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## OUR NEED OF PHILOSOPHY.\*

### AN APPEAL TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY.

PHILOSOPHY, religion, the arts, and the sciences are the most important possessions of mankind. By introducing certain ideas into men's minds you determine their doings and omissions. As people think, so they feel; and as they feel, so they act. Our conceptions lie at the bottom of our sentiments, and our sentiments determine our attitude in life.

The great mass of the people are not conscious of this process as it takes place in their own souls. Their ideas, as a rule, are vague, and their sentiments impulsive, or even instinctive. All the more will their motives be governed by the dimly defined world-view that forms the bottom-rock of their comprehension and constitutes the frame of their character.

Philosophy is a clarification of the convictions which dominate our being, and as such it is the most indispensable thing in the world.

The people at large who are not philosophers, religious teachers, artists, and scientists have been in the habit of taking what is offered them. Formerly the laws of a country were dictated by kings, or a few powerful leaders. If the government of a country was imbued with the right spirit, all went well and the mass of the people enjoyed the benefit of their rulers' wisdom. But times are changing. The people begin to make the laws themselves. Consider the importance of the ideas people think, and you will grant that the people have and should have an interest in the making of ideas. People want to know how thinkers think their thoughts, for upon the authority of those thinkers the people have often blindly to rely. They want to know how it happens that now this and now that philosophy grows into prominence; they want to learn something about their own wants, that they may discern between those who offer them wholesome food and those who pander to the low instincts of the masses.

There is one point, especially, which it seems ad-

visable to insist upon. It is a matter of course that the ignorant should learn from the scholar, but it may sound strange when we add that also the scholar should learn from the ignorant. And this inversion of a general rule, if true at all, is most true in philosophy. Philosophy is not for the learned exclusively; philosophy is for the people and from the people.

While the learned furnish the materials and give to them systematic shape, the spirit of a philosophy rises from the hearts of the multitudes. Philosophies are not, as is so often assumed, the work of isolated thinkers. Philosophies are peculiar superpersonal beings that extend their influence sometimes over whole nations.

Philosophy is made by the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time, but to our philosophers belongs the responsible duty, not only of rendering clear and distinct, but also of directing the aspirations of their time, of guiding the yearnings of the people, of censuring their errors, of purifying and of elevating their views. Thus their philosophy, in its turn, again affects their public and becomes an important factor of the future.

The spirit of our time surrounds us like the atmosphere, invisible but none the less inevitable. We breathe its air without knowing it. Its subtle influences can be evaded by no one, be he ever so learned or ever so ignorant.

A lonely thinker who is not in contact with the world that surrounds him, may be ever so wise and may write very valuable books; but he will have no influence upon his contemporaries. A philosopher must feel the pulse of the people beat in his own heart, with all the nobility of their aspirations, and with all the errors that sway their minds. He must adopt the good features of public sentiment and conquer their evils, that his readers can follow him and profit by his exertions.

Every era in the evolution of mankind has its problems. A philosopher must understand these problems and work out their solutions.

The philosopher who imagines that the philosophy he has worked out is his own creation is deceived. We are wont to say, "I have an idea." It would be more correct to say, "The idea has me." The philo-

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sophical need of a certain epoch of human evolution takes possession of a man's soul, and this need begets in his mind the philosophy of the century.

#### GERMAN PHILOSOPHY.

Think of the influence of Kant upon the German nation. It is true, his methods of philosophising were not popular, but his philosophy was. It sprang out of that stern religious spirit which recognised the truth that man lives not for pleasure, that he has a higher calling, which on penalty of perdition educates his moral nature. Kant's philosophy is concentrated in his categorical imperative; he is the philosopher of the moral "ought"; and that rigorous devotion to duty which penetrates the whole fabric of the Prussian state is only Kant's views practically applied.

