

The Open Court.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL

Devoted to the Work of Conciliating Religion with Science

No. 202. (Vol. V.—20)

CHICAGO, JULY 9, 1891.

{ Two Dollars per Year.
Single Copies, 5 Cts.

SELFISHNESS AS AN ETHICAL THEORY.

BY WILLIAM M. SALTER.

It is one thing to say that as matter of fact all men seek their own pleasure or happiness, and quite another thing to say that they *should* do so. The former statement belongs to the realm of psychology; the latter proposes an ethical rule. In a previous article (June 4), I questioned the correctness of the psychological statement and I now propose to inquire as to the tenability of the ethical rule sometimes derived therefrom.

At the outset, it strikes one as strange to propose as a rule what everyone is said to do of his own accord. A rule should be something to guide us, but if we always do, and cannot help doing, what the rule enjoins, the rule becomes, to say the least, superfluous. If we can no more help acting selfishly than we can help breathing, there is about as much sense in urging us *to* act selfishly as in putting the injunction upon us to breathe.

A "should" naturally suggests the possibility of acting otherwise; but if in the nature of the case we cannot act otherwise than we should act, the "should" is practically meaningless. There is little sense even in asking us to eschew self denial and unselfishness, if on account of our psychological constitution self-denial and unselfishness are impossible, and every act is necessarily interested and for our own advantage. And the fact that advocates of selfishness do warn us against unselfishness and self-denial looks like a giving away of their case—since it is hardly rational to warn men against what they can as little do as they can escape from their own shadow or jump over the moon. Suppose some one should say that a straight line is the line which no one can help drawing in connecting two points. There would be nothing in such a statement to guide us when we were seeking to draw a straight line; it would be the same as saying, Go ahead and draw in whatever way you like, a rule is quite unnecessary. The fact is, if all men act selfishly and must of necessity do so, ethics in general (and not merely any specific rule) is a superfluity; and the very words, "should," "ought," "obligation," "duty" would have to pass into disuse and be regarded as survivals of an antiquated mode of thinking.

Such moral scepticism or nihilism is also forced

upon us by another consideration. If selfishness is the true ethical rule, i. e. if the pursuit of our personal pleasure or happiness is the right aim, it follows that any way in which we find happiness is right. If one person makes himself happy by doing good in the world, very well; but if another finds that cruelty gives him pleasure, we must also say, very well. If this man finds it to his advantage to speak the truth and keep his word, he acts rightly in doing so; if the other gets ahead by lying and breaking faith, he acts also rightly. A recent defender of selfishness* (and one who has the rare merit of being straightforward and fearless in his logic) goes to the length of saying that *if* it made him happy to get drunk, to treat his wife as his slave and to beat his children, he should undoubtedly do those things—and he asks, why then should he condemn those who actually live that way for no other reason than that he in fact finds his happiness in doing differently? If then everything is right which gives one pleasure or happiness and the most contradictory things do give pleasure or happiness, it follows that moral distinctions break down and that love and hate, truth and lying, temperance and drunkenness, marital faithfulness and adultery, stand on the same moral plane. Such is the conclusion drawn by the writer I have quoted. He says:

"One act is just as virtuous as another; one man is just as righteous as another. The man who picks my pockets is just as good a man, morally speaking, as he who at the risk of his life pulls me out of the river. The murderer is just as righteous as the philanthropist, the ravisher as innocent as his victim, a drunkard as moral as an ideal clergyman. Each of these only does what he must, will and should under the circumstances."

And with remarkable consistency he adds:

"Men muddle their brains with such words as right and wrong, morality, duty and virtue; they say I ought to do this or not to do that . . . ; but there are no such things or powers or obligations as these." In fact, "there is no morality but what vain people have manufactured."

By no means does it follow that one must be a bad man to say such things; I believe that this writer is personally not only one of the most straightforward and fearless, but one of the most just, unselfish and tender hearted of men. But I suppose that whatever he is he regards as his idiosyncrasy; and if by accident he were mean and cruel instead, I suppose that

* Hugh O. Pentecost in the *Twentieth Century*, April 2.

he would deny (as a matter of logic) that there was any obligation for him to try to act differently.

