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BENEDICT SPINOZA.

BY W. L. SHELDON.

THERE never was any beginning and there never will be any end, to the speculations of the human mind as to the nature and being of God. We may think we have settled it one way or another; we finally make up our minds as to what we think or believe, what we accept or reject, what we affirm or deny. At times we are clear that we have come to a definite conviction.

We may think for example that we don't really believe in a God. We have looked over the arguments, reflected on what men have told us and made up our minds that there is no such being. Just when we may have fancied that it was all plain and we had done with the subject, lo and behold, some other idea, some other conception of that great Power, is brought before us. It is not that a new argument has been presented. Probably the arguments and evidences have been quite exhausted. What is not exhausted however, is the idea itself. And so it is that in spite of all our efforts, if we are thinking beings, given to serious purpose and reflection, we are again and again brought back to the same old problem, because it is always coming before us as a *new* problem. We are again and again confronted with new ideas, grander and more lofty conceptions of God.

The reason why we never get away altogether from the subject, is plain enough on closer investigation. We cannot escape it because we cannot actually get away from the Universe. When we are asking who or what is God, we are asking what is the Universe. When we are asking what is the Universe, we are asking who or what is God. Atheism has no existence in philosophy. We can no more deny the existence of a Supreme Being than we can deny that there is a bed or bottom to the ocean. We have not been there; and as long as that is the case, modesty forbids the spirit of denial; precisely as the same spirit of modesty requires, that we be cautious and conservative in presuming on too much knowledge about that Supreme Power that men call "God."

We are told that about two and a half centuries ago there was born in the old town of Amsterdam a

child whose name has come down to us as Benedict Spinoza. He came of the race that has given us Isaiah and St. Paul, Jesus and Jeremiah. He was of the line of people whose most serious thought from the time of Abraham and Moses has been given supremely to reflecting about the nature of the Supreme Being. They might be said to have been the "God-intoxicated" race of early history. When this child grew to manhood and desired humbly to wear the mantle of the prophets, to give up his whole life to the study of that theme, to search into it more deeply, to enlarge its conceptions, to make it grow with the expanding thought of the birth of a new world,—the race to which he belonged, nay further, the thinking reflecting Christendom, cast him out; they would have none of him. The age to which he belonged pronounced upon him its anathema. Men refused to recognise his mission; they would almost have driven him from the face of the earth.

But two and a half centuries have rolled by. The world which has forgotten most of his opponents, has picked up the mantle which men tore from his shoulders, and wrapped it once more about him. They place him again where he belonged, among the great prophets, not only of the Israel of the race from which he came, but of a universal Israel. We can say that he was in his life an outcast, but that he has come down to us as a conqueror. He has won a triumph rare and unique in the whole history of philosophy.

It is not that he established forever the principles which he advocated; it does not imply that he became the great and exclusive discoverer of the final truth. No man dare claim that privilege. He has triumphed in the sense that he has proved the right to be a teacher, an enlightener of his own age, and a stepping stone in the development of human thought by which we have climbed to our present era of higher knowledge. No man would perhaps at the present time call himself in the full sense of the term a disciple of Spinoza. But there is not a shadow of a doubt that the most profound thought of our own time, the deepest thinkers of our century, have ever been influenced by, or shown marked indications of, what is known as "Spinozism." We can see it in the case of Goethe as

well as Darwin and Emerson. Almost everybody knows something about him. But there is such a fascination in the study, in just thinking about him, that we venture to tell the story over again. It gives new feelings whenever it is brought to our minds.

Who was this man, the father and author of "Spinozism"? He was a modest retiring Jew, a plain, simple unpretentious person, a grinder of lenses, a mechanic, a workingman. He was not this at the beginning. He was destined by his father to be a leader in the Church, to become another of the great line of Rabbis among the Hebrews. He could have had the comforts and conveniences of life; he was in one of the great centres of culture and refinement; he was given the best education. But he chose the life of the humble and lowly. He did not do this because that was the most preferable; but rather because it left him a free man. We no longer know of him or hear of him in a wealthy home at Amsterdam; he has not come down to us as a leader or guide in the lore of the Talmud. We know of him rather as a lens grinder, earning his living by the use of his hands, in a quiet corner of the city of the Hague.

Where had he come from, or who were his forefathers? A century or more previous they had come from Portugal. The edict of the king and the inquisition of Spain had driven them from the south. The Jews were not wanted there; they were told to leave. Word came to them "get you gone from this land." The fathers and mothers had to obey, life was not safe; the children might have been torn from their arms; there was no hope for them in that country. But up in the north another people had come into prominence. They had shaken off the yoke of the southern oppressor; they had a land of freedom and opened their doors to the exiles. Holland was glad to receive those banished Hebrews and welcomed them even with open arms. And so they came and settled there and were known as the "Portuguese Jews." They were the fore-fathers, the ancestors of this lens grinder or mechanic, the God-intoxicated Spinoza.

