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“THE WILKESBARRE LETTERS

ON

THEOSOPHY,”

(Being a Series of Letters Contributed to

THE SUNDAY MORNING LEADER,

WILKESBARRE, PENN.)

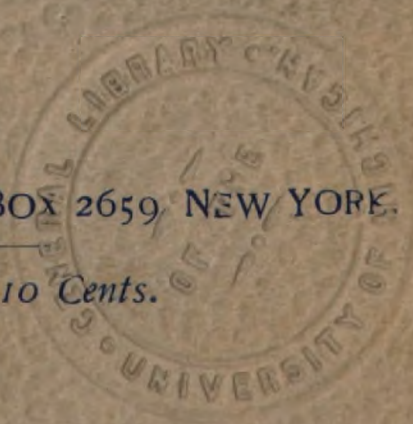
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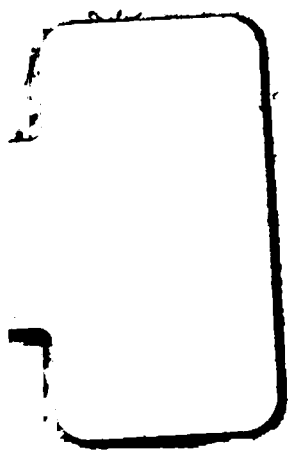
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# THE WILKESBARRE LETTERS ON THEOSOPHY.

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THE SUNDAY MORNING LEADER,

Wilkesbarre, Pa.)

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## I.

Any man, upon first hearing the word "Theosophy," naturally supposes it a new form of religion or a new interpretation of the Bible. Remembering the varieties of churches and sects in even the smallest towns, and that these, as well as the fresh formations recorded in the daily press, are all based either on individual conceptions of what is right or on individual interpretations of what some one else has written, he as naturally puts it aside as merely another vagary of religiously disposed minds. And if, as is common, he recalls the trifling distinctions around which sects form, and the impossibility of proving which is true, even if its truth is worth proving, his mental gesture embodies impatience and contempt. At this the Theosophist feels neither surprise nor displeasure, but sympathy. He has exactly the same indifference to petty or undemonstrable beliefs, and not a particle of interest in organizations for upholding them. As to this, he and the man first hearing of Theosophy are, therefore, entirely at one.

But why, then, it will be demanded with some surprise, is a Theosophist enthusiastic over a new creed, and eager to abolish the systems of Christianity around him? The answer is concise;—*Because it is not new, it is not a creed, and it does not aim to abolish those systems.*

If any one desires, even as a mere intellectual matter, to understand what is that system which has but of late come to the knowledge of European nations, and which in so few years has excited such wide-spread and profound attention—public interest being evidenced by journalism, by literature, and by the growth of the Theosophical Society—he must dismiss at once from mind all ordinary and conventional ideas. He must realize that he is not dealing



with a competing religion, or with a competing sect in an existing religion, or with the followers of any single teacher, however eminent, or with the believers in any particular sacred book or any particular interpretation of a sacred book, or with the advocates of any code of doctrines or ritual, or with professed discoverers of new truths in the world of nature, of science, or of faith. All these conceptions must be swept away, and when the mind is free from traces of accustomed thought on religious topics, ready to consider wholly unfamiliar ideas as to Life, Individuality, and the Future, then is the man prepared for an answer to the question, What is Theosophy?

But there are some preliminary facts. Theosophy is from two Greek words, and means Divine Wisdom, i. e. knowledge of or about God. *Knowledge*, observe; not opinion, or conjecture, or inference, but information. Now two things are herein implied. The first is that the persons from whom that information came to us had the power to acquire it with certainty. Modern secular science denies this. With Herbert Spencer it speaks of the "unknowable," and always affirms that the world of invisibles is, and ever must be, unsearchable by human faculty. Nothing beyond the range of material perception can, it says, be *known*. In a sense, this has truth. The finite cannot grasp the infinite. As Mansel has shown in his "Limits of Religious Thought," not only are we ordinary men unable to apprehend the nature and relations of thought in that region, but there is, at the very outset, an inevitable and invincible contradiction in the very terms "Absolute" and "Infinite." All of this can be admitted, and admitted on the avowed ground that only the Divine can comprehend the Divine, while still asserting that there may be as much of certainty in knowledge respecting accessible parts of the unseen, as there is certainty of knowledge respecting accessible parts of the seen, universe. By what persons, by what faculties, and by what means, shall be discussed later on. The present point is that Theosophy claims certain knowledge of that whereof it treats, and hence that, as to this, it stands alone. The scientist denies the possibility of any knowledge at all; and the theologian, while professing it, offers proof only from *à priori* arguments, from hearsay, or from the disputed meanings of a book. And whether its claims can be substantiated or not, Theosophy assuredly takes a unique position when it discards as to God mere tradition, reasoning, or scriptures, and says, "Hear me, for I *know*."

