, is applied to the voluntary relations among men. My relations to my family, to my business partner, to our joint business connections, to my friends in Denver and Santa Fé, to you in writing to you as I am doing, and all the rest, taken together constitute my social relations. To this society, as you justly say, the development of civilisation is due.

The State is a very different affair indeed. It is of course an old story to you how the first political organisation was military and was despotic; how little by little the despotism relaxed, the warlike nature changed, to assume a milder type, tending toward the industrial; how in comparatively recent times we have agreed to accept a show of numerical force, in the form of votes, in place of wasting our time and substance in actual clubbing matches, which is the real meaning of democracy.

The plea now is that still further must liberty develop before industrialism can advance. The military political form of organisation must fade and finally vanish as the voluntary industrial society develops.

For after all majority control is but a makeshift. The majority is necessarily the less developed part of the community; the minority necessarily the more developed.

To permit the comparatively prejudiced, ignorant, and narrow-minded to control the acts of the comparatively judicial, informed, and liberal, is to limit progress to the capacity of the poorest specimens of humanity.

admission leads, that the only function of the State is to be able to use force is for the protection of liberty.

As the result of the observations of the State, we have come to the conclusion that liberty is a good thing. In the crystallisation of spontaneous industrial society the only polar force that does not defeat itself is the will of the component individuals. The problem is to obtain for all as much liberty as possible, without restricting the liberty of others.

This means that it is unwise for the majority to use their power to gratify all their wishes; and unwise for the minority to acquiesce in such tyranny. The power of the majority must be limited to a defence of their liberty only, or it tends to relapse into despotism.

Now there is one thing certain, that to take money from a man by force in order to pay yourself for protecting him, cannot be regarded as protection at all; taxation imposed by force, is necessarily robbery.

The state is the power which takes by force what it chooses and returns only what it pleases. The state, as thus explained must shortly perish if the real social relations among men are to continue.

When the state thus perishes, there will ensue the period of the rational development of man, a geological period which has barely begun and to which we can discern no end—to now man is led by his fears and passions, a trembling atom in an unknown but terrible world.

The various problems that perplex us, the economic and social maladjustments of to-day, liberty will solve, liberty will set straight. It can be demonstrated that it will do so to those who care to look into it.

JOHN BEVERLEY ROBINSON.

[1] We take it for granted that everybody who uses the terms "society," "nation," and "state," knows their degrees of similarity as much as their degrees of dissimilarity.

2) It is indeed, not history, but "an old story" that political organisations were first military and despotic, then industrial, then democratic, a story invented by philosophers who construct history. Mr. Spencer's writings on the subject are very popular, but his theories are not based on facts.

3) Did I ask "What do you propose to substitute?" I do not remember having written it, for there is no need of asking the question. I cannot find the passage nor is it likely that I wrote it, for I dislike substitutes. The words state, society, nation, are invented to describe facts, and Mr. Robinson seems to agree with me, for he speaks of the state no longer as a pumpkin-head, but as "a power."

4) State (Lat. status) meant originally the way in which matters stand or their mode of existence; then it was used in the sense of the people as a body; the social state of existence fixed by regulations or laws; society organised; the commonwealth; the body politic. The constitutions of the various states, actually existing, are very different. Most of them are governed either by monarchs, or by aristocracies, or by a political machinery. Thus "state" is sometimes also used in the sense of "the power wielded by the government." The constitution of our states is republican, but Mr. Robinson is right that our majority vote is only "a makeshift." We are still ruled by a political machinery the power of which is limited by public opinion. The ideal state is a state without a government, i. e. a state in which the people are not ruled, but have their common interests administered by faithful officers. If Mr. Robinson means that the institution of "government" has to perish, we agree; but we should not for that reason say, that the state must perish. The state, let us hope, will remain, and the state government has to become a state administration.—ED.]

NOTES.

is, so far as we are concerned, successful in his attempt at reconciling agnosticism with monism. The neo-agnosticism which he propounds has discarded those tenets which we denounce as injurious errors, and we can but heartily agree with the reverent attitude upon which he insists. It may be added that we do not want to preach a peculiar kind of philosophy. Our ambition is higher. We desire to work out that consistent world-conception which is correct. Our propaganda is not devoted to spread our monism, but to investigate and spread the truth.

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