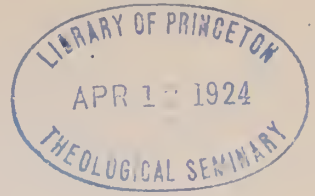

THE

PRINCETON REVIEW.

By Whom, all things; for Whom, all things.

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THE CONCORD SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY.

ALL people interested in the state of opinion know that there met at Concord, in the middle of July last, a company of very high-souled men and women who held high converse with one another, and with high theories, till the middle of August. I was politely asked to join them, albeit they knew I was not one of them. With great delicacy of feeling they proposed to me a theme in which it was supposed I would be specially interested, the Scottish philosophy, in which I was reared and to which I adhere, not, however, in all its doctrines, but simply in its method, which discovers truths prior in their nature to the induction which discovers them, and which indeed could not discover them unless they were already there in the mind. I regarded it at the time, and still regard it, as a misfortune to me that, owing to an old standing obligation to go elsewhere, I was not able to accept their invitation.

Those who met were drawn together by a common faith and sentiment not easily defined (the school is not much inclined to lay restraints on itself by definition), yet noticeable by all. They constitute a school quite as much so as the ancient Pythagoreans, the Platonists, and Neoplatonists, with whom they have certain interesting affinities. They believe in mind as infinitely higher than matter,—some of them believe in matter simply as a veil thrown over mind. They are sure that in mind there is vastly more than sense, than sight or touch or hearing. Some of them would burst the bounds of space and time, which do so hem us in, and go out into the eternal, the infinite, the absolute. They are seeking to mount to a sphere far above the mundane, and if they do not rise to the sky, which is apt to become ever more remote as we ascend, they at least, as in a balloon, reach

the clouds, whence, as the traveller in the Alps, they gain grand views of the heavens above them and lovely views of the green vales below them.

They are all aspiring after an excellence which they do not find in the busy pursuits and attractive fashions of the world; nor even in its literature and its science, in its newspapers and its novels, which seem to them to have too much of the clay of the earth sticking to them, and to be all too much held down by terrestrial gravity. They are longing and seeking for something higher and better for themselves and for the community. All of them are utterly opposed to materialism under every form. A number are driven to Concord under the influence of a recoiling wave opposed to the whole secular spirit of the age. They feel that even physical science, as the mere co-ordination of material and ever-changing objects, cannot satisfy the cravings of the soul. Most of them adopt the Christian religion on the same ground as many of the Platonists did in the second century, as in consonance with their lofty philosophic ideas. Others rather turn away from it as the Neoplatonists in Alexandria did, because (as shown so graphically in Kingsley's "Hypatia") it is too definite in its precepts and statements of fact and doctrine. Some of them, in accepting it, adapt it to their tastes and make it a cloud lowered from heaven to earth, and embracing in it Buddhism and all religions with their acknowledged errors because containing so much truth. A few of them are disposed to believe in spiritual media and rope-tying—just as their prototypes among the Alexandrian Neoplatonists did in magic and necromancy, as bringing heaven into close connection with earth.

Most appropriately the association met at Concord. The place, with its three thousand dwellers, is in the level country as it swells towards the mountain country to which it looks up. It is a characteristic New England village, only it has been associated with more men and women of real genius than any like place in America: with Hawthorne and his weird fancies; with Margaret Fuller[1] and her enthusiastic and fascinating talks;

[1] Julia Ward Howe tells us "Margaret Fuller once said that she accepted the universe, and Carlyle laughed heartily on hearing it, and said, 'I think she'd better.'"

with Thoreau and his wild-bird wood-notes; with Ripley and his high Coleridgean criticisms. Alcott and Emerson, thank God, are still spared to gather their pebbles from the plains and to scatter them ungrudgingly. These two may be regarded as the true fathers and founders of the school, and their children are proud of them. They were not able to take a very prominent part at the meetings, but they looked in upon them (Alcott occasionally spoke with his old glow), and were welcomed with profound respect and warm affection, as well they might be. From this place Mr. Alcott years ago stretched out his arms to embrace Buddha and all Asia in his wide religious creed. It is understood that latterly he has lost all partiality for bald Unitarianism, and has returned to the faith of the Episcopal Church. Here Emerson has strung his lovely pearls often on slender strings and woven them into a rich necklace. The meeting was honored with the presence of Mr. Stedman, who composed the poem "Corda Concordia" (a considerably labored composition), than whom we have not a finer critic of high poetry in this country. Mr. Sanborn, besides reading some literary papers, was the instrument of bringing together the men and women of kindred tastes from various States of the Union. The association has had a most important accession to it by the removal of Dr. Harris from St. Louis to Concord. If I mistake not, he will henceforth be the leader of the sect. It is expected that he will be the philosopher of the school, and give it organization and system; and if so, it will become more philosophical and less poetical, and possibly thereby less attractive in the eyes of some who love to wander in the wayless and to gaze on gilded clouds.

