

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.

Associates: { E. C. HEGELER
MARY CARUS.

VOL. XX. (NO. 7.)

JULY, 1906.

NO. 602

CONTENTS:

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| <i>Frontispiece.</i> Benedictus de Spinoza. | |
| <i>The Psychology of a Sick Man.</i> CHARLES CAVERNO. | 385 |
| <i>The Great San Francisco Earthquake.</i> (Illustrated.) EDGAR L. LARKIN.... | 393 |
| <i>The Cohesive Power of Ignorance.</i> FRANK CRANE..... | 407 |
| <i>Agnosticism in the Pulpit.</i> EDITOR. | 411 |
| <i>The Dog's Boilers and their Fuel.</i> (Illustrated.) WOODS HUTCHINSON, A.M., M.D. | 417 |
| <i>Professor Haeckel as an Artist.</i> EDITOR. | 428 |
| <i>Zoroastrian Religion and the Bible.</i> | 434 |
| <i>A Japanese Writer's History of His Theology.</i> Communicated by E. W. CLEMENT. | 436 |
| <i>Benedictus de Spinoza.</i> | 439 |
| <i>Book Reviews and Notes.</i> | 439 |

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"Give me not, O God, that blind, fool faith in my friend, that sees no evil where evil is, but give me, O God, that sublime belief, that seeing evil I yet have faith."

My Little Book of Prayer

BY MURIEL STRODE

If you want to know the greatness of a soul and the true mastery of life, apply to The Open Court Publishing Company for a slip of a book by Muriel Strode entitled simply "My Little Book of Prayer." The modern progress of sovereign mind and inner divinity from the narrow cell of the ascetic to the open heaven of man, made in God's own image, is triumphantly shown in it, yet a self-abnegation and sacrifice beyond anything that a St. Francis or a Thomas a' Kempis ever dreamed of glorifies the path. To attempt to tell what a treasure-trove for the struggling soul is in this little volume would be impossible without giving it complete, for every paragraph marks a milestone on the higher way. That the best of all modern thought and religion is garnered in it, its very creed proclaims:

Not one holy day but seven;
Worshiping, not at the call of a bell, but at the call of my soul;
Singing, not at the baton's sway, but to the rhythm in my heart;
Loving because I must;
Doing for the joy of it.

Some one who has "entered in" sends back to us this inspiring prayer book, and to seize its spirit and walk in the light of it would still the moan and bitterness of human lives, as the bay wreath ends the toilsome struggle in the hero's path. Measure the height attained in this one reflection for the weary army of the unsuccessful: "He is to rejoice with exceeding great joy who plucks the fruit of his planting, but his the divine anointing who watched and waited, and toiled, and prayed, and failed—and can yet be glad." Or this, in exchange for the piping cries of the unfortunate: "I do not bemoan misfortune. To me there is no misfortune. I welcome whatever comes; I go out gladly to meet it." Cover all misfortune, too, with this master prayer: "O God, whatever befall, spare me that supreme calamity—let no after-bitterness settle down with me. Misfortune is not mine until that hour." Here, too, is the triumph of the unconquerable mind: "The earth shall yet surrender to him and the fates shall do his will who marches on, though the promised land proved to be but a mirage and the day of deliverance was canceled. The gods shall yet anoint him and the morning stars shall sing." And this the true prayer for the battlefield: "I never doubt my strength to bear whatever fate may bring, but, oh! that I may not go down before that which I bring myself."

Nuggets of pure gold like these abound in this mine of the mind which the victorious author has opened for us. To seek it out swiftly and resolve its great wealth for himself should be the glad purpose of the elect. And who are not the elect in the light of its large teaching? To claim them in spite of themselves is its crowning lesson. "It is but common to believe in him who believes in himself, but, oh! if you would do aught uncommon, believe in him who does not believe in himself—restore the faith to him."—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat, March 5.*

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BENEDICTUS DE SPINOZA .

Cui natura, Deus, rerum cui cognitio ordo,
Hoc Spinoza statu conspiciendus erat.
Expressere viri faciem, sed pingere mentem
Zeuxidis artifices non valere manus.
Illa viget scriptis: illic sublimia tractat:
Huic quicumque cupis noscere, scripta lege.

By permission of Mrs. Julius Rosenthal.

Frontispiece to *The Open Court*.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A SICK MAN.

BY CHARLES CAVERNO.