Such seems to be the logical outcome of selfishness as an ethical theory. Practically in an individual case, it may work no harm; but in general, if men could sophisticate themselves so far as to adopt it and act upon it, the result would be grave moral deterioration. There are only two ways in which the result might be avoided; first, if all men had good instincts and dispositions to start with (which is manifestly untrue), and second, if there were a kind of pre-ordained constitution for every one, in virtue of which, whatever expectations men cherished in connection with wrongdoing, the actual and necessary result were misery and unhappiness. The latter proposition may possibly be true; for one, I confess I should like to believe it. It would be a most powerful argument in favor of a moral order and constitution of the world. If it could be made out that however we may wish to be happy, there are only certain ways in which we *can* be happy, it would look as if nature itself was on the side of those "certain ways," and gradually discovered them to us in the course of our experience and manifold experimentation.

And yet as a matter of fact there are grave difficulties in the way. It is, of course, true that to one of sympathetic disposition the reflection that he has sometime been harsh and inconsiderate brings pain. A naturally just-minded man undoubtedly finds humiliation in recollection of any incident in which his interests betrayed him into unjust treatment of another. Dryden has finely said:

"The secret pleasure of a generous act
Is the great mind's great bribe."

But can it be truthfully said that every one feels a pang in remembrance of unsympathetic conduct? If we do unjust things does it necessarily follow that we experience humiliation afterward? Is the cut and make of our nature so that we cannot do mean things without subsequent revulsion of feeling—and to us all does the secret pleasure of a generous act come like a great bribe? As I have said, I should like to believe so; but the fact seems to be that human nature is variable, and what gives pain to one person does not to another. It is sometimes by our thoughts, our speculative reason and not by convincing experiences of pleasure or pain that we learn what is right. What a noble saying is that of Sir Philip Sidney's!—"Doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man's life." But I am afraid the truth is simply that doing good is the only certainly happy action of a *good* man's life. Does giving make a miser happy? It seems to cost as much discomfort and pain for some men to part with a dollar as for a child to cut a tooth.

"Society is no comfort
To one not sociable."

says Shakespeare. Sometimes we are not happy in doing good to ourselves any more than in doing good to others. As the same great observer and critic of human life has written:

"Your affections are
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
Which would increase his evil."

As men are, personal comfort and happiness make a poor guide for them. It is safe to have supreme regard for such a standard, only when we are already perfectly moralised and rationalised—that is, when reason and conscience have such a dominancy in us that we can have no happiness save in following their dictates. And even then, when as Wordsworth says, joy has become "its own security," joy would not really be the guide, but the effect of following the true guide, which is ever to be found in the rational nature of man. As most men are, it is actually dangerous to follow after what each thinks will make him happy and that only; it is because they do this so unthinkingly that they fall into the pitfalls that they do. George Eliot had given up all theological views of morality, and yet she once wrote, "There are so many things wrong and difficult in the world that no man can be great—he can hardly keep himself from wickedness—unless he gives up thinking much about pleasure and rewards, and gets strength to endure what is painful." What better illustration could we have of the truth of this, than in Mr. Pentecost's own words: "Don't kill the Czar unless to do so would surely make you happier, but if it would make you happier, then kill him," and, again, "Don't destroy property or throw stones at scabs, unless you are sure it would make you happier to do so, but if you are sure, then do it." There is, of course, no deed of shame, no wild act of blood, no monstrous tyranny that could not be justified for the perpetrator of it by the same logic—the Czar himself and all persecutors, monopolists, seducers of the innocent, grinders of the poor, devourers of widows' houses, being thus made blameless.

It is not in place for me at present to attempt to say what the true guide is; my object is purely critical. But I may briefly remark in general that guidance, in my view, lies in our thoughts rather than our desires for pleasure and happiness. We can find pleasure in all sorts of things, but we cannot think all sorts of things to be right. Our thoughts are ahead of our impulses; there are certain things we are bound to call right by virtue of our very nature as rational beings and to the extent men have followed reason, they have done so. It is in these progressive and enlarging thoughts that I find the clue to nature's purpose with regard to us, to the Divine plan of our being. *We cannot help thinking certain things to be right; we may not do them, we may not want to do them, our wishes may go clean contrary to them, and yet, if we are*

honest with ourselves, we cannot help thinking them to be right. The practical problem of life is to make our thoughts, and not our haphazard cravings for pleasure, rule. Here is the field of moral conflict, the occasion for the exercise of the moral will.

"And oh, when Nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
Still in the soul to admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weakmindedness—
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!"

N.B. The following three articles are criticisms of Mr. Salter's first article "Selfishness: a Psychological Argument," which appeared in No. 197 of The Open Court.—Ed.

PLEASURE IN SELFISHNESS AND ALTRUISM.

BY J. C. F. GRUMBINE.

