

THROUGH COLORED GLASSES

Almost nineteen hundred years ago, in Nazareth of Judea, there was born in a manger in a stable the son of Joseph and Mary. And because he taught the brotherhood of man in a day when men were enemies, because he said "Love thy neighbor as thyself," when there was hatred, greed, distrust and war, because he elevated the souls of men and taught the greatness of spiritual being, this glorious Prince of Peace is today the thorn-crowned king of the civilization builded in his name. For he, the meek and lowly Nazarene, by his life and precepts, regenerated and purified the world. He taught that being was nobler than doing, that spirit was greater than matter, and of his lesson he was the living proof.

Under his influence, and the influence of those who were under him, the world has become spiritualized.

Spirituality, with art and music and literature as her handmaids, has made man a creature of high ideals and noble purposes. In his soul once more is kindled the old Promethean flame, and his heart throbs responsive to the music of the spheres.

The visions of ultimate truth and beauty, away up beyond the snowy heights have quelled the stormy passions of a barbaric race, and in a common brotherhood men march on and on toward the higher goal.

All this is theory, understand. The facts, in truth, are hardly consistent with the theory.

This week, while an hundred million knees were bent in worship at a common shrine, and that the shrine of the Prince of Peace, the massacre of the innocent has gone on unpunished in Armenia. Why? Because Christian nations were too selfish to interfere. The blood of Cuban patriots has cried to heaven unavenged. Why? Because Spain has a God-given right to murder and oppress. The rumor of a war between the two greatest of Christian nations has been greeted from seventy millions of people with joyous acclaims. Why? Because we long to imbrue our hands in a brother's blood.

The brotherhood of man! Wars, and rumors of wars, powder and guns, armies and navies—do these go with the golden rule? Do they bespeak a high, spiritual plane? Do they indicate that we subordinate doing to being? Our social and governmental organizations—the very competitive system, the framework of our civilization—do these bespeak the brotherhood of man?

Utopia—it is a pleasant dream—but a dream nevertheless. In reality the world, A. D., 1895, is barbaric and selfish and material just as it was B. C., 1895. Our culture, our spirituality, our "common brotherhood," our avowed ideals and aspirations—all are of the outer, not the inner, man. The baser metal is within. Only scratch off the polish, the varnish and veneer, and man is as much of a brute today as he was when first emerging from primeval caves, he pushed back the shaggy mane from off his eyes and glared in amazement at the sun.

But nevertheless, 'mid softly pealing mellow bells we have wended our ways to gorgeous shrines to bow in chastened worship at the altar of him whose life and teachings are but the antitypes of the lives and practical teachings of us who bend the knee.

"Out upon ye, for a generation of scorpions, hypocrites and vipers."

A child was born; it was an organism, nothing more. It had no mind, no memory, no thoughts, no emotions. It simply existed. Little by little its organs

of sense began to carry feelings and convey knowledge to the brain. The child was acquiring a conscious individuality. Its mind became a storehouse of facts. The child grew to manhood. The man was able to reason, reflect, deduce inferences, build theories. All these from experience; all experience from the senses. The senses, acting on the brain, produced molecular action; this molecular action was the cause of states of consciousness. The continuity of the states of consciousness was the man.

Years passed. The man was old. His senses were blunt and dim and unresponsive. As a consequence, his faculties of thought and reason began to diminish, his memory to fail. His states of consciousness, accordingly, became less vivid. All this because the sense organs found the brain molecules less sensitive and so less responsive.

Finally, the senses failed to act; reason gave way; memory was gone; consciousness ceased—the man was dead. Did his soul go marching on? Did his soul, which was a result of states of consciousness, an effect of molecular action and combination, continue to exist when the molecules were scattered and still?

When the block house, which was only a combination of blocks, has been shattered—when the combination of blocks has been destroyed—is the house still there? Does it go on existing?

Is Lincoln a cultured city? With all its reading circles and culture clubs, does it really keep up with the times? Does it appreciate the best of modern literature? If you believe it does, just make a pilgrimage through our book stores some day and report.

