



The Indianapolis Times

(A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER)

Owned and published daily (except Sunday) by The Indianapolis Times Publishing Co., 214-220 W. Maryland Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Price in Marion County 2 cents—10 cents a week; elsewhere, 3 cents—12 cents a week.

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SATURDAY, JAN. 5, 1929.

Member of United Press, Scripps Howard Newspaper Alliance, Newspaper Enterprise Association, Newspaper Information Service and Audit Bureau of Circulations.

"Give Light and the People Will Find Their Own Way."

Heaven, Science and Mark Twain

It's a bit strange, after all, that an attack in a scientific meeting on the old-time religion should cause such a sensation. For there is nothing new about the point of view. It has been expressed and amplified in literature many times.

Probably the sensation lies in the fact that the fundamentalist's chief fear is of science, and that when a man taking part in a meeting of scientists, such as Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes of Smith college, aims a blow at the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the response is much more militant than when a writer, like Mark Twain, did the same thing. But, anyway, Mark Twain did it more attractively.

"The earth," says Dr. Barnes, "from the standpoint of time and space is certainly most inconsequential indeed. Man likewise tends to shrink in terms of the new cosmic outlook."

Mark Twain developed the idea with a story, of "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven."

Stormfield has died and is riding "straight as a dart for the hereafter." He races a comet; in the excitement is diverted from his course, finally lands at what proves to be the wrong gate—a gate set aside for the dead from another part of the universe.

He is asked where he is from, and replies proudly, "San Francisco."

The head clerk is puzzled completely at the answer, and by the elaborations that ensue—California, the United States of America, and the world. All are unheard of at that gate.

"What world?" asks the clerk.

"The world," says I.

"The world," he replies—"there's billions of them."

Finally Stormfield mentions the planets, and the clerk vaguely remembers having heard of Jupiter.

"What system is Jupiter in?" asks the head clerk, turning to an assistant.

"I don't remember, sir, but I think there is such a planet, in one of the little systems away out in one of the thinly worlded corners of the universe. I will see."

"He got a balloon," continues Stormfield, "and sailed up and up, in front of a map as big as Rhode Island. He went up until he was out of sight, and by-and-by he came down and got something to eat, and went up again."

"He kept on doing this for a day or two, and finally he came down and said he thought he had found the solar system, but it might be fly specks. He got a microscope and went back."

"It turned out better than he feared. He had roused out our system, sure enough. He got me to describe our planet, and the distance from the sun, and then he says to his chief—"Oh, I know the one he means. It is on the map. It is called the wort."

And so, through the medium of a wishing carpet, Stormfield is transported million of leagues along the outer rim of heaven to the proper gate, and hears the welcome voice of an old acquaintance sing out—

"A harp and a hymn book, pair of wings and a halo, size 13, for Cap'n Eli Stormfield of San Francisco."

If the reader is a bit bored by the rather heavy nature of the scientific discussion, he will find pleasant relief in the conception as expressed by the great humorist. He, like the scientist, shocks the stock notion of the here and the hereafter, and, like the scientist, certainly stimulates thought.

Perhaps the most interesting of his unorthodoxies is that which attacks the conventional teaching that heaven is a place of happiness through total rest and complete painlessness.

Told in the simple language of the Stormfield story—

"There's plenty of pain here—but it don't kill. There's plenty of suffering, but it don't last. You see, happiness ain't a thing in itself. It's only a contrast with something that ain't pleasant."

"There ain't a thing you can mention that is happiness in its own self—it's only so by contrast with the other things. And so, as soon as the novelty is over and the force of the contrast dulled, it ain't happiness any longer, and you have to get something fresh."

"Well, there's plenty of pain and suffering in heaven—consequently plenty of contrasts, and just no end of happiness."

Prohibition Facts Needed

Recent developments point to the need for a study of the prohibition problem in the manner proposed by Herbert Hoover. In his acceptance speech Hoover said there were certain abuses which must be remedied, and that "an organized searching investigation of fact and causes alone can determine the wise method of correcting them."

There is a demand for information as to why the government after nine years is unable to enforce the Volstead act, and as to whether the act can in fact be enforced.

W. C. Durant sought enlightenment through his \$25,000 prize contest for the best plan of enforcement. Durant's contest was interesting, but brought to light no ideas considered of value by government officers. W. R. Hearst has followed with a \$25,000 offer for the best plan for repealing the eighteenth amendment.

Senator Jones of Washington, prohibition advocate, proposes a senatorial committee to study the enforcement system and suggest improvements. Senator Bruce of Maryland objects that the investigation would be under "the whiplash of the Anti-Saloon League" and would prevent just the thing Hoover suggested.

Whether Bruce is right about league influence, the wisdom of Jones' proposal is questionable. Facilities are lacking for a dispassionate and scientific study, and politics would interfere. An extensive investigation of two years ago did nothing more than to reveal the existence of abuses.

