

# "THE HOUSE OF MANY FAITHS."

In Genealogical Hall There Is a Strange Fraternity of Strange Creeds, with Many to Worship at Their Shrines.

prominent business and professional men and women.

## NEW THOUGHT HEALERS

As soon as the hall is vacated by the Bahais, it is immediately put in order for the Sunday afternoon lecture of Charles Brodie Patterson, the metaphysician. As a New Thought healer and teacher, Mr. Patterson is always certain to attract a large audience and one composed of those who believe that he has solved the mysteries of life sufficiently to enable him to show them the shortest possible cut to health, happiness, and financial prosperity.

As all students of New Thought doctrines know, the secret of this victory over the obstacles of life is the mastery of the mind, for it is the mind that is the master over the body, and if the mind can once be controlled, life can have no further difficulties for the individual who adopts this correct mode of living.

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"You can be what you will to be," is the fundamental principle of Patterson's system, and, judging from appearances, the apparently intelligent persons who flock to hear him every Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock are reasonably successful in putting his theories into practice, at least so far as the matter of financial prosperity is concerned.

## HARMONIAL PHILOSOPHERS.

In the evening Genealogical Hall is given over to a "psychical research society," which bears the very pretentious title of "The Renaissance of Christianity and Harmonial Philosophy," but which, as a matter of fact, is nothing more or less than a regulation Spiritualist meeting, where the usual Spiritualist doctrines are expounded and some very ordinary "tests" are given by Mrs. Katherine F. Fenton, a "psychic" who has recently located in New York.

So far as the casual visitor is able to determine, the principal object of these meetings is to advertise Mrs. Fenton's business as a medium and spiritual healer, although the chairman of the assembly, Mrs. Emma Struble Arbecan of 237 Pacific Avenue, Jersey City, who is a daughter of Ohio, a member of the Rubinstein Society, President of the Lonely Club, and President of the First Church of the Spirit, of Jersey City, seems to take them more seriously.

"This movement," she said, in explanation, "was started by the Rev. Mr. Fitchorn, a clergyman who resigned from his church in Pennsylvania because he had a more important message to give the world. For some time he was our preacher, and he would probably be with us now if I had not been taken ill. While I was sick, however, the spirits told Mrs. Fenton that we ought to change the name of our organization from the good one that he gave it, and call it a 'psychical research society.'"

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"As Mr. Fitchorn did not like this, he went away, and now I can't get him to come back again. Still, I intend to keep the same title, because it is so comprehensive. 'Renaissance,' you know, means 'renewal' or 'awakening,' and this spiritual phase of the new thought movement is really the awakening of Christianity. Then, the words, 'harmonial philosophy' simply mean that we are willing to accept all the philosophical theories that are in harmony with this awakened Christianity. I think it is an awfully good name, and there are lots of people who need to have just such truths preached to them, but I don't know what we shall do now that we have lost Mr. Fitchorn."

## SUN WORSHIPPERS

If the future of "The Renaissance of Christianity and Harmonial Philosophy" is somewhat uncertain, however, there is no such element of doubt in the plans of the "Mazdaznans," more familiarly known as "Sun Worshipers," who occupy Genealogical Hall every Wednesday evening. Whatever others may intend to do, they have come to New York to stay, and from the size of the congregations that are attracted to these Wednesday

evening lectures, there is no immediate prospect that the work will be discontinued for lack of interest.

Although the New York temple was established by the Master of the cult, Dr. Otoman Zar-Adust Ha-Nish of Chicago, in 1905, the general public had practically no knowledge of the existence of such a faith until some two years later, when its mysterious rites were subjected to the disapproval of both Anthony Comstock and the State Medical Association.

At this time one of Dr. Ha-Nish's textbooks, "The Inner Studies," was formally suppressed by Comstock's society, while several of the leading members of the cult were charged with the crime of practicing medicine without official authorization.

