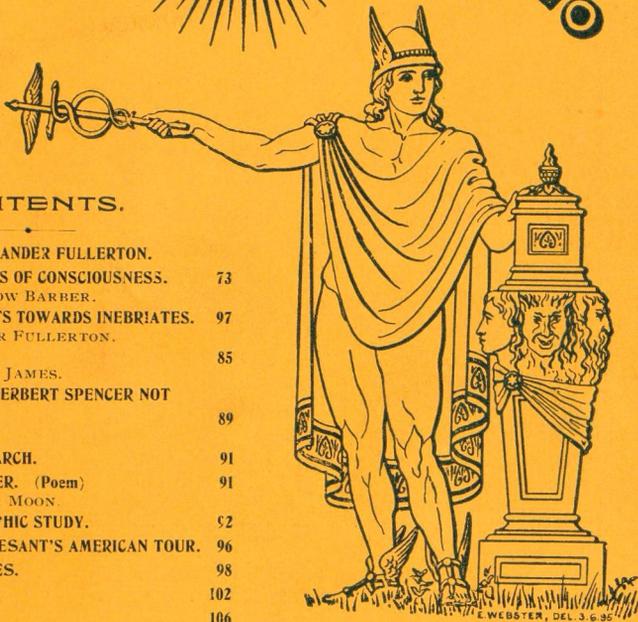




# MERCURY.

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DEVOTED TO  
**THE STUDY OF THEOSOPHY, ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY,**  
**THE OCCULT SCIENCES AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.**  
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**WILLIAM JOHN WALTERS,** - - - - - **Managing Editor.**

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The Editors will endeavor to answer satisfactory, but of necessity briefly, any question addressed to them in a spirit of serious enquiry, if pertaining to the subjects to which MERCURY is devoted.

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PALACE HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.



*Satyam Nasti Para Dharmah.*

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To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.

To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

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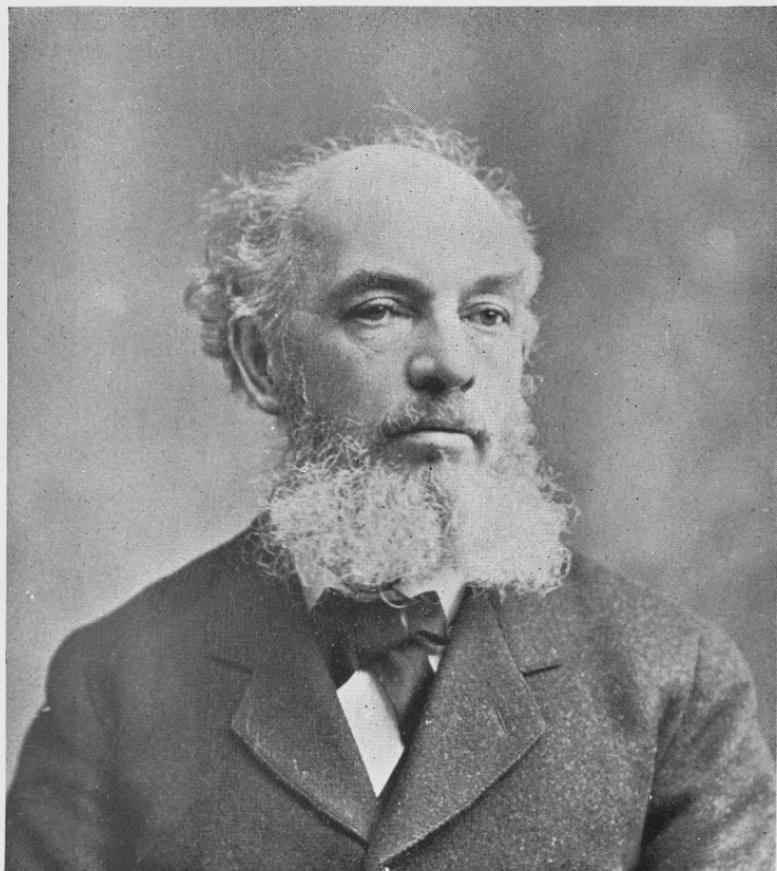
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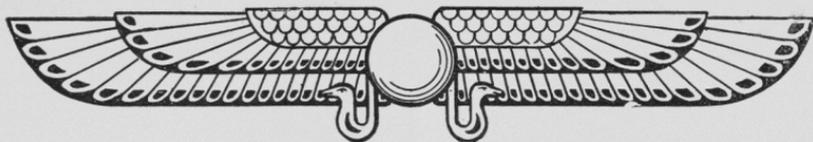
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ALEXANDER FULLERTON  
General Secretary of the American Section T. S.

“Point out the ‘Way’—However dimly, and lost among the host, as does the evening star to those who tread their path in darkness.”



# MERCURY

Official Organ of the American Section, T. S.

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## MAN AND HIS VEHICLES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

**I**N “Man and his Bodies,” Annie Besant says: “Physical matter has 7 subdivisions, distinguishable from each other, and each showing a vast variety of combinations within its own limits. The subdivisions are: solid, liquid, gas and ether, the latter having four conditions as distinct from each other, as liquids are distinct from solids, and solids from gases. These are the seven states of physical matter and any portion of such matter is capable of passing into any one of these states, although, under what we call normal temperature and pressure, it assumes one or the other of these as its relatively permanent condition, as gold is ordinarily solid, water is ordinarily liquid, chloride is ordinarily gaseous. The physical body of man is composed of matter in these seven states, the gross body consisting of solids, liquid and gases and the etheric double of the four subdivisions of Ether, known respectively as Ether I, Ether II, Ether III, and Ether IV.”

The Physical Body;—under this term physical body, must be included the two lower principles of man—formerly in Theosophical parlance the *Sthûla Sharîra* and *Linga Sharîra*—since they both function on the physical plane, are composed of physical matter, are formed for the period of our physical life, are cast off by the man at death and disintegrate together in the physical world when he passes on into the astral. They are distinguishable, by the materials of which they are composed, into the gross

body and the etheric double, the latter being the exact duplicate of the visible body, particle for particle, and the medium through which play all the electrical and vital currents on which the activity of the body depends.

The Dense Body is the lowest vehicle of consciousness, and it is necessary to purify this body and become the master not the servant of this body; in the purification of this lies the preparation for all Yoga practice. The Ether Double is composed of the four ethers, which interpenetrate the solid, liquid and gaseous constituents of the dense body, surrounding every particle with an etheric envelop, and thus presenting a perfect duplicate of the denser form. This etheric double is perfectly visible to the trained sight and is violet-gray in color, coarse or fine in texture as the dense body is coarse or fine. It is by means of the etheric double that the life-force, Prâna, runs along the nerves of the body and thus enables them to act as the carriers of motor force and of sensitiveness to external impacts. The powers of thought, of movement and of feeling are not resident in physical or etheric nerve substance, they are activities of the Ego, working in his inner bodies, and the expression of them on the physical plane is rendered possible by the life-breath, as it runs along the nerve threads and round the nerve cells. On looking at a man's lower bodies with astral vision, the etheric double (Linga Sharîra), and the astral body (Kâmic Body) are seen interpenetrating each other as both interpenetrate the dense, physical body.

Much confusion has arisen in regard to the etheric double and the astral body; the etheric double is composed of the physical ethers only, and cannot, if extruded, leave the physical plane or go far away from its denser counterpart; it is built after the mould given by the lords of Karma, and is *not* brought with him by the Ego, but awaits him with the physical body formed upon it.

The Astral Body or Kâmic desire Body, on the other hand, is composed of astral matter only, it is able to range the astral plane when freed from the physical body, and it is the proper vehicle of the Ego on that plane; it is brought with him by the Ego when he comes to reincarnate. Under these circumstances, it is better to call the first the etheric double and the second the astral body to avoid confusion. In sleep, the Ego slips out of

the dense body and its etheric double, leaves them to recuperate itself for the next day's work; in death, it slips out for the last time, but it draws out the etheric double with it separating it from its dense counterpart, and thus rendering impossible any further play of the life-breath in the latter, as an organic whole. The Ego quickly shakes off the etheric double, which, as we have seen, cannot pass on to the astral plane and leaves it to disintegrate with its life-long partner. The etheric double is peculiarly susceptible to the volatile constituents of alcohol.

The Astral Body is made up of the seven sub-states of astral matter, and may have coarser or finer materials drawn from each of these. It is easy to picture a man in a well-formed astral body; you can think of him as dropping the physical body and standing in a subtler, more luminous copy of it, visible in his own likeness to clairvoyant vision, though invisible to ordinary sight. A well-formed astral body means a man who has reached a high level of intellectual culture or spiritual growth; by the definiteness of its outline, its luminosity, and the perfection of its organization may be judged the *stage* of Evolution reached by the Ego using it. The astral body every one is constantly working through, but comparatively few work in it separated from the physical. Without the general action through the Astral Body, there would be no connection between the external world and the mind of man, no connection between impacts made on the physical senses and the perception of them by the mind. The impact becomes a sensation in the astral body and is then perceived by the mind. In the astral body are the centers of sensation. The astral body thrills to every thought that strikes it, whether from the mind of other men or from the mind of its *Owner*.

The Astral World is a definite region of the Universe, surrounding and interpenetrating the physical, but imperceptible to our ordinary observation, because composed of a different order of matter. The astral body is the seat of all animal passions and desires, the center of the senses, the vehicle of man's kâmic consciousness, and it is with this body that he functions on the astral plane; and, when Karma permits the full unbroken consciousness, which passes at will between the physical and astral world, the bridge shall be made which lets the memory cross from one to the other without effort, so that the man, returning from his activi-

ties in the astral world will don again his physical vesture without a moment's loss of consciousness. This is the certainty that lies before all those who chose the life of *Service*. Life will be a continuous whole, the body put aside to take the necessary rest for its work, while the man himself uses the astral body for his work in the astral world; then they will keep the *links* of thought unbroken, knowing when they leave the physical body, knowing while they are passing out of it, unwearied consciousness which gives the absolute certainty of the existence of the individual *Self*, of the fact that the body is only a garment that they wear, put on and off at pleasure, *not* a necessary instrument of thought and life.

The passage, through Kâma Loka, of one who has purified the astral body is swift; if it has been purified to the last possible degree of delicacy, then its passage through Kâma Loka will be of inconceivable rapidity, and the Man will flash through it untrammelled in his flight to loftier regions. We are not living in an astral body now, but are forming the type of the astral body which will be ours in another birth, for all our lives are linked together and cannot be broken away from those behind or those that stretch before us. We have but one life, in which what we call lives are only days. We cannot get rid of the Karmic liabilities of a preceding life by passing through death, the life of man is continuous, unbroken, the earth lives are linked together, not isolated. The processes of purification and development are also continuous and must be carried on through many lives. Some time or other, each of us must begin the work.