THE chlorine-green god, Nausea, set himself against me. He had his way. No food was tolerable. Hearing the clink of dishes on the way to my room put me in antagonism to their contents before sight. Water brought from the dining room ice-pitcher was like belated slops from a coffee urn. There is one barricade that the aforesaid god does respect, and that is ice. The commercial ice of North America one will avoid. Its microbes may be malign. A friend procured for me a demijohn of water from a favorite spring. This, exposed to the outer air, in proper receptacles, in zero weather, gave me zero ice. Nausea quailed before that. The bite and sting of that ice at low temperature, is a delight to this moment. It had a meaning and expressed it. But ice is only a palliative. On it man cannot long support life, and goes rapidly down to exhaustion and a flickering pulse. On the way down I remember one incident with interest, for it gave

“Respite and Nepenthe”

for a moment to pain. I was sitting beside the Doctor on the edge of the bed and fainted. He threw me back on the bed and that revived me. I was thoroughly angry with him and when I got voice upbraided him for bringing me back to consciousness. The joy of that brief moment of oblivion, with the consciousness, on each of its edges, of freedom from pain, abides still as brightly as that of a summer vacation. Possibly we need have no more trouble in taking chloroform than in going to sleep and in waking.

The process downward to the wandering of delirium was rapid. Of this period I have no distinct memory. But in it the children were summoned from the east and from the west. They were pres-

ent in the house the night of the favorable (medical point of view) turning. Fortunately I did not know this fact. I remember that the Doctor sat by my side with one hand on my pulse and in the other a hypodermatic syringe. The nurses were standing in attendance. I knew the meaning of what I saw—and—was satisfied. I expected to make the change from this condition of existence to what is beyond. Now what happened next I attribute to sleep and dream. But I distinctly thought I had made the transition. The one mental exercise that held me was curiosity. I wanted to see what was coming next. I got no distinct view but there seemed to be much lying before just ready to be revealed. Now that I am to look forward to a real transition at some not distant day, I am much encouraged by the psychology of this dream, considering the background in consciousness from which it was projected, to-wit: the expectation of departure. The universe is still the universe, whether one is on this side or that of any equator separating its latitudes. If one can find adjustment here from science, philosophy and religion, he may trust that he can find it there.

I opened my eyes—the Doctor was gone, the nurses were seated in quietness, hypodermatics had won and I was here and not there. The first thought that came to me was—I wonder if the windmill was turned on to the pump yesterday afternoon, if it was not we shall be short of water. Eternity and a windmill—what a juxtaposition! Yet both are worthy objects of thought—"Each in its 'customed place.'" Eternity will split into particulars as does time. The reflection soon came—Ah me! Why did I not go forward? Now I shall have all that is preliminary to go over again.

The psychology of a "rapt and parting soul"—what is it? The human race has had testimony and observation from which to draw conclusions and yet no generalizations of value have been reached. The whole matter is in chaos. Let us posit one principle, try it, and see if it will hold good. *Those who depart this life, at the time of departure are willing to go.* If there are exceptions to this rule it may be of interest to search for their causes. But let us deal with the rule. *We owe the universal desire to leave this life to the ministry of pain.* Let us go back one step. Benjamin Franklin said: "Anything as universal as death must be regarded as *intended.*" Biology lends its whole force to Franklin's conclusion. Integration and disintegration have been the history of all organism since the primal cell. With the deterioration of tissue comes in pain or *dis-ease*. Now again we can make use of Franklin's philosophy: any thing as universal as suffering after an organism has

passed the zenith of its vitality must be regarded as *intended*. This conclusion may not exhaust the philosophy of suffering, but *no* philosophy can be sound that neglects it. If the end in view be the cessation of life, then pain may be regarded as an adaptation physically and psychically to that end. It produces in man normally just contentment with that which is to be. Tennyson sings:

“Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Hath ever truly longed for death.”

Like a great many other things, that is true up to a certain point and then it ceases to be true. Water contracts to 32° and then it expands. Burns is equally true,

“O death, the poor man’s dearest friend,
The kindest and the best,
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest.”

Whether one longs for death or not depends upon the vital condition of his physical organism. When vitality is high, and its storm and stress for action on, a man does not want to die. But the case is entirely altered with feebleness and suffering. Then men do “long for death,” ever have, and ever will. Even those who are in the flush of life, if they are maimed in some sad accident, often ask to be put out of their misery. Men usually do not cross bridges till they come to them. But again the rule is that when men come to the bridge we have in view, they are willing, often desirous, to cross it.

