

Mr. Bryan in the Bible Class

[By Grapho, in the Congregationalist and Christian World, Feb. 3.]

I saw Mr. Bryan produce such a commotion in a presidential convention as never before or since has been witnessed in the political gatherings of the country. Here in Miami I have seen him arouse such enthusiasm in a Bible class as I never have seen anywhere else. So great was the interest that the class threatened to overrun the whole auditorium of the Presbyterian church, and it was announced that the next meeting would be held in the grandstand of the ball park near the church. When Mr. Bryan made a temperance address in the same park the meeting filled all outdoors, and the election went dry two to one. Whether talking politics, temperance or religion, Mr. Bryan is a remarkable man.

The class which the famous orator addresses when at his Miami home is called the tourist class. It was organized by Mr. George Cooley, a Congregationalist with a Chicago training, and the pastor of the church, Dr. W. W. Faris, also is a man with a Chicago training. Four of the good doctor's children went to China as missionaries, and the doctor himself came down here as a missionary. Miami is now called the Magic City, but it was then very much in the raw. Dr. Faris began in a tent with nine persons. Now he has a congregation which includes more visiting ministers and traveling pillars of northern churches than any other pastor in the city. It is called the Tourist church.

It never is possible to put on paper the exact quality and glow of an address which makes the hearers lean forward with eager faces and breathless interest. It has red blood which refuses to be turned into black ink. But I think many reads of The Congregationalist will be interested in the substance of what Mr. Bryan had to say to the Bible class, and I ought to remark that while the effect is unusual, the manner is quite calm and the method simple.

Discusses Peter's Method of Appeal

The lesson was part of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, beginning with the verse in which the apostle calls the attention of his hearers to the wonders, signs and miracles "which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know." Peter began his argument, said Mr. Bryan in substance, by referring to facts which his hearers knew. These things had been done in the midst of them; they had first-hand knowledge of them — "as ye yourselves also know." And this is the way to begin with men who are in doubt. If a man doubts about a matter or belief you can not convince him by referring to or arguing from something else which he doubts. You must, if possible, begin on some ground of accepted facts, with something which he knows. Now, we can not begin at the present day just where Peter did, because his hearers had immediate knowledge of these things, but our hearers do not. We should begin with the things which men know now, with the great things which Christianity has wrought in the world. There are conversions of men which are as wonderful in their way as the wonders to which Peter appealed. Degraded men have been lifted out of the gutter, their characters transformed, their lives transfigured by the power of Jesus Christ. Peoples have been changed, communities have been turned from superstition and cruelty and cannibalism to a life of civilization and progress by the gospel. These are facts, and

we can use these things with the doubter, and for the confirmation of our own faith.

At the same time there is a sense in which belief in the miracles is the test of faith. For it usually is true that if a man does not believe in the deity of Christ he also denies the historicity of the miracles, and vice versa, if he does not accept the miracles he usually rejects belief in the deity of Christ. There seems to be an inseparable connection between the two.

The Call for Action

When Peter had made his argument from facts and the convincing power of his sermon was evident, he appealed for action—"repent and be baptized." This is the purpose and end of preaching, to make men act. They are not simply to believe or admire, but to do something. And Peter told them that when they acted they would receive the promises, namely, the remission of sins and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. There can be no improvement on that, either in preaching or hearing. It is as up to date as anything can be; it never can be out of date. There is nothing which the world so much needs today as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a great revival wave of spiritual religion. (When men and women hear this said in deepest earnestness by the man who compelled the nomination of Mr. Wilson at the Baltimore convention, when they are looking into the glowing face which on that momentous occasion was turned like steel against Tammany and "Tigers" and plutocratic bosses and "machines," it surely does produce an impression.)

The gospel means action, it is to be applied, continued Mr. Bryan. That is what it is here for. When it is applied promises come as they did on Peter's day. Men say that you can not apply the principles of the gospel in matters of war and peace, that they are not practical, that you must wait until the world is on a higher moral level, more Christianized. But how are you going to get the world more Christianized unless you apply the principles of Christianity? How are you going to get it up to that higher moral standard set by Jesus Christ if you refuse to apply his teachings on the ground that they are impracticable? If the doctrines of the Prince of Peace are ever to save the world from the horrors and savagery of such strife as we now see, we must not set them aside or postpone their use, but apply them. (Here the class broke into applause which nearly upset the Sunday school, and it became evident that about the only safe place to have Mr. Bryan speak is out of doors where his hearers can let loose their feelings.)

The Doctrine That Might Makes Right

In a talk on a review lesson Mr. Bryan briefly discussed the evolution theory, and among other things referred to an incident related by an American minister who is now pastor of a great London church. After this minister had preached a sermon in which he severely criticised the teachings of such German thinkers as Nietzsche, that might makes right, and that the world belongs to the strong, a German hearer came to him and said, "You were pretty hard on us today." "Yes, I was," replied the minister, "and you deserve it." "But wait a minute," said the German, "do you know where the German philosophers got that doctrine to which you so stoutly object?" "I can not say that I do," replied the minister. "Well, they got it from that great

Englishman, Charles Darwin, and his doctrine of the survival of the fittest. They are applying that doctrine to the human affairs of today. They have made it their philosophy of life and government. The weak are to go down, the strong are to go up. Might is right. It is the only practical kind of right there is. You do not believe in it, and I do not believe in it," added the German, "but I am telling you where it came from."