I made the rounds last week, inquiring for a certain one of Ibsen's plays. Of the five book stores which I visited, none had a single one of Ibsen's plays on its shelves. The intelligent clerk at one shop, on being asked for Ibsen's "Ghosts," was prone to request the "author's name again, please." It was very evident he had never heard the name before! I tried again—this time in fruitless quest for Lewis' "The Monk,"—for I thought that our tastes might possibly incline to the old masters. But judging from the succession of blank looks that met the demand for this book, it seems perfectly safe to hazard the guess that Lewis and his "Monk" was literally a sealed book to all the booksellers.

Smollet and Fielding and Boccaccio were conspicuous also—only by their absence.

I came back to modern times again. I tried Tolstoi and Tourgeniff and Szienciwitz. Of these authors, one or two book stores had a stray work or two. But they were evidently sorry they had them, for, as a clerk said, "there is no call for them."

I tried the poets—Swinburne and Watson and Maetterlink—and the result was the same. I believe I did succeed in finding a 59-cent compilation of some of Swinburne's "selected" poems.

A quest for Maarten Maarten's "God's Fool," and the novels of George Meredith met the common fate—it was fruitless.

And it was not only in standard authors that the book stores failed; the failing was just as marked in the editions of those authors that they did have.

The new editions, the latest styles in binding, print and paper, could not be found. Of the styles of 1894 and 1893 there was a considerable sprinkling, but of the real triumphs of the book-

makers' art of this year of our Lord 1895, the evidences were remarkably few.

The blame for all this does not rest with the booksellers. Not at all. They keep those books for which they have a demand. The reason they fail to keep so many of the best works of the best writers and most advanced thinkers is simply this: The people of Lincoln do not care to read them. Dickens and the elder Dumas and Sir Walter Scott mark our high tide, and the ebbtide is measured by Bertha Clay and The Duchess.

Of course there are people in Lincoln whose reading extends beyond these limits—clear up to Ibsen and Hall Caine and Maclaren and way down to Old Sleuth and Buffalo Bill.

But the happy medium is found within the lines indicated. It very fairly measures our culture.

"Culture and refinement," said the wise Caesar, "seldom penetrate to the provinces."

Theodore and the doctor were playing chess. The doctor was working hard. His nerves were tense, his face was rigid. All his powers of concentration, combination and computation were centered on the game.

Theodore, as usual, was whistling "Sweet Marie" and waiting for the doctor to move. The doctor, after long study, moved K-b to Q R 5, and announced mate in three moves.

Then "the gallery" came in; Bixby and Nagel, and Kennard and Brown and Judge Hall and General Webster; and they all turned in to down the doctor. A Babel of voices were lifted in words of advice, and a wilderness of fingers traced out on the board multitudinous roads for Theodore's salvation. Above all the din of advice rose the shrill cackle of "the count" with his "Go-heah! go-heah!"

And the doctor went. He kicked over the table, grabbed his umbrella, and went.

"Expluncticated," commented Bixby. "Well, well, well, well," said Brown. And Theodore sat whistling "Sweet Marie."

They sat side by side on the sofa in the doctor's waiting room. They were evidently father and son, the father a rough, gruff looking man, dirty and ill kempt, the son a little fellow of eight or nine, pale, wan and scrupulously neat and clean, with his eyes swathed in many folds of white linen bandage.

The father's eyes were restless and roving; under them were circular hollows surmounted by dark blue puffy swellings. A great red bandana was wound carelessly about his neck. One of his shoes was ripped the whole length of one side. His hat was on his head.

The son sat motionless. His pale, thin features were untouched by mark of thought or feeling. His heavy under lip hung down, and revealed his large white teeth. His shoe strings were neatly tied in double knots—never his own work, with his poor, bandaged eyes. And I saw a loving mother in the background.

His little hand lay in his father's great and horny palms, quite motionless. The father's hand stroked the hand it held, gently, and oh! so tenderly; caressed and fondled it, with almost a woman's touch, as they sat there patiently awaiting their turn.

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