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PYTHAGORIC.

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The catholic kindness of the philosopher who conducts The Open Court gives me a hearing before its bar, to present the claims of certain ideas. I accordingly undertake to show faulty, as methods neglected or described the use of which I shall advocate. These pleadings will make up a series of briefs, or articles, to be entitled "The Critic of Arguments," the word critic here meaning an art, like logic, etc. But I shall beg leave to interpose among these essays others relating to points in the history of human reason, treated mostly with special reference to the practical lessons they suggest.

"Many loved Truth, and labored to find her; few found her, and few knew her; the least of them knew her better than the wisest that sought her."—Ecclesiastes.

So sang James Lowell. But he knew, as well as anybody, that no dryads could ever have expected anything more from his plodding than the "cast mantle" of truth. The individual scholar looks upon himself as only one of a vast army of ants who are collectively building up something which no one of them can comprehend in advance or is destined ever to see, but which is to be the solace, stimulus, and strength of future generations. The student's life would lack something of its proper dignity if he did not well know, at the outset, that, in embracing it, and thus surrendering the ordinary joys of life, he has to look forward to no personal compensation, whether material or sentimental. I mean this of the American student, only, for of course all is very different in continental Europe, where learned men are sought after by universities, and have an honorable status, instead of being counted as cranks. What is a bit discouraging in his prospect, to a young man who contemplates devoting himself to intellectual affairs, is the assurance that all his life long he will be prevented from doing his work thoroughly well, and from competing with European rivals, owing to the impossibility of procuring the necessary books. True, there are a few great libraries in the expensive cities, open at stated hours. But to study one must burn the midnight oil, and must have many books always at hand. No poor grub will, in any of the dreams that invention brings, ever fancy that, among all the rich Galleon clubs, a single bibliophile could be found who would deprive himself of half a dozen rare volumes, in order, with the proceeds of their sale, to purchase a thousand works of value to be loaned to one who would actually use them for the world's good!

In these days, we have seen all sorts of artisans and manual laborers associating themselves to enforce the respect of those with whom they deal; but it was only a little while ago that I heard of the actual existence of a seer's society of scientific students, called the Pythagorean Brotherhood.

It is a beautiful name. I would it were given to me to write the life of Pythagoras; for it is not only the sublimest of all human biographies, but the task would also afford a unique opportunity of showing how a true logic would deal with a great mass of weak testimony, and of putting in a clear light the futility of the canons which historical critics are now in the habit of applying to such cases. Open any modern history of philosophy and you will find that the story of Pythagoras, except in a few colorless outlines, is erased altogether, on the ground that it rests upon very late authorities, to follow whom would not be "safe." Can anybody explain what that word means? The Latin salvus illum means: I have come out without loss; and so when an insurance company judges a risk "safe," they mean that they will take a thousand like it and that what they lose on some of them will be made good on others. If this is the sense in which historical beliefs are said to be "safe" or otherwise, one essential factor in determining whether they should be so regarded must be their value to us in case they are true. One would risk more for the sake of knowing that the ideal Pythagoras lived, than he would for the sake of knowing that the Platonic Socrates lived. The best of the story should be true, to judge by the elevated character of all the Pythagoreans we hear of; and when we remember how intensely secretive they were, and how they refrained from so much as naming their master, the late divulgement of
but to believe that the Pythagoreans did keep their mathematical discoveries to themselves; and all the testimony there is in favor of the fact fails to impress me as an impetus to deny. That is impossible, I am wonting in the true critical spirit. But since they must have earned by their living the practice of the mathematicals, and learned the art of commensuration, surveying, etc., it would plainly be in the interest of the guild that this "mystery" should remain a "mystery" to outsiders. When Boehtius, about A.D. 500, gives the learned account of a sort of abacus, consisting of a table ruled in columns for the decimal places, in which columns characters substantially the same as our Arabic figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, were written, he says that this table and these digit-characters were used by the Pythagoreans. True, the ghouliness of this passage has been much disputed, notwithstanding one of the manuscripts dating from the tenth century, long before the introduction of the Arabic notation into Europe. But these doubts are now given up, at any rate by the best authorities. Still, hardly need say that every self-respecting critic rejects the statement of Boehtius that these figures were used by the Pythagoreans. For how could Boehtius, A.D. 500, know anything about the secrets of a club, of which two hundred years before, he had never before been publicly spoken of through either the widest limits of the Roman Empire, unless perhaps in Egypt, where some hieratic characters are fancied to resemble them), are modifications of the letters of the Coptic alphabet, at that time in wide use.

After that time, these figures were heard of again until Muhammad ben Musa brought them once more from Khiva in the fifth century, at the summons of the Arabian Khalif. When, in the tenth century, they first appear again in Europe, they are strangely attired, not to Argan, Turks, Parthians, Persians, Egyptians, etc., Pythagoreans, but to the Chaldeans; and they hear (at least in name) these Hebrew names:

1. Iesha
2. Yeshu
3. Baru
4. Nebu
5. Ieua
6. Colin
7. Zefba
8. Tathlins
9. Colinas
10. Chelina

M. Lenormant, the Assyriologist, recognized five of these words as corruptions from the Semitic speech of Babylonians, viz. — igin = leibeh; arba = ara; qib = khamais; zebbe = zebba; abib = abu, i.e., "human facts of nature and of history answers that question, plainly. The movement has been on its way to sure accomplishment, since the day on which the truth began to escape all tongue of men and women gave up their lives and all their individual hopes to that great end.

Objection may also be raised to the word "animal" and "primitive" as applicable to savage humanity. It may be denied that there exist at present as simple a form of human consciousness as those which have been described by anthropologists. It may be maintained that the peoples so called are degenerations from a higher order, or that they have been modified by subsequent experience. We need not deny it. Evidence is not conclusive. But even the former statement would not "civilize" that man. They are not "civilized" in the sense of having exhibited the traits of any particular race of early man, but they possess their geologic characteristics. Christianity is exhibited by a few races, for the most part former-faithers, such as the Ostrogoths (the dwarf tribes of Egyptian Africa). The Christians are, indeed, a literary race: they live in cities and are dressed in the same garments as men: they wear no clothing. Their food consists principally of grains and beans. Little is known about their lives that they save in their civil lives or before the sixteenth century. They are engrossed, marry,