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## CHRISTIANITY, ITS SPIRIT AND ITS ERRORS.\*

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I.

IN human actions—in even the most beautiful actions—the negative side much sooner, and more strongly reveals its quality than the positive side. In these last years there has been observable a consoling return of society to religious interests, and yet in this also we mainly view the deleterious, wrong side. The most distressing consequence of this consists in the fact, that the mind, while stranger to true religion, or, at all events not sufficiently penetrated by it, lays hold of religion under the influence of fashion, and unable to handle the matter at issue, lingers about various fictions created by itself and others. Among the actual transformations of Christianity, the most harmless is that, which, under the name of Christian religion, endeavors to propagate an abstract morality, partly of a philanthropical, and partly of an ascetical nature. And very plausible reasons are offered for substitutions of this kind. That Christianity principally consists in love to our neighbor, and in a benevolent life, is about as true as the dictum, that grape-wine, chemically speaking mainly consists of water. Moreover, pure morals, like pure water, are not only very useful, but they actually constitute an object of prime necessity. Yet, why thus dupe ourselves by calling water wine, and abstract morality Christianity? The precepts of temperance, of justice and humanity, ascetical and philanthropic tendencies exclusively, do not belong to any particular religious doctrine, but, providentially, all this makes up the common inheritance of many religious and philosophical schools. And if the matter really consisted in those precepts by themselves, then there is no reason why they should not be set forth in a straightforward way, for their own intrinsic merit. But, why do we display that particular sign, which mainly points to objects of a different kind, foreign, and even disagreeable to the teachers of pure morals? Nobody forbids us to handle water by itself; but why distribute it into wine bottles? And why add it to the wine?

There exists another obnoxious transformation. Many people, recognising in Christianity, irrespective

of pure morals, certain other essential elements, such as dogmas, sacraments, hierarchy, imagine, that in these elements *by themselves*, consists all the force of the Christian religion. Continuing the above comparison, this would resemble a man, who, while knowing the chemical difference of wine from water to consist of alcohol, and some other ingredients, should on this basis, give us to drink, instead of wine, undiluted spirit mixed with tannic acid and some coloring matter. The deadly effects of such a treatment would be obvious. And similar effects, as history proves, always resulted from the adulteration of vital Christianity with the undiluted spirit of abstract dogmas, with hierarchical and mystic elements that cannot be reconciled with the principles of human enlightenment.

If in Christianity we behold a living religion, in which we spiritually subsist, all dispute about prevalence or prominence of this or that given element really has no meaning. It may be quite interesting, to know the chemical ingredients of our food, but no chemist, through the results of his analysis, will substitute carbon for bread, or nitrogen for meat. He himself only feeds on the concrete organic union of these elements, as other men do, who never heard of chemistry.

In the vital relation to Christianity, the essential significance, does not belong to these or those integral elements of this religion, but only to the one spiritual principle, that shapes out of those elements a definite totality, and from which all the parts receive their relative power and importance. Unalloyed Christianity is neither dogma nor hierarchy, neither divine worship nor morals, but the vivifying spirit of Christ, really though invisibly present in humanity, and acting upon it through a complex process of spiritual development and growth—a spirit, embodied in religious forms and institutions, constituting the terrestrial church, its visible embodiment, *yet not spiritually exhausted by these forms*, and not finally and absolutely realised in any given external fact. Traditional institutions, forms, and formulas, are indispensable to Christian humanity as a skeleton for a vital organism of a higher order; but, the skeleton itself does not constitute the living body. It is impossible, that any higher organism could live without bones, but when the walls of the

\* Translated from the Russian periodical *Voprosy Filosofii i Psichologii* by Albert Gunlogsen.

arteries, or the valves of the heart begin to ossify, that is a sure symptom of inevitable death.

I do not intend here to discuss the life itself of Christian societies, but I only wish to point out several theoretical mistakes of Christianity, that, moreover, possess a certain practical significance, as decidedly unfavorable symptoms of our own state of social sanity.

