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RENAN'S PHILOSOPHY.

BY DR. FELIX L. OSWALD.

A SAFEGUARD of justice, in the estimation of moral, as well as of intellectual, attainments, is the rule to distinguish between the general type and the realised standard: the main direction of the current of tendencies, and the actual rate of its progress.

In comparing the characteristics of different periods of civilisation, the standards, in both respects, will generally be found to differ more than the types and to have been much more modified by local circumstances. Thus, for instance, the manful rationalism of the Roman nation at the time of the elder Pliny compares, on the whole, favorably with that of their modern descendants in any country of southern Europe, yet local conditions favored the progress in that direction in regard to religious liberty, while they hindered it in regard to secular science. The same statesmen and philosophers who, with rare exceptions, recognised every nation's right to formulate its notions about Heaven and Hades, as fully as they conceded every man's right to express his private theories on the habits of the Man in the Moon—these same prototypes of our most advanced religious reformers nevertheless believed in miracles and omens, in werewolves, mermaids, and goat-footed satyrs. Since the time of King Numa they had undoubtedly advanced, both in point of science and religious tolerance, yet in the latter direction their progress was favored by the comparative liberality of their political institutions, while in the former it was obstructed by superstitions derived from the ignorance of their rustic ancestors.

In the intellectual standards of individuals we can often notice a similar contrast which can be best explained while we can still realise the influence of the circumstances that limited the development of mental tendencies in special directions. For it has been well said that the heresies of one age become the truisms of another, and a time may come when philosophical critics will find it difficult to comprehend by what metamorphosis of intellectual principles the cautious and compromising author of the "Life of Jesus" could come to risk the trenchant, and almost recklessly can-

did, speculative chapters of the "Future of Science," and "Moral and Mental Reform."

For that contrast can by no means be explained on the theory of successive advances from lower to higher stages of rationalism. As early as 1847, Renan's contributions to secular philosophy are marked by the intellectual radicalism of his later works; while to the very last, and at a time of life when men are not apt to sacrifice the prestige of a hard-won reputation to traditional prejudices, his attempts at the solution of ecclesiastical problems characterise a transition stage of the progress from dogma to reason.

Ernest Renan's innate penchant for speculative rationalism manifests itself in all his works, but only in the arena of secular science could his tendency in that direction start abreast with the advanced thought of the times. In everything pertaining to the problems of dogmatical Christianity his speculations were hampered by mountain-masses of orthodox prejudices. In the open fields of philosophy he moves with winged steps, unhampered even by the desire of concession to the claims of established theories, within the enchanted circle of religious traditions he staggers under a comparatively diminished, but still enormous load of dogmatism,—his light-ward movements sustained by in-born strength, but with the constant implication of an apology for moving at all. To him the deadly anti-naturalism that repressed the intellectual development of a hundred nations, as with the coils of a strangling hydra, is a "sublime system of ethics, injured merely by the exaggerated ideas of its godlike authority"; the thousand years' eclipse of freedom and liberty, that intervened like an unnatural night between ancient and modern civilisation, he ascribes to the brutality of barbarous nations,—the same barbarians that proved so amenable to the influence of Pagan and Mohammedan culture. He extols the beauty of the horrid superstition that deluged Europe with blood and tears, and appeals pathetically to the duty of free inquiry for having ventured to maintain its human origin and question its absolute truth and infallibility.

Yet in estimating the relative rate of progress, we should remember that even the poet-philosopher Goethe, with all his educational advantages, haltered

his Pegasus at the rock of Pantheism and listened to the hammer-strokes of the Titan Spinoza, while the nineteen first years of Renan's life were passed under the influences of the Treguier priest-school and the seminary of the Abbé Dupanloup.

In politics, historical criticism, and even in the study of non-Christian religions, Renan was a radical of radicals.

He says :

"The Koran is from beginning to end nothing but a mass of sophistical argumentation. . . . Islamism abounds with the most absurd fables. . . . It has been proved that the immense majority of those who followed the prophet of Mecca, had not the slightest religious faith in him. After his death it was seriously discussed whether they should not abandon his religious enterprise and only continue his political work. ('The Future of Science,' pp. 261 and 479.)

"The religion of the Romans always remained an aristocratic creed, and there never was a system of faith less capable of becoming the religion of mankind. What interest could a Gaul, a Syrian, an African take in a worship which concerned only a small number of proud and often tyrannical families ?

"It is strange that Europe should have adopted as the basis of her spiritual life the literature of the Hebrews, the work of another race and emanating from a spirit different from her own. As a matter of course she only could accommodate herself to them by entirely misconceiving their meaning."

