

enjoyment. They aim at the best without always attaining to it. They see the rapid advancement which civilized society has made in the domain of a new continent, and they unconsciously participate in the rapid movements of the times in which they live. How could it be otherwise in a land like this,—especially if it be true that this century (as Dumas, the French physicist, has said) is to be known in history “as the age of electricity.”

The criticism of the “St. James’s Gazette” is, however, rough. It does not show any nice appreciation of the circumstances it discusses. Most English observers of this country judge it from afar—by the capitals in the newspapers, by sensational reports in telegraphic dispatches, by the foolish and provoking parade of personalities in political, ecclesiastical, and social affairs. Even the semi-authorized report of Herbert Spencer’s impressions does not indicate that he has fully mastered the situation, though many of his comments are sound and sagacious. Nevertheless, all thoughtful Americans ought to, and they do, weigh, calmly and accurately, the criticisms which foreigners make upon our social life and its tendencies. Such remarks will include a great deal that is true and suggestive, with a spice of that which is false and provoking—but the digestion of it all will be wholesome.

Are the critics not right when they say that the Americans are unwilling to take the pains which are requisite to secure the highest results? Ask a college professor, for example, if the youth come up for matriculation well prepared; ask the editor what sort of manuscripts are offered for his inspection from writers who are eager to make their appearance in print; ask the elders in charge of a vacant pulpit if it is easy to find a new minister; ask in regard to medical education, what proportion of the young doctors annually graduated are fitly trained for their profession; ask for an architect to build a sightly and substantial public building; ask the school committee what sort of candidates offer for vacant places; ask the judges of portrait-painting how many true artists there are in this branch of art. Everywhere the answer may be heard: “many are called”—writers, teachers, artists, architects, physicians—but few are worthy to be “chosen.”

So we go on, not so steadily, not so safely, not so wisely as we ought. But the country is so vast, the natural resources are so rich, the freedom is so delightful, and the inheritance so abundant of the best which the world has produced, that we are, as a whole, a happy and contented people. We might, however, be happier in the present if our capacities were more judiciously enlarged and educated,—and surer that the inheritance we possess would be handed down unimpaired to those coming after us.

Meanwhile, if it is necessary, for the sake of a verdict, that the defendant should answer the prosecutor, we may, perhaps, be allowed to add that the writer in the “St. James’s” has replied in this article of his to the very query he propounds. He “wonders whether we in Europe, too, are ultimately to give way upon this silly prepossession, and to admit the equal power of everybody to discourse without previous preparation upon every conceivable subject at a moment’s notice.” The American readers of “St.

James’s” can give him their impressions on this point. For, in his hasty and ill-tempered, though partly just, criticism, he has sought only for facts to prove his point.

We do not know whether the story about Professor Sylvester is true or not, but it bears the marks of verisimilitude. Yet, after all, it is no discredit to the country or the youth that there is such a preëminent professor of mathematics among us, and that his presence is inspiring even to those who are but tyros. We can tell a story which is suggested by that of the “St. James’s.” A few years ago a young school-master of Pennsylvania, sharing, though more wisely than the tyro, the American enthusiasm for the best things, and especially for quantics, went to Baltimore to study with Professor Sylvester, with this result, that before long the writings of that young man were used as a textbook in the University of Cambridge, England.

Christmas.

THE almost universal observance of Christmas can hardly be accepted as an indication of a growing interest in the Christian fact which it celebrates, when we remember that it is the one religious festival which not only combines the pagan and Christian sentiments, but in which the pagan sentiment speaks with a more obvious appeal than does the spiritual, to the purely secular side of our nature. The green boughs brought from the frosty woods to freshen our over-civilized homes, and to hide or enhance our restlessly decorated churches, re-awaken the instinct which, in barbarous ages, frankly claimed outdoor nature as the sphere of man’s home and religion. The lighted tree, apart from any Christian association, has a charm of its own, fascinating to the veriest skeptic; and the Christmas cheer, the realizing of the gregarious instinct under conditions of civilized feeling, the intense recognition of human ties expressed in seasonable gifts, can hardly be claimed as the product of the purely Christian element in the day. Indeed we suspect that not a little of “Christmas joy” has no deeper source than a Pagan defiance of winter’s cold, as though the heart should cry to its chilling demands: “I defy you! I shall revel and be happy in spite of you!”

