

ONE MAN'S NOTIONS.

Apologia.

It is not meant by this title to intimate that the thoughts that may be expressed in this column from time to time, belong to the author by right of discovery, much less that they are his in contradistinction to others. It has no flavor of "one man power," which monarchy makes the test of security, nor of that phenomenal excellence on which Matthew Arnold based the perpetuity of the "blessed remnant," to whom the world is to look for salvation from the quicksand of mediocrity.

Indeed, the right of discovery, is almost as ^{un-}certain a tenure in the realm of thought as in the material world. In its moral aspect it is perhaps a little better grounded. By what ethical principle a white pirate landing on an island on a continent inhabited by dusky aborigines, has the right to claim it, its revenues and the allegiance and services of ^{its} ~~the~~ people for himself or some sovereign whom he represents, it would be hard to declare. Yet it is one of the ba-

sis principles of international law which boasts itself as "the fundamental law of Christain Civilization." Perhaps the reason it is restricted by accepted definition to "Christain" civilization, is that no other civilization ever found it necessary to invent a falsehood to conceal its real motive. Barbarism takes what it wants because it wants it, not claiming the act to be right or otherwise justifiable. "Christain" civilization seeks to make the Almighty the sponsor of its infamias by falsely pretending that He is the instigator of its acts and a partner in the plunder of the weak. By the same specious reasoning, by which the so-called "right of discovery," has been claimed as a part of the fundamental law by which the actions of Christain nation are to be ^{regulated} ~~regulated~~, we have come to think that whatever a strong, civilized people wish to do, as regards a weak or uncivilized one, that they have a right to do. This sanctification of robbery is a peculiarly Christain device and the law is therefore very properly declared a principle of "Christain" civilization. It merely adds to the wrongful barbaric act the gilding of

ed and very securely stored

Like ballast, too, conviction in and of itself, is worthless. Accident may indeed make it valuable. It may be a merchantable article at the port of entry or one may have to pay for its removal. In short whether convictions are a good or bad ballast depends upon the quality of the convictions. If they are worked out of the rock of experience and taken aboard with sweat and groans and tears, they can usually be relied on to hold the craft on its intended course. If they are merely dumped into the empty hold at some educational sand-bank at which the newly-fledged craft has been sometime moored the chances are that it will make trouble before a fair cargo of better stuff can be shipped in its stead. Very often it has to be thrown overboard to save the craft from being swamped.

It is for this reason that so many who start out ballasted with convictions down to the water-line, come into port so light and cranky that a novice sees at once that they are unseaworthy.

Of course, a young man must have some ~~ballast~~ convictions, just

as an empty ship must have some ballast; but they should be of the simplest character. The man who is overloaded with convictions and knows everything with a cast-iron certainty, is not only an unpleasant but a dangerous companion. He is continually running into some lighter and prettier craft because so heavily laden he does not readily answer to the helm of circumstances. Of course, it is always their fault; he has the right of way and merely holds on his course, but it would be safer for some of those who collide with him and pleasanter for all if he yielded a little of his right even at the cost of a supernumerary conviction.

It is for these reasons that I feel convinced that no one will take me for a young man. I am loaded down with "Notions, but have not many convictions. What I have are immutable as convictions should be. I do not say that they are right. I have learned too well the lesson that only One is right and given to no man to declare or apply the rule of eternal rectitude by which human souls are measured to risk that assertion. All ethical rules are but approx-

imations, varying with circumstances and conditions more or less from the inflexible standard by which the pillars of Eternity are placed. The few ^{convictions} ~~conditions~~ which are left, out of the cargo with which I set out, may not indeed be correct, but they cannot be discarded now. They are part and parcel of the craft they have so long ballasted. They were poured in hot like melted ballast and have settled and hardened about ribs and keel. To them the ship owes whatever of sea-worthiness it has. Yet even they may drag it down.

If I were at all "up with the times," even if I had no convictions, I would never confess that I had only notions. The man who has no convictions ought at least to have some theories. As the fact of having "Notions" proves the writer is not young, so the acknowledgement that he has no theories, proves him to be old-fashioned. Thought is of little moment in these days unless it is snugly woven into theory. The reason is not far to seek. The man who is ballasted with convictions naturally and easily makes sail with the ory. His nature demands something concrete and positive which easi-

ly mastered and assimilated. Mere notions are unpalatable to him.

