

The Evolution of Idealism.

by

Winnie Copeland.

Outline:-

- 1st Introduction.
 - 2nd Definition.
 - 2nd Source.
- 1st Its evolution in the:-
 - 2nd Individual,
 - 3rd child.
 - 3rd Youth.
 - 3rd Old age.
 - 2nd Man, as a whole.
 - 3rd Mentally.
 - 4th Religion.
 - 4th Sentiment.
 - 4th Education in general
 - 3rd Physically.
 - 4th Development of body.
 - 3rd Morally.
 - 4th Psychological view.
 - 4th Social view.
- 1st Conclusion.

The dominating power of man is the will. — A dual monarchy, — an aristocracy: Realism and Idealism. — Contrasting terms yet one often embodies the other — neither is complete without the other — no mind is totally devoid of either — which dominates determines the character of its abode in this life, whether man or brute, ruler or serf, heaven or hell.

The "subjective nature of knowledge leads to idealism" which is the doctrine of living up to or attaining to our highest ideals. Much depends on definition. Owing to some writers, the opinion is now held by many that an idealist is "one who believes the whole empirical world to be a delusion; who sees no reality but his own thoughts, and cannot rest even that reality on a solid foundation"; in short a nihilist. "Is there a philosophy more triumphant, more overflowing with faith, more world-storming, than true idealism?" There is no one with a keener conception of all that is transpiring

around him, no one more thoroughly awake to the realistic side of life, no one more clearly conscious of all the outer sensations and inner emotions than the mind whose ideal is the achievement of perfection.

The child in his early years lays the foundation for his life work; in fact determines what his influence shall be for all future time. His ideal is his model, after which he shapes his life; and altho his ideals change with age and environment, still the conditions are similar, and the man who molds his character after that of some world renowned hero need not be ashamed that in childhood he copied after a fascinating yet insignificant acquaintance. It was simply a question of a part for the whole! More than likely the same traits of character that attracted the attention of the child were shown forth more vividly in the model of the man.

The child who passes the bright, sunny morn of youth without indulg

ing in the pleasures of delightful day-dreams has missed the most fascinating, most entertaining, most satisfactory pastime granted to his more highly imaginative companions. In this as in few other things in life, wealth, power and position; poverty, servitude and mendacity have no dividing line.

The son of the fisherman may stretch himself on the shimmering sand and create for himself the same fair visions the Hall street merchant's son is indulging in at the same time, while curled up among mansdown cushions, in the most luxurious parlors of New York, and be perfectly confident that he is not trespassing on preempted property. While the one could not play ball with the other or slide down the rich man's cellar door, there are no restricting barriers regarding his flights of imagination. Barriers are realistic, but thoughts and surroundings idealistic. How many happy hours he passes building aircastles for himself on the sea-shells of the ocean till they reach far beyond the clear

their vault above. He sees himself similar to the more fortunate boys he knows; he is not envious, but learns to love his imaginary companions as tho they were real!

Some stern, ironclad realist may argue that the child should be brought up to regard such indulgences as a wicked waste of precious time, and if nothing more a detriment to the physical, as well as the mental part of his makeup. On the contrary, it has a subduing, refining influence and no place is so beautiful, so full of the acknowledged love of the Creator as the dreamland of the dreamer.

Nations are idealistic as well as individuals.

The will is the source, the origin of ideals, and also of their realization. The actual self is largely particular and unrealized. This will or self which the will sets before itself is its ideal; this ideal will serves as a spur to the actual self to realize itself; it leads to discontent with every accomplished result,

and urges on to new and complete action; it serves also to measure all accomplishments, furnishing the criterion by which to judge them. The feeling of harmony which is the mind's ultimate test of intellectual truth, artistic beauty and moral rightness, is simply the feeling of the accord between the accomplished act and the completed activity which is the ideal.

It is not our self or will which is the ideal, and another will which is the source of its attainment but the ideal will has been a constant native power which has energized in bringing forth the concrete attainments in knowledge, beauty and rightness.

The idealist may be crabbed, like Ruskin and Carlyle, because of his impatience at not being understood, and his keen realization of not being able to revolutionize established laws and customs, and have the world as he would like it.

The savage has but little imagination. He may fancy beautiful hunting grounds, with game in abundance, but

his mind tires and he cannot be made to think on any one subject for any great length of time. He has faint visions of a brave warrior and faultless marksman, which serve to determine his future actions. All the deepest thinkers are by no means the most perfect idealists, but the most perfect idealists are the deepest thinkers and most highly developed socially.

As the savage advances up the scale of civilization, his world widens and broadens. It is a law of nature to judge all things by our own limited experience, and his idea of the Divine Being was first one of a great hunter who governed all success and failure in the one great pursuit of his existence. Later it changes to a number of Gods, who control the different elements and hold the lives of all in their hands. To these Gods, they offer needless sacrifices and live in dread and terror through the narrowness of their mental capabilities.

A later and more advanced step is

that of the Holy Trinity; in form, a man strong and perfect; in mind, possessing human feelings and instincts of unbounded power, and ruling with an iron hand the blind, helpless, groveling slaves to outward form instead of inward thought and Christlike deed.

But as much by much the world recognizes, so point by point the star of religious evolution rises above our horizon. We feel that there should be a new religion vast and modern as our needs! This religion will, recognize the perfect ideal will as the only reality:—The sole object of all our labors, trials, and sacrifices, the total aim and object of our whole existence. One has said, "Unitarianism is the religion of good sense, the least idealistic religion that has ever professed to connect itself with Christianity." That sentence is the embodiment of contradiction. The day is dawning when men will all be brothers, not in name but in spirit; when man will comprehend his common origin and common

and with all nature; will allow the disappearance of things he was wont to reverence, without losing his reverence; and after repeated failures to connect the new and old will establish his faith upon another basis, having satisfied his own conscience that a dogma is elective and not essential; will no longer measure his Creator by the ideal of the savage, but will so live that when he shall put off this earthly form, his soul may return to its donor his God and Nature's God, the God of the Universe.

