

Report Upon the Recent Literature of Ethics and Related Topics in America

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BOOK REVIEWS.

REPORT UPON THE RECENT LITERATURE OF ETHICS AND RELATED TOPICS
IN AMERICA.[Continued from the *April number*.]

1. CALMIRE. New York: Macmillan & Co., 1892. Pp. v., 742.
2. THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE AND ITS APPLICATION IN STATE RELATIONS. By Marietta Kies, Ph.M. [A dissertation for the Doctorate at the University of Michigan.] Ann Arbor, 1892. Pp. iii., v., 131.
3. THE ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SAMUEL CLARKE. By James Edward Le Rossignol. [A dissertation for the Doctorate at the University of Leipzig.] Leipzig, 1892. Pp. v., 97.
4. HUMANITY IN ITS ORIGIN AND EARLY GROWTH. By E. Colbert, M.A., formerly Superintendent of the Dearborn Observatory, and (*ex officio*) Professor of Astronomy in the (Old) University of Chicago. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1892. Pp. 409.
5. A DIRECTORY OF THE CHARITABLE AND BENEFICENT ORGANIZATIONS OF BOSTON, TOGETHER WITH LEGAL SUGGESTIONS, ETC. Prepared by the Associated Charities. Third Edition. Boston, 1891. Pp. xii., 351.

1. "Calmire" is the title of a novel just published by Macmillan & Co., a work belonging to the general type of ethical and religious tales of which "Robert Elsmere" gave so noted an example a few years since. The present work, however, differs otherwise very widely from "Robert Elsmere," as from most of its fellows and rivals, and has to be judged by a decidedly different standard.

"Calmire" appears anonymously, but the present reviewer doubts whether, in case the book receives the attention which it deserves, there will very long be great difficulty in discovering who wrote it. The author's quality and attitude are in many ways so finely and frankly revealed, that, if I am not much mistaken, his personal friends, recognizing the rarity of his temperament and training, are likely to find out at once, upon reading his pages, with whom they have to deal, and that without any further direct hints or confessions from him. He has no reason to be ashamed of his offspring, and yet, for the moment at least, it would be necessary to respect his wish as to the suppression of his name, even if one were mathematically certain of the man; and, of course, our guesses, even when, from our personal point of view, they seem most assured, may as well remain without further expression. In any case, the author, as he deliberately shows himself in his pages, is a "whole man," and one of an enviable type. One has to picture him as about the age of his principal hero, the elder Calmire, and as, like this hero, a man of the world rather than a man of letters. He is widely read, and knows well from observation how a book should be made; but he has not heretofore been regarded as a writer. His work accordingly lacks proportion and finish. The worth of it lies rather in the stuff than in the shape, and in the author's personality rather than in his theories. He himself has seen much, has suffered much, and has even dreamed much; but he prefers to be known to his acquaintances chiefly as an admirer of scientific methods and as a

lover of cold facts. The bitterness of life, meanwhile, has not been able to affect his true gentleness of heart. When he criticises, he does so with a certain austerity of judgment that young men and ardent believers in traditional faith will find a little cruel. There is something acid and merciless about his manner as an opponent; but as a friend, as a lover, as an adviser of the erring, as a sympathetic helper in an hour of grief, he shows nothing so much as a noble simplicity and kindness. This simplicity of mind guides him also as he studies the great theoretical problems to which his novel is largely devoted. He is a Spencerian both in morals and in his whole attitude towards the questions of philosophy and religion. There are not many Spencerians as firm in the faith as he is, and he knows it. He asserts repeatedly and earnestly that the reason for this firmness is the profoundly "scientific" character of the Spencerian formulas,—their completeness as expressions of the great recent advances of human knowledge. It is obvious, however, to the dispassionate reader, that our author actually, though unwittingly, admires in Spencer the elements which Spencer's doctrine, in common with others, has derived from a vast number of the world's great thinkers, ancient as well as recent, rather than the more peculiar qualities which characterize Spencer himself. The creed which the elder Calmire teaches in the latter part of this book is really in no wise confined to the results of recent science. And when a man such as our author has learned pretty nearly all the philosophy that he knows from Spencer, his reverence for Spencer is, in fact, unknown to himself, a reverence for philosophy in general, including the "old metaphysics" which he professes to despise as opposed to what we shall have learned only since Darwin's time. There are people who, if they were to read the Sermon on the Mount, or the Dhammapada, for the first time in their lives, not having heard of these documents before, would easily be convinced *a priori*, by the depth and dignity of the ethical teachings, that such great thoughts could only have arisen on the stage of evolution which Darwin and Spencer have lately rendered possible. But it is useless to ignore the history of thought; or to suppose that "science," while doing for us what it unquestionably has done, has also, and only recently, obtained insights which have, as a fact, long been among the most significant of humanity's intellectual possessions. Our author does not err in his historical notions as much as some do, but the historical is not the strong side of his teaching. And this I say in full consciousness of the enormous actual importance of the real contribution of science to recent thought.

