



DEVOTED TO RATIONAL SPIRITUALISM AND PRACTICAL REFORM.

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THE COSTS OF SENSUALISM.

Timothy Titcomb, in one of his "Preachings upon Proverbs," in the *Springfield Republican*, thus forcibly portrays the philosophy and the costs of sensual indulgence. Let the reader remember that Spiritualism, so far as it relates to morals, is the opposite of sensualism, and tends to raise mankind above its power, that they may live in the spirit, and not after the flesh.

In the constitution of man—a constitution which associates spirit with matter by marvellous marriage of organisms, and intimately interchanging sympathies, and subtle interdependencies—the Creator has so constructed the body that it shall convey to the mind, for its comprehension, the properties and qualities of material things.

These properties and qualities are communicated by and through the senses, and these senses are so constituted as, in their exercise and office, to be affected by pleasure or pain. Chiefly the office of the senses is that of conveying pleasure.—For the sense of smell, the vital alchemy at work in the flowers elaborates an infinite variety of perfumes. For the sense of taste, the food is prepared in meats and fruits and grains of an infinite variety of flavors. The auditory sense is regaled by birds and brooks, by instruments which the cunning hand of man has made, and by that greatest of all instruments, the human voice. Light ministers to the pleasure of vision, reflected by numberless forms of beauty. In fact, there is no pathway that leads into the penetralia of our natures, and gives passage to the comprehension of the good things of God, that does not absorb something of the divine aroma of that which it bears.—The process of eating, by which we prepare for deglutition the food necessary for our support, is a process of pleasure. We do not gorge our food like the anaconda, impelled by a bald and beastly greed; but its qualities please our senses.

Now, so long as these senses are kept to their appropriate ministry—always a subordinate one, in that they deal entirely with the qualities and properties of matter—so long will it be well with the soul to which they minister; but whenever the soul turns to them as the source of its highest pleasures, and seeks for the multiplication and intensification of those pleasures as the great end of its life, then the whole being is prostituted, and absolute, unmixed evil is the natural and inevitable result. There is no law in the universe more certain in its operation than that which punishes sensuality. The man who makes a god of his belly feels the result in an unwieldy, gouty frame and a stupid brain. The man who delights in the intoxication of his senses by the use of stimulants, wears them out, and poisons, even to their death, body and soul. The man and the woman who seek, by the gratification of desires unhastened by love and unwarranted by law, to filch from a heaven-ordained relation the delights of its hallowed commerce, and give themselves up to this form of sensuality, never fail to win to themselves moral corruption or induration, and bodily imbecility and disease. At the gate of this garden of sensual pleasure the angel stands with his sword of flame, and no man enters unsmitten of him. In the path of sensuality in all its multiplied forms God has placed barriers mountain-high, to stop men, and frighten them back from the certain degradation and destruction to which it leads. The path to life is in the opposite direction.

I have said thus much upon the philosophy of the prostitution of the soul to sense that I might the more readily reach the convictions of a generation which, active as it is in intellectual and Christian development, has stronger tendencies to sensuality than any of its predecessors in this country. As wealth increases in any country, the tendencies to sensuality, through the temptations of idleness and the growth of the means of gratification, always increase. The history of national decline and downfall is but a detail of the effects of sensuality. The elevation of style in living beyond a certain point, always impinges on the sensual. Beyond this point, that which we call luxury commences, and luxury is but sensuality refined. In this country, we are all seeking for luxury; and those who cannot afford it, associated with homes, home pleasures and home restraints, embrace such forms of sensual gratification as come within their means to purchase. Men who are poor, look on with envy, and are seeking on every side, in new philosophies and systems and phases of religion, for the license which shall give them more of sense with smaller drafts on conscience. As the free spirit of the age breaks away from bondage to old ideas, old bigotries, and old superstitions, it goes wild, and its newly found liberty runs daringly and blindly into forbidden fields. The free-love doctrines and free-love practices of the day, the multiplication of cases of divorce, and the shameful infidelities that prevail, are all indications of the sensual tendencies of the age.