The third great plane is the Mind World; when we have learned something of this, we shall have under our eyes the physical, the astral and the mental worlds—our globe and the two spheres surrounding it—a triple region where man is active during earth incarnations, where he dwells during the periods which intervene between death that closes one earth life and the birth which opens another. These three spheres are man's school house and kingdom, in them he works out his development, his evolutionary pilgrimage; beyond them he may not consciously pass until the gateway of Initiation has opened before him—for out of these three worlds there is no other way. The mind world includes—though it is not identical with—what Theosophists call Devachan

or Devaloka, the land of the gods, where he peacefully assimilates the fruits of his physical life, where there is no pain or sorrow. The mind world is sub-divided into seven sub-planes, these are grouped into two sets, a three and a four. The three upper sub-planes are technically called arûpa, or without body, owing to their extreme subtlety, while the four lower are called rûpa, or with body. Man has consequently two vehicles of consciousness in which he functions on this plane, to both of which the term mind-body is applicable. The higher consciousness is known as the Causal Body; this body is the permanent body of the Ego, the Higher Manas, lasting from life to life. The mind body is the lower Manas lasting after death and passing into Devachan, but disintegrating when the life on the rûpa levels of Devachan is over; the mind body is also the vehicle of the Ego, the Thinker, which is composed of an exceedingly rare and subtle kind of substance, invisible to astral sight as well as to physical, and far too subtle to be perceived even by the inner senses of man. As regards its functions, it is the immediate vehicle in which Self manifests as intellect, growing life after life in proportion to intellectual development; it does not, like the astral body, become a distinct representative of the man in form and feature. When working in connection with the astral and physical bodies, it is oval, egg-like in outline interpenetrating the physical and astral bodies, surrounding them with a radiant atmosphere as it develops, becoming larger and larger as the intellectual growth increases.

The mind, in this region, speaks by color, sound and form, so that the complete thought is conveyed as a colored and musical picture instead of only a fragment by the symbols we call words. Books are written by great Initiates in color language (language of the gods) and known to many Chelâs. The vibrations from a single thought give rise to form, to color, to sound, and the thought expresses itself in all these ways by the vibrations set up. The mind body grows by thought, the exercise of our mental faculties, by the development of our artistic powers, our higher emotions; we are building our mind body, day by day, each month, each year of our lives. The causal body, the form aspect of the true man, is like a delicate film of subtlest matter, just visible, marking where the individual begins his separate life; that delicate, colorless film of subtle matter is the body that lasts

through the whole of the human evolution, the thread on which all the lives are strung, the "thread-self." It is the receptacle of all which is in accordance with the Law, of every attribute which is noble and harmonious, therefore enduring; it marks the growth of man, the stage of evolution which he has attained. Every great and noble thought, every pure and lofty emotion is carried up and worked into his substance. The "Spiritual Ego" is not Manas, but Manas united to, merged in Buddhi. This is the culmination of human evolution, the revolution on the wheel of births and deaths. Above this, we have one plane higher, the plane of Buddhi, into this the Yogîs can pass and taste the bliss of that glorious world, realize their own consciousness, the underlying unity which becomes a fact of experience and no longer only an intellectual belief. Through the Gateway of Initiation, through which man is led by his Masters, he rises for the first time into the spiritual body and experiences the Unity which underlies all the diversity of the physical world, the separateness of the astral plane and even of the mental region.

The Temporary Bodies or the body of illusion, or artificial body, in which man fashions his mind body into a likeness of himself, travels from land to land, also into the world mind, gathers experience and truths which he brings back to the waking consciousness. The Human Aura is the man himself, manifest at once on four planes of consciousness; it is the aggregate of his bodies, of his vehicles of consciousness, it is the form aspect of the man. Most glorious of all is the spiritual body visible in Initiates, through which plays the living âtmic fire; this is the manifestation of man in the Buddhi plane.

Then comes the Causal Body, his manifestation in the highest mental world, the arûpa levels of the plane of mind, where the individual has his home. Next the mind body, belonging to the lower mental planes, the astral, etheric and dense bodies in succession, each formed of the matter of its own region and expressing the man as he is in each. As the higher vision is developed, the physical body is visible as a kind of dense crystallization in the center of the other bodies, the others permeating it and extending beyond its periphery, the physical being the smallest, the astral next, showing the state of the kâmic nature—passions, emotions, appetites—differing in form, color and fineness as the man is more or less pure.

The Man—that continuing individual who passes from life to life, who comes into bodies and leaves them over and over again, who develops slowly in the course of ages, who grows by the gathering and assimilation of experience, and who exists on the higher mânasic or mental plane—begins his experience by developing self consciousness on the physical plane; here appears “waking consciousness” which works through the brain and nervous system, what we recognize as mental faculties. The brain merely receives vibrations, the consciousness working in the astral body changes the sensation, and the mental body changes the vibrations into sensations, into perceptions, and then carries on all the processes which transform the chaos into cosmos. The consciousness thus working is illuminated from above with ideas not fabricated from materials supplied by the physical world, but reflected into it directly from the Universal Mind. Man is one and the same man, on whatever plane he may be functioning; his triumph is when he functions on all five planes in unbroken consciousness. Those whom we call Masters, “Men made perfect,” in whom evolution is completed, there is nothing they cannot understand, nothing that they cannot help, the cycle has been trodden to its close and what they are, all in time shall be, who are climbing slowly upward. This is the unification of consciousness; the vehicles remaining for use, but no longer are able to imprison, and the man uses any one of his bodies, according to the work that he has to accomplish.

MAY BARLOW BARBER.

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## DUTY OF THEOSOPHISTS TOWARD INEBRIATES.

On several occasions of late we have lightly handled a question which is, I take it, well worth thorough treatment—the question: “What is the Duty of Theosophists towards Evil-doers?” It may assume two forms: One is the form of a mere problem in ethics, *i. e.*, the wisest, most just and far-sighted policy towards offenders. The other is the form of a problem in Theosophy proper, *i. e.*, whether interposition for relief is not an interference with Karma, and therefore both impertinent and futile. Perhaps we can best equip ourselves for dealing with a specific topic by clear conception of the general law under which all such must come.

Wherever there is inherent life—as everywhere through the

organic world—the possibility of injury involves the provision for repair. In the vegetable kingdom, the frosting of a twig, the mutilation of a limb, the grazing of a bark causes a rally of all the vital powers to remove the damage. In the animal kingdom, that of both brutes and men, sickness or wounds or bruises are a call on Nature to concentrate her forces on the seat of injury that the poisonous matter be ejected, the weakened organ be built up, the fractured bone healed. Pain shows that the natural order has been violated, and that the tender places of the organism have been shocked. It is the summons to consciousness, informing of injury, invoking of remedy, enjoining to submission. It is not the evil, it is the notice that there is an evil; it is not the disease to be treated, but a clue to where that disease should be sought.

From this, two consequences follow: The first is, that the real purpose of medical art is to cure the disease, not to remove the pain. Either for mere relief to suffering, or to facilitate more thorough treatment, anæsthetics are rightly used; but in their use it is never forgotten that pain is but a symptom of disorder, and that the object is to heal the disorder, which healing itself annuls the symptom. The other consequence is, that a true physician will refuse to remove pain if the agencies necessary deepen and strengthen the disease and thus ensure worse pain thereafter. It would be folly to save from suffering for a day, if thereby the patient was subjected to an increase of his malady, and thus to an increase of his suffering, for years. Nor could the charge of cruelty hold against a practitioner who, certain of results, refused to alleviate a temporary anguish at the cost of a permanent malady.

Let us now translate these principles into the moral sphere, and note if their application is not as demonstrable as in the sphere of physics. Here, too, we have the phenomena of injury, mutilation, and apparatus for repair. There is the violation of moral order, the consequent disorganization of moral tissue, the summons to the moral system for its powers toward recuperation. So, too, there is the phenomenon of pain, possibly of body as the result of excesses, possibly of soul in the form of conscience. As in the physical sphere, it is a symptom of disease, and, also as there, it gives the clue to the part affected, and so to the remedy.

But the analogy does not stop here. The two corollaries we

noticed in the world of physics are just as true in the world of morals. Here, too, wise treatment is designed to remove the cause of suffering rather than the suffering, to dry up the source rather than the outflow. The moralist does not give opiates or emollients to conscience, but seeks to eradicate the fault which caused conscience to burn. And as a far-sighted physician, however tender, refuses to give immediate relief to pain if thereby are ensured a stronger disease and a longer recurrence of pain, so the moralist, however sympathetic, will not remove the suffering caused by evil if to do so will invigorate the evil and repeat the suffering.

We have now reached the point, I think, where we may take up the specific questions propounded some weeks ago for our discussion. They were questions as to the treatment of drunkenness; and drunkenness seems to me a peculiarly felicitous illustration of the matter for two reasons—it is a case where the offense is so directly personal and wilful, and it is a case where the penal consequences follow so immediately and unmistakably. The various questions might all be summed up in this general one: "Do we owe any duty to drunkards?" Speaking simply for myself, I answered unhesitatingly, "None whatever," and, though this may seem harsh or unfeeling, I think it capable of clear defense.

For, you will observe, the sympathetic feeling excited is because of some one of the painful consequences which follow upon that indulgence. It is not on behalf of those who are made the victims of it—the wife, family, friends, but of the offender himself. And we are asked to shield him from the results of his misdoing—the exposure, the danger of accident, the risk of arrest and imprisonment, whatever may be the penalty involved. And yet, you perceive, these penalties are precisely the consequences which Nature has affixed to the violation of her laws, and affixed for the same reason that she excites pain in a weary limb or misused organ, namely, to arouse a sense that wrong has been done and to convince that the pain will persist until the wrong has been rectified. And, analogously to the physical cases, it seems most clear that the evil we are to attack is the drunkenness and not the shame it brings, and that we are not even to avert that shame if, by so doing, the drunken habit is made more fixed and

the repetition of shame ensured. Can anything be more certain than that to avert the disciplinary treatment of Nature is really to prevent the very reform for which discipline is designed? You take away the only means adequate to secure the end, and yet do not see that you thus prevent that end. And you do so because you wish to save from suffering, not perceiving that the most certain way to save from suffering is to allow the suffering to effect the cure which forever ends it, rather than frustrate the cure and thus necessitate the renewal of suffering.

Put in distinct language, the case stands thus: I believe that many a man would be startled into self-control and rescued from permanent dissipation if his first carouse was followed by a painful fall, a night in jail, or a temporary suspension of relations by his family. The remedy may seem severe—is it more so than a lifetime of disgrace, a series of remorse, a collapse of intellect and health?