It might be curious, and very instructive withal, to have laid bare to us the past experience in thought and belief and feeling of those who met together and spoke and listened. But we have no means of ascertaining this, no right to pry into it. Some of the older men, we know, were loosened from the old faith and trained in another faith by Channing, who had such influence in Boston an age ago. Most appropriately an evening was devoted to talk of his merits, and the conference was led by Mr. Hazard. The school of Channing (in this respect, but in no other, like the school of Hegel) has divided into three

streams. There is the Middle division, faithfully keeping to the position of Channing himself. They are a small body of men and women now venerable from age, dreadfully alarmed about the wild course which some of their sons are pursuing, and hesitating whether they should not go over with them to Dr. Brooks's church to save them from utter scepticism. It is clear that the young generation will not stay where Channing stayed, because they see that while he professed to follow the Scriptures, he yet preached doctrines palpably inconsistent with them. The party of the Left are more numerous and active. They see that Unitarianism cannot be drawn from the Scriptures, of which they have let go their hold, and are descending into the barest negations of all belief, and running a risk of sliding into agnosticism and even materialism; the ministers among them seeking to interest and keep up their congregations by preaching on the topics of the times and not on those of eternity. Dr. Frothingham, late of New York, was much troubled with them, and has given us a graphic description of them and of his disgust with them; and has ended with retiring from the active ministry, as not knowing what to believe. The Channingites of the Right are of a higher class. Channing himself was a man of high moral tone, but in no special sense a philosopher; and this class of his followers feel their need of a deeper foundation to rest on, and came in considerable force to Concord in search of it. They feel that they need something more soul-satisfying than Unitarianism, and yet are not disposed to go back to the old orthodoxy. Some of them are striving hard to believe that they have found stable rest in Plato, in Kant, or in Hegel.

It is interesting to find it stated that at the meetings there was a larger number of females—all well educated—than of men. It is also a significant fact that a considerable number of national teachers did thus spend their weeks of vacation, seeking profit as well as pleasure. It is clear that there are in the country inquiring minds seeking for something higher than the business and fashions of the world can give them, than even the science of the day can furnish, or its newspaper literature or its state school lessons. I am not sure that these wishes and hopes were fully gratified; whether the food dispensed has been found

to be as solid and nourishing in the mastication and digestion as in the feeding upon it. Some, I know, felt that the philosophy taught was too impersonal, and not sufficiently practical to meet the wants of men, women, and children in a world of struggle and temptation, of suffering and of sin.

The meeting at Concord last summer is worthy of being carefully noted by thinking minds. It is true that the country as a whole paid little attention to it. The public press, so far as they observed it, did so with a leer, as if not quite sure whether they should admire it or amuse themselves with it. But then it is true that the world has never noticed at the time the occurrences which have afterwards produced such mighty results; the seed lying in the ground is not observed till it springs up simultaneously in the whole field. It may be doubted whether, when the history of 1881 comes to be written by some future Bancroft, the meeting at Concord will have even a passing notice. The historian will dilate on the assassination of Garfield and the madness feigned and real of Guiteau, on the sulks of Conkling, and will settle it for us whether Grant is even now counselling with the President. But he will have little to tell us of the progress made by the grand question of civil reform—the only measure fitted to save us from the tricks of miserable politicians—and still less of the signs of the deeper thoughts of the country as not just accomplished but indicated at the Concord meeting. That meeting, particularly the success so far of the meeting, has its significance. It was a protest against a clamant evil, the wide-spread tendency towards materialism. It expressed a want to be met and relieved, and a strong desire on the part of a body of sincere people to elevate the faiths of the country. Questions were put that must be answered, and these ultimately more momentous than those discussed in the newspapers and in Congress.

I am of opinion that the influence of the meeting has, upon the whole, been for good. The papers read were of a high order both in thought and expression. The inclination of everything was upwards—sometimes, indeed, only the flight of a kite which will have to come down again when the wind which bore it up has subsided. There was a confessed or implied belief in, and constant appeal to, the highest ideas which the

mind of man can entertain. A high ideal of some kind was before every one. I am prepared to maintain and to prove that every one of the ideas and beliefs to which they were appealing has a place in the mind of man, and has in itself an elevating tendency. Such are the ideas of the true, the good, the beautiful, of the infinite, the lovely, and the perfect. It is good to hold up these before the eyes of the men of the world, of the worshippers of wealth, of the votaries of fashion, and the exclusive cultivators of natural science. They are all realities in the mind, quite as much as the monkey, the cat, the newt, and the lamprey, which our naturalists are studying so carefully, are realities without the mind. The speakers at Concord did not err in seeking to draw attention to these mental realities. But the naturalists who have lately written papers on the animals named have not assumed beforehand what they are, but have inquired diligently into their nature, their structure, their growth and habits, and by the careful observation of facts, carried on for months or years, and by searching experiments verifying the hypotheses or theories previously formed. The great defect of the members of the Concord school is that they assume, adopt, and apply the ideas without any previous scrutiny of them after the maieutic manner of Socrates, or observational induction of them after the method of Bacon.

In reading these papers I often wished that Socrates had appeared among them. Boston, of which Concord is an annex, has often been called, not just *the* modern Athens (Edinburgh is vain enough to claim that title), but *a* modern Athens. It has a distant resemblance to that ancient city. It has had orators and talkers, poets and poetasters, historians and storytellers, journalists and critics, literary societies and cliques. But strange as it may sound, it has never had a Socrates—greatest man in the greatest nation of heathen antiquity—one whose function was to search every kind of wisdom, real or pretended. Had there been such a one in Boston, he would certainly have been attracted to Concord last summer. We can picture him appearing there after having travelled the distance on foot, —certainly I would have travelled a thousand miles on foot to witness the scene. I see him with my mind's eye at this moment, " with that Silenic physiognomy, with that grotesque

manner, with that indomitable resolution, with that captivating voice, with that homely humor, with that solemn earnestness, with that siege of questions." "Oh," says Dean Stanley, "for one hour of Socrates! Oh for one hour of that voice which should by its searching cross-examination make men see what they knew and what they did not know; what they meant and what they only thought they meant; what they believed in truth and what they only believed in name; wherein they agreed and wherein they differed!"