This philosophy of duty, which sprang from the spirit of the nation, was elaborated into learned systems of thought by Kant, Fichte, and other men of their kind, and these again affected the people as leaven raises the dough. The people became conscious of what they dimly felt. Their aspirations were clarified. Kant's philosophy of puritan sternness was right and applicable to practical life. It had a strengthening effect, and thus it came to pass that Prussia, the state most representative of this spirit, grew in power and broadened into Germany. Germany's success in peace and war is due to the philosophy of duty which created under unfavorable conditions flourishing industries and made her armies irresistible; for it inspired the hearts of the nation, from their kind-hearted but stern old Emperor and his great counsellors down to the simple-minded private, who had perhaps never heard of philosophy in his life.

The philosophy of duty made Germany great. But let us not forget that even virtues can be exaggerated into vices. There is a danger of one-sidedness in the German conception of duty. Duty is the counterpart of right. He who has duties must have rights. The man upon whom duties are heaped without the due proportion of rights becomes a slave. He is compelled to do service, but his honor is not pledged to perform the work. Nobody can blame him when he asserts his manhood in open revolution.

#### FRENCH PHILOSOPHY.

There is another nation in Europe which in many respects presents a strong contrast to Germany: it is France. The time will come when instead of combating one another, these two nations will seek to learn from each other, that they may mutually profit by their experiences, and that the virtues of each may help to overcome the shortcomings of the other.

If you visit the French exhibit at the World's Fair, you will find the inscription on the escutcheon of France *Droits de l'homme!* "The rights of man."

There is a grandeur in this conception, but also a danger. It confers a dignity on man. Every man has rights and he should insist upon his rights. But if he be not worthy of them he will not be able to maintain them.

The philosophy of duty was, even before Kant's time, so deeply ingrained in the Prussian mind that the greatest king that ever sat on the throne of Prussia, instead of boasting of his divine right as a ruler, declared that he was the first servant of the people. How different was the conception in France. In France the king proclaimed the right of absolute sovereignty over the country. "*L'état c'est moi*" was the motto of Louis XIV, and the aristocracy helped him to suppress the rights of the people. But the people arose in their might and asserted the rights of the *tiers état*.

French philosophy is the philosophy of the rights of man, but it neglected the duties of man. It proclaimed man's right to the pursuit of happiness. Had the Germans possessed something of the French spirit, they might have made their ideal of duty grander still; and had the French better understood German thought, they might have deepened their conception of right. For there are no duties without rights, and no rights without duties.

The philosophy of a nation is important, for it foreshadows the nation's fate.

Let us hear what Heinrich Heine says of the interrelation of French philosophy and French history. He says in his articles on "The History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany," Book III:

"The idea which we think, is a soul without a body. It gives us no rest until we have given it a body, until we have helped it to sense-perceptible existence. The idea wants to be deed. The word wants to become flesh. And strange! Man, like the God of the Bible, has only to speak out his ideas and the world is formed. It becomes light or it becomes darkness. The waters are divided from the dry land, or wild beasts appear. The world is the signature of the word.

"Mark, ye proud men of action. Ye are nothing but the unconscious servitors of the men of thought, who often in modest retirement predetermine all your actions with strictest exactness. Maximilian Robespierre was nothing but the hand of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the bloody hand which out of the womb of the times brought forth that body of terrorism the soul of which had been created by Rousseau."

#### ENGLISH PHILOSOPHY.

Having spoken of German and of French philosophy, I should also add a few words on English philosophy. In consideration of the fact that the United States of North America developed from English colonies, and that English has always been the official language of our country, it is natural that English thought should have been of great influence upon the American mind. But this influence is more felt in science and literature than in philosophy, and strong though it is, it affects philosophy only indirectly.

English modes of thought, through poetry and literature and those subtle influences which are produced by the mechanism of language, in an indirect way, most powerfully tell upon the development of America, but the American conceptions of life naturally form a contrast to English views.

When speaking of English philosophy we mean that traditional way of philosophising mainly represented by Locke, Hume, the two Mills and Herbert Spencer, modified, but not much influenced, by Berkeley, and tempered by Kantianism through Hamilton, and by Hegelianism through the Neo-Hegelian school.