They imply doubt, challenge investigation and smell of uncertainty. A man who relies on a newspaper for knowledge has time only for the most concentrated statements of fact. A theory can be put into a nutshell--almost into a mustard seed. It is as easy to take as a homeopathic pellet. What does it matter that the disciple knows nothing of the steps by which it was evolved or the reasoning on which it is founded? It is not reasoning a man wants in these days, but conclusions--not speculation but knowledge. If a man cannot guarantee his conclusions to be correct what right has he to think and especially what right has he to express his thought upon the printed page?

Ah, theories are such beautiful things--so easy to make and so hard to overthrow! A man well-ballasted with convictions has only to take on a deck-load of theories to be ^{as} impervious to reason as a soul without sense. Then too, they are such beautiful things! Even

when they lie mere stranded wrecks mouldering on the shore of the past, they are still able to charm the imagination and delude the fancy. How many theories has the world known for the reconstruction of society upon a new and and better plan; the reorganization of government, by which the woe resulting from human imperfection shall be eliminated; by which millennial peace may be secured and heavenly joys anticipated. How many thousand sweet souls have projected out of their inner consciousness a new and purer ideal of life--a way by which man may travel from the cradle to the grave without making one misstep or striking once his foot against a stone of sorrow! Ah beautiful theories whose shapely lines the waves and tides of human affairs have strained and warped to ghostly gapings and whose gossamer sails the stormes of passion have torn and the tears of disappointment have bleached! One cannot speak lightly of such sweet dreams. Even their shattered fragments appeal to our regard. We dread to relegate the beautiful vision of social perfectibility to the realm of disappointed fancies. It is a pitiful thing to pack

away in the garret where the useless lumber of the past is stored the thousands of beautiful Utopias of which men have dreamed and in which they believed, which are now alas, as useless and ridiculous as the myriad schemes for achieving perpetual motion whose broken models tell of yesterday's infatuation.

How the world laughs as it looks back upon Locke's theory of a Republic! Yet how eagerly and gravely thousands gaze upon the far less practical scheme which Bellamy borrowed from a still remoter past and with a little tawdry touching up hangs above the arch of the future as the model of desirable and attainable perfection! Man in the aggregate is a terrible iconoclast. While individuals are gazing in rapt admiration on their own pet schemes for the extinction of evil or the perfection of bliss, the race tramps recklessly on grinding in the mire beneath their grimed and bloody feet the glittering fragments of yesterday's enchanted palaces of millennial ~~bliss~~ hope.

Theories of all sorts, are dangerous things unless dug out of

mire of absolute and definable experience. It was said of a great naturalist that if one gave him but a tooth of an extinct species, he could reconstruct the entire animal. The tendency of mankind is always to build a Megothaurian theory upon a single molar of hypothesis. The result is that by and by an army of barefooted commomplac facts come along tramples the airy structure in the dust and we wonder what it was that so dazzled our eyes a moment before. Theories are like soap-bubbles; not many have the skill and patience to blow them successfully. When the sunshines not too warmly and the air is not stirred by a zephyr, they ~~xxx~~ shine with unparaelled brilliancy. But nobody invests in them or puts any faith in their stability. We know of what they are made, --rainbows without and stale breath within. They are fairy realms where dreams may dwell but too frail even to bear the fantastic foor of hope.

Theories obscure the past as well as the future. For a long time science rested solely on unbottomed theories. Not all of them have been pricked yet; but slowly and patiently we are getting down

to the bed-rock of fact, on which today's civilization rests. It is hard to separate dreams of the ages from the truths of antiquity. We find that of all liars the dead are the worst. The man who attempts to steer his course by a beacon on some remote promontory of the past is pretty sure to find himself among the breakers before he has proceeded far on the voyage of life.

The trouble with social, political and religious theories is, that they cannot be tested like scientific ones. One cannot make a working model of a republic, or test a new scheme of social organization. Even if such an attempt is made it is well nigh impossible to tell where the responsibility for failure lies. It may be in the plan and it may be in the material. Indeed, the social architect seems to be entirely without any guide as to the strength or weakness of the material out of which his glittering Utopia must be made. There is no reliable strain-sheet by which the strength or weakness of the human claims on which the gardens of the new Babylon are to be hung can be computed. So they fall battlement and turret,

and the man who starts out in life equipped with theories which seemed to him as firm as the everlasting hills, finds himself at last gasping on the shore of Time with a shattered faith and only a few grains of worthless dust in his grasp.

