

FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL
STANDPOINT.

HAVING recovered my wonted composure after the experience outlined in my note last week, I now revert to my original letter, in which I addressed a few words in closing my remarks to those who are in the habit of "wading through moral cesspools," in either telling or listening to off-color stories. Needless to say, I intended no offence, but apparently I gave some to one individual, who has written me a not too polite note expressing his views on the subject, which are, in short, that a man may be perfectly pure and manly and yet be led into doing on occasions what he would not like to make a practice of. I have neither the space nor the desire to reply. But I now emphasize what I have already said: There is no excuse for any professing gentlemen making a sewer of his brain, for that is practically what it amounts to. If you don't like that theory, don't adopt it as your own. If you have any doubts, ask some good lady friend, one of the big-hearted, sensible girls who would make a good wife, what she thinks to it, and be governed by her. But for goodness sake don't be thin-skinned!

I detest thin-skinned people. They see in every paragraph a reflection on their precious selves, when perhaps only a general lecture is meant. Result—trouble. They are always unhappy; at contraries and cross purposes with the conditions of existence, and most of their time is spent in useless fretting and grumbling. Gracious and wholesome influences visit them lightly, while sinister and grim ones control them absolutely.

To begin with, the man I call thin-skinned is an imaginative genius. He lives in a persistent dread of troubles that there is no valid cause to anticipate. Here let me say the thin-skinned "man" is generally a woman, for the female sex consists to a greater or less extent of this class. They are intelligent as a general rule, but their minds are fundamentally distorted, and their impressions take crooked and misleading shapes accordingly.

It goes without saying that the thin-skinned person is a confirmed egotist. His or her personality is infected with an exaggerated importance which the world does not conceive as its estimate by any means. The bump of self-esteem is abnormal, and the quality so absorbing that the subject overlooks the salutary duty of comparing his merits with those of other men in an important way, and asking, "After all is said and done, am I not getting my full share of success and honor—perhaps more?" But no. There is but one figure in his horizon, that his own. He acts upon the implied hypothesis that in taking the trouble to be born, he acquired a right to superior consideration, together with the right on his part to ignore all the rest of mankind except for the promotion of his individual purposes.

Such a character is permeated with selfishness. You may not see it, but it is there. It rarely or never lends itself to a

liberal or noble use. When it does a favor or makes a sacrifice, it negotiates for a larger advantage in return. The thin-skinned people are not the philanthropists and benefactors of the world. "Cast thy crumbs upon the waters, that a harvest of loaves may speedily be reaped," would seem to be their motto. The idea of spontaneous and disinterested friendliness is entirely foreign to their methods and tendencies.

There is a settled fear in the mind of the thin-skinned man that somebody is going to challenge his right to the peace he occupies. He is particularly sensible to the humble conditions of his origin and early life. He wants to forget that he was a tadpole before he began to be a frog and when people insist upon recollecting it he is offended. Another thing that worries him is the haunting suspicion that every playful allusion to his eccentricities is a deliberate attempt to impeach his integrity and tarnish his good name. An arrow of railery no matter how awkwardly aimed always hits him in a vital point and he prates of the hurt as if it were one of the gasping wounds of Caesar.

Enough. Better to have a politician's hide (like a rhinoceros) than to be encased in an oversensitive cuticle. Better have a totally unsusceptible epidermis than an abnormally developed covering delicate as the quick.

In one of our city Churches last Sunday, I heard a sermon that made my hair stand on end—that is it would have done so only fortunately (or unfortunately as the case may be) I am bald-headed. The preacher, an excellent man no doubt and well thought of was "driving home" some pointed remarks. How he did slang-whang the devil and all his works! Whew! you talk about the excitement of a lacrosse match or a horse race—to quote a phrase he himself used they were "not in it." His was very evidently not the gospel of peace and salvation, but rather the doctrine of sin and eternal damnation. One thing is certain I will never attend his church again and when I die I hope to be buried by a clergyman, not by a howling demagogue.

I have no use for the hoop-la evangelist who goes after his game with a meat axe and a circus-tent sort of slang. Further, I don't believe in turning a so-called house of God into an intellectual freak museum to persuade people to it. These machine made attacks of moral hysteria seldom effect great reforms. When you have to work a man into a sort of nervous frenzy to get him started along the path of Christian duty, it were well to close up the rear exit with a shot gun quarantine—that is, if you expect him to continue long therein. Furthermore, I haven't much faith in mouth Christians, people who are good because they observe certain church rules and so far obey the laws of the land as to keep out of the police court and the penitentiary. What the world needs these days is fewer ministers who sacrifice sanctity to sensationalism and more parishoners whose piety is not for Sunday

consumption only. In other words, more practical, broad-gauge Christianity and less hide bound dogmatism, more hard hustling on individual account and less hacking on the Lord for help.

I am not an atheist. In fact I have a profound disgust for these professional believers whose chief mental stock in trade consists in doubt and denial of revealed religion so called. I have noticed that about the time a youngster begins to make a general ass of himself, when he knows more than his father, then he begins to doubt his mother's religion and shrewdly asks his Sunday school teacher who made God, demonstrating by the aid of natural history diagrams that a large whale could in no wise swallow a small prophet and so on. He undertakes to demolish the whole fabric of the Christian cultus, to chase it off the earth, to make it lose itself on the shoreless wave. But somehow or other the church walls do not topple before the blast of the ram's horn or at the shrill piping of the big whistle, and, in the fullness of time, the youth learns that religion is anchored on something vastly heavier than the mere record of miracles.

My observations also lead me to the conclusion that about the time a youth has finished his open-mouthed poring over the pages of The Sage of Ferrey and the Age of Reason and some like literature, (for which, by the way, I have due respect) he has become a firm believer in the equality of man, the world's great shibboleth, the prayer of the populace by day, the dream of the democracy by night. He argues "all men are equal." Therefore, the ignoramus is placed on the same plane as the philosopher, the student in classics with his teacher, the man who blacks your boots and who perhaps cannot tell the time of the day by the clock on the city hall or distinguish between a bill of exchange and a Chinese wash bill, ranks in the same category with his employer! And because twenty-one years of age and of the male persuasion, he is competent to speak *ex cathedra* on municipal, provincial and national questions, and to pass upon a nice question of policy by casting a vote. Verily it is a cold day for the intelligent man when he is driven to the polls in the same carriage with the man, who cannot distinguish between a mustard plaster and a lemon pie, and knoweth not the swan from the porcupine. Each has a vote and each vote counts one, no more, no less.

EXERCEVIA.

Lady Dilke's literary tastes are closely allied to those of her husband, but nothing that she has yet published has attracted any considerable degree of attention.

In a London police court recently, Lady Donoughmore was fined \$100 for failing to give notice that her daughter was suffering from scarlet fever in a lodging house and for moving her in a public conveyance.

Miss Katharine Wormeley, the only satisfactory translator of Balzac into English, lives during the summer in a little house on Thorn Mountain, N.H., called "The Sater," the Norwegian name for an upland meadow.