Had he appeared, he would certainly have been welcomed by all, even by the few in secret dread of his cross-questioning. In suasive conversational tone he would have begun simply and innocently by stating that for himself he knew nothing, but learning that so many wise men had met he had come seeking instruction. He might then have taken up the subject discussed by the paper just read, and said how much he had been gratified with it. Having thus gained favorable ears, he would now put questions so easy that they would at once be answered. As I am not that Socrates, I am not able to give his questionings. The subject might be the pre-existence of the soul and the idea in it, as discussed in the Platonic papers by Dr. Jones, or the Hegelian reality, opposed to the Kantian formality, as propounded by Prof. Harris. His avowed object would be by the use of example and logical division to lead them to define what they evidently understood so thoroughly and were talking of so glibly. "It is not that. What then is it? I am not to be satisfied with a statement about the thing; I must know what the *τὸ ὄν*, the very thing, is." In order to find this he would now approach the subject from a different point, and put another set of questions which would be answered as readily as the previous ones. Not till he had proceeded a certain length in this his skilled dialectical process would he bring out his terrible elenchos or principle of contradiction got from Zeno, and crush as in a vise the double set of answers, showing that they contradicted each other—this amid the visible mortification of some and the gratified tittering of others. Having thus fulfilled one of the ends of his life in exposing the show of pretended wisdom, we can conceive him setting off to Boston to wait the opening of Harvard College, there to have the opportunity to play the

fire of his dialectics on students and even professors, and question them as to the consistency of their philosophy and the worth of their boasted science. Quite as likely when half way he would have stopped and stood still for hours, being arrested by his daimonion, and then returned to Concord to have another gymnastic contest, ending in the dissipation of error, if not in the establishment of truth.

If Socrates was the wisest man in old Athens—so declared by the oracle—Bacon may be regarded as about the wisest guide in modern times. I cannot find that the philosophers of Concord are following the method, or that they have drunk into the spirit, of the father of induction. They feel the slow method of observation to be tedious and irksome to their ardent nature. They seize and cling to what recommends itself at once to their higher nature, intellectual and moral, and would mount to the supreme truth at once. They are unwilling to start with what Bacon insists we should begin with in all research, "the necessary rejections and exclusions," with what Whewell recommends as "The Decomposition of Facts;" that is, to fix on the precise thing to be examined, and put the irrelevant matter out of the way. The whole school are apt to mix up things which should be carefully separated, and to affirm of the whole what is true only of a part. They are especially averse to the slow and laborious method recommended by Bacon of collecting facts external and internal (for there are internal facts as well as external), of collating and co-ordinating them, and thus rising, not *per saltum* but *gradatim*, from particulars to lower laws or axioms (as Bacon calls them), thence to middle, and only then to the highest of all, and to causes and forms.

I hold that the grand ideas which they fondle and cherish and hold forth to the view of the world are all genuine; that they are all in the mind of man, and are ever coming forth into actual exercise in our inward experience. The business of the true philosopher should be to examine them carefully, to determine their exact nature and objective validity. They are entitled to use them only so far as they have done so. But by assuming them at once, and applying them without induction and without analysis or criticism, they mingle error with the truth, and often make the truth bear up the error. They are ever

forming rapid generalizations upon loose resemblances, which cannot be carried out legitimately; and in applying them they are ever falling into serious mistakes. Hence the common objection taken to them that they are mystical, which may be described as seeing everything in a mist. By gazing intently upon certain truths they have cast a halo around them, created by the eye that looks to them. Those who are religiously inclined among them claim to discover truth by divination, and often mistake their own fancies for the inspiration of heaven.

I regret much that I have not been able to obtain a full report of the proceedings of the Concord meeting. I applied to the Boston *Traveller*, which gave an account of the proceedings from day to day, but there were gaps in the numbers sent me, and I cannot give and do not pretend to give an epitome of the papers read.[1] I must satisfy myself with bringing out the characteristics of the school.

I may begin with Dr. Jones. He is a genuine and representative member of the school. I have taken a fancy for him: he has so much personality, he is so unlike his age, so unlike his country. He is a native of Virginia, but is now settled in Illinois. Here he established some twenty years ago the "Plato Club of Jacksonville." It opened with him and two or three ladies to whom he read a dialogue of Plato. "It has had," says a writer in *The Platonist*, "vicissitudes of interruption and resurrection. Meeting originally at various residences, it at length found a permanent home in the parlors of Mrs. J. O. King, who has been a member from the first. A few years ago the meetings were transferred to the rooms of the sister of Mrs. King, Mrs. Eliza Wolcott, who is also one of the original members. Of this society Dr. Jones is the permanent lecturer. It meets every Saturday at 10 A.M. The reader reads Plato ordinarily in the Bohn translation, the Greek original being at hand,