What was this man in his life and how was he esteemed? He received little esteem. He was an outcast. Men looked down upon him; they felt themselves wiser than he. They were sure that they deserved better of the Most High; they would have wiped the dust from their feet after separating from this man. He was the "Atheist Spinoza." It makes us smile a little now, as we hear the word. It is hard to understand just what it means. Spinoza an Atheist! Well then so was Moses, Luther, Plato, or St. Augustine. Men know better now. His teaching has been in existence two hundred and fifty years. He was not an Atheist; he did not deny the existence of a God.

What kind of a man was he? That would be difficult to answer. He left no biography of himself like Rousseau; he did not put himself forward as many a great man has done; he did not have what is called ambition; he did not care very much for the world. He was not an intense nature with overmastering feelings; he could live even without much sympathy. He did not have many friends, he had no family. He was childless, wifeless, fatherless and motherless; and yet it is said that he was cheerful and even happy. He had nothing bitter to say about men. I don't know that he was given to exclaiming against fate or destiny; I have not heard it intimated that he ever assumed that he had not had his share of the joy in the world. He would perhaps have been glad of more joy and affection, more sympathy and friendship; but he could exist without it and yet not be miserable.

Are we to think, because he was so quiet and unobtrusive, that he did not have will-power and character? Was he just a "shop-worn" philosopher, a tiresome writer of books? We recall to mind a little incident that broke the monotony of his life. It was a sample of the *man* rather than of the speculative thinker. When his father died, the two sisters undertook to deprive him of his share of the inheritance. What did he do? Was he meek and submissive; did he let them have their own way and continue in his course as a polisher of glass, and a philosopher? No, he contested his rights in the courts, established beyond dispute the claim to his share of the property;—and then, then he handed it over to his sisters. Unfortunately philosophers as a rule have not always been that kind of men. But that was the character of Spinoza.

He did however have one passion, great and overpowering in its influence upon him. He was intense in just one way. He was mastered by the passion of *love for thinking*. Spinoza is one of the few great religious teachers who have been incarnate intellects. There is perhaps nowhere in literature a more exalted expression of regard for pure thinking and its worth than we find in one of the chapters of his greatest work called "Ethics."

"It is therefore of the highest utility in life that we perfect our understanding or reason as much as possible; and in this alone consists the supreme felicity or blessedness of man; for blessedness is nothing else than that tranquillity of soul which arises from the intuitive knowledge of God. Now, to perfect our understanding is nothing else but to apprehend God, and the attributes and acts of God which follow from the necessity of the Divine Nature. Wherefore the highest end and aim of the man whom reason guides, his supreme desire, that by which he studies to regulate all other desires, is the desire he feels to adequately conceive and know himself and all things else that can fall under his intelligence. There is however no rational life without intelligence, and things are only *good* in so far as they aid man to enjoy that Soul-Life (*mentis vita*) which is defined as understanding. Those

things on the contrary, which prevent man from perfecting his understanding and enjoying this rational life, and those only, do I call *bad*."

He was essentially and above everything else just *mind*. The one problem which absorbed that intellect, drew its attention and enthusiasm, was the nature and the being of God,—though he has been called the "Godless Spinoza."

How do men as a rule form their ideas of the Deity, what gives them their God. Is it philosophy and speculation, is it the teaching of their childhood, is it from study and reflection? No, for the most part it has been none of these. It is the human feeling, the craving of the heart, which supremely has given men their Deity. They built him out of their ideals and longings, and clothed him in the garment of the Universe. We cannot all be thinkers. Men have not time for continued or prolonged reflection, they must live and work. But while they do this, the heart goes on craving something, and it believes and trusts in some kind of an unseen Power. This has been the fact from the earliest ages. Philosophy has not given the race of men their God.

It is not for me to criticise this method. Good as well as evil has come from it. Truth as well as error may spring from the feelings. But of this much I am certain, that the songs and hymns, the music and the architecture, have more to do with what men believe on this subject, than their own abstract thinking. The Bibles have done more in this respect than philosophy. It was love or fear which first brought men to their knees; and it is so still.

But there in that old town in Holland, two hundred and fifty years ago, was a solitary man who was a rare exception to this method. He did not get his belief through feeling or the emotions. He is one of those unique, isolated examples of men who have found their God strictly and exclusively through their minds. Spinoza was dominated first by the passion for true thinking, rather than by the yearning to find the Deity. He has as much, and perhaps more than any other man, used the method of logic to discover a God.