## II.

All are agreed, that actual, original Christianity is the identical system once taught by the founder of our religion himself. What, precisely, did he proclaim? If we cull from the Gospels, isolated utterances, the question would receive a number of different answers. Some will find the substance of Christian doctrine in non-resistance to evil; others, in submission to spiritual power ("hearkening to you, they listen to me"); still others will persist in faith in a judgment, or, in the separation of the divine from the worldly, and so forth. All these texts gleaned at random, furnish in a fragmentary way whatever is required; but when read in their full context, they no longer afford the wished for meaning. Laying aside these exegetical abstractions, we shall only remark, that many views concerning the essence of Christianity,—although differing among themselves, yet each of them having an equal foundation on some evangelical text,—do not at all express the true essence of Christianity; but, at best, are only partial illustrations of the doctrine, and can be said to reach only so far, as the isolated utterances of Christ himself have been reached and understood. To understand the real sense of these partial truths, and to estimate their real significance, is only possible through their relation to the one central idea of Christianity. But, for the definition of the latter, it would be impossible to rely mechanically on the letter of the separate texts, but we must have recourse to another more sensible method. Is there nothing in the Gospels, which directly points to that which Christ himself, and his most intimate disciples recognised as the very substance of his teaching? As a matter of fact, also in the Gospel, Christ has spoken of his doctrine in its concreteness, and the idea of Christianity is there expressed as of one totality. And, how is it then stated? Is his teaching called the doctrine of non-resistance to evil, or that of spiritual power, or that concerning judgment, sacraments, the dogma of the trinity, redemption, etc.? Nothing of the kind. All these points, indeed, are found in the Gospel, but the Gospel itself, the glad tidings of Christ himself, are not proclaimed from these points of view. That announcement does not call itself the Gospel of non-resistance, the Gospel of heredity, the Gospel of judgment, the Gospel of faith, or even the Gospel of love; but it constantly proclaims,

and invariably calls itself *the Gospel of the kingdom*—the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.\*

The word of truth, that the son of man soweth is "the word of the kingdom"; the secrets revealed by him are "the secrets of the kingdom," etc.

In this way, without doubt, the central idea of the Gospel itself, according to the Gospel itself, is the idea of the kingdom of God. To either the direct or indirect elucidation of this idea are devoted almost all the sermons and parables of Christ, his esoteric conversations with the disciples, and finally the prayer to God the Father. From the connection of the texts relating thereto, it is clear, that the evangelical idea of the kingdom is not derived from the concept of divine rule, existing above all things, and attributed to God, conceived as almighty. This supreme dominion is an eternal, immutable fact, whereas the kingdom proclaimed by Christ is a thing, advancing, approaching, arriving. Moreover it possesses different sides of its own. It is within us, and likewise reveals itself without; it keeps growing within humanity and the whole world by means of a certain objective, organic process, and it is taken hold of by a spontaneous effort of our own will. To the worshippers of the letter all this may seem contradictory, but in those, who possess the mind of Christ all this actually concurs together in one simple and all comprehensive definition, through which the kingdom of God is: *the full realization of the divine in the natural—through the God-man Christ, or in other words, the fulness of natural, human life, united by Christ to the fulness of divinity.*

The perfect union of the divinity with humanity, necessarily ought to be reciprocal; for that union, in which one of the parties is annihilated or in which it does not preserve its freedom, is not a *perfect* union. The internal possibility, the fundamental condition for union with the divinity is thus found within man himself—the kingdom of heaven is within you. But, this possibility ought to pass into effect; man ought to reveal the kingdom of God, that is hidden within him, and for this purpose he ought to join the manifest effort of his own free will to the mystic effects of grace within him; the kingdom of God is conquered by exertion, and only those, who employ active efforts shall possess it. Without such individual efforts the possibility remains merely a possibility; the pledge of future grace perishes.† The kingdom of God having

\* Math: iii, 2; iv, 17, 23; v, 3, 10, 19, 20; vi, 10, 33; vii, 21; viii, 11; ix, 25; x, 7; xi, 12; xii, 28; xiii, 11, 19, 24, 31, 33, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 52; xvi, 19, 28; xviii, 1, 23; xix, 12, 14, 23, 24; xx, 1; xxii, 2; xxiii, 13; xxiv, 14; xxv, 1, 34. Mark: i, 14, 15; iv, 11, 26, 28; ix, 1; x, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25; xii, 34; xiv, 35. Luke: iv, 43; viii, 1, 10; ix, 2, 11, 27, 60, 62; x, 9; xi, 2, 20; xii, 31; xiii, 18, 20; xiv, 15; xvi, 16; xvii, 20, 21; xviii, 16, 17, 24, 25, 29; xix, 11; xxi, 31; xxii, 16, 18, 29, 30; xxiii, 42, 51. John: iii, 3, 5; xviii, 36. Acts: i, 3.

† In this respect it is remarkable that the words: "the kingdom of heaven is within you" by Christ were addressed to the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees, of whom the majority remained unbelievers; consequently, here is only meant the pent-up potential capacity of human nature for a union with God.

