

E G O T I S M S .

NO journal heretofore published in the United States has made it its special business to give expression to the advanced thought of the time on philosophical, scientific, and religious questions. The editors of the existing magazines, in order not to give offence to any possible patron, have carefully excluded all advanced or heterodox speculations on religious and social topics; yet these very questions, which, among an immense reading population, no periodical dares discuss, are of the very highest human interest. It is the intention of the projector of *The Modern Thinker*, provided he can find any support in so doing, to choose for discussion just those subjects which are now so carefully avoided; and he expects, of course, to shock many old prejudices, and to create a good many new ones against himself and his publication. The latest results of human thought and modern science in all departments of speculative activity shall here find a place, no matter what creed or existing preconception they may conflict with.

The projector is well aware that such a publication cannot pay in a pecuniary sense. There is no money to make, but some to lose in such an enterprise; and it cannot possibly be published unless a sufficient number of persons can be interested who are willing to make some slight pecuniary sacrifices in its behalf. Are there any such?

To avoid all misconception, it should be understood that the projector of *The Modern Thinker* is a Positivist, of the school of Auguste Comte. He does not, however, unqualifiedly accept all the speculations of that great philosopher. It is his desire to be liberal, and to open the pages of this publication to the representatives of all the advanced schools of modern thought, especially to the adherents of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill, who at the time of writing have no adequate or avowed organ in the United States.

Persons wishing to help in this enterprise, either as subscribers or patrons, will please address

D. GOODMAN,

Editor "Modern Thinker," 19 Bank St., New York City.

WHY VARIEGATED COLORS.

The publisher of *The Modern Thinker* has a claim upon the gratitude of mankind for all time in being the first to disregard the superstition in favor of black ink upon white paper in ordinary reading matter. No valid reason can be assigned for this universal custom beyond the imitateness we have inherited from our Samian ancestry (see Lord Monboddoo and Darwin). All the arguments favor variegated colors both in the paper and ink; nor is there any good reason why the type should all be of the same size?

White is very trying to the sight, and the paper generally used is one of the principal causes of the diseases of the eye so common among students and all who read a great deal. Then black is a vile color, or rather it is no color at all; it is an absence of light, and is indicative of feculence, smut, decay, death. Let it be banished from all good books hereafter to be published, and given over to foul and obscene writings.

The popular books of the future must be printed in all the colors of the rainbow; but black and white should be sparingly, if ever, used. Art will come into play in deciding in what color each topic should be treated, for every passing emotion and thought even has a hue of its own. The poet tells us of

Celestial, rosy red,
Love's proper hue.

Green in times past has been indicative of jealousy, and yellow of melancholy; but these are empirical generalizations of what is really true, that every human emotion has an analogue or correspondence in music and color. We sometimes are puzzled that official statistics should be printed in "blue" books, and we laugh at the authoritative publications of the Chinese government being called "vermillion edicts;" but there is a justification for these variations in the eternal fitness of things. It is for science to say what are the complementary colors for each passion, emotion, and thought, and when its verdict is rendered, authors and printers must heed and obey.

There is no need to point out the marvelous beauty which this change will effect in the publications of the future. Monotony will be replaced by a charming variety, and books will bloom like a garden of flowers. When that time comes, the oculists' and opticians' occupation will be gone.

The new school of painting represented by Troyon in France, Whistler in England, and Winslow Homer in this country, is bringing gray and neutral tints into vogue and avoiding contrasting colors. Nature does not use high colors; they are only brought into play to relieve the landscape, never to dominate over it. The savage, uncivilized taste delights in strong contrasts; but the highly civilized taste runs to neutral