I dwell on this exception because it is of great consequence. We must understand the majority of writers and even thinkers on this subject, from what they are trying to say, rather than from their actual utterances. There is always a confusion in their thought from the elements of emotion. But when it comes to this other man, we are to judge him exactly by what he has said. He undertook to prove his position with the accuracy of a mathematical demonstration. He laid down his definitions and his axioms, formulated his propositions, undertaking to establish every one of them by propositions previously established, or by axioms already adopted. We have the unique instance of an attempt

to prove the existence of a Deity by the method of Geometry.

If I undertake to explain what he said, it can only be in a crude, fragmentary sort of a way. All that can be done is simply to lay down some of his thoughts. I shall not venture to offer criticism. He was so big a mind, he stands out so by himself, that it would be better to leave him to be judged, and not for me to pronounce judgment. Much of what we shall give, may be known already, even if people have not read one line of his writings. His thoughts are in the atmosphere of our day.

The exiled, outcast Jew of the Hague did not have to aid him the writings of Kant, Helmholtz, Darwin, or Huxley. Science was scarcely in existence. They did know a little something about anatomy, practically nothing about chemistry, still less of biology. Philosophy had only just been reborn and rebaptised in the great minds of Bacon and Descartes. Religious thought had occupied itself for the most part with the great struggle as to the authority of the Church, the historic accuracy of the Scriptures. It had said much as to what the Church and the Bible taught of the Deity. But little however as yet had appeared in human thinking of the disposition to ask just who or what is this Being called God. Descartes the father of modern philosophy had given the one starting point from which the modern world has not receded. He did not know what he was doing when he laid down his proposition; but it was the standpoint essential for present modes of thinking. He had ventured to urge men "to accept only that which you can prove." Spinoza adopted the standpoint and brought on the convulsion. He dared to lay his hands, not merely as Luther did, on the accepted traditions as to what was real history, but still further on the accepted tradition as to what was the real and final truth.

What did they do to him when he ventured to do his own thinking, to lay his hand on the traditions? They offered him money. The rabbis went to him and said they would give him a thousand guilders a year, if he would attend the religious service occasionally, and just *keep quiet*. But Spinoza did not care for money. They tried something worse; although it is not known who is responsible for the effort. A man rushed out upon him in the darkness and thrust at him with a dagger. If money would not buy him into silence, death would quiet him. It was then that he left his native city of Amsterdam and finally settled in the Hague.

We do not assume that we can make perfectly clear what were these thoughts of Spinoza. As the human mind becomes large and searches deep, its thinking grows complex. We know more, we have more profound ideas, but they are less sharply drawn. Human

views of the Supreme Being in early times were very simple, but they were well defined. Men felt that they clearly understood what they meant by God. It is not simply the difference in opinions as put forward by this deep thinker, which makes the attitude of mind more difficult to comprehend; it is that the whole subject is vastly larger in all its aspects at the present time. The early view as taken by men was more easy to grasp, because it was more in the form of a picture. It could be seized in part by the mind, and completed by the imagination. But the intellectual grasp of the idea must be bare, it can give no picture. The imagination may not step in here and help out the conception. The atmosphere for that reason is cold and frigid on the mountain-top of pure intellect.

Spinoza would have said, I suppose: You say that your idea of the Deity is a power outside of and regulating Nature. A personal Supreme Being is easy to grasp by the imagination. But that which is the simplest to grasp by that means, is the very hardest and most difficult to grasp by the mind or intellect. The God and Nature you offer is picturable, but not thinkable. Mind can grasp only one substance. There can be no "God *and* Nature." If there is such a Being, it must be a God in Nature, a Nature which is in God. One substance cannot spring from another substance. Either they have both been from the beginning, or else they have always been united. God and the Universe are One.

You talk of this infinite space as being something separated from that Being. In that case, He must be outside of it, and can have nothing to do with it. But no; He is in space and space is one of His Attributes.

You say that God may change the order of Nature, alter its laws and movements. Why then, there must be two Gods in one God, two agencies in him and pulling in different directions, so as to induce him to change his plan. No, God cannot interfere, not because he is finite and limited, but because he is Infinite, complete and unchangeable. He acts by the necessity of his own nature and that is his Freedom. There is no miracle-working Deity because there is something better. There must be something higher than caprice of thought. The Deity must have known from the beginning what was to take place throughout eternity. The laws of nature cannot alter, because they are a part of the laws of the nature of the Deity; the two are identical. Only that which is finite is changeable. There exists rather an unchangeable Infinite Mind and that Mind is God.