But, I am told, self-control is not always within the power of the will. If by this is meant that such a state may be produced, I admit it; but who is responsible for that state save the offender? Short of such a state, the will *must* be sufficient. Wills, no doubt, differ in power. There are degrees therein as there are in physical strength. Not every man is, or can be, judged as Hercules. Yet all men have the power to walk, to meet the ordinary demands of life, to dress, and eat, and talk. Society can no more concede that an individual lacks the power to be sober than that he lacks the power to put on his clothes, to partake of his meals, to attend to his affairs. The power is there; if he does not choose to exert it, is he to be held free?

But again, it is said, temptation may be too strong for him. Examine into this and see what it results in. Temptation, no doubt, constitutes a tendency, but it does not produce an irresistible momentum. To say that an offense is excusable because the temptation is strong is only another way of saying that a man may do any act if he greatly desires to do it. Inasmuch, however, as the impulse to all acts comes from a desire for them, this is equivalent to saying that a man is at liberty to do anything he chooses. Are you prepared to take that ground?

If not; if it is conceded that there are certain moral obligations resting upon all; if it is recognized that the very quality which

distinguishes a human being from an animal is the power of self-determination; if it is admitted that Nature affixes penalties to transgression in order to check, and warn, and reform; if it is seen that the most erroneous policy is to thwart the beneficent system of Nature and increase the ills she is striving to abate; then, in the matter we are discussing, it follows that a man is bound to sobriety, that he will suffer if not sober, that we wrong him by interposing to avert his suffering. And it follows, further, that by allowing the suffering to go unhindered, we are but imitating the sage physician who will not give an anæsthetic, if to do so perpetuates a disease. It is not hard-heartedness, but far-sighted wisdom; not want of sympathy, but the fullest measure of it.

If these things are so, I think that the question of interfering with Karma need not trouble us. There is, at once, the broad distinction between evils that people have brought upon themselves, and those that have fallen on them through no personal fault. We see it at once in the difference between the drunkard and the drunkard's child—I do not say the drunkard's wife, because she has the remedy of action in her own hands. To relieve an innocent child raises no problem in Karma. In the other case none need be raised, for the proper course has been settled by a general law of Nature, to which Theosophists, like all other believers, may well bow. Our accepting gratefully and fully, as I trust we do, the light streaming from the Wisdom-Religion, does not antagonize us to truth in any field or to the perception of law in any sphere. Rather it enlarges our conception of Law, fortifies our sense of its inviolability, quickens our readiness to conform to it. We can hardly become unsystematic through learning the perfection of system.

One more thought on the subject of this paper. "How," some one may say, "does it comport with our position as to Universal Brotherhood?" As to this, I have no misgivings whatever. The doctrine of Universal Brotherhood holds that all men are equally the outcome from a common source, and are therefore on the same fraternal level—brethren. But it does not hold that all equally exhibit their ancestral traits, or are equally meritorious in character, habits and life, or have a right to the same indiscriminating treatment, or can be allowed fraternal claims while viola-

ting fraternal bonds. Theosophy would be unreason, madness, chaos, if it abolished moral law, moral obligations, moral discipline. Instead of a reign of peace we should have a saturnalia of outrage if all restraints were obliterated, and every one be permitted to do precisely as he pleased. We have no such notions in the restricted limits of family brotherhood. There are good brothers and bad brothers, but all are not treated alike. We do not conceive that birth from the same parents empowers our brothers to pillage our properties, ruin our reputations, sear our sensibilities, and then claim our consideration. In fact, we should argue, and very justly, that they could not claim the privileges of a relationship while scorning its obligations. And so in the wider field of the Universal Brotherhood, our brothers must respect us if we are to respect them. Assuredly they cannot scout at the Power which we revere, defy the Law which we obey, dissipate every treasure we are struggling to conserve, poison all the waters of life which we are striving to keep sweet, and then insist on their equal place in the household! Let us not suppose that Theosophy is the negation of common sense and common right, or that all the loftiest ideas of human justice are to fall prostrate before a phrase. Let us rather illuminate the phrase than make it ridiculous. It is not ennobled, it is degraded and belittled, when it is used to cover over the sot, the ruffian, the criminal. They would not obtain admission to our houses and our homes if with liquor-laden breaths they stammered out the words "Universal Brotherhood," and I do not believe that our hearts are any the more open to such visitors or would give them either a welcome or a benediction.

ALEXANDER FULLERTON.

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"The wise man does not speak from impulse or sensation. He chooses his words. He knows that words are storage batteries, and that the energy they contain is released when he speaks them. Having power over his words, he directs their released energy, which accomplishes that whereunto it is sent. By his chosen words he breathes the breath of life which makes him alive from the dead."

## “ISIS UNVEILED.”

The time had come when men began to break loose from the theological traces and ignore sectarian lines. It had become evident to many that the remarkable diversity among the creeds of men was irreconcilable with the validity of counter contentions for sectarian definitions of Truth. Either one was wholly right and all the others wrong in so far as they differed with the one that was right, or there was a substratum of truth in all, the superficial differences being really immaterial. Bigotry was growing less with every decade, whilst agnosticism was spreading with alarming rapidity—a hopeful sign, indeed, for when men acknowledge their ignorance, they are no longer controversialists; they have cast aside prejudice, and are then in a receptive mood, ready for whatever teaching it is their Karma to receive.

But many there were who held to God and Truth in the abstract while refusing to be confounded with the bewildering confusion of statement as to what is right and what wrong. For these, in due time, there came one who, with a Master's hand, tore aside the veils of tradition, dogmatism and superstition, and demonstrated, by mere comparison and critical analysis, a common origin of all religions, a primeval revelation, of which all later forms and ethical systems are but relative parodies. This reformer was Madame H. P. Blavatsky, who later, through the Theosophical Society, became, in fact, the founder of a fresh and growing school of religious philosophy and science; but she only came forward after the necessary training and preparation among the Occultists of the East, and, in a manner almost miraculous, gave to the world a book entitled *Isis Unveiled*, which marks the beginning of a new epoch in Western metaphysics and psychology.

A comparative stranger in New York, without the means of consulting the thousands of rare books and manuscripts scattered among the libraries of the world (to and from which reference is made and quotations stated, with chapter and page), she, nevertheless, produced in the seventies two huge volumes, devoted to the discussion and comparison of ancient, mediæval and modern systems of science, philosophy and theology, which in point of learning has never been equalled by exoteric scholars.

By birth a Russian of noble blood, yet disclaiming a scholastic

and hardly a practical acquaintance with the English language, the obstacles to a lucid expression of her thoughts were indeed well nigh insuperable. Moreover, the points of contact between Eastern and Western thought and aspiration were so few; the vocabulary of the latter so deficient in terminology as to afford no adequate expression for the elaborate concepts of a fully developed system of metaphysics, beginning below the mineral and extending as far as it could be followed through its subtle intricacies in the direction of the Absolute; the aversion of Western minds to everything that would divert their materialistic trend of thought, all combined to make her undertaking difficult to the degree of impossibility to other than an indomitable will. Yet she succeeded admirably. If we except a few grammatical and structural inaccuracies—the result of pardonable oversight in so voluminous a work—her diction and the straightforward, intelligible and forceful elucidation of the abstruse technicalities of what has since become almost popular Theosophy, are inimitable. How much of clearness may be attributable to the revision of a few devoted friends is of little consequence. They had their reward in the privilege of sharing in so momentous a project.

The publication of *Isis Unveiled* created a profound sensation in the literary world. Reviewers were interested, astounded, nonplussed, yet all conceded its extraordinary claims to a studious perusal. When they could not praise, they could only remain silent or condemn point blank what disagreed with their own unfounded opinions. It was hard to ridicule the most plausible exposition of problems which had provoked much speculation, ending only in misplaced surmises, and particularly so when vital questions concerning the fundamental facts of human existence and moral and social development were mooted. It was hard, I say, to ridicule what could only be compared to the disadvantage of a counter thesis. The difficulty was to find a person competent, by expert learning in all the multifarious subjects treated upon, to express an authoritative verdict as to the merits of the book. Critics exclaimed against its audacity while they stood aghast at its obvious profundity. They could not tell whether the book was the work of an eccentric prodigy, who, in the course of a lifetime of omniverous reading and indefatigable research among antiquated lore, had amassed enough material to overwhelm, if not

to mystify, the reader, and so attain a spurious reputation for an abnormal intellectual capacity; or whether, in some preterhuman manner, she had access to assistance and data beyond the reach of ordinary channels of information. They did not know what to make of it; the book was too much for them.

Hypnotism, spiritualism, alchemy, witchcraft, sorcery, telepathy, and innumerable other phases of psychological phenomena were all discussed as by one having practical knowledge of the *modus operandi*. Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, the Druses, the Sacred Mysteries of the Ancients, Occult Brotherhoods of every age and clime were all explained, traced to their origin and compared as by a contemporary initiated into their Arcana. Modern ecclesiastical doctrines were boldly refuted and shown to be the result of this, that, or the other circumstance; current scientific theories were ridiculed or amended without a "by your leave;" Biblical incidents were claimed to be allegories, susceptible of interpretation to one having the key; time-honored institutions, customs and rituals were unmercifully lampooned, the basis of alleged facts argued from beneath them, as shown to be a degenerate remnant of Pagan rites. Jehovah himself was dethroned as the Universal Deity and relegated to a subordinate position among the lesser gods, the chosen tutelary Ruler of the Israelites; while the ineffable Very God of Very God—the One from whom all proceeded—was exalted far beyond the pale of human appreciation or conception.

The Jewish Kabala, the Chaldean Book of Numbers, the Hermetic Philosophy of Egypt, the Bhagavad Gîtâ of the Hindus were all cited as more or less esoteric teaching—each being, in its respective racial ethical system, the inner counterparts for the few of the outer form of doctrine for the many. Points of concordance were made manifest in all; in fact, the Gnosis—the same underlying Wisdom and Truth—was traced through the phraseological ramifications of each; and, ultimately, religion, as man himself the world over, was postulated as one and indivisible.

What strange teaching was this? What unaccountable freak of a feverish imagination could have prompted such vagaries from mortal woman? The author herself was an enigma, therefore, what else could her book be but a puzzle to the worldly-wise? "This woman hath a devil—nay, *is* the devil in academical disguise," some said, "The book is a nightmare," said others. A

few exclaimed, "This is good; give us more!"

