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MESSENGER

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The S. Stephen's College Messenger.

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VOL. IV.

ANNANDALE, N. Y., APRIL, 1898.

NO. 8.

John Ruskin as a Moral Philosopher.

FEW men ever attain distinction in more than one department of human activity, but now and then some man, gifted and versatile, rises above his fellows and wins for himself this distinction. The versatility of Michael Angelo, painter, sculptor and architect, is well known, and several of the pre-Raphaelite painters—notably Dante Gabriel Rossetti—have attained a considerable reputation in the field of literature; but John Ruskin has made himself a reputation as an art critic, poet, sociologist, economist and moral philosopher. True, his preëminence as an art critic has somewhat overshadowed his other work; but still he claims our respectful attention as a teacher of moral truths, not, indeed, inspired nor infallible, but, nevertheless, earnest, thoughtful and sincere.

His remarkably forceful style of writing attracts our attention so strongly, that at times he almost compels our assent to his propositions by the force of his rhetoric, and notwithstanding his deep conviction of the wrongness of modern moral standards, he is a thoroughgoing optimist, who not only confidently hopes for the ultimate triumph of right, but sometimes shows us good where we least expected to find it, as "Every great evil brings some good in its backward eddies."

When the exaggerated ideas concerning independence which the French Revolution had inculcated were still dominant among a large part of the English nation, he took it upon himself, as a moral philosopher, to teach that *dependence*, and not independence, was the law of life. "Independence you had better cease to talk of, for you are dependent not only upon every act of people whom you never heard of, who are living around you, but on every past act of what has been dust for a thousand years. So, also, does the course of a thousand years to come depend upon the little perishing strength

which is in you." (*Fors*, I, p. 33.) This is dependence with a vengeance; but it is every word true, and we cannot but feel that it is a stronger incentive to right action than all the "be good or you'll be damned" preaching which ever was done. It is not a comfortable feeling to realize that you can't do as you will, or rather that you can't will as you should will; but the thought of *our* responsibility for the future, not only of our individual selves, but of the race, is enough to give strength to the weakest mortal. Again, we are not only to be ourselves dependent, but in our turn we are to have others dependent upon us, even now, at this present. "The true strength of every human soul is to be dependent on as many nobler as it can discern; and to be depended upon by as many inferior as it can reach." (*Eagle's Nest*, p. 54.)

Mr. Ruskin was the first English writer, who taught the duty of cultivating the emotional nature. Some of the later enthusiasts of this cult have carried it to ridiculous extremes, as the young French author—a Parnassian, by the way—who recently exclaimed, "Anything, even life itself, for a new sensation!" Of course, Mr. Ruskin taught no such foolishness as this; but he did teach a right valuation of sensation. "He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace." (*Sesame and Lilies*, p. 67.) "The ennobling difference between one man and another—between one animal and other—is precisely in this, that one feels more than another. If we were sponges, perhaps sensation might not be easily got for us; for if we were earth-worms, liable at every instance to be cut in two by the spade, perhaps too much sensation might not be good for us." The acme of existence is not a Buddha-like calm and general numbing of sensation. That is not the end for which man's exquisite nervous system was developed, and, consequently, the ascetics of all ages have been fundamentally wrong. The sensations are to be given right direction, and to be exercised and indulged in accordance with certain biological laws. You need not expect an ape, or a Zulu, to appreciate the music of Wagner or Chopin; but when a man has once developed the nervous sensibility to appreciate such music, he is more apt to win hell than heaven by denying himself that refined and ennobling sensation, and the same is true of other sensations when, because of nervous development, the desire for these sensations has become a natural appetite. Temperance, and not total abstinence, is the dictate of reason and common sense.

Another subject to which Mr. Ruskin has given some attention is still a live issue. Capital punishment seems to be going out of fashion; but Mr. Ruskin deplores the fact. "I believe it to be quite one of the crowning wickednesses of this age that we have starved and stunted our faculty of indignation, and neither desire nor dare to punish crimes justly." (*Lectures on Art*, p. 60.) And again, "Your modern conscience will not incur the responsibility of shortening the hourly more guilty life of a single rogue; but will