thus been realised in the eternal divine idea and potentially approaching to human nature, there remains also something to be achieved for us, and by ourselves. From this side it becomes our own work, the task of our own act, and these cannot be limited by the separate, individual existence of isolated human beings. Man is by nature a social being, and the highest work of his life, the supreme aim of all his efforts, does not depend upon his individual fate, but upon the social fate of collective humanity. For the realisation of the divine kingdom, it is inevitably necessary that it pass into a personal ethical movement, and that the latter, for the attainment of its fulness, pass into a social movement of the entire humanity, extending thus at a given moment, and under given conditions to the general divine human-process of universal history. If the divine kingdom is the wedding of grace unto humanity, it follows, that it will not be observable in man in his egotism, but in man as a living member of the universal whole. In this way man finds the kingdom of heaven, not only within himself, but also before himself in the onward march according to the revelation not only in the actual union of the deity with past and present humanity, but also in the ideal anticipation of a further and more perfect union in the future. In all this, without doubt, there is something foreordained fatalistic; that is, not dependent on the personal will of the individual. But, individual freedom none the less is preserved, because every man may by his own will avail himself or not of the common religious property of humanity; he may or he may not add his own vital effort to the organic growth of the kingdom of God. The latter, at all events, is not limited by the subjective, ethical world of particular individuals, but it possesses its own objective activity, general forms and laws, and is evolved according to a complex historical process, in which individuals play partly an active, and partly a passive rôle. Hence, the important significance of the visible church, as a formal, symbolical institution, by a certain number of steps realising the universal totality, in which the particular individuals participate in the constitution, into which they enter, but which later, on the other hand, does not at all represent their arithmetical sum, or mechanical mass. And, moreover, only in this objectively organised character of the collective divine-human process, as presupposing and including our personal, moral acts, only in this *super-personal* character of this process becomes possible that given apparent *suddenness* in the approach of its final results, as directly confirmed by the Gospel.\* As a matter of course, this suddenness is only relative, and fully concurring with the uninterrupted and predetermined growth of the di-

vine-human organism; and, moreover, this suddenness of outward manifestation of the inwardly prepared critical moments in its growth is purely physical. The seed corn, after growing out of the soil, in a like manner suddenly transfers its germs to the earth, and just as suddenly the ripened fruit drops upon the ground; so even the most important phases of the *divine kingdom* come, although suddenly, yet in the *fulness of time*, to wit, when prepared by the preceding process. This suddenness, accordingly, does not exclude, but on the contrary, presupposes the efficient co-operation of individual efforts, in the general growth of the kingdom of God.

Thus the superficially apparent contradictions between the internal and external character of the kingdom of God, between its progressive, and its spontaneous realisation are removed by the true conception of the fact. As existing for our benefit, the divine kingdom must necessarily be within our own spiritual constitution, particularly, through the condition of our internal union with God. A union of this kind attained its individual perfection in the person of the God-man Christ; but here it also revealed itself as super-individual. True *union with another* cannot be a subjective condition only; the union of every man with God cannot be simply personal. The divine or heavenly kingdom cannot be a psychological fact only; but, above all, it is the eternal objective truth of a positive total truth. This truth is deposited in the social character of the natural man, in the universal, all-comprehensive essence of his mind, although it is not actually given, but only potentially bestowed. The fulness of all being, in a perfect manner united to God through the son of man,—such is this absolute ideal, the realisation of which began and is continued in universal history, as a common achievement of humanity; all human souls work for its realisation, unconsciously and spontaneously; all share in the same, and, moreover, while self-acting and self-conscious, this ideal constitutes the social duty of every enlightened Christian. From this side the divine kingdom is not made up of the simple act of the union of the soul with God, but consists of a complex and all-embracing process, to wit, the physico-spiritual growth and development of the unified divine-human organism in the world. And this increase, like every organic growth, does not only represent a non-interruption of the quantitative moments, but also represents the different shades of qualitative steps and forms, of which although the highest may presuppose the lowest, and be prepared by them, yet in nowise can be entirely derived from them, and therefore also appear as something new and strange.\*

\* Math. xxiv, 29. Conf., on the other hand, in the same chapter 31, 33.

\* But these new wonders at the same time are also new revelations, that throw a light on the preceding mysteries and enigmas. Because from the

And having set forth the above central idea of Christianity, we shall easily distinguish and expose the different phases of the errors actually prevailing. Among these we shall here notice only the most obnoxious.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

#### FREETHOUGHT, ITS TRUTH AND ITS ERROR.

By freethought we understand the right of every thinker to seek for, to find, and to state the truth himself, and in calling freethought "a right" we are well aware of the fact that as all rights are only the reverse of duties, so freethought is at the same time the duty of every thinking being to seek for, to find, and to state the truth for himself. And this duty, in our conception of religion, is also the highest religious duty of man. The religion of science, therefore, may also be called, in this sense, the religion of freethought.

Freethought stands in opposition to authoritative belief. There have been and there are still religious teachers and institutions which maintain that man should not seek the truth for himself, because he is, as is claimed, unable to find it, and if a man has become convinced that he has found some truth for himself, he must be mistaken and therefore he should not be allowed to pronounce it, his errors being injurious to his fellowmen.

Man accordingly, because he cannot know, should believe, he should trust in what he is told to be the truth, he should give himself and his reasoning up to the higher authority of the church, "bringing into captivity every thought" (2 Cor. x, 5). Freethought has risen in revolution to the religion of blind obedience, and freethought, although first suppressed by ecclesiastical and secular authorities, has come out victorious in the end and is now almost generally recognised as the cornerstone of progress among all the nations which represent civilised humanity.