The second implication is that Theosophy is a *Universal Science*. To know God is to know all, for, as St. Paul said, "He is all and in all." Any adequate conception of Deity involves conception of His workings, and hence of His creatures, their lives, training, and destiny, the worlds they dwell on

and those to which they progress. "Teleology,"—to use a term of theology —, is thus coupled with astronomy, and the two virtually include every possible department of human thought. Theosophy is thus the Science of the Universe, and embraces every region of matter or mind. F. T. S.

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## II.

Any stranger, invoking cordial welcome to a household, would be asked at once for his credentials. Still more would any unfamiliar doctrine in philosophy or religion, especially if in evident contrariety to those already domiciled. Most of all must be Theosophy; for not only is its appearance novel to a western mind, but it has features so singular, so startling, so grotesque even, that a very natural impulse is to repulse it as unworthy a second glance. The impulse is a mistake, but one is quite right in demanding the most copious testimonials, and in refusing credence till these have been scrutinized and verified.

Waiving for a time certain details and collateral matters hereafter to be expounded, no man save Materialists and Agnostics will oppose the following propositions: That spirit is more permanent and more potent than matter; that vastly wider stretches of discovery might be traversed if physical limitations could be over-passed; that there may be realms of truth as far exceeding the range of normal intellect as light and sound exceed the perceptive power of the eye and ear; that, unless discovery is to be barred at a line which no human being is either able or authorized to indicate, the whole region of truth is given to man for entrance and exploration; that this is a loftier aim and a more probable result of human existence than mere material progress; that existing internal faculties are in all likelihood susceptible of far higher development than that usually attained; and that such development would almost certainly bring with it, not only a richer apprehension of truth, but a grasp of natural powers and forces of which the less developed faculties can know nothing.

From these propositions follows this:—That if a human spirit can pass beyond the limitations of the senses and explore at will the realm of the unseen, its acquisition of truth can have no assignable bounds, and its mastery of forces will be what is called "miraculous."

This seems in no wise unreasonable, exaggerated, or inconceivable.

It is a logical, a necessary sequence to the conceded points. *Now this is*

*precisely what Theosophy asserts has been done and may be done.* In other words, it is a claim to ADEPTS.

Let us look at the matter from another angle. An athlete, a contortionist, a watchmaker, acquires astounding power or delicacy in muscle. An Oriental dyer easily detects shades of color which are imperceptible to our eyes. There are mathematicians who calculate complicated problems in less time than their pupils can write them down. An able *ex tempore* speaker will flash forth brilliant thought in brilliant words. Each of these extraordinary powers, bodily or mental, has been attained through extraordinary training. It seems, but is not, a miracle ; and merely exemplifies of what natural endowments are capable when expanded through specialized processes.

Why should not the same result follow training given to the spiritual nature, that part of the internal being which connotes experiences, apprehends truth, echoes aspiration ? And why should not the training be the same, i. e., a cultivation of the special faculty and an atrophy of such others as impede or impair it ?

Returning, now, from *à priori* considerations to direct assertion, Theosophy states that there is at present, and always has been, a class of men who have thus developed the Higher Principles of human nature, and by a systematized course of discipline have over-passed the ordinary limitations of flesh and blood, pierced into the realms of the physically-unseen, gazed directly upon and comprehended Truth, are eye-witnesses of the reality underlying form, know and handle strange natural forces and potencies, and, because thus perceiving verity and wielding power, can expound the one and manifest the other. If these assertions can be proved, the first of the "preliminary facts" in Article I. will have been verified, and there will have been given the "credentials" referred to in the first sentence of Article II.

