

EACH HIS OPINION.

At first sight it may seem almost superfluous advice to tell a man that he ought to have opinions on the creeds, politics, and institutions of the day; but yet, when a man is asked suddenly for his opinion on some every-day topic, some common-place subject, it is surprising how often he has to confess he has not given the matter thought, and beg off expressing himself.

This state of things was considered commendable in a man at one time, when it was deemed well for people to look to Church and State authorities as the only men to have opinions, and accordingly they trusted their politics to the king and his minister, and their creeds to the priests, contenting themselves with performing certain duties and swearing to certain beliefs in a mechanical sort of way, without knowing the why or wherefore. Men would leave hearth and home to fight almost anybody anywhere without a good idea whether the cause was just or unjust, the war necessary or unnecessary, content so long as the king willed it so. A doctrine had but to be asserted by some famous Professor, or Doctor, and the *ipse dixit* among students and disciples would have the weight of a Papal fulmination.

Orthodoxy ruled with a rod of iron, and brave was the man who dared ask leave to analyze the orthodox pill before swallowing! Gradually, however, very gradually, people, feeling the rule of orthodoxy irksome, rebelled. Robe and gown, clerical cravat and legal wig, began to lose the mysterious awe and impressiveness they were wont to inspire, and men recognized the fact that these dignitaries gathered their knowledge and acquired their information by sheer study and perseverance, and that they were not endowed or imbued with ready-made wisdom and infallibility.

Men who were searchers after truth grasped the idea that borrowing and inheriting opinion was not so worthy of them as patiently and studiously forming it, so based on evidence and fact that they could assert and argue from it. These truth-seekers were the men who became the lights of their times, never distinguishing themselves by orthodoxy and following the fashion; they made their names and won their fame by taking the dogmas and teachings of the day, analyzing, dissecting, and probing them to the core;—then, in the face of Church and State, judge and doctor, showing up what was rotten, and rejecting it. They had to suffer a hot time of it, these early heretics; they got lots of kicks and abuse, but they knew they had founded their opinions on rocks and were content to wait; for, though *veritas odium parit*, it still wins the day. As time rolled on, the spirit of personal investigation grew stronger, and it became easier to break away from dogma and conventionality in all subjects. The few who had judged for themselves gradually grew to be the many, and in every department of life there stood up men who, by the assertion of their independent, honest convictions, worked out the great revolutions in religion, politics, and science to which this age owes so much.

And now, in these days of cheap education, publications and travel, when we have every opportunity to think and form opinions for ourselves, it is our duty so to do—it is both privilege and duty to personally investigate the topics of the day, and arrive at honest, concise conclusions, not merely general ideas. In politics it is not sufficient to uphold such a party, but we must have decided views regarding the policy and various actions and bearings of that party. It is not enough to feebly acquiesce with such authors and writings, but we must have positive opinions regarding them. It is not enough to admit that the Press is beneficial, but we must have our convictions as to what are its duties, and what its abuses—what it may put before the public, and what it may not. Especially in our religion is it of importance that we be not satisfied with owning such a church or creed, but we must have our convictions as to the merits of the laws and government of that church, and the formula and doctrines of that creed.

On this subject of all subjects, it is imperative that we have decided opinions; for, until a man has decided whether he is responsible to God or merely to a self-made standard of morality, he cannot untrammelled give attention to the decision of other subjects. Instinctively a man speculates on that subject, and the sooner he decides the subject the better. If our beliefs cannot stand the test of fair argument and logic, however painful and humiliating the discovery may be, the sooner we see it and abandon them the better. We find it hard parting with pet doctrines and theories at the time, but feel glad we saw the error when we look back.

On many subjects it is hard to form decided opinions without much study and investigation, but we must not grudge the time and trouble, for duty to ourselves and fellows demands it, though friend and foe may resent our conclusions. We must still expect much intoleration—expect to find opinion forbidden on many subjects, as there has been a family creed on the matter, or because fashion and conventionality are against it. Especially on religious affairs men will dogmatise and dictate on their petty second-hand hear-say knowledge; but I have yet to learn that *doubt* is depravity, or that honest scepticism on any subject, be it religion or science, is not better than weak acquiescence in orthodoxy for the sake of comfort and peace. Let us fairly and squarely look at all subjects and questions that bear on the welfare and advancement of mankind, investigating and thoroughly scrutinising them as

we would a cash-book, and then, with our opinions well founded, assert them manfully, be we in a majority or minority.