It can do no harm, though, to notice the fact that the latter passage was not written till after Renan had been deprived of his Hebrew professorship in the College of France. That outrage may have convinced its victim that moderation may cease to be a virtue if carried to absurd and yet insufficient extremes. Our friend Conway, by the way, had the advantage of a similar experience, when in one of his contributions to a leading American freethought paper he expressed the trust that "Men will not willingly smite the face of Truth if her aspect is mild and her voice is low," and in a subsequent number of the same journal was brutally attacked for his mild defense of the freethinker Foote against the persecutions of British bigots.

Ethical idealism, as opposed to the cash-register type of utilitarian morals, had no stauncher defender than Ernest Renan. Like Marcus Aurelius, he held that the sense of duty should contrive to dispense, not only with the hope of reward, but even with the hope of escaping downright ingratitude.

"Men who devote their lives to the service of Truth, must be prepared to face the risk of having to work for a small rate of direct wages. Nations, too, which work out social and religious problems in their own bosoms become almost always politically weak. Every country which dreams of a Kingdom of God or lives for grand, general ideas, and pursues a work of general interest, sacrifices through the same its individual destiny, enfeebles and destroys its rôle as a terrestrial country. One can never set oneself on fire with impunity."

He then adds :

"And yet, I wish to God that I could have succeeded in making it clear that there is in the pure cultivation of human faculties

and of the divine objects which they attain a religion as sweet, as rich in delights as the most venerable forms of worship."

A passage which deserves to be inscribed on the title-page of every work devoted to the reconciliation of religion and science.

"Woe be them who are at ease," says Carlyle, "because," comments Renan :

"The aim of humanity is not repose, but moral and intellectual perfection. How can people talk of taking their ease, when they have the infinite to traverse and the perfect to reach ? Mankind will repose only when it has reached perfection. It would be too strange if a few profane persons could, from motives of dollars and cents or personal interest, arrest the progress of the mind, the true religious problem. The most dangerous state for humanity would be that in which the majority, finding itself quite at ease and not wishing to be disturbed, should retain its repose at the costs of thought and of an oppressed minority. When that occurred, the only safety would be in the moral instincts of human nature, which, no doubt, would not be found wanting."

Nor does Renan shrink from the logical consequences of that theory in its application to religious problems. Colonel Ingersoll's remark that "an honest god is the noblest work of man," is said to have cost him the nomination for the governorship of Illinois ; yet that proposition is merely an epigrammatical variation of Renan's prediction that :

"After having organised humanity, human reason will one day proceed to organise God." ("The Future of Science," p. 31.)

And again :

"It is a bold thing to assign limits to the reforming power of human reason, or to reject, no matter what attempt on the plea that it is without precedent. Every reform was characterised by the same defect originally, and, besides, those who prefer that reproach do so nearly always because they have not a sufficiently extensive idea of the various forms of human society and human history. In the East, thousands of people die of starvation or of wretchedness without ever having thought of revolting against the established powers. In Europe, rather than die of hunger, a man thinks it better to snatch up a rifle. . . . The greater or lesser extent of a people's belief in fate is the test of their rank in civilisation. The Cossack blames no one for being knouted ; it is his fate. The Turkish rajah bears no one a grudge for the burdens imposed upon him ; it is his fate. The poverty-stricken Englishman nurses no grievance ; if he starves to death-it is the decree of fate. The Frenchman revolts if he suspects that his misery is the consequence of a social organisation capable of being reformed."

Yet Renan was very far from being a "Chauvinist." The cause of truth is dearer to him than the cause of France, and on occasions he takes the risk of treating his countrymen to decidedly severe moral and political lectures.

"In reflecting on the decay of the scientific spirit," he says, "it seems to me that the small importance attached among us to higher education, and the total want of institutions corresponding to the German universities is one of its principal causes. And how can one help regretting at the same time the deplorable nullity to which the provinces seem condemned for want of local literary movements and institutions ; when we come to consider that every small town in the Italy of the sixteenth century had its master painter and master musician, and that every town of 5000 inhabitants in Germany is a literary centre, with a printing press, devoted

to works of science, a library and often a university; when we consider all this we feel grieved at the want of initiative of a great country reduced to a slavish imitation of her capital. The distinction between Parisian good taste and provincial bad taste is the consequence of the same intellectual organisation, but it so happens that this distinction is as hurtful to the capital as to the provinces; it invests the question of *taste* with an exaggerated importance. All this is a proof of the somewhat melancholy fact that art, science, and literature do not flourish among us in consequence of an innate and spontaneous need, as in ancient Greece, or in mediæval Italy, for with us, in the absence of stimulation from without, there is no production.

"Our morbid dread of pedantry explains why certain sciences are held back by a kind of shamefacedness and hardly dare to assert themselves openly. We are so terribly afraid of ridicule that everything which can possibly lend itself to a semblance of it arouses our suspicion; and the most worthy things by incidental associations may lay themselves open to it. The term pedantry which, if not clearly defined, may be so mischievously applied, and which, with the unthinking is almost synonymous with everything relating to serious and scientific inquiry, has in this way become a scarecrow to subtle and refined intellects, who have often preferred to remain superficial, rather than lay themselves open to a frivolous and absurd attack."