Theories are the castles in which cowardice and self-conceit hide away from ~~the~~ the assaults of truth, where socialism bids defiance to knowledge and from which cowardice pours contempt on patriotism. "How do you know my theory will not work?" Is the triumphant shibboleth of the man of profound convictions who might "doubt truth to be a liar," but can never doubt his own conclusions. And this is an unassailable position. Reason cannot touch it because he makes his own reason the final arbiter and the pride of conviction makes that unchangeable. Its fallacy cannot be specifically demonstrated because there is no fresh world or no new continent in which to set the stage and no proper men and women to serve as puppets in the great experiment.

Yet theories are a good thing when once exploded. They can do

no harm then and from almost every one of them some little shred of truth may be gleaned. Did you ever watch a company of rifleman firm firing at the butts? There is a deal of noise and smoke though no harm is done; but the boys who rush in and pick up the empty shells equip themselves thereby with a playthings of amazing capacity.

What will they not make of those bits of copper cylinders! The germ of many a new invention which may bless or cure mankind may be found in those exploded shells. Just so exploded theories will amuse many tomorrows. How we laugh at the philosophers who put a veto on yesterday's science! How tomorrow will laugh at the flimsy fetters we seek to put upon its limbs!

The writer is not as young as he once was nor as old as he hopes to be, but he has thrown overboard many of his convictions and become very shy of theories. He has only "Notions,"--little gnarled scraggly bits which he sometimes thinks are auriferous nuggets and anon trembles lest they should prove only "fool's gold." They have cost him some labor and not a little pain. He has had to throw away

many of those he once prized most highly because they would tarnish when exposed to the light and the verdigris which told of hidden poison would gather on the surface. These "Notions," are not very bright but they are all there was at the final "clean up," and none have shown thus far any inclination to tarnish. If not very brilliant they can be guaranteed to do no harm. If they are not "mountains of light," they are at least very substantial little pebbles which will stand a good deal of polishing and some of them may prove to be true gems.

What is one of them? Well, I have a notion that one man who really wants to know the truth is likely to be of more service to the world than a thousand who know it already and that one honest work scrubby Notion that is not afraid to be handled and criticised and picked to pieces is worth more than a ten-acre lot-full of theories that shine and glitter just above our reach.

ONE MAN'S NOTIONS.

Apologia

Dupel

It is not meant by this title to intimate that the thoughts that may be expressed in this column from time to time, belong to the author by right of discovery, much less that they are his in contradistinction to others. It merely signifies that no one else is responsible for their character or is to be held in any manner accountable for their expression. Why such a title has been chosen ought not to be difficult to infer. No prudent man ever endorses a blank note, not merely because he does not like to tempt himself to take advantage of the law's mercy and escape responsibility for his own act, but also because it is difficult to relieve his mind that the authority given to underwrite a particular sum may possibly be exceeded by the agent. So the INTER OCEAN might not care to set the seal of its impersonal corporate approval upon all that one man might believe or even be willing to say.

In like manner the writer might hesitate to blazon his personality at the head of a column which is intended to be a candid ex-

to acquire, so impervious to attack, so comfortable and self-satisfying! They need no study. One has only to believe what he will to a full-fledged conviction; he has only to keep on believing to have a whole brood of convictions perch upon his individuality. They are much commended by moralists, too, as providing "ballast for manly character." Like many of the figures the moralists are apt to use, this one seems sadly misapplied. Ballast is simply dead weight which an empty vessel carries to keep it on an even keel. When it is shifted by any great shock, the center of gravity is changed, the water runs in at the ports and the craft sinks. That is the trouble with convictions. They prescribe the "trim" of every empty soul that takes them aboard. If they are badly stowed they send it on a wrong course slipping day by day a little farther from the track laid down upon the chart, a little nearer the breakers, or if by chance the fault is discovered in time, into a far different port from that for which it set out. Convictions are indeed ballast for an empty heart or brain but they are very dangerous ballast and need to be carefully assort

a sanctimonious falsehood.