Without idealism what would the home be? Return to the primitive man; an enclosure surrounded by four cold, bleak walls, no sentiment, no love, only animal instincts. How different today! The one-roomed cottage is transformed into a palace, the simple fare to a repast fit for kings, the homely labor-worn features as attractive as those of lords and ladies; and how? By that only element conducive of human happiness:—Idealism.

With idealism:—

"A dweller in a hut alone, fed from a dish of wood,
A drinker of the flowing brook, a child of solitude,
A sleeper on a bed of leaves may find that life is good,
And hear high music on his way that bids his soul rejoice,
If his wise ear has learned to hear - to hear the Wordless Voice."

But,

"Dark for the world would be the day that saw that voice withdrawn;
Then would the day be emptiness, the race of man be spurn;
No twilight peace would fall at night, no hope would come with
No dreams would haunt the skyline, no fancies throng the glen,
The wretched weight of iron fate would crush the hearts of men."

The ideal object of which the mind is
conscious is vicarious or representative of
a real object, unknown immediately, or
as existing, and known only mediately
through this its ideal substitute.

Should the belle of today look with favor
on the brass bedecked and rainbow panth-
ed warrior of the primitive ages? Should
her soul be thrilled by the once enchant-
ing melodies of the Cavalier should it
sound beneath her window? Should
even the ideal of her schooldays be that
of maturer years? No. So much for
this ever advancing element of society.

In education, as in all other lives,

this faculty has served as ministrant.

To us the geocentric theory is no longer plausible, and when we go back to ancient Egypt we can realize how great has been the progress of the human race. From a time when the Universe comprised the Nile region and a portion of the Mediterranean, overhung by a changing canopy, blue by day and black by night, resting upon colossal posts on the mountain tops; from a people to whose minds the moon and stars were lamps suspended in some mysterious way only to fade and die when the fiery orb in his golden barge floated down the celestial river, to our day and our ideas, what a vast amount of growth and enlargement is represented!

All such crude notions are to us simply a glimpse of childhood, yet this was the intellectual condition of man before research had verified the theories of creative imagination.

The day was when life was held in such light regard that a man's life

was no more than that of any animal, and murder was checked only by the practical uselessness of the act. This element has not yet died out, nor will it so long as this relic of barbarism remains in a majority of the people. War in all its horrors must oppose the evils of a race capable of punishment in no other way; as many animals cannot understand good counsel and reasoning, but must be impressed by physical violence, so many men will not consent to arbitration, but must be met on their own level. As long as idealism remains dormant, so long must the brotherhood of man remain in a state of constant disruption.

With the poet and the novelist more than in others success depends on the height of the ideal. The popular novelist no longer depicts in glowing terms each minute detail of dress and each incident of the romantic acts of his work, but rather hints at each and gives our imagination the complement of creative reading.

True poetry can never be translated into prose. Where would you find fitting prose-words that could express one-half the sentiment conveyed in that finest of metaphors,—

"As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread
Eternal sunshine settles on its head"?

It would be vastly more fitting to trail the purest bridal robes through the mirey alleys of the slums, than to attempt to disclose that sublime vision, and clothe it in the homely epithets of the realistic.

Who would prefer the life of a Sir Nicholas Blount to that of a Rabelais? The one perusing only the material side of life, the other seeing between the lines all the tints and melodies of nature, as tho' in an ethereal fairy land of beauty. All will agree that Milton saw less of the idealistic in life than Shelley; while "Paradise Lost" is deep and full of thought, what is more inspiring than "The Cloud"?

Beauty is nothing but the loveliest form of pleasure; to those deep impress-

ious love and truth, imagination must subserve and minister in rendering them more intense by the images with which it illustrates them."

"Even the external form of verse becomes a sharer in the triumph by making difficulty itself a part of the poet's facility and joy."

When the world advanced to the stage of poetry, literature and art, a step was taken that can never be retraced. The day will never come when man shall cease to reverence these crowning jewels of the mind.

¶ We are born with capabilities, and they have to be developed in the physical body as in everything else. "The one great end of man's existence is enjoyment," so one has said. If that be true, the only way to attain it is to reach physical perfection. The Greeks in their supremacy attained the highest ideal by effecting a just harmonization with the real; but the world in its mad rush for unbalanced perfection, has neglected this most important requisite to

its attainment. We are now, to some extent awakening to the fact and bravely attempting to retrieve our lost physical perfection.

The ideal is a model - "a matter of rightness, for the coming short of which there is a feeling of guilt." Hold fast to the high ideals; if they look like castles in the air, add new chambers, whole stories to them, rather than lower them one inch to fit the sneering Present. "There is a gap between the motive and the attained end." Here it not for what we find manifested in the moral will the action of the intellect in searching for truth, and the creative activity of the aesthetic imagination, would remain ultimately incomprehensible. While the aim of the religious action is directed to the embodiment of the ideal in the real, the moral attempts to confine the real in the ideal. The unconscious nature of man acknowledges that the real and the ideal should be one, and blindly affirms this belief in the formation of character.

Each repetition of an act adds one more item to our ledger of character, either on the Dr. or Cr. side; and so it shall continue to be till the ideal and the real side of our motive power have become unified: then the sides will balance, neither will be in excess of the other, and the scroll of our life's work will roll back to display the first perfect record made since the creation of man. Then we can truly say,

The world has passed the crucible,

Perfection is attained,

The Spirit calls us to himself:—

'Tis Paradise regained.