The Editor's Musings

L. Frank Baum

Editor's Note: In the interest of readability, the editor has inserted the occasional period or colon where such marks were obviously missing, but commas and other punctuation remain as in the original. Spellings have been corrected with brackets or not at all. Baum sometimes used asterisks to indicate changes in thought or subject matter, and these have been retained.

25 January 1890

The age of Faith is sinking slowly into the past; the age of Unfaith becomes an important problem of today. Is there in this a menace to Christianity? This unfaith is not the atheism of the last century. It is rather an eager longing to penetrate the secrets of Nature—an aspiration for knowledge we have been taught is forbidden.

*  *

Many ages ago Budd[ha] came to enlighten the civilization of the East.

The pure and beautiful doctrines he taught made ready converts, and to-day his followers outnumber those of any other religion.
To the fierce and warlike tribes of Arabia, Mohammed appeared. His gentleness and bravery tamed their fierce natures. They followed him implicitly [sic], as millions of their descendants follow him still.

Confucius with ready sophistry promulgated a "religion of reason."

His works are to this day the marvel of all intelligent people; his myriads of disciples have never wavered in their faith.

The sweet and tender teachings of Christ, together with the touching story of his life, have sunk deeply into the hearts of those nations which rank highest in modern civilization.

In their separate domains all these religions flourish to day. Their converts are firm and unflinching, their temples cover the land, and each in its own way sends praises to a common Creator—a Universal God.

* * *

Yet in every nation there is a certain element in society which acknowledges no religion and is bound by no faith.

* * *

Amongst the various sects so numerous in America today who find their fundamental basis in occultism, the Theosophist[s] stand pre-eminent both in intelligence and point of numbers.

The recent erection of their new temple in New York City has called forth the curiosity of the many, the uneasiness of the few. Theosophy is not a religion. Its followers are simply "searchers after Truth." Not for the ignorant are the tenets they hold, neither for the worldly in any sense. Enrolled within their ranks are some of the grandest intellects of the Eastern and Western worlds.

Purity in all things, even to asceticism is absolutely required to fit them to enter the avenues of knowledge, and the only inducement they offer to neophytes is the privilege of "searching for the Truth" in their company.

As interpreted by themselves they accept the teachings of Christ, Budd[ha] and Mohammed, acknowledging them Masters or Mehetmahs, true prophets each in his generation, and well
versed in the secrets of Nature. But the truth so earnestly sought is not yet found in its entirety, or if it be, is known only to the privileged few.

*  
*  *

The Theosophists, in fact, are the dissatisfied of the world, the dissenters from all creeds. They owe their origin to the wise men of India, and are numerous, not only in the far famed mystic East, but in England, France, Germany and Russia. They admit the existence of a God—not necessarily a personal God. To them God is Nature and Nature God.

We have mentioned their high morality; they are also quiet and unobtrusive, seeking no notoriety, yet daily growing so numerous that even in America they may be counted by thousands. But, despite this, if Christianity is Truth, as our education has taught us to believe, there can be no menace to it in Theosophy.

1 February 1890

The key to the success of our country is tolerance. Since the memorable Declaration of Independence of '76 many republics have risen and fallen, while the United States are gradually assuming the highest position among the nations of the earth.

The "live and let live" policy of the Americans has excited the admiration of the world, yet it can never be emulated in any other land, for in no other country do the government and the people act in such admirable unison, being one in fact as well as theory.

*  
*  *

Our citizens derive their origin from every nation and every clime, yet they live together in perfect harmony. No feuds of ancestry, no prejudice of birth mar the tranquility of their daily interchange of courtesies. Every man falls naturally into the niche for which his education and abilities fit him, and his
neighbor has pride in his success, or sorrows for his misfortunes, no matter from whence he came.

* * *

Many religions prevail throughout the land, but no one quarrels with a friend because he chooses to worship God through different channels than those he himself believes to be the true ones. Bigotry, if not wholly unknown, is so intolerable as to be nearly entirely suppressed. The members of one Aberdeen family attend four different churches and have four different faiths without a particle of internal dissen[s]ion. The subject of religion, save in a general sense, is never raised; yet each believes that he alone has discovered the truth.

* * *

In many a family the father is a staunch Republican while his sons are attached to Democracy, and vice versa, yet they seldom disagree. Political tolerance is one of the institutions of our country. The two great parties are a necessity, and in their very discords is found the security of our country. Whichever prevails, both are patriotic, and interested in upholding our most cherished institutions.

* * *

Professional and trade tolerance is now general, and growing more prevalent every day. Two lawyers fight desperately over a case or a client, and dine affably together the same evening. Two merchants wage bitter conflict for trade during the day and meet at one or the other's house for a quiet game of whist after the day's rivalry. "If my competitor succeeds better than I, he is a better man, and challenges my admiration."

* * *

It is this spirit of tolerance, social, political and religious which has won for us the name of being the most liberal and fair-minded among nations.