In the realm of thought, the claim of first discovery, has a limited but very uncertain application. Fortunately, for human peace, it is not recognized by law at all. Priority of conception gives no man any possessory right. It is only expression of thought which the law protects and that only to a very limited extent. The man who has a thought, embodies it in words and prints it, may have a copyright if he will register it, pay a fee and give the country two copies for the immense library the Nation is too stingy to properly house, which copyright secures him the exclusive privilege of publishing his idea in that form for twenty-eight years. But this, it seems, is not because of the thought but the form in which it is expressed. So at least, the courts have decided. Words, not thoughts are the substance of the author's right.

pression of his individual views. It might be that the name would either help or hinder their popular acceptance, or it is possible that it might harmfully affect the author in other relations. Even in this enlightened age the free expression of personal views, is not always conducive to individual prosperity and still more frequently proves inimical to personal comfort. A minister having peculiar views as to the relations of God to Man, or of men to each other as the result of divine commandment, might very well hesitate to imperil the general harmony existing between himself and the church he serves or the sect to which he belongs, by the expression of views which after all might not prove of sufficient value to the world to recompense him for the loss of confidence and regard which might follow their open acknowledgement. A lawyer might very well hesitate to express views upon legal, social questions which might possibly be little relished by a class of clients from whom a considerable portion of his professional revenue was derived, or a politician shrink from allowing opinions to become public which might

prove unacceptable to any portion of those constituents on whose support he relies for acknowledgement in public service or party favor. The agent of a great corporation might well question whether duty required him to stand forth as the sponsor of ideas in regard to the ^{Justice} ~~justness~~ and policy of particular methods on which the revenues of the corporation in a greater or less degree depends, while a member of any organized trade or business would certainly be held excusable for desiring to avoid any expression of his personal views which might endanger the daily bread which he is permitted to earn by the sweat of his brow and the gracious permission of the confederated managers of his particular craft. Even the most simple-minded agriculturist might very reasonably shrink from being known by the shrieking petitioners for public charity and State aid of the F.M.B.A. as the responsible author of the publicly expressed opinion that a more liberal application of common-sense, elbow-grease, thoroughness, ^u fertilizer^s and enthusiasm would be more valuable to the ^u interests than the whining suit for public favor which is ~~far more valuable to the~~ ^{the whining}

waged in forma pauperis in their behalf by professional prophets of ill. Especially, would he not wish to be known to express the heretical notion that the farmer has not the very best ground to complain of a lack of public ~~support~~ respect and parity of opportunity until he has manifested enough self-respect to make his sons willing and anxious to pursue the calling in which their father has won success, rather than make himself the servant of some incorporeal servant of the public convenience or a mere distributor who clips the coin of labor between the mint of production and the mart of supply. Yet there is One Man who believes this to be an essential truth and so long as the fire of public indignation can only scorch and wither the initials which proclaim him to be the one sixty-three millionth part of the aggregate population of the United States, he is willing to express it boldly as was the knight to challenge the giant whom he believed to be absent from the frowning cavern through which the echoes of his brave defiance rung.

The truth is that while a ~~ctual~~ actual persecution for opinions sake

But if priority of conception actually did confer any possessory right in ideas, what a tangled web of human consciousness it would be necessary to unravel to determine any one's title! How claims to what is termed "originality" would shrink and shrivel! A man quoted the brilliant retort of a noted jester about holy things in the presence of a guide as they floated in a canoe on the Rangely Lakes.

"Do you say Mr. ——— claims that as original?" he asked.

"Certainly; why not?"

"Nothing, only I've read it in a book printed before he was born."

And sure enough when they came out of the woods, the guide showed an old pamphlet sermon bearing date a decade before the brilliant jester was born, in which was the "original" mot, word for word as he had given it.