There is a foregleam of this adjustment in the action of animals. When they find in themselves an intimation that a great change portends, they yield to its promptings, give up the struggle for existence, forsake their fellows and their customary beats and haunts, retire to some secluded nook and await what comes. Some one says it is harder to catch a dead bird than a live one; we can see why.

Edward Young (he ought to have credit for many felicitous expressions of truth, if he was not a poet) says:

“Man makes a death which nature never made.”

We do not die our own death but that which the superstitions and terrors of centuries of our kind have loaded upon us. We die such death as the imagination of the dark ages permits us to die. When it comes to that it admits of debate who had the worst outlook in that era, saint or sinner. Take a forecast of the future of which St. Simon Stylites is representative—vigils, fasts, penances,

pilgrimages, yes, the Crusades—and realize that when, after all tortures the body could endure, one lay down to die, he had the mental torture that all he had suffered might be in vain and through some self-deceit or some unnoticed neglect he might trip on the threshold of heaven and fall back into hell. We have changed all that? Oh no! Much from out that gloom still remains to cast its shadow over souls as they contemplate the journey forward. Of course one extreme begets another. In the later centuries ecstasies came in to supersede the gloom of the saint. Suspicion arising from various sources attaches to these exercises of the saint. Nature is not in the habit of doing serious things in ecstasy. We are not born in ecstasy; we ought not to expect to die in ecstasy. An inflamed imagination working by preconceived notion will account for most of these ecstatic departures from life. Plainly the sinner's horror is a psychological addition to the pains of death, arising from belief in hell. Belief in a "city of gold" and in a "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone" is not now widely held, and so perturbations either of joy or fear cease to appear in parting hours, and we can discern more clearly in them the rational and kindly intent of nature.

I have had nothing but the common experience of men. I have seen many persons pass out of this life. I have never seen one depart in ecstasy or in fear. The only person I ever saw in terror of death did not die. The case shows clearly how psychological considerations come in to interfere with a sound philosophy respecting the order for removal from this sphere of action, and respecting the general kindness of its execution. A young man drifted away from the East to the far West. Not gifted with the power of initiative he failed to find employment, his money gave out, he fell sick and was taken to the county-house. When I called on him there the perspiration stood in big drops on his forehead. I hurriedly asked him: "What is the matter?" He said: "I am dying, and I am afraid to die." I took my cue from the last expression. I found his pulse strong and voice natural. I gave him one grain of cinchonidia and said: "Now tell me all about it. What are you afraid of?" He took the Bible from under his pillow and putting his finger on the 16th verse of the XVth chapter of Mark—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," said: "I have never been baptized." I replied: "My good friend, I can get any one of half a dozen ministers of as many denominations here in an hour and we will have that matter attended to. You will live that time any way." But I had reckoned without my host, for he an-

swered: "I must be immersed to be baptized and sick as I am that cannot be." At some time, in his life before, a little information as to the historic standing of the text that troubled him might have helped him now—he could have given himself the benefit of a doubt. But plainly effort in that direction was not now in point. I cannot recall all the steps of the detour I took to relieve his mental suffering. It is enough to say that in an hour the perspiration had gone from his forehead and he was comfortable in body and mind. In a few days arrangements were made by which he departed for the East. Shortly after his arrival he executed what he thought was his duty—was immersed and joined a church. He found work and had a happy outlook for this world and the world to come. Now the name of cases of this kind, as well as of some others, is legion. But we should not confuse ourselves in settling upon a philosophy of pain and death, with varying particulars of this sort that have no necessary connection with it. The young man's distress was necessary neither to him nor to any one else.

Testimony as to the psychology of the dying is to be received with caution. Two persons present, because of difference in preconceived ideas, might give very different reports. When the matter has passed to second and third mouths it is hopeless to expect to reach the truth. Witness the testimony in regard to the mental condition of Thomas Paine in his last hours.

Before I came to my teens I had a case that was for long years a puzzle to me. An old neighbor lay dying. He had been a "sturdy" sinner. He loved rum "for its own sake" and always kept it in the house for daily use. He was profusely profane. He would lie. The neighbors said that sometimes between the days, if he wanted corn or apples, he paid no attention to division fences. They said he was "hot" and let it go at that. The day he died an aunt of mine came to visit at our home. Passing the house of the dying man she called to inquire about him. She did not go in. At my home she took me for a walk, and being a good woman, improved the occasion to make an impression on me. She told me what remorse the old neighbor was suffering, that he said he had "done wrong and it stared him in the face," that he was in the agony of the death of all the wicked. Now this did make an impression on me and I thank my aunt to this day for her intent. But a few days afterward I heard one who was there all the time the old man was sick, say that from the beginning he dropped into unconsciousness, which was only rarely and briefly broken; that once the old man said he had made a wrong disposition of his property

and wished he had divided it differently. "His life had not been ineffectual." He was genuinely covetous and had accumulated and kept his property. He did not share his rum with any "souter Johnny," as Tam O'Shanter did,

"The reaming swats that drank divinely."