Still, we have one more lesson in tolerance to learn. We must do away with sex prejudice and render equal distinction and reward to brains and ability, no matter whether found in man or woman.
8 February 1890

There is no vice so prevalent, nor one with which the public [is] more familiar, than that of mercantile fabrications, or, more plainly, trade lies. It is the age of deception and adulteration, and the people know it; yet they accept the most preposterous statements of the purity and honesty of goods without emotion, knowing at the same time that the gentle shopkeeper's claims will not hold water. Nor do they attach blame to the merchant, who is frequently well meaning and who (outside his store) would scorn to utter an untruth or mislead his friends. After giving the matter careful thought, we have arrived at the conclusion that the public likes to have the goods they buy pronounced of superior quality, no matter how low the purchasing price may be. If a man buys a dollar engagement ring, he wishes the merchant to assure him 'tis "pure gold," although common sense refutes the very idea. His conscience is thereby eased and his purpose served at a slight expense, and his "girl" never knows the difference.

A woman who has been accustomed to paying 25 cents for a handkerchief is delighted to find one for a dime at a cheap store, which the merchant declares is worth 25 cents. After all it's a handkerchief; she has saved 15c and is happy; and the merchant has made more clear profit than he could on a genuine 25 cent article and is happy likewise.

The public has no idea of value, as a rule, and is too liable to judge an article's merits by its price, although the statements of a store-keeper, no matter how erratic, are usually accepted without a murmur.

A few anecdotes which have come within the writer's personal ken, may not be amiss, and will serve to illustrate the public's credulity and patience.

* * *

A certain prominent jeweler experienced religion and was made a deacon of his church. One morning he bethought himself that he must avoid misrepresentation of his goods in the future, and calling his clerk, a bright intelligent boy, he said:

"John, if you hear me lying about my goods, or charging too much for them, you just give me a gentle reminder. The habit is almost involuntary, but I wish to be honest in the future."
An hour later, one of the jeweler’s wealthiest and most persistent customers entered and requested to look at some ear drops. “This,” said the merchant, briskly, “is the handsomest pair we have. They are solid gold, and actually cost me five dollars.”

“Deacon!” cried the boy, warningly. The deacon got very red, glanced at his clerk nervously, and continued: “But, madam, in view of your being an old customer, I’ll let you have them for two-fifty, for the truth is, they are not exactly solid.”

“Deacon, deacon!” persisted the boy. The deacon cast at him a look of despair, mopped his brow with his kerchief, and, virtue finally winning the fight, exclaimed, “madam, they are not gold at all! but they’re very pretty, and if you’ll give me a dollar for them I shall make a reasonable profit!”

*

One of our telegraph operators admired an overcoat which a friend had purchased, the rather as it was claimed to be all wool and sure to do many years’ good service. So he repaired to the clothing store from whence it came, and asked the proprietor, to whom he was unknown, for its mate.

“Those all-wool coats? I am very sorry, sir, but we are entirely out. But if you wish I will telegraph for one, and it will be here tomorrow.”

“That will do. I want the all-wool one, remember.”

“Every thread is wool, sir; we’ll guarantee it. Will wear like iron. Nothing like them on the market.”

The operator gave his order and returned to the office. Shortly afterward he received the following message for transmission, written by the clothier:

“Send by tonight’s express one of those cotton-mixed overcoats, size 36,” etc.

*

An amusing incident which illustrates the thoughtlessness of women occurred in one of our groceries yesterday.

“Are these codfish fresh?” asked a young wife, pointing to a pile of the old-fashioned salt-soaked variety. “Perfectly fresh ma’am!” responded the grocer, briskly, “caught only yesterday. How much, ma’am?” “About two pounds.” And she tucked her
purchased under her arm and walked away with a contented and happy look on her face. Satisfied that she had made a good investment, and wholly unconscious of the amused grin on the grocer’s face.

* * *

A cigar dealer ordered a few weeks ago a hundred cigars of $160. per thousand, to accommodate a few of his wealthy customers who were tired of the ordinary “two for a quarter” article. For some reason the bill from the wholesaler failed to arrive, but the cigars came and were eagerly purchased by the nabobs at 25c each.

“Simply delicious!” said one old smoker. “Well worth the money,” pronounced another, puffing with great content. “This is indeed a rare weed,” exclaimed another, in ecstasy, “and in future I propose to economize on something else, and smoke only this brand!”

“Yes, gentlemen,” cried the delighted merchant, “they certainly ought to be good. I paid $160. per thousand for them!”

“So you have told us.”

“Yes, and I can prove it. See, here is my mail, and in it my delayed bill. Examine it yourselves,” and he tossed it toward them. One, with much respect, unfolded the invoice, and then in deep horror read:

“To 100 cigars, $1.60. We presume you made an error in ordering, and have sent you our cheapest brand at sixteen dollars per thousand.”

A moment later a half dozen partly smoked cigars lay upon the floor, the store was vacant, and the proprietor dismally bemoaned the inequalities in life and the stupidity of his action.

“If I had only looked at the bill myself,” he moaned, “they never would have known the difference!”

* * *

There is an old saying that “there are tricks in all trades but ours.” Merchants seldom acknowledge, even to themselves, the various devices employed to hook a customer, or the deceptions practiced to make them believe in the value of an arti-
Employed on one of the daily papers is a man who used to be a jeweler.