"Hope," says George Sand, "is the faith of this century," and Ernest Renan exalts that faith to the dignity of an intellectual religion.

"Many of my readers," he says, "may feel surprised at the frequency of my appeals to the future. Yet the only means of understanding and justifying the modern spirit is to look upon it as a necessary stage towards the perfect, in other words toward the future. And this appeal is not the mere act of a blind faith falling back upon the unknown. It is the legitimate result emanating from the whole of the history of the human intellect. Let those take heart who dread to see the effects of the human mind stifled by material preoccupations. Intellectual culture, speculative research, science and philosophy, possess the best of all possible guarantees: I mean the needs of human nature itself. Man will never live by bread alone. The disinterested pursuit of the true, the beautiful and the good is as imperative a want to him as the need of satisfying his hunger and his thirst."

DOES THE STATE EXIST?

ONE of the most beautiful and thoughtful publications on the Christmas market of this year is "Columbia's Courtship" by Walter Crane, which represents a picture-history of the United States in twelve emblematic designs. Who is Columbia? Columbia, as we all know, is an allegorical figure; and allegorical figures do not exist. But why then do we enjoy these and other similar works of art? Supposing they are mere lies and chimeras, are not iconoclasts rightly entitled to destroy the products of a superstitious imagination?

The tendency of the times is individualism, and the glory of our institutions is, that they have, for the first time in the world's history, given, in principle at least, a most unbounded sway to individual liberty. And rightly so. It may be counted as a national characteristic of us Americans that we believe in liberty, in individual liberty, and it almost amounts to treason

with us, to lose confidence in the feasibility of free institutions and the inalienable right of every one of us to liberty.

True it is that this theory remains too much mere theory. Having free institutions we are not at all jealous of our liberties. We allow inroads upon our rights to be made almost daily and do not object. Even our legislatures, the national legislature at Washington not excepted, have passed bills which closely considered are unconstitutional.

Individualism being recognised, at least theoretically, as the tendency of the time, its principle is often misunderstood and the mistakes carried to an extreme. There are people who flatly deny the existence of society, state, nationality, or any superindividual entity. They declare the individual alone exists; the individual is a reality; but society, the nation, the state, are mere collective terms of a number of individuals. If this be so, has not the iconoclast a right to break the idols and to destroy them, be they ever so beautiful? Or should perhaps the allegorical figures representing nationalities, states, cities, etc., possess a meaning, so that after all they are not senseless vagaries of an idle imagination?

Several years ago I came across a pamphlet in which the author, a German-American journalist, holding a prominent position on the greatest German newspaper of New York, undertakes to prove that nationality does not exist; for what is nationality? Is it constituted by the territory of a nation? No, for there are people of an alien nationality living in the territory of every nation. Does it consist of blood-relationship? No, for immigrations take place among all the nations on earth, and foreign blood is constantly infused everywhere. Is perhaps the language the distinguishing feature of nationality? No, not even the language constitutes nationality, for German is spoken outside of Germany, and English outside of England. Ergo, he argues, nationality does not exist, and a nation is only a number of individuals.

These arguments seem very convincing; and yet they are ridiculously superficial. Suppose a chemist wanted to know what a clock is, and began his enquiry by analysing the substance of which the clock consists. He would find only some copper and iron and other chemical elements, but no clock. Would he be intitled to conclude that clocks no not exist, that there are heaps of brass wheels and cogs, but no clocks, and that the mere idea of a clock is the product of a feverish imagination.

The same argument which disproves the existence of the state and other superindividual entities, will serve to disprove the existence of the individual. For what is an individual? Does an individual consist of matter? No, certainly not! For the material particles

of which an individual so-called consists are constantly changing. Man's body is a constant flux. Is an individual constituted by the titles, possessions, and rights he enjoys? No, he is not, for he may lose them or acquire new ones. Well then, is perhaps an individual the totality of his ideas and aspirations? Even the ideas and aspirations of a man are not constantly the same; he sometimes forgets or neglects his aspirations which were very powerful in him, and he will most probably be swayed by new ones of which at present there is no trace in his soul. So let us conclude that individuals do not exist, and that the assumption of individuals is a mere illusion; it is a pet superstition of to-day.

These arguments are just as valid as those that prove the non-existence of the state. And yet facts speak louder than syllogisms. Here we are real beings, and here we live in the actual world of a definite relationship called the United States of America.

We receive protection in our industrial pursuits and enjoy many other of the innumerable benefits of public order; they are all very real; and he who is blind to their reality cannot be blind to our paying taxes which might sometimes be out of proportion to our estates or unjustly levied. And who would deny the reality of the state as a tax-gathering entity.