Had he stolen it? It was most unlikely that he had ever seen that pamphlet; still more improbable that he had talked with any one

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threat of pillorying their ancestress as the ideal of a class so little esteemed. What is a philanthropist? One whose loves mankind for the mere fact of humanity; one whose pity and sympathy with human woe and zeal in the amelioration of human conditions, are unbounded by race, nationality or type, unrestricted by individual interests, family ties or social relations. The typical philanthropist would miss a chance to make himself rich or powerful or famous, in order to help others to dwell on earth in comfort and lead happier, sweeter lives. He would not give his whole strength to selfish projects because he would feel impelled to devote his energies beyond the limit of specific need to helping his weaker brethren to stand erect and become self-supporting and self-reliant. This is a most despicable role for the average man to attempt. The world laughs at him for a fool and ^{one} would almost as soon find an ^{ancestors} ancestress' face in the rogue's gallery as in an album of typical philanthropists. They are regarded among

has gone out of fashion there is yet a sort of peril about the free expression of opinions which may be regarded as absurd, visionary or even offensive, by others. Even the fame of doing good is often irksome much more the reputation of proposing that good should be done. The children of an eminent American lady by the mouth of an eminent descendant recently protested most vigorously through the public press against an expressed purpose on the part of an association of the good women of the United States to exhibit a portrait statue of her at the impending World's Fair as "the typical philanthropist" of the New World. Had the proposal been to commemorate her personal worth or testify appreciation of her merits as one of the most beautiful or fascinating of accomplished of American women, it is not at all probable that objection would have been made. It was not the perpetuation of her memory to which they objected, but the character assigned her. She did her duty, her descendants said, but was not a "philanthropist."

It is no wonder the affectionate family writhed under the

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who had read it. What then? It was one of those thoughts very likely to come uppermost in any mind absorbed in a particular subject. And the subject had been uppermost in thousands of hearts for a generation.

Ideas of a particular character become epidemic at particular times. A new thought is often only the natural, reasonable, almost unavoidable resultant of two other thoughts into close and familiar juxtaposition. More than once, inventors a thousand miles apart, who never heard of each other or knew that any one else was laboring at the same problem have on the same day or the same week, presented their claims to a concrete expression of the same idea at the Patent Office. In other cases an idea will lay upon the surface, under the eye of all for years, perhaps for centuries and no one will observe it.

The same is true of doctrines and philosophies. Whence comes the curious harmony of sentiment between the Jeffersonian and the

Mecklenburg declarations of independence. Was the one an invention an adaptation, a forgery? There seems little probability of such a fact. It is not more likely that they were both translations of popular sentiment made by hearts burning with the same patriotic frenzy and naturally finding expression in similar terms?

Mr Henry George was much offended when a professor at one of the English universities said in criticising his theories at a public meeting in his presence:

"What is new in his theories is not true and what is true is not new."

The theories were just as new as the criticism and both were in the main borrowed from the same source--that French thought which is the great treasure house of paradox. Indeed, the criticism was truer of nothing in the world than of itself and militated not a jot against the merits of the scheme which it was intended to depreciate. What is new in Mr George's philosophy is merely a matter of method and whether that is true or not depends entirely upon the

character and quality of the people who may attempt to carry it into effect. A method which is true in Australia would probably be false enough in Corsica or St Petersburg.

So the writer will not say that the thoughts that will appear in this column are his thoughts and not another's or his by priority of conception. He may have borrowed some of them from any of the ages past and they may be the latent or half-forgotten fancies of those who read. Two friends dreamed the same dream and told it at the same hour, a hundred miles apart. Whose was the thought which each one had seized and dragged out of the realm of slumber? It belonged to neither: its elements were in the general conditions to which both were exposed. There is a common property in thought. Reared under the same influences, exposed to the same conditions, and affected by the same motives, men think the same things. Heroism and fortitude, courage and cowardice, greed and treachery--these and a

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hundred other qualities of head and heart, are common property of peoples and notions at different epochs. The most brilliant, startling and profound utterances of poet, orator, statesman or philosopher, those which thrill the heart most keenly and live longest in the memory, are only shining concretions of the universal sentiment. As each one thinks today so probably a thousand others are thinking. But in this case, one man speaks not for others, but only for himself. These "Notions, are his only because he entertains them whether secured by conquest or discovery, elimination or adaptation, held exclusively or jointly with others, it matters not; they are his "Notions.

ly a decade he made it a special almost an exclusive study. He did not give his days to it and had no college professor to steer with infallible iteration. His schoold days were over. They had been cut short by certain object-lessons in political economy which he has never been quite able to forget. The duties of life and the necessities of domestic economy occupied the days and very often much of the nights. But ~~xxxxxxx~~ he studied faithfully, giving to the great science all the spare moments. He discarded luxury and sometimes pinched himself of necessaries, in order to procure the volumes which he supposed were essential for a thorough comprehension of the subject. He has never regretted the time thus employed. All of the treatises he read were interesting; many were valuable. Some of the theories advanced opened the way for the acquisition of truths; some of the facts were valuable as showing how little reliance could be placed on the conclusions. If he did not learn to reverence political economy he did learn to appreciate correctly political economists. Not that they are all alike or all of equal val.