Freethought has often been misunderstood. It is not only misinterpreted by the adversaries of freethought, but not infrequently also by those who call themselves freethinkers. Freethought does not mean that thought is free or should be free, it simply claims freedom for the thinker to think undisturbedly and uninterfered with for himself. The thought of the thinker however is not free and cannot be free, in the sense that the thinker can think however he pleases. Freethought, it is true, claims the liberty and the right to think for the individual; but that right being procured, the individual can think only by renouncing its individuality. We can dream as we please, we can imagine that this or that might be so or so just as we like. But when we think, we cannot come to a conclusion just as we please, we have radically and entirely to

give up our likes and dislikes in order to arrive at what can objectively be proved to be the truth.

The freethinker who claims not only liberty for thought, but also liberty of thought is gravely mistaken. There is no liberty of thought. The mere idea "liberty of thought" is a contradiction, for thought is strict obedience to the laws of thought and only by strict obedience can we arrive at the truth which is always the purpose and final aim of thought.

The error that there can be liberty of thought has led to another erroneous idea which is a misinterpretation of the principle of tolerance. We certainly believe in tolerance, but tolerance means the recognition of other people's right to express their opinion. It does not mean that any and every opinion is of equal value. Tolerance demands that the opinions of those who seek the truth should be heard; they should not be put down with violence or treated with contempt. Yet tolerance does not exclude criticism; it does not and should not abolish the struggle for truth among those who believe that they have found the truth. For truth is objective and there is but one truth. If tolerance is based upon the idea that truth is merely subjective, that something may be true to me which is not true to you, and that therefore an objective conception of the truth is an impossibility, tolerance has to be denounced as a superstition. Tolerance in this sense is injurious to progress, for it prevents the search for truth and leads to the stagnancy of indolent indifferentism.

The expression objectivity of truth must not be understood in the sense that truth is an object. Truth is not a thing, but a relation. Truth is the congruence of our ideas with the reality represented in these ideas. If the idea is a correct representation of the reality represented so as to form a reliable guidance in our department toward the reality, it is true. That truth can be more or less clear, that it can more or less be mingled with errors, that it can be more or less complete or exhaustive is a matter of course. Truth cannot be possessed as objects are possessed so that we either have it entire or not at all. Truth is the product of our exertions, it is the result of our search for truth, so that, the world of realities with its innumerable relations and unlimited changes being living before us, immeasurable, interminable, and eternal, truth can never be complete, never perfect, never absolute in the minds of mortal beings. But that proves only the greatness of the universe and the grandness of the object of our cognition. It is no fault of truth. For truth remains truth, it remains objective, and can as such serve as a guidance for conduct, even though it be incomplete and imperfect. We however are freethinkers and search boldly for a more complete and more perfect conception of truth, because we trust in

true teleological point of view even the lowest steps and forms presuppose the highest, as their ultimate aim, and because only through the disclosure of that highest aim they explain themselves, and obtain a meaning.

truth—in its objectivity, its exclusiveness, its universality, and its authority.

Freethought, if the word is conceived as the right and the duty of everybody to think for himself, boldly abolishes the slavery of blind obedience, but it does not abolish, as is sometimes erroneously supposed, any and every authority. On the contrary, its claim is based upon authority and can be maintained only on the strength of this authority. This authority is the objectivity of truth, which involves its uniqueness. There is but one truth. All the many different truths are but so many parts or aspects of truth; and although the different aspects of truth may form contrasts, although we may state them in paradoxical formulas, they never can collide so as to enter into a real and actual contradiction. Whatever is positively contradictory to truth is impossible, for truth is one and is always in harmony with itself. Truth is objective and the right to think is based upon the confidence that correct thought which is rigidly obedient to the laws of thought, will lead to the cognition of truth.

Freethought accordingly is not the renunciation of all authority, it is only the renunciation of human authority. It is not the abdication of obedience, it is only the abdication of blind obedience. Freethought refuses to recognise special revelations not merely because it disbelieves the reports made about these special revelations, not merely because it declares them to be doubtful and unreliable. Freethought would be weak if it were based on mere negations and disbeliefs, and that freethought which never ventures farther than the negations is weak indeed. Freethought refuses to recognise special revelation, because it believes in the universal revelation of truth. The God of freethought is not a God who contradicts himself, who makes exceptions of his will by miracles for those who seek after signs. The God of freethought is not far from every one of us. We can seek him, if haply we might feel after him and find him. For in him we live and move and have our being. He appears in the realities of nature and of nature's laws, and his revelation is not dual; it is one, it is throughout consistent with itself and every one is welcome to search for the truth.

Because God has been conceived as a miracle-working magician, and because the ecclesiastical authorities have again and again maintained that such a God alone can be called a God, freethought has been driven into the negativism of atheism. But if God is conceived as the objective reality in which we live and move and have our being, as that power the cognition of which is truth and conformity to which is morality, freethought is by no means either negative or atheistic. Freethought is by no means a mere

negation of belief, it is by no means an overthrow of religion, or a reversal of religious authority. Freethought is a strong and potent faith. It is the faith in truth.