The point is, there are realities which do not consist of matter or substance, realities which are not concrete objects, but consist of relations. These relation-realities, it is true, do not exist of themselves, hovering in the air as ghosts or demons, like the gods of pagan mythology, but, for all that, they are not nonentities. They are real enough, and whether a relation is such and such, or otherwise, is often of paramount importance.

The relations which we call society, nationality, or state, are of the most important kind; they are not mere bugbears, but realities for the preservation of which individuals are ready to fight to the utmost, to sacrifice their possessions and even their lives. We admire a Cato who committed suicide, we praise the Cimbric women who slaughtered themselves and their own children, because they did not want to survive that peculiar kind of society they lived in. We glorify the death of every hero who dies for his country. Shall we say that it is a mere bugbear for which he dies, that nationality, the institutions of a nation, and the state, are superstitions of the day, and that they have no real existence?

* * *

All this granted, the objection has been made, that the state and society in general are after all only relations among individuals. Individuals were first, and society is a contract made by individuals. Society, accordingly, is not superindividual, but is a relation sub-

servient to the wants of individuals. The individual does not exist for the sake of the state, but the state for the sake of the individual.

The question whether the individual or society was first, reminds one of the parallel question whether the hen or the egg were first. And the answer to both questions is, Neither was first.

The hen-and-egg problem is briefly explained thus: First was living substance which reacted upon the stimuli of its surroundings in a special way. And the constant repetition of these reactions produced habits. Living substance is not only intrinsically immortal, but it also grows and increases. Now when a division of labor changed growth into propagation, individual existence sprang into being, introducing at once birth and death, and confining the work of propagation to a certain organ producing germs. Every germ contains the memories of its ancestral lives and brings in the course of its development its habits into being. Thus the germ originates simultaneously with the individual, and the egg is a coeval with the hen.

Similarly, the individual (viz. the human individual or man) was as little before society as society was before man. All those features which make of man a human being have originated solely through social intercourse, and in this sense it is quite proper to say, that man is the product of society. There is no human society except there are a number of men constituting this society, and in this sense again it is proper to say that society is constituted by individuals. Yet society can be constituted by a number of individuals only if in the souls of the individuals are impressed those marks of social intercourse which find their expression in a common language, common interests, and common ideals.

Sweep your soul clean of all that you owe to society and what is left of you—a speechless and soulless being, a brute. Further, the highest aspirations of your life can be realised alone in your community with human society. How blind to facts are those that deny the actual existence of society with all that it implies!

Eating and drinking, or enjoyments of any kind, and the continuance of our existence are not the highest aims of life. There are higher aspirations, the aims of which are of a more subtle nature than can be analysable by the gross methods of a hedonistic philosophy. And strange: those who maintain that society exists solely for the sake of the individual, are generally ready to deny most emphatically that the earth and what grows upon it has been created or exists for the benefit of man!

When investigating the question of purpose, whether society exists for the sake of the individual or the individual for the sake of society, we must not forget that we have to deal with a self-made puzzle. When

we confront a relation, we can neither say that the one part of it exists through the other nor the other through the former one. The relation is the whole and its parts are mere abstract views, which as such, i. e., as parts of the relation, do not independently exist. We might as well say, there are husbands independent of wives or wives independent of husbands. This is obviously nonsensical, because the relation between husband and wife with all it implies constitutes what we call husbands and wives.

Husbands do not exist for the sake of wives, nor *vice versa*; but the marriage relation as a whole has a special purpose.

Thus man does not exist merely for the purpose of being a representative of humanity. *Vice versa*, humanity (viz., all those features which have been developed through social intercourse and constitute the human in man) does not exist simply to be either an ornamental or useful quality of a certain kind of two-legged beings. But both exist in, with, and through each other. Humanity would be an empty word, if it were not a living reality in the brains of individual persons, and men would not exist as men, as human beings, if it were not for the humanity that fills their souls with noble contents and ideal aspirations. But if we take both as the realities which they represent, humanity is the larger and higher being, for it comprises the individuals. The individuals are after all only parts of humanity, and humanity is a superindividual existence.

A nation, it is true, is no concrete object, no constant and unvarying being. But closely considered nothing is stable, and least of all an individual.

That which we call a rose-bush is a rose-bush still, even though some branches be broken off. A rose-bush seems to be a concrete thing, strictly limited and defined. But it is not. It is a thing of varying qualities. The name which is attributed to it, suggests a constancy and permanency that is foreign to its nature. The same is true of all things. All the world is a tremendous whirlpool of changes and that which we call objects are certain eddies or waves; they are units to our appearance, but limited by ill-defined boundaries. There is no object in the world which as such and such a thing, is an independent existence: all are parts of the whole. The names by which we designate these parts include innumerable relations to the whole and without these relations the names would cease to be appropriate for the things. For instance, one of the qualities of a chair is its purpose of serving as a seat. Suppose this purpose to be absent and we should no longer call the object a chair.