As to the meaning of the title, little need be said. The book was originally called "The Veil of Isis," but as it was afterwards discovered that a book so named and copyrighted was already in circulation, this title had to be changed into the less appropriate one by which it is now known. In reality, Isis is not yet unveiled to the world, or man would be dangerously wise in a Wisdom that may not be misused with impunity. Isis, as one of the Egyptian threefold Deity, represented esoterically the Word—the sacred Gnosis, the basis of all Wisdom, all Truth. The unveiling of Isis accomplished by the book was merely the lifting of the outer veil of traditional misconception as to the true character of the goddess, and this for the behoof of the earnest student in an age of purblind materialism. The real unveiling he must do for himself, after he has been found worthy—this is a matter of spiritual illumination.

The mission of the book, as I take it, was a twofold one: to put the data, *pro et con*, before the people, that they might think and judge for themselves, and to prepare them for an unprejudiced reception of her forthcoming masterpiece, the *Secret Doctrine*, in which a second veil is removed.

Now that the effervescence of public opinion has subsided, what is to be the status of the book outside of Theosophical literature? At what literary and scientific value will it be appraised by the bespectacled savants, who put the academical imprimatur upon such heterodoxical innovations as public opinion will no longer suffer them to ignore? Who can tell? What does it matter? Despised or allowed to sink into oblivion, it will not be until its theories are exploded or its statements and deductions proven false. Scholars and scientists have had a quarter of a century in which to disprove its assumptions, and they have not done so. It has fulfilled its mission if it were swept out of existence to-morrow. The Theosophical Society, of which it was a forerunner, is an assured fact; its influence upon literature, theology and science is remarkably apparent; while the dissemination of the teaching of the *Secret Doctrine*—which it so successfully introduced—is effecting a silent revolution in Western metaphysics, biology, psychology and theology, as it is also leading men back to "the Way, the Truth and the Life, in whom there is no change, neither shadow of turning."

WILLIAM T. JAMES.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER NOT MATERIALISTIC.

TO THE EDITOR OF MERCURY:

Among our friends, the Materialists, the idea is prevalent that the philosophy and teachings of Mr. Herbert Spencer and the result of his investigations justify, and even necessarily lead up to, a belief in Materialism, he being by many considered a very great authority.

The following extract will for this reason be of special interest to Materialists as well as to Theosophists.

In the Appendix to *Principles of Biology*, Vol. I, p. 490, replying to a criticism published in the *North American Review* Mr. Spencer says:

“That, however, which I regard as most reprehensible in his criticism is the way in which he persists in representing the “System of Philosophy” I am working out as a materialistic system. Already he has once before so represented it, and the injustice of so representing it has been pointed out. He knows that I have repeatedly and emphatically asserted that our conceptions of Matter and Motion are but symbols of an Unknowable Reality: that this Reality cannot be that which we symbolize it to be; and that as manifested beyond consciousness under the forms of Matter and Motion, it is the same as that which, in consciousness, is manifested as Feeling and Thought. Yet he continues to describe me as reducing everything to dead mechanism.

. . . . . I recognize no forces within the organism, or without the organism, but the variously-conditioned modes of the universal immanent force; and the whole process of organic evolution is everywhere attributed by me to the co-operation of its variously-conditioned modes, internal and external.”

On page 491 he quotes from the closing paragraph of *First Principles*:

“Hence the reasonings contained in the foregoing pages afford no support to either of the antagonist hypotheses respecting the the ultimate nature of things. Their implications are no more materialistic than they are spiritualistic; and no more spiritualistic than they are materialistic. Any argument which is apparently furnished to either hypothesis is neutralized by as good an argu-

ment furnished to the other. The Materialist, seeing it to be a necessary deduction from the Law of Correlation, that what exists in consciousness, under the form of feeling, is transformable into an equivalent of mechanical motion, and by consequence into equivalents of all the other forces which matter exhibits, may consider it therefore demonstrated that the phenomena of consciousness are material phenomena. But the Spiritualist, setting out with the same data, may argue with equal cogency, that if the forces displayed by matter are cognizable only under the shape of those equivalent amounts of consciousness which they produce, it is to be inferred that these forces, when existing out of consciousness, are of the same intrinsic nature as when existing in consciousness; and that so, is justified the spiritualistic conception of the external world, as consisting of something essentially identical with what we call *mind*. Manifestly, the establishment of correlation and equivalence between the forces of the outer and the inner worlds, may be used to assimilate either to the other, according as we set out with one or other term. But he who rightly interprets the doctrine contained in this work will see that neither of these terms can be taken as ultimate. He will see that though the relation of subject and object renders necessary to us these antithetical conceptions of Spirit and Matter, the one is no less than the other to be regarded as but a sign of the Unknown Reality which underlies both."

These words are suggestive to Theosophists. Given the universal immanent force of which Mr. Spencer speaks, with that inherent quality of evolution which Materialists attribute to that force, and undoubtedly evolution would result. But Mr. Spencer says this is just as consistent with the idea of mind as the basis of all things as it is with the materialistic hypothesis. The ultimate test then is, which is the most reasonable? Theosophists may fairly comment that a universal immanent force possessing the potency of evolution into mind, is not understandable, save upon the hypothesis that such universal force is, in one of its aspects, Universal Mind. So that, at the very basis of materialistic philosophy we find that for which we contend, and Materialists cannot come to their conclusions without denying their own premises. One thing, in any event, is clear—Mr. Spencer is *not* an authority for Materialism.

F. E. TITUS.

## ASTRONOMICAL RESEARCH.

Among the readers of *MERCURY* there must be some lovers of Occult research who have access to astronomical and astrological records. We ask these fortunate individuals to aid in the diffusion of knowledge by looking up the conjunctions of Saturn and Uranus during the past two hundred years, and giving the data to the pages of this journal.

To the earnest investigator every event has a value, the little as well as the great, the remote as well as the near. We know that the Solar System is held together in space by that great Law whereby each planet attracts every other planet, and is, in turn attracted by all. This attraction is so well defined that through a knowledge of its action the planet Neptune was discovered. Now, if a physical orb has the power to pull towards itself another physical orb millions of miles distant, may it not be inferred that the Astral forces of these orbs also affect each other? The Astral forces are more subtle and reach to a far greater distance than those of the physical. Every force has its correlate in thought; therefore, one must infer that planetary orbs, not only affect each other physically, but mentally also—that is, the humanity of a planet feels the pull of attraction of the others. But the XIX Century demands positive proof. It says, and with reason: "If the Astral and mental forces of planets influence each other, then demonstration of this influence can be obtained by comparing astronomical motions with historical events.

The year 1897 has felt an interblending of the forces externalized in the planets Saturn and Uranus, both of them Occult, and for material things very disturbing. The effects of their conjoining have been marked, but we are too near to be able to get a clear view of events."

In 1851, a similar conjunction took place, and the Crimean War was attributed to its influence. But no judgment can be formed upon data so meager; the records of several hundred years, at least, should be studied ere a correct idea can be obtained of the influence of these conjoined planetary forces upon human events.

Hence the readers of *MERCURY* are called upon to aid in gathering this information.

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### THE SONG OF THE RIVER.

O, river flowing to the sea,  
What is the song you sing to me?  
" 'Tis a secret, a secret," the river said;  
"If you would hear it, bow low your head;  
Listen, listen, bend lower your ear;  
Be still as the silence if you would hear.  
A part of the whole, I give I give,  
In doing that part, I live, I live;  
If the rain-drops fall on my bosom,  
I gather them close in my arms,  
If the clouds needs my waters for rain-drops,  
I yield them without alarms  
Or fear, that the source of all waters  
Will fail me in my need;  
A part of the great Creator's plan,  
I am doing His will! Do thou this, O man?"  
As I stood where the river flowed into the sea,  
This is the song it sang to me.

VIRGINIA A. MOON.

# OUTLINES OF THEOSOPHIC STUDY.

ISSUED BY A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE AMERICAN SECTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AT THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION HELD IN CHICAGO, JUNE 27, 1897.

The papers issued under the above head are designed to aid Lodges of the T. S. and its earnest members to follow a course of serious and consecutive study, by which they may master the main principles of the Ancient Wisdom—Theosophy. Each course is complete in itself, and is intended to cover the subjects dealt with, although subsequent study may fill in many details. The "illustrative readings" guide the student to the details as given in our elementary books. We have aimed at presenting the knowledge in a systematic way, so that the student may have nothing to unlearn hereafter, however much he may add. The following "Outlines of Study" are ready, or are in course of preparation:

I. The Constitution of man and his worlds, and their relations to each other.

II. Reincarnation and the laws of growth.

III. The Science of the Soul.

MARY WEEKS BURNETT, Chairman,  
KATE BUFFINGTON DAVIS,  
MAUDE L. HOWARD,

*Committee appointed by the Convention, with Annie Besant as Consulting Member.*

*Approved:*

ANNIE BESANT.

## OUTLINE I.

### The Constitution of Man and His Worlds or Planes, and their Relations to Each Other.

TEXT BOOK. THE ANCIENT WISDOM.

This should be read as an introduction, but the closer study of comparative religion may be left until the main principles of Theosophy are grasped, and the student thus obtains a test whereby he may distinguish between the essential and the non-essential.

#### CHAPTER I. THE PHYSICAL PLANE.

Read pp. 40 to 45, down to "the labyrinth of facts."—A diagram should be drawn of the seven planes; see p. 82, in "Seven Principles of Man," ignoring for the present the technical names showing the functioning of Atmâ, etc. The atom should be drawn on each plane, its outer wall having a different color on each plane, and the inner coatings being shown. Notice the fact that there are three waves of evolution, each with its own work.

Read pp. 45-49, "most varied conditions."—The most vital point is the existence of the seven conditions of matter on each plane. The plate should be reproduced on the blackboard, and the breaking-up process studied. Notice the definition of "a plane" on p. 47. Illustrative Readings: The article on Occult Chemistry, "Lucifer," November, 1895, also any well-illustrated article on crystallurgy in a good encyclopædia or work on Chemistry. Read pp.

49-56.—Note that the dense and etheric parts of the physical body are really one vehicle for use on the physical plane, and that Prâna plays through the etheric double on the dense body. See physical plane in diagram, p. 32, "The Seven Principles of Man." Illustrative Readings: "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 5-16. "Man and his Bodies," pp. 9-35.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is evolution and what its guarantee?
2. How does God manifest Himself?
3. Describe the formation of the matter of the Universe in planes.
4. What is a plane?
5. Is any matter "dead?" if not, why not?
6. What are the first and second life-waves, and what does each do?
7. What are the subdivisions of matter on a plane?
8. What are the two main divisions of man's physical body? Of what materials is each composed?
9. How is the body built up and how may it be purified?
10. What part of the body receives electric vibrations?
11. What is Prâna, and what its vehicle?
12. How is the mould of the physical body formed, and how is the latter constructed?