Where penalty succeeds so poorly, there may seem to be rather poor encouragement for preaching; but, in my opinion, the teachers and preachers of the age should direct more of their power against a tendency which is doing more to undermine the character of the American people than their sateless thirst for gold. Even in the general strife for wealth, the desire for luxury is largely the motive power. The object kept

prominently in view is feasting,—eye-feasting, ear-feasting, tongue-feasting, or the feasting of other or of all the senses—and this beyond natural desire, and with the wish and intent to coax from the organs of sense more of pleasure than they can afford with health to themselves and the souls to which they minister.

Now my opinion is that to a man, or a body of men, prostituted or in process of prostitution to sense, there is very little use in talking of religion or morals. Those are motives which they do not understand. So I address myself to the selfishness of the age, as a motive, the strength of which may not be questioned, and bid it withdraw its hand from this fire on pain of losing it. "Cent per cent do we pay for every vicious indulgence," says the proverb; but it is too moderate by half in its estimate of expense, for a youth of sensual pleasure can never compensate for a life of pain. If you do not believe this, ask the debauchee whose senses and sensibilities were long since burned to ashes. Seek further testimony, if you will, of her whose brief life of sensuality is closed by abandonment; or of him whose gluttony has made him a disgustingly bulky bundle of ailments, or of him whose nerves shiver with the poison on which they live. If you say that I am dealing with extremes, without analogies to yourselves, retire into your own consciousness, and question what you find there—old sins of sense that start up and fill you with remorse and fear—old wounds of conscience gaping and bleeding still—old fractures of character that refuse to unite, and make you shudder at your own weakness—old stains upon your purity that memory will not allow to fade. This process will prove to any man of ordinary weakness, who has been subjected to ordinary temptations, that never, in a single instance, has he indulged in an unlawful sensual pleasure without paying for it a thousand times in pain.

The universal fact, based in universal experience, is, that there is nothing in the world that makes so poor a return for its cost as sensual pleasure. No man ever traded extensively in this line without becoming a bankrupt in happiness. It does not pay, and cannot be made to pay, and every man would see and understand this if he would keep an account of his receipts and expenditures. Let me help you to open a book of this kind. Credit sensual pleasure for a spree—a night of hilarity, produced by drinking and feasting; and then turn to the other side of the account, and debit it with the details of cost—money enough to furnish bread for a hundred hungry mouths; a day of languor, pain and indolence; a damaged reputation which may interfere with the projects and prospects of a whole life; a loss of self-respect, and a deadening of moral sensibility; a reduction of the capacity of enjoyment and of the stock of vitality; the sullen pangs of a reproving conscience; the tears of a mother and the severer anguish of a father—all these, and more, for an hour of artificial insanity! How does the account look?

Suppose we try another: Credit Sensual Pleasure for the illicit indulgence of a powerful passion. Then place the cost upon the debit side of the ledger; shame and fear, conscious loss of purity, the possession of a foul secret that is to be carried into all society, and into all relationships, disease and remorse, or, what is more than all these, hardness, brutality, and the formation of habits whose only end is ruin. I may not, through fear of giving offense, enter into all the details of the debit side of this account. They may be found and read of all men in graveyards, in hospitals, in brothels, in garrets and cellars, in ruined families and ruined hearts and hopes. Now does this thing pay?

I have presented only the private side of this account, and that but imperfectly. There is a public side. The innumerable paupers whose life is supported by the state, owe their pauperism, directly or remotely, in three cases out of four, to sensuality—to strong drink, licentiousness, or some form of extravagance that proceeded from a devotion to sensual pleasure. Idiots begotten in drunkenness, lunatics through various forms of sensual vice, criminals who are caged in every jail and prison like wild beasts, diseased creatures, alike loathsome to themselves and others, crowded into numberless pestilential hospitals,—all these are public burdens, imposed by the sins of sensuality. If we run through the whole catalogue of crimes we shall find them all growing directly or indirectly out of this comprehensive vice. In fact, it may be said that all crime, with all its consequences, is but a manifestation of the dominance of sense over reason and conscience.