"Do you see this diamond pin I'm wearing?" he asked, the other day, "well, it's part of my old stock. I paid a dollar a dozen for them, and they sold like hot cakes at 99c each. I could have sold them at ten cents each with a fair profit, but no one would buy a ten cent pin. In fact the only way I could sell them at 99c was to advertise "Reduced from $2.50" and in that way I disposed of a bushel of them. Now who," he added, gravely, polishing the bit of glass on his coat sleeve, "who would believe this gem cost me but eiglit cents? Everyone considers it a genuine diamond, for they think a man in the newspaper business would scorn to wear anything else!"

* * *

We might continue indefinitely citing incidents of a similar character. Barnum was right when he declared the American people liked to be deceived. At least they make no effort to defend themselves. The merchants are less to blame than their customers, for the cry is not so much for genuine worth as for something pretty and attractive at a low cost. And a good article is always worth a good round price.

15 February 1890

Amongst the many details that go toward making up our daily lives nothing is so important to our comfort as a happy home. Few men realize sufficiently that it lies entirely in their hands to make their home life enjoyable or otherwise. In nine cases out of ten a happy home depends on the temperament of the "man of the house." A woman is usually so occupied with her household duties and the care of her children that she naturally becomes more or less nervous and irritable, and looks forward to the home coming of her mate as the one excitement that shall relieve the monotony of her daily routine. If he appears sullen, morose and bearish her overwrought nerves give way, and quarrels and bickerings naturally ensue.
If he enters the house with a cheerful face, a smile and a kiss of welcome and a cheery word her troubles are all forgotten; the latent sweetness in the disposition of the most unsociable woman is involuntarily drawn out, and a pleasant and genial chat restores to her the even poise of her nervous organization. It's all nonsense for a man to claim that his wife's temper will not allow him to enjoy his home life. There is no Xant[h]ippe\(^1\) who will not succumb to the gen[er]ous good humor of her husband. And it's not so very hard to maintain this good humor either, if you will only take up your mind to it. It brings invariably [its] own reward. Even in the outside world, (vastly less important to any man than his home) good humor and cheeriness bring hosts of desirable friends who would fight very shy of the morose and surly man. Business details are most attractive when they can be transacted in a pleasant way, and every right-minded man is quick to appreciate this fact.

*  
*  
*  

A great deal depends on how you start off your day. The old saying about "getting out of bed the wrong way" shows that this has been conceded for ages. A friend once said that he could judge a man's temper[ament] to a nicety by watching him at the breakfast table. A man genial over his coffee-cup will be agreeable throughout the day. The fellow who growls over his breakfast and finds nothing to his satisfaction may perhaps brighten somewhat during the day, but his grumpiness is fairly certain to follow [him] to his pillow.

*  
*  

If this life is to be lived in unhappiness it is scarcely worth the living. You will regard it as boredom yourself, and your acquaintances will secretly wish you quit of your disagreeable existence. No one is so unfortunate that there is not some enjoyment to be extracted from his daily life, if he makes an endeavor to obtain it. Don't allow business worries to make you unhappy. [It's] all well enough to worry at your office,

---

1. The name of Xanthippe, wife of the Greek philosopher Socrates, has come to stand for a shrewish woman or an ill-tempered wife.
when there's an actual necessity for worry, but don't bring your troubles into your home life. Don't eat your meals with disagreeable thoughts of business running through your brain. Don't, for heaven's sake, talk "shop" at the table and annoy your wife and family with matters it is your own business to regulate yourself. If you wish to confide to your wife details of business, there are plenty of opportunities when, sitting cosily and comfortably together, you can broach the subject quietly, without necessarily upsetting her equanimity. And ten chances to one she will give you more wholesome advice than any of your business friends.

* * *

Those who look only on the dark side of life can find no sunshine. If we choose to live in a cellar the sun is not likely to come out of the heavens and seek us in our obscurity. If we meet trouble halfway it will accept the tacit invitation and be ever present with us.

"A merry heart doeth good," and the greatest things which can be showered upon a family are good nature and cheerfulness.

22 February 1890

There is a strong tendency in modern novelists toward introducing some vein of mysticism or occultism into their writings. Books of this character are eagerly bought and read by the people, both in Europe and America. It shows the innate longing in our natures to unravel the mysterious; to seek for some explanation, however fictitious, of the unexplainable in nature and in our daily existence. For, as we advance in education, our desire for knowledge increases, and we are less satisfied to remain in ignorance of that mysterious fountain-head from which emanates all that is sublime and grand and incomprehensible in nature. Of all that is unexplainable in our daily lives we can only say that they are Nature[']s Secrets, and a sealed book to ignorant mortals; but none the less do we marvel at
their source and desire to unravel the mystery. Formerly the severe restrictions of religion against penetrating into the unknown restrained many intelligent people from exercising this natural and reasonable desire, but with each succeeding decade comes more advanced and liberal ideas, and the passion for occultism which attains in our age is merely in its infancy, and cannot fail to lead to more determined and intelligent research in the future.