[1] When this article was nearly completed (Dec. 10) I received *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* for July, the publication of which has been evidently delayed. It contains articles read at Concord from Aug. 2 to 5, viz.: The Kant Centennial, by Prof. Mears; Kant and Hegel, by Dr. Harris; Kant's Transcendental Deduction of Categories, by Prof. Morris; The Results of the Kantian Philosophy, by Julia Ward Howe; also a brief Report of Discussions at Concord, by Mr. Sanborn.

and he commonly comments upon it at length." The writings of the great masters of literature and the sacred books of the world are frequently adduced in corroboration and explanation of statements made. In this way are frequently used the Bible, Homer, the Greek tragedians, the Hindu dramas and sacred texts, Shakespeare, Dante, and Goethe. Some of us are grateful that we have one Bible; but this club has a number of Bibles,—from some of which it might be as difficult to get light as to extract sunbeams from cucumbers. It believes in the Bible of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments,—always as interpreted in accordance with Plato; but it also believes in others. "All Bibles," says Mr. Block in an article in *The Platonist*, "are myths—narratives so constructed as to reveal to the fit interpreter the Absolute Truth." If this means all truth or truth without error, I fear the fit interpreter has not yet appeared. The club has been honored by a number of eminent visitors, such as A. Bronson Alcott, Harris, Emerson, Snider. Should I ever be in the region, I hope they will allow me the privilege of attending one of their meetings. Their creed seems to be: "There is one God, and Plato is his prophet"—a higher prophet I acknowledge than Mohammed, or even than Hegel, whom the Germans so admired an age ago; but, alas! they are now inclined to tear down their idol. As Plato was a prophet, we can conceive him to have had a glimpse of this Jacksonville club rising up in Illinois twenty-one hundred years after, and I am sure the thought brought a gratified smile upon his face and helped to bear him under those doubts and snarls that sate on the countenance of his critical pupil Aristotle as he listened to his master.

Dr. Jones delivered two courses of lectures at Concord: one on "Law in Relation to Modern Civilization," the second on "Platonism." He revels in the grand ideas of Plato. He quotes numerous passages which set forth the grandeur of the soul, its pre-existence and its immortality. Applying his lofty views to the present day, he shows what is the downward tendency of "the cognition of a physics without a metaphysics; a natural without a supernatural; a material without a spiritual; a real without an ideal world; a lower world without an upper world, and consequently a natural order without an intelligible

order; natural law without mind, natural forces without will forces, and in fine a Cosmos without a Logos."

I regard it as quite in order to refer to the *Platonist*, a periodical published monthly at St. Louis and edited by Thomas M. Johnson, who seems to be a scholarly man. It is devoted chiefly to " the dissemination of the Platonic philosophy in all its phases." So far as I have seen it, it gazes most fondly on one phase; this, I may add, the highest. Plato was a many-sided man. In particular he had both a negative and a positive side, a searching, doubting side and a doctrinal, dogmatic side. He does seek to establish truth, but like his master Socrates he is quite as frequently employed in exposing pretension. In many of his dialogues he seems to be satisfied with sifting the theories advanced in his time as to truth, beauty, virtue, and kindred topics, is at no pains to specify what is the truth, and leaves us in doubt whether it can be found. This side of Plato was accepted by the academic schools—older, middle, and new—and in the end ran itself out in the barest scepticism, which discussed everything but settled nothing. But Plato had another and more attractive side. He rose up as on eagles', nay, rather on angels' wings towards the contemplation of the eternal Idea in its relations to God, the soul, and the world. This side culminated in the Neoplatonism of Alexandria, which represented the highest state of the soul as consisting in ecstasy; that is, the soul gazing forever on the One, the True, the Good—which became in the end a blank enough and profitless exercise. This is the side commonly presented to us in the *Platonist*. The periodical gives us the treatises of Porphyry, Iamblichus, Plotinus, and Proclus in the version of Thomas Taylor, of whom it has always been doubted whether he understood the works he translated.

Dr. Mulford is held in high esteem in the association and beyond it. He is the author of "The Nation: the Foundations of Civil Order and Political Life in the United States." He there rests the state on God as the foundation, and binds the superstructure by morality. He has another work, "The Republic of God," which has reached a fourth edition. In it he discusses high philosophico-theological themes in a lofty tone of thought and language. He has a higher estimate than I

have of Hegel and his artificial forms, and of Maurice, whose mists, which so impressed many an age ago, are now melting away. He does treat of sin at considerable length, but his view of it and of its essential evil is not sufficiently deep. "Sin," he says, "is unreal" (p. 140); "it is the contradiction of life; but in the consciousness of its contradiction [Hegelian] there is the evidence of a deeper unity in which it may be overcome, and of the ground of its obliteration. There may be a root of righteousness of life that is deeper than the root of evil." Sin seems to me to be as real a thing as moral good, and I do not care about putting good and evil into a unity. Proceeding in this line, Bailey in "Festus" calls "good God's right hand, and evil his left." In the paper read at Concord he criticised the various schools of political life, such as the physical, the utilitarian, the social, the formal or abstract. He maintains that the state implies continuity, authority of law, religion, and morality.