In this view—and no one knows better than its victims that it is the correct view—sensuality rises into the position of the grand scourge of mankind. It is the mother of disease, the nurse of crime, the burden of taxation, and the destroyer of souls. Oh, if the world could rise out of this swamp of sensuality, rank with weeds and dank with deadly vapors—full of vipers, thick with pitfalls, and lurid with deceptive lights, and stand upon the secure heights of virtue where God's sun shines, and the winds of heaven breathe blandly and healthfully, how would human life become blessed and beautiful! The great burden of the world rolled off, how would it spring forward into a grand career of prosperity and progress! This change, for this country, rests almost entirely with the young men of the country. It lies with them more than any other class, and

more than all other classes, to say whether this country shall descend still lower in its path to brutality, or rise higher than the standard of its loftiest dreams. The devotees of sense, themselves, have greatly lost their power for good, and comparatively few will change their course of life. Woman will be pure if man will be true. Young men, this great result abides with you. If you could but see how beautiful a flower grows upon the thorny stalk of self-denial, you would give the plant the honor it deserves. If it seem hard and homely, despise it not, for in it sleeps the beauty of heaven and the breath of angels. If you do not witness the glory of its blossoming during the day of life, its petals will open when the night of death comes, and gladden your closing eyes with their marvellous loveliness and fill your soul with their grateful perfume.

ANECDOTES OF SWEDENBORG.

The following passages from Wilkinson's Life of Swedenborg are sufficient of themselves, in the absence of all other evidence, to establish the reality of those powers of the spirit which we have been accustomed to term "supernatural."

THE FIRE OF STOCKHOLM.

"On Saturday, at 4 o'clock, p. m." says Kant, "when Swedenborg arrived at Gottenburg from England, Mr. William Castel invited him to his house, together with a party of fifteen persons. About 6 o'clock, Swedenborg went out, and after a short interval returned to the company, quite pale and alarmed. He said that a dangerous fire had just broken out in Stockholm, at the Sudarmalm (Gottenburg is 300 miles from Stockholm), and that it was spreading very fast. He was restless, and went out often. He said that the house of one of his friends, whom he named, was already in ashes, and that his own was in danger. At 8 o'clock, after he had been out again, he joyfully exclaimed, 'Thank God! the fire is extinguished, the third door from my house.' This news occasioned great commotion through the whole city, and particularly amongst the company in which he was. It was announced to the governor the same evening. On the Sunday morning, Swedenborg was sent for by the governor, who questioned him concerning the disaster. Swedenborg described the fire precisely, how it had begun, in what manner it had ceased, and how long it had continued. On the same day the news was spread through the city, and, as the governor had thought it worthy of attention, the consternation was considerably increased; because many were in trouble on account of their friends and property, which might have been involved in the disaster. On the Monday evening, a messenger arrived at Gottenburg, who was despatched during the time of the fire. In the letters brought by him, the fire was described precisely in the manner stated by Swedenborg. On Tuesday morning the royal courier arrived at the governor's, with the melancholy intelligence of the fire, of the loss which it had occasioned, and of the houses it had damaged and ruined, not in the least differing from that which Swedenborg had given immediately it had ceased; for the fire was extinguished at 8 o'clock.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

Supernaturalism in all ages has had a commercial side, and has been cultivated as a means to regain missing property, or to discover hidden treasures. The good people of Stockholm were perhaps spiritual chiefly in this latter direction. It was in 1761 that Swedenborg was consulted on an affair of the kind by a neighbor of his, the widow of Lewis Von Marteville, who had been ambassador from Holland to Sweden.—Curiosity too was a prompting motive in her visit; and she went to the seer with several ladies of her acquaintance, all eager to have "a near view of so strange a person." Her husband had paid away 25,000 Dutch guilders, and the widow again applied to for the money, could not produce the receipt. She asked Swedenborg whether he had known her husband, to which he answered in the negative, but he promised her, on her entreaty, that if he met him in the other world, he would enquire about the receipt. Eight days afterwards Von Marteville in a dream told her where to find the receipt, as well as a hair-pin set with brilliants, which had been given up as lost. This was at 2 o'clock in the morning, and the widow, alarmed yet pleased, rose at once, and found the articles as the dream described. She slept late in the morning. At 11 o'clock a. m. Swedenborg was announced. His first remark, before the lady could open her lips, was that "during the preceding night he had seen Von Marteville, and had wished to converse with him, but the latter excused himself, on the ground that he must go to discover to his wife something of importance." Swedenborg added that "he then departed out of the society in which he had been for a year, and would ascend to one far happier;" owing we presume, to his being lightened of a worldly care. This account, attested as it is by the lady herself, through the Danish General, Von E.—, her second husband, was noised through all Stockholm. It ought to be added, that *Madame* offered to make Swedenborg a handsome present for his services, but this he declined.