contentedly fire a salvo of mitrailleuses into a regiment of honest men—leaving Providence to guide the shot." (*Fors*, II, p. 211.) Put in this way capital punishment does not seem entirely unjust, notwithstanding the rant of prison reformers and prison chaplins; but turn back a few pages and read his denouncement of the opponents of capital punishment. "It is only rogues who have a violent objection to being hanged, and only abettors of rogues who desire anything else for them. Honest men don't in the least mind being hanged occasionally by mistake, so only the general principle of the gallows be justly maintained; and they have the pleasure of knowing that the world they leave is positively minded to cleanse itself of the human vermin with which they have been classed by mistake. The contrary movement—so vigorously progressive in these modern days—has its root in a gradually increasing conviction on the part of the English nation that they are *all* vermin. 'Worms' is the orthodox Evangelical expression." (*Fors*, II, p. 100.) The two-fold purpose of judicial punishment seems to have been almost forgotten. It is not only to make the criminal suffer for his wrongdoing—even to the extent of paying the death penalty, perhaps—but to strike terror into other persons having the same criminal instincts. Life imprisonment is the refinement of cruelty; and yet, until experienced, it does not seem to be anything very terrible to the born criminal, and, consequently, the punishment fails of its secondary purpose, while it becomes more cruel than the tortures of the Inquisition.

There are several moral questions which are almost inseparably connected with capital punishment. First, the object of punishment in general, and capital punishment in particular; and secondly, the moral effect of such punishments upon the community at large. The latter is probably the most important for the moralist; for the modern science of criminology seems to leave us only two alternative courses to pursue with criminals. Either colonize them at hard labor, as Russia does, or execute them. Perhaps it is the better, in the long run, to adopt the first course, and make them useful to the community while they expiate their crimes by their suffering. A great deal of misspent sympathy has been bestowed upon Russian convicts by Americans of late years, and it is only lately that the public in this country has understood the situation in Siberia. A Nihilist, who sought to fill his pockets by putting American nerves through a set of gymnastics, is largely responsible for the misunderstanding; but the American love of humbug must come in for its share. We rather pride ourselves on our humanity, as a nation, and not infrequently make ourselves a laughing-stock thereby.

From the earliest times the province of conscience has been a favorite theme with moral philosophers. Some of these have seemed to imagine, that every human being was provided with a kind of compass attachment by which he was enabled to distinguish right from wrong, as one may distinguish

north from south by the mariner's compass; but Mr. Ruskin seems to incline to the more modern view, that conscience has a mental basis, and that the mental training and mental caliber, so to speak, go to determine the personal standards of right and wrong. In other words, right and wrong are relative terms. From this proposition it is only a step to defining wrong as the lesser good. In *Fors* he makes some remarks on this subject, which all of us may well take to heart. "I must do what I think right." How often is this sentence uttered and acted on—bravely—nobly—innocently; but, always—because of its egotism—erringly. You must not do what you think right, but, whether you or anybody think or don't think it, what is right.

"I must act according to the dictates of my own conscience."

"By no means, my conscientious friend, unless you are quite sure that yours is not the conscience of an ass."

The study of moral questions is always interesting and profitable, and collegians owe it to themselves to devote some attention to the subject. True, there is always a text-book of morals and a professor of moral philosophy in every college; but the student who simply does the routine class-room work is too apt to get into the habit of thinking in a set of pigeon-holes. He takes the ready-made opinions of the author of the text-book, and absorbs a certain number of the personal notions of the professor; and, as a result, he loses his personality entirely, whereas he should have developed his own philosophy of right and wrong, finding the reason of the rightness and wrongness in his own mind. Very probably he will finally differ from the text-book and the professor only in unimportant details; but, whatever the result, he needs the mental discipline of thinking out these things for himself. He should read a variety of authors, representing as many different schools of thought as possible, and then, having gathered the material, should work it over and build his own moral fortress. Very likely it will be a card castle. Most of the work and thought of young men is about that substantial; but it is good practice, and the results are sure to be advantageous.

Watson Bartemus Selvage, '98.

A Scene from a Comedy Entitled "Under Currents."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MISS KITTY O'NEIL, *telegraph operator at Hanksman's Station.*

MR. JACK HOLLERAN, *one of the crew of train 13 on the Q. & R. R. R.*

JENNIE, *operator at the Bend,* } *Both represented by the Telegraph Instru-*
SMITH, *a dispatcher,* } *ment.*

PLACE. *Telegraph office at Hankman's.*

TIME. *The interval required for the engine of No. 13 to "water" from the tank at the station.*

Curtain rising discovers Miss Kitty sitting at her little table upon which is the telegraph instrument.

Miss Kitty. It's about time for No. 13 to be along. I wonder if Mr. Jack Holleran will favor me with a call to-day. I treated him so badly yesterday, while he was here, that I could hardly blame him if he never appeared again. But it really was not my fault; I did not dare shut off the wire and it did seem as if "everybody and his wife" wanted Hankmans when Jack and I had only five minutes together. If he could only understand its abominable "ticks" I would not seem such an utter fool to him and he might see that I really do care for him a great deal; even if my part of the conversation appears at times like the ramblings of a maniac.