Of the story itself the present reviewer can give hardly a hint. It opens unpromisingly. Not until the long book is half done are we really aroused. The close, however, is admirable. The heroine of the tale is a young woman of an almost superhuman graciousness of heart,—capable on the one hand of forgiving, with saintly condescension, her repentant lover, almost as soon as she first learns the truth concerning a very grievous wrong which he has done; incapable, on the other hand, of appearing visibly bored by even countless hours of Spencerianism and of evolution. By virtue of this divine patience under the long strain of argument, this lady far outranks even the plastic youth of the Platonic dialogues. For the elder Calmire, despite his really winning ways, is not precisely a Socrates to command attention; whilst from the younger Calmire

the Platonic youth would have fled in scorn and terror. The scenes of the story are laid amidst an environment of luxury. The characters row, drive, sit together in beautiful houses, and philosophize. It is the younger Calmire, who, beginning the attack, discourses to the lovely lady concerning modern science and its outcome, ethical and religious, throughout the first portion of the book. He himself is a crude youth, fresh from college. His views are permitted to appear very negative and extravagant. At first one finds him an extremely disagreeable person, and wonders what the heroine can discover either in him or in his philosophy. Later on in the book, when under suffering, the young man develops more strength. At best he is never quite worthy either of the heroine's love, or of the prominent place which the author gives him. A moral catastrophe, whose complications one must not here reveal, but whose nature is quite familiar to those who know either fiction or youth, suddenly interrupts the hero's wooing, and, revealing an earlier fault of his life, sends this young man into temporary exile, whence he writes frantic letters to his uncle, the elder Calmire, and a diary of penitential reflections. In his inmost heart he is still uncorrupted, and in time he recovers himself and his moral insight, and finally even his long-suffering beloved herself. Having so sweetly endured his philosophical conversation, she is prepared to forgive in due time even his sins.

On the departure of the younger Calmire into exile, his uncle, a widower, whose heart also is not untouched by the heroine's loveliness, but who nobly represses his feelings, now takes the word. The popularized Spencerianism of the first part of the book has been permitted to seem often boyish and flippant. This first part is entitled "Chaos." The second part, entitled "Cosmos," sets forth, in the elder Calmire's speech, a teaching which, in its outcome, proves to be a sort of Esoteric Spencerianism, or, to borrow the Buddhistic phrase, a Spencerianism of the "greater vehicle." Here, as a fact, despite the length of the discussions, one reads with continually increasing interest. It is the author who now speaks through the person of his hero. Science, evolution, the moral order, the nature of right and wrong, the limits of knowledge, are all set forth to the unwearied heroine. But when, in a later conversation on the possibility of immortality, Calmire the elder (just then discoursing to his nephew) suddenly spreads the wings of his spirit, springs from the earth of the knowable, and soars, in a fine flight of metaphysical imagination, into the possible realms that *may*, for all we know, lie in the regions of the Inscrutable, transcending the limitations of space and of time, the philosophical reader, recognizing some very old and beloved friends in these thoughts, follows Calmire with a respect not unmingled with a certain gentle mirth. Truly, the Spencerianism of what we have ventured to call the "greater vehicle" promises to become in time indeed esoteric. But Calmire returns to the firm earth quite soon, and remembers that what he has been saying may be no more than a "form of words!" Best of all, however, in this part of the book, are the numerous passages in which Calmire sums up the results of a ripe experience. One may think what one will of the philosophy. One respects highly the man.

The ending of the novel is, as befits an evolutionist's tale, fairly joyous. The style of the work is unequal. The very numerous colloquial Americanisms, and the too frequent passages of inaccurate English, will be felt by many readers

of taste as a serious drawback to their enjoyment. Yet on the whole the work is an important one, wherein a genuine ethical earnestness is well joined with a fine and manly vigor. The volume is too long, and will weary many. But it ought to be widely read.

2. "The Ethical Principle" is a thesis for the Doctorate, presented to the University of Michigan by Marietta Kies, now of Mills College, California. The essay, which contains little of novelty in its doctrine, follows the lines of the teachings of Dr. W. T. Harris, of Professor John Dewey, and of the late Professor Mulford, applies the ethical principles to the theory of the State, insists upon the inseparability of the principles of justice and of "grace" (*i.e.*, charity), and frequently dwells upon the essential agreements that lie beneath many of the seeming differences of ethical doctrine. There is a considerable wealth of illustration in the little volume, which is, on the whole, a modest and meritorious study, although marked by defects of style.