THE QUEEN OF SWEDEN.

It was in the same year (1761) that Louisa Ulrica, a sister of Frederick the Great of Prussia, and married to Adolphus

Frederick, King of Sweden, received a letter from the Duchess of Brunswick, in which she mentioned that she had read in the *Göttingen Gazette*, an account of a man at Stockholm, who pretended to speak with the dead, and she wondered that the Queen in her correspondence had not alluded to the subject.—The Queen had no doubt heard of the Marteville affair, and this, coupled with her sister's desires, made her wish to satisfy herself by an interview with Swedenborg. Captain de Stahlhammer out of many authorities is the one whose narrative we select of what passed at that interview.

"A short time," says Stahlhammer, "after the death of the Prince of Prussia, Swedenborg came to court [being summoned thither by the senator, Count Scheffer.] As soon as he was perceived by the Queen, she said to him, 'Well, Mr. Assessor, have you seen my brother?' Swedenborg answered, No; whereupon she replied, 'If you should see him, remember me to him.' In saying this, she did but jest, and had no thought of asking him any information about her brother.

Eight days afterwards, and not four and twenty hours, nor yet at a particular audience, Swedenborg came again to court, but so early that the Queen had not left her apartment called the white room, where she was conversing with her maids of honor and other ladies of the court. Swedenborg did not wait for the Queen's coming out, but entered directly into her apartment, and whispered in her ear. The Queen, struck with astonishment, was taken ill and did not recover herself for some time.

After she was come to herself, she said to those about her, 'There is only God and my brother who can know what he just told me.' She owned that he had spoken of her last correspondence with the prince, the subject of which was known to themselves alone."

THE BISHOP HALLENUS.

Bishop Hallenius the successor of Swedenborg's father, paying a visit to Swedenborg, the discourse began on the nature of common sermons. Swedenborg said to the bishop, among other things: 'You insert things that are false in yours;' on this the Bishop told the gardener, who was present, to retire, but Swedenborg commanded him to stay.

The conversation went on, and both turned over the Hebrew and Greek Bibles, to shew the texts that were agreeable to their assertions: at length the conversation finished, by some observation intended as reproaches to the bishop on his avarice, and various unjust actions: 'You have already prepared yourself a place in hell,' said Swedenborg; 'but,' added he, 'I predict that you will some months hence be attacked with a grievous illness, during which time the Lord will seek to convert you. If you then open your heart to his holy inspirations, your conversion will take place. When this happens, write to me for my theological works, and I will send them to you.' In short, after some months had passed, an officer of the province and bishoprick of Skara came to pay a visit to Swedenborg. On being asked how the Bishop Hallenius was, 'He has been very ill,' replied the officer, 'but at present he is well recovered, and has become altogether another person, being now a practiser of what is good, full of probity, and returns sometimes three or four fold of property, for what he had before unjustly taken into his possession.'

From that time the bishop became an open supporter of Swedenborg's doctrine.

THE SPIRIT OF VIRGIL.

"A single anecdote," says Atterbom, "in relation to his spiritual intercourse, we cannot refrain from introducing, especially as none of those hitherto known so artlessly delineates his peculiar and unrestrained mode of living, at the same time, both in the natural and spiritual world. The occurrence took place with a distinguished and learned Finlander (Porthan,) who during the whole of his life, believed rather too little than too much. This learned man, when a young graduate from the university, was on his travels, and came to Stockholm where Swedenborg was living.

On his arrival at the house in which Swedenborg resided, he was introduced into a parlor by a good-humored old domestic, who went to an inner apartment to announce the stranger, and immediately returned with an apology from his master, as being at that moment hindered by another visit, but which would probably not be of long duration; on which account the young graduate was requested to be seated for a few minutes—and was left in the parlor alone. As he happened to have taken his seat near the door of the inner apartment, he could not avoid hearing that a very lively conversation was carried on, and this, during a passage up and down the room: in consequence of which he alternately perceived the sound of the conversation at a distance, and then again immediately near himself; and plainly so that every word might be heard. He observed that the conversation was conducted in Latin, and that it was respecting the antiquities of Rome: a discovery, after which, being himself a great Latinist, and very conversant on the subject of those antiquities, he could not avoid listening with the most intense attention. But he was somewhat puzzled when he heard throughout only *one* voice speaking, between pauses of longer or shorter duration; after which the

