

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

### The Apostle of Schopenhauer at Pawpaw

I have occasionally presented silhouettes to members of the club of certain great men who have fallen among us like meteors (even if they have since hardened and cooled into ordinary rocks) and I take this opportunity of sketching and giving you another. It was in the little village of Pawpaw when I first came across this messenger of philosophy. Colonel Plumage introduced me to him. He wore a large green coat the tails of which hung like a couple of wooden shutters; top boots; a high fur collar and an astrakhan cap. He came plunging behind us smoking a meerschaum, and struggling through the wind and snow of a winter's day. He was rather above the medium height; of fair complexion; the eyes covered with gold spectacles, and his head leaned to one side as though he had just asked a question and was listening to the answer. I also noticed that he kept his mouth half open like Sarah Bernhardt, showing the upper row of teeth overlapping the lower set, which is one of the signs of genius, and that his voice was very soft, which in a man is a sign of danger to women.

The Colonel presented him as the St. John of metaphysics who was preaching philosophy to the practical heathens of the wild and woolly West, and added that he was an Apostle of Schopenhauer, and that if I were a disciple, I ought to know an apostle and if I were an apostle, I ought to know the disciple. It took only a few moments to make the discovery that we were both engaged in the same task, that of translating the works of Schopenhauer, and thus helped to carry out the dying wish of the great philosopher, that he might appear in an English dress, and be read by the strong common sense and independent mind of England and America. And then that if we were to combine our forces, his familiarity with German and my superior knowledge of English, that the task would be easier and the conquest more complete and permanent. We also agreed that Schopenhauer's first work, the thesis with which he gained his degree of Dr. of Philosophy, should be the opening wedge in the public mind; for once insert the "Fourfold Root of the Principle of a Sufficient Reason" in their heads, the rest would walk in of its own accord. Of course this meeting took place before any of Schopenhauer's work had appeared in English.

After the apostle, whom I will call Lichstrahl, had left us I inquired of Col. Plumage what he knew of this philosophical waif, and how he became stranded in the village of Pawpaw. "When I had charge of the Quartermaster's Department in St. Louis"—he replied, "the office and the accounts were like a menagerie in which every animal was in the wrong cage, and no one knew how to get them out and in again in their proper places. I struck this fellow Lichstrahl accidentally, and in the week he changed chaos into order, and the clerks who had ridiculed him on account of his clothes soon learned to respect and fear his brains. Both Lichstrahl and I felt that our meeting was one fixed by destiny, and that the moment had arrived when we could place in front of the eager and inquiring minds of the West something nobler than a [recording] machine and more instructive

than the paper tape worm communication received from the stockbroker's ticker, viz. "the fourfold root of the principal of a sufficient reason." And for the purpose he recognized in me, the owner of a brilliant and dashing style, and I perceived in him one of the daring divers in German metaphysics who can stay for any length of time fathoms deep below the line of common sense and always come up a little tired but perfectly sane. In fact his mind acted upon philosophical fog like vinegar upon turbid water and instantly precipitated the mind.

As we both lived in Pawpaw we met in the morning on our way to town and in the evening on our way to the country. He was a book keeper and foreign correspondent at a bank, and he received \$800 a year on condition that he should fill both positions, which he did very cleverly. I ought to add that his salary had lately been reduced on account of the following circumstances.

The President was a very prominent member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and was very solicitous in regard to the spiritual welfare of the clerks. The astrakhan cap which Lichstrahl wore had always struck him as having an antithetical air, but whether the head was affected with free notions of religion he did not know, so he determined to [sound] for himself. So one day he inquired – does philosophy or mathematics teach anything contrary to religion? "Oh, yes." said Lichstrahl. "What is it?" Inquired the president. "In mathematics," was the answer "two and one make three; but in religion two and one make only one, and then a part is as large as the whole." The president did not make any reply at the time, but next month he reduced his wages ten percent, and paid his own pew rent with the money.