tints, both in furniture and attire. I print this publication in contrasting colors because my readers are still barbarians in matters of color. The variety furnished is not from any vain striving after eccentricity, but to show what can be done in the way of contrasts, so that the reader may judge what hues are most pleasing to the eye. Nature gives us a blue sky with a foreground of fleecy gray clouds on a carpet of green grass, with a background of brown earth or yellowish sand. The ocean is many-hued, but its tints are neutral and restful to the eye. True there is white snow and white sand in nature, but they are rare in the habitable portions of the globe, and are always hurtful to the sense of sight. Pure blackness or darkness is almost unknown in nature; moonlight and starlight relieves it, and the human retina can never be trained to tolerate an excess of it. In view of these facts, I do not hesitate to assert that white and black for reading matter are simply infamous and damnable. They are murderous outrages upon the sense of sight. Men's eyes are not formed like cats' or owls', to look into the darkness, as they must do in reading black letters; nor do men usually stare straight at the sun at noon-day, as it is said eagles do; yet the theory of our whole literature is that the human eye is a combination of that of the cat and eagle. The dense stupidity of the whole reading world respecting this important matter is another mortifying instance of the limitation of the human faculties. Of course the whole book-publishing interests will deride this effort to get back to nature and common sense, as a change would involve loss to them. Nor will oculists and opticians favor it if they understand their business interests. The great idiotic, stupid reading public will jeer and howl at this attempt to save their eyes and injure the sale of spectacles; but the projector of *The Modern Thinker* is satisfied that he has begun an important reform, and that in fifty years from now there will be no white paper or black ink used in publications, except as examples to show the folly of the present and past generations.

ON STYLE.

Cultivated readers will notice that the editor of *The Modern Thinker* has paid very little attention either in his own writings or those of his contributors to mere literary expression. Word-mongers, if they hunt them up, will find many inaccuracies and inelegancies of language, judged by the ordinary standards. Now he does not undervalue verbal excellence, but he is satisfied that it may cost too much. At the present day there is a deplorable waste of human intelligence and effort in acquiring a knowledge of the etymology and syntax of the necessarily imperfect tongues now used by the human race. It must be borne in mind that in all probability there is a language of Man common to all races, which has yet to be discovered, or, if Mr. S. P. Andrews' claim holds good, which it has yet to be acknowledged has been

discovered. A slight acquaintance with phonography will suffice to show any one how barbarous and imperfect our English language is, even in the obvious matter of its primary sounds. We use some forty-two sounds in an ordinary speech, and have only twenty-four letters to express them. Nor is this all. We do not pretend to pronounce half the words even as they are spelt. Hence our written signs are fraudulent—are lies—and we waste precious, precious years of the lives of our children in trying to teach them these lingual falsehoods. The absence of all scientific character in the English as in other languages is shown by the disagreement of professed linguists. There are no such disputes among arithmeticians, mathematicians, and chemists, as there are among philologists. When men of sense, culture, and candor, like Dean Alvord, G. W. Moon, Richard Grant White, and all the leading writers upon grammar, differ so widely in everything relating to words, their uses and place in sentences, we may be sure the difficulty is inherent in the subject itself. If language had a scientific basis, there could be no dispute about anything connected with it. All doubt would soon be dissipated by demonstration. But while recognizing the fact that our language, and indeed all spoken tongues, are barbarous, compared with what they will yet be, it will not do for reformers, positivists, and scientists, to neglect correct speech, judged by the conventional standards. Accuracy of thought generally results in precision of utterance, and we who differ from the world in great things cannot afford to differ from it in little things. Hence our contributors must be plain and direct of speech; but as for elegance and fine writing, so called, we will none of it. Mere literary criticism and discussions about words the editor regards as a criminal waste of time and human intelligence, and those who want to fret their wits in pastime of this kind must look elsewhere. No work is worth anything that is not for the good and glory of humanity.

TOPICS FOR CONTRIBUTORS.

Persons who wish to write for *The Modern Thinker* would do well to read the following list of possible topics. They are not now placed in any definite order, but may be in a subsequent issue. The object of the editor is to stop purposeless writing, and to show the scope of the publication.

1. What is the verdict of science upon the conception of a personal God? How large a share has anthropomorphism in the idea of Deity or Deities, and what warrant has the conception from the order of nature? In other words, is our belief in a God derived from subjective idealizations or objective realities?

2. What does science say to the notion of a personal immortality? "If a man die, shall he live again?" What do we know about the life hereafter? and upon what objective basis does this conception rest?

3. How about causation? Is there a beginning and end, or should eternity be regarded as a circle rather than a straight line? How do we get our notions of First and Final causes—of the Absolute and Infinite—of Time and Space?

4. What are the facts with regard to the appearance of life on this planet? What is the latest result of discovery in this field? Do recent inquiries help or discredit the Darwinian hypothesis? Did the human race really develop out of some one of the lower animals? What are the facts, and what the most reasonable hypothesis to account for them?