CHAPTER II. THE ASTRAL PLANE.

Read pp. 57-65, down to "but not understood."—Grasp clearly the meaning of the term "elemental essence," (p. 59), and the nature of "artificial elementals." Illustrative Readings: "The Astral Plane," pp. 47 (the elemental essence," §2)-55; pp. 67-77, "65 million human lives."

Read pp. 65-70, "poor relations."—Note these classes of non-human astral entities, so as to realize that the astral plane is a world with its own normal population. Illustrative Readings: "The Astral Plane," pp. 56 ("The Kâmarûpas of animals")-62, "of the kind at all."

Read pp. 70-73, "the coming earth life." Illustrative Readings: "The Astral Plane, pp. 19-23, "now known on earth." "Seven Principles of Man," pp. 47-48, "from a living person."

Read pp. 73-80, "invisible world."—It is very important that the student should understand clearly the composition and working of the astral body during physical life. Illustrative Readings. "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 17-19 "on the physical plane." "Man and his Bodies," pp. 41 (as to the Constitution)—50 "fulfilling his wish."

Read pp. 80 (last line)-82.—Study diagrams on pp. 82-84 in "Seven Principles of Man," the astral and physical planes, noticing the different divisions where the "principles" are taken. Illustrative Readings: "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 1 (last line)-4, and 22-24.

QUESTIONS.

1. How is a bridge made between the physical and astral planes by the atom of the physical?
2. What are the general characteristics of astral matter?
3. Explain "elemental essence," and describe an "elemental."
4. What is an "artificial elemental," and how do such beings affect our thoughts?
5. What is the work of "desire elementals?"

6. What is man's responsibility towards the elemental kingdoms?
7. Describe severally the astral body of an undeveloped soul, an average one, and an advanced.
8. How is the evolution of the astral body quickened?
9. Explain the functions of the astral body in connecting consciousness with the physical brain.
10. Describe the classes of the population of the astral world.
11. What parts of man's consciousness find expression through the astral body?
12. What is "going to sleep?"

#### CHAPTER III. KAMA LOKA

Read pp. 83-91, down to "deliver us." Illustrative Readings: "The Astral Plane," pp. 25 (The ordinary person)-33, and 38 (the suicide)-41, "contribution by them." "Man and his Bodies," 56 ("if we follow")-58 "loftier regions." "Death and After" pp. 15 (the fate of the body)-46 "to destruction."

Read pp. 91-106. Illustrative Readings: "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 19 ("after death, the higher")-21, and 42, 43. "The Astral Plane," pp. 33 (last line)-38, "better to avoid it."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. On what plane is Kâma Loka? What does it include in the nomenclature of religions?
2. Describe the departure of the man from his dense physical body.
3. Why should perfect quiet surround the death-bed?
4. What becomes of the dense body, the etheric double, and Prâna?
5. What rearrangement of the astral body occurs after death?
6. What governs the length of the man's stay in each division of Kâma Loka, and in what do the conditions of the spiritually advanced and the average man differ?
7. What is the effect of death by violence?
8. Describe the seven subdivisions according to their inhabitants.
9. How can those in Kâma Loka be helped by their friends on earth?
10. Define a "shell," a "shade," a "spook," an "elementary."

#### CHAPTER IV. THE MENTAL PLANE.

Read pp. 107-114, "limitations of forms." Illustrative Readings: "The Devachanic Plane," pp. 10 ("The Devachanic sense")-26 "with the idea." "Birth and Evolution of the Soul," pp. 42 ("as to the way")-46 "he will have to live."

Read pp. 114-119, "eyes be blind." Illustrative Readings: "The Astral Plane," pp. 62 (The Devas)-65, "on the astral plane." "The Devachanic Plane," pp. 29 ("the embodied")-33, "of what they see," pp. 74-86. "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 48 ("a higher form"), 49, "body of illusion." "Man and his Bodies," 83 ("temporary bodies")-84.

Read pp. 119-128, "faculties of the pupil." Illustrative Readings: "Man and his Bodies," pp. 62-75, "results from them."

Read pp. 128-133, "in every sheath." Illustrative Readings: "Man and his Bodies," pp. 75 (the causal body)-81. "Birth and Evolution of the Soul," pp. 13 ("Now, for a moment")-30. "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 49 ("The Higher Manas")-58.

Read pp. 133-136. Illustrative Readings: "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 24-40.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is Manas, and whence derived?
2. How does he show himself on the physical plane?
3. How are the subdivisions of the mental plane grouped?
4. What are the characteristics of the mental plane?
5. What beings are met there?
6. What governs the place of the Thinker in the Arûpa world?
7. How do the vibrations from the Thinker build the mental body?
8. Describe the three types of mental body.
9. Why is a savage often worse than a brute?
10. Describe the birth of the causal body.
11. How much of our earth-life helps its growth?
12. What are the illusory "I's" in man?
13. Define clearly the terms "higher" and "lower" Manas. What is genius?

CHAPTER V. DEVACHAN.

Read pp. 137-148, "chapters on reincarnation." Illustrative Readings: "The Devachanic Plane," pp. 33 ("The disembodied")-46, "donor and recipient." "Death and After," pp. 46 (Devachan)-65, "illimitable past."

Read pages 148-153, "that high realm." Illustrative Readings: "The Devachanic Plane, pp. 9 ("a beautiful description")-10, "higher power," 48 (seventh sub-plane)-65, "physical life." Note that in this book the lowest plane is called the seventh, and the highest the first.

Read pp. 153-158, "falls to pieces." Illustrative Readings: "The Devachanic Plane," pp. 65 (the arûpa levels)-73.

Read pp. 150-162. Illustrative Readings: "Birth and Evolution of the Soul," pp. 31-37, "directed by appetite."

QUESTIONS.

1. What relation have the illusions of the physical and of the devachanic planes to Reality, and which plane is the more real?
2. What conditions the state of the man in Devachan?
3. With what other persons does a man in Devachan come into contact?
4. How is the Thinker employed in Devachan?
5. Sketch the progress of successive devachanic experiences to a developing soul.
6. What are the two great stages in devachanic life, what vehicles are used in each respectively, and what determines the length of each?
7. Describe definitely the causes in earth life, the heavenly experiences, and the results on a future incarnation, of life on each of the seven levels of Devachan.
8. What are the "Three Worlds?"
9. How is a new life-cycle begun, when the devachanic life is over?
10. Define accurately the "personality" and the "individuality."

CHAPTER VI. THE BUDDHIC AND NIRVANIC PLANES.

Read pp. 163-168 "destructive of all pain." Illustrative Readings: "Man

and his Bodies." pp. 82, 83, "innermost self."

Read pp. 168-170. Illustrative Readings: "Death and After," pp. 67 (Nirvâna) 68, "back into action."

Read pp. 170-174.

Read pp. 174-178. Illustrative Readings: "The Seven Principles of Man," pp. 59-70, "at a given period."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is the human monad? distinguish between this and (a) the monad of spirit-matter, (b) the monad of form.
2. What are the three aspects of the LOGOS, and in what order are they developed in man?
3. Give and explain the Theosophical name of the bliss-aspect.
4. How is the bliss-body formed?
5. What is the characteristic of the Buddhic plane?
6. With what aspect in the human monad is the fifth plane connected?
7. Does the individual perish?
8. Where is the foundation of Brotherhood?
9. In what part of man does "separateness" reside?
10. Why is Brotherhood the one obligation in the Theosophical Society?
11. Distinguish between the Self and the forms in which it clothes itself, and relate the "principles" to the Self and its forms.

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## T. S. ECHOES.

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### MRS. BESANT'S AMERICAN TOUR.

TO THE EDITOR OF MERCURY:

On our way from Cleveland to Buffalo we were not far from one of the famous camps of the Spiritualists, and such a pressing invitation was given, through Count Axel Wachtmeister, that it was decided to go to Lilydale, to lecture for them. On Tuesday afternoon, August 17th, we left Cleveland about 2 o'clock, but our train was delayed and we missed the connection at Dunkirk. However, horses and a conveyance were to be had, and we arrived in good time, after a drive through the dusk over country roads; our driver's instinct took us safely across strange wooden bridges and through lanes so dark that once we crashed into a cart before we saw it. They were watching at the camp, and Mrs. Besant and the Countess Wachtmeister were at once conducted into the canvas-sided "Auditorium." The lecture was listened to with deep interest, and the next morning many enquirers came; for the more educated Spiritualists are tired of phenomena and are eagerly seeking a philosophy that can explain what they know already, and lead them on to know more. Mrs. Besant lectured again in the afternoon and the Countess in the evening. The latter remained behind and organized another Branch at Dunkirk, where she also lectured with success, whilst Mrs. Besant went on to Buffalo, on the east-

ern shore of Lake Erie. Here the local Branch had arranged free lectures for Thursday and Friday, August 19th and 20th. These and the receptions were all crowded.

On Saturday, August 21st, we spent a glorious day at Niagara Falls and passed on in the afternoon over Lake Ontario to Toronto, Canada. Mrs. Besant remained until Tuesday, lecturing each night, giving instruction to our members every morning and talking to enquirers in the afternoon. The town of Hamilton was visited on Tuesday, August 24th, and a lecture given there, which inspired people to try and form a Branch for study. The next day Toronto was returned to, and a final lecture given; we hear that a dozen new members have joined the Toronto Branch, which forms a nucleus for the work in Canada.

Returning over the blue waters of Ontario, past the Niagara Falls and Buffalo, we reached Rochester on the afternoon of Thursday, August 26th. This was a successful visit. Miss Susan B. Anthony took the chair at Mrs. Besant's lectures and a Branch of the Society was left there. Syracuse and Albany also showed their interest in Theosophy, and each formed a Branch for study.

Then we passed on to the peace of beautiful Greenacre, on the Piscaqua, four miles from Portsmouth, N. H., where Mrs. Besant's lectures were listened to with enthusiasm, and we came into contact with many advanced minds. All the interest that had been accumulating on our way seemed now to culminate, and in Boston a Branch of nearly 50 members was quickly formed and is still growing. Some of these were old members, who had dropped away in consequence of the difficulties two years ago, and they were very glad to be able to come into touch again and to continue their studies; others joined for the first time, realizing that along the line of study pointed out, they had a hope of gaining deeper knowledge under true guidance.

Mrs. Besant lectured three times in Boston and once in Lynn, where a small united lodge had already rejoined the parent Society, after separating themselves for a time, in the confusion of minds caused by the late troubles.