The faith of freethought is as a grain of mustard seed, which indeed, is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. The faith of freethought is in the beginning a mere maxim, a hope, an ideal. But it is founded on the rock of ages; it is founded upon truth. The faith of freethought is justified. We have a right to search for the truth; yea, we have the duty to search for the truth. And why? Because truth can be cognised. Truth is not an illusion, not a mere subjective fancy, it is founded upon objective reality. It is an ideal that can be approached more and more, not a mere vision but a realisable actuality. It is a path, although a steep path full of thorns, a narrow and strait gate and few there are that find it. But we must find it for all other paths lead astray. And we can find it, and blessed are those who have found it, for it alone leads onward and upward; it alone is the way of life, it alone is the road of progress.

#### CURRENT TOPICS.

READING the church notices on Sunday morning, as my custom is, in order to determine where I may get the most religious instruction, I noticed with some surprise that there were five "Churches of Christ" in Chicago, and one of them was advertised as "The Colored Church of Christ." I confess that I care little about the points of doctrine that separate the sects, but in a church thus classified and branded I take deep interest, and I wonder what Jesus of Nazareth would have thought of a "Colored church of Christ," could he have imagined a solecism so grotesque, one church for the sheep and another for the goats, one temple for the white and another for the colored soul, if souls are colored, as probably they are not. It appears to me that this exclusion of colored people from the churches of Christ that are not colored, renders white christianity null and void, and many of the churches of Chicago are guilty of blaspheming in that way. They have eloquent preaching and praying in them, and sweet voices like those of angels chant psalms of heavenly splendor, forced up higher and higher by the tones of a Gothic organ wherein dwells the very genius of melody; but it appears to me that if the colored brother is not welcome there, the worship is all in vain. The preaching and the praying, and the songs and the music do not even reach to the top of the steeple much less to heaven. They grovel near the ground like the smoke of Cain's burnt offering rejected of the Lord.

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In harmony with the movement already started for keeping foreigners out of this country, is the supplementary movement about to be started for keeping Americans in. In a patriotic lamentation radiating from Chicago, a complaint is made that the American tourists who visit Europe every summer take too much money out of the country; and therefore they and their money should be compelled to stay at home. One of the "great dailies," great in size I mean, points with exultant finger to the difference in value between some Exports and some Imports; and joyfully

shows a "balance of trade" in our favor amounting to several millions of dollars and odd cents. In a comical sort of burlesque its *paean* of triumph dies away into the following dirge, played slowly in a minor key: "All this balance is wasted and lost by American travelers who spend their money abroad." According to the spirit of this complaint, unless we can have laws to keep within the country all Americans who have dollars, it only gives a half protection to keep out foreigners who have none. With unconscious and unpremeditated humor, the "great daily" aforesaid, while deploring the wickedness of Americans who spend in London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin, the money that ought to be kept in their own country, delightfully unaware of any inconsistency, gives through its own columns pressing and persuasive invitations to the citizens of all nations, urging them to visit America in 1893, and spend *their* money in Chicago.

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The United States Mint is in peril. There are new coins to be made, with new designs, and there is only one man in this country who can make designs for coins. I have always envied the man whose head and shoulders rise above the clouds of mediocrity; who can do any one thing better than any other man can do it; but how his inefficient glory pales in the presence of the only man who can do it at all. He is the very incarnation of royalty, and monopoly is his prerogative. The thought that possibly, he may die sends a chill creeping down the spine. There have been men before who thought that the world could not get along without them, but here is a man in Philadelphia who *knows* that it cannot get along without him. The art of making designs for coins is his own private property, and unlike all other property, he can take it away with him when he dies. When we lose him we lose the art also. "I have told our engraver," said the Secretary of the Mint, "to prepare me a set of designs for subsidiary coins. I will not do anything with the dollar for some time. There is no hurry about it, and the weather is too warm to worry ourselves about anything that does not require immediate attention." It is the luxurious and reposeful ethics of the "Departments," never to hurry or worry, especially in the hot weather, and over so large a matter as the silver dollar. If the Department of the Mint will focus its intellect on the small and subsidiary coins, it is all the country ought to expect of it during the hot weather. "Our engraver at Philadelphia," said the Secretary of the Mint, "is the only competent person to prepare these designs." In this country, he meant, for he languidly continued, "We might get them in France. The French coin work is of the most artistic description." And when common sense wanted to know why he did not get them in France, the Secretary answered, "Because the people of the United States would never forgive us if we went outside this country for our designs." This people are owners of half a continent, filled with natural wealth unparalleled among nations; and looking at them through the wrong end of his telescope, the Secretary of the Mint thought they were too little to forgive him for getting his coins designed in France, where such work is "of the most artistic description." The War Department, being of a more martial spirit than the Department of the Mint, is not afraid of the people of the United States, for I read that in experimenting with a great gun at Sandy Hook on the 25th of July it was loaded "with 250 pounds of German prismatic powder." I wonder if the people of the United States will ever forgive the War Department for loading American guns with German powder