IT was with more than ordinary interest that I read William M. Salter's recent contribution entitled "Selfishness: A Psychological Argument," to *The Open Court*—particularly because his treatment of the subject seemed to me to be most ingenuously devised. His criticism of the position held by Leslie Stephen, Lester Ward, Bain and Bentham will not, I think, hold good. He seems to think that to act *for* a thing such as happiness as an end is to act with it *constantly* in mind, as if not to do so were a possibility. He then instances the youthful player at ball who is desirous of beating all his contestants in the game, (the victory which he expects to receive will afford him the most agreeable sensation which is called happiness) but who as he warms up in the game forgets all about the real end which he has in view, viz. the pleasure to be derived from beating or from becoming the victor in the game. Mr. Salter thinks that if the end is the happiness to be received by winning the game, then he would have it always in mind. How does Mr. Salter know that he does not have this very pleasure in mind, and if so, what difference does it make, if as Mr. Salter thinks, he plays having in mind the chief or *relative steps* to the end in view could he get victory or the result of victory—which to him is so much pleasure—without leading his conduct on the field toward the attainment of the end which he is conceded to have in view. To change the figure, can a man who desires to be happy by using his talent rightly along the line of art, medicine, law, or mercantile business, ever expect to obtain happiness in the particular way he has chosen, by not having in mind the *means* to the end—whatever they may be? And is it not a play on words to say that *because* one does not always have in mind (how can he think two different thoughts at the same time any more than he can occupy at the same time two places) correlatively and simultaneously both the means to as well as the end for which he acts, he is not acting for happiness. The

psychological analysis of Mr. Salter seems, therefore, to me to be untenable in this instance. Then, again, he alleges that the motive of hunger, if I may be permitted to call it such, or the satisfying of appetite is not the pleasure which results from the act of eating, but it is the desire for an object such as food that prompts one to eat. This may be true as far as it goes, but this appears to me to be the fact or the real status of the case, that whereas an excessively hungry man would eat simply "to fill up," a man in a normal condition as well as a starving man would eat as much for the pleasure which would result in the general process of living from his keeping his physical organism, by eating proper food, in a sound and healthful state; or in addition to the pleasure which one is afforded by eating that which he likes, there is the ultimate pleasure which is derived from eating the proper food judiciously. This after all is the chief consideration.

Mr. Salter neglected to touch upon the pleasure which is not so much a result of choice as it is the result of action prompted by constitution and mechanism. An egotistic person acts, it is said, from the motive of self-interest while the altruistic person acts from the motive of self-love or benevolence. Egotism pleases but does not benefit a man, while altruism pleases and benefits him. Nay more than this, while egotism curses the egotist, altruism blesses not only the altruist, but humanity. In order to get the best and most permanent happiness one should seek for and use the means which will produce it. To say that one cannot seek and obtain his highest happiness rationally and resolutely is to say that we are in the world to obtain our highest good by being a blind leader of the blind.

SELFISHNESS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

BY A. H. HEINEMANN.

EUEDEMONISM makes the feelings of pleasure and pain the foundation of its edifice of moral science saying, that a state of pleasure, or a diminution of pain, constitutes, in every case, the sole motive of action. An attempt to disprove this principle was made by Mr. W. M. Salter in No. 197 of *The Open Court*. Had he limited himself to a discussion of the propriety of the qualification "sole" given to "motive," he might have had a better chance of success. The pivotal point of the discussion, however, is the definition of the word "pleasure." Pleasurable feelings are so different as to render any attempt at a definition of general acceptability extremely difficult. The only definition ever offered satisfactory to my mind, is that proposed by Dr. P. Carus in his "Soul of Man," saying, that "pleasure is the feeling that naturally accompanies the gratification of wants" (p. 343).

In order to make this definition serviceable, it will be necessary to agree upon the meaning of the word "want." A want is a feeling of deficiency. Hunger, for example, is a feeling of a deficiency of nourishment, or a want of food; cold is a feeling of a deficiency of heat, or a want of warmth. Thus is love a feeling of a deficiency of society, or of the completeness of being, or a want of intercourse with another being. The sense of duty in an emergency shows a deficiency of right action, or a feeling of a want to act in obedience to conscience.

Let us see how the definition fits the cases adduced by Mr. Salter in No. 197 of *The Open Court*. He says of hunger that "it is not the pleasure of satisfying hunger the really hungry man is thinking of, but the food—it seems a direct appetite for an object." Hunger is a feeling of some shortage, or emptiness to be filled; a painful deficiency to be replenished; replenishing, or filling being the natural remedy for the want. This remedy is found in eating which, by diminishing the pain, grows pleasurable, in agreement with the eudemonistic principle.