We may mention here, *en passant*, that human society is a very complex organism and all the single organs through which it manifests its existence are

most wonderful, not to say mysterious entities, leading a life of supermaterial reality, each one capable of development, liable to decay as well as to a higher evolution. Such are language, religion, historical traditions, customs and ceremonials, moral views, juridical institutions, educational systems, economical, military, or other habits, political ideals, etc., etc. The state, however, is a modern offshoot of society which on a special and limited territory has established itself, and for obvious reasons (mainly to prevent arbitrary applications of the principles of its being) has codified the most important of its relations in statutes called laws.

The view here presented, establishing the principle of societism as an actual and real factor in the evolution of mankind, it must be well understood, does not abrogate that other principle which is called individualism. On the contrary, it explains it and it complements its maxim, which by itself is one-sided, untenable as a working principle, and even nonsensical. Individualism, the glory of our republican institutions, is not a denial of societism but its counterpart. Individualism maintains that society, even considered as a society, will prosper best where the factor of individualism has full play. Let all the places in a society be open to free competition and give elbow-room to all the individuals so that everywhere the best may come to the front. It is not probable that an increase of comfort or of individual happiness will be the result of the full application of this principle; on the contrary, it will make it harder for him that has an easy lot in life, to maintain it. But society as a whole will be benefited and mankind will progress at greater strides than it ever did before.

P. C.

RENAN'S "THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE."

TWO HIGHLY interesting articles have appeared in recent issues of your valuable journal, one by John Burroughs on "Religious Truth," July 21, 1892, and the other "Higher Education for the Masses" by Susan Channing, July 28, 1892. Over a year ago you were kind enough to write me that you would publish a notice of Renan's "Future of Science" if I would write one. Such a task is beyond my power, but I feel impelled to jot down a few thoughts and reflections—the result of my recent reading.

The "Future of Science," written by Renan when he was about 26 years of age, about the year 1850, is in my opinion a very remarkable book. Surely those who are in the van of thought interest us most. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old, but I say unto you" is a familiar saying. We are always anxious to see the new man and read the new book. Can he throw any new light on the great problems of life which I hold with you are not insoluble, tho' they may not all have been solved?

Forty years ago the distinguished Frenchman was advised not to publish his book, the times were not ripe for it; so he put it away in his portfolio and waited for a more convenient season, which did not come until 1890 or '91. The work in the very fair English translation is a large book of upwards of 500 pages, and is one long, eloquent, deeply interesting plea for what Professor Huxley so well calls the furtherance of *natural knowledge*, and for the complete adoption of the modern critical scientific method of

reasoning applied to the Old and New Testament Scriptures, as opposed to the old theological, clerical method of interpretation. If we begin with the maxim that "Nature is made better by no mean, but nature makes that mean," then we will look upon our sacred writings as purely human and natural. At this last decade of the nineteenth century we can surely proclaim with Schopenhauer that those who maintain a so-called supernatural origin of the Scriptures are yet in the infancy of knowledge. The Bible is pre-eminently a *human* production, and must be approached in precisely the same way as we approach any other human production. If we act upon this principle a flood of light is at once thrown upon our subject. The body of truth is one; there is no sacred and profane knowledge, all *knowledge* is sacred.

I read recently a long article in one of the leading English Reviews on "David Grieve." The writer failed to perceive the subtle teaching of the book. The scene between the hero and Canon Aylwin at the nobleman's house and David's subsequent reflections is the great point which Mrs. Ward wishes to insist upon, both in "Robert Elsmere" and in her last novel. David asks, "Is truth then divided, is there one truth for the Scriptures and another truth for so-called secular human writings?" The first two centuries of the Christian era are fenced off and an entirely different method of interpretation is applied to that period; it is all supernatural, divine, inspired, totally different from Professor Huxley's and Renan's *natural* knowledge. Again in "Robert Elsmere" the scene where Catherine is reading the lives of the early Christian bishops and is amazed at their beliefs and ways of thought, Robert points out to her that the whole *habit of thought* of the ninth century was entirely different from the nineteenth century. This fact we cannot dwell upon too earnestly. All admiration, as Renan says, is *historical*. We must judge of everything by the period of the world in which it happened, where it happened, the environment, the *milieu*. So judged, Christianity is seen not to be identical with Roman Catholicism, with any form of Protestantism, or with religion. It is only one form, one expression of the religious sentiment of mankind, which is as old as humanity and will last as long as the human heart and brain endure.