* *

It is easy to see that Shakspere [sic] was in a more or less degree a mystic. Throughout his works runs a subtle vein of occultism which shows a familiarity with the inner workings of nature remarkable in one who lived in his age of bigotry and superficiality. But so much of Shakspere and his life are traditional that we of this age can scarcely judge his character. In Bulwer we see the next remarkable instance of mysticism in fiction. His “Coming Race” was written in an age when electricity was but an idea, yet much that he predicted in his work exists in our world of today, and who knows that future ages will find the remainder an exaggeration? What he wrote concerning occultism in “Zanoni” was regarded as a jest in 1836, but today it is the subject of earnest thought with many students of nature. These works, with his “Strange Story”, stamp him as a mystic of no mean order, although such a thing was unthought of by his contemporaries, and perhaps was not realized even by himself.

* *

To the “She” of H. Rider Haggard is attributable much of the popularity of mysticism in modern works of fiction. We doubt if Haggard realized how powerful his work was in occult suggestions. A Theosophical friend recently declared to the writer that this author was undoubt[ed]ly a reincarnation of some ancient mystic, and therefore throughout his brain lingered some latent and inexplicable knowledge which prompted the ideas from which “She” emanated. If this is true the ideas were exhausted in this work, for in no other has Haggard shown himself possessed of much occult knowledge. The horribly fas-
cinating romance of [Robert Louis Stevenson's] "Dr. Jekyll[l] and Mr. Hyde" conveys also an idea of the possibilities in nature. Following these works, which attained unbounded popularity, we have hundreds of novels of an occult or mystic nature, many of them utterly worthless and barren of one valuable idea, others, like Mabel Collins'[s] pure and delightful creations, food for elevated and earnest thought. Mr. Lovell2 has taken an important step in publishing an "Occult Series of Novels" but one which we understand is liberally paying him. The appetite of our age for occultism demands to be satisfied, and while with the mediocrity of people it will result in mere sensationalism, it will lead in many to higher and nobler and bold-er thought; and who can tell what mysteries these braver and abler intellects may not unravel in future ages?

15 March 1890

The superiority of western women in usefulness over their eastern sisters is the subject of frequent remark by those who visit the west for the first time. In the east—especially the Atlantic States—it is still considered a disgrace for young ladies to engage in any kind of regular occupation, and even a married woman loses her social status by engaging in business or following any pursuit which brings her monetary returns. In many and many cases young ladies sit with idly folded arms or listlessly dallying with fancy work, whose sire is at his wits end to supply the necessities for his family. Occasionally driven to obtain money by their own efforts, they engage stealthily in sewing and fancy work for eastern establishments who have discovered their weakness; and they would be greatly mortified if the transaction ever became known, even to their near-

2. New York publisher John W. Lovell mass-produced cheap editions of popular works, many of them pirated, during the 1870s and 1880s, including The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886).
est friends. This is especially true of those young ladies who desire to be known as “moving in the best society.”

*  
*  
*  

What a vast difference between these undesirable damsels and our brave, helpful western girls! Here a woman delights in being useful; a young lady’s highest ambition is to become a bread-winner. And they do. Take Aberdeen for example. There is not a young lady in our society—and we boast an exceptional society, too—who in one way or another is not engaged in some useful and helpful occupation. There is not a married woman of any consequence who does not take pride in being of use in the store, the office or the bank. One reason is, we are engaged in an equal struggle for competence; another that western women have more energy and vitality than those of the east, and another that there is no nonsense or false pride in their constitutions and they cannot brook idleness when they see before them work to be done which is eminently fitted for their hands. Their womanly dignity is not lowered, but exalted; independence renders them the more lovable in the sight of all true men, and the amount of good they accomplish to themselves and others is little short of miraculous. Their bright example stimulates their husbands, brothers and sweethearts to renewed efforts, and their active brains and good judgment are responsible for the success of many a man’s business which without their counsel to direct it would be irretrievably involved in ruin.

*  
*  
*  

So much our western women have accomplished. For this have they gained the respect and admiration of the world. What more may they not accomplish when they have won their recognition to citizenship and are able to advise and act in the more important affairs of the state?

*  
*  
*  

The editor of a Warner paper recently argued against universal suffrage by saying that the women of the New England States had claimed that they did not want to vote. No, they
don't. Neither do they want to do anything else that is useful, helpful or of benefit to themselves and the State. They simply want to be let alone, to sit in their parlors, wear fine clothes, read cheap literature, talk nonsense and be figureheads in "society." The Western woman is different. She has grasped the most difficult question of life and conquered it by her vigorous womanliness. She will grasp and conquer willingly the less difficult matters of state when once the laws have made it her privilege and duty to do so.

5 April 1890

Mrs. Marx-Smith, a Chicago clairvoyant, was in town Thursday, and gave a few "sittings" at a private residence in the evening. The lady is marvelous in many ways. Events past and almost forgotten were recalled by her with vivid truthfulness, and were we to believe that the future as predicted would come to pass, we should shiver with dread and shout with delight. But it won't. We know these mediums of old, and that the reason they are so much more correct in relating past events than in predicting futurity is due to the cleverness and ignorance of the Elementals.