As a matter of fact, the Mazdaznans still insist that they have been the victims of persecution at the hands of the authorities. As they explain, they do not pretend to practice medicine; instead, they teach an art of self-healing that is thoroughly in harmony with nature's laws. These results are obtained through the correction of the diet, by a new system of rhythmic breathing, and by the practice of other rites that are supposed to attract the life elements from the sun and the air. What the Mazdaznans do lay claim to is that proficiency in its mysteries is a positive guarantee of a long and healthful life. In evidence of the reliability of their claims they point to the personal appearance of their members, with most of whom time has apparently dealt kindly, or even to Dr. Ha-Nish himself, for he is a man upon whose shoulders the weight of sixty-five years rests so lightly that one might easily be excused for mistaking him for a youth of less than thirty summers.

"It is all in knowing how to live," one of the pupils exclaimed. "We begin with

the diet, by eating only those foods that are in season. If you eat strawberries in December, you violate one of Nature's laws. We go even further, and eat nothing that has to be killed—not a bit of meat, or poultry, or fish—from one year's end to the other. When you eat such things you take a rank poison into the system, and there is no wonder that people grow old and die before their time.

"Then, we breathe, for breath is one of the most important factors in upbuilding the health of the body. Man has twelve senses—not only five, or, at the most, six, as is customarily supposed. These senses are: (1) seeing, (2) hearing, (3) smelling, (4) tasting, (5) touching, (6) feeling, (7) intuition, (8) transmission of ideas, (9) telepathy, (10) spiritual discernment, (11) clear-sight, and (12) realization.

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"Each of these senses depends for all its development upon that life principle that can only be accumulated by correct methods of breathing, the breath being the first link that connects the human being with earth life, and the last link to break as he passes on to another sphere.

"Mazdaznan is one of the most ancient of the world's religious philosophies. Originating among the Chaldeans, it passed to the Zends of Persia, and has been introduced in this country through the efforts of Dr. Ha-Nish, who is, without doubt, one of the wisest men in this world. According to his teachings, man is a product of evolutionary processes working through eons of time. He contains within himself the sum total of all the experiences gained in the past forms of earth life from protoplasm to man, and, as the result, true and rational education consists in drawing out and vitalizing these experiences, developing the latent

powers and dynamic energies acquired in the struggle for existence through each progressive plane in which man has manifested.

"And this is exactly what Mazdaznan does. No matter where you stand to-day—even if still at the very lowest round of your development—this system will give you something which you can grasp and which will lead you out of the vapors of accumulated ignorance and superstition toward man's estate.

"If you are a thinker, overbalanced as most thinkers of this age are in mental development, lacking the physical foundation to back it up, Mazdaznan will bring it within your power to control your physical being. It will enable you to acquire perfect health, self-control, poise; it will teach you the conservation of life forces, making you an all-round man or woman, at the same time enriching and broadening your mental conceptions."

With such a programme—a programme so full of such enticing promises—it is not surprising that the high priest of the cult Otto Schmid of Coronet Court, Riverside Drive and 139th Street, should have little difficulty in persuading people to attend his Wednesday evening lectures, for with so many practical blessings like perfect health, perfect self-control, perfect poise, and almost, if not quite, the whole secret of eternal youth to be gained, who would not be a "Sun Worshiper"?

On Thursday evening Mr. Patterson again lectures on some subject in keeping with his theories about the mental healing of disease, and, from time to time, but with less regularity, other teachers of peculiar doctrines occupy the platform to explain their ideas to all who will listen. Or, if, by any chance, the plgrim who is searching for new religious "truths" can always ascend to the rooms of the Theosophical Society, where he will be certain to find somebody ready to instruct him in all the intricacies of the mysterious doctrines of "reincarnation" and "karma."

## THE WOMAN CURIO COLLECTOR.

THE craze for collections of various kinds has been beneficial in more ways than one. It has given employment to a number of women who are adepts in the art of finding things in out-of-the-way places and getting them at low prices.