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ue but their worth is easily graded, being in exactly inverse ratio to the positiveness of their knowledge.

The most striking thing about this experience, however, is the fact that though the writer had a notion that he knew what political economy was, when he began, he now freely confesses himself unable to form any reliable idea either of what it is or of what it is intended to be.

In fact, he is willing to go one step farther and say that he has never yet found an author who was able to define it, who had any clear idea as to its scope and function or who did not actually use or impliedly refer to it in two or more senses. In this he is no worse off than the great majority of those who have written upon the subject. Of those who have followed in the steps of Adam Smith and treated of Political Economy as a science there are but one or two who have not specifically bewailed the insufficiency of his

predecessors in that they seemed to be without any clear conception of the bounds and functions of the science they professed to teach. One of the very latest of them all and one who has edged perhaps as far into the sunlight of truth as any of them, occupies a considerable share of the space he has allotted to himself in bewailing this defect, arraying contradictory definitions and showing that none of his predecessors had respected the definitions they had given.

Of course, where such doctors disagree, a poor learner who only cares for truth and takes no stock in any man's theories is not likely to get any very clear ideas. In fact, he is irresistibly forced to the conclusion, either that there is no such a science as political economy at all or that nobody has yet found out exactly what it is--where it begins, where it ends and what its purpose and function. Yet how often does this loud-sounding and pretentious ~~scientific~~ term serve to hide under the robe of pretended scientific sanctity the shreds and patches of a shrivelled and despicable dogmatism!

they began to tarnish or showed signs of poison verdigris which might make them dangerous to those who should receive them.

What are they? Only insignificant results of one man's observation of present conditions who has looked upon life from many points of view but always with the eye of a worker bending under the burden of self-support and thrilled with the divine desire to do, which is the only hope of progress and the sole guaranty of a better tomorrow. What is the character of these notions? Very commonplace indeed. One of them is that a man who is really willing to do the best he can is worth more to the world than a thousand who know exactly what everybody else should do.

By claiming the "Notions" which will from time to time appear in this column as his, the writer means merely to declare that no one else is responsible for their formulation. A newspaper is an impersonal institution, yet the most cautious of ~~organisms~~ organisms. No wonder; every throb of approval or disapproval in the public mind shows itself in the balance-sheet which marks its prosperity or decline.

The writer does not know that he will say anything that will offend, but lest he should he has begged the privilege of speaking for himself and may upon occasion use the first person instead of the impersonal third. He does not mean to assert that his notions are true: he hopes they are, but like malleable metal, if they are not of correct form it may be that they will stand to be hammered by others into proper shape. He is not vain enough to suppose that they are new or valuable, but they about that he finds in the "clean up" after a busy life, which has even the semblance of permanent value. They are not brilliant; he has thrown away much wiser ones because

JOHN WORKMAN'S NOTIONS.

Concerning Convictions and Theories.

I hardly know whether I am old or old-fashioned. Of course, I must be either the one or the other, or I would not have "notions", or if I had would not admit it. If I were young and foolish enough to think of serious matters at all, I would call my conclusions, convictions. It is a much more dignified term and there is an air of stability and maturity about it, which is vastly attractive to the young man who is just leaving the adolescence behind him and facing the battle of life with that undauntedness which only he can know whose foot is yet firm in the stirrup and who has never been unhorsed by the shock of the bewildering onset. Convictions well become the full fresh lips which the downy moustach but half conceals as its pencilled points incline backward towards the unbrowned cheek which flushes still at every fervent thought that fires the eye, that flashes confident beams from beneath the unwrinkled lids.

Very convenient things are convictions, too. They are so easy