Lastly, let us treat others when uttering their opinions as we would have them treat us—not discharging tirades of ridicule and scorn on conclusions we think weak and wrong, but for the sake of truth, arguing earnestly and pointing out the error, that we may gain our fellow and strength on the side of truth.

Guy Ross.

RECOLLECTIONS OF TRAVEL.

No. I.

Who does not recollect Interlaken? Who ever went to Switzerland for a long or short excursion and did not “do” Interlaken? Describing it would be alike useless to those who did or did not visit it. Those whose fortune it was to spend longer than a day or two there, it will be a scene for ever before their mind’s eye—a longing once more to behold “the Jungfrau and its glaciers, the glowing of the Alps at sunset. The summer heat, the expensive and overcrowded hotels, the dusty promenade with its crowds of beggars you may forget, (you meet those as well out of Interlaken) but Lake of Thun and Brienz the Heimwehfluh, the mountain park of the “Rugen,” never! and so it ought to be, a traveller ought to bring home a treasure of recollections, of scenery, agreeable incidents and interesting acquaintances made, a store to last him for life.

It is the fate of American travellers, who must combine pleasure with business, to overdo sight-seeing, to try to see in four weeks what ought to be seen in four months, and in most cases they bring home but a mass of confused ideas, and as souvenir a collection of photographs, and a file of paid hotel-bills, one about as valuable as the other.

It was my fortune for several summers to spend July and August on this delightful spot, on that retreat on the foot of the “Rugen,” the hotel Jungfrau blik. Rambling on those wooded hills I made an acquaintance of a more than passing nature, an acquaintance whose interesting personal history, whose high intelligence, thorough knowledge on all topics, lent to my sojourn at Interlaken an additional charm. I was thus accosted by an old gentleman, who enjoyed at those parts the soubriquet, “The Philosopher of the Mountain,” but fear not that I will introduce the reader to some goblin of the Alps and into wonderful crystal caverns à la Andersen’s tales, still my friend’s history has quite a romantic touch. My interlocutor, an old German nobleman, Von Rappard, resided in a most lovely retreat on this Mountain Park, in full view of the grandest Alpine scenery of the world, with glaciers on the one, the lakes on the other side. Meeting him oftener, the casual acquaintance grew into intimacy, and soon I learned in all its details the thrilling history of his eventful life. In 1848, engaged in the rebellion in Wurtemberg, condemned to death, he fled to Switzerland, his entire property confiscated; too proud to play the part of political martyr and mendicant, he quickly resolved to strike a new path, to support his young family. Assisted by his wife he worked hard and assiduously to prepare specimens for the microscope; these he disposed of, all over the Continent, chiefly in Paris. Many a year this nobleman by birth and by nature worked, assisted by his, as noble, wife, in this interesting vocation; earning enough to live at ease, surrounded by all that nature and art combined make life valuable. Later on a general amnesty restored to him an ample fortune, and he is now passing his winters in Rome, Florence, and his summers—“*beatus ille qui procul negociis*”—at his retreat at Interlaken.

The recollection of this intercourse and the hours passed in the circle of this highly intelligent family, conversing freely in four languages, belong to the most pleasant of those bygone days. Never tired to place before me the most interesting specimen of microscopic preparations, and reasoning on its wonders, an incident occurred which will for ever be present before my mind’s eye: He exhibited to me, affixed on glass a part of the genus “*Actiniae*” well known to the reader, as the beautiful appearance on the ocean, commonly called “man of war,” so gorgeously to look at, when under the rays of the sun, showing all the colours of the rainbow. The specimen appeared to be a part of those extreme threads, seeming to fly about like loosened ropes from a vessel. To the naked eye it appeared like a strong thread of a spider web, ending in a prominent point. But under the microscope—O wonder!—a chain and an anchor of exquisite shape, each link a model of artistic beauty, not one link resembling the other, but in all the variety each link perfection in itself; and the anchor—behold! the same shape as since oldest times we use for our vessels—an instrument given by Creator, God, Providence, or under any other name, to this inhabitant of the ocean, for a distinct purpose; and men, without seeing the pattern, without being instructed, made same instrument for same purpose! I noticed the old gentleman’s intelligent eye resting on me, wondering what I would think and what my impression would be. “We are the offspring of God,” exclaimed I. Upon which he grasped both my hands, and with all the ardour of youth he said: “Yes, we are the offspring of God! Here before you is the incontestible mathematical proof! The same creative faculty is part and parcel of our very nature! Darwin is wrong when he says ‘Man is an instrument-making animal.’ Man is more: the uncouth stone axe of the