You say that God is a person. Have you thought what that means? Do you know what it implies to be a person, to have a separate individual self-consciousness. Personality is that which distinguishes one being from another, isolates him, divides him off

from other individuals. Can you attribute that to the Deity? Are we to think of Him as divided off from something else, separated by limitations? If that be the case he must be divided off from another Deity and there would be two Gods. Personality is a quality of human beings, it is a limitation which confines the self within boundaries. God is too perfect, too high, too supreme a Being, for us to think of him as limited by existing as a personality. He is not infinite self-consciousness; but Infinite, Impersonal Mind.

You say that Nature acts by the will of God. But that would imply caprice. It is the mind that acts and not the will, the understanding and not the heart. Nature acts not by the will or wish of a Deity, but by the law which comes from Him because it is a part of God. There is but one universal law, that of Cause and Effect. The result must always follow from the cause, the cause must always give the result. There are not many acts, but just one act; there is only cause and that is God. He acts as much in the movements of my finger tips as he did when he set the planets and the suns swinging in their orbits. These finger tips are as much a part of Him as they are of me. He acts in myself because there is and can be only one source of action. He is the author of all action as He is of all being. There is or can be but one cause, and that cause is God.

You may say that the Deity is tender and loving, that he feels joy and sorrow, that he is troubled about us, that he loves mankind. But what after all are these feelings of sorrow and joy? Whence do they spring, how long do they last? They are the changeable fleeting modes that come and go, they arise simply from our limitations. Sorrow is due to imperfection; it is a hindrance to the action of the mind or the soul. How can there be such a feeling in a Being that is perfect and without hindrance? We should make him human like ourselves, finite, influenced by passions and affections, if we attributed that quality to him. No, He is mind, and not feeling, cause and not emotion. God does not feel joy or sorrow. We are to love Him and not to expect that He shall love us. We should make Him inferior, if we thought of Him as having such a feeling.

This was what he thought about the Deity. For him in his convictions there was just one substance, one cause, one law, one power, one universe, one mind,—and that All was one God.

It is bare, cold and abstract, hard to grasp, most difficult to comprehend. And yet the science of Darwin and Helmholtz is saturated with it; it is voiced in the poetry of Shelley or Goethe; it is reflected in the philosophy even of Emerson or Hegel.

What was he doing, how did he live, where was he, while doing all this thinking? For a time he was in a

back room up two flights of stairs working by himself at his trade, earning his living and doing his thinking. When he found however that that was too expensive he moved to the house of a painter, took a room and got his own meals. There he would work, sometimes not going out the room for days. Life for him was not expensive. Philosophy may cost brain energy, but can subsist by frugal living. From a translation of his work I take a little extract that is given from an old biography of Spinoza.

"He would live a whole day upon a milk soup done with butter, which amounted to three pence, and upon a pot of beer of three half-pence. Another day he would eat nothing but gruel done with raisins, and that dish did cost him four pence half penny. There are but two half pints of wine at most for one month to be found amongst these reckonings, and though he was often invited to eat with his friends, he chose rather to live upon what he had at home, though it were never so little, than to sit down at a good table at the expense of another man. He was very careful that his expenses should not exceed his income, and he would say sometimes to the people of the house that he was like a serpent with its tail in its mouth, to denote that he had nothing left at the year's end; and that he designed to lay up no more money than would be necessary to bury him decently, and that as he had got nothing from his parents, so his heirs and relations should not expect to get much by his death."

It was not necessary that he should have been so sparing with his means, living with such absolute simplicity. There were some friends who loved him and who would have shared with him what they had. One time they brought to him as a gift the sum of two thousand florins. What a treasure that would have been, setting him free to do nothing but just live a life of thought or reflection. Spinoza would not take it. He said that he wanted nothing, that if he were to accept that sum of money it might divert him from his study and occupation.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

THE PULPIT AND ITS DUTY.

BY G. . . . K. . . .

PERHAPS a large majority of the American people attend the sermons and lectures of the ministers of the various religious denominations either as members of the church or casual visitors. There can be no question that the clergy, both catholic and protestant, by their preaching do exercise a vast influence not only upon their congregations, but also upon the general public, for it has become customary for some years past for the great city papers to publish the sermons, lectures, prayers, and even interviews, if not literally yet substantially, of the greater lights of the ministry in their Monday issues, thus giving to their lucubrations an extensive circulation.