We must bear in mind that philosophy did not as yet exist among the first settlers. They brought with them, however, the germs from which in time a philosophy would naturally develop. They brought with them their love of liberty so deeply rooted in the Saxon mind, deepened by the religious convictions of Protestant Christianity in the shape it took in the minds of the Puritans and the Friends.

The first philosophical movement on the shores of New England was elicited not by an English thinker but by Kant, and the effects of his transcendentalism are not yet obliterated. True, English books are studied in this country more than French and German works. John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, especially, are extensively read and highly appreciated; but we can hardly say that any English philosophy has been powerful enough to affect the spiritual life of the nation. We have learned from the English in innumerable details and offer them our gratitude ungrudgingly, but the spirit of philosophising has developed in the United States with great independence and certainly not as an offshoot of English thought.

#### OUR NEEDS.

There is one great advantage in the old world. The authority of science and scholarly philosophy is so well established in Europe, that corybantic minds have little chance of gaining the public ear, and European scholars sometimes wonder how it is possible that the United States government itself is so often compromised by wild schemes. We need only mention here the rain-makers who were officially supported in carrying out the ridiculous experiments that made our country the laughing-stock of other civilised nations.

How often do we hear the reproach that America is the country of cranks! The liberty of our country gives to every Tom, Dick, and Harry the same chance to display his puerilities as to the sound thinker to propound rational ideas. How shall we overcome the evil influence of nugacities? How shall we discern between the man of worth and the man of notoriety?

Those who do not know our ideals, principles, and

hopes, see in such conditions not only symptoms of immaturity, but also of decay. We beg leave to differ from this view: these conditions are evils which contain the seeds of a harvest of good; they are prophecies of a fairer future. The United States of America are so constituted that we have but one choice left us: we must educate the masses or go to the wall.

How often has mankind been in a similar predicament! Many steps in advance have been made in this way, for it is one of the most important methods of Nature's educational system. She proposes a problem to her creatures which must be solved on penalty of perdition. "Solve it," she says, "or die." And her creatures do die, until one of them finds the narrow and strait path that leadeth unto life.

The situation in which we are is serious, and although we must be confident that in the end we shall solve the problem that confronts us, we have sufficient reason not to be too sanguine, for it is not impossible that we shall have to pay for it dearly.

We shall have to pass through times of great tribulations and anxieties in which Nature in her attempts to eradicate those unfit for survival will destroy, with the guilty, many that are innocent. Those who think that our country is prosperous enough to trespass the laws of being, have to learn lessons that will not please them. But there is no escape.

We believe in the principles of liberty, of universal suffrage, of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We apply these principles, we suffer from the ignorance of our legislators and self-elected magistrates, and we have thus the opportunity of learning by experience.

This state of things renders the task of an American philosopher peculiarly important and difficult. European philosophers may sit in their studies and devote themselves to the abstract questions that please them. American philosophers have to step upon the same platform with the mountebank. Here all meet without pretensions, and the sage must reply to the incoherent notions of the fool as to his equal. This naturally appears to a European scholar as a humiliation; but by doing so a thinker does not stoop; it does not lower his work; on the contrary, it will only widen his views and deepen his convictions. Injudicious notions cannot be ignored in a republic where every man has the same vote. If they are ignored, they will do harm, for errors are mental diseases. Says Marcus Aurelius: "Dost thou think that a false opinion has less power than the bile in the jaundiced or the poison in him who is bitten by a mad dog?" And folly is not less injurious here than elsewhere.

He is not the right man for our wants who simply shrugs his shoulders at the visionary conceits of the world. Go to the fool and meet him; make science

confront folly ; let those simplest notions against which a presumptuous dotard sins be elucidated ; and if he is incurable by reason of his inborn stubbornness, or perhaps because some hope of personal advantage warps his opinions, provide such instruction for the people that they may learn to discriminate between error and truth.

#### OUR PLANS.

We Americans almost regard it as our duty to fall into every error of political economy into which European nations have fallen before. We might learn from their experience, yet prefer upon the whole to make their experiments over again. But if we adopt a sound philosophy and are severer in enforcing the authority of science, we can greatly abbreviate this process. Therefore, the philosopher should on no pretext withdraw from the task that is set him.