If Mrs. Browning says: "If heads that hold a rhythmic thought must ache perforce, then I, for one, choose headaches," she clothes a eudemonistic experience in the paradoxical form of a desire for pain. She does not truly choose headaches—not fool enough for it. But not being able to secure the pleasure of rhythmic thought without the accompaniment of a painful headache, she submits to the latter rather than forego the pleasure of the former. It is a clear eudemonistic transaction.

J. St. Mill's assertion that men will "pursue sensual indulgences (i. e. pleasures) to the injury of health, though perfectly aware that health is the greater good," is an uncommonly strong confirmation of the eudemonistic law. The man indulging, is moved by a present pleasure so powerfully as to disregard an unmistakable warning of pain to follow in the future. Present pleasure overpowering a hope of remote pleasure, is a well known eudemonistic experience.

J. St. Mill considering the condition of a discontented Socrates preferable to that of a contented pig, pronounces every kind of philosophical thought so great a pleasure as to render the condition of a Socrates even when discontented or seemingly unhappy, more desirable than that of a hog whether such hog should walk on four legs or on two. Mill intends to gauge the pleasure of Socrates and that of the hog in order to vindicate the eudemonistic principle.

Enoch Arden desirous of possessing his wife again, feels it to be his greatest duty to provide for her happiness. He feels he would be tormented with pains were he to disturb her happy condition. But her happiness depends upon his resigning his claims on her.

His renunciation seems the only means to secure her happiness and thereby his own greatest gratification. Or, Enoch Arden's self-denial is a corroboration of eudemonism.

Every one of the examples recited in No. 197 of *The Open Court* can be treated like the above examples in order to show the application of eudemonism to every kind of human action. The above discussions, however, suffice to demonstrate that in every effective motive of action a feeling of pleasure or pain is found. Any such feeling may be called an interest, or, there is no effective motive unless the agent is interested in it. Anything indifferent can never, in a healthy being, be a want to be gratified, or an anticipation of pleasure, or an object to be desired or willed. Being interested in an object, means, being inclined to give attention to it, or to concentrate our activities upon it, or to will it. Thus, an interest, or a pleasurable emotion, says the law, is necessary to transform a conception into an effective motive of action.

The law of pleasure and pain is founded in our nature, says modern evolutionary thought, that is to say, it is a natural law acting with necessity. It says that every living creature, in a condition of health, strives to obtain pleasure and to obviate pain, or, it is these subconscious feelings of pleasure or pain, which prompt every action performed within animated nature. The muscular reactions observed in the lowest, or simplest living beings, are what is commonly called reflex motions. A reflex motion is a muscular reaction responding to a subconscious feeling. The reaction shows whether the feeling was either agreeable or disagreeable, i. e. pleasurable or painful.

Similar motions are observable in higher animals. A bull excited by pain will fly into a fury and hurry along carelessly, almost unconsciously, a proceeding hardly distinguished from reflex motion. All activity of living creatures continues of this kind until reflective thought has grown to be a power strong enough to act as a check upon reflex motions caused by feelings of pleasure or pain. Such checks may be noticed, for example, in a lion who having failed to reach his prey by making his leap too short, proceeds to undergo a special course of training in the art of jumping, by measuring the distance and practising until he has found out and learned to put forth the exact amount of exertion requisite to give to his leap the length wanted. Such rational proceedings can no longer be called reflex motions; they are distinctly conscious activity regulated by reflection and by a determination not easy to distinguish from what is called "will" in man. There is a motive in the leopine activity which can no longer be identified with a subconscious feeling of pain or pleasure, but which is the result of that mental activity called reflection. Such motives may

be called intellectual motives to distinguish them from sensitive motives as found in the subconscious feelings of pleasure or pain.

When the stage of mental reflection is reached in the animal kingdom, the immediate effect of a feeling of pleasure or pain, is checked or modified. The reflective mind begins to distinguish between its own feelings and external objects. From that stage onward the action of the natural law of pleasure and pain is complicated by the interference of intellectual motives, that is, of conceptions not immediately identifiable with feelings of pleasure or pain.