If the clergy, however, would confine itself to preaching the doctrines of their creeds, endeavoring to explain and prove them, they would do but little service to their flocks. For this reason they have to deduce

from their dogmas rules to guide the people in their every day conduct of life; in other words they have to evolve from their doctrines, as they appear from resolves of œcumenical councils, synods, and confessions of faith, a moral code. In this application of dogma to the ordering of practical life by moral principles, the ministers, and particularly the more eloquent and popular amongst them take often a very wide range, entering often into the most minute relation of business, domestic, and social life. There are prayers and preaching against the pride and extravagance of the rich, against the envious lawlessness of the poor, against the saloons, theatres, balls, dancing, tobacco, gambling, sabbath-breaking, and many other evils real or imaginary. It may be all very well to dwell on these topics, but they touch the people only as individuals. As regards however the conduct they are to pursue as a part only of a whole, as citizens as regards the duties they owe to the state, very little is to be found in all the clerical sermons, lectures, and discourses.

It is certainly not desirable that the clerical fraternity should descend into the dusty arena of politics, should discuss party questions from the pulpit, making it a tribune or a platform. Nothing would be more degrading to the profession and injurious to the community.

But still there are questions in one sense political which involve at the same time moral questions. Such was the slavery question. Within our country the existence or non-existence of slavery, guarded as the institution was by constitutional and legislative provisions, was a matter of most eminent political importance, but no one would deny, that it was not a question to be dealt with from its moral side, by those who have assumed the cure of souls and who have taken the spiritual welfare of their parishioners under their special care.

Now it may not be said that the state is not above or rather below the morality of the individual, that the rules of justice and equity, binding upon the citizens, ought not to be applied to the state, the aggregate of the citizens, that we must support the policy of our country "right or wrong."

Yet it is too obvious that in many instances the pulpit has been silent upon political questions involving grave moral principles. For the last month the clamor against the great agnostic, Col. Ingersoll (personally a most generous, amiable, kind hearted, cultured, and eloquent gentleman) has been resuscitated, for it had almost died out, by clergymen of various denominations. A great clerical light in the east has called him a small mosquito, hardly worthy of the least notice, forgetting that Mr. Gladstone, some of the English prelates, besides a dozen or more of our

American orthodox ministers had entered the lists against him long ago. This late battle had been carried on in many public journals, filling their columns with sermons, open letters, interviews, while all the time there was a great question pending, which ought to have called upon the clergy to use their best exertions in order to prevent a flagrant wrong. Nothing less was threatening than a war with a small sister republic which might have cost the country thousands of precious lives and many millions of dollars, a war inglorious at best, if successful, a war to be brought about unquestionably for personal aggrandisement only, without the least adequate cause. The brawl of drunken sailors and of an ignorant mob of the lowest order, maddened by the idea, not altogether unfounded, that our Representative had been unduly partial to the dictator whose usurpation had caused the revolution and a destructive civil war. The Chilean government had expressed its regret at the occurrence right at the start, had assured us that the matter would be investigated and tried according to their laws, and had not sanctioned the conduct of their police officers, if any of them were guilty of having failed to perform their duty. And yet while through the machinations of some of our public men this war, to be engaged in for the most unreasonable reasons, the ministers of the gospel of peace and good will to all men on earth were busy in trials for heresy, holding inquests over dead creeds, quarreling over the significance of the word "Sheol," revising catechisms and prayer books of three hundred years ago, they had nothing to say about the immorality of such a war, did not exhort our pious president to show some indulgence, if such were needed to a small nation, just emerging from a bloody revolution and still fearing a counter revolution, in the interest of the vanquished party, if the new government would not show a bold front to the great northern republic. Here was surely an occasion where the pulpit ought to have exerted its salutary influence. It ought to have silenced the clamor of those would be great little men, who offered themselves as organisers of volunteer regiments to wipe out little Chili, to have warned the people against those patriots who want war in order to fill their pockets by fat contracts, as they have done in our late unpleasantness.

To have endeavored to stop this insane war cry and to have denounced its instigators and supporters would not have been defiling, but glorifying the pulpit.

CURRENT TOPICS.

