

gatorial conception it is, one must read the book to know. In fact, it is too dreadful for human belief. The attractive and elevating features of the conception (and such are by no means wanting) are the ones the book mainly dwells upon; but surely no subsequent paradise could indemnify the soul for such fearful bondage to the flesh. For that reason, not many readers will be inclined to accept the theory as true. Besides, Calvinism is in ebbing favor, nowadays—some persons will call it an unsavory ebb. Now this book exhibits curious vestiges of the Calvinistic, or rather the old theological philosophy, though these are softened down till barely perceptible. Mr. Stanton does not, for instance, hold, with St. Augustine, that the honor and glory of God demand that the great majority of mankind should be predestined to everlasting fires; but he does tell with theologic glee of the misery of two old hidebound Puritans prolonged throughout two centuries. He has faith in the radical reprehensibility of certain created spirits, which to some minds has always seemed vile blasphemy. Above all, he cannot free his conception of the other world completely from that of retributive justice, and practically postpones the Beatitudes to the comfort of another life.

Considered merely as a tale, 'Dreams of the Dead' is a story that, once read, will never be forgotten; and the lessons it impresses are not unprofitable. Any reader of it who might have been inclined to repine at the thought of mortality, will be safely cured of that complaint by the perusal, and be glad enough to adopt, if he can, the opinion of old *Prospero*, "Our revels here are ended," etc.

55 (6 October 1892) 260

THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The letter by Samuel A. B. Abbott, to which Peirce refers, was printed in *The Nation* [55 (22 September 1892) 220-221]. Abbott's letter was intended as a rebuttal to an editorial note in *The Nation* of 55 (18 August 1892) 127, in which it was stated that the Boston Public Library had changed its policy of permitting nonresident scholars to borrow books. Criticism similar to that advanced by Peirce was also raised by Forest Morgan in a letter to the editor of *The Nation* [55 (29 September 1892) 241].

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The hopes of one student were mightily raised when Mr. Samuel A. B. Abbott averred that there was "*not a particle* of foundation" for the statement that the Boston Public Library "no longer grants to persons actually engaged in authorship the privilege of drawing books, though non-residents." Certainly I knew there were several particles of foundation, at least, for the statement, but I inferred that the Trustees were not aware of such facts, and were determined they should not exist. I therefore ventured to address the President of the Board, saying this, and asking, for the reason that I am writing a course of lectures for the Lowell Institute, on the History of Science, that I be allowed to borrow Gilbert's treatise, 'De Magnete.' I offered, at the same time, if desired, to deposit \$50 as security for the book, which usually fetches about \$35 in the market. My letter was returned to me by Mr. Abbott unanswered. I wonder how the kingdoms of this world appear when viewed from that awful pinnacle, the Presidency

of the Board of Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston. What funny little creatures ordinary men must seem! Such a situation would be quite enough to render many a poor gentleman so dizzy that he would not know whether he was telling the truth or not.

C. S. PEIRCE.

55 (27 October 1892) 324-325

Distinction and the Criticism of Belief.

By Alfred Sidgwick. Longmans. 1891.

CSP. identification: MS 1365. See also: Burks. *Bibliography*; MSS L 159.18, L 159.19; MS 1378 (draft). This review is unassigned in Haskell's *Index to The Nation*, vol. 1.

Mr. Sidgwick enjoys a certain reputation, he carries an air of distinction and mundanity in his style, and he professes to discuss questions of logic in a fresh and enlightened way; so that we open his books in high expectation. But we lay them down with a sigh. All that has been accomplished in this department of thought since the days when it was possible for a Hegel to publish such attempts at analysis as Hegel's were, might as well have remained unrecorded as far as Mr. Sidgwick's teachings are concerned. Now, that a man can do fine work in logic without being well read in its literature, several eminent instances render more than evident. But the requisite to such fruitfulness is an extraordinarily vigorous mind, that brings forth genuine flowers of thought, bright, delicate, and redolent of suggestion, and not mere fabrications of tissuepaper, needing wires stuck through them to hold them in shape.

The author opens by explaining that the subject of his studies is Ambiguity. This promises well, for there is nothing thinkers of his quality need more to study. But we soon find ourselves wondering whether he knows what the word ambiguity means. He can hardly be unaware there is such a fault, but he appears to have little dread of it. The real topic of his book is not that, but vagueness. Ambiguity is a confusion between ideas quite distinct, such as the *unlimited* and the *immeasurable*; and though 'Distinction' does not *treat* of this, it richly illustrates it. Vagueness is an indeterminacy in the limits of the application of an idea, as to how many grains of sand are required to make a *heap*, and the like. It is not necessarily a fault of reasoning; in its lower degrees it is but an unavoidable and harmless imperfection of thought. The problem Mr. Sidgwick sets himself is to note the precautions needful that vagueness may not lead into positive error; and a problem of elementary simplicity it is. Yet 280 pages might suffice to muddle it, and this volume has 279. An efficient aid in treating such a subject, so as to satisfy the skimmer of books that he has gone over matter which would have been worth reading—and this class numbers important critics—is a vocabulary well chosen to render the meanings of dubious propositions questionable, and to dress up familiar ideas in queer disguises.

Mr. Sidgwick informs us that "distinction as such—distinction at all—is the separation of kinds; and the notion of separate kinds is unavoidably opposed to the notion of differences which are merely of degree." The first half of this state-