Reflex activity forms the greater amount even of the doings of the human race. Men whose senses act with sufficient energy, will perform the common acts of daily life, that is not merely those of their animal existence but also those of their business occupations according to the natural rule of pleasure and pain. They are used to attend to their daily business in a machine like manner. The various activities of business life are the effects of settled habits of thought, that is to say, the mind has formed a series of conceptions each of which corresponds to an act of business to be performed. At any given moment of the day, one of these business conceptions is uppermost in the mind, forming the centre of interest, the sensitive motive that wants to be acted out. This want has to be gratified by the performance of whatever activity the conception may suggest. Little reflection is needed. Attention to what is going on is all that is required. The performance is pleasurable because it is in conformity with habit, or agreeable to the nature of the individual. An infraction of daily habits is liable to cause pain. Or, in other words, the habitual activity of the daily life of men, like that of animals, is regulated by the natural law of pleasure and pain.

So far the eudemonistic principle reigns supreme in man as in animals. There is no conflict until intellectual motives begin to interfere with sensitive motives. Such an interference occurs in those exceptional cases which require the activity of critical reflection. But even then the conflict is apparent only, that is it ends in harmonious interaction between the natural and the moral law.

The psychic processes called reflection are subject to natural law as are the workings of the principle of pleasure and pain. It is according to natural law that we reflect and reach decisions as to which conceptions of our minds must be selected to be the strongest motives. That decision or selection determines what we ought to do. But between the "ought" and the real deed there is still a gap to be filled.

The filling out of this gap is the business of volition, and it is to this act only that the moral law applies.

The ought is determined by reflection pointing out the conception which is worthy to move the will. But the will may, or may not, make it a motive of action, or a guide in voluntary activity. By coming to a decision and assigning to an idea the position of a ruler of action, the agent makes it the centre of his interests, that is, the object of his supreme desire. He thus transforms it into an incitement of pleasurable feelings and thereby enlists the natural power of pleasurable sentiment in the carrying out of his design. In this way the harmony between the natural and the moral laws is established.

Pleasure and pain being subjective feelings, fail to determine anything concerning the nature of the motives of action. It is the particular province of the moral law of free will, by deciding which idea is to be the motive of action, to determine the nature of the objects to be pursued by moral activity.

In every voluntary action, therefore, there are these two laws found co operating: the moral law determining the subject-matter, and the law of pleasure and pain ruling the natural working, that is, the steady supply of force in the pursuit of moral action.

Summing up; the eudemonistic law of pleasure and pain finds universal application in the natural activities of life; but it has only a secondary bearing upon voluntary action. The moral law, which is the law of liberty or of free will, applies to voluntary action only, that is, to those exceptional cases of human action in which the compulsory rules of natural law acting with necessity, are of secondary account.

The principles of necessity and of morality are contradictory. Eudemonism, which is a law of necessity, may offer a good basis for a science of the natural evolution of morals. But when the stage of morality is reached in the ascending course, eudemonism must no longer be continued in the part of guide but must be assigned the subordinate part of handmaid supplying material force to the rule of liberty which constitutes the basis of the science of pure ethics.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELFISHNESS AND METAPHYSICAL ETHICS.

BY VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE.

IN No. 197 of *The Open Court* appeared a criticism of the egoistic conception of life from the pen of Mr. Salter in which I was deeply interested. Interested because I believe that as one of the leaders of the ethical movement Mr. Salter is aware that there is no more frequent or more fatal error to overcome, in his work, than this very philosophy of selfishness, and therefore should be one of those best conversant with the proofs of its shallowness and falsity.

It is plain that the increasing interest in the ethical problem is evidence of the unrest which sits upon

Humanity in the presence of the destruction of its temple. Science has torn the veil from the tabernacle of Fear; Man has looked within, and the space he imagined filled with terrible ghosts is seen to be empty. Only the darkness kept him from knowing it: now there is light—light everywhere, and he no longer accepts the moral code "obey." Yet knowing this, in the face of the death of God, he finds himself only at the statement of the problem. The symbols and the forms of religion, the vestments of priests, have become only mockeries, signs of the crude worship of a half savage imagination. And still, bound up in them, was a something that was true; something of which he dares not let go, something that had served to guide his actions, and give meaning to life. This was the ethical problem; to undress the truth and leave it nude, white, shining, a luminous point moving before Man into the infinite—the future: to explain what good it was, that, wrapped in the dogmas of the Church, nevertheless bound men together and served to lift the race slowly upward.

It is at this questioning point that radical freethought has too often made its mistake. It falls into one of two errors; and the most grievous, I believe, is this of making self the centre and circumference of all consideration. The most brilliant of American orators, the idol of freethought, has been so mistaken, and all his writings are permeated with the "happiness philosophy." Grieved and disgusted with a world which "for love of Love has slain love" he has conceived that the way to improve matters is to cease urging the necessity of goodness, and insist that people shall be happy (his conclusion being that a happy man *is* a good man). The same teaching, variously expressed by the most trenchant pens, is to be found throughout the radical press. It says, practically: "the universe is purposeless; man's actions are accountable to no one. Therefore let him be happy. Let him study to discover what line of conduct will increase the sum of his agreeable sensations, and follow it. The desire for such increase is the motive to all action, whether of the barbarian or the civilised man; the only difference being that the civilised man has wider knowledge and a greater number of emotions."