* * *

Scientists have educated the world to the knowledge that no portion of the universe, however infinite[s]imal, is uninhabited. Every bit of wood, every drop of liquid, every grain of sand or portion of rock has its myriads of inhabitants—creatures deriving their origin from and rendering involuntary allegiance to a common Creator. The creatures of the atmosphere, while admittedly exist[e]nt, are less widely known in that they are microscopically and otherwise invisible to ordinary humanity. No student of Nature can conceive that the Creator, in peopling every other portion of the universe, neglected to give the atmosphere its quota of living creatures. These invisible and vapory beings are known as Elementals, and play an important
part in the lives of humanity. They are soulless, but immortal; frequently possessed of extraordinary intelligence, and again remarkably stupid. Some are exceedingly well disposed toward mankind, but the majority are maliciously inclined and desirous of influencing us to evil. The legendary “guardian spirit” [sic] which each human being has, is nothing more or less than an Elemental, and happy is he who is influenced thereby for good and not incited to evil.

* * *

A clairvoyant is a person so constituted that through lapsing into a trance the soul is freed from [its] confines and allowed to roam at will through space. The body, in [its] comatose and unprotected state, is taken possession of by an Elemental, scores of whom eagerly await such an opportunity of embodiment, which is denied them in nature. For they are not disembodied souls, but simply misty beings created to fill their position in the universe, and so are vastly inferior to man. It is a delight to them to be able to use the organs of speech belonging to the body they temporarily inhabit. Having eternal life, they are more or less well posted in regard to the past lives of those who seek the clairvoyant's knowledge, but being possessed of no divine souls they are as ignorant of the future as human beings, and their predictions, given hap-hazard with mischievous [sic] or malicious or well-meaning intent, are therefore absolutely valueless.

They merely answer questions for the sake of communicating with man—a privilege appreciated the more for [its] brief exercise. For the soul, returning from its wanderings, drives the Elemental from the body, of which it resumes possession; the medium awakes from her trance, rubs her eyes, and tells you truthfully that she has no knowledge of what her lips have spoken.

* * *

Not all clairvoyants are acquainted with the above theory, many of them being ignorant and uneducated and confessing their inability to explain the trance state and [its] consequent disclosures. Their power lies simply in the ability to divorce
temporarily body and soul,—an operation of considerable danger. Even the most ignorant are uneasy and fearful before consigning the body to [its] frightful ordeal, and the more intelligent mediums are with difficulty induced to try the experiment at all. The danger lies in the liability of the soul not returning, in which case the Elemental will continue to inhabit the body until death, and the medium is thereafter possessed of a veritable devil. But aside from such a frightful contingency, powerful Elementals frequently obtain undue influence over the body, from which it is made to suffer continually. Viewing the matter in these lights the medium’s lot is almost invariably “not a happy one,” and it is a decided misfortune to be gifted with the variable powers entrusted to them by a capricious and frequently indiscriminating Nature.

Lest some of our readers think the writer over-credulous in the statements he has set forth, we will explain that the theory is one gathered from numerous conversations with mediums of many degrees and nationalities. The wonders of clairvoyance are to us indubitable, and the above argument, while it renders the subject less inexplicable, is not vouched for, nor held up as infallible.

10 May 1890

From time immemorial there have been numerous proverbs floating about the world adjuring poor, suffering humanity to be economical in their daily lives. The facts that to waste is to want, that economy is the sure forerunner of wealth, that the best way to earn a penny is to save it, and that for the extravagant there is no tomorrow, are infused into the minds of our youth to prove a nightmare in maturer years.

We are shown endless and practical examples where rigid economists have built up immense fortunes—and in every instance they go to their graves misers. Life has but one object to them—to amass wealth. They know no happiness; they
despise all comforts. They want to save money in order to grow rich. Not that money means anything to them but an accumulation of riches which they forfeit to grim Death.

If there is a hereafter for these people—a hereafter where no moneys can be hoarded—they are sure to be very miserable in it or to acknowledge that their earthly course was a mistake.

* *

The other day we heard one of our neighbors severely criticized by another because he had oranges upon the breakfast table every morning when his salary was only seventy-five dollars a month. His children are always prettily dressed; his wife goes into society and to entertainments and keeps a servant. He wears good clothes himself and always looks cheerful and well fed. He acknowledges that he never saves a cent. Sometimes, indeed, he is forced to borrow a few dollars. But he always pays his debts and finds opportunities frequently of assisting those less fortunate than himself.

His critic was the wife of a man who earns one hundred and fifty dollars a month. She keeps no servant and has six children. Meat enters their household but once a week—on Sundays; her milk bill is never allowed to exceed a dollar a week, and she was just bemoaning that the times were so hard that she couldn't buy a new dress for the baby, and had twice reproved her next youngest for saying she was hungry and wanted a cookie.

Her husband owns seven building lots in Aberdeen and one business lot on Main street—all earned by denying his family unnecessary clothes, luxuries for the table and amusements, (outside the church sociables) and by making a slave of his wife by obliging her to do the housework and care for a family of children.

* *

Now I ask you, tell me candidly which is the best man of the two? Which will be the gainer when Death calls him to his last account—the man who can say "I have lived", or the man who can say "I have saved"?
Which is the more honest to himself and to the world he lives in—he who regards money as a means to live, or he who lives as a means to save money?

You may say one is extravagant and the other cautious. “A rainy day” will find one in a dilemma and the other prepared.

That is true.

But did you ever see the manly, liberal, generous citizen (not the spendthrift, mind you—we are not considering him at all) come to want?