Current "Apologies for Christianity," unlike those of the 18th century, do not emphasize the argument from miracles, rightly conceiving that spiritual truth must vindicate itself and not look for large support to physical marvels. To this Theosophy agrees ; but as part of its claim is that spiritual conquest includes a conquest of matter, there is fitness in evidencing the Adept as a Master of Nature before reverencing him as a Teacher of Truth. What are some of his prerogatives, and how can it be proved that he exercises them ?

An Adept can read thoughts and purposes, influence both from any distance, can disintegrate the particles composing an object, cause them to be carried by currents to another region, and there re-integrate them to their original form, can produce sounds and motion at will, can inject written

sentences into letters already sealed, can cause flowers or other objects to drop from mid-air, can so concentrate invisible forces as to resist the strongest attempts to remove material things, can communicate instantaneously with brother Adepts in this or other worlds, can, in short, manipulate the large part of nature's resources known to him as easily as we the small part known to us. Strangest of all, he can suspend the connection between his spirit and his body, and, with the free movement of spirit, pass, like thought, from point to point in space, checked by no obstacle and hampered by no time. It may be said, in brief, that he can, and does, do just the things antecedently probable of a disembodied intelligence profoundly versed in knowledge of seen and unseen powers.

Claims like these sound so monstrous, so preposterous, that the more intelligent the hearer the more prone to their rejection with ridicule. And yet, after all, these are merely questions of fact, to be determined, like any other fact, upon evidence. Such evidence exists abundantly; not in uncertain testimony from witnesses dead for 1800 years, but in direct avowal from living spectators, present repeatedly at varied places and times. The matter is discussed and illustrated in Sinnett's *Occult World*, to which the reader is referred (1).

Before passing to the far more important subject of occult doctrine, it may be well to state that the experience of Theosophy dissuades it from the direct use of phenomena for evidence. When, for reasons which will be given later on, the masters vouchsafed large disclosures of occult knowledge, it was supposed that phenomena would affirm them. Instead of reverent interest the result was insatiable curiosity, clamorous demands, and embittered public controversy—things most repugnant to the spirit of the Wisdom-Religion—, followed by malignant charges of imposture against the devoted and self-sacrificing representative of the Masters. We know from an analogous case in the first century what may follow the “giving of a sign,” and why it was said, “Verily, there shall no sign be given.” So now. Phenomena have been withdrawn from the public, and the evidential reasoning is from the quality of the doctrines, their conformity to reason and the moral sense—the test of all permanency in doctrine, as shown by Lecky (2), and their potency to uplift character,—all of these considerations being illuminated by the glowing light coming from the Adepts and their revelations. They have demonstrated their power; we shall see them demonstrate their truth. F. T. S.

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(1) The writer has small personal knowledge of such, but has heard copious accounts from eye-witnesses and has been privileged to see and handle some of the most remarkable productions described in “Hints in Esoteric Theosophy” and other works.

(2) History of Rationalism.



## III.

There are in Theosophy two central doctrines—the doctrine of Reincarnation, and the doctrine of Karma. The first is startling, the second soothing; both are so eminently rational that conviction almost certainly follows comprehension. The mere statement of them secured the present writer's instant acceptance, and led ultimately to his happiness as a full Theosophist. Both are rooted in the profound fact of Evolution (of which science has seen a part), the fact that all life expands and rises from poor and low to rich and high plateaux.

“Stronger than woe is will; that which was Good  
Doth pass to Better—Best.”

The doctrine of Reincarnation is that each man dwells in the flesh not once, but often. His internal, indestructible self comes again and again into earth-life, each time in a different race, family, condition, so that he is confronted successively with every form of test and experience, assimilating into that Self the essence of each incarnation, and at last emerging with an exhaustive knowledge of humanity and a perfected character. He is not a thousand men compounded into one, but one man who has had a thousand lives. As a world-wide traveler learns the peculiarities of each region and people, himself becoming mentally more supple and more vigorous as the result of travel; so the Ego learns humanity through having been identified for a time with each section of it, and becomes not a Chaldean, a Roman, or an American, but a Man. And as the traveler dwells, now in a tent, now in a palace, now in a hut, now in a hotel, never imagining that his surroundings are other than transient and unessential; so, too, the Ego dwells in temporary homes of body, a craftsman, a prince, a slave, a student, each being an encasement for a single life, not one being any real part of the Being which outlasts them all.