It was the fundamental error of this reasoning which I had hoped Mr. Salter would have pointed out. Unfortunately he falls into the other mistake, the substance of his article being comprised in the old, metaphysical formula: "Do right because it is right." People "desire certain things or objects, and while the getting of them gives us pleasure, it is not so much the pleasure, as the things we want." This is an explanation which does not explain. He is right in saying that "the getting of them gives us pleasure";

pleasure is the result of action not its cause. But to substitute for the assertion "I save a man's life because it gives me pleasure," "I save his life because I want him to have his life" is to get no farther on. It does not explain why I want a thing which is of no particular benefit to myself. And it is the why of the want that prompted the action. It serves no purpose to tell people to do right because it is right, unless they have a means of ascertaining what is right, and why it is right. Unless the ethical movement can answer this question, it has furnished no enduring structure to replace the old, it has not revealed the truth of the old. Science, which has shattered idols, must explain religion. Nor is this so difficult when once we have understood ourselves. Realising that we are parts of the universe subject to the same processes manifest in all other forms of life, realising that our egos are but social growths that develop according to inheritance and environment, as do all other growths, we are prepared to realise that our actions are prompted by the unconscious *Me*, the Man which has been accumulating, so to speak, for ages, the social Soul which is the common inheritance of all. This large *Me* which lies below our conscious selves, is the result of all the untold struggles of Man to come in harmony with his environment; and the same struggle goes on in us, will go on in the future. Our pleasure is an insignificant quantity having nothing whatever to do with the question. Indeed it is pain, not pleasure, which unbars the gate of Progress, since all progress comes through a quickened consciousness that we are no longer in harmony with our environment, an awakening to the fact that the social ideal has moved forward and we must follow it. To illustrate: chattel slavery was right so long as the ideals of men had not advanced beyond it; the yoke rested easily upon the body of the slave and the soul of the master. Both were happy. Why not have remained so? "Servants obey your masters" was to do right because it was right. Why not have continued? Because with the development of the vast economies of modern production, the chattel slave system no longer held its old relations in society: the unconscious *Me* clamored for adjustment. The social ideal of larger liberty had extended to the black men. In the end armies killed each other. For pleasure? Hardly. For duty? Yes. To accomplish their ideal of right. It is very shallow to retort, "that is the result of the duty superstition; people kill each other." As well blame those who first conceived the possibility of communication between two villages for building turnpikes instead of at once jumping to steel rails and locomotives.

The rightness of an action is measured by its harmony with the ideal which Science points out as the

path of the social march. Upon this foundation the ethical movement may rest, knowing the truth of the old creeds, that they bound men together and developed the social character, repressing the instincts of selfishness, instead of scattering, disintegrating and belittling men, which is the inevitable result of the Egoistic philosophy—the gospel of Caprice.

CURRENT TOPICS.

IN former days, whenever the Queen of England gave a fancy dress ball at Buckingham Palace, the Lord High Chamberlain would proclaim the royal will and pleasure in these terms, "Her majesty has given orders that no foreign goods be worn on this occasion, and that the guests appear in costumes of British manufacture." The guests paid no attention to it, because they knew that it was only a political appeal to the insular prejudices of the English workmen, and an ostentatious attempt to feed seven million toilers with five loaves and two small fishes, without the spiritual grace to work the miracle. The old formula, useless now in England, has been imported into this country, for I see a proclamation just issued by the "Lord High Chamberlain" of the White House, to the effect that, "Mrs. Harrison has given orders that no foreign goods shall be used in refurbishing and decorating the rooms of the White House *except* where it is impossible to procure the *necessary* material in America." The exception is delightful for its womanly candor. A masculine politician would have left it out; but Mrs. Harrison frankly and sensibly says that she will patronise American industry if it can supply her with the exact article she wants; otherwise she will buy it in England or India, in Africa or France. The exception though honest was imprudent, for the very people flattered by the command will veto the exception. They will issue a counter-proclamation and say there is no necessary material impossible to procure in America, to furnish the Executive Mansion. And these are the people who pay for the furniture. The embargo reminds me of those ardent patrons of American industry, who when starting on their European tour implore their neighbors to buy only American goods while they themselves are going to lay in their own supplies in England, France, and Germany.