From 9 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon the apostle of Schopenhauer worked as silently as a cogwheel in a watch, and when he put on the astrakhan cap, he was as jubilant as a boy out of school. The voice that had been corked up for eight hours now asserted itself, no matter who heard it. For instance as we walked home down Fourth Street we would discuss the inevitable – "Fourfold root of the principle of a sufficient reason." He would have under one arm two loaves of bread wrapped up in the usual straw paper. In the excitement of the debate, the paper would be torn off the bread and be kicked into the gutter, and then plugging one loaf under one arm, he would raise the other as a baton to give force to his argument, to the amusement of the fashionably dressed young men and women who wear airing their clothes on that favorite thoroughfare.

Vanity he had none, except it was to be the translator of "The fourfold root of the principle of a Sufficient reason", and that made vanity a virtue. Now it so happened that I was not only admirer of this luminary of philosophy, for a widow and three children who lived opposite tried to make life pleasant to him by waylaying the apostle and filling him with succulent soups on cold winter nights, and with ice-cold watermelons on hot ones. I think that the widow and her three little girls presented an embodiment of the Fourfold root in domestic architecture; anyway he proposed, was accepted and invited me to the wedding.

A slight hitch occurred in regard to the [ ] form of the marriage ceremony; but with one

paragraph of Schopenhauer, he convinced her that marriage is a civil contract, and that a Justice of the Peace for two dollars or even for half a dollar, could bind them tight enough for this earth; and as for the priest they would give him a chance at the funeral. And one night in December I and another friend accompanied the pair to the only magistrate in Pawpaw, as witnesses to the marriage.

The worthy Justice was making a pair of boots when we entered his store, and at sight of us, he pulled off his leather apron, laid aside his ball of wax and iron last, snuffed the candle with his fingers, kicked the dog into the back yard, and after wiping his nose on his shirt sleeve, said he was ready.

The license was read to him while he looked in the index of the state statutes to find out what, if any, limit the law placed on fees. Then he stood the bridal pair up in front of his counter, and he made us all swear that we would obey the laws and the Constitution of the Commonwealth, and a true verdict rendered according to the Judge, and this we should do under the penalty of perjury. Then with his waxy hand, he put the ring on the bride's finger, and pronounced them man and wife, and warned us that what God has joined together only the court of common pleas could cut asunder - Amen!

The residents of Pawpaw will long remember that night. The German [ ] of the neighboring city sent a detachment 25 strong to serenade the apostle of philosophy on his wedding night, and they awoke every man, woman, and child with a rousing choral of "Sleep, lady, sleep" and other rattling nocturns. Of course they were invited inside and in order to give them more room and air, windows and shutters were opened, and then they sang an ode to solitude which made every rooster and dog within ten miles of the village frantic with excitement. The widow was so overcome either with the wine or the sentiment, that she retired to bed and Lichstrahl and the best man played an accompaniment to another earsplitting chorus, with such fire and expression that the plaster commenced to crack on the ceiling, and several neighbors opened their windows and howled out to "Shut up and be damned."

It was 2 o'clock in the morning when the choral lads went home and the apostle of Schopenhauer insisted upon seeing me to my door, and as the snow was pretty deep upon the ground, I took him in to warm him up, so that his cold feet should not chill his bride on the wedding night – or morning. Like Socrates, the wine did not affect his head for he made a very neat rhyme of the words – "the principle of a sufficient reason and fourfold root" and was trying another on the Platonic idea, when the bride with a Constable and a lantern took him away, full of Rudersheim and the fourfold root.

Marriage, however, did not stop his work or mine on the translation. He would take a sheet or two of my work down to the bank, and when the President or the cashier was not looking, he would make the required Corrections. But one day the President caught sight of the translation and the word "Principal" and "fourfold" attracted his eye and he inquired of the apostle if any principal could be made or augmented, fourfold, and if so, would he explain it. That evening the apostle in the Directors room propounded to the President the new theory of life. He read extracts from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

and gave him a soul moving photograph of the greatest of the philosophical treatises “The fourfold root of the principle of a sufficient reason.” The banker was stunned! He expected a mathematical invention, how to multiply the principle without violating the laws of usury; and to have his financial soul irritated with such a Moonlight Sonata by one of his pecuniary slaves was humiliating; and when Saturday came, he dismissed the apostle without a word of explanation and hired two boys for the same money.