Here on the shores of the lake of Geneva in this charming *pays de Vaud*, I am continually reminded of that very distinguished Swiss thinker, Amiel. With him let us ever remember that "Entanglement is the condition of life; order and clearness are signs of serious and successful thought." Alas! the majority of even cultivated people are Gallios who care for none of these things. Even if the great revolution in modern thought, almost if not quite as important as the Reformation, has dawned upon them, they fear to teach it to their children. Dr. Momerie in a recent number of *The Forum* has declared that the popular dogmas of Christianity are *doomed*. Canon Freemantle in a leading English Review has given up the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Dr. Abbot, the distinguished English Baconian scholar, goes as far as the most advanced. An article entitled "Illusion in Religion" which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*, I think over a year ago, is extremely interesting and suggestive. The world is a-hungered for "right thought." "Every man is a scholar potentially and does not need any one good so much as this of right thought"—so Emerson taught more than a generation ago.

A total change in the *habit of thought* has come over most cultivated, widely read and travelled people within the last thirty years. The word, the much endeared word religion has changed its meaning. It no longer signifies to the "awakened minds of all classes" a body of incomprehensible and in some instances preposterous dogmas, but in the words of Renan, the religious life is the *serious* life. We must no longer "separate the holy man from the virtuous man." The Scriptures contain the best and most beautiful definitions of religion to be found anywhere. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself un-

spotted from the world." Many others equally full of the deepest spiritual meaning will well up in the mind at once. None of them have any connection with the old perplexing doctrines which are *doomed*.

When I was at Harvard University, away back in the early fifties, there was a saying attributed to Dr. Walker, "If you wish to make yourself notorious, attack Christianity." How times have changed since then. We have had Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Renan, and hosts of others, and a change has come over the spirit of our dream. The Paines, the Voltaires, the Igersolls, for all of whom I have great respect, have done their negative work. The true advanced thought of to-day is the greatest friend of Christianity. To-day we have such spiritual forces as Emerson, Clough, Amiel, and in some important respects, Renan, and a host of others, not to mention the extremely interesting and important work which appears weekly in *The Open Court*. Indeed, the light is streaming all around the horizon. "The soul of God is poured into the world thro' the thoughts of men."

Allow me to conclude these very rambling remarks by a quotation from Georges Sand. * * * It is an addition to our stock of light, this detachment from the idolatrous conception of religion. It is no loss of the religious sense, as the persisters in idolatry maintain. It is quite the contrary; it is a restitution of allegiance to the true Divinity. It is a step made in the direction of this Divinity; it is an abjuration of the dogmas which did him dishonor. * * * Everything is divine—even matter; everything is superhuman—even man. God is everywhere; He is in me in a measure proportioned to the little that I am. My present life separates me from Him just in the degree determined by the actual state of childhood of our race. Let me content myself in all my seeking to feel after Him, and to possess of Him as much as this imperfect soul can take in with the intellectual sense I have."

* * *
In relation to the above line of thought, allow me to mention three important books.

1. *Modern Humanists*, by John M. Robertson.
2. *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive*, by J. A. Symonds.
3. *The Story of William and Lucy Smith*.

ATHERTON BLIGHT.

CURRENT TOPICS.

Two very curious and interesting samples of aboriginal theology have just been put on exhibition in Chicago, one specimen by Mrs. Amanda Smith, a famous colored evangelist, and the other by Mr. Hempstead Washburne, the mayor of the city. Sister Smith preached last Sunday at the South Park Methodist Church, and she exhorted her hearers to "take the elevator of salvation and raise themselves above the clouds of sin, and into God's pure air." Her theory of heaven is primitive and orthodox enough, but her means of getting there are somewhat heretical, being of the modern and labor-saving kind. It used to be the doctrine that heaven was a million stories high, and that the only way to reach it was by a toilsome and patient climbing of the stairs, but now we are invited by an eloquent and fervent evangelist to "take the elevator," and get there in a luxurious, easy way. Sister Smith had visited the Board of Trade, and from the gallery she had looked into the arena, where the speculating gladiators were engaged in boisterous competition. Jealous of the mercantile enthusiasm there, she described it thus, "Directly one man would throw a hand into the air and wave it; then another man would have a hand up, and a third would wave both his hands over his head and they would all shout. And I don't suppose one of them would raise his hand in church." That was excellent sarcasm, for it is not likely that any of those excited combatants could be coaxed away from a bargain, even to "take the elevator of salvation."

Finer still, was this rebuke to the bishop who opened the dedication services at the Columbian celebration with a prayer abounding in history, argument, information, and explanation enough to fill two closely printed columns of a newspaper. Said Sister Amanda Smith, "I always expect more reward for a strong prayer than for a long prayer. Make your beliefs long and your prayers short." The religious value of this admonition would have been greater, had Sister Smith said benevolence instead of belief; but it was admirable, even in its imperfect form, and altogether better than anything in the bishop's prayer.