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The broad, expansive, continental political economy to which I have just referred, reminds me of that antediluvian epoch when the circus first crossed the Mississippi into northern Iowa. I was living in Marbletown at the time, and I shall always remember the spiritual stimulation produced by that circus, and the muni-

pal importance which it conferred upon the town. From a drowsy, shiftless village it sprung at one bound up to metropolitan rank, and immediately put on airs of superiority over the rival village of Rockbottom which the circus had scornfully passed by. From the very day that the advance agent came along, and stuck his dazzling posters on the fences the citizens assumed a higher tone. They straightened up as it were, and adopted city forms. Men put on civilised clothes, and discarded coon-skin caps and moccasins. Women who had always gone barefoot in the summer put on shoes, and talked of being "in society"; and ladies who persisted in going barefoot were no longer counted among the "best people." The moral improvement effected by the circus, although not permanent, was very perceptible at the time of which I speak. Of course we did not get all that was promised by the bills; but I argued then, and I maintain it now, that for every half dollar paid by those who were not able to crawl under the tent, we got a dollar's worth of what the handbills called "innocent amusement blended with instruction." The jokes of the clown, while to jaded appetites they may have had a flavor of antiquity, were fresh as roasting ears to us, and as juicy. The elephant was a poem, and take it for all in all, I think that for shaking lethargy out of a country village a circus is better than an earthquake. However, all this is merely a preamble introducing the catastrophe described in the next paragraph, wherein lies the moral of my story.

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This fable if judiciously studied will show the duty of keeping money in our own country, and *a fortiori* in our own town. The next evening, after the circus had gone, a lot of us, in fact all the leading citizens of the place were seated on the benches in front of Abner Clark's tavern, reveling in the good humor which the circus had left in the air. We were praising the sword swallowing, the ground and lofty tumbling, the polandering, and the somersault throwing. We were wondering how any man could jump over eight horses and an elephant, when who should come along but Deacon Shadrach Sturn, a mathematical man who had elected himself by a large majority to the office of town critic, censor, and statistician. He intercepted the rays of the beneficial sun, as his custom was, and he lowered the genial thermometer thirty-five degrees by showing that a circus was against the laws of God and Political Economy. By the aid of a pencil he "cal'lated" that, supposing the adult attendance at the two performances to be so many, and this, he said, was a "conservative estimate," and figuring the children who went in at half price at so many, and adding the two sums together, the result was as he showed with sardonic triumph the enormous sum of two hundred and seven dollars and seventy-five cents actual cash money taken out of town by the circus, and wantonly diverted from the channels of home trade; not counting the loss of time thus frivolously wasted; which, allowing that of the men to be worth only ten cents an hour, and that of the boys five cents, and estimating the time of the women and girls as worth nothing "for the purposes of this argument," then adding together the number of hours, after subtracting the women from the men and the girls from the boys, and multiplying that number by the total attendance, and this again by seven and a half the compromise medium between ten cents and five cents, and dividing the whole product by the common denominator, "we have another enormous sum of thirty-nine dollars and twenty-five cents withdrawn from the gross capital of Marbletown by the circus," said the mathematical Shadrach Sturn. The fun, good nature, and child happiness that the circus left in the village counted for nothing. Gloom and laziness again settled upon Marbletown; it relapsed into its former state of coon-skin caps and moccasins. It adopted sackcloth and shiftlessness in self-reproach for allowing so much money to be carried out of town by the circus. "And all for the gratification of a sentiment,"

said Shadrach. We are trying to shrivel the United States of America to the size of Marbletown; and the policy of the great republic will soon be under the direction of that eminent economist and statesman Sturn.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### PROF. F. MAX MUELLER ON "BRIGHT EYES AND DARK EYES."

"I sent my soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of the after life to spell;  
And by and by my soul returned to me  
And answered, 'I myself am Heaven and Hell.'"

To the Editor of *The Open Court*:

PERMIT me to make a very few remarks on what I conceive to be fallacies in the above article in *The Open Court* of June 13. Prof. Max Müller really writes as if approving the relative and materialistic system of the world while advocating what is virtually one founded on Theology and Philology (Metaphysics). As he confessedly allows that he did not always get the best of the argument in his discussions with the Japanese Buddhist priest—"his excellent friend Bunyiu Nanjio"—on the subject of prayer. Like Bishop Colenso's experience with the Zulu. The professor states, "he was quite startled when his friend declared to him that his sect considered prayer as sinful, as almost [quite] blasphemous," which surely is the verdict not only of Japanese Buddhism, but of Reason and Common Sense, and commonplace as well. The great philologist's *per contra* contention that "Prayer is a universal custom, arising from the most natural impulse of the human heart, that it is only an expression of our own helplessness and of our trust in a higher power, and that, even if not granted, a prayer would help us to submit more readily to the inscrutable degrees of a higher wisdom"\* is a mere begging of the question and will not hold water at all when traced to its real source. The Buddhist counter place seems perfectly inexpugnable "that, if we really believe in that supreme wisdom and power, it would be an insult to put our own small wisdom against the higher, or in any way to try to interfere with the workings of that higher power." Surely here the argument is against the unscientific plea of your eloquent contributor "that we are so made that we must believe in a Maker of the World, or in an Agent behind all the phenomena of nature, or in a First Cause." The present standpoint both of moral and physical science, especially as contained in the Evolution theory of things, is that true Ontology, as Lessing long since, though rather confusedly, adumbrated, is not for the human mind at all, which "must" limit itself to the non-absolute or relational sphere itself. And virtually, in his closing sentence, the professor seems to make at least a very palpable compromise and even in a great measure, to go over to the camp of the *Atheos*. As Cudworth and Bacon were held to do—much to the former's disgust and distress. Bacon's quotation from Plutarch to the effect "that it is better not to believe in a God at all than to hold [as we must do from the seamy side of Nature—at once *Alma Mater* and step mother]—that he, devours his offspring," sufficiently interprets the *real* Baconian Verdict, and quite neutralises the whole gist of his essay on Atheism and of his unworthy depreciation of Epicurism and by implication Euhemerism—in his otherwise sublime and veracious *Essay on Truth*. Prof. Max Müller, it seems clear, is still in the bonds of Animism and Dualism, as proved elsewhere by his uncompromising hostility to Darwinism which involves also his disbelief in the doctrine of development (Becoming) of early Pan-Socratic Greek thinkers, who as Ueberweg states, were to a man Hylo-Zoists.

R. LEWINS, M. D.

\* How about idolators swinging their idols when their petitions were not granted. See an article on "Divine Right" in the June number of *Cornhill Magazine*.

## ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE MASSES.

To the Editor of *The Open Court* :—

OBSERVING the crowds that frequent a good soda water fountain on a hot day, one is led to ask why this evident liking of the people for cool drinks of a harmless nature is not taken advantage of by those who endeavor to improve the morals and health of the workman. Why should not also hot drinks in cold weather dispensed in the same way be equally profitable and popular? Let a man who is willing to sink some money with the expectation of ultimate large returns—what he might perhaps venture in a newspaper enterprise—put a good sum into fitting up a general amusement and refreshment establishment in a good location in Chicago, and conduct it in as attractive a way as possible minus intoxicants and immorality, and he would accomplish more for the common class of workers than could be accomplished by a dozen churches.

My scheme in brief is this:

First a refreshment stand and restaurant. The windows should display some interesting novelty, and on one side should be a handsome bar for hot drinks, and on the other, one for cold drinks, with general restaurant in the rear.

Second, there should be in close connection a large hall for music and theatricals, and fitted with tables and all the furnishings of a variety theatre. In fact it should be a variety theatre with the indecency and vulgarity left out, but giving the most popular music and plays by the best musicians and actors procurable. It could also be used for panoramas, stereopticon entertainments, athletic exhibitions, etc.

Third, a smaller hall should be provided for amateur theatricals, meetings of social and literary clubs, and for dances.

Fourth, a reading room for distinctly popular literature, the daily, illustrated, and humorous papers, the popular magazines, and good but entertaining books. Photographs, photogravures, etchings, and pictures of all kinds should be provided for examination, and also to let. By this means a working-girl might easily brighten and beautify her room anew each month at small expense, and privilege of purchase being granted, might become owner of artistic things which pleased her most. This plan might also include statuettes and *bric-a-brac*. A work of art is always open to view and exercises its refining influence more constantly and directly than a book. A library which would circulate pictures, the latest and most popular as well as reproductions of the great masters of the past, would accomplish great good, and I do not see why this has not been before carried out. Musical instruments could also be rented.

Fifth, the scheme should also by all means embrace parlors attractively furnished, with piano, etc., where two or three workmen might bring two or three working girls, and spend by themselves a pleasant evening with music, conversation, cards, and dancing. A place of this kind would save many a one from the worst resorts.

Sixth, a billiard room, general card room, bowling alley, shooting gallery, gymnasium, and other features could be added when thought desirable.

All rooms should be ornamented with popular works of art yet having artistic excellence, though florid enough to outdo the gin palace. Refreshments should be served in all parts of the establishment as requested. Everything should be charged at just such a cut under ordinary rates as to be an inducement to patrons, but no more and no less. The whole should be conducted in a thoroughly business way, and in fact it should never be known outside the immediate projectors that anything else than money is in any wise contemplated. What the workman suspects is done merely for his good or out of charity, he will by a right and true instinct always avoid. He will shun those who come in a I-am-holier-than-thou attitude and with a let-me-lift-you-up-to-my-plane air

but he will quickly respond to any one who places before him things which are worth his buying. Every one, whatever be his particular opinion on temperance, must admit that the common saloon is the great foe of the workingman, and every careful observer must further, I think, grant this, that the foe must be met and vanquished on its own ground and by business methods. The manager should be not a distinctively good and philanthropic man, least of all a "reformed" man, but a keen business man with some practical acquaintance with his constituency. His zeal should be stimulated by rewards graduated by the success he attains toward making the venture pay on the general plan set forth.