There's the whistle now! (*To the instrument.*) Oh if I could only choke you off for the next five minutes I'd give up my next holiday and listen to you all day.

Jenny (through the instrument). Is No. 13 on time? Tell Williams to watch for signal at Rock Creek to-day. And say, Kitty, while I have the wire, are you coming down to the Bend next Saturday night? The Pleasure Club is going to give a dance. You're coming aren't you?

Jack Holleran (who has entered while the instrument has been ticking, and not waiting for it to cease). Good morning, Miss Kitty! I hope you are glad to see me.

Kitty (confused, with her hand on the key, speaks aloud the answer she intends for Jennie at the Bend). No, I can't say that I am. You see, father—(*aside*) oh, what have I said?—Yes, yes, of course Jack—I mean Mr. Holleran—really I'm awfully glad you came. I was afraid—

Jack. Why, Kitty!—please let me call you that—how could you think, even for a moment, that I would not come? Don't you know that this is the happiest part of the day for me?

Smith (through the instrument, simultaneously). Miss O'Neil will you please wire me whether you noticed who was running Number 7 this morning.

Kitty (her eyes toward Jack but her hand and mind on the instrument). Really, I did not notice. My attention is usually engaged upon other things than trainmen. (*Then perceiving Jack's crest-fallen look.*) Why what is the matter Mr. — Jack? You look as if you wish you had not come.

Jack. Well I wish I could understand you! Kitty you treat me mean; honest, you do. I believe if I should get down on my knees here and tell you that I love you better than anything else, you'd look far away over my head, and then say something I couldn't make out. I ain't fooling, Kitty. Can't you give me some encouragement?

Jennie (through the instrument, before he finishes). I'm as lonely as can be, Kitty; and I've something to tell you; let's talk.

Kitty (to Jenny, but aloud). No, I'm too busy now.

Jack. But, Kitty, I've only a minute or two more to be with you; and then not again until to-morrow. Say you love me; I know you do.

Jennie (through the instrument). O, nonsense! You can if you want to. You're not busy.

Kitty (abstractedly). Yes, truly. I'd like to; but not now. Keep still a little while.

Jack. But, my dear girl, you're talking foolishly. You know I can't wait even a little while. You must tell me right away. I'll never have the heart to come here again if you can't give me some satisfaction to-day. Do you love me, or don't you?

Smith (through the instrument). Hankman's Station. Hold Number 21. Tell Brooks to send flagman back. Wire the Bend to hold 19. Has 13 left the switch?

Kitty (bewilderedly). No.

(The train whistles. Exit Jack, hastily. Kitty's tears fall with the curtain.)

Q.

What Constitutes a Good Citizen?

THERE have been so many books written, dealing with this subject in all its phases, and so thoughtfully expressed that it would not only be useless but presumptuous in us to treat it other than in a most general way.

The relations of individual to state, and state to the individual, have time out of mind been questions of all absorbing interest to mankind. Especially is this so in the more enlightened periods.

Old Greek civilization devoted much of its time to defining these relations, but it remained for her ancient rival Rome with her magnificent statehood, her government and her law courts with their wonderful systems, to bring these relations to such a state of perfection, that their influence has been felt throughout all succeeding ages. Triumphantly has she tintured the judicial courts of every enlightened nation of the present day, and is the foundation of every good system of government. Yet, the question of good citizenship was a live one even in that remote period. The Roman citizen was bound to the state, body and, practically, soul. The individual existed only for the good and welfare of the state. The sum and substance of the idea of a good citizen in those sturdy days is contained in that old and oft-quoted line in the odes of Horace:

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."

While every good system of government is based on Roman forms, we do not for one instant wish to state that it ends there. On the contrary the Roman laws are like the strong but unsightly foundations whereon is reared the beautiful structure of true citizenship which is especially noted in the

governments of England and the United States. Well, then, may the philosophers and wise men of our day say: "That if these present forms of government fail the world must necessarily come to an end as there are no better." There is a justifiable pride in this utterance, but there is also an element of fear;—fear lest the present almost perfect form of government will be placed in the hands of persons who are unqualified to wield the axes of state. Thus we are brought face to face with that intensely interesting question of good citizenship, without which no nation or government can hope to exist until the judgment day. Rome fell, of whom it was said with a pride which equals that of any nation of the present day, "that the Imperial City was the Keystone in the arch of the world and when it crumbled the world would be utterly destroyed."