I take some pleasure in watching the expansion and development of the "Law of Limit and Overflow," on which I claim a copyright, and which I claim to be that law not written in books, which limits the rich man's power to consume, and which causes a portion of his wealth by his own voluntary action to overflow upon the poor. A very interesting illustration of this law I find in a German Jew, Baron Hirsch by name, a man with millions of dollars who lives in a fairy castle across the sea. I confess that he seems to me like a fabulous person, one of these mythical barons who lived a thousand years ago, and who have come down to us embalmed in the legends of the Rhine. So far as I can find out, he owns the mountains of Lebanon, and the mines of Ophir; also the valley of diamonds discovered by Sinbad the sailor. In spite of my doubts I am assured that he is real, and not a baron of romance, as many popular barons are. Dazzled by the splendor of the baron's wealth, an American editor wrote him a letter and asked him what he was going to do with his money. Instead of taking offense at this impertinence, and ordering the editor to be flung from the battlements of the castle, the baron politely answered the letter and his answer is printed in the *North American Review*. In that letter I behold the statesmanship of charity, that productive plan of benevolence which helps the poor to help themselves, the comprehensive almsgiving of ploughs, and hammers,

and spades, with a bit of land whereon to work and live. The baron's words are better than mine; he says:

"What I desire to accomplish, what, after many failures, has come to be the object of my life, and that for which I am ready to stake my wealth and my intellectual powers, is to give to a portion of my companions in faith the possibility of finding a new existence, primarily as farmers, and also as handicraftsmen, where the laws and religious tolerance permit them to carry on the struggle for existence."

* * *

There is beautiful pathos in this heroic ambition of Baron Hirsch to lead his afflicted "companions in faith" out of the Land of Egypt, and out of the House of bondage. He desires to transplant the Jewish victims of religious persecution from Russia and other benighted nations to some free and hospitable country where they may live in honorable industry as tillers of the soil. He proposes to establish them not in cities but on farms. I feel a twinge of conscience when he says that there is no room for them in the United States, because I think he means to say there is not any welcome for them here. This was the new Canaan of his hope; for he says, "In considering the plan I naturally thought of the United States, where the liberal constitution is a guarantee of happy development for the followers of all religious faiths." Yet he passed us by, and will carry out his plans in the Argentine republic, in Canada, and Australia. I fear it was only genteel courtesy that made him give as a reason for his action, "the enormous number of Jews already in the United States;" and that adding to the number, "would be of advantage neither to the country itself nor to the exiled Jews." It is more likely that he has heard the mutterings of that inferior public opinion which threatens to send them back under the operation of those "pauper" laws, "contract labor" laws, and other narrow-minded statutes which promise after a time to strike both hospitality and magnanimity from our national character. While we are striving to make this country wise and great, we should endeavor to make it correspondingly generous and humane; lest there be fixed upon us the character given to Lord Bacon, and the American republic become celebrated as the "greatest, wisest, and meanest" of all nations.

* * *

A new industry is coming into existence, the importation of water from the river Jordan, warranted to give a superior quality of baptismal regeneration to the children of the rich. Soon we shall see this advertisement in the drug stores, "Water from Carlsbad, best for rheumatism; also some from Jordan, best for baptism." As there is no competing river Jordan in the United States, there will not be any protective tariff on the water from the ancient stream. A sudden impulse has been given to the new business by the recent christening of a royal baby, the grandchild of the Prince of Wales. In describing this important event the court circular is careful to inform an anxious world that, "The christening water was brought from the river Jordan by Lord Rowton who recently returned from the Holy Land." This ought to confer special grace upon the royal infant, but the charm is weakened a little by the astonishing fact that the Prince of Wales himself was baptised in water from the Jordan, but in his case it didn't take. There was a hope lingering in this democratic world that the sacraments at least would remain of equal quality, and that fashion would not stimulate pride instead of humility, by providing a superior sacramental article exclusively for the rich; but our trust was vain. The church must make its ordinances luxurious and exclusive, therefore booths for the sale of water from the Jordan must be built in Vanity Fair. The Eucharist will become aristocratic also; and the royal and the rich will not partake of Holy Communion until they know that the bread is made from wheat gleaned in the fields of Boaz, and that the wine is pressed from the grapes of Naboth's vineyard.