It has been judicially decided that it is libellous to speak of a lawyer as a "shyster"; and yet it has never been legally determined exactly what a "shyster" is. In the slang of popular contempt the word has usually been applied to a tricky, unfair, and unscrupulous lawyer; a fellow of stratagem and deceit who gambles with lies and perjuries for a fee; a creature void of con-

science, who for money glorifies the guilty side; and in the language of scripture, "taketh reward against the innocent"; an unscrupulous hireling "casting firebrands, arrows, and death," at anything or anybody to gain a case, without the excuse of madness for doing it. A lawyer-like effort is now being made in Chicago to give the word "shyster" a limited and special meaning, and to apply it only to those irregular pleaders who practice in the courts of Justices of the Peace, *without having been admitted to the bar*. The illegal methods adopted by the justices in some of those courts having been exposed by a lawyer in a lecture, professional and public discussion was aroused, and the whole wickedness conveniently fastened upon those self-appointed advocates who have never been admitted to the bar; or in the classic language of one of the justices, "the men of the 'shyster' class, the men who defend prisoners in my court without having a license to practise law." This was turning the whole subject to the left oblique, for the point in issue was the shysing of the courts and not the character of the unlicensed bar.

* * *

Whether or not a barrister is a "shyster" depends entirely upon his own character, and not at all upon his license. There is an aged superstition still believed in, that admission to the bar is a sort of sacrament, like baptism, conferring grace and wisdom by force of a diploma, an error that has done much wrong, besides making fools of men. Some of the most accomplished shysters that I have ever known have been lawyers of high standing at the bar, and such lawyers abound in history. Lord Coke was a lawyer of some standing in the profession, but in his practice at the bar he was a "shyster," especially in the office of Attorney General, where in the prosecution of persons charged with crime, he was unscrupulous, and unfair, ready, and sometimes eager, to take reward against the innocent. Lord Bacon, I believe, had his diploma, and was considered a lawyer in his day, but as counsel for the crown in the trial of Lord Essex, he proved himself a "shyster," putting false meanings upon facts, perverting the testimony, reviling the prisoner, and twisting the truth out of symmetry to secure a conviction. To the credit of Coke be it said, he was no shyster on the bench, but a just and fearless judge, while Bacon was a shyster even in the great office of Lord High Chancellor. And in this day, and in our country we have some licensed shysters eminent at the bar, and there are some of them on the bench, which is a much more serious matter. Diplomas confer neither knowledge nor wisdom, although they do create castes, which, by the way, was the original design of a license to practice law. To require a man to obtain a license to earn a living at anything is a usurpation by government of a power to divide the people into classes, and to put fines and penalties upon industry. I cannot think of any justification for it except in the case of doctors and drug-sellers; and I am not sure that it is justifiable even there.

* * *

Among the rights of which the colored man is unfairly deprived in this country is the right of having his head knocked off in a prize fight. I have just read a challenge from a famous "champion" of Caucasian blood, in which he promises to knock out any "white" man in the world, provided the "purse" be made large enough to constitute a provocation; but not for any amount of money will he be prevailed upon to confer such a distinction upon a "nigger." This challenge is really a prudent one although it appears to be a trifle bigoted and invidious. There is actually a colored man from the antipodes or somewhere, who is willing to bet money that he can put the haughty Caucasian to sleep in a limited number of rounds, and as he might accidentally do it the wisdom of the white man in despising him becomes evident. There may be money in it, but where is the honor? Where is the glory of conquering a nigger when contrasted with the mortification of

being conquered by him? Sentiment is very often the most practical good sense, and it seems to be so here. Death by the foot of a horse is more honorable than death from the kick of a sheep, and I think the colored man in this country, has helped us greatly to preserve our dignity. When I refuse to pay a colored man what I owe him for the moral reason that it is improper for a white man to owe a "nigger" anything, I save my money and vindicate my nobility at the same time. During the war, when we first began to think of enrolling the negroes into regiments, the scheme was opposed on sentimental grounds by many of our own officers. One of them, disputing with me on the subject, put an end to the argument by saying, "Well, it ain't right to make soldiers of them. How would you like to be shot by a nigger?"

* * *

One of the most chivalrous of the "war at any price" party is a member of congress from Illinois by the name of Stewart. He is reported as talking thus: "I don't want a war just to lick Chili. Chili is not big enough, but if we could get into a war with Chili, England might be drawn into it, and that is what I want." Mr. Stewart wants a war with Chili just to whet his appetite so that he may make a hearty meal of England. He would relish a war with Chili like his drink of bitters before breakfast, as a pungent stimulant. He has no quarrel with England, but as a Christian statesman and humanitarian, he thinks that "a country ought to have a war in every generation, because it wakes things up." It is very true that a war with England would "wake things up," and it might even wake Mr. Stewart up to see that he is the Don Quixote of Congress, but that is not likely. He would be too much interested in the destruction of life and property; in the shelling of towns and the sinking of ships; in all the savage and sulphurous paraphernalia of war. And besides, he would be too busy in the front of battle to think of commonplace things. The high spirit of Mr. Stewart in selecting a formidable adversary is worthy of praise; and in this he reminds me of Jack Dolan an Irish friend of mine, who was almost as foolish when drunk as Mr. Stewart is when sober. Whenever he was "in drink" Jack always wanted to fight, and with eccentric chivalry, in which he is imitated by Mr. Stewart, he selected the biggest adversary he could find. One evening a stranger of splendid physical proportions happened to be sitting in front of the hotel, and his immense muscularity so excited the admiration of Dolan that he immediately proposed a fight. The stranger declined the challenge, kindly telling Jack to go away, but this only provoked him to still more offensive defiance, and at last he took his victim by the collar to make him fight. This was too much, and the stranger gave Jack a couple of blows that sent him whirling to the ground, so that he rolled over six times before stopping, and would not have stopped then had he not been rolling up hill. When he came to, and picked himself up, Jack advanced upon his enemy and extending his hand exclaimed in a tone of triumph, "I thought you could do it."