It is evident that a festival making such an unmistakable appeal to the secular side of our life—the pagan side—offers it a tempting point of compromise with the spiritual significance of the day which many a secularist has already availed himself of. Men whose adjacency to the Christian religion forbids being quite pagan in feeling, and men whose paganism forbids being quite Christian in faith, find a sentimental use of Christmas sufficient. They would probably say: “While you Christians rejoice to celebrate your divine child born in Bethlehem, let us rejoice to celebrate all human births everywhere. Light your Christmas-tree in honor of your Christ-child, of whom we know nothing, while we light ours to shine upon the children gathered around our knee. Keep your legend or fact of the angel-song, the ‘Peace, good-will,’ the guiding star, the Magi bowing and prophesying at the manger. Enough for us the ‘Peace, good-will’ from lips that we know and love, that we see a star of hope above our own home, that

our best wisdom confesses childhood's power to bend it at its cradle." It is obvious, however, that such a sentimental use of Christmas indicates a practical rejection of Christianity as a spiritual force. It is only when anything ceases to be regarded as a power that it is accepted as a picturesque ornament. In religious matters, at least, sentimentalism is the evaporation of power; and, in this growing use of the great Christian festival, we see in advance what the whole Christian religion might become should faith in its spiritual force become universally extinct. The unbelieving world would retain it, as the sentimentalist does now, to supply, with the satisfactions of an exquisitely picturesque mythology, those gentler feelings of our nature for which the energies of civilization make no provision. Christian people of a theological cast would be surprised to know how many have already turned over their religion from the conscience to the taste, and how many more are beginning to reject it, not so much as a disproved as an exhausted religion. The old-fashioned "infidelity" which claimed that Christianity was a delusion from the very first, has given place to the idea that whatever moral power it may have had has spent itself, and that the real center of ethical life is elsewhere. Fifty years ago an "infidel" was always suspected—often justly—of denying the Christian faith in order to escape its judgment upon his own ill-regulated character. To-day a skeptic is more likely to justify his denial for the opposite reason, that Christianity fails to exert the moral power claimed for it. Very few, perhaps, hold this view as a reasoned conviction. It is rather a feeling, partly fed, perhaps, by the modern ideas of development and evolution which enable us to think of humanity as having outgrown so many of the forces which once ruled it, but a feeling whose strength is shown in the way in which so many are beginning to treat the Christian religion as of only picturesque value, to be discarded by everything in our nature more serious than the requirements of taste.

What is it in the popular religion of our day which has made it possible for such a suspicion of its moral exhaustion to grow in the midst of every so-called religious community? For although those who hold to the Christian faith have a right to ask those who reject it: "Have you tested its moral power by the final test of trying to live up to it?" such a challenge has no weight unless it suggests to the doubter a clear idea of what it is he is asked to live up to. It is the fault of Christians themselves if no such clear idea challenges the moral skepticism of the age. Certainly it will be their own fault if such skepticism does not force them to some sort of unanimous statement of what it is in their religion which must be tested by the moral necessities of mankind.

In the meantime, the power of Christianity remains a fact quite apart from the insufficient account of it given by the theories and practices of nominal believers, a fact which any intelligent person can test for himself, letting it exert in his life whatever power it has. The moment a man of mental integrity and moral earnestness determines to apply that test to Christianity before discarding it, he will find his determination the best guide to its real power. He will find his attention gradually fixed, not upon a sys-

tem, theory, code of laws, or a church, but upon a divinely human life radiating its inspiration in every age. He will discover that what he is to accept or reject belongs, not to the region of ideas, but to the region of fact. He is to reject or accept the personal influence of the Christ whose name is in all the Christmas airs, and chimes, and carols, as his spirit is in all humanity. He is to test and decide whether that life is or is not an exhausted power,—is, or is not, to be classed with the forces which the world has outgrown. Perhaps, in such an earnest attitude, his first discovery will be of his inability to pass final judgment upon the moral value of such a being. And then, as what is best in him opens to that divinely human appeal that calls from life to life, which never reached him through any of the formulated aspects of religion, he may discover that his reluctance to judge it springs from the fact that his deepest moral nature is still swayed by the very force which he once suspected of exhaustion. Such an earnest inquirer will find it easy to see how the exhaustlessness of Christianity's ethical power means only the exhaustlessness of the life at the center of it, which is itself the realization of our highest ideal. From the heart of this mighty fact of a perfectly realized life, presented as the perpetual standard of all life, issues the most universal and the profoundest encouragement that ever spoke to man—the encouragement of a divine faith in the capacity of his moral nature to adjust its desires and energies to the requirements of that standard. Here we think is reached the essentially invigorating force of the Christian religion. It shows to the universal conscience the personality of Christ as a living statement of the highest moral demand possible to be made upon human nature, and also as a living expression of the divine trust in every one's ability to respond to it.