Fortunately the translation of the Colossal essay was completed, and now only one thing remained, viz.: to find a publisher on whom the [immortality] of publication would be confirmed. And putting the precious [MSS] in my lunch basket, I swam, as Meredith says of his women, into the store of the leading book publisher on Fourth Street. There were nine partners in that house, and I went through the whole nine pushing in front of me an English translation of “The fourfold root of the principle of the Sufficient reason.” This occupied a good deal of my time, for whenever I had nothing to do, I would suddenly dash into the store on Fourth Street, catch hold of one of the muses – (I mean partners) and read him a couple of extracts from the fourfold root. And it used to work upon them like laughing gas. The result was that a boy was placed at the front door, and whenever my lunch basket turned the corner, he gave the signal and the principal – I don't mean the fourfold principle – but the chief would hide himself in the cellar, and the other eight muses would scatter like quail in a cornfield. Finally one of the nine partners said to me in a burst of confidence – “It won't do, you know, upon my soul it won't do! We know what the public want. If it were a novel by Howells, or a treatise explaining why Bacon wrote Shakespeare, or a deeply religious work like ‘Why the Devil don't get Married' or a political work like Brian [Bourra] on Queen Victoria, or even a law book, such as that popular book ‘Staggers on Glanders', we would put our last dollar on it – but Philosophy! Really and truly now, you must excuse us.”

He afterwards melted sufficiently to say that if I paid \$500 down, he would print a hundred copies, provided I took them out at the back door! Five hundred dollars. It was like paying for the privilege of presenting the city with a fountain, a statue in the park.

A domestic crisis, alas was now approaching in the life of the apostle of Schopenhauer – He had discovered that the widow made very good soup, washed fairly well and was a neat housekeeper, but she was deaf, dumb and blind to the beauties of art or philosophy. She was willing to supply the [ ] honorably with children, but she despised the Fourfold roots of the principle of the sufficient reason; and she believed that to pronounce the name of Voltaire would probably bring scarlet fever and the measles into the house. And she had taken her three children and left him, and now when his astrakhan cap appeared on the streets of Pawpaw, the widow and her three children would rush out and snowball him; and one night he had to move her things away with as much secrecy as if he were burglarizing a store! But as even the rain will soak a Christian Clergyman through to the skin if he have no umbrella, so Provenance will not intentionally let even a freethinking philosopher starve to death. And he managed to get a situation in a firm who needed a bookkeeper who was a good chemist and knew the modern languages. The house, or rather its proprietors were engaged in making gin, brandy, old rye whiskey, Kümmel, Chartreuse and Benedictine out of alcohol and essences of extract; and my

friend filled the bill as perfectly as the labels and corks did the bottles. And it was a charming site to see him in that office which looked like a drug store pouring old port, sherry wine and Bourbon Whiskey out of the same cask.

But the Schopenhauer boom never boomed. A London publisher had the honor of presenting to the English reading public the Fourfold root etc., although candor compels me to say that our translation was much closer to the original. I have suggested several times that we might get up a philosophical syndicate for the dissemination of reasoned truth; but he says with his usual placidity – “The Early French Jesuit luminaries failed to make many permanent converts among the male Indians, a head after being scalped being a leaky receptacle for even religious dogmas; but with the Squaws they had better success. Today you notice that the Indians are not quite so red, and they have a taste for French, many of them being, as Heine would say, related to the French on their mother's side. So here the spark I left in my wife's mind, if not extinguished by beer and pretzels may yet become a small oasis in a wilderness of Clay mud and sand.

And the apostle is still engaged in making a mixture out of potato alcohol, brown sugar and glycerin, which according to the labels is pure medicinal cognac, but which he told me privately, could be used to great advantage as a liniment to wash and strengthen horses legs. And thus, I regret to add, a genuine bit of diamond is used by a burglar to cut windowpanes; instead of shining upon the shirt front of some minister of public instruction or glittering in the ear of some beauty.

Henry Hooper

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