* * *

A faint and feeble attack upon our political aristocracy has been made in congress by Mr. Miller, a member from Wisconsin. He proposes to reform the United States Senate by amending the constitution so that senators must be elected by the people, their term of office reduced from six years to four, and so that each state, in addition to one senator on its own account, shall be allowed another for each million of its people. By this amendment Mr. Miller hopes to change the American House of Lords into a popular and representative body. The scheme will fail, because the American people are more thoroughly devoted than any other people in the world to this principle of government in their national affairs, namely, that the minority shall rule. This doctrine has been firmly set in the constitution by that clause which gives the states equality in the senate, irrespective of their wealth, geography, or population. It was intended from the first, that the

minority should rule by the veto of the Senate on the House of Representatives. This is the foundation stone of the government, for historians tell us that without it the constitution could not have been built at all. Under this plan we have eleven states with twenty-two votes in the senate, although their inhabitants added together are less by three hundred thousand than the population of New York alone, and yet New York has only two votes in the senate. Twenty-four states with forty-eight votes have less than thirteen million people, while the other twenty states with only forty votes have more than fifty millions. I always laugh at the anomaly when I hear a fellow citizen boasting of "constitutional democracy," because I know that he means aristocracy, just as I knew that he meant slavery when he boasted of "constitutional freedom" thirty-five years ago. Of course the Americans will not submit for ever to minority and aristocratic rule, but they will bear it for a long time yet; and when they abolish it, they will do so not by amending the constitution, but by the constitutional process of stopping the supplies, the method by which the commons of England, brought the King and the House of Lords under popular control.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE EIGHT HOUR DAY QUESTION.

To the Editor of The Open Court:—

MAY I say a word as to one of General Trumbull's comments on my "Eight Hour" address in No. 230 of *The Open Court*? He says, "as an economic argument it [my address] was deficient in evidence, and it was effectively challenged by Mr. Eastman who said in referring to the claim that a reduction of hours would not reduce products, 'When that is proven the question is settled.'" A reader might suppose that I had simply made the claim without citing evidence to support it. But I did adduce a considerable array of facts and I think it no exaggeration to say that they showed conclusively, or "proved," that reducing the hours does not in and of itself limit production. These "facts" were taken in good measure from an article by John Rae on "The Balance-Sheet of Eight Hours" (*Contemporary Review*, Oct. 1891), which I wish everyone who takes the subject seriously would read; Mr. Rae writes in that discriminating and judicial vein which indicates the sincere student of the question. I willingly admit that the proof I gave is not absolute and is quite consistent with cases in which reducing the hours would injure production. But is it not rather unreasonable to ask for such absolute proof? Is there not even a touch of absurdity in it, since if in each and every line of industry actual experiment demonstrated that "eight hours" was practicable, there would be nobody left to whom the proof could, or needed to, appeal? Absolute proof an employer can have only after he has himself tried the system and found it will work. In other words, the very proof he wants is only possible as the result of an experiment, that is, of acting without absolute proof. Is not the practical question something like this—whether evidence does not already exist sufficient to justify one in venturing or experimenting? Experience proves that a reduction of hours need not be harmful; whether such reduction will be harmful in a special case can only be known by trial. Here is where the part of good-will to the cause comes in; if one has it, I should think one would be naturally prompted to make the trial. But "proof," such as Mr. Eastman apparently asked for at the Sunset Club, is out of the question in the present stage of developments. If one waits for it, one may never act.

