

## WHAT SOCRATES WOULD SAY.

Lona Ingham Robinson in the Des Moines Register and Leader.

I went around the streets yesterday and among the committee of 500, where I heard a great buzzing of the citizens regarding the forthcoming race of candidates for nomination as archons of our city, and I would like to know, Aristocratus, what virtue you have most in mind as essential to the holders of these public offices.

First, O Socrates, a city magistrate must be a good business man, one of the builders of the city that he may have its interest at heart.

Yes, truly, Aristocratus, the builders of our city—a good bricklayer or carpenter, for instance, learns to keep things on the square, has all his walls plumb, his arches true—

No, no, Socrates; I do not mean the working man, I mean a man of business.

How so? the man who does no work?

No, but the man who does large things, who owns the concerns employing men—

Yes, yes, I see; he who works the working men.

Well, if you will put it so, but since we want a business administration a candidate must be first of all a business man.

I suppose, Aristocratus, you mean a successful business man?

It was a successful man I had in mind.

So successful as to have acquired riches?

Of course.

Then, Aristocratus, you consider that a man who by long habit of looking after his own interests instead of other people's is now best qualified to reverse the process and look after other people's interests and not his own?

But surely, Socrates, if a man is a failure in his own affairs he could not be trusted with the affairs of others.

What! If he have the orphan fund in keeping when disaster come upon him and by sacrifice of what was not his own, retain his fortune and his reputation for success? Publico, what think you?

That for that man failure would have been the true success.

But, Socrates, said Aristocratus, what kind of man should we have if not one who makes a success of whatever he undertakes?

I suppose, Aristocratus, that you heard the story of the great robbery at the jewel merchant's lately by two confederates, and no trace of the miscreants has been found? Yes. These men having scored a great success in their undertaking, would, then, Aristocratus, be eligible for public service?

You know, Socrates, I would not want such outlaws put up for candidates.

But success was the virtue you had in mind?

But not success in lawlessness, in crime, O Socrates; the gods forbid.

Name the kind you think essential to our candidates.

He should be prominent, distinguished as master of events and of his time; in a word, know how to get there. Successful, then, of course.

Well, Aristocratus, there is Jathullicus, who quite fills the bill of your requirements, is prominent and admittedly knows not only how to get there, but to stay as representative of the people in the Acropolis though means most scandalous are openly charged to him. The army post is one of the worst scourges he has brought upon us, as useless as two tails upon a cat, but potential of misery enough should grimy diggers some day need to lift their heads as freemen and demand their rights and meet but muzzles of the soldiers' guns. I suppose you would like a master of success like him or some of his myrmidons.

No, Socrates, for somehow, his fame, though wide, has strangely grown over rank to please the citizens.

In other words, you know, a myrmidon of his could never get the votes, broke in Publico, with some heat.

Then, Publico, you do not regard a reputation for success as the first qualification for one of our archons?

No, Socrates, unless it be success in some manner of public service.

Then, Publico, you do not hold one qualified for such an office who is in anyway related to the Corporatti?

No, Socrates, but quite the contrary.

Nor would you hold that the candidate to be elected should live in a certain style of house?

By no means.

Nor that it is essential that his wife should hold high festival to the shrine of society?

Surely not.

Then, Publico, what is the greatest virtue to be desired in one in whom we must entrust our public affairs?

O Socrates, that he be incorruptible. That he would care for the interests given in his charge even as the business man would care for his own profits.

Is that all, Publico?

He should have the wisdom to select honest men in his appointments.

The incorruptible usually have that kind of acquaintances; have you any other qualification in mind?

Yes, Socrates, at least one archon should have the gift to recognize the hand of fraud, the face of corruption, no matter how cunning its disguises; and the boldness to proclaim it.

Have you any one in mind like that?

Yes, Socrates, surely you remember Hamerydes, the faithful?

I cannot see, interrupted Aristocratus, how you can esteem worthy of mention such a peering,

meddling plebeian as that. Besides, he is no respecter of the great. 'Tis even said he has no fear of the gods.