But in man there is more than knowledge, there is emotion. If we scrutinize the varieties of human circumstance, we perceive how small is the range of that emotion in any one. The largest possible range is where an individual is child, parent, spouse, kinsman, patriot, and philanthropist. Very few are all of these, and, of course, not one can be both father and mother, husband and wife, brother and sister. To understand each one must become each, and so the long path of the evolving individuality leads through every zone of sex, relationship, affinity, sentiment, and duty, not a type of human emplacement being omitted or a phase of human affection skipped. One of the theological arguments for a probable incarnation of God is that, without experiencing the sorrows and endearments of humanity, the Divine nature cannot fully sym-  
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thize with or understand the human. Hence, say theologians, the need of a God-Man, i. e. Christ. The doctrine underlying this argument is that one has no power to comprehend what one has not undergone. If true, it shows the necessity of a Divine incarnation; but then it shows equally the necessity for human reincarnations. And of this, as of many other points, it may be remarked that the fundamental postulates of "orthodoxy" point really to Theosophy, and that Theosophy does not seek to abolish the Christian, but to make him consistent.

Still further, man has a moral sense. Such of us as have no tendency to crime very generally think of truth and honesty as aboriginal conceptions, constituent and innate. In fact, however, sociology shows that they are evolutions, and largely brought about by experience of the evils from lies and fraud. The sense of justice, the most abstract of all, is as yet but feeble, and in women hardly exists. Whatever solidity and precision some of the moralities now exhibit have been wrought through bitter and protracted racial discipline, and only so will the rest be modelled. Similarly as to persons. Why am I veracious and my neighbor a liar? Because my parents have taught me to be truthful, and his have not? No; for in domestic influence, in virtuous surroundings, in social incentive, he has had all my privileges, perhaps more. Because I am by nature a truth-lover and he the reverse? Exactly. This, indeed, but puts the question one step back, yet it discloses the solution. It is that our respective natures are the out-come of repeated previous incarnations, during which I have taken to heart the lessons from falsehood, while he has not. He may perhaps be industrious, and I slothful. Now, just as the Hottentot can only attain to English virtues by slow development under disciplinary processes through many generations, so my neighbor and I will only attain respectively to truthfulness and industry under like processes through many incarnations. The idea in "Essays and Reviews" which once scandalized England but which everybody now accepts, that an individual life typifies the life of the world, is true conversely too. A child becomes a man, and a savage race becomes civilized, in knowledge, affections, and moral sense, by stages. In a race these stages are generations; in a man they are incarnations.

Once more; man has, or rather is, a spirit. We may here so far anticipate Theosophic teaching as to say that each human being is an emanation from the Divine, a spark scintillating away from the Central Sun, to be reunited thereto when its wanderings are at last over; and that this spark is enveloped in certain layers of greater or less materiality, the physical body being the

most gross and palpable; also that the evolutionary process through incarnations aims at the absorption into the spiritual nature of the finer essence of mind and soul, as this is extracted and etherialized, so to speak, during the discipline of earth-lives. To transform from the carnal into the spiritual is, indeed, the purpose of every true religion. How far this is possible in the 20, 50, 80 years of one distracted career, any of us may realize by consideration of his own. Theosophy affirms that purpose, and then vindicates it by showing the provision for its accomplishment through many careers in successive incarnations.

The pilgrim spirit thus re-embodies itself innumerable times in its journey from the Divine to the Divine. The lower principles associated with it have undergone combinations of every kind and degree, and will do so until the evolutionary process is completed. When perfection is attained in knowledge, emotion, and moral sense, and when the spirit is emancipated from material influences, the final and the efficient causes of rebirth will cease together, and with those causes their result. The individuality—that continuous identity upon which personalities had been strung as beads upon a cord—will have finished forever its wanderings.