No; when he needs assistance the world turns out and renders it gladly; he is entitled to it, for in his time he has assisted many. But if the miserly man loses his money or comes to want—as sometimes happens—heaven help him! for no one else will.

This is no defense of extravagance. We simply mean to infer that we have one life to live on earth. Our next life, being a spiritual one, will not be advanced by practices of economy here, as there is nothing to slave or accumulate there.

The good things of life were given us to be used, not disregarded. Be comfortable. It requires less to make some folks comfortable than others. To a laboring man who earns two dollars a day, a cosy little home, a pleasant wife and rosy-cheeked children, a good square meal, a good newspaper and a pipe and tobacco mean comfort and content. He is as rich as Vanderbilt or Astor. He is a happy man, provided he is not imbued so strongly with the wicked vice of “saving” as to lead him to abandon these, his luxuries.

A man whose tastes and education demand greater luxuries, should by all means procure them—provided always he does not exceed his income. This “rainy day” theory is a good one in itself if it does not serve as an excuse for denying yourself comforts.

To get all the meat from the nut of life is the essence of wisdom. To earn contentment is the noblest ambition. The miser is never contented, no matter whether his hoard be a dollar or a million. Therefore, “eat, drink and be merry—for tomorrow you die!”

18 October 1890

When I admit you into this, my inner sanctum, it is in confidence, as your humble friend, and you must not criticize me. I take this opportunity to have a quiet chat with you, and you can't dispute me. This is not the newspaper, it's the man, and if you don't like him you are not obliged to read what he says.

Do you realize that fully two-thirds of the population of the United States are unchurched? It is so. Don't give way to surprise; you know that the churches—numerous as they are, would not accommodate a third of the people if all desired to attend the services on Sunday morning.

As our country progresses, as our population increases, the percentage of church goers is gradually growing less.

*  *

The people are begin[ning]ing to think. While everything else has progressed, the Church alone has been trying to stand still, and hang with a death-grip to medieval or ancient legends. It teaches the same old superstitions, the same blind faith in the traditional bible, the same precepts of salvation and damnation.

And all this while the people have been growing more liberal in thought, more perfect in comprehension. They feel unable to reconcile with their common-sense, their intuition, their heart-emotion, the doctrines and dogmas of the priests. Their reason revolts from the blind and superstitious faith upon which rests the structure of the Christian religion. Fifty years ago there were few Theists, Atheists, Deists, Materialists, Agnostics, Cosmists, Monists or Independent Thinkers. These terms have been called into requisition by the liberal thought of the people. Today each has many followers.

*  *

Is there no remedy? Is there no salvation for that ancient and beautiful religion of Christ which is today tottering on its foundations? Shall the world be given over to Secularism and Free Thought? Is there no Truth so positive that the masses may accept it without a murmur?

*  *

*  *
When the priests acknowledge their fallibility; when they abolish superstition, intolerance and bigotry; when they establish the true relations between God and Christ and Humanity; when they accord justice to Nature and love and mercy to the All-High; when they abhor the thought of a vindictive and revengeful God; when they are able to reconcile reason and religion and fear not to let the people think for themselves, then, and then only will the Church regain its old power and be able to draw to its portals the whole people.

* *

"Well, well," you may say, (if you are a priest), "so long as my church is comfortably filled, so long as my salary is forthcoming, so long as my congregation do not quarrel with my precepts, I need not worry over the decline of Christianity."

Do you realize what a mockery this congregation of yours is? Do you realize that with nine out of every ten it is not devotion or faith that attracts them to the church, but policy and fashion? There is a popular and fallacious belief that a church goer is a good citizen. Therefore, if I wish to sell my wares, if I wish to attract clients, if I wish to obtain subscribers to my latest financial scheme, I go to church. If my wife or daughter wishes to shine in society she also goes to church. The Church is responsible for modern society. We don’t go to hear the sermon; we don’t listen to it; we don’t care about it. We are seen in the sacred edifice and our reputation is safe.

Through the Church you can obtain more prestige on earth than in heaven. Insincere and indifferent men, fashionable and unthinking women; these are your church goers. Where are the others? Where is the intelligence and nobility and self respecting manhood of the people?

Studying science, my friend, for science—not the much-abused and legendary devil—is the enemy of the Church. Science we know to be true.

6 December 1890

When I admit you into this, my inner sanctum, it is in confidence, as your humble friend, and you must not criticize me. I take this opportunity to have
a quiet chat with you, and you can't dispute me. This is not the newspaper, it's the man, and if you don't like him you are not obliged to read what he says.

When Rev. Dr. Keeling of St. Mark's Episcopal Church announced that he would discourse on Spiritualism on last Sunday evening, the general impression was that he was attempting a rather difficult subject for an orthodox minister. But Dr. Keeling knew what he was talking about, and his earnest and well delivered sermon was of intense interest to the vast multitude that thronged his church. If they went there expecting to hear Spiritualism ridiculed and anathematized as a fraud, they were doomed to disappointment. Dr. Keeling has investigated the subject and has had some curious personal experiences, so that when he says he knows that modern spiritual manifestations are true spiritual manifestations there is no one dare gainsay him. He told his listeners of a time when he visited Dr. [Henry] Slade, the famous medium, and conversed through him with a recently deceased friend who displayed a knowledge of their past life that would not admit of its being any delusion.