* * *

Old as a mummy, and as grim, was the theology exhibited by Mayor Washburne in his praiseworthy message to the city council on the subject of rendering assistance to the unfortunate sufferers by the great fire at Milwaukee. In that message he says, "I have learned from prominent citizens of Milwaukee that the city does not desire to call for outside aid; that those losing by this act of God are bravely preparing to resume business and relieve the necessities of the suffering through local efforts entirely." The language of this humane appeal shows how a mixture of sense and superstition can muddle the mind, placing the human and the divine in conflict, after the manner of Jacob and the angel. If the fire was the act of God, the victims of it ought to submit with resignation to the divine will, instead of "bravely preparing to resume business." If the fire was the act of God, why did the mayor send firemen and fire engines from Chicago to Milwaukee to assist in putting it out, as they valourously did? If this infliction was the act of God, is it not an act of rebellion against him to "relieve the suffering"? The sentiment has done great mischief in the world, teaching men to believe that the universe is governed by supernatural caprice instead of law. It has taught men to rely on prayers instead of actions, and to shun the sciences as dangerous to the soul. This jumble of theology and fire-engines reminds me of that theologically pious owner of a field who nailed this warning on a pole: "The earth is the Lord's; but this field is my private property, and anybody trespassing upon it will be prosecuted."

* * *

The theology of Mayor Washburne, in some form or other, has been the law of England from the time of Saint Augustine down to the present day. In the custom known as *deo dandum*, God was not regarded as the author of a fatal calamity, but as the offended party, who must be propitiated by a gift of the irresponsible or the inanimate agent which had caused the injury; and this offering was called a deadand. If a man was killed by a horse, the horse was forfeited to God; and if a human being was killed by a wagon, the wagon became deadand on the verdict of a coroner's jury. As God was never personally present to receive the gift, it went to his nearest representative, the church, to be applied to pious uses, or to pay for masses to help the departed soul. Ages ago, when I was working on the Great Western Railway in England, a careless train came along one day and killed a couple of men, close to the town of Windsor. A coroner's jury sat upon the case, and after finding a verdict of accidental death, declared the engine to be deadand, assessing its ransom at a hundred pounds. This amount the railroad company paid as a theological retribution, protesting at the same time that God must not be permitted again to interfere with the prerogatives and profits of railroad corporations. I think that this delinquent engine, with which indeed I was personally well acquainted, was the last of the deadands, because immediately after this occurrence of which I speak, the railroads having become greater than God, deadands were abolished by act of parliament at the demand of the railroad companies. They said, "If engines and trains are to be given to God whenever a fatal accident happens, what is to become of railroad enterprises?" And the railroads won it.

In all that appeals to the enlightened imagination and the spiritual sympathies of men, the celebration at Wittenberg was the most elevating as it was the most beautiful festival of this year. The emancipated soul of Germany held victorious jubilee in the old Schlosskirche which Martin Luther consecrated long ago, and the pictorial realities of the spectacle made its ideal grandeur and significance visible as the church itself. For that hour at least, the emperor fairly represented the Protestant spirit of Germany; and not of Germany only, but of all the world. What he said was temperate, kind, and charitable. He was orthodox, indeed, as became a Lutheran speaking in the church and at the grave of Luther, but he eloquently proclaimed the gospel of love and toleration for all the opposing faiths. He spoke like a resolute man under perfect self control, and free from that Imperial delirium which has inflamed so much of his talk of late. What he said might have been the speech of his father or his grandfather, whom he invoked in terms of profound veneration, and whose presence in the spirit animated what he said. Few more impressive scenes than this have been witnessed in our day; Germany in the person of the emperor, and England in the person of the heir presumptive to the British throne, swearing allegiance to Martin Luther in the old Schlosskirche in Wittenberg. Surrounded by the Protestant princes of Germany, the emperor said, "We do not fight anybody in religious matters, but we cling to our confession until death." The restoration of the old Schlosskirche symbolises the revival of religious freedom throughout all the world.

* * *

Being an "immigrant" myself, I take some interest in the immigration question; and I do not think there is any other element of the "social problem" that has been decorated with so much patriotic nonsense. Impossible plans to stop the emigration of men and women from Europe to this country distract the public mind and baffle statesmanship, because it would be as easy to reverse the current of the trade winds as to halt the stream of humanity flowing from the narrow and harsh conditions of the old world to the richer and broader opportunities of the new. The diminutive anticlimax of the cosmopolitan Columbian festival, attended by invited ambassadors from all nations, was the Christian pulpit pleading for a monopoly of this continent and the restriction of immigration. Preaching on the subject of "National Perils" at the Fourth Baptist church last Sunday, the Rev. Dr. Bartlett, after describing a number of oaths, pledges, and obligations which he would impose upon the immigrant "before he should be allowed to land," insisted also that no man should be allowed to vote "unless he was able to make himself understood in the English language." Formerly it was demanded only that the voter himself should understand the English language, but Dr. Bartlett improves upon that, and requires that he shall also be able to make other people understand it. This plan, if adopted, will be a great hardship, for it will compel the foreigner not only to qualify himself but also to provide an understanding for others. There are many Americans who are not able to make themselves understood in the English language, or in any other. I know some Doctors of Divinity who have been trying to do it forty years, without success. Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote and spoke the English language fairly well, and even compiled a famous English dictionary, but he could not always make himself understood; and on a certain occasion he replied thus to a dull person who said he could not understand him, "Sir, I cannot furnish you with argument and understanding too." And yet the ability to do that is what the Rev. Dr. Bartlett would require of the poor "immigrant" as a title to the ballot.