"We must be careful how we apply this doctrine of the strongest," said Mr. Bryan, "for I have found since I began delivering addresses on religious subjects that the evolution theory often has been consciously or unconsciously absorbed in a way which has a tendency to paralyze the conscience. Whether men know it or not, they have permitted it to become antagonistic to those principles of Christianity which make the strongest the servants of humanity, not its oppressors. The effect of the doctrine is to make them think that the world belongs to the Caesars. But Christianity says that the world belongs to the people in it. Christianity is for the people, for the weak as well as the strong. It commands us to help the helpless, to lift up the fallen, to break no bruised reed, to crush no man or people because they are weak. Christ came to save, not to destroy, to give life and to give it more abundantly. What the world needs today is the saving, renewing power of Christ's gospel, not the rule of the Caesars."

His Way of Defending the Faith

Mr. Bryan's method of defending religious faith against the attacks of its opponents is to admit that we must begin somewhere with an assumption, but that the unbeliever is no more free from this necessity than the believer. The world is here, the universe is here, we are here, when we undertake to account for the origin of all this a point will be encountered beyond which we can not pass without an assumption. I ask the man who attacks religious faith where he begins. He may reply that he begins with matter or with energy. Then I say to him, I begin with God—"In the beginning God"—and my assumption is just as scientific and rational as his assumption. In fact, it has fewer difficulties than his, because it assumes a cause equal to the effects, while his assumption is constantly beset by the difficulty of proving how a lower cause can produce a higher effect.

In handling this subject Mr. Bryan shows that he has gone thoroughly into the whole matter and is familiar with what is called the controversy between science and religion, and that he knows the arguments and the philosophy of the opponents of Christianity. He also shows much familiarity with the Bible, and his faith in its teachings as the best philosophy of life for individuals and for nations is profound. He is the preacher's friend, the believer's brother.

OSTRICH-PREPAREDNESS

[From The Literary Digest.]

However the reader may take his stand on the preparedness question, let him assume for a moment absolute neutrality and attend to the instructive and amusing Fable of the Unprepared Ostrich as recited by Elmer T. Peterson. A fable is not an argument, but at times it is an effective bludgeon. Mr. Peterson's fable is not at all the answer to all anti-preparedness, but it is a blow difficult to parry. We do not remember seeing a fable presenting the other side of the question quite so succinctly and pointedly. It appears in the Topeka Capital, "the immortal newspaper," the Chicago Post reminds us "that suggested that

the German submarine attacks ceased because of the terror inspired in the central European chancelleries by the news of the Plattsburg encampment." The Capital, which has printed not a little against militarism, includes this within its columns with perfect good humor:

"The Ostrich, with plumes of Great Value, roamed Peacefully about his accustomed haunts, when he heard the sound of Guns in the Distance.

"He realized that this means Danger and that some Avaricious Hunter might take a notion to Shoot him. But he Philosophized with the following Arguments:

"I do not know who this Possible Enemy is, therefore I am Safe.

"I do not know, but Think that Some One will Defend me in case Danger should come. I am not sure, but Think that those Defenders are Well Enough Armed. Jingoos say they are Not, but Jingoos take the word of those who make a Business of Fighting, who, of course, know Nothing about it.

"The Enemy is so Exhausted from Shooting that he will be Unable to Shoot Me.

"If some one should Attack me, I could Instantly Change myself into a Lion and Repel the Attack with Ease. Anyhow, it is Wrong to Fight under Any Circumstances whatever.

"I will not take refuge behind a Fence or Building, because the chances are Somebody got a Graft out of building them.

"There are Two or Three places on the boundaries of my domain where it is impossible to break through. Therefore, I am Safe.

"Altho I have my Faults I Feel that I should Pose as a Model of Virtue, an Example to the Whole World. Therefore, I will not resort to Resistance. I believe in taking things as they Ought to be instead of as they Are."

"I do not believe in being Prepared. I will Stick my Head in the Sand and Forget that there is such a thing as Trouble.

"Moral—Ostrich Plumes for Sale."

ORGANIZED LABOR'S PROGRAM OUTLINED BY JOHN MITCHELL

A New York dispatch, dated Feb. 13, says: John Mitchell, chairman of the state industrial commission, in an address here today outlined the program of organized labor. He declared it is confined to these six aims:

A minimum wage that shall enable women and men to live in a manner conformable to American standards, to educate their children and to make provision against old age and sickness.

The eight-hour day which gives opportunity for the cultivation of home life, the enjoyment of books, music and wisely employed leisure.

Legislation making it unlawful for children of tender years and frail physique to be employed in dangerous pursuits.

Laws providing for the safeguarding of the lives and limbs of workers engaged in dangerous occupations and for compensation for injuries sustained in the course of employment.

The progressive improvement of the sanitary working and housing conditions of the wage earners.

The preservation of the constitutional guarantee of trial by jury, free speech and a free press.

"The ideal of the trade union," he added, "is to combine in one organization all the men employed at a given trade and to demand and secure for each and all of them a definite minimum standard of wages, hours of labor and conditions of work. By this is not meant that the wages of all shall be the same, but merely that equal pay shall be given for equal work."