At the same time he saw a beautiful hand protrude from beneath the table—seemingly flesh and blood, of which he felt and recognized its solidity, after which it melted away into nothing. Dr. Slade being called out of the room, Dr. Keeling at once got under the table to see by what machinery or fraud this manifestation had taken place; but there was no machinery and he could discover no fraud. One of his congregation who visited Slade at the same time had still more remarkable results.

Afterwards, in writing, Dr. Keeling's hand was seized by an invisible power, and compelled to write words which he had never thought of, and sentences very beautiful but which were foreign to his brain. Then the good doctor became frightened. What, he cried, is this wonderful power? Whence did it come?

"Then," says Dr. Keeling, "it came to me like a flash that it was the work of the devil, and at once I saw the cloven hoof! I got on my knees and prayed fervently to my Father to deliver me from such experiences; and since then I have never known or felt them again!"
Here for the first time it occurs to us to challenge the reverend gentleman's assertions. This devil with the cloven hoof has been, we thought, eliminated from the church doctrine. How many of Mr. Keeling's hearers believe today in this cloven-footed devil? Very few, we think, and these only the most trusting and devout orthodox christians.* This class being a minority even amongst church goers, the mass of Dr. Keeling's hearers, those with the liberal ideas of today, are unsatisfied with his explanation of the cause of the phenomena of Spiritualism. The rector grew impressive when he warned his congregation against the evils and dangers of Spiritualism. He said that the universe was peopled with spirits, but that nature had raised up a barrier between mortals and immortals which should not be lightly broken down. It was better to cling to Christianity than to follow the religion of modern Spiritualism, for while there were only here and there a medium who could perform these wonders, the ministers and churches of Christ were accessible to all people. True, perhaps, but still unsatisfactory. For the average man will say: "I may take Dr. Keeling's word for the existence of spiritual manifestations, but when he claims the devil is responsible for them my curiosity is excited, for I do not believe in this devil." Those "two or three mediums here and there," will we venture to say, excite more curiosity among his hearers than the exhortation to shun them can counterbalance. As an example of the superiority of Christianity to Spiritualism Dr. Keeling points to the alms-houses, hospitals and other monuments to the religion of Christ. Modern Spiritualism; that is, the understanding of the science and its acceptation as a religion, dates back but forty-one years. Christianity has had eighteen hundred and fifty odd years more to build up these monuments of charity and humanity. The question is, will Spiritualism do as much for the world during the coming eighteen centuries? or, to put it another way, how many of these monuments existed forty-one years after Christ?

Dr. Keeling's claim that Spiritualism anti-dates [sic] Christ is correct, but the knowledge of the science of Spiritualism—for its followers claim that it is all explained by natural science—is comparatively of recent date.

Spiritualism has had two determined enemies—Science and the Church, both widely opposed, but of equal enmity. But a
few days ago Science publicly acknowledged the truth of Spiritualism and today the Church follows suit.

To those who long to seek the truth, in whatever garb it may be clothed, Spiritualism offers a broad field for investigation. I do not say it is the truth, as Dr. Keeling does; I simply say the theory of spirit return exists, and offers a fascinating study to the agnostic or the scientist. As regards its danger, I do not see what we need fear from communication with our friends on the other side, and it is a natural supposition that our friends would protect us from any enemies of the spirit world who might attempt to injure us. Perhaps Dr. Keeling is right. Perhaps he is wrong. At any rate, it was a timely and interesting discourse, and each of his hearers will form their own opinion of it.

* Dr. Keeling has since informed us that a belief in a personal devil is one of the established doctrines of his Church.

13 December 1890

When I admit you into this, my inner sanctum, it is in confidence, as your humble friend, and you must not criticize me. I take this opportunity to have a quiet chat with you, and you can't dispute me. This is not the newspaper, it's the man, and if you don't like him you are not obliged to read what he says.

Dr. Keeling has surprised me with the following letter:

MR. EDITOR: Permit me to say a few words by way of correction of some points made in your editorial notice last Saturday; I speak of my sermon delivered the previous Sabbath, on the relation of Modern Spiritualism to Christian Faith etc. I remember, of course, that I chanced in the Editor's room on the day of publication, and that you submitted the article in proof-sheet for my inspection and revision; but as I was not there on that business, and happened to be a little pressed for time just then, I did not read each separate sentence of the article as carefully as I should. I am made to say that "I felt the solid flesh and blood of the hand that appeared etc." I did not say that I saw the appearance, but it did not touch me nor I, it. I did not use the words "Religion of Spiritualism etc., for I have never dignified that wide-spread delusion with the title of 'Religion.' The whole bur-
den of my discourse was in proving it to be a delusion of the Evil One. Of course, then, I could not speak of it as the Religion of Modern Spiritualism!

I am also made to speak of my having admitted the "Truth of modern Spiritualism." Not at all! I admitted certain phenomena, but denied the truth pretensions. I admitted communications, appearances, etc., but denied that they are what they are claimed to be.

I distinctly stated that I did not believe it was my deceased friend who was communicating with me but that some one, or something, was seeking to pose as my deceased friend and representing themselves to be thus and so; therein I found the deceit and imposture.