The Association Against the Prohibition Amendment has appropriated \$100,000 for what it promises will be an impartial study during the present year. Its study inevitably will be attacked because of the association's open opposition to prohibition.

Elsewhere we find groping for light. In New York, The Telegram has revealed much poisonous liquor being sold, and authorities have begun a campaign against speakeasies. Lacking an enforcement law, the New York state law against nuisances has been invoked against the liquor dives.

Michigan tries to check the flow of liquor with an habitual criminal law, but the recent sentencing of the mother of ten to prison for life for selling liquor

is creating such a protest that the experiment may be abandoned.

There is no problem of moment before the country on which there is so great a dearth of accurate information. Doctors, criminologists, economists, and other observers disagree on even the fundamental phases.

No one can say definitely whether more liquor is being drunk now than before prohibition, or whether liquor drinking is growing, although there are loud assertions in abundance.

The effect of prohibition on the public health similarly is a matter of controversy. So with prohibition and crime, the courts and law, national wealth, public morals and politics, and almost every other angle.

Obviously, if remedies are to be devised, unassisted facts are needed. The controversy has been so bitter that facts have been ignored, distorted, and obscured, especially by organized drys.

A study by the new administration will be of value to the extent that it is fearless and impartial. That doubtless is Hoover's plan. He cannot put it into effect too soon.

Just One Difference

One of the phases of the good old days complex that all of us possess is to regard the past generation as more sedate than the present. Ours we call the jazz age. And we rather like to think that the whoopie of the new is more tempestuous than the hilarity of the then.

The wild party of Jan. 1, 1929, is supposed to be wilder than the gayest event of what we patronizingly refer to as the gay nineties. It is only when something happens to turn our attention backward that we realize that the vagaries of human conduct do not change much as one generation succeeds another.

The death of Harry Lehr is one of those things. Harry was "a card."

Back in the time when mansard roofs were blooming and the whatnot was a household institution, Harry Lehr, a champagne merchant, came out of obscurity in Baltimore and into the bright light of New York society.

Review in your mind the wildest antics of the year just gone and compare them with Harry Lehr's monkey party, his bathing suit dinner, his "looking backward" ball or his affair in honor of "Senor Burro of Mexico"—and then ask yourself, are we so very devilish, after all?

The one unmistakable difference does exist, however, as the deviltry of the nineties is compared with the skittishness of today—the alcoholic inspiration that was not tinged with wood alcohol.

The Chinese Market

An article in the current Magazine of Wall Street emphasizes the enormous potentialities of the Chinese market as a field for American exporters.

There are 400,000,000 people in China. The vast majority of these people, at present, use almost nothing that does not come from their own vicinity. But the new regime in China, seeking to rehabilitate the country, have great plans for raising its economic level. They are now projecting a \$10,000,000 road building program, and hope it will be merely the first step in a general awakening.

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David Dietz on Science

Actions Are Reflexes

No. 252

THE reader who would become familiar with what physiologists have to say about the nervous system of the human body must acquaint himself with the term "reflex."

The word figures as much in modern psychology as in physiology and Watson, the founder of the school of psychology, known as the "behaviorists," insists that the whole story is told in one word.

A reflex has been defined as a reaction to a stimulus. The simplest types of reflexes have been called the automatic because they are entirely out of the person's control.

They are sometimes called the unlearned reflexes because they are exhibited almost immediately after birth.

The blinking of the eye is a good example of an automatic reflex. If an object comes close to the eye, the eye will blink. It may be that the person is walking on a winter day and a perfectly harmless snowflake falls near the eye. The person knows that the snowflake is quite harmless. But his eye blinks just the same.

Tears will flow as the result of certain odors, that of an onion, for example. This is entirely automatic and beyond the control of the person.

All complex behavior of the body is built upon such reactions. The behaviorists—and even some physiologists—go as far as to say that all human conduct can be explained on the basis of reflexes, eliminating any idea of free will from the situation. But this is still open to a great deal of argument.

One of the familiar types of reflex is the so-called flexion reflex. This consists of the bending of all the joints of a limb when some part of the skin covering it receives a painful stimulus.

The flexion reflex comes into action when a person touches a hot stove, for example. As soon as the finger comes into contact with the stove, the arm is suddenly bent, pulling the finger away.

The reaction also comes into play if a person steps on a nail. The leg is bent at once, pulling the foot out of danger.

This same flexion reflex comes into action in walking. Walking consists of alternately extending and flexing the legs.

There is reason to believe that a nerve stimulus goes from one leg to the other, thus controlling the alternate extension and flexing of the legs.

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Senator Reed is one of the cleverest pleaders and prosecutors in the Senate, but he is no cleverer than he was twenty years ago. In that lies the tragedy of his career.

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