From September 10th to 16th, Mrs. Besant was in Chicago lecturing, in spite of the great heat wave, and working in her usual way with our energetic members there. On September 18th, she arrived in New York with the Countess, whom she had picked up in Baltimore, where Mrs. Besant stopped a night to lecture. Three busy last days were spent in New York, and two lectures were given in Chickering Hall. The last was a free lecture: "Theosophy its Past, Present and Future." To a large and sympathetic audience, Mrs. Besant gave a vivid sketch of the origin of the Theosophical Society, its work, and the past troubles that had tried to check its usefulness to the world; of its present position, organized on each of the great Continents, its teachings firmly grounded and

confirmed by the researches of those who had tried honestly to follow on the lines laid down; and of its grand future as the spiritual helper and moral educator of the races yet to come. This powerful and plain statement of the position was a fitting conclusion to her past six months of constant travel, joyful work, and ungrudging aid extended to all who chose to ask it.

We left the Countess Wachtmeister to seek some much needed rest before resuming her work in America, and started for England on the American Liner "St. Louis" on September 22d, with many and kindest thoughts of Mr. Fullerton, the brave and devoted General Secretary of the American Section, and of all our earnest brothers scattered throughout the land.

We feel that the Section, now numbering over 50 Branches, will steadily increase and steadfastly fulfil its great purpose amongst the eager, growing peoples of the United States.

Although a hurricane was said to be on our path and every preparation was made to encounter it, the "St. Louis" made a good passage, and Mrs. Besant landed safely at Southampton on Wednesday, September 29th, just a week from New York. The Brahmacharin Bodhabhikshu crossed in the same vessel and will work at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in London during the coming winter. ANNIE J. WILLSON.

## REPORTS OF BRANCHES.

CHICAGO BRANCH.—There have been no special features in the work of the past month. As the season advances, attendance at the weekly meetings grows larger, and interest in general seems on the increase. The fall and winter season of Sunday night lectures was opened by the Brahmacharin, and the President of the Branch, Mr. George E. Wright, has lectured on "Hindu Poetry." A course of lectures by Mrs. Edith Sears is arranged for the near future. The subjects of Mrs. Sears' lectures are not yet announced, but will presumably pertain to practical Theosophy and the Esoteric side of the teachings in the New Testament. Pundit Lalan has opened his classes for the fall and winter. He lectures there twice a week at the Headquarters. Tuesday afternoons on "The Esoteric Interpretation of the Bhagavad Gîtâ" or three practical paths to spiritual liberation; Fridays on "Yoga (Pantanjali) Philosophy," and Sundays on the "Reconciliation Between the Doctrines of the Head and of the Heart." On Friday, the 1st of the month, a Theosophist of long standing passed over the shining river and into a new life. Mrs. Dr. Betts, whose name is well known to many members of the American Section entered into rest, that came after much pain and long suffering. The services preceding the cremation were held Monday, October the 4th, in the Chapel at Grace-land. They were conducted by Mr. George E. Wright, and were of a most impressive and beautiful nature. Each Branch in the city was represented. How thankful we should be to know that there is no death. It is but the passing from one chamber to another. A time of mental and soul refreshment to prepare for fresh endeavors. A workshop in which the best efforts we have

made here are transmuted into capacities for future achievements. Our dearest who have passed on and left us in this vale of tears, with aching hearts and streaming eyes, have gone before us "but a gray aut's pace," and truly in our calmer moments when the gentle hand of Time has healed at least the edges of our wounds, we can feel if not hear them say:

"When ye come where I have stepped  
Ye will wonder why ye wept;  
Ye will know by wise love taught,  
That here is all, and there is naught."

P. G. K.

CHICAGO, October 14th.—The Shila Branch continues to meet regularly and preserve harmony which the name implies. It is making real progress, and the interest continues. Each meeting is opened by a reading by the President from the *Voice of the Silence*. The class in the *Secret Doctrine* progresses though the "Pilgrimage of the Monad" is not yet exhausted. It has Mrs. Cooper-Oakley's printed instructions for conducting the class, and the members continue to be enthusiastic, and profitable results must be attained. The study of the "Building of the Kosmos" is also an interesting one, and is a part of the instruction at each meeting. Mrs. Besant's latest book *The Ancient Wisdom*, presented by her to the Branch, comes very opportunely; as a study of it is contemplated when the present one is finished. The library increases in value, and new books are being added at intervals. New members come in, and are pleased. The instructor, Mrs. M. L. Brainard, contemplates a visit out of town for a while which is regretted, but she goes to give spiritual instruction. The regular place of meeting for the Shila Branch is at the residence of the President, Mr. J. A. Darling, in an "upper room furnished and prepared," and it was hallowed by the presence of Mrs. Besant when she last visited Chicago.

SEATTLE, Oct. 19.—Ananda Lodge is working along in a quiet way. No new members have joined the Lodge, but many strangers attend the meetings. The good attendance, especially at the Sunday meetings, is very encouraging and the members endeavor to present Theosophy in a simple and effective manner, so that the ignorant as well as the learned may understand these grand truths. We are very happy in having with us during the winter Dr. and Mrs. de Clifford, earnest workers in the cause. Dr. de Clifford lectured for us on "The Theosophical Conception of God," and on another occasion on "Egypt." Other lectures were "The Objects of the Theosophical Society" by Mr. Clark, "Theosophy and the New Psychology" by Mrs. Bush, and the "The Path of Discipleship or Soul Culture" by Mrs. Stein. The Lodge is studying *Man and his Bodies* at the Wednesday meetings, and finds the Syllabus of the Chicago Branch very useful.

HARRIET C. STEIN, Sec'y.

TO THE EDITOR OF MERCURY:—Having decided to remain in this country to continue the Theosophical work which I began on my arrival in San Francisco in May, 1896. I think that you will like to have a monthly letter from me, giving you a detailed account of my proceedings.

After the departure of Mrs. Annie Besant, I took a much-needed rest in Atlantic City, enjoying the sea breezes with my son, who accompanied me to that delightful resort. The Count then sailed for Europe in the monster vessel, the "Kaiser," and I continued my journey to Moss Neck Manor, Va., the beautiful estate of the Countess d' Ahdhemar, an old friend of Madame Blavatsky's,

having entertained her in Enghien for some months, and most interesting it was to listen to the many wonderful manifestations of Occult power which occurred in her house during the visit of H. P. Blavatsky.

After a week of delightful repose and rest, I then came on to Washington, where a reception was given to me by the members of the Branch. Amongst all those assembled was Mrs. Cora Richmond, the well-known spiritual inspirational lecturer, with a record of 40 years' work behind her. In remarking to her that both in her lectures and books her teachings seemed to me to be akin to our Theosophical ideas, she replied that it was so, and that she had taught the embodiment of souls or reincarnation long before the formation of the Theosophical Society, thus proving that Theosophy or Divine Wisdom is permeating the world through many channels.

The next day, the 12th, a business meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a systematic method of propaganda, many useful suggestions were put forth, and those present were willing to co-operate in the work.

To-day, the 13th, I proceed to Baltimore, and then stop at Philadelphia on my way to New York. Yours cordially, CONSTANCE WACHTMEISTER.

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LOS ANGELES, Oct. 19th.—Harmony Lodge T. S. has settled down to a quiet course of study, having three Branch meetings and one public lecture a month, instead of four public lectures a month, as formerly. It has seemed best to devote more time and attention to study rather than to the preparing of lectures to please the public. All Branch meetings, however, are open meetings, and if at any time a good lecturer can be secured, whose services would otherwise be lost to the Lodge, it is deemed best to waive the usual Branch meeting in favor of the public lecture. During the month of September, Mr. Joseph Adams, familiarly and affectionately known as "Brother Joseph," gave two lectures: "How the Soul is Unfolded" and "A Better Method of Prayer." In October Mr. O. P. Taylor lectured on "Cause and Effect on the Moral Plane." The Secret Doctrine Class on Friday evening is both entertaining and profitable, each member present taking part in the study and discussion. The MERCURY for September has found ready sale; several new books have been added to the Library, which is well patronized by the public. H. R. Sec'y,

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TORONTO, CANADA, Oct. 4th.—Mr. A. G. Horwood, President Toronto T. S., recently visited Hamilton and read a very interesting paper entitled "Christian Symbolism." Mr. Horwood had made a special study of this subject. At the close of the meeting many said that their objections to Theosophy had been much modified, and light had been thrown upon the Christian Scriptures.

F. E. TITUS.

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NEWARK, N. J., Oct. 21st.—Newark Branch is one of the branches of the T. S. recently organized, and, though small in numbers, is very energetic and doing most excellent work. Mr. C. H. A. Kluge writes: "Our regular weekly meetings are held on Sunday evenings, and are generally well attended. They are conducted by the President, and are pleasant and instructive. We have adopted the line of study recommended by Mrs. Besant last spring. Thursday evenings of each week is devoted to the members' class, and we have taken for study Mrs. Besant's new work *The Ancient Wisdom*. We have adopted the system of cards recommended in MERCURY, and find it works very satisfac-

tory. A series of vegetarian dinners have just been introduced, it is quite a novel idea, and is intended to teach people how to live so that they can have healthful bodies, and thereby clearer minds; the following extract is taken from our local paper: "The first of a series of dinners was given on Tuesday evening by Mr. and Mrs. Kluge at their home, 570 Hunterdon street, in aid of the Library Fund of this first Newark Lodge of Theosophical Society, of which Mr. Kluge is President. The subject for instruction was 'What is Theosophy?' Music was rendered by Prof. Max Braun, of this city, and a very pleasant and instructive evening was passed. To-morrow evening, at the same place, Professor Edwin V. Wright, of New York City, will lecture on the 'The Silent Forces of Nature.' He will talk of the real man and the house in which he lives; his environments.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., Oct. 29th.—Golden Gate Lodge has had quite an active month. The members have adopted the syllabus of topics as arranged by the Chicago Branch, and much earnest and hard study has been the result. The following public lectures have been given since our last report: "Theosophy and the New Astronomy," by Prof. John Mackenzie; "Do the Planets Influence Man?" Miss M. A. Walsh; "The Immortality of the Soul," a symposium, by members of Branch; "The Pilgrimage of the Soul," Miss M. A. Walsh; "The Voice of the Silence," W. J. Walters. In addition to our Lodge and public meetings, three classes each week are being carried on, two of which are conducted by Miss Walsh. Thus the Master's work goes on. W.