3. Decidedly more limited in the scope of the undertaking, but also much more important as a contribution to knowledge, appears to me another Doctor-Dissertation, that of J. E. Le Rossignol, a study which, although prepared for the University of Leipzig, and published there in English, may, as the work of a Canadian scholar, be claimed as belonging to this side of the water. The method is that of modern philological research; the foot-notes render verification easy, the historical outlook is broad, and this exposition and criticism of Clarke's ethics will doubtless prove of genuine service in filling a gap in the literature of the subject. Clarke's historical relations and his presuppositions are clearly set forth. The criticism, if not very profound or original, is wholesome and conscientious.

4. Professor Colbert's "Humanity" is a work of manifold learning, and of curious speculation. The learning, to be sure, in those few, of the many topics touched upon, concerning which the present reviewer has a right to possess any judgment, appears to be of a very unequal character; and one therefore feels considerable doubt as to the author's accuracy and insight in the wide regions where one cannot control his results. But as these regions include speculations of an astronomical, geological, and chronological character, one must leave to specialists the task of passing final judgment. The main theses of the book are presented in a final "Summary." The general doctrine of evolution is accepted and laid at the basis of the discussion. So far the author is on safe ground. He proceeds, however, to discuss when man was most probably differentiated, what great physical changes of the earth's surface led to his early migrations, and where the neolithic men of our hemisphere (*i.e.*, the northern hemisphere) came from. He speculates on the origin of language, the nature of primitive religion, the influence of primitive astronomical notions upon early faith and custom, and the source of the power of the priesthood. He asserts that the planets were the first gods revered, that the Hebrew Jahveh was a planetary god, that "the prediction of the Messiah was purely astronomical," and that "in a few score centuries hence the northern hemisphere will be partially submerged" for a period, "vast southern areas" being then uncovered. Lest we of the United States should be forgotten after this time of flood (whose physical causes he discusses in connection with speculations as to the succession of alternate

northern and southern glacial periods), our author thinks that it "would be well for us to consider the propriety of erecting some durable monument in the United States to bear witness of us then."

Most of these opinions would concern the readers of this JOURNAL comparatively little were it not that our author includes them in a discussion which is intended to cast an especially strong light on the history and nature of religion,—a discussion, moreover, from which he draws several important morals as to the significance of human progress. On the whole, then, it is enough to say that the book is full of pretty confident assertions concerning some of the very darkest regions of the history of man's evolution. One questions whether such assertions will bring much light to anybody. One is quite sure that, in the present state of science, the author can prove very few of them, except the less important ones.

5. The "Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston" appears in a revised edition "after nearly six years' interval." The book is intended "especially to help those actively engaged in charitable work," and "it contains, therefore, many things beside descriptions of charitable societies." Among these "many things" one may note the "Legal Suggestions," which fill pages 287-316, and which are intended to "offer some general information" as to questions concerning the duties and rights of those with whom the visitors of the "Associated Charities" are likely to come in contact. This is one example only of the compact wealth of this authoritative little volume, which must interest those who are students of practical philanthropy, whether in Boston or elsewhere. To actual workers in benevolent enterprises in any American city the book must be indispensable.

JOSIAH ROYCE.

We have also received the following:

A PEDAGOGICAL LIBRARY. By Will S. Monroe, Superintendent of Schools, Pasadena, Cal. (Reprinted from the *Pacific Educational Journal*.) Oakland, 1892. Pp. 12. A brief bibliography for the use of teachers and of students of educational theory.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL PRISON CONGRESS AT ST. PETERSBURG. Published by the U. S. Government Bureau of Education, 1891. Pp. 253.

THE THEORY OF DYNAMIC ECONOMICS. By Prof. Simon N. Patten. Philadelphia, 1892. Pp. viii., 153. Vol. III., No. 2, of the Publications of the University of Pennsylvania.

Of the "Series of Modern Philosophers," edited by Dr. Sneath, of Yale University, and published by Henry Holt & Co., of New York, we have received the new volumes:

SPINOZA. By Prof. Fullerton.

REID. By Dr. Sneath.

J. R.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIALISM. By John Rae, M.A. Second Edition. Revised and enlarged: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.

In a second and improved edition of an already good book, Mr. Rae brings copious and ready knowledge, vigor of style, economic grasp, and some asperity of tone to an expository statement and hostile criticism of contemporary