* * *

A sad and melancholy bit of news is the announcement which I often see in the papers to the effect that the Terrapin Club, or the Pommery Club, or the Latchkey Club, or the Drawpokers, or the Devilmaycares, or some other of the numerous clubs abound-

ing in the city, "has taken possession of its new and elegant home" on Washington Street, or Dearborn Avenue, or Jefferson Place, or somewhere. The profanation of the good and beautiful word "home" is the mournful and pathetic feature of the information, because to many men the brilliant and exhilarating club is a refuge and a retreat from home. The man whose home is the club is homeless. Wives, too, are homeless in many of our fine houses because their husbands are absent at the club. Fire destroyed a handsome club house in Chicago the other night, and the papers deplored the accident as "The disaster to the beautiful new home of the Chicago Athletic Association." If the word "home" truthfully described the beautiful building, then might women well rejoice at the fire. A club is a useful and convenient institution so long as it is merely a place of meeting for congenial friends, for dining, for reading, for social conversation, for a game of billiards, or for any other harmless recreation; but as soon as it becomes a home, or a substitute for a home, its attractions become lures, demoralising men. A married man may innocently have many places of resort, but he cannot innocently have more than one home, the hallowed sanctuary where his wife and children are. Late one night an Irishman got on the street car to go home, but the seats were all filled, and he was compelled to hang on by the strap. He consoled himself by thinking that some of the passengers would soon get out and let him have a seat, but on, and on, and on, as the story books say, they went, and nobody got out; so at last he said, "In the name of the Lord, have none of ye a home to go to?" Very often I mentally say the same thing when I see a lot of men late at night lounging and yawning at the club.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

BOOK REVIEWS.

THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE AND THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN. By *Sir John Lubbock, Bart., M. P.* New York and London: Macmillan & Co 1892. Price \$1 50.

NATUR UND KUNST. Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kunst. By *Carus Sterne*. Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Litteratur. 1891.

It so happens that these two books, both written by prominent authors on the same subject, come under our notice at the same time. We intend to give them a more elaborate notice on another occasion, but wish to call attention to them now, as both will make beautiful Christmas presents for those who love nature and wish to study the beauty of nature. Sir John Lubbock rightly says on p. 1 of the present volume:

"The world we live in is a fairyland of exquisite beauty, our very existence is a miracle in itself, and yet few of us enjoy as we might, and none as yet appreciate fully, the beauties and wonders which surround us."

While Lubbock opens our eyes to the beauty of nature, Carus Sterne undertakes to solve some of the problems of the philosophy of art. In his first book he treats of the origin of the sense for beauty in the animal world (pp. 1-174), in the second book he discusses the artist's conception and reproduction of nature. Both books are highly recommendable, for they breathe a truly classical spirit of taste and tact, and the authors are imbued not only with an enthusiastic love of nature, but also, what is more, with a deep insight into her mysteries. Both are art-critics and scientists at the same time."

KPS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

DOES THE STATE EXIST?

To the Editor of *The Open Court*:

What is this thing which you call a State? Dissect it for yourself and you will find that it is but a pumpkin-head and sheet wherewith to scare the superstitious,

As for myself I was born in the territory known as the United States and am held as a tributary of the governing horde, but I give no voluntary allegiance to it, nor to any other form of compulsion. How can I give voluntary allegiance when voluntary dissent is not permitted?

A republic is all very well, a vast advance on a monarchy or oligarchy, but there is a better; and the time will probably come when, driven by circumstances, people will find out that better. It is freedom. Free as we are compared with what has been, the really free political association which lives on the merits it possesses, on the benefits it offers, on the safety it confers; not on taking by force the financial support which the cool-headed and sensible minority would not grant, were it not wrested from them by the votes of the prejudice and passion-driven majority.

When taxation is relinquished for voluntary contributions, when protective associations prove that they aim at protection only, by not forcing people to be protected who do not want to be, there will be an end of political corruption, an end of flag-idolatry, an end to the State as there has been an end to the Church superstition.

JOHN BEVERLEY ROBINSON.

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