Solon observed that when the baser elements among the voters of his city gained the upper hand the better class of people retired from political assemblies leaving the decision of the weal and woe of their country in the hands of the mob. In order to prevent the evil that might thus arise from the inactivity of the better class, he passed a law that in times of public excitement no voter should fail to attend to his political duties.

Let us imitate this law, not only in politics, but in science and philosophy, also. Let every scientist, every philosopher, every thinker, know that he holds a responsible office, and that it is his duty to let the people enjoy the benefit of his exertions. The crank has a right to be heard. Let us respect his right. His ideas should be analysed. Erroneous views are very useful in so far as they compel us to revise the entire structure of our thought, down to the bottom rock upon which it rests. In this way alone can education be instilled into the broad masses of the people.

What we want here in America is not only to have universities of as high a standard as in Europe, but also a university extension which will so raise the general level of education that by and by the uneducated will entirely disappear.

Such is our American plan. We are still far from our goal, but we believe in our ideal.

Is this ideal impossible? Perhaps it is. Like perfection, it shows us an approach to an infinitely distant aim. But every step toward it is an important advance on the road of progress. The full attainment of the ideal may be impossible, yet the ideal itself is practical.

As Christianity is a religion in which every one should be a priest, so our country is a political organisation in which every one should be a king. Our social habits, our civilisation, and our education must be raised to meet this high standard. That gross errors

of political economy, in commercial matters and in other public affairs, should affect our legislation, must become impossible, not because a few men in Washington are conversant with the subject, but because the masses of the people who elect the legislators are so thoroughly informed that a judicious policy will under all circumstances ultimately be assured.

We Americans have started our republic with French ideas ; we have asserted the rights of man in the preamble to our Constitution. But we have too much Saxon blood in our veins and too much Teutonic thought in our minds not to know that all rights imply duties. Let us accordingly work out a philosophy of our own, a philosophy as broad as the world and worthy of the lofty humanitarianism of the founders of our country, a philosophy which will combine dignity with obligation, duty with rights, and self-discipline with self-assertion. This is our mission in history ; let us work out our noble destiny !

"America, thy name is opportunity !" said one of our best American thinkers. Well, then, let us bear in mind that an opportunity can be lost as well as improved. It lies with the people of this great nation to improve or to lose the great opportunity that a kind Providence has provided.

P. C.

#### THE STORY OF AN OLD LONDON SOCIETY.

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY.

V.

No man greatly moves men by his doubts, but by his convictions. William Johnson Fox was not a sceptic : it was his strong belief in divine justice that emancipated him from Calvinism, which denied that justice ; and it was his enthusiasm of humanity, his poetic love of nature, that caused the traditional miracles to shrivel into folk-lore. Writing in 1830, he says : "There is nothing in the Universe which is not strictly religious. Whatever isolates itself is superstition. All sciences are doctrine ; all industry is worship ; all laws of matter and of mind are God's will ; all revelations of those laws are God's works ; all devotion, goodness, and happiness have their best and broadest basis in the truth, that of him, and through him, and to him are all things." An old officer of the Mint tells me that he remembers Fox giving a discourse on Geology and the Bible, at the end of which he closed the Bible, and, with a hand on either cover, said : "Ah, my friends, do not let the range of your intellect be limited by the mechanical art of a book-binder !" He liked to keep up the sentiment of the old observances if separable from forms, as in suggesting a real friendly supper, instead of the Communion. Dr. Martineau tells me that when he was a young minister in Dublin, Fox visited him there (they were both Norwich men) and "dedicated" his eldest son