5. What effect have the land-laws of different countries upon human well-being? Is there any peculiarity in the Chinese land-laws which enables so vast a population to subsist upon so comparatively small an area? What modifications should there be in our real estate laws to promote the greatest good of the greatest number? What effect will the wholesale granting of lands to railroad corporations have upon the future of the West? Are land monopolies to be countenanced? What are the limitations to the right of property in land? Which is the major and which the minor consideration—the good of the whole community or the sacred rights of property? What is the Positivist solution of the land question? What the Spencerian (*vide* Social Statics)?

6. Is there a "language of man" common to the whole race? Is it possible to invent, grow into or discover such universal language? What are the teachings of comparative philology? What does the tendencies of things lead one to expect? What does science say?

7. Is there a religion of man; one common to the whole human race, and which some time will be generally recognized? What progress has comparative theology made? In what respects do the various religions agree, and at what point do they diverge most? Is the religion of man to be an invention, a growth, or a discovery?

8. What is the true solution of the labor question? Is it coöperation or shall the armies of labor be led by captains of industry (capitalists) under moral restraint? Are trades-unions to be encouraged in this country? What value is there in Fourier's speculations? Can the socialists' writing be studied with profit?

9. What value is there in the writings of the political economists? What relation does political economy bear to sociology? Is a gold and silver basis currency necessary?

10. What are the true relations of the sexes? Is monogamy the most perfect form of marriage? Is it desirable to reorganize marriage scientifically? Which should be the head of the family, the man or the woman? Could society exist where frequent changes of married partners are permitted? What is the future of marriage? What is the true cure of the "social evil"?

11. Is stupiculture or the scientific breeding of human beings desirable, and if so, is it practicable? What do the laws of heredity teach

us? If personal qualities are transmissible, would it not be well to take some pains to increase the number of people with good strains of blood and to discourage the propagation of inferior breeds? Can this be done with the monogamic marriage, and if so, how?

From this hastily thought-out programme it will be seen that the editor wishes to have discussed all topics of the highest human interest. The periodicals now in existence are published upon the theory that the American people are children mentally—that what they want are pictures and stories; and the success of the *Ledger*, Harpers' *Monthly* and the illustrated papers shows that this unflattering conception has a basis of truth—that the great mass of the American reading public have no brains above their eyes. But there must be here and there a few persons deeply interested in the problems relating to the Where, Whence, and Whither of the human race, and it is for them this periodical is published. We shall devote no space to mere literary criticism or the settlement of disputed points in history. A prodigious amount of human cerebral force has of late years been wasted in rehabilitating the ruffians and strumpets of history. Why should so much time, talent and sympathy have been bestowed upon Lucrezia Borgia, Richard the 3d, Henry 8th and Mary Queen of Scots? When we have a true spiritual power intent upon the supply of real human necessities, the Macauleys, Motleys and Froudes of the future will be disciplined to expend their force in some more useful employment. Hereafter, be it remembered, all human effort can have but two objects, either to improve the race itself or to give man a better control over the planet he inhabits.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

In case the proprietor of *The Modern Thinker* has sufficient encouragement, it is his intention to employ the best minds of the age as contributors to its columns. The following are among the persons he means to apply to if the money is forthcoming:

Herbert Spencer, Prof. T. H. Huxley, John Tyndall, John Stuart Mill, Sir Wm. Thompson, George Elliot (Mrs. Lewes), Earnest Renan, M. P. E. Littré, Fred. Harrison, J. H. Bridges, Richard Congreve, G. W. Lewes, John Morley, Chas. Darwin, Carl Vogt, Prof. Seeley (Ecce Homo), Ludwig Meyer, Prof. Helmholtz, Dr. Buechner, and all the other noted European philosophers and scientists.

Of course, native talent will be secured as soon as known and recognized. Indeed, no permanent success can be hoped for, unless American scientists help by their contributions. The trouble, however, is that we have literally no American philosophers and scientists of any repute. We have a good many scientific specialists in this country, and a few third or fourth rate metaphysicians with a strong theological bias, but in the higher departments of speculative activity, we have no names as yet which the world holds in honor. It is a part of the mission of

this publication to give American talent in this direction a chance to be known.