One of these women has desk room in an office in Columbus Avenue, and has put out her sign, "Curio Collector." She pursues her novel vocation in a systematic, businesslike way. In the first place she reads the papers carefully, learning through them of many people who are making a collection of odd and interesting things. Then she has a wide acquaintance, and hears of possible customers through the gossip of drawing room, tea table, and boudoir. Her next step is to call on the collector, introduce herself, and offer her services.

"I was in correspondence with many people in many cities," she says, "and am in a position to procure for you articles which you would probably never hear of, or at least would have great difficulty in getting. Moreover, I can get them so much cheaper than you can that even after paying the price of the article and giving me my commission you

will be spent less than if you had made the purchase directly."

The diversity of tastes simplifies her work considerably. For instance, she may be on the lookout for an addition to a collection of old and antique rings for one person and unique vases for another. The man who has a passion for rings may have a vase for which he cares little, and vice versa. By a stroke of diplomacy a change may be effected, and she receives her commission for both, with the expenditure of comparatively little time and money on her part.

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It is strange how many valuable articles—valuable, that is, from the collector's point of view—are to be found in places least suspected, and in the possession of people who have no idea of the worth of what they consider simple belongings. These may be heirlooms or small objects that have been picked up carelessly in going from place to place. But whatever the associations clinging around these sought-for treasures their owners are usually willing to part with

them as soon as they learn that for somebody they possess an intrinsic value.

The Columbus Avenue collector has many ways of finding the wares in which she traffics. When she is given an order to secure a definite article she advertises. The things that are submitted for her approval would form a curiosity shop in themselves. Then she corresponds with other collectors, visits stores, shops, and museums, and sometimes, when other plans fail, she adopts a system of house-to-house visiting in neighborhoods where it seems probable that she may come across something in her line. She states her errand concisely and is always received courteously in making these unceremonious calls.

The woman attributes her success chiefly to the fact that she never tries to get something for nothing, but pays amply for whatever she gets, knowing that it will be returned to her many fold within a few days. She is now working on no fewer than fifty different collections, many of which are exceedingly odd and show in what freakish directions some people's minds are inclined. Here are a few of them: Stuffed toads for a Madison Avenue woman, who already has 500

specimens of the genus toad in his various shapes and sizes; fossilized vegetation, odd bottles, teeth of famous people, photographs of vicious animals, paper weights, door keys, exact miniature copies of inventions for the punishment of criminals, skins of cats of lofty lineage. The foregoing fads are selected at random, but will serve to show the scope of the work undertaken by the person who adopts curio collecting as a profession.

HERE must be something in the atmosphere of Genealogical Hall that is especially conducive to the free expression of peculiar religious opinions, for the components of faiths that are either strange or weird always seem to gravitate toward this particular meeting place as naturally as water runs down hill.

If the teacher of any mysterious cult invades New York, or the inventor of a new religion becomes imbued with an overpowering desire to preach his message to the world, it is reasonably safe to predict that it is at Genealogical Hall that the faithful disciples will first be gathered together. Between its walls more erratic doctrines have been taught than in any other spot in this city, and, as the result 226 West Fifty-eighth Street has long been the Mecca to which the lover of religious novelties has turned when pursuing his search for startling mental and spiritual sensations.

Genealogical Hall—as its name might indicate—is the property of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, but, while this association maintains its permanent meeting rooms and archives on the second floor, its members utterly disclaim all responsibility for the extraordinary opinions that are expressed, almost every day in the week, in other parts of the building. And this is the only attitude that could well be assumed by the society, for while it might be possible to express some sympathetic interest in the tenets of one of these organizations—say, for example, the New York Branch of the Theosophical Society, whose rooms on the third floor are open daily, with weekly services on Sunday—it would require a most omnivorous capacity for the digestion of odd religious beliefs to comprehend, much less harmonize, such a vast variety of unique "truths" as are now expounded by those who regularly preach at Genealogical Hall.