(Russell Martineau, now the eminent Hebraist of the British Museum). That was his substitute for christening. (That was in 1831, when Martineau forfeited his pulpit in Dublin rather than receive the State aid (*Regium Donum*), distributed among the Presbyterian churches, in which the Unitarians were included. Martineau then visited Fox in London and preached for him at South Place. Fox urged him to settle in London, but an invitation to Liverpool prevailed.) But Martineau was then, as now, in advance of the Unitarian body, which indeed Fox had to drag after him. He was a few years later liberated by a tempest. Unhappy relations with his wife came to open rupture, and this, with his opinions in favor of divorce, (opinions now incorporated in English law,) caused a division. Mr. Fox and his wife came together again, but meanwhile the tempest had separated the Society from a sect, and given it the independent position it has occupied for nearly sixty years. During the turmoil Mr. Fox sent in his resignation, but the Society insisted on its withdrawal; and in yielding to their request, Mr. Fox assumed more advanced ethical ground. Their freedom, he declared, must not be limited to theological questions.

"Pulpit instruction, to obtain any power of usefulness, must extend to topics of far greater practical importance than the articles of any creed. We must carry into moral speculation; into civil and political life; into the investigation of institutions and manners; the same fearlessness and frankness, and the same reference to great principles and ultimate purposes, that are requisite in theology, even though they entail a repetition with aggravations of the same results in the imputation of bad motives or bad tendencies, the aspersion of character or conduct, and the interruption of that peace which is never advantageously preserved when it obstructs freedom of thought and speech, the promulgation of truth, and the progress of individual or social reformation."

Mr. Fox lost the Presbyterian wing of his Society; it was a small wing, albeit heavy, and he gained in its place a wing related to his genius. Robert Browning told me that Mr. Fox was "a man of both talent and genius; and sometimes put out his talent to work for him." Before the split, Fox, I suspect, used to compensate his unprogressive wing with his talent, for lifting the progressives by his genius. But it is characteristic of Mr. Fox's method, that, although he had really taken away the basis of Supernaturalism, the superstructure tumbled palpably under the touch of another man. This was the Rev. Philip Harwood, who (February, 1840) became his assistant. Harwood gave six discourses on Strauss's "Leben Jesu" (not yet translated), and these, being published, first awakened public attention to the new theory. Even South Place shuddered, and Fox had to defend Harwood. In September, 1841, Harwood left the ministry and became a journalist. For many years before his death (1887) he had been editor of *The Saturday Review*, the

organ of all conservatism, and few remembered in him the heresiarch of 1840, who was the first to throw discredit from a pulpit on the miracles of the Bible.

Some seceders followed the miracles, but the Chapel became the recognised centre of religious rationalism, and attracted the most enlightened audience in London. On Easter Sunday, 1842, was celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Fox's settlement, when a silver vase, a purse of four hundred pounds, and an illuminated address were presented to him. There was a grand dinner during the week, over four hundred at the table, among them many ladies. The Society had always had annual dinners, but this was the first dinner the ladies had attended. It is curious that this public-dinner conservatism, outlasting all others, should have prevailed so long in a Society that owed so much to women.

To two ladies—Eliza and Sarah Flower—the Society owed a debt second only to that due to the eloquence of the minister. They were daughters of Benjamin Flower, the famous editor of *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, who, for criticising a bishop in his paper, was imprisoned. In prison he was visited by a sympathetic lady, whom, on release, he married. From such parentage came Eliza and Sarah, aged respectively twenty-six and twenty-four, when their widowed father, dying (1829), left them to the guardianship of Mr. Fox. They were refined, cultured, lovely; their home, near that of Mr. Fox, was the salon of literary and musical people. Mendelssohn was often there, attracted by the wonderful genius as a musical composer of Eliza. In Sarah's letter to Mr. Fox, given in a former paper, Robert Browning, at the age of fifteen, is referred to. Six years later his first poem, "Pauline," had appeared, and Sarah wrote to a cousin about the poet (in June, 1833):

"Have you seen anything of 'Pauline'? I will send you down one of the first copies. We have renewed an old acquaintance with the author, who is the 'poet-boy' we used to know years ago. He is yet unmaturing, and will do much better things. He is very interesting from his great power of conversation and thorough originality, to say nothing of his personal appearance, which would be unexceptionably poetical, if nature had not served him an unkind trick in giving him an ugly nose."

