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OBSERVATIONS

An article entitled "Wayside Fancies," printed in the *Hesperian* of Nov. 1st, has called forth considerable comment upon the author, the magazine and the university. I am glad that it is possible for a student to write such an article unmolested and without fear. It shows that the university has not been growing and working, nor the state paying taxes in vain these last twenty years. Fifteen years ago, in the "Dark Ages" the faculty would have risen like one man against any student who would have dared express an opinion approaching agnosticism and he would have been shown the door. But today more knowing men greet this sort of youthful cynicism with the patience and amusement which it deserves, knowing that such things are mere boy's fancies, the result of a little too much Renan and Voltaire, and that self-sufficiency and vain conceit, which is the most pathetic thing about being young. The faculty have ceased trying to break butterflies and juniors on a wheel. Its undignified and hard on the wheel. Junior agnosticism is as necessary as junior poetics, and as soon outgrown.

"They grasped me by the arm and said, 'Come up to the daily prayer meeting, come along.' And their invitation was earnest and sincere. To them prayer means something; they know a God who sits up somewhere on a throne in boundless space—a God who answers prayer—sometimes. To me prayer means nothing—and I know no God. So I did not go. To them I am an object of pity—genuine pity. For they believe their God will damn me, because I do not know him. It all seems so strange; we are constituted very much alike, they and I. We have

the same senses, like environments, think the same, in many instances, see politics, literature, science and art in the same light. Yet here we diverge, widely, irreconcilably. We are both in earnest, both sincere. Yet they believe that true which I know to be an absurdity. They would say they know that to be true which I believe to be an absurdity. They know all that I do; know of Siberia with its awful horrors and unjust sufferings; know of vice and crime rampant and triumphant; know of virtue squalid and in rags; they see wrong conquer good, falsehood subdue truth. And seeing and knowing all they can say, 'Altogether just and righteous are thy ways, Lord God Almighty.'

That is the offending article, which seems to me inoffensive and childish enough. Its only redeeming feature is its earnestness. Its worst fault is its gratuitousness. Declarations of that sort are so utterly uncalled for. There is no one tearing about the university awaiting to slay unbelievers. It is better than what young poets write on spring, but it is just as impracticable. It is bitter with the bitterness of youth and ignorance. When a man is young and self-important he delights to think that life is a tragedy. When he is older and humbler he is very content to think it a comedy not rightly understood. Can Mr. Newbranch prove to us that the world is all wrong? Can he answer that oldest of queries and tell us "what is truth?" Perhaps after all this life is the best life, this world a good world, only we cannot read it so. Mr. Newbranch looks over the world and says, "Behold, it is very bad." So a Hottentot might look over a copy of Shakespeare or hear a sonata of Beethoven's and twirling his brass nose ring remark with conscious pride at his own pessimism, "It is nonsense."

It is really very difficult to make a final decision as to the merits of creation and the meaning of the universe. Difficult even for a university student.

Truly, Mr. Newbranch is young. When he is a little older he will see that these appearances and conditions he refers to do not matter much. That they do not impeach the justice of God nor the dignity of man. He will learn that it affects virtue very little that it is in rays, benefits vice very little that it is triumphant. The curse of vice is that it is not virtue, the happiness of virtue that it is not vice. Virtue, starved and desolate and with barren years and empty hands whispers of vice with secret envy "It is happy." Vice, weary of its roses and raptures, cheated of the shadow it has pursued through a life time says of Virtue, "It has sacrificed, and it is happy." Both of them lie, and it is rather pitiful. It is too late to begin to look for happiness. It is only an ideal, anyway, a chimera that the world pursued in the golden days of its youth. It is not for us. We are "born too late unto a world too old." There is left us only honor. To live like men and to die

like men; to have our chance, to run our course. "The rest is silence." It is not romance or tragedy, it is a plain, pure fact that must be faced and not feared. Mr. Newbranch speaks of the lies that triumph. Will Mr. Newbranch show me in all history one lie that has triumphed after its time was ripe to fall? One institution that has lasted after all its usefulness was gone, one form that has survived after all truth and poetry had gone out from it?