You say that Science has within a few years, acknowledged the truth of Spiritualism and now the Church follows suit. I do not know to what admission of Science you refer, but as far as my reading and observation extends, I think Science disdainfully ignores Spiritualism altogether. But you cannot say from my admission of certain personal experiences that I had in an interview with Slade, that the Church has made any admission. Expressions like these may indicate some adroitness in their employment, but they are certainly indigenous and untrue. It is untrue to say that the "Church" has admitted so and so, simply because some one Proselyte of the Church has had certain personal experiences. The Church has her appointed way of speaking authoritatively and should not be held responsible for the private personal views of her members, outside her dogmatic formulas. It is as though the Postmaster or a United States Senator or Congressman should attend a Spiritual Seance, and proclaim their conviction that the phenomena were extra natural, and then you should write that the United States Government had acknowledged "The Truth of Spiritualism." That would be about as true of the Government as it would be of the Church.

I think the evident purpose of your informant, for you were not present, was to suppress as far as possible, all the qualifying parts of the discourse and wrest the general result to the comfort and support of modern and local Spiritualism. The sermon should have been given literally and entire or not at all.

Yours [T]ruly,

R. J. KEELING.

NOTE: I did not mean, and think I did not express myself, when I asked the Editor to make a note to that effect that merely the Episcopal Church held to the doctrine of the personality of Satan. I meant the Church Catholic in all ages and everywhere. Not that it has been formulated as a doctrine but everywhere implied and inculcated in the language of allusion to Satan and his evil work. The Greek,
Roman, and Anglican Churches—all the great Protestant Churches in Europe and in this country, hold to the doctrine of the Personality of the Evil One. There are individuals who recoil from the doctrine when it is presented; think it too dreadful to be entertained; but they cannot intelligently and competently refute the teachings of Holy Writ, or the position of the Church on that point.

When I had permitted Dr. Keeling to peruse the proofs of the article at his leisure, and had made all the corrections in it which he pointed out, I felt relieved of much of the responsibility of the criticism. However, I will say that I had not one report of his sermon, but many, to guide me in writing the article, and he had previously told me in a private interview of his experience with Slade. I regret any errors that may have crept into the article. Those Spiritualists who attended the lecture say that they considered it a manly, courageous and courteous treatment of the phenomena of Spiritualism. It would not be wise for me to pick up Dr. Keeling's gauntlet and argue the points he mentions, although I may be very well disposed to do so. A newspaper is hardly the place for such a discussion, and as it would inevitably result in the discomfiture of one or the other of us, and as I have the highest regard for the Reverend Doctor and value his friendship, I am going to leave it to the judgement of my readers.

On the evening of the sermon, the Church was filled to overflowing by all sects of Christians and by most of the liberal thinkers of the city. These have discussed the sermon fully since it was delivered, and no comment of mine could change popular opinion regarding it.

20 December 1890

When I admit you into this, my inner sanctum, it is in confidence, as your humble friend, and you must not criticize me. I take this opportunity to have a quiet chat with you, and you can't dispute me. This is not the newspaper, it's the man, and if you don't like him you are not obliged to read what he says.
My Dear Sir:

You have fully and frankly published my communication in your issue of the 13th, and I thank you for it. You say well, it is better that the discussion should not be prolonged in the column of a newspaper on such a topic, and I should certainly be one of the last to invite publicity of this kind, but a sense of what was imperatively due to myself and people, impelled me to offer my corrections of the first article that appeared in the Pioneer. In your printed statement of my last article, I observe that you have made me seem to deny what I have fully granted before the audience. In the fifteenth line from the top, you print me as follows: "I am made to say that I felt the solid flesh and blood of the hand that appeared etc., but did not say that I saw the appearance etc." My dear sir, either I made a most egregious mistake or the printer did, in punctuation. If you will place a semicolon after the word that, and italicize it, you will see how different it will read, and will render clear what I meant to say: "I am made to say that I felt the solid flesh and blood of the hand that appeared etc. I did not say that; I saw the appearance, etc., but it did not touch me, nor I, it. You will see by this rendering that I fully admit now and print all that I admitted before the audience. With this correction, I am entirely satisfied with your publication of my rejoinder, and heartily reciprocate your kind feelings and sentiments as a personal friend. I think as an Editor you are just and fair, and I honor a man who prefers to think and speak his own views giving freedom to others to do the same. In the twelfth and fourteenth lines from the bottom of last Saturday's column, occur the words indigenous and proselyte which should read, disingenious and Presbyter.

R. J. KEELING
St. Mark's Parish.
Dec. 15th, 1890.

The good Doctor is very anxious that his position should be thoroughly understood, and we are sorry that his omission of the mark of punctuation caused the wording to apparently contradict his meaning.

The compositor cannot be blamed for a literal reproduction of Dr. Keeling's letter, but we think few readers misunderstood his meaning.

We regret that Dr. Keeling's position as Rector of an orthodox Church will not allow him to expatiate more fully upon the phenomena of Spiritualism, or to state his individual views quite as clearly as he would perhaps like. At present he can
scar[cl]ely preach for or against the interesting and mysterious doctrines of Spiritualism; but still he may find some consolation by referring to his Bible, and finding the solution of the problem in Acts V, the 38th and 39th verses.
Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.