Nature must have redressed this wrong, for Browning had a good enough nose in later life. But the really unkind trick of nature was in bringing Browning into the world eight years later than Eliza Flower, who chiefly inspired "Pauline." Browning would gladly have married her, had she consented. In conversation with him I saw that she stood sacredly apart in his memory. "She was a composer of real genius," he said. In the year before her death (from consumption, 1846) Browning wrote to her:

"I never had another feeling than entire admiration for your music—entire admiration—I put it apart from all other English

music I know, and fully believe in it as the music we all waited for. Of your health I shall not trust myself to speak: you must know what is unspoken."

John Stuart Mill was also among the supposed aspirants for Eliza's hand. But she was the spouse of her art, consecrated to its ideal. Its steady realisation she saw in the sacred heart of the Society, whose every beat she set to music. Meanwhile Sarah was interpreting that heart in beautiful hymns. The two sisters, with voices mated like their souls, used to sing in the choir. Mr. Fox wrote some exquisite hymns and selected others; Eliza, besides her own compositions, adopted themes from Mozart, Beethoven, Spohr, Mendelssohn, Hummell, and others. There is still seen in South Place a venerable gentleman, C. D. Collet, who was then choir-master. The choir attained an excellence previously unknown in England. The hymns were exquisite antiphones to the poet-preacher's harmonies of thought and feeling.

When the sisters died (Sarah Flower Adams, heart-broken by her sister's death in 1846, was borne to rest beside her at Harlow in 1848), South Place began to decline. Mr. Fox was now in Parliament battling for the rights of Jews and for national education. He was compelled to throw more and more of the chapel work on his assistants. In 1849 he gave his celebrated discourses on "Religious Ideas," which constitute his most important volume, one which anticipated half the Hibbert Lectures of our own time. He gave fewer discourses every year, and with six only in 1852, they ceased altogether. After that the Society had two ministers, one of whom, though a worthy man, was reactionary in the direction of Unitarianism; while the other wished to introduce the English Liturgy, only a little expurgated. The liberal traditions and elements of the Society were too strong for them. The Society got the best supplies it could, and had high hopes in 1859 when they heard that Theodore Parker was in London. The deputation sent to him received their sad answer in a hoarse and hollow voice which told that the end was near. Dr. Martineau entertained Parker at luncheon, and invited several ministers to meet him. And when Parker tried to go Martineau clung to him, even with emotion, feeling that their meeting was really a parting. It was all very pathetic. Old Dr. Brabant came from Bath, Miss Cobbe and Miss Winkworth, and Professor Newman, all the Theists gathered around the American; had he possessed the strength South Place would have had another great page in its history. But it could not be. The great man went South to die. With the ministry of Parker in America and of Fox in England the type of Theism they represented really terminated. The majority of Unitarians have arrived far enough now to pay to the dust of such men the homage denied

to their living presence; but find, increasingly, that the dynamic Theism left by those men, their inspiration having departed, is also turning to dust.

#### SHOULD REVIEWS BE SIGNED?

BY PROF. CALVIN THOMAS.

I SUSPECT that some who read the title of this article will at once guess that the writer of it is about to air a personal grievance. The ethics of book-reviewing is a subject not often discussed in an abstract and impersonal way. I hasten to say, therefore, that just such a discussion is what is here proposed. I am not biting my thumb at any one in particular and there is no fever in my veins.

That the subject *is* an ethical question, involving considerations of duty between man and man, is evident. It is of interest, too, not only to those who write and those who manage journals, but to those who read. The reviewer of a book occupies a responsible position. What he says may influence opinion, and it is important that this influence make for what is right. It may also affect the fortunes of the author and of those dependent upon him. We often hear, to be sure, that a good book cannot be written down by the critics, and this is probably true in the long run. If a book has vital qualities it will make its way in time, and the hostile criticism that is bestowed upon it may even turn out to have helped it. But this "long run" is always a good way off and before it is reached the author may die or may at least have time to suffer a great deal of pain. That a good man's reputation will in the long run be proof against calumny does not excuse the slanderers who make life miserable for him in the short run. So again we may say that a book which is over-praised or wrongly praised will in time find its level. But in the meanwhile certain persons will have been misled, the truth will have been betrayed, and every betrayal of the truth has a habit of propagating its species.