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As Sunday is the day which is most favorable to churchgoing, the first day of the week is naturally the "busy day" in this haven of the new religionists. From 11 o'clock in the morning, when the teachers of the Bahai Revelation read and explain the typically Oriental communications that they have received from the Master of their cult in the East, until late at night, when the last "spirit" message has crossed the borderland and the "psychical researchers" feel that they may go home, there is scarcely an hour when somebody is not engaged in presenting some ideas that are so distinctly out of the ordinary that certain people are willing to pay attention to them.

## THE BAHAIS

So far as the Bahai Revelation is concerned, this faith has been very appropriately described as a sort of non-ascetic pantheism. Its followers believe that the world has had many Saviours, or divine messengers, including Adam, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed. Each of these inspired teachers has spoken to mankind in the language and terminology of his own time and race, and all of the great prophets have declared that one who was still greater would yet come to preach a new revelation from God with such clearness and power that all nations would receive it, and would come together in the acknowledgment of the truth, in the worship of the One God, and into peace and harmonious relations with all men.

According to the Bahais, the day of the fulfillment of these prophecies has now come, for they believe implicitly that the revelation first preached by Baha'ollah, in Persia, some fifty years ago, was God's last and greatest message to the world. Like so many other prophets, Baha'ollah was preceded by a forerunner who was known as the "Bab," and from whom the sect derives its popular name of "Babists." His work, however, was merely of an introductory character, and about 1853, the great prophet, Baha'ollah, appeared, and was accepted by the disciples of the "Bab" as the direct manifestation of God among men.

He taught that the time was at hand for the coming of the "most Great Peace," the cessation of wars, the unity and harmony of the world, the increase and diffusion of knowledge, and the worship by all men of the One and single God. He declared the purpose of the new revelation—or the will of God—to be the abolition of all differences between religions, the bringing of all into the worship of the same Creator, and into absolute fraternity one with another. In other words, the basis of the Bahai Revelation has always been the unification of all religious beliefs, and, as the result, Christian Bahais now worship in full accord with Buddhist Bahais, Parsee Bahais, Mohammedan Bahais, or Hebrew Bahais, for, at this time, the Bahai doctrine has its representation in all the great religious systems throughout the world.

The present head of the Bahai cult—the direct representative of God on earth—is Abdul Baha, or, as he is better known to the faithful, the "Blessed Perfection." Succeding to the position upon the death of his father, Baha'ollah, in 1892, he has since been the sole interpreter of the new law, and to him every true Bahai, wherever he may reside, is bound to accord implicit obedience in even the most trivial affairs of life. As one Bahai writer has said:

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"He is the perfect man, the model, the exemplar of righteousness, the interpreter of the Word, the liver of the Law."

In other words, the attitude of the Bahais toward their Master, Abdul Baha, is the same as that shown by Christians to Jesus Christ, or by Mohammedans to Mohammed. It is to him that all their praises are sung, for it is through him alone that the spirit of God is now manifested on earth.

Judged by its ritual, the Bahai service is almost commonplace. Its "tablets"—the messages from Abdul Baha—are called—are filled with such expressions as "the fragrance of the rose garden of the Lord," "the melodies of the dove of Thy Oneness," "the hyacinths of my knowledge and wisdom," "the chalice of immortality passed by the hand of the cup-bearer of eternity," and other Oriental imagery, but the meetings are conducted with an Occidental simplicity that is almost puritanical. The tablets are read, hymns are sung by the congregation, and there is a discourse by one of the two accredited preachers, Howard MacNutt of 935 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, or Hopper Harris of Newark, N. J. Yet, simple as these services may be, there is something about the Bahai Revelation that must appeal to the human intelligence. Certainly it is not from the uncultured or ignorant classes that its congregations are recruited, when they are composed of such persons as Percy Woodcock and Miss Juliet Thompson, both of whom are well-known artists; Arthur D. Dodge, a lawyer; Mrs. E. E. Gibbons of 83 Madison Avenue; William H. Hunt of Fanwood, N. J., and other equally