RELIGION RECONSTRUCTED.

The whole tendency of advanced thought in this country has heretofore been in the direction of analysis—of disintegration. The progress of Biblical criticism and modern science has discredited the old creeds without supplying the basis for a new synthesis of emotion, belief, and practical life. Hence the anarchy which reigns supreme in Church, State, and Social Life.

It is curious to remark that, without an exception, the leaders of thought in this country have been destructives; they have been pullers-down, never builders-up. Look at the names: Channing, Emerson, Parker, Beecher and their followers and echoes. They all agree in discrediting the past—in denying that any objective basis of belief is possible or desirable as a bond of union—in exalting the individual at the expense of society—in appealing to the inner light rather than the outer form. And see what has resulted! The Unitarian movement has spent its novel force, and the sect which bears the name is only notable for agreeing to disagree. Its latest and logical development is in the person of the Rev. O. B. Frothingham, who is seriously at work trying to make disorganization organic; in other words, he is endeavoring to get people to act together whose only bond of union is the irreconcilable divergences of their fundamental beliefs: this is the logical outcome of the whole Unitarian or Liberal Christian school.

Theodore Parker was a pure destructive. He has left no school, no church—only a memory. Nor will Henry Ward Beecher fare any better. He practically ignores the theology of the sect to which he claims to belong. He has done more to discredit orthodox Christianity than any infidel writer of the present generation. Nor will he leave anything to posterity save the recollection of a somewhat remarkable personality and a few volumes of sensible sermons and essays. Emerson has preached the gospel of Individualism, and in so doing has helped to exaggerate some of the worst tendencies of the American mind. He has simply added to the prevailing anarchy.

The publication of *The Modern Thinker* signalizes a new departure in American thought. Henceforward the reformatory movement in this country will be organic, not destructive. Every new development of science, instead of merely discrediting the old, will help lay the sure foundation of the new synthesis. To destroy permanently you must replace; and this is the work to which the new scientific religion of Humanity will address itself. Ours is the only true church—the church infallible—universal. We tolerate no dissent and insist upon subordination, but our weapons are moral—spiritual.

What our aim is will be seen by Mr. Frederick Harrison's splendid article on "The Problem of Positivism," in this number.

A SUGGESTION.

No true Positivist cares to tamper with the faith of earnest believers in any of the Christian sects of the day. He has too much reverence for the past and too high a respect for the profound and noble sentiments which are called into being by religion, even when based upon illusions, to wish to subject pious and sensitive natures to the bitterness and demoralization of scepticism. But he has a right to insist upon truth-telling and integrity among scientists. The new spiritual authority must never tamper with the facts nor bear false witness in the disputes between science and theology. Our American scientists have shown a painful lack of what is popularly known as "backbone" in the face of theological prejudice, and the time has come when a public opinion should be created which will make it infamous for scientists in this country to give any countenance to the Mosaic account of the creation, or tolerate in any way the myths which form the basis of the Christian faith. Agassiz has much to answer for in quaking before the storm he once raised in speculating upon the origin of the human race, and the only excuse that can be put in mitigation of his want of pluck and scientific integrity is the patent fact that at that time he had no public opinion to which he could appeal to sustain him. Hereafter, then, let it be understood that philosophers and scientists will be called to a stern account for any hesitancy in accepting all the results of scientific investigation; and this is one of the reasons which calls for the existence of *The Modern Thinker*.

CONCLUSION.

The reader will notice that this publication is not announced as a serial. This is number one (1), as will be seen by the title-page, and number two (2) will not be issued until it is seen whether the American public care to sustain an enterprise of this character. The editor has no illusions upon this point. He is aware that out of the fifteen millions of adult Americans who read, but a few paltry thousand are interested in the high themes which it is the mission of such a publication as this to discuss. What little speculative activity there is in this country is as yet confined to the old theologies and forms of thought. Where a dozen persons are interested in positive science in its higher departments in America, there are a thousand in England, France and Germany. Intellectually, as a people, we are not much in advance of the Italians or Spaniards. All this will be bravely altered by-and-by, but at present philosophy is at a low ebb, and original thinking is very infrequent.

D. GOODMAN,
Editor "*Modern Thinker*."

July, 1870.