We shall all acquiesce, no doubt, in the doctrine that the reviewer's responsibility is primarily to the public. His task is not a private matter between himself and his author. He is not there to gratify a friend or to pay off grudges. It is not for him to sophisticate the truth in any way, or to vary by a hair's breadth from an honest report of his convictions, merely to please his author. And he is equally bound not to sacrifice justice on the altar of self. He is not there to show his wit, or exploit his literary cunning, in order that *he* may be seen of men. He has a duty to perform and that duty requires that he watch himself and be sure that his motives are right.

But he needs more than a determination to tell the truth, for his very austerity of purpose may lead him astray. He may tell the exact truth, and nothing but

the truth, and then sin gravely by not telling the whole truth. A common case is that of the critic who, reading a book on purpose to review it and hence being on the lookout for points to criticise, allows his attention to rest entirely upon the flaws he has discovered and forgets to mention the countervailing merits, or disposes of them in a few words of grudging recognition which may easily be lost sight of or be discounted by the reader. If, in such a case, the author happens to be unknown, so that the reader of the review gets his first impression of him from that source, the impression is apt to be very erroneous. It is not a sound defence of such a procedure to say that what the author needs for his own benefit is not praise for his good qualities, which he is not likely to lose in any event, but ruthless exposure of his faults and mistakes, to the end that he may correct them. The reviewer is not a schoolmaster and the schoolmasterish tone does not become him. He may properly expect that his author and other authors will profit by his work if it is well done, but this should be rather an incidental consideration. His first and greatest duty is to give his readers a just impression of the book he is discussing.

There are those who contend that he should refrain from praise or blame altogether and be simply a reporter. The grounds of this contention are easy to see and are such as to entitle it to respectful consideration. No small portion of what we read in the book reviews of the day consists of dogmatic expressions of opinion which, if one but knew the truth, would be seen to have no value. At best the critic's opinion will be the outgrowth of his prepossessions and associations; of his religion, philosophy, and politics. It will be affected by the character of his hobbies, by the state of his digestion, and by numberless other factors, more or less personal and fortuitous. He is likely to commend that which "strikes him just right," that which emanates from his own clique or school, and reflects his own idiosyncrasies, and to condemn that which does not. Perhaps he is, if the facts were known, incompetent to give an opinion: he is a novice who has read up a little for the occasion and owes the bulk of what he knows about the matter in hand to the very book he is criticising. Perhaps he is afflicted with an itch for showing his own smartness; he is fond of "cutting up" people and does not like to allow any considerations of justice to interfere with his pastime. Very likely he has not read the book at all, but has derived the impressions which he delivers with such delectable cocksureness from a desultory turning over of the leaves, or as often happens, from a perusal of the preface and table of contents.

Now it is hardly worth saying that a review which is open to any of these strictures can be of no real value to any one. On the other hand, if the reviewer

would simply describe his book as objectively as possible, and with due respect to the author's point of view, he would in most cases be performing a really valuable service. We can understand, therefore, the position of those who lay down the rule that the reviewer should simply report what he finds and let the facts speak for themselves. We readily grant, too, that in very many cases this is the very best thing that can be done. Such, for example, are cases in which the reviewer, after candid self-inspection, has himself some doubt of his own competency; cases in which, for lack of space or any other reason, he is not in a position to give fairly the *grounds* upon which his criticism is based; above all, cases in which he has not had the time, or has not taken the time, to read the book thoroughly from beginning to end. In all such cases a conscientious reviewer should certainly refrain from dogmatic and sweeping expressions of personal opinion.

