

or early Christians ever laughed, tho it is certain that several of them wept.

"If any one will consult a concordance of the Scriptures he will be surprised to see how little is said about laughter. In England a religious person is called a 'serious person,' and an English infidel once described Christianity as 'the cultivation of sorrow.'

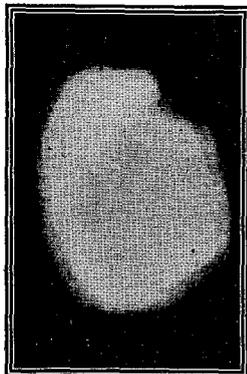


FIG. 1.

Laughter, then, must have a very small place in such a religion.

"On the other hand, what Dr. Buckley actually said, that a clergyman has no right to make his congregation laugh, and for him to do so is irreverence, is neither true nor philosophical. Paradoxical as it may seem, tears and laughter are companions. Every rhetorician knows that a public speaker who is famous for producing tears is equally famous for producing laughter.

"It is also to be observed that there are laughs which are distinctly religious and devout. There have always been new converts who gave vent to their unspeakable joy in peals of laughter.

The most intensely religious and devout congregations in the Christian world are sometimes moved to laughter by something particularly sublime and sweet in a Christian experience, by some wonderful and apposite providence, or by some felicitous scriptural quotation. It is really no uncommon thing for a pious congregation not only to laugh, but to manifest its piety by laughter."

THE THEOSOPHICAL THEORY OF THOUGHT-FORMS.

IT may interest many of our readers to learn, on the authority of Mrs. Annie Besant and of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, leaders of the theosophical cult, that not only do theosophists believe that "each definite thought produces a double effect—a radiating vibration and a floating form," but that the initiated claim ability actually to see these thought-forms and to perceive definitely their shape and color. Mrs. Besant and Mr. Leadbeater do not ask us to be content with this mere generalization, but they put before us, in a recent volume called "Thought-Forms," a number of colored diagrams depicting certain thoughts as they see them. They assure us, moreover, that any one else "whose education has made him sensitive to appearances of the astral plane" may enjoy the same visual experience. Seeking further information about the "thought-form," we learn that it is compared to a Leyden jar, "the coating of living essence being symbolized by the jar, and the thought-energy by the charge of electricity." If a man's thought or feeling is directly connected with some one else, they inform us, the resultant thought-form moves toward that person and discharges itself upon his astral and mental bodies. If a man's thought is about himself, or is based upon a personal feeling, as the vast majority of thoughts are, "it hovers round its creator and is always ready to react upon him whenever he is for a moment in a passive condition." If the thought-form be neither definitely personal nor specially aimed at some one else, "it simply floats detached in the atmosphere, all the time radiating vibrations similar to those originally sent forth by its creator." The three general principles underlying the production of all thought-forms, according to the authors, are these: "Quality of thought determines color. Nature of thought determines form. Definiteness of thought determines clearness of outline." Of the colors which characterize religious thought-forms we read:

"The different shades of blue all indicate religious feeling, and range through all hues from the dark brown-blue of selfish devotion or the pallid gray-blue of fetish worship tinged with fear, up to the rich deep clear color of heartfelt adoration, and the beauti-

ful pale azure of that highest form which implies self-renunciation and union with the divine; the devotional thought of an unselfish heart is very lovely in color, like the deep blue of a summer sky.

As to the forms and their peculiar significance the accompanying figures, aided by the text, will give an idea of what the theosophists mean, tho the color, which in all four cases is blue of varying intensities, can not here be reproduced. To quote:

"Fig. 1 shows us a shapeless rolling cloud. . . . It betokens that vaguely pleasurable religious feeling—a sensation of devoutness rather than of devotion—which is so common among those in whom piety is more developed than intellect. In many a church one may see a great cloud of deep dull blue floating over the heads of the congregation—indefinite in outline, because of the indistinct nature of the thoughts and feelings which cause it; flecked too often with brown and gray, because ignorant devotion absorbs with deplorable facility the dismal tincture of selfishness or fear, but none the less adumbrating a mighty potentiality of the future, manifesting to our eyes the first faint flutter of one at least of the twin wings of devotion and wisdom, by the use of which the soul flies upward to God from whom it came."