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NEW ZEALAND SECTION, Oct. 2d.—Col. Olcott and Miss Edger arrived in New Zealand on August 24th, the first place visited being Dunedin, where a week was spent. The second week was given to Christchurch. In both of these cities a very successful series of lectures was given, Col. Olcott taking as his subjects, "Theosophical Society," "The Divine Art of Healing," "Spiritualism and Buddhism," while Miss Edger lectured on "What Theosophy Can Teach Us," "Theosophical Training of Children," "Karma and Reincarnation," "Fundamental Conception of Religion," and "Christianity." The lecture on "Healing" attracted much attention, and was repeated in both cities. In Christchurch it was delivered in "Our Father's Church," which seems to be always open to Theosophical lectures. Wellington was next visited, and here Col. Olcott lectured on "Re-birth of the Soul," "Healing and Spiritualism." A week was spent in Wellington, and then the smaller Branches, Woodville and Pahiatna, in the Province of Wellington, each had a day or two, lectures being given by the President in each. Several days were also spent in Nelson, where Col. Olcott lectured on "Spiritualism and Healing," and Miss Edger on "How We Can Help the World." Everywhere the lectures have been successful, drawing large and sympathetic audiences, and very favorable newspaper reports; the presence of the President-Founder has awakened public interest, and he has created very favorable impression, both among members and all those interested in the movement (a largely increasing body of people); the press interviews published being also very satisfactory. In addition to the public meetings there have been Branch, drawing-room and social meetings, and meetings for enquirers; new members have joined the Society, new zeal has been aroused, and much good work done all round. Auckland was reached on September 29th, and the same evening a public reception was given to the visitors in the rooms of the Auckland Branch, which was very well attended, and

showed that the same interest shown in other places was alive in Auckland, which should ensure the success of the lectures to be given, the first of which will take place on Sunday, October 3d.

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## ON WITH THE WORK!

Mrs. Besant has left us to return to Europe. She has worked for the Theosophical Cause in the United States with unwearied zeal and energy, the result being, that the Section now numbers 51 Branches and over 1000 members. May the remembrance of her untiring efforts stimulate a corresponding desire for work in the hearts of all the members of the T. S., for if each one would try and do something to help the Cause, then the Section would soon redouble its adherents. On all sides, souls are crying out for the comfort and wisdom that Theosophy alone can bring.

The best tribute we can pay to Annie Besant is to follow in her footsteps, each one making an effort to carry on the work which she has so ably performed in this country.

The Countess Wachtmeister has decided to remain in America, and after a few weeks' rest will begin her lecturing tour in the East, visiting New York, Boston, and probably the Southern States. All those wishing to correspond with her should write to—care of Mr. ALEXANDER FULLERTON, 5 University Place, New York City.

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## BOOK REVIEWS.

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*The Ancient Wisdom*, an outline of Theosophical Teachings, by ANNIE BESANT. Price, Holland Binding, \$1.50. Cloth, \$1.75. MERCURY PUBLISHING OFFICE, 414 Mason St., San Francisco.

Students of Theosophy have long felt the need of a book which would present the great Truths of the *Secret Doctrine* in a simple concise form, and which would gather together the fragments of wisdom scattered through that monumental work and build them into one harmonious whole. Such a book is *The Ancient Wisdom* of Mrs. Besant. It is an invaluable text-book of Theosophia, a synthesis of its fundamental teachings, freed from metaphysical speculation, philosophic disquisition, and archaic lore, and adapted to the thought of Western life.

Mrs. Besant is a born interpreter. The most abstruse and obscure themes become plain and practical when expressed in her clear, forceful, attractive style. Chaos grows into order at her command. These qualities of limpidity and proportion are pre-eminent in *The Ancient Wisdom*. If a fault be found with the book—and no human effort can be entirely perfect—it is an excess of condensation, of conciseness, for which reason *The Ancient Wisdom* will appeal less to the beginner than to the more advanced student, who will find in its pages the solution of many vexing questions.

The vast themes of cosmogenesis of involution and evolution of man's transcendent destiny are grouped in perfect perspective, so that the reader can sense the outline of the vast structure of Theosophia; then, step by step, he is led to note its principal features. The keystone of the whole is the relation of man to the universe revealed by the knowledge of the Self. Throughout the book, the author never loses sight of this basic truth, and never fails to impress its meaning upon the reader. Mrs. Besant realizes, through experience, that struggling humanity needs a practical philosophy of the heart.

The Introduction deals with the similarity found in all the great religions in regard to the "main spiritual verities" taught therein. Beginning with the teachings of the Fourth Race, as preserved in the sacred books of China, passing

on to the bibles of India, Egypt, Israel (both exoteric and esoteric), of Persia, to the Orphic Mysteries of Greece, to Buddhism, the Christian Testament and New Platonism, the author brings each and all to give testimony as to their common origin, and sums up in the following words: "All these similarities point to a single source, and that is the Brotherhood of the White Lodge, the Hierarchy of Adepts who watch over and guide the evolution of humanity, and who have preserved these truths unimpaired, from time to time, as necessity arose, re-asserting them in the ears of men."

The chapter on "Reincarnation" explains the working of natural selection, the evolution of instincts, of animal mind and the birth of the soul, and gives a vivid picture of the Self clothing itself in bodies rare and dense for the purpose of growth through experience in all worlds. *The Ancient Wisdom* reveals man unto himself: In its pages each one can study how he has builded his various selves; how he stands in heaven, as well as on earth. It says: "*Every sphere is around us*, the astral, the mental, the buddhic, the nirvânic, and worlds higher yet, the life of the Supreme God; we need not stir to find them, for they are here; but our dull unreceptivity shuts them out more effectively than millions of miles of mere space." For man responds to these spheres or planes by his receptivity to their impressions, the power of brain and nerves to respond to their vibrations. The realization of this truth as a vital fact of life would change all our previous measurements of life and things, and consequently would help to change the direction of the world's thought, for the knowledge of what man is, of the process of his becoming, reveals the scope of his power to unmake that which he has made. Man's responsibility rings clear and true in this book. We read: "The chains that bind him are of his own forging, and he can file them away or rivet them more strongly; the house he lives in is of his own building, and he can improve it, let it deteriorate, or rebuild it, as he will." And again, "We are all masters of our to-morrows, however much we are hampered to-day by the results of our yesterdays." And it is through thought that we become "masters of our to-morrows," "Thought is the most potent factor in the creation of human karma" — and again, one says: "I did it without thinking, unknowing that he had thought so often that he had made that action inevitable. When a man has willed to do and act many times, he at last fixes his will irrevocably, and it is only a question of opportunity when he will act." The study on karma clears away many shadows of helplessness and fatalism still lingering around the Karmic idea and obscuring its light. The relations of karma with heredity are also scientifically explained, and many misconceptions will be cleared away by a study of this chapter. The pages devoted to "The Buddhic and Nirvânic Planes," although treating of subjects transcending finite though ture yet most practical, for here we find clear concepts of the Monad, of nirvâna, of brotherhood. In one brief sentence, tense with life, nirvâna stands revealed. "The nirvânic consciousness is the antithesis of annihilation; it is existence raised to a vividness and intensity inconceivable to those who know only the life of the senses and the mind." Then the way of gaining the abode of bliss is shown: "The only way in which the man can contribute to the building of this glorious form (bliss body) is by cultivating pure, unselfish, all-embracing, beneficent love, love that 'seeketh not its own' — that is, love that is neither partial, nor seeks any return for its outflowing. \* \* \* Pure love brought the Universe into being, pure love maintains it, pure love draws it upwards towards perfection, towards bliss."

This development of perfection is dealt with in the chapter on "Man's Ascent" which synthesizes the principal points in the *Path of Discipleship*. Thus *The Ancient Wisdom* is a summing up of the principles already given out in various ways, a co-ordinating of the teachings to the one essential work of to-day, the developing of the God latent in man; but the purport of the book will be better understood in Mrs. Besant's own words quoted from the close of the Introduction.

"A heavy task lies before us, and beginning on the physical plane we shall climb slowly upwards; but a bird's eye view of the great sweep of evolution and of its purpose may help us, ere we begin our detailed study in the world that surrounds us. A LOGOS, ere a system has begun to be, has in His mind the whole, existing as idea — all forces, all forms, all that in due process shall emerge into objective life. He draws the circle of manifestation within which

He wills to energize, and circumscribes Himself to be the life of His universe. As we watch we see strata appearing of successive densities, till seven vast regions are apparent, and in these centres of energy appear whirlpools of matter that separate from each other, until when the processes of separation and of condensation are over—so far as we are here concerned—we see a central sun, the physical symbol of the LOGOS, and seven great planetary chains, each chain consisting of seven globes. Narrowing down our view to the chain of which our globe is one, we see life-waves sweep round it, forming the kingdoms of nature, the three elemental, the mineral, vegetable, animal, human. Narrowing down our view still further to our own globe and its surroundings, we watch human evolution, and see man developing self-consciousness by a series of many life-periods; then centring on a single man we trace his growth and see that each life-period has a three-fold division, that each is linked to all life-periods behind it reaping their results, and to all life-periods before it sowing their harvests, by a law that cannot be broken; that thus man may climb upwards with each life-period adding to his experience, each life-period lifting him higher in purity, in devotion, in intellect, in power of usefulness, until at last he stands where They stand who are now the Teachers, fit to pay to his younger brothers the debt he owes to Them."

Spiritualism in the Light of Theosophy, by the Countess Wachtmeister. Price, 5 cents. MERCURY PUBLISHING CO.

Among our Theosophic students and workers there is, perhaps, no one better qualified to expound the mysteries of psychic phenomena than the Countess Constance Wachtmeister; devoting several years to investigation she fortunately brought to bear on the problems involved a keen and penetrative judgment and well-balanced faculties. Practical experiments along these lines are accompanied by so many dangers that it is not wise to rush into them unless the Will be steadfast and the power of discrimination particularly clear. The Countess had many and varied experiences during her research. In the pamphlet under review she gives an able explanation of the method used for materialization of astral entities; of the effect of mediumship upon mediums, and makes intelligible the four bodies of man. One exceedingly interesting feature of the discourse is the origin and history of the movement known as Modern Spiritualism. The origin is attributed to an Occult fraternity that has existed since the days of the Atlantean civilization, having control of many Occult powers and forces they thought to aid in stemming the tide of materialism pouring over the world by bringing about phenomenal communication between the astral and physical planes. The pamphlet contains a record of some very interesting Occult experiences of the Countess. Criticism is disarmed throughout; there is such a just and sympathetic presentation of Spiritualism, and so gently does the writer lead the mind of the reader from the fragment of Occultism found in Spiritism to the grander philosophy of true Occultism, as taught in Theosophy, that no antagonism is awakened; and one puts the little booklet down with a wider conception of the mysteries of the Divine Will manifesting in the Universe. D.