The question of discarding Christianity, therefore, is the question of discarding an aid to moral effort which no mere system of ethics, however evolved, claims to supply,—the attractive power of a life, perfectly realized and yet in closest sympathy with the most initial desire to adopt it as the standard and inspiration of one's own character. It is hard to understand how an earnest man, who sees that the character and personality of Christ constitute the radiating center of Christianity, can discard so august a thing as though it were outgrown, until he has tested it for himself, or, in the language of common sense, has tried to live up to it. We are familiar enough with the story of intellectual reactions from Christian philosophies and theologies as powers outgrown, but we wait in vain for the man who can look the world in the face and say: "I have judged Christ himself at the bar of my conscience and found him and his ideal insufficient." Who can tell us that he has outgrown the character of Christ?

Unless Christmas has already degenerated to a pagan holiday, it surely has a special meaning for those who are beginning to suspect that the religion of the Son of Man has exhausted its power. It is the one festival through which the "highest, holiest manhood" looks into our life, claiming recognition from what is holiest in us all. As we put aside the accessories of the day and look at the heart of it, we hear an inspiring call, which, through the philosophic con-

fusion of the age, finds our conscience, as a brother's voice might reach us through the tumult of a crowd. No one keeps Christmas, nor hears its true carol, until he sees that vision. He who, having seen it, rejects it

as an exhausted spiritual force, has not so much judged Christianity as confessed himself incapable of responding to the most inspiring appeal possible to be made to the spirit of man.

COMMUNICATIONS.

"The Growth of the United States."

BOSTON, MASS., Oct. 17, 1882.

EDITOR OF THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

SIR: In the article on "The Growth of the United States," in the October issue of your magazine, on page 924, I am sorry to note that one hypsometric group dropped out of my statement of the distribution of the population of the United States according to altitude.

The figures for the several groups should be as follows:

Under 100 feet.....	9,152,296
100 to 500.....	10,776,284
500 to 1000.....	19,024,320
1000 to 1500.....	7,904,780
1500 to 2000.....	1,878,715
2000 +	1,419,388
	50,155,783

Truly yours,

Francis A. Walker.

"Lincoln's Height."

EDITOR OF THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

SIR: I have read the communication in THE CENTURY for October, and can only reiterate that Abraham Lincoln was just *six feet one inch* when I measured him in April, 1860. As before stated, I placed him back against the studio wall, and made a mark over his head, as I had done in the case of Senator Douglas, two years before. I measured from the floor up to the mark several times, in order to be sure I was right, desiring to know the exact difference in the heights of these two men, which was just twelve inches. I thought Mr. Lincoln fairly erect when I marked on the wall. Possibly he might have stretched up an inch or two higher, but at that date it is hardly possible he could have expanded three inches in length! I am now reminded of a story told me while at Springfield, a few years since, of Mr. Lincoln's faculty for stretching himself out in length. I did not know of this, however, at the time I measured him, or I should have requested him to give his fullest height. The following is the story:

A wager was made one day in Springfield, between some friends of Mr. Lincoln and of O. M. Hatch, late secretary of the State of Illinois (also a tall, slen-

der man), as to their relative height. Mr. Hatch was first placed against the wall, so a mark could be made over his head, Mr. Lincoln remarking, at the time, "Now, Hatch, stand fair." When the mark was duly made, Mr. Lincoln was placed beside it, and at first Mr. Hatch's friends declared that they had won the wager. "Wait," said Mr. Lincoln. "The mark is not yet made for me." Then he began to stretch himself out like India rubber, and went nearly two inches above Mr. Hatch's mark, carrying off the stakes amidst the shouts and laughter of the bystanders.

In the model of the statue I made of him in 1878, I represent him six feet three and a half inches high, which is over his real life-size.

Mr. Lincoln looked taller than he really was, owing to his thin, bony, lank form.

Leonard W. Volk.

"The Taxidermal Art": A Correction.

EDITOR OF THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

SIR: In the December issue of your magazine a clerical error has crept into the article on "The Taxidermal Art." On page 232 is Mr. Beard's illustration "Woodcock and Young," the mounting of which is credited to me. I beg to state that the beautiful little group so graphically represented was mounted by Mr. Thomas W. Fraine, of Rochester, N. Y., and is the result of a careful study of the live birds in captivity. I am unwilling that Mr. Fraine should be denied the honor and the right of having his name appear with his work, or that I should be the recipient of credit which belongs to another.

Very truly yours,

William T. Hornaday.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 23, 1882.

[We are also informed that the Harlequin duck, represented in the same article, was mounted by Mr. Scott, and not by Mr. Webster. These gentlemen being unknown to us, special care was taken to give the proper credits, and we regret exceedingly that our desire to do justice to the taxidermists in this respect should have been thwarted by misinformation. ED. C. M.]