As I write this, my eye falls on a newspaper account of an experiment with the eight hour system which was to be tried this year in London among the book-binders, and which I suppose is now under way. It seems that a strike was threatened and the London Chamber of Commerce mediated in the matter, with the

resulting agreement between the employers and the men that the eight hour day should be tried for twelve months, at the end of which time it should be continued or abandoned according to the character of the results. An arrangement was made as to overtime (i e. all time over forty-eight hours a week); but the employers pledged themselves, in accordance with the desires of the men, to make every effort to abolish systematic overtime. They also granted an advance of ten per cent. on prices for piece-work. Something of this character seems a reasonable way of getting at a solution of the problem. Why should not our Chicago employers make an experiment with the eight-hour or the nine-hour day? They have Mr. McVeagh's example to encourage them. I do not mean that all the fault lies with the employers. The workmen are sometimes unreasonable and demand too much or at least demand it too soon. A large Chicago firm did recently try to gradually reduce hours, but the men would have eight hours at once or nothing; and the result was nothing and a sincere disappointment to the firm. The spirit of reason needs to animate both sides of a controversy, if an all-around justice is to be done and real progress made.

WM. M. SALTER.

Chicago, Jan. 27, 1892.

BOOK REVIEWS.

SPINOZA'S ERKENNTNISSEHRE IN IHRER BEZIEHUNG ZUR MODERNEN NATURWISSENSCHAFT UND PHILOSOPHIE. Allgemein verständlich dargestellt von Dr. Martin Berendt' und Dr. med. Julius Friedländer. Berlin: Mayer & Müller.

Spinoza's system, so the authors of this book claim, has in spite of innumerable commentaries not as yet been properly understood. The reason is that his philosophy which does not belong to his time alone but to all times, is presented in an antiquated form and dependent in this respect entirely upon its time. Spinoza's method is the formal system of scholasticism, but the contents of his philosophy is closely related to all the problems of modern times. His method is deductive, but the substance of his thought is analytic; he repels by his artificial syllogisms but is after all *par excellence* the philosopher of experience.

The authors have arranged the material systematically, treating in five chapters of (1) Spinoza's idea of "imaginatio" or insufficient cognition, (2) rational cognition, (3) the transition from rational to intuitional cognition, (4) the object of intuitive cognition, (5) a review of the three degrees of cognition. A sixth chapter is added containing critical notes and references. The last chapter is in size two fifths of the whole. It has purposely not been worked into the exposition of Spinoza's system in order that this main part of the book may be popular. And we approve of this division of the material for the learned bywork and historical apparatus are too apt to encumber the exposition of a system and render it indigestible to those who care little for the literary feuds of scholars.

The make up of the book is very practical. The authors present Spinoza's ideas by explaining quotations which are made prominent through indentation and stringing them together by headings in bold-faced letters which show the continuity of the thoughts. Their attempt to modernise Spinoza's views is upon the whole not carried too far, although we have our doubts whether their interpretation of reason and intuition will be tenable. However the reader having the material before him can easily judge for himself.

The authors go perhaps too far when declaring that Spinoza forms the intellectual centre of all thought before and after him. The problems of all the leading thinkers, so they say, have already found satisfactory answers with great clearness and precision in Spinoza's philosophy—if he is but rightly understood. We are great admirers of Spinoza but we cannot join in this exaggerated praise. With the same right we might say that all the problems of philosophy find their proper solutions in the sentences of the

Koran, if they are but rightly understood. Yet this exaggerated praise of a master is easily forgiven and does not detract from the value of the book, the aim of which is a popularisation of the world-conception of one of the greatest thinkers that ever lived.

P. C.

ASTRONOMISCHE BRIEFE. Die Planeten. By C. Dillmann, Tübingen. Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1892.

C. Dillmann is the principal of a mathematical high school in Stuttgart. A review of his book "Die Mathematik die Fackelträgerin einer neuen Zeit" appeared in *The Monist*, I, 4, p. 617. He is a scholar who understands the practical importance of science and especially mathematical science which he attempts to make (and we think that he has found the right path) the basis of modern education. The present book serves a practical purpose; it is popular, reviewing in short and pleasantly written sketches our astronomical knowledge of the solar system. He tells us in seventeen letters which cover about 230 pp., the most important results of scientific research concerning the planets and their inhabitability, the moon, the planetoids and the laws that make of the assemblage of these celestial bodies a solar system. The title seems to indicate that this little volume on the planets will be followed by other astronomical letters on the fixed stars which undoubtedly will be as welcome an addition to the German popular science literature as is the present book before us.

P. C.

NOTES.

The signature of G. K. under which the article "The Pulpit and Its Duty" appears in the present number, is well known to many citizens of this and other states of our country. To those who do not know it, suffice it to say, that it is the signature of a man who held the highest position in the administration of the state of Illinois, of a man who looks back upon a long and active life well spent in labor for practical and ideal aims and whose name is never mentioned without honor.

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