

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEUE FREIE PRESSE - (1903-4)**

### ***I REVIEW OF GEORG BIEDENKAPP'S IM KAMPFE GEGEN HIRNBACILLEN***

Concealed behind this somewhat unpromising title is the book of a brave man who succeeds in telling the reader much that is worthy of consideration. The sub-title of the work reveals more of its content: 'A Philosophy of Small Words'. The author is in fact fighting against those 'little words and arrangements of words which exclude or include too much' and which reveal, in people who have the habit of using them for preference, a tendency towards 'exclusive or superlative judgements'. It is self-evident - our author would contest even this phrase - that the fight is not concerned with these harmless words but with the tendency to become intoxicated by them and to forget, on account of the exaggerated representation thus achieved, the necessary limitations on our pronouncements and the inevitable relativity of our judgements. It really serves as a useful warning if one is shown how much that was described by people of an earlier generation as 'self-evident' or as 'nonsensical' ranks with us to-day conversely as nonsensical or self-evident; or if we observe, in a series of well-chosen examples, to what a narrowing of their mental horizon even important writers must plead guilty, as a result of their misuse of superlatives. The exhortation to moderation in judgement and expression actually serves our author only as a point of departure for further discussions on other 'errors of thought' of human beings - on the central delusion, faith, on atheistic morality, and the like. In all these observations is manifest the author's honest endeavour to take seriously the implications of the particular view of the world necessitated by the discoveries of modern science, in particular of the theory of evolution. A lot that is psychologically accurate is included, and many truths of the kind that have often been said before but cannot be often enough repeated. The author has set himself the thankless task 'of improving and converting people' by means of exerting a sober influence, without seeking to move them to laughter by humour or sweep them along with him by passion. Let us wish him all success.

### ***II REVIEW OF JOHN BIGELOW'S THE MYSTERY OF SLEEP***

Solving the mystery of sleep might well have been reserved to science; the pious author, however, operates with biblical arguments and teleological causes. For example: it would be an idea unworthy of divine providence to suppose that it would allow human beings to spend a full third of their life in spiritual inactivity. Sleep is rather that state in which divine influence penetrates most freely and most effectively into human mental life. But in spite of all objections to the author's way of thinking we will not omit to emphasize the kernel of truth in his assertion. Scientific studies of the state of mental life during sleep, too, oblige us to relinquish as inadequate our previous assumption that sleep reduces the play of mental activity to a minimum. The important processes of unconscious mental and even intellectual activity continue - as the elucidation of dreams given by your reviewer demonstrates - even during profound sleep. This unconscious mental activity deserves to be called 'daemonic' but scarcely divine.

### ***III OBITUARY OF PROFESSOR S. HAMMERSCHLAG***

S. Hammerschlag, who relinquished his activity as a Jewish religious teacher about thirty years ago, was one of those personalities who possess the gift of leaving ineradicable impressions on the development of their pupils. A spark from the same fire which animated the spirit of the great Jewish seers and prophets burned in him and was not extinguished until old age weakened his powers. But the passionate side of his nature was happily tempered by the ideal of humanism of our German classical period which governed him, and his method of education was based on the foundation of the philological and classical studies to which he had devoted his own youth. Religious instruction served him as a way of educating towards love of the humanities, and from the material of Jewish history he was able to find means of tapping the sources of enthusiasm hidden in the hearts of young people and of making it flow out far beyond the limitations of nationalism or dogma. Those of his pupils who were later allowed to seek him out in his own home gained a paternally solicitous friend in him and were able to perceive that sympathetic kindness was the fundamental characteristic of his nature. Feelings of gratitude towards a revered teacher - undiminished through the course of decades - received most dignified expression over his grave from Dr. Friedjung the historian.