The Rev. Dr. Bartol spoke of the "Transcendent Faculty in Man." He has glowing passages. He says man is an animal; "but he is an angel too: feels the wings folded up on him, is aware of his ability to slough off his physical organism as a serpent does his skin in the wood, conscious that he can dispense with many a tendency and proclivity characteristic and conspicuous in his present life and history, yet not lose his identity, but be the same in essence when he shall soar as now he grovels or gropes." I doubt much whether he sees the right way in which man may soar. "His constitution, as it is at any given time, is all he has to go by. It and not the new translation, the Bible revised or unrevised, is that real word of God which is not a book but, as the sacred volume itself avers, a hammer and a fire and runs very swiftly. Can a book run or be a hammer or fire? The word of God came to Isaiah or to Micah: did it not to Garrison and Lincoln and John Brown? As says the Greek sage, 'all flows,' and our nature blends in the flux of things. We have ecstasies, exaltations above our ordinary state to appreciate Paul's trances, or the transfiguration of Jesus with Peter and James and John, or George Washington's elevation once above himself, as the historian relates, on the battle-field."

The Rev. Dr. Kedney (author of a work on Æsthetics) deliv-

ered an able lecture on the "Groundwork of Ethics." He reviewed the improved Benthamism as presented by John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, and Herbert Spencer, and gave an exposition of the ethics of Kant.

Professor Harris seems to me to be at this present time the greatest man in the school, and the most likely to rule its future destinies.[1] I look upon him with profound respect. It may be doubted whether there is or was an abler superintendent of schools in America than he was when he held that office in Missouri. I do hope that he will continue to further the cause of education by lecturing to our teachers and in colleges on what is called Pedagogic in the German universities, or in some other way that may occur to his fertile mind. But his great work, as it appears to me, is *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, of which he is the learned editor, and which he has carried on with infinite courage and perseverance for a great many years in spite of indifference on the part of the public, and I suspect under a heavy pecuniary burden. In that journal he has had discussed, always from a certain standpoint but invariably in an elevated tone, the deepest problems of human—I believe he would say divine—thought, and tried to make clear to the American public the profundities of Hegel. Once in St. Louis I had the privilege of listening to one of his papers or lectures delivered in a parlor to a dozen high-class ladies, who looked as if they understood him, and who certainly appreciated him highly. He made the generalizations of Hegel as clear and satisfactory as they could possibly be made—generalizations very far-ranging, but, I may add, with which I could not concur. He delivered at Concord two courses, five lectures in each: one on "Philosophical Distinctions," and the other an exposition of Hegel's philosophy. I do hope these last lectures will be published in his journal or in a separate form, so as to enable Americans to determine whether Hegel's strongly compacted system is a castle on the earth or a castle in the air; it is visibly a castle with battlements, with bastions and towers of an imposing and formidable character. In the course on "Philosophical Distinc-

[1] If so, it will have less of Plato and more of Hegel: less of gold-leaf and more of iron; less of rich pasture and more of fences; less of flower and fruit and more of stalks and branches.

tions" he has stages of cognition arranged *à la* Hegel in a triune or triplet form. The first stage is sense-perception, in which there is no thinking. This gives us mechanism. My criticism is that there is intelligence in sense-perception, and that there cannot be mechanism without thinking. The second stage is reflection, which classifies and arranges. I remark that this is a peculiar use of the word reflection, the function of which is usually supposed to be the bending back of the mind and the looking on what is in the mind or has been in it. Arranging and classifying has been commonly ascribed to the comparative powers of the mind. This second stage brings us to chemism, which, as it appears to me, cannot fall under reflection. The third stage is ætiology or teleology, which carries up to another triad—the miracle, art, and religion. These three things may have some affinity as all coming from the higher nature of man, but their bond of union is very loose. It appears to me that an ingenuity much inferior to that of Hegel or Prof. Harris could draw out of the worlds of mind and matter an indefinite number of such trinities, made in a vague way to embrace all things under them, but the distinctions having no deep or actual foundation either in mind or matter.

I am sorry that I have not the means of sketching certain other papers. As I am dealing with philosophy I pass over the literary papers, some of which were brilliant. I have studiously omitted those of the professors who came from their academic halls to discuss metaphysical subjects, as President Porter (who had read for him the paper which appeared in the last number of this REVIEW), Professors Morris, Mears, and Watson. They appeared personally or by their papers chiefly to ventilate Kant in this his centenary year. I may refer to them in a later part of this article, when I treat of the great German metaphysician.

It could be shown by a large induction of historical facts that every prevalent opinion, nay, every practical measure following, is apt to fall back on a philosophy to sustain and defend it when attacked. Hitherto the Concord school has leaned mainly on the ideas of Plato, so grand but at the same time so vague and unbounded. The feeling now is that they must have something more definite and logical. At this present time while there are countless metaphysicians of ability in Amer-

ica, there is, unhappily or happily, no influential philosopher or philosophic school commanding the thought of our young men and calling forth their devotion. The consequence is that those who are not content with the commonplaces of America are resorting to the imposing systems of Germany, most of them to Kant and Neo-Kantism—which is the form in which Kant is now presented, and a few of them to Hegel.

