

A Criticism.

BY D. PRIESTLEY.

I was intensely interested, but, I confess, not at all enlightened, by Mr. Underwood's article on the first page of the TORCH of February 8th. It seems to me that the whole discussion is based on the use of ambiguous terms. Let us first look at the dictionary:

SOUND—Noise; report; the object of hearing; that which strikes the ear. 2. A vibration of the air, caused by a collision of bodies or other means sufficient to affect the auditory nerves when perfect.

LIGHT—The agent which produces vision.

VISION—The act of seeing external objects.

HEAT—The force, agent or principle in nature which renders bodies solid, fluid or aeriform, and which we perceive through the sense of feeling.

Mr. Underwood says, "Only those who possess the power of abstract thinking can grasp readily the idea that we know phenomena only as an affection of consciousness." But the question is not how we know phenomena, but whether phenomena exist. If phenomena do not exist objectively, how can we know them by consciousness or otherwise? To know what does not exist is to know nothing. A spiritualist friend of mine once told me that he could put a blank card against a wall, and by concentrating what he supposed to be his mind on some person of his acquaintance, he could see the picture of that person upon that card. According to my notion, when there is a picture on a card and a person can see it, there is objective phenomena which in some way corresponds with the subjective; but when a person sees what does not exist independently of his consciousness, it is entirely subjective. When a person gets in a condition such that he habitually fails to distinguish between the subjective and the objective, that person is a lunatic.

The person who remarked "that cataracts roared, thunder reverberated through the heavens long before there was an ear to hear such sounds" said what was strictly true. Those vibrations or sounds were the creators of ears and the cause of the subjective sensation of hearing. The sounds were here long before there were organs of hearing, else there never would have been any ears. Light existed, else it could never have produced organs of sight. Heat was here intense enough to melt the earth. I have looked into a smelting furnace where iron was liquid and know there was intense heat, but could not have known it as a matter of sensation, for if I had been there I should have been in-

cinerated and never had any more sensation.

"Vibrations of air communicated to the sense of hearing (the acoustic nerve) gives rise to a sensation. That sensation is called sound." Mr. Underwood may call that sensation sound if he chooses, but I avoid confusion and ambiguity by calling it hearing, and I have good authority for Mr. Underwood calls it hearing in the above quotation.

Mr. Underwood says "Only as auditory nerve was evolved was there sound: only as the optical apparatus was developed was there light." I should amend that by saying, only as auditory nerve was evolved was there hearing; only as the optical apparatus was developed was there sight." That seems to contain all the truth there is in the question, and makes it a truism too simple to need telling.

Lastly we have Huxley's statement: "That all phenomena are, in their last analysis, known to us only as facts of consciousness."

There it is again—"known to us." Nothing is or can be known to us. What is known, is known to some individual. Every judge or lawyer knows that what can be verified by several witnesses is probably objectively true.

"Us" is a myth like "the thing in itself," and Mr. Wakeman's "humanity," spelled with capital letters. The phenomenal is the real. Consciousness is a phenomenon.

The Brakeman at Church.

BY ROBERT J. BURDETTE.

On the road once more, with Lebanon fading away in the distance, the fat passenger drumming idly on the window pane, the cross passenger sound asleep, and the tall, thin passenger reading "Gen. Grant's Tour Around the World" and wondering why "Freethought Pills for That Narrow Feeling" should be painted above the doors of a "Buddhist Temple at Benares." To me comes the brakeman, and, seating himself on the arm of the seat, says:

"I went to church yesterday."

"Yes?" I said, with that interested inflection that asks for more. "And what church did you attend?"

"Which do you guess?" he asked.

"Some union mission church," I hazarded.

"No," he said, "I don't like to run on those branch roads very much. I don't often go to church, and when I do I want to run on the main line, where your run is regular and you go on schedule time and don't have to wait on connections. I don't like to run on a branch. Good enough, but I don't like it."

"Episcopal?" I guessed.