In marked contrast to Rome's system, citizenship to-day affirms that the individual does not exist for the state, but the state for the individual. This is an improvement, the vastness of which we can scarcely realize; with this great change comes newer and heavier responsibilities. If we would become good citizens, it is necessary for us to rise up like men, and assume these responsibilities. We must seek to keep the state pure, free from the corrupting influences of party politics, pure in the higher, nobler sense. The state exists for the individual, therefore the individual should seek to make the state a thing of surpassing greatness, intellectually, morally, physically, and last, but not least of all, spiritually. The good citizen is the man who loves right and hates wrong; is willing to suffer for the cause of right if necessary, and who loves the state with that great love which counts it no hardship to die for it. The Roman had this feeling and it was most admirable because he was a mere slave of the state, but we, we are free! The state exists for us; is *our* slave and performs *our* will. Oh, let that will then, be employed by us for the right, and for the permanent welfare of the whole citizen body which composes the state. Thus will we merit the title of good citizens.

We are living in an age which will try men's souls. We are at war with another great nation—a nation which is supported largely by the strength and traditions of a magnificent past. Why are we at war with this nation? The answer is simple but sure, because the Spanish people have violated nearly every law of good citizenship, by oppression, treachery, cruelty and vice, until to-day they are as whited sepulchres fair to look upon, but within are filled with the skeletons of murdered souls! On the other hand we are daily receiving many evidences that good citizenship is not yet dead in our own country, by the vast number of men who are willing to lay down their lives for the oppressed, and for the maintenance of the honor of our glorious citizen body.

Good citizenship seems to be very ripe at the present time, but let us remember that ripeness is but the beginning of decay. Many books have been

written on good citizenship, and all are permeated with the idea of purity of thought and deed on the part of the voter—the citizen. On this we build the hopes of the permanency of our state. The rising generation should realize that the future is in a great measure in its hands and it can make itself a blessing, or a disgrace to all succeeding generations. We may not all have the same, or equal positions in life, but we can all do our duty faithfully. The great need of the present age is universal brotherhood.

..... "A time like this demands
Strong minds great hearts, true faith
And ready hands"

Very often we see men who are living within the letter of the law, and yet from their actions we are sure they are not good citizens. This is so evident that we may take it as an axiom that "A man may pride himself on being a law abiding citizen and yet not be a good citizen." That good citizens vote for war is not by reason of their love of contention and strife, but as a means of effecting a lasting peace which is the final hope of man. What a vision presents itself to our enraptured gaze.

The preceeding ages have been truly glorious, but who can tell of the glories of the future, ever and anon through the rifts in the dark clouds of the future we catch glimpses of the glorious Sun of Peace diffusing its warm rays as a benediction on the earth; giving life, prosperity and wisdom to the inhabitants, and moulding to perfection a world as the fitting habitation of the Great, Eternal Ruler of the Universe and the good citizen.

Linden Harris White, 1900.

ANNANDALE VERSE.

SONNET—LIFE'S CASTLES.

ONE day when I was strolling 'long the beach,
Whiling away the hours, as one who craves
A rest; admiring the incoming waves,
I saw a group of children; busy each
Constructing a great castle, soon to reach
Completion. Driveways, arches, halls were made;
But then a billow huge, in might arrayed,
Swept all away. A truth this seems to teach.
We in this life are often wont to boast
Of plans, not only beautiful, but strong;
Till suddenly some ill, and then a host
Of happenings adverse around us throng;
And when the worst is o'er—awaking—mad—
We find ourselves bereft of all we had.

Alfred Reed Hill, '01.

THESE WITHERED FLOWERS.

A RONDEAU.

(From one of E.'s letters.)

THESE withered flowers a garden sear
Brought forth mid weeds and brambles drear—
These thoughts of mine which are for you—
I hold them in my hands, and view
Their drooped leaves quivering as with fear.

I would refresh them, could each tear
Of mine a shriveled petal rear—
My bitter tears! They cannot dew
These withered flowers.

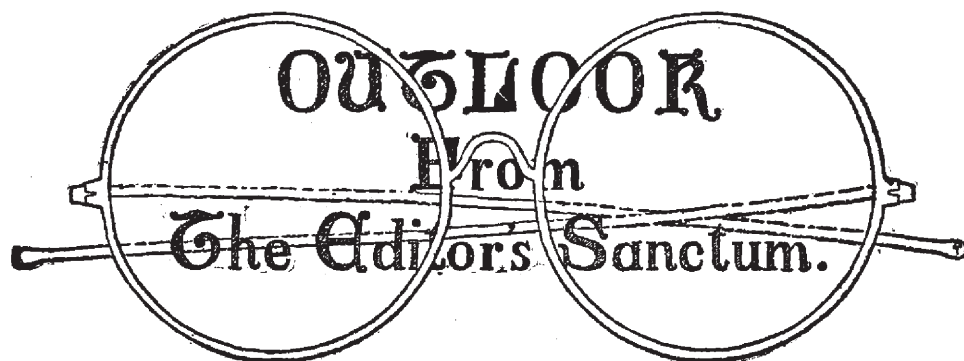
But when they reach thee, hold them near
Thy heart. Thy sympathy may cheer—
A cup of water to renew
Their life—or, with their faded hue,
To you, to you may still be dear,
These withered flowers.