In the last century Locke was by far the most influential philosopher in America. He was the leader in the great movement which set aside the old abstract philosophy drawn out of the brain in favor of the new method founded on facts and experience, and so he was hailed by a people who rebelled against kings and established a republic. Locke easily derived all our ideas from sensation and reflection. Happily this philosophy was never accepted entirely in America. Men seeking to defend truth and morality were always calling in, consciously or unconsciously, and appealing to something deeper than a gathered experience which can never be necessary or universal. The Scottish principle of common-sense satisfied many for a time, but is now forsaken, as supposed to be a mere appeal *ad populum* and not sufficiently profound. American youths, after finishing a rather commonplace course of mental philosophy in their colleges at home, now betake themselves to Deutschland, with high expectations of being able to reach the bottom of things. A writer in a foolish paper lately published, apparently on the principle "Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own conceit," thus describes them ("Conflicts of the Age," p. 72): "I have observed of those youths who, after finishing their course in the college down there, set off for a year or two to Germany, that they come back with a most formidable nomenclature as ponderous as the armor of Goliath of Gath. How I rejoice to find a boy rising up to lay them prostrate with a more primitive weapon! For they have become unbearably haughty, and would slay all who cannot pronounce their shibboleth at the fords of speculation. They are introduced at the German universities to a set of distinctions which seem very deep,—the distinction between form and matter, subject and object, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, phenomenon and noumenon,—by which they are led into a labyrinth with no clue to bring them

out. In all these distinctions, and in the nomenclature expressing them, there are subtle errors lurking which lead through idealism to scepticism." These youths, not willing to lose the wares they have gained with such labor and at such expense, bring them home with them, and use them without being able to sift them or cast out the adulterations, and they dispose of them to half-admiring, half-doubting pupils.

Kant has reached, as it appears to me, his highest altitude in this his centenary year,—few philosophers have lived so long. In Germany the works upon him, volumes, articles, pamphlets published this year, are uncountable, all acknowledging defects in Kant as understood an age or two ago, but expounding, or more frequently hinting at, a Neo-Kantism which is to avoid the obvious errors of the old. I have at this moment on the table before me four goodly volumes on Kant written in the English tongue within the last few years: There is the elaborate volume on "Kant," written by Professor Edward Caird, of Glasgow, who examines Kant on the principles of Hegel, and reaches a more ideal realism, which no doubt is self-contradictory,—but then all truth is the combination of contradictories. There is a smaller volume "On the Philosophy of Kant," by Robert Adamson, of Owens College, Manchester, who discusses the problems started by Kant, acknowledging that Kant's "system has manifested inner want of consistency and evident incompleteness;" but so far as I can see, not putting in its room anything satisfactory. He says: "It can hardly be too strongly impressed on the student of philosophy that the ordinary mode of starting in constructive metaphysic with the Cartesian certainty of one's own existence is misleading, and likely to entail the gravest error." I have not been able to find what he proposes to start with. There is the work of Professor Watson, of Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, "Kant and his English Critics," in which he acutely criticises Balfour, Stirling, Lewes, and others who are charged with not properly interpreting Kant. He meets these men by showing that Kant when properly understood is not responsible for their opinions. In my opinion, they may be more successfully met by showing that Kant is himself wrong in those points in which they father their errors on him. Professor Watson is constantly hinting that he

could improve Kant on certain points. Of course I have no opinion as to these improvements till they are drawn out. I have also before me "Text-Book to Kant:" Translation, Reproduction, Commentary, Index, with Biographical Sketch, by James Hutchison Stirling; 550 pages. Written in his usual Carlylish style, often exaggerated to crankiness, he has some admirable expositions and valuable criticisms of Kant's Critique. Once more, I see an advertisement of a translation of the Critique by Max Müller.

I believe that we have now reached the watershed, and that henceforth the stream will descend. Every one of these authors so far finds fault with Kant. From this date he will be criticised more and more severely. More fundamental objections will be taken to him than is done by these his admirers. All philosophers now see that such ideas, or rather convictions, as identity, infinity, and moral good cannot be derived, as Locke maintained, from sensation or the reflection of sensation in the mind. So, with the ghost of agnosticism grinning at us in the darkness, we shall now have to inquire whether, on Kant's theory that the mind begins with phenomena in the sense of appearances (*Erscheinungen*), it can ever rise to realities.

I have as great an admiration of Kant, of the man and of his philosophy, as those I have been criticising have. Vast good has resulted from his calling in mental principles which guarantee higher truth than the senses and save us from scepticism. I like much his partiality for the old logic, and I approve of some of his improvements of it, as, for instance, in introducing Immediate Inferences. For what is valuable in his categories he is very much indebted to that old logic. He has done invaluable service to morals, and I may add religion, in upholding the practical reason with its categorical imperative. The study of his philosophy calls forth and braces the highest energies of the mind, and makes us feel that truth and virtue have an immovable foundation.

But, on the other hand, he has fallen into errors which, legitimately or illegitimately, have been used to support and justify very pernicious ends. I do not allow that Kant met the scepticism, or rather the agnosticism, of Hume in a wise or satisfactory manner. Hume made the mind to start with, and in the

end to be in possession of, only impressions and ideas. His opponents should meet him here and drive back the ravager at the entrance. But Kant took down his outer wall and allowed the Trojan horse to enter with an armed force which he could not cast out, and which kindled a conflagration which left nothing but ashes and mounds behind.

