

[COMMUNICATED.]

HOBBIES AND CRANKS.

It is no uncommon thing for a man or woman to have a hobby, which to them is the greatest thing on earth, and they are often surprised that this hobby of theirs possesses no attraction whatever to others. Round this, a large proportion of the thought of such persons revolve; it may be a harmless thing, like the collection of postage stamps, or it may be as serious as one as that which animated "Jack the Ripper," but between the two extremes there is every diversity of preference, amounting in severe cases to what might be called monomania or that existence of mental obsession which justifies us in calling a man "a crank."

Hence, men have sought for that apocryphal universal solvent which had power to transmute all base metals into gold; for that universal elixir which was the guarantee of indestructible health and everlasting life; for that force which would secure the secret of perpetual motion, beyond the sneers and cavil of the scientific world. Social reformers without number have each had their panacea for the evils of society, from the advocate of multi-form and all-pervading organization, to the undisguised anarchist who is the foe of any rule, government or control. License and liberty to such have been almost synonymous terms, and labor for bread a crime, so long as undistributed wealth was within reach of the despotism of unwelcome toil.

The last general industrial and commercial stagnation in the midst of bounteous harvests, creative machinery and untold millions of hoarded money, demonstrates that the labor of the world and all its products can be manipulated by men who have a hobby whether that be gold, silver, paper or the three in combination. Human ingenuity works in devious ways, and mental crankiness can produce widespread havoc and ruin, while exhibiting the softness of the cooling dove.

Educational projects are and will be the shuttlecock between rival parties on the playground of our common life. Professionalists who know little or nothing of man's origin or destiny presume to dictate from the simple observation of faculty, the culture of the whole. They aim in ignorance to make the pyramid stand upon its apex, assured that if it fall in any direction, it will be pyramidal in form at least. Rival schools of medicine have hobbies from infinitesimal doses of homoeopathy to the drenches and douches of the herbalist and hydropathist; nature meanwhile in most instances cheating the charlatans of medicine by self-recuperation, or else yielding in sheer despair to the potency of ignorance, and hiding the results thereof in the kindly grave.

Great reformatory institutions seem to be based upon untenable views—misconceptions of crime, sanity and poverty; and methods which fail for lack of broad ideas of man and things. Lunatics and madmen are confined for life; criminals are held in restraint, and when a sentence is served are turned out without anxiety as to re-

form; while poverty vegetates in crowded courts of cities, and in mammoth establishments without a glimpse of liberty, with but desultory and accidental or unintentional effort at the creation of self-independence; society seemingly deeming it easier to support than to educate or redeem the victims of its permitted conditions.

Untold millions of treasure, wrenched by taxation from a passive people, or laid upon the altar by sympathetic and philanthropic souls, are spent in futile ways, only grazing, as it were, the outer fringe of these giant evils, which mook at modern pretensions to enlightenment in its deal with the problems of suffering humanity. Even the beneficence of religion is made the football of respectability. Its ministers are in the main professionals, caring little for the cleansing of the sinks of vice, and sprinkling at a distance with the eau de cologne of ostentatious charity the purlieus of poverty and of living death.

In the great Parliament of Religions lately convened at Chicago there was had but a reiteration of creed, more Christianity being expressed by the heathen than by its most eloquent and gifted leaders; but the whole—Christian and heathen—apparently were more bent upon airing their erudition than in considering how to apply the truths of revelation, held by both alike, to the redemption of the world, the renovation of society, the increase of true intelligence, or the practical application of the idea of universal brotherhood to the exigencies of our sadly defective civilization. The hobby of each one was creed and church. It was more to be a Catholic, a Baptist or a Buddhist than it was to be a man, and to divert the golden stream of Paeonius in a sectarian direction, rather than to lift the incubus of poverty and sin from the stricken multitudes of earth. Was it Madame Roland who exclaimed on her way to the scaffold, "Oh, Liberty! How many crimes have been committed in thy name?" Had she been a religionist instead of a revolutionist, she only needed to substitute the word "Religion" in place of "Liberty," to have made that rebuke which would have caused the cheek of professionalism to tingle wherever that is found! Not, perchance, for its sins of commission as much as those of omission, which have reached, as it were, to heaven!

In a commercial age men make a hobby of trade. For it they circumscribe the world, and open the untrodden haunts of semi-civilization, compelling trade at the point of the bayonet and by the mouth of the cannon. India, China, Africa and the islands of the sea have suffered conquest at the dictum of this hobby worshipped by an asserted superior race. This is not, however, confined to action on a gigantic scale. Large cities, small towns and obscure villages have in them men who mounted on this hobby ride it to death. It is trade, trade, nothing but trade! Many worthy men no doubt are engaged in this direction. But when there is nothing else of interest to a man in life he is like one who is color-blind. There is a world but it is divested of its glow and beauty. There is social life, but unless it is an auxiliary to his business it has no

charms for him. There is family life, but he takes no time for its enjoyment. A wife and family become secondary; they are well provided for as a matter of course, but home life is more than bread and dinner, and clothing and amusements. Even money lavishly spent on schools and what is called an education, may separate parents and children and raise a barrier in the face of accord and unity which is fatal to the highest spirit of genuine home. There is religion, that best solace to the human soul, but its gentle influence is smothered between the pages of the ledger. Credits and debits absorb and control the time and thought, the body and brain. A man becomes as fatally engulfed in figures and goods as were the Egyptians in the roaring sea. There is intelligence in the world, books and literature, and art and science. But the man who makes business his undivided hobby, only reads the "trade paper," speculates upon what he can buy or sell at a profit, and like an eagle on the highest pinnacle of observation which looks not at the glorious world, he sees but that which serves himself; famine or plenty, sunshine or shower, trade, traffic and deal bound alike the horizon of his future and his present.

Who has not wondered at this, that men should be satisfied with but one hobby, one idea? And yet, after all, it may be that in some way such men have moved the world. Unheard at first and all unnoted perhaps, persistence has secured in time, attention. So the labors of the alchemist, and the delvers into things unknown, may have in the flight of time pioneered the way for the triumphs of later science and benefits at large. The squabbles of churchmen and the contention of medical schools, may have proved on one hand a highway for sublimer ethics, and on the other, that study of "the human form divine," which evolves knowledge of function and certainty of law. Through the fire and smoke of intellectual war there may come if not already the peace of decisive authority and assurance of rest.

The use and benefit of diversified hobbies—of positive craze, may not always be clear at the time; yet if these are the means by which Providence works, criticism may stand rebuked in proving that His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as ours." Even were men in general "so straight that they leaned the other way," by and by, they will become more and more symmetrical and harmonious and the roundness of humanity will stand revealed. Men of one idea, one hobby, one line of thought, will move into more generous development and a grander manhood; social, industrial, political, scholastic, medical, scientific, and religious culture will be blended for one common purpose, the enlargement of the soul by the exercise of its inherent faculties, and the salvation of the physical as the tabernacle of the indwelling spirit, that He may be all in all.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appeareth we shall be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is."