Herbert Seymour Hastings, '98.

IN SEASON.

THE gay little wind-flowers are shaking their heads;
And white folded blood-roots are leaving their beds;
Bright dandelion buttons are everywhere showing,
While shad-bush its petals like snow-flakes is throwing.
Oh, dear Mother Nature, with beautiful face,
So kindly upon us, so beaming with grace,
We come to thy arms and we creep to thy breast;
Oh, give us, dear Mother, thy spirit of rest:
That spirit of patience to trustfully wait
For God's smile of comfort, no matter how late.

H., '98.



IT is rather remarkable how time and circumstance give force to what we read; and just at this juncture Kipling's "Song of the English" (in "Seven Seas") has acquired a new meaning. Don Carlos, the Spanish pretender, seems to have put the facts of the Cuban situation into a nutshell when he remarked, that it was part of the irrepressible struggle between the Anglo-Saxon and Latin Races. Isn't it about time that our patriotism should out-grow national boundaries and that both Americans and Englishmen should press forward to the realization of race patriotism?

There has been a "literary" side to the Spanish-American trouble, and after writing some rather weak and sentimental verses, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps has appealed to her countrymen (and country-women) to keep the peace, regardless of national honor, the interests of our commerce or the sufferings of the Cubans. It is just such a silly, canting, cowardly whine as we should expect from the author of "Gates Ajar," just what we should expect of a woman who could imagine herself going to heaven and lying on a bed of mignonette.

THE MESSENGER thinks that some uniform method of crediting quotations from exchanges should be devised by the college press. Would it not be well to give the name of the magazine when quoting directly, and simply credit as "exchange" when quoting from another paper which has in turn quoted it from its original source? Another practical reform which might be instituted by some of our contemporaries would be to devise some method of wrapping their magazines, so that an individual of ordinary ingenuity might separate them from their wrapper without tearing them into more than twelve or fifteen pieces. Several of our exchanges come so tightly rolled, and so thoroughly glued, that a surgical operation conducted on scientific principles is necessary if we wish to read them afterwards.

By the recent changes in the Constitution of the MESSENGER, there are now two assistants to the Business Manager, one of whom will be known as

the Advertising Agent and the other as Subscription Agent. The Editorial Staff will also be increased by a fifth editor who will be elected by the Board of Editors and who will rank according to his class standing. This latter enactment will not go into effect till June.

Notes and Comments.

- Trinity Term opened Monday night, April 18.
- The Freshmen's Algebra is still awaiting decent burial.
- On Wednesday, April 20, Dr. Olssen delivered a lecture on the X-rays before the Junior Class.
- The $\Sigma. A. E.$ Lodge was formally opened Friday night, April 22, with impressive ceremonies.
- The Rev. George B. Hopson, M.A., D.D., Professor of Latin, spent the Easter Recess in Baltimore, Md.
- Visitors: Rev. George D. Silliman, M.A., D.D., '67; Rev. D. Russ Judd, B.A., '90; Homer A. Flint, B.A., '97; Arthur More, ex-'99.
- Prof. Saunders resumed his lectures on experimental chemistry immediately on the re-opening of college, and will give two a week until the course is completed.
- The following officers have been elected by the Freshman Class for the Trinity Term: Heady, Pres.; Argus, Vice-Pres.; Fowler, Sec'y; Morang, Treas.; Graham, Historian.
- The MESSENGER exchanges are now placed in the Hoffman Library, and henceforth will be kept on file by the librarians. In a few years they will form a valuable addition to the library.
- Elections: Business Manager Foot-ball Team, Porter, '99; Marshall, Champlin, '99; Business Manager MESSENGER, Kellemen, '99; Subscription Agent, Anderson, '01; Advertising Agent, Treder, '01.
- A little blaze in the K. T. X. room caused much smoke and excitement one day last week. The nigger-heavenites, excited and scared by the smoke, began tossing their personal effects out of the windows. One individual broke a mirror by throwing it out of a window, and tore a mattress by dragging it down stairs. If anybody finds a letter beginning "My sweetest darling," he will confer a great favor on a person who does not wish his name published, by leaving same on the chapel steps some night at nine o'clock.

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