I take deeper objection to Kant's philosophy than was done by President Porter or Professor Morris at the Concord meeting. First, I object entirely to his phenomenal theory of knowledge, to what is called phenomenology. Professor Mears says in his paper of "the materials presented to us by the inner and outer sense:" "These materials are not objects, and their presence does not constitute them experience until they have passed through the pre-existing moulds of the mind and taken their shape. They are not in space or in time of themselves; they are neither one, nor many, nor all; they are neither like nor unlike [is one rose not like another?]; they are neither substance nor qualities, neither cause nor effect; they have in fact no being except as the mind by its own insight recognizes or affirms it of them." The professor is forever lauding Kant for undermining sensationalism; but he did so by making mind as well as matter unknown, and thereby, without meaning it, landing us logically in agnosticism, in the darkness of which Huxley builds up materialism. I could show that agnosticism claiming to be logically derived from Kant is lowering thought in this the last quarter of the nineteenth century quite as much as sensationalism professing to come logically from Locke did in the corresponding quarter of the eighteenth century. As Americans began then to search Locke, so they must now commence to search Kant,—always after studying him and taking what is good from him. Dr. Stirling thus expounds: "In short, both outer object and inner subject, being perceived only through sense, are, by necessary consequence, perceived not as they are in themselves, or not as they just *are*, but merely as they *appear*. Whether we look to space or time, it is only our own states we know in either,"—and I may add, our own states merely as appearances. I hold that the mind begins with things and not with phenomena, with things appearing and not mere appearances. Even a tree seen in the water with its head down

is a real thing: it is the reflection of light from the water. But it will be asked me contemptuously, "Can it be possible that you hold the vulgar doctrine that you perceive the very thing?" They will condescend to remind me that to the eye the sky seems a concave, whereas it is an expanse; that color seems to be in the rose, whereas science tells us that it is a vibration at a certain rate in an ether; that we seem naturally to see things at a distance, whereas we perceive only things touching our eyes. Having condescended thus, they will then turn away from me as not worthy of being further reasoned with. Now I am quite disposed to meet them if they will meet me in argument. By the help of a few acknowledged distinctions I am able to hold by the trustworthiness of the senses. The senses may be charged with giving us more than realities, may seem to be giving us the distance of objects, whereas experiments wrought on persons born blind show that originally man has no such endowment. The difficulty is removed by drawing the distinction between our original and acquired perceptions, and showing that our original perceptions, which by the eye is simply a colored surface, do not deceive but show us the very thing. If those who disagree with me refuse contemptuously to argue with me, I can take it patiently, being sure that some other will be raised up to do what I have not been able to do. Of this I am certain, that the phenomenal theory of knowledge cannot stand much longer; if we do not begin with knowledge in the senses, inner and outer, we can never get it by a further process. Bacon in a well-known passage speaks of men being first inclined to believe in God, afterwards having doubts as they see difficulties, but in the end reaching a well-grounded faith. There is apt to be a like process in the theory of the senses. Men are led primarily to believe their senses, then they discover that the senses seem at times to deceive, but at last they are brought to acknowledge that the deceptions are apparent, not real.

Secondly, Kant has given a very erroneous account of those principles of the mind which he calls in to beat back Hume's scepticism. He represents them as forms imposing themselves on phenomena, whereas they are not moulds superimposing qualities, but perceptions of things with their qualities. They do not impose space and time upon objects, but perceive

objects as in space and time. The very favorite phrases of Kant, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, may cover error. There is not an *a priori* form to impose on things; there is merely the *a priori* capacity to discover things and what is involved in them.

Thirdly, Kant pursued a wrong method throughout—the Critical. I admit that what he calls *a priori* principles are to be sifted before they are accepted. But they are to be sifted simply by inquiring what they are and what they reveal. This does not make a limited experience the foundation of truth. Any one who will give his attention can understand that there may be truths prior to induction and above induction, but the nature of which we can discover only by induction.

But what are we to make of Hegel? I believe I had better let that question be answered by Prof. Harris. Some of my readers, however, may be interested to learn what pains I have taken to be able to find an answer for myself. A quarter of a century ago I resolved to spend five months of the vacation allowed me in Queen's College, Belfast, in mastering the system of the mighty man who for a time reigned as king of thought in Germany. I got a good edition of his works and set myself earnestly to the task of understanding the profound thinker. To assist me I read at the same time Vol. IV. of Willm's "Histoire de la Philosophie Allemande," which expounds the system with all the French *clarté*. I was soon made to realize that I was travelling with a giant who walked with seven-leagued boots, and that I had great difficulty in keeping up with him; but this arose simply from his strength and my weakness, and not from any defect of his. So I persevered. I felt at times as if I got glimpses of his meaning, and then I seemed to lose them. I was sure that this stream must be very deep, and I was bent on sounding it. But then it was pressed upon me that it might look so very deep because it is so drumly. Still I held on with all the obstinacy of a Scotchman for weary months in the sweet summer days. After months of study I thought it right to take a survey and an estimate of what I had gained. As I drew in the net I felt that I had an immense, seemingly an immeasurable length of knotted cordage, but the living fish were very few. At length, feeling my brain oppressed, I broke off and betook myself to the Grampian Mountains,

where I found the observation of the forms of nature, especially of the mountain plants, to be far more pleasant, and I thought profitable, than the study of the artificial forms of Hegel's dialectic. In the end I came to the conclusion that I had gone far enough into the labyrinth, and that as life is so brief and uncertain, and as I had so much other study to carry on and work to do, it might be as well to stop.