The design of the establishment being to fill a large place as an amusement resort, it should always be kept purely secular. Sunday should have the most attractive bill, but no sermons or lectures should ever be allowed. The whole entertainment should always be thoroughly popular in tone, and what does not "take" should be promptly withdrawn. The object should be not to give anything conspicuously different from that usually found in common resorts, but merely something of a little better grade minus all whisky and vileness. With a good name and judicious advertising such an establishment, liberally and rightly conducted from the start, would end in a great success financially, and morally in proportion; for appreciation and interest shown by spending money is the best possible test of the hold which anything has upon the public. But he who undertakes the scheme must first make sure by thorough study of the lower kinds of resorts that he knows how to hit the popular taste. If the people want spectacle, dancing, and song, let them have it without lewdness; if they like athletic contests, let them have them without brutality; if they enjoy eating and drinking, let them do so without intoxicants; if they would have sociability and freedom, let it be without rowdysim and license. He who values the good of mankind will not care who makes their laws so long as he is able to control their amusements. The masses set over against a day of toil, an evening for amusement, and over against a six days of drudgery one day of pleasure; and this fact must be weighed well by all who undertake their elevation and improvement.

HIRAM M. STANLEY.

THE QUESTION OF MONOGAMY.

To the Editor of *The Open Court*.—

ALLOW me, as one who has paid especial attention to the subject of Mrs. Susan Channing's communications to *The Open Court*, to say that, while I agree with her as to the importance of chastity for the well-being of a people, and while I reject entirely the view adopted by the writers she names, as to the sexual condition of primitive society, I strongly object to her statement that primitive man was monogamous. We can only judge, in this case, of the past by the present, and I think I may safely challenge Mrs. Channing to produce a single example of a really monogamous tribe of savages. Even if such a case, or half-a-dozen such cases exist it would not prove the rule. No doubt many individuals, from sheer necessity, have only one wife, but, as a fact, some form of group-marriage is practised by all savage tribes; although subject to the most careful restrictions for the prevention of marriage between persons near of kin. The argument in favor of primitive man having been monogamous, based on the fact (?) that syphilis was unknown prior to 1494, is more than weak. Mankind is known to have existed for at least 10,000 years, and may have existed as many centuries, and yet we can infer what was the sexual state of society at the beginning of the period from the happening of an event 400 years ago! The mere statement of the conditions shows the weakness of the argument. I heard the late Dr. J. F. McLennan say that mankind had existed so long on the earth that it is useless to endeavor to affiliate the present races. While I disagree with this opinion, the fact on which it is based should render us cautious in drawing conclusions.

Mrs. Channing has made a treble mistake in connection with the English Contagious Diseases Act. In the first place, the supposed repeal of the Act did not take place. Speaking from memory, only the clauses which placed its operation under government superintendence were repealed. Secondly, the cause of this partial repeal was not what your correspondent supposes. Of course the opponents of the Act affirmed that it did more harm than good, but their statements were shown to be incorrect, and the action of the government—that of Mr. Gladstone—in the matter was the outcome of pure sentiment. Thirdly, the Act was not soon (partially) repealed. It existed in its entirety long enough to prove its great value conclusively to those who could consider its object and operation in the spirit of reason. Possibly, however, Mrs. Channing and I are referring to different things; as several C. D. Acts were passed during the period the former names, and my statement relates to the last one.

C. STANILAND WAKE.

NOTES.

Professor Nicolas Grote, the editor of the Russian Quarterly Magazine *Voprosi Filosofii i Psichologii*, called my attention to Vladimir Solovieff's article on "Christianity," a translation of which appears in the present number of *The Open Court*. Professor Grote writes: "Vladimir Solovieff is at present, beside the Count Tolstoi, our most eminent thinker; he is a distinguished philosopher as well as theologian. I do not share his theological convictions, belonging myself to the small fraction of those Russian philosophers who prefer to be simply philosophers and scientists. But I cannot help admiring the extraordinary talent and originality of my friend. You Americans should be familiar with his works on religious and ecclesiastical "questions." Vladimir Solovieff is a professed Christian, yet his conception of Christianity, like that of Tolstoi's does not coincide with that of the established Christian institutions. Therefore, it appears, he is not looked upon with favor by the Russian government, and he named the present article "The Frauds of Christianity." This title being misleading, we took the liberty of changing it into "Christianity, its Spirit and its Errors."

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