voice appeared to have obtained an answer, and to have found in the answer a motive for fresh questions. That the *hearer* of the persons conversing was Swedenborg himself, he took for granted, and the old man was observed to be highly pleased with his guest. But who the latter was he could not discover; but only that the conversation was concerning the state of persons and things in Rome during the time of the Emperor Augustus: and particulars on these points were elicited, which he with unavoidable and increasing interest endeavored to lay hold of, since they were altogether new to him. But as he became more and more absorbed in the subject itself, and was endeavoring to forget the marvellous in the treatment of it, the door opened; and Swedenborg, who was recognizable from portraits and descriptions of him, came out into the parlor with a countenance beaming with joy.

He greeted the stranger, who had risen from his seat, with a friendly nod, but merely in passing by him: for his chief attention was fixed upon the person who was invisible to the stranger, and whom he had conducted with bows through the apartment and out at the opposite door: repeating at the same time, and in the most beautiful and fluent Latin, various obligations, and begging an early repetition of the visit. Immediately afterwards, on entering again, he went straight up to his later guest, and addressed him with a cordial squeeze of the hand: 'Well, heartily welcome, learned Sir! excuse me for making you wait! I had, as you observed, a visitor.'

The traveller, amazed and embarrassed: 'Yes I observed it.' Swedenborg: 'And can you guess whom?' 'Impossible.'

'Only think, my dear Sir: Virgil! And do you know: he is a fine and pleasant fellow. I have always had a good opinion of the man, and he deserves it. He is as modest as he is witty, and most agreeably entertaining.'

'I have always imagined him to be so.' 'Right! and he is always like himself. It may, perhaps, not be unknown you, that in my first youth I occupied myself much with Roman literature, and even wrote a multitude of *Carmina*, which I had printed at Skara?' 'I know it, and all judges highly esteem them.'

'I am glad of it; it matters little that the contents were respecting my first love. Many years, many other studies, occupations and thoughts, lie between that period and the present. But the so-unexpected visit of Virgil awakened up a crowd of youthful recollections; and when I found him so pleasant, so communicative, I resolved to avail myself of the occasion, to ask of things concerning which no one could better give information. He has also promised me to come again before long.'

THE ELBERFELD MERCHANT.

An intimate friend of Stilling's, a merchant of Elberfeld, had occasion to take a journey to Amsterdam, and having heard much of this "strange individual" (Swedenborg), desired to become acquainted with him. He called upon him, and found a venerable friendly old man, who desired him to be seated. The Elberfeld merchant, Stilling says, was "a strict mystic in the purest sense. He spoke little, but what he said was like golden fruit on a salver of silver. He would not have dared for all the world to tell an untruth."

He explained to Swedenborg that he was acquainted with his writings, and had heard the relations of the fire of Stockholm, and the affair of the Queen of Sweden's brother, but that he wished for a proof of a similar kind himself. Swedenborg was willing to gratify him.

The merchant then said, 'I had formerly a friend who studied divinity at Duisburg, where he fell into a consumption, of which he died. I visited this friend a short time before his decease; we conversed together on an important topic: could you learn from him what was the subject of our discourse?' 'We will see. What was the name of your friend?' The merchant told him his name.

'How long do you remain here?' 'About eight or ten days.'

'Call upon me again in a few days. I will see if I can find your friend.' The merchant took his leave and despatched his business. Some days after he went again to Swedenborg, in anxious expectation. The old gentleman met him with a smile and said, 'I have spoken with your friend; the subject of your discourse was, the restitution of all things.'

He then related to the merchant, with the greatest precision, what he, and what his deceased friend, had maintained. My friend turned pale; for this proof was powerful and invincible. He enquired further, 'How fares it with my friend? Is he in a state of blessedness?' Swedenborg answered, 'No, he is not yet in heaven, he is still in Hades, and torments himself continually with the idea of the restitution of all things.' This answer caused my friend the greatest astonishment. He ejaculated, 'My God! what, in the other world?' Swedenborg replied, 'Certainly; a man takes with him his favorite inclinations and opinions; and is very difficult to be divested of them. We ought, therefore, to lay them aside here.' My friend took his leave of this remarkable man, perfectly convinced, and returned back to Elberfeld."

