

Discussions

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Tuesday, August 11.

- 8.45 A.M. PROFESSOR ADAMS, "Public Commissions considered as a Conservative Solution of the Monopoly Question."
 10 A.M. PROFESSOR TOY, "Religious Reformers and Founders."
 5 P.M. MRS. WHITE, "Vivisection."

Wednesday, August 12.

- 8.45 A.M. PROFESSOR ADAMS, "Review of Industrial History and Doctrine."
 10 A.M. PROFESSOR ADLER, "The Correlation of Moral Instruction with Other Branches, especially with the Teaching of History."
 5 P.M. PROFESSOR TOY, *concluding lecture*, "The Ethical Element in Religion."

DISCUSSIONS.

[Following the excellent suggestions of our correspondent, whose letter appears below, as well as our own judgment, it is our purpose to insert hereafter, under the present head, brief contributions, together with editorial observations such as from time to time are offered or suggested to us by our correspondents, or are brought to our notice by current controversy. Contributions bearing upon either ethical theory or ethical practice, of a length suitable to this department, are cordially solicited.—EDS. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS.]

THE MORAL ASPECT OF "TIPS" AND "GRATUITIES."

It occurs to a reader of the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS that it would be a very good thing if that journal were to add a department for the discussion of such ethical topics as are not of sufficient importance to demand an article to themselves. Nearly every question of conduct is in some of its aspects a question of ethics, and is capable of having light thrown upon it by such persons as are thoroughly familiar with ethical principles, and have formed the habit of applying them correctly to particular instances,—in other

words, by such persons as have knowledge and trained reasoning powers. There is hardly a dinner-table where some question of conduct does not come to discussion in regard to which people are found to have widely different views, and concerning which they would gladly know, while their interest in the subject is warm, what are the opinions of the professional expounders of ethical doctrine. It is not that they will be in too great haste to accept those opinions, but that they are anxious to know how the arguments by which they are influenced will stand the criticism of experts. There is hardly any question upon which ethical considerations have any bearing that is really trivial. It has been well said by a recent writer on logic that whenever we come to a wrong conclusion, we injure ourselves, not only by the wrongness of the conclusion, but in one (or both) of two other ways as well: either there has been an error in our method of referring this instance to a leading principle,—in which case we have weakened our reasoning powers,—or else the leading principle has been itself wrong, and by appealing it we have increased its force; for we cannot use as actual guides the principles which lie more or less vaguely in our minds without strengthening, to some extent, their hold upon us. In case the principles are ethical principles, there are hardly any wrong ones whose hold upon us we can afford to have strengthened.

As an example of the kind of question I mean, take the subject of giving fees to our inferiors when they perform some service for us for which they are (or ought to be) otherwise well paid. This is a question which always awakens warm interest whenever it enters a conversation. I insist upon it that the way in which it is settled is a matter of very grave consequence. It is certain to have an immense effect, one way or the other, upon dignity of character in a large number of human beings. The most important difference between the people of this country and those of the older civilizations, according to those foreigners who have studied us, is that in this country one person may be as good as another as regards essential worth of character. Now, it would seem to be impossible that this subjective feeling of worth and dignity could

continue to exist among individuals who have accustomed themselves to taking fees. If it were a question of waiters in restaurants and hotels alone it would be one thing, but the custom of making little presents to menials (one cannot avoid calling them menials as soon as they begin to accept little presents) is sure to extend itself over countless others of the relations between the rich and the poor, if it once gets a foothold. Are we willing, simply because a few thoughtless rich people, returning from Europe, find the European custom the most conducive to their comfort, to give up our manly American custom of straightforward pay for straightforward service? In the April number of the JOURNAL OF ETHICS, Mr. Leslie Stephen quotes Mr. Lowell's noble words descriptive of America,—“she that lifts up the manhood of the poor,”—and plainly says that the thing that grates most painfully upon him in his own country is the servility of the lower classes. Is any sacrifice involving possible comfort, or possible imputation of meanness, too great to make to preserve uninjured, in however slight a degree, a quality which is one of our country's most important distinctions?

On the other hand, that this view of the matter is not “absolute ethics” is apparent from the fact that in Japan a totally different sentiment prevails. The Japanese (as Miss Bacon has just shown in her charming little book on “Japanese Girls and Women”) consider that it is plain buying and selling that is degrading, and that compensation for service of all kinds should always be in the form of a present. The only gentlemanly way in which a cup of tea can be taken in a restaurant is by leaving a *douceur* of a few cents in payment on the tray. Has ethics anything to say as to which is, in reality, the higher ideal of conduct?

But even if it were admitted that the no-fee plan is the better one, is not individual observance of it absolutely without effect? Is not the opposite custom so firmly established already that there is no possibility of changing it, for one thing; and, if it were not, is not the nature of the custom such that what one person does is unseen by, and consequently ineffective upon, what another person does? If the latter is

the case, is there any principle which requires us to do what inflicts immediate loss upon our neighbor, and immediate discomfort upon ourselves, for the sake of theoretical considerations upon which our conduct is admittedly ineffective?

Besides cultivating a lordly condescension in the rich and servility in the poor, there is a third class of people upon whose happiness the custom of feeing has a marked influence. The moderately well-dressed people are quite sure of being neglected by all but superhumanly virtuous waiters for the sake of those persons from whom large fees may be expected. Is this a state of things which the moralist, whose motto is to be, according to Mr. Leslie Stephen, "social equality except for cause," can endure to see fastened upon us without a protest?

It is thus that I heard this question debated *pro* and *con* the other day by a company of people who had all, in the words of William James, "a strong vocation for the moral life," but who were unable to convince each other that one way was better than another in this matter. Has a *Journal of Ethics* anything to say upon the question? Whoever thinks it a question of insignificant importance may well reflect upon those other noble words of Mr. Lowell's:

"In life's small things be resolute and great
To keep thy muscle trained: know'st thou when Fate
Thy measure takes, or when she'll say to thee,
'I find thee worthy; do this deed for me?'"

CHRISTINE LADD FRANKLIN.

COMMENT ON THE FOREGOING.

The interesting letter of Mrs. Franklin introduces to our readers a topic that has wider social bearings than appear on the surface. In *Westermann's Monatshefte* for April, 1882 (pp. 82-100), Rudolf v. Ihering, the famous Göttingen jurist, author of "Der Zweck im Recht," presented to the German public, for the first time, what one may call a relatively scientific view of the social significance and consequences of "Das Trinkgeld." The tale, as told by v. Ihering, is an impressive one. The widely-extended mischief done by so seemingly insignificant a custom is depicted by an expert in social problems with extraordinary vigor and persuasiveness. Paulsen, in his "Ethik" (1st ed., p. 423; 2d ed., p. 446), mentions v. Ihering's "Interessante Studie" with approval, and apparently full agreement. A little consideration, for the rest, shows how suggestive the custom of "tips" and "gratuities" is of certain very general processes