The Theosophical Review, October.—The Editors announce the reduction in price from 17s.6d to 12s. commencing with the November issue. The Watchman on the "Watch Tower," signals some interesting events in the Religious and Scientific world. Note is made of the Catholic Congress, recently held at Fribourg, Switzerland, at which the delegates representing the French, Swiss, Italian, Dutch Polish, Hungarian, English, Irish and American organizations practically endorsed the (once to them) damnable heresy of Evolution. "The Ceasing of Sorrow," by Mrs. Annie Besant, is a rather short but most excellent article. We quote: "To seek happiness by union with forms is to dwell amid the transitory, the limited, the clashing; to seek happiness by union with Life is to rest at peace on the permanent, the infinite, the harmonious." "The Foundation of the Empire of Truth," by H. Dharmapala, treats of the *Dhamma of the Buddha*. "The Bhagavad Gita and the Gospels," by Francesca Arundale, is concluded. "Concerning Intelligible Beauty," is a valuable contribution by W. C. Ward, translated from the Greek of Plotinus; the first part describes the three Hypostases or Substances, "which as princi-

ples all things depend." Mr. O. Firth furnishes a short article "On the Theosophic Use of Imagination." "Among the Gnostics of the First Two Centuries," by G. R. S. Mead, is continued, likewise "The Christian Creed," by C. W. Leadbeater. Other articles are "The Geometry of Nature," by A. M. Glass; "Some Results of the Higher Criticism," by G. R. S. Mead, in which the writer quotes copiously from the article of Mrs. Thomas Davidson in the July issue of the "Quarterly International Journal of Ethics," in which some very striking results are given of Biblical research. Announcement is made of the death of Mr. Edward Maitland, the well known colleague of the late Dr. Anna Kingsford. The usual Book Reviews and Correspondence, complete a most interesting number.

Theosophist, September.-commences the eighteenth volume and nineteenth year of its existence, and some timely references are made concerning its policy. "Old Diary Leaves," continues with unabating interest. Col. Olcott describes very graphically his journey with Mme Blavatsky to Europe, and incidentally refers to the Coloumbs, of headquarters' fame. "Theosophy and Theology" gives an account of the very successful lecture tour of the President Founder and Miss Lillian Edger. Allan Leo contributes an article on "Astrology and Symbology," which is profusely illustrated by diagrams. The other articles are "Modern Prophecies," by A. T. B.; "Theosophic Ideals," by A. F. K.; "The Alexandrian Library," by P. J. G.; "Dhritarashtra," by Purmeshri Dass and Dhanraj.

Lotus Bleu, September.—Commentary on "Light on the Path," translated. "The Red Man," by Guymiot, tells of "a person or class of persons," so-called because it appears clad in red or purple. "The Red Man, according to occult legends, has communicated with a certain number of mystics not only of the past but also of to-day." Dr. R. C. Fisher concludes his excellent article on vegetarianism, entitled "Obesity." "Occult Varieties" relates some interesting occurrences from the diary of H. S. Olcott. "Animal Reincarnation," by Bertram Keightley, is concluded. "Under the Bodhi Tree," by Luxame; "Jakim and Boaz;" "Roma;" "Questions and Answers," make up a very interesting number.

Sophia, for October, is attractive. The initial article by Mrs. Besant is an interesting recapitulation of the "Theosophical Movement." "Reincarnation," by her pen, continues. Bertram Keightley contributes a valuable translation of Sankhya Philosophy. Our Spanish brother, Senor Soria y Mata, evinces a vast range of thought and research in his unique article on "Genesis," which began in the July number. The main feature of this article is an investigation of Geometry. The author believes that he has found the key-note of the Pythagorean mathematical system and some of the occult lore that Pythagoras is reputed to have taught his students. A liberal review of the Theosophical journals of the day, complete the number proper, to which is added the last supplement on "Atlanta." A. H. T.

Theosophy in Australasia, September.—This number continues to give reports of the successful tour made by Col. Olcott and Miss Edger. "The Outlook" discusses some new scientific facts. The other papers are "Illusions," by H. W. Hunt; "Ecstasia, or Spiritual Illumination." Part II, Questions and Answers.

Received,- Prasnottara, The Vahan, Arya Bala Bodhini, Awakened India, Rays of Light, Exodus, The Theosophic Gleaner, The Temple, Chicago Vegetarian, Intelligence, Arjuna, The Brahmavadan, Philosophical Journal, Forskaren, Mahabodhi Journal and *Present Salvation* by E. M. Wheelock. Austin, T.

#### NOTICE.

WANTED, to complete sets, several copies of MERCURY for January, 1897. S.ubscribers or Secretaries of Branches, having duplicate copies, will confer a favor by sending them to W. J. WALTERS, Palace Hotel, San Francisco, Cal. Full price and postage will be allowed.

# THE FORUM DEPARTMENT.

Any person can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and short notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Be careful to write only on one side of the paper.

## QUESTION CCCLXVII.

*Is it possible to interfere with Karma?*

M. W.—Karma is the Law of Causation, which, though immutable as a principle of action, is ever changing as to direction and the form of its working. It is true that to-day is an unfolded yesterday, yet the manner of that unfoldment depends greatly upon environment. Environment shapes the act, colors the thought. And what is environment? Is it not the family, the country, the race, the age in which an individual finds himself, and of which he is a part? This host of units act on the individual, impose on him their thought collectively and individually. No one can separate himself from others. He may hide himself in cave or forest depths, yet the thought of humanity, the subtle influence of nature find him out and play upon his mind.

The well-accredited facts of telepathy prove that thoughts call for the responsive vibrations in minds, thousands of miles distant, that every strong desire affects some other sentient souls, and silent suggestion plays a great part in the shaping of lives. The units forming humanity are so interblended that it is impossible to separate the acts of any one from the acts of others.

“Like warp and woof our destinies  
Are woven fast.”

Desire, love, hate, fear, sympathy, aye, even indifference, are ever busy in weaving our Karmic threads with the threads of other lives. Whenever a smile brings to a soul, lost in the darkness, the blessed sunlight that drives away the shadows, and changes sorrow into joy; whenever a timely word or kindly act helps a brother to his feet; whenever new ideas, new impulses awake the slumbering soul, impelling it to seek a higher ideal, the action of past causes is in a sense interfered with, their direction is changed, and new causes set up that will modify their effects.

Throughout the universe the lower obeys the higher, spirit moulds substance, mind controls matter, physical conditions, whether in nature or man, respond to the direction of knowledge and yield to its command. And this law of orderly subordination is the chief factor of Karma. Without it, there could be no evolution. Therefore, so-called interference with Karma in the sense of changing the direction of effects or disintegrating mental forms that new ones may be born is *Karma itself*.

It is utterly impossible to live in the world without affecting others, either for good or ill, for individual Karma is merely a strand, a thread in the web of collective Karma. But it is possible, through the lack of knowledge, or mistaken affection, to delay the advancement of a soul by pre-

venting it from acquiring knowledge through experience. But even here it is better to err on the side of mercy and compassion than to affect the world's thought by any suggestion of harshness or cruelty. In our present condition of ignorance and selfishness the only clew that will lead us out of this Karmic labyrinth is the Golden Rule—the only light, the radiance of the Eternal Self, and that radiance is compassion. The *Voice of the Silence* says, "Inaction in a deed of mercy is action in a deadly sin."

#### QUESTION CCCLXVIII.

*According to Theosophical writings the Ego merely overshadows the child until seven years of age. What different relation does the Ego bear to the child than that borne to the adult, and what effect does this different relationship have on the personality?*

A. W.—The Ego functions through its different vehicles by the law of sympathetic vibration; in the physical body the brain and nerves form the responsive instrument and must necessarily have a certain growth before they can respond. Moreover, these vibrations produce pictures, not words; therefore, the child before he can express these images in physical language must acquire that language; it has also to learn to adjust itself to the conditions of its new life. The average time given to this education is seven years; but some children manifest the thinking, reasoning quality much earlier, even so early as the fourth year; while others have brains and nerves of much slower growth and consequently do not respond to the Ego's touch until some years after the close of the first septennate. During this period of growth the Ego directs the building of its instrument through the astral vehicle. The actual relationship of the Ego to the child and to the adult is essentially the same, differing only in the made and degree of manifestation and function; and during this period of imperfect manifestation, as regards the physical and intellectual planes, the child is irresponsible, not yet understanding its relations to external life. Mrs. Besant in *Ancient Wisdom*, page 205, says: "At a very early stage the new astral body comes into connection with the new etheric double, and exercises considerable influence over its formation, and through it the mental body works upon the nervous organization, preparing it to become a suitable instrument for its own expression in the future. This influence commenced in ante-natal life—so that when a child is born its brain formation reveals the extent and balance of its mental and moral qualities—is continued after birth, and this building of brain and nerves, and their correlation to the astral and mental bodies, go on till the seventh year of childhood, at which age the connection between the man and his physical vehicle is complete, and he may be said to work through it henceforth more than upon it. *Up to this age the consciousness of the Thinker is more upon the astral plane than upon the physical, and this is often evidenced by the play of psychic faculties in young children. They see invisible comrades and fairy landscapes, hear voices inaudible to their elders, and catch charming and delicate fancies from the astral world.*"

QUESTIONS TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE NEXT AND SUBSEQUENT  
ISSUES OF THE FORUM.

 Answers should be sent in as soon as possible.

1. *In answer to question CCCLXX, in the September number of VAHAN, Mr. Leadbeater gives the date of the sinking of Poseidonis at 9564 B. C. We would like to ask this writer how he obtains that date, whether through direct occult records, or by clairvoyance, or by calculations on the Precession of the Equinoxes or of the Poles? And in the event of this third supposition being the correct one, would he please tell how he computes the Precession, which is variously estimated between 24000 and 31000 years (by H. P. B., 25868, Herschell's valuation, now admitted incorrect), and moreover the rapidity of which greatly varies at different epochs? [VAHAN please copy.]*

2. *In many Theosophical writings I find statements somewhat as follows: With the physical and moral decline of races come atmospheric disturbances and terrestrial cataclysms, while (without being able to satisfactorily say why) I believe this to be the case, I should like an occult explanation showing how this is brought about.*

3. *The seeming inequalities of human life are, according to the exponents of Karma, the results of previous lives; pleasure and pain in one incarnation being merely effects of causes generated in another. Animals, we are told, do not make Karma, yet we see them existing under similar diversified conditions, some starved and beaten, others pampered and admired.*

*In the case of human beings we submit to an inevitable law which bears the stamp of reason and justice, but how can we recognize the sufferings of animals with the idea of a presiding intelligence whose chief attributes are mercy and justice?*

4. *Is there a decrease in weight of matter as it rises in the scale of evolution, e. g., are vegetables as a class lighter than the same bulk of mineral, animals lighter than vegetable, man lighter than the Lower animals, and the more highly developed intellectual man lighter than his less advanced brother? If there is any relation between the weight of a body and the consciousness which animates it, what are the accompanying differences of chemical composition, and why?*