That is just why, exclaimed Publico, we are going to vote him in. When he was archon did he not catch Hippeas, the Corporaticus, in bribery and accuse him openly in the market place ready to confront the judges with the proofs in court and ask that he be brought to justice?

But Aristocratus did not seem to hear Publico's last words, he was saluting the Corporaticus and his numerous family just then riding by in their chariots, casting so much dust in the eyes of Publico that for a time he was unable to see. But after the pageant had gone by he said: Socrates, tell me, do you not think my argument more just than that of Aristocratus?

Surely, Publico, and Hamerydes, of whom you were speaking just now, has in my judgment proved a great success, even though he failed to get his case against the Corporaticus into court. He failed only as a stone mason fails when the other craftsmen do not build their part upon his completed foundation. My divine monitor apprises me that you are in the right, Publico, and that if the Corporati do not throw too much dust in people's eyes, we can soon offer up thanks to the gods for a truly reformed city government. Now get out your lantern, trim it well so you can see the ear marks of four more honest men.

\* \* \*

### GRANDMA'S VERDICT.

"The world has never been so sweet,  
No, never before!" she said;  
"The willows never so yellow,  
The maples never so red!"

But we just laughed and said to her,  
"Why, grandma, every spring  
Ever since we can remember  
You have said the self-same thing!"

"La, well-a-day, perhaps I have,  
I'm forgetful, old and gray;  
Maybe I have said so before;  
I say it again to-day.

"When the maples lose their fire,  
When the willows turn to buff,  
And the skies are only commonplace,  
I have lived here long enough.

"When the springtime is no marvel,  
And the summer-time but heat,  
When I can see but merchandise  
In a field of waving wheat;

"When the green of distant meadows  
Means nothing to me but hay,  
I'll close my eyes for good and all,  
For I shall have had my day."

—Anna J. Grannis.

## BOOKS

### THE ART OF LIFE.

**The Use of the Margin.** By Edward Howard Griggs.  
**Where Knowledge Fails.** By Earl Barnes. New York.  
B. W. Huebsch, Publisher. Price, 50c each.

These initial volumes in "The Art of Life Series," edited by Edward Howard Griggs, give ample promise of fulfilling the purpose of the editor, who in his introduction to the series, says:

The aim of this series of brief books is to illuminate this never-to-be-finished art of living. There is no thought of solving the problems, or giving dogmatic theories of conduct. Rather the purpose is to bring together in brief form the thoughts of some wise minds and the insight and appreciation of some deep characters trained in the actual world of experience, but attaining a vision of life in clear and wide perspective.

In a word, the aim of these little essays is to make the reader think for himself, as he is bound to do if he accepts the suggestions offered, for instance, in "The Use of the Margin," written by the editor himself.

The prompting thought given on every page of this small volume might prove the opening stroke to a mine of buried treasures which each silent thinker possesses in himself, often without his own knowledge until he is awakened by a subtle suggestion of the possibilities of life for him. It is really the way one uses his "margin" of time or money that indicates the real character aims and ideals of the person, and the student with ambition to make the most of his opportunities will find help and encouragement in hints given by the author of "The Use of the Margin."

"Where Knowledge Fails," by Earl Barnes, with an introduction by the editor, is a strong presentation of the uses of Faith, and of the part it plays in our experiences, though often unrecognized by ourselves. Our "guesses" at things, and our steady pursuit of ends that lie beyond our knowledge, are unconscious exercises of a faith which we skeptically deny. "All that can be known must be known; and faith must never hesitate to make way for knowledge." Yet, as the author infers, all known things have become familiar through the approaches of faith, for one really has to trust before one can prove any unknown thing.

Meantime science had best learn modesty. She is not landless, but her estates are small and ill-cultivated. She cannot occupy the open spaces save by taking them over in increments, and there is no hope that she can ever reach the horizon. Let her then make friends with Faith, and if Faith respects her atoms and electrons and ether and protoplasm, let her in turn respect Faith's belief in personal significance, in God and in immortality.

A. L. M.