On the other hand, to insist upon a universal application of such a rule is to throw out the child with the bath, as the German proverb has it. For criticism, when properly managed, is a fine art and deserving of all encouragement. The world's debt to it is prodigious. But criticism, both etymologically and historically, implies an act of judgment. This judgment, moreover, is a good thing for all interests concerned, provided only that the judge is competent and conscientious. Everything depends upon that. It matters not that another judge of equal competence may dissent, or that the opinions of both may presently turn out to be in need of radical revision. Standards change, the wisest are fallible, and progress is the result of the conflict of opinion. That multitudes of reviewers make criticism a farce or a nuisance is no reason why the one who is qualified to make it a pleasure and a benefit to his fellow-mortals should be called upon to abdicate his functions.

But now what is the best guaranty that the critic's work will be faithfully performed? Is it the signing or the omission of his name? It seems a little singular at first that the very best journals should be found resorting to exactly opposite methods of reaching the same result. The tendency seems to be setting more and more in favor of the signed review, but there are still many first-rate journals that publish only anonymous reviews and regard anonymity as the one essential condition of good work. It is argued that the critic whose name is not to appear in connection with what he writes will be the more likely to speak his mind fully and freely; that he will be less likely to be swayed by personal considerations, such as the reputation of his author, or his own private relations to the author; in short, that he will be less timid about expressing his

opinions, for knowing that these opinions are not to go out to the world as *his*.

That this argument rests upon an altogether faulty analysis of human nature, I do not pretend to say. The trait undoubtedly exists, but the question is, whether it is good or bad; whether it deserves to be given more play or less; whether the acts that spring from it are more likely, on the whole, to be courageous and necessary acts of which the doer should be proud, or spiteful and malicious acts of which he should be ashamed?

On this point I do not see how there can be two opinions. The trait in question is essentially puerile. It is manifested most strongly in children, savages, and adults upon whom civilisation has done an imperfect work. It is the characteristic weakness of those who wish to shirk responsibility for bad or dubious conduct. Who are those that are most prone to anonymous criticism of the speaker at a public meeting? Gamins (young or old), who wish to create annoyance and show their smartness without risk of getting into trouble. The civilised person of responsible character, who feels that he has a duty to perform, prefers, if he has anything to say, to stand up "like a man," (note the significance of the common phrase,) and say it in full view of the audience and of the speaker. All reputable newspapers recognise in part the validity of this principle by refusing to publish anonymous letters; they insist that the editor, at any rate, shall know who the correspondent is. This they do, they tell us, as a "guaranty of good faith." But where a man's character, conduct, or work is in question, he has a greater interest than the journal in the correspondent's good faith. Why has he not, then, a paramount right to the same guaranty which the editor claims for himself? Would it not be better, from the ethical point of view, if all sorts of articles in all sorts of papers were to be much more generally signed than is at present the case?

At any rate, so far as book-reviews are concerned, I am fully persuaded, after having written a large number of both kinds, and after having for some time studiously observed the workings of my own mind in connection with the business, that the argument is in favor of the signed review. When experience and reflection have shown the reviewer the importance of taking care, and have also taught him clearly where his own besetting perils lie, he can be conscientious under either system; but until then anonymity is more of a temptation than a help. For one reviewer, who, knowing that his name is to be signed to what he writes, will be led thereby to take from or add to what he feels ought to be said, there will always be five, who, knowing that their names are not to appear, will take advantage of their anonymity to say what ought

not to be said and what they would not say, if they stood personally responsible for it. The best guaranty for the faithful performance of duty in all relations of life is individual responsibility, and the most dangerous temptation to carelessness and all other sins is the chance of hiding one's identity. A critic who would be guilty of trimming his sails to the wind of favor, because his name was to be known, is the very one who would be especially prone to do injustice under the mask of anonymity. On the other hand, the critic who knows that his own reputation will be more or less at stake in what he says, has in fact the very strongest incentive to be careful. The golden rule about "doing unto others" is never so potent a regulator of conduct, as when the vague "others" are replaced in the imagination by some concrete John Doe who will know exactly where the blow comes from and be at perfect liberty to strike back.

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