"Limited express," he said; "all palace cars, and two dollars extra for a seat, fast time and only stop at the big stations. Nice line, but too expensive for a brakeman. All trainmen in uniform, conductor's punch and lantern silver-plated and no train boys allowed. Then the passengers are allowed to talk back to the conductor, and it makes them too free and easy. No, I couldn't stand the palace cars. Rich road, though. Don't often hear of receiver being appointed for that line. Some mighty nice people travel on it, too."

"Universalist?" I suggested.

"Broad gauge," said the brakeman; "does too much complimentary business. Everybody travels on a pass. Conductor doesn't get a fare once in fifty miles. Stops at all stations and won't run into anything but a union depot. No smoking car on the train. Train orders are rather vague, though, and the trainmen don't get along well with the passengers. No, I don't go to the Universalist, though I know some awfully good men who run on that road."

"Pre-byterian?" I asked.

"Narrow gauge, eh?" said the brakeman. "Pretty track, straight as a rule; tunnel right through a mountain rather than to go around it; spirit-level grade; passengers have to show their tickets before they get on the train. Mighty strict road, but the cars are a little narrow; have to sit one in a seat and no room in the aisle to dance. Then there are no stop-over tickets allowed; got to go straight through to the station you're ticketed to, or you can't get on at all. When the car's full, no extra coaches; cars are built at the shops to hold just so many, and nobody else allowed on. But you don't often hear of an accident on that road. It's run right up to the rules."

"Maybe you went to the Congregational church?" I said.

"Popular road," said the brakeman. "An old road, too; one of the very oldest in the country. Good roadbed and comfortable cars. Well managed road, too; directors don't interfere with division superintendents and train orders. Road's mighty popular, but it's pretty independent, too. Yes, didn't one of the division superintendents down east discontinue one of the oldest stations on this line several years ago? But it's a mighty pleasant road to travel on; always has such a splendid class of passengers."

"Did you try the Methodist?" I said.

"Now you're shouting," he said, with some enthusiasm. "Nice road, eh? Fast time and plenty of passengers. Engines carry a power of steam, and don't forget it; steam gauge shows a hundred, and enough all the time. Lively road; when the conductor shouts 'all

aboard,' you can hear him to the next station. Every train light shines like a headlight. Stop-over checks are given on all through tickets. A passenger can drop off the train as often as he likes, do the station two or three times and hop on the next revival train that comes along. Good, whole-souled, companionable conductors. Ain't a road in the country where the passengers feel more at home. No passes; every passenger pays full tariff rates for his ticket. Wesleyan air brakes on all trains, too. Pretty safe road, but I didn't ride over it yesterday."

"Perhaps you tried the Baptist?" I guessed once more.

"Ah, ah!" said the brakeman, "she's a daisy, ain't she? River road, beautiful curves; sweeps around anything to keep close to the river, but it's all steel rail and rock ballast, single track all the way and not a sidetrack from roundhouse to the terminus. It takes a heap of water to run it, though; double tanks at every station, and there isn't an engine in the shops that can pull a pound or run a mile with less than two gauges. But it runs through a lovely country; these river roads always do. River on one side and hills on the other, and it's a steady climb up the grade all the way till the run ends, where the fountain-head of the river begins. Yes, sir, I'll take the river road every time for a lovely trip; sure connections and good time, and no prairie dust blowing in at the windows. And yesterday, when the conductor came around for the tickets with a little basket punch, I didn't ask him to pass me, but I paid my fare like a little man—twenty-five cents for an hour's run and a little concert by the passengers assembled. I tell you, Pilgrim, you take the river, and when you want—"

But just here the loud whistle from the engine announced a station, and the brakeman hurried to the door, shouting:

"Zionsville! This train makes no stops between here and Indianapolis!"

The idea of going to heaven through the aid of priests places mankind at once in a stage of dependence and inferiority. When once accustomed to this state, they are thus necessarily prepared for all those degrading concessions and compliances, which constitute the condition of master and slave. Firmness and nobleness of mind are gone; men become dastards in character, and recreant in nature. The designing and hypocritical, who believe nothing of the imposition, join in the practice of it, to carry their own worldly schemes; some of pride, some of genius, others of gain, but like all schemes of tyranny, the burthen of paying and fighting for them falls invariably on the common mass. — Horace Seaver.