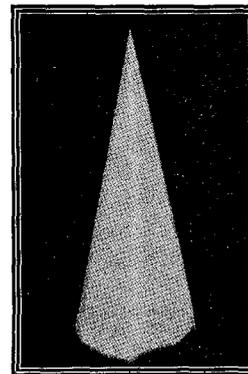


FIG. 2.

Fig. 2 symbolizes the upward rush of devotion. Thus:

"We could hardly have a more marked contrast than that between the inchoate flaccidity of the nebulosity of Fig. 1 and the virile vigor of the splendid spire of highly developed devotion which leaps into being before us in Fig. 2. This is no uncertain half-formed sentiment; it is the outrush into manifestation of a grand emotion rooted deep in the knowledge of fact. The man who feels such devotion as this is one who knows in whom he has believed; the man who makes such a thought-form as this is one who has taught himself how to think. The determination of the upward rush points to courage as well as conviction, while the sharpness of its outline shows the clarity of its creator's conception, and the peerless purity of its color bears witness to his utter unselfishness."

Fig. 3 symbolizes self-renunciation. According to the authors:

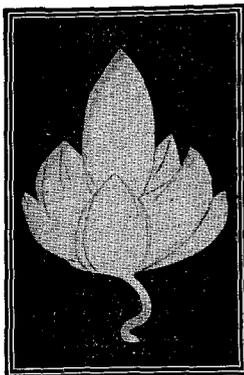


FIG. 3.

"Fig. 3 gives us yet another form of devotion, producing an exquisitely beautiful form of a type quite new to us—a type in which one might at first sight suppose that various graceful shapes belonging to animate nature were being imitated. Fig. 3, for example, is somewhat suggestive of a partially opened flower-bud, while other forms are found to bear a certain resemblance to shells or leaves or tree-shapes. Manifestly, however, these are not and can not be copies of animal or vegetable forms, and it seems probable that the explanation of the similarity lies very much deeper than that. An analogous and even more significant fact is that some very complex thought-forms can be exactly imitated by the action of certain mechanical forces. . . . While with our present knowledge it would be unwise to attempt a solution of the very fascinating problem presented by these remarkable resemblances, it seems likely that we are obtaining a glimpse across the threshold of a very mighty mystery, for if by certain thoughts we produce a form which has been duplicated by the processes of nature, we have at least a presumption that these forces of nature work along lines somewhat similar to the action of those thoughts. Since the universe is itself a mighty thought-form called into existence by the Logos, it may well be that tiny parts of it are also the thought-forms of minor entities engaged in the same work; and thus perhaps we may approach a comprehension of what is meant by the three hundred and thirty million devas of the Hindus.

"This form is of the loveliest pale azure, with a glory of white light shining through it. . . . It is what a Catholic would call a definite 'act of devotion.'"

FOREIGN COMMENT.

RUSSIAN DIPLOMACY.

PERHAPS one of the most interesting features in the recent Peace Conference at Portsmouth has been the side-light which it has cast upon the national character of the Japanese and Russian diplomats who were engaged in a battle which should prove even more decisive than Mukden or the Sea of Japan. The Japanese plenipotentiaries were, in the language of a German paper, "solemn, silent, and serious." The Russians were voluble and excited. Mr. Witte, at the close of the negotiations, is represented in the press as openly expressing his self-satisfaction, and even as boasting of a diplomatic victory. To a representative of the *Slovo* (St. Petersburg) he said:

"You see what one gains by standing firm. I was in a frightful position. I had not the right to accept a compromise, and a rupture seemed likely to enlist the sympathies of all on the side of Japan. Mr. Roosevelt appealed to my patriotism, humanity, and good sense. Fortunately, I succeeded in holding out to the end. The Japanese could not read in my face what was passing in my heart. From the outset I assumed such an indifferent tone that it eventually carried conviction. When the Japanese presented their written conditions I laid the latter aside without looking at them and spoke of something else. On leaving the room I intentionally forgot the conditions lying on the table. When one of the Japanese plenipotentiaries drew my attention to this, asking if I did not wish to take away secret documents which some one might read, I put the papers carelessly into my pocket. It was thus to the last minute of the negotiations."