The antecedent probability coincided with the statement of the witness who was present that the old man when he spoke of "wrong" was thinking about property. My aunt gave a moral turn to the word, because her antecedent philostophy called for it. She talked with me under the conviction that what she thought ought to be must be; she had not the slightest suspicion that it could be otherwise. Now if the man's psychology were as she represented, that might be an important fact for religion but on the *philosophy* of the *intent* of death and its mode of execution, *naturally*, it is negligible. Physically speaking, however, the old man probably got out of life with less distress than his better neighbors, for his doctor was of a very old school, was a devotee of rum, and like another famous physician worked with the "twa simples, calamy and laudamy." The latter we may be sure was not spared.

The moribund sometimes use expressions that are thought to have religious value. They may and they may not have. The expression "going home" does duty for piety—it may be legitimately, it may not. I have seen two cases where on their face one might think the use betrayed deep religious feeling. But it was very certain to me that it had nothing of it. One was the case of an aged clergyman with whom I had familiar acquaintance. I was away from the city of his home for years. Returning I found him in new conditions and greatly changed. He was living in the home of his son. But mentally he had lost all co-ordination with his then present circumstances. He did not know with whom or where he was. Now since the days of Irenæus it has been common speech with old men—"I remember better the things that happened in my youth than those which have happened in my later years." Loss of memory of recent events is part of the shortening in process which nature employs on the way to the final separation from this life.* This was what had happened to my aged friend. He was a stranger in his own son's family and at his own son's table. But my name struck him. It lay back far enough in memory to be in the unclouded realm. We were fast friends again on the old basis. We walked with our arms about each other around the house and the grounds. Once in a while he would say: "This is all well—

these folks mean well enough and do well by me but I wish you would take me back to the old home." With that he was still coordinated, with this he had lost connection. He was glancing backward and not forward when he requested me to take him home. This comports with the known psychology of declining years.

The other case was that of a woman ninety-seven years of age who had, through those years, kept mastery of her faculties. One evening as she was about to retire, she said she wanted to be taken home the next day, she had been there long enough. The next day as she went about the house, she preferred the same request. She had lived in that house nearly fifty years, had presided over its building and furnishing and had reared her family in an old house on the same ground. She was the impersonation of domesticity and nothing more. She had a wonderful faculty of minding her own business. She was not religious, she was not irreligious, she was simply non-religious. The fact was that in the disintegrating process preparatory to departure from life, every thing had been swept away from memory except some far corner back in her early girlhood. In a few days that too went into the cloud and she passed quietly from life. When she asked to be taken home she had not the slightest reference to extra mundane conditions but to a former home on earth.

All religions carry a vast amount of superstition in regard to a future life. Ours is no exception. So little is known about the future that it is the common playground for imagination. Fancy and rhetoric are strained to their utmost to set forth the glories or or the wretchedness of the future. It is time that those who minister in the name of religion called a halt on this license of imagination and plainly said for how much of it they stood sponsor. If there is a life beyond this, it is to be feared that the good will be more disappointed with it than any one else, so much pre-conception have they carried along in this life that cannot possibly be true.

Over most of our songs and hymns pertaining to the future should be printed: "Caution—private way—no one responsible for disappointments incurred therein—*caveat viator.*" The signal ought to be passed along to the masters of all craft on the religious sea to haul in and not to let out the sails of imagination with regard to the future. The creeds of former thought may not hold the common mind but the poetry does. When we go forth from this life, the less we are laden with fancies that we have invented our-

selves or that some one else has imposed upon us, the better it is likely to be for us.

Conclusion: It is our duty to reduce to lowest terms the pains and weariness that will come upon us. But do the best we can, they will come and work their result. We may, with ear intent, catch the order for forward movement and go cheerfully.

CONVALESCENCE.

The old treadmill creaks and rattles as it was not wont. The guys and down fastenings seem loosened. Yet the familiar motion of the rollers under the feet is not unpleasant. "The windmill?" Yes, yes, I must see that the windmill is in gear and running.