It was remarked that this doctrine is “startling.” Probably every reader not familiar with it will verify the remark. Yet it is far from inherently absurd. There is nothing more unreasonable in the asserted fact of a long existence before this life, than in the admitted fact of a long existence after it. Immortality may as well run backwards as forwards. Nor is the doctrine new. It is one of the oldest in the world, and is now held by a large part of mankind. Nor does it antagonize Christianity. Christ himself did not disfavor it (St. John ix. 2 and 3), and many of the most eminent Christians have adhered to it. Nor does investigation weaken its proof. The Rev. Mr. Alger, whose famous “History of the Doctrine of a Future State” is the standard work upon immortality, at first disbelieved it, but now announces his conversion to it after 15 years’ additional study. Poets and preachers of every age have sung and proclaimed it, and cautious writers have conceded that it solved problems otherwise hopeless and cleared away difficulties otherwise impassable. Taken in connection with the doctrine of Karma, hereafter to be expounded, it gives an easy and rational explanation of the facts in life which mystify and pain the thinker, and its vivid prophecies thrill through the despondent soul and nerve anew the philanthropist and the aspirer. If it only mitigated the gloom of death, it would be priceless; but it does more, it dispels it. And so to the thoughtful and the beneficent and the timid, it bears light and inspiration and peace.

We shall see in the next Article some of the objections to Reincarnation and why they have no force.

F. T. S.

## IV.

The flush of astonishment with which one first hears that he has been many times born into this earth and will be many times more, is at once followed by the uprising of several objections. Four of these are worth attention.

1st. "If this doctrine is true, why have I never heard of it before?"

*Ans.* This implies that nothing can be true of which you have not already heard. Surely you will not maintain that. But the unfamiliarity of Reincarnation is in no wise strange. It has not been a common doctrine in the West, is rarely discussed and never preached, and most men's conceptions of life and destiny are merely those prevailing in their circle and community. You are quite at home now with ideas which were distasteful to you ten years ago, and which twenty years ago were unknown to you. Unless you are always to remain stationary, fresh thoughts will present themselves, and each as it does so will appear new. Reincarnation is one of the oldest doctrines of mankind, but you have not happened hitherto to encounter it.

2d. "If spirit is an emanation from the Divine, it must partake of the Divine fulness, and why, then, should it need a weary course of incarnations towards perfection?"

*Ans.* To some extent this is, of course, a mystery. But the most conventional hold that spirit proceeds in some way from God, and the fact of *one* incarnation is patent. If your argument does not annul the one incarnation that is certain, it need not the many that are probable. Moreover, the other principles with which spirit in man is conjoined do require development, and it is these upon which the aim of reincarnation bears.

3d. "Though a pessimistic assertion, it is probably true that not a human being can be found who would voluntarily re-live his life. If so, is not the multiplication of lives appalling rather than consolatory?"

*Ans.* It is a question of fact, not of choice. No doubt it would be appalling if no prospect of betterment was held out, or if the character of succeeding lives was wholly beyond control by us. Neither of these suppositions is true. A constant advance is part of the scheme, and the rate of it is (as shall be shown) put largely in our power. No man need shrink from a career which is certain to end in glory if he fills up his duty in it. This is the position of the Church, why not of Theosophy?

4th. "Why do we have no memory of past lives, if, indeed, there were such?"

*Ans.* Are you sure you have none? Almost every man has at times a strange flash of consciousness that he was once in the same scene before, and



the scientific explanation of consecutive action by the brain's double lobe does not satisfy him. But there are records of much more pronounced cases, too long to quote here, where in childhood, or in nervous diseases, or under peculiar emotion, memory of previous existence seemed to revive.

The question, however, assumes that memory is continuous. We know, in fact, that it is interrupted. It is so in sleep, as are all faculties, and it is so in certain cases of sickness. It is even so as to a large part of our past years, only a few great incidents looming out of the haze, and all others being obliterated unless and until some shock discloses them as still preserved. Now, if parts of a life may be forgotten, to be recalled again when the proper conditions occur, why may not the whole of a life? Memory is, no doubt, an indestructible faculty, yet its action may be suspended. Occult science claims no more than this, and adds that at a certain stage of spiritual development the entire history of the Ego in each incarnation is at once and forever revived.

There is nothing, then, in the conditions of the case, or in analogy, or in reason, which thwarts the proposition that the progressing Ego may be as ignorant of the lives it has undergone as of those which are to follow. And it is easy to see that this should