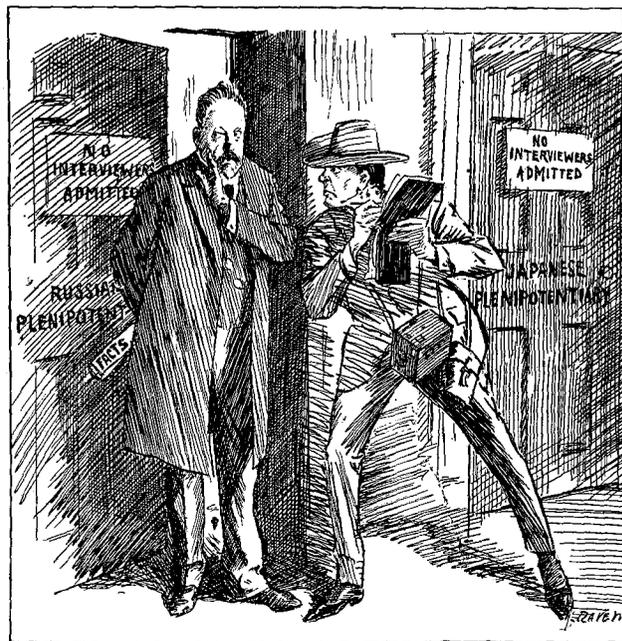
One London daily represents Mr. Witte's conduct in the negotiations as a long series of "bluffs," and the London *Standard* declares:

"Hardly any responsible writer treats with seriousness or sympathy M. Witte's delight at what he mistakes for a glorious victory. If the statement which he is reported to have made to a correspondent of one of the radical papers is not a fabrication, the weakness of the Czar's plenipotentiary can not be attributed to a disingenuous disposition. He is represented as claiming admiration for affecting, throughout all his dealings with his Japanese colleagues at the council-chamber, stolid indifference and even disdainful forgetfulness of their proposals. If this be the new type of diplomacy, men of honor will decidedly prefer the old."



UNCLE SAM AS A SNAKE-CHARMER.

—Fischietto (Turin).



RETICENCE A LA RusSE.

AMERICAN NEWSPAPER MAN—"See here, I can't get any information next door. Can you talk?"

MR. WITTE—"Alas! My lips are sealed. But—I may tell you in strictest confidence that the justice of the case is entirely on our side. Here are the facts."

—Punch (London).

DIPLOMATIC EXIGENCIES.

In a similar tone the London *Times* speaks as follows:

"The Russian people are not under any illusion as to the real character of the peace. They are not blinded by the remission of the war indemnity, which is paraded in Portsmouth as a great diplomatic victory. M. Witte, according to messages from American sources, is said to have proclaimed himself to be the conqueror. A correspondent . . . pertinently asks in what particulars the Russian plenipotentiary has exhibited the high degree of statesmanship on which the American reporters are congratulating him? He almost wrecked the negotiations. He would have wrecked them altogether, had it not been for the magnanimity and the real statesmanship of the Mikado."

He is accused by all the London papers with being too communicative and even with betraying to reporters the sacred secrets of the conference in an attempt at playing to the galleries. From this accusation Mr. Brunetière absolves him (in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*) and says:

"Certain journals have accused him of having talked too much, of pandering to the curiosity of the reporters, of showing himself incapable of keeping up the silence and mystery proper to a diplomat. But he published no secret of importance and never at any time uttered a word that would imperil the success of the negotiations."

The *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna) claims a real victory for Mr. Witte, and says:

"The victory which the Russian generals failed to carry off has been won by Russian diplomacy, which showed itself at the table of the conference more fortunate than armies in the field or fleets on the sea. Victorious Japan has surrendered."

The *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin) acknowledges that the Japanese diplomats made this surrender, but adds "and it does honor to their wisdom." According to the *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin) this palpable victory of Witte is likely to appease the anger of the Russian people toward the Government, and Witte's boast of a diplomatic triumph is justified by the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, which expresses surprise at Japan's back-down, which renders her successes in the war no more than a Pyrrhic victory. On the other hand the *Frankfurter Zeitung* declares: "The Japanese in their war with Russia have gained a series of brilliant victories, but their greatest victory of all has been