Last Saturday the *News* published the "official" report of Prof. Bartlett, the "chemist in an ochre plant at Indianola," on the gold discoveries at Milford. Prior to reading Prof. Bartlett's report I was prepared to believe that the sensational Milford affair might really have some reasonable foundation. I was prepared to hear on well authenticated authority that there is gold in this region in paying quantity. But since the chemist in the ochre plant at Indianola made his report I have lost confidence in the Milford gold fields. The report was about the most unscientific thing I ever saw. It stamped its author as a charlatan, and gave the whole affair an air of unreliability that must be discouraging to those persons who are trying to find out the truth. There may be gold in the Milford fields; but Prof. Bartlett's report does not strengthen the belief that there is. Experts do not go into ecstasies and superlatives. If the owners of the alleged gold-bearing property want to inspire the public with confidence in their enterprise they should get a more temperate and conservative expert.

One thing is sure, that while other cities in the state were momentarily frightened by an earthquake last week Lincoln escaped unscathed and naught occurred to disturb the peaceful slumber of the righteous. I have heard the theory advanced that Lincoln escaped because of its superior virtue, and was spared because ten righteous men left over from Mayor Weir's administration were found therein, while her besotted sisters, the cities of the plain, were tumbled unceremoniously out of their beds by an avenging deity. Myself I am inclined to think that we had the earthquake, but that the recent social sensation had so hardened us to shocks of all kinds that we were unable to feel it. Shocks are only comparative anyway, and are noticeable only because they destroy the accustomed composure of things, and it has been so long since "the push" of this town has known any composure of any sort that I doubt if a volcano, vomiting fire and hot tamalas in the middle of O street, would make any impression.

For really Lincoln has outdone herself in the sensational line this season and whatever else it may have been it has been interesting. In the first place there were a number of little affairs in which two or three—generally two popular young people—were gathered together and their friends were pretty

anxious to see how they would terminate. Then there were several impossible scandals which no one believed but which every one repeated. Then the Lincoln club was formed not without considerable jealousy and turmoil. Then there was a new chancellor, a genial and charming gentleman who was much received. Then there were those villainous anonymous letters that implicated people with standing in Lincoln, and which made things lively for a week and a day. Finally came the unique sensation of class versus mass which advertised the social status of Lincoln from New York to San Francisco. And yet it is not half through. What will not the winter bring forth? Let them come, the faster the better, its all in a lifetime anyway. If we can't be great; or rich or intellectual or a gold centre we can at least be interesting. *Vive la bagatelle.*

A number of people have gone from Lincoln to Denver to test the healing power of the man Schlatter. Some of them have returned professing to have been benefited by the laying on of hands. Others cannot see that their ills were affected in any way by this man who claims power from God. Many times in the last 50 years, or for that matter, the past 200 years, there have appeared at different places men who have claimed the Christ like power to cure the lame, the halt and the blind, by the mere laying on of hands or the utterance of prayer. These men have worked upon the credulity of their fellow beings, and it is a fact that thousands of persons who have taken treatment at their hands have believed themselves to have been greatly benefited or entirely cured. There are well authenticated cases where genuine sufferers have been relieved after the application of the treatment given by these so-called Divine healers. The will is a potent influence in the restoration of health, and many of these people who have thought they were cured by the healers were in reality healed by the exercise of their own will power in the determination to be relieved. Then it is a well known fact that a very large percentage of the people who believe themselves to be ill have no real complaint, other than a disturbed imagination. It is not much of a trick to work on the credulity of this class and affect a cure. In eighteen centuries there has been only one Christ. Since the days when Christ and his disciples walked the earth there have been no miracles. Since Christ, no man has had the power to heal by the mere touch of a hand or the offering of a prayer. And it seems a little remarkable that so many people are willing to believe that what has not been done since the beginning of the Christian era is now in this age a possibility. If Schlatter has the power that he claims to have, then the day of miracles is again at hand. We may expect to see the dead restored to life, water made to flow from solid rock, rail called down from the heavens,