Since that I have once or twice ventured to criticise Hegel, but was told very emphatically by those who appeared to understand him that I did not understand him, and I was not quite sure whether they might not be right. I have watched with deep interest the history of the system, and conversed with several eminent Hegelians both of the right and left for hours at a time, and found no two of them agreeing with each other. I have observed that when any man opposes the system, he is told that he does not understand it. I was amused at, and rather gratified with, the story told that Hegel had said, "Only one man understands me, and he does not understand me." I was not amazed, nor was I sorrowful, to hear that the believers in Hegel were every year becoming fewer and fewer, tho metaphysicians still continued to study him and admire his dialectical skill. I confess, however, that I was taken by surprise when the pessimists, who follow much the same method but reach far different results, described one so famous as a charlatan. Finding that in the histories of philosophy he had a great name in the statement and interpretation of opinions, I betook myself to him at times when I was studying some of the ancient systems, such as that of Aristotle; but I found that he put them all under his own forms—in short, Hegelized them.[1] Of Christianity he always wrote in the way of compliment, but it is when he has made it speak as he speaks.

It is not easy to criticise Hegelianism, for this among other reasons, that it contains so much, all things divine and human,

[1] Many of the German histories of philosophy and those who copy them in England and America fall into a like fault. Thus they represent the Greek philosophers as seeking after the *absolute*, which is a German thought. What the Greeks were seeking after was τὸ ὄν, the reality, the real thing; not the *Ding an sich*, which is an absurdity, as there can be no such thing as a thing in itself; but the thing itself, the very thing.

that few if any finite minds can comprehend it. Those who would chivalrously enter into the lists against him may find that they are fighting with forms and not realities—with windmills, like Don Quixote. His philosophy seems to me to consist of rapid generalizations drawn by the speculative intellect from a few loose but at times true points of resemblance, overlooking specialties and differences. Such are his perpetual trinities, being, essence, notion: under being, quality, quantity, measure; under essence, ground of existence, phenomenon, reality; under notion, subjective notion, object, idea; and these again subdivided into threes, the whole in the end being identified with the Christian Trinity. They remind me of those systems of physical science which were taught in our universities before the days of Newton and induction, complete beyond what any physical philosopher can teach in our day. Not being formed carefully after the nature of things, but by pure thinking, these grand logical laws could not be legitimately carried out, and when they were carried out came into collision with facts in our nature or beyond it. But Hegel with his powerful intellect was determined to carry them out, and in doing so was alarmed by no consequences. When nature goes against reason, he holds that it must give way before reason, the higher. When he found that Newton's discoveries would not fall into his framework, he did not hesitate to set them aside, a circumstance which first led scientists to doubt of his pretensions. He is ever assuming what he should first have proved, and he does not scruple to set aside self-evident truth when it crosses his path. He admits that some of his positions are contradictory of each other, but then he maintains that truth is made up of two sides which are contradictory. It can be shown that these antinomies, and those of Kant as well, are not contradictions in things, but simply one-sided, partial, and perverted accounts of things.

He was not contented to be the *minister*, he was the *magister naturæ*. He ever lauded religion, but it had to submit to be ruled by his laws. It is well known that he did not go regularly to any church, and when his wife, a pious woman, would invite him to go with her, he would reply, "Mein Herz, thinking is also devotion." I apprehend that these two things, first his thinking not founded on facts and not subject to God, and sec-

ondly his ambitious speculative intellect, were the two sides or personalities that met in the third thing his philosophy, the whole constituting a trinity which he devoutly worshipped, and in the light of which is revealed more of the "Secret of Hegel" than even in Dr. Stirling's elaborate work.

It is a curious but not an inexplicable circumstance that while his sun has been going down in Germany, it has been rising in some other countries. In Great Britain and Ireland, and I may add in America, there has been no influential thinker since the decease of Mill and Hamilton,—always excepting Herbert Spencer, to whom many of our higher minds are not willing to submit because of the agnosticism of his "First Principles" and his identifying mind with nerves. Finding nothing at home to satisfy them, a number of youths in these countries have been resorting to Germany. In particular Merton Hall in Oxford has been a nursery of Hegelianism, which has had powerful propagators in Mr. Wallace and the two brothers Caird, the principal and the professor. In America Hegel has had an enlightened admirer in Dr. Harris, and a powerful defence in a group of writers in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy.*

To sum up, I believe in the lofty aims of the school at Concord. I go with them in their courageous opposition to scepticism, agnosticism, and materialism. They are doing good by holding before the age certain elevated ideas to lift up its downward look. But they will require carefully to determine what these ideas are, and what the laws by which they are regulated and limited; what they can do and what they cannot do. Many dissatisfied with the meagre philosophy of England, Scotland, and America at this present time are looking anxiously towards Germany. But I do not believe they will be able to beat back the tide by the embankments erected by Kant and Hegel, which when they give way, as they are evidently doing, will only let in the floods of scepticism with greater force. When the ancient Britons were wishing to drive out the Romans they called in the Anglo-Saxons, who became more formidable masters than those they drove out. So it will be with the Teutonic invasion which many are calling in: it may introduce a deeper error than that which it has been brought in to expel.

JAMES McCOSH.