It is told, no doubt falsely, of a famous American orator, who was a colonel in the army, that on coming into the presence of the enemy he promptly surrendered his command, shouting, "Hold on there! Don't fire! I'm willing to recognise your condemned confederacy! Let's compromise!" I see in this fable the contending sects shaken by the vibrations of the printing press, surrendering to each other's doctrines, and shouting "Let us compromise." The theological colonels, however, who so amiably surrender are very likely to be tried for heresy, the ecclesiastical name for desertion. At the present moment an eminent Christian minister and a popular Jewish Rabbi are under charges, the one for surrendering the Trinity, and the other for surrendering the Unity of God. Even the Jews as a church are dividing like the rest of us, although they may remain united as a race. It appears that the Rabbi, Dr. Aaron Wise, published in the *American Hebrew* a discourse on "Prophetism and Prophets," in which he said that the doctrine of the trinity was a Jewish dogma older than the patriarchs, and that Jesus merely revived it. This concession was immediately condemned by the Board of Orthodox Ministers, who passed a resolution that Dr. Wise be tried for heresy. This decree was for the time suspended in order that Dr. Wise might make an explanation, which he did, saying that his language had been misconstrued owing to a mistranslation from the original German, and that nothing could be farther from his mind than to question that fundamental principle of Judaism "the belief in the absolute unity of God." This ought to save him, and it probably will; but it was a close call.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

DR. E. G. HIRSCH ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The Reform Advocate has published Dr. Emil G. Hirsch's address to the graduates of the Cook County Normal School, delivered at the commencement exercises. Dr. Hirsch lays his finger on the sore spot of our educational system and advocates reform. He does not want to abolish the public school system because it is faulty. On the contrary, he wants to preserve it; for it is "great" and "founded on granite," but he desires us to recognise its faults and to improve the system. Though public prints and papers are filled with the praises of our educational system, he declares, few there are that really, not merely professedly, understand what the teacher should be to the community. Teaching must be a life-work and therefore the teacher should hold a life-position, that leads up to an honorable old age devoid of the annoying sense of insecurity. At present, the teacher's position is in this country as yet too insecure, because it is too often affected by politics. The teacher must first and above all be a psychologist. Latin and Greek alone do not fit us to be teachers. The insufficiency of cramming and memorising has been acknowledged and manual training has been introduced to complement the old one-sidedness. But manual training must be more than showing some tricks at the bench or the anvil. We must not pour into the head from without, but develop from within whatever is in the child. The pupil must be left to act and to react upon the impulses given him. A Thousand failures self wrought by the pupil are educationally considered of greater and more promising worth than is one lesson perfectly recited after drill and mechanical repetition. With these aims the young teachers should go out, as it were, as "missionaries into darkest Africa." Dr. Hirsch closed with the following words: "Of Moses in the old legends it is said that from his light the others lit their tapers; his own did not diminish in brightness or brilliancy for communicating of its flame. So will your own lamp shine on all the more brilliantly for imparting to the young the spark of knowledge and the ambition to learn. This is your reward, a recompense which your profession has above all other. May then come to you that satisfaction in your work which the world cannot give but also cannot take away!"

BOOK REVIEWS.

INTIMATIONS OF ETERNAL LIFE. By *Caroline C. Leighton*. Boston: Lee & Shepard.

The author of this little book after twenty years separation from schools, churches and libraries was much impressed with the spirit of doubt that had crept in among sacred things. Hoping that she might be able to point out a beacon light, she attempted to let the religious feelings draw new strength from the revelations of science. The booklet is mainly engaged with the question: "What is the bearing of the discoveries of the last half century on the probabilities of our future?" The answer is very cheerful. There is no scientific proof, yet there are sufficient hints in nature, which promise a universal immortality. The book is one of the very best of its kind. It is written in a similar spirit to Drummond's works. Yet we must confess that we look upon this method of applying science to buttress the crumbling religious faith as fantastical and—futile. It will dazzle for a while some people who either believe or wish to believe. But it will soon be found out that the immortality taught by science is not that of the individual ego soul. The most characteristic chapter of the theoretical basis of the author's faith is that on the psychic body, which is found to consist of the luminiferous ether.

NOTES.

The charge of heretical teaching brought against Prof. Max Müller's Gifford Lectures as was reported in a previous number, has been thrown out of the Glasgow Presbytery by 17 to 5 votes. It was then carried before the General Assembly and dismissed. Prof. Max Müller will therefore continue his lectures at Glasgow. Two volumes of these lectures have appeared.

THE OPEN COURT.

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY BY

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.

TERMS THROUGHOUT THE POSTAL UNION:

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\$1.00 FOR SIX MONTHS.

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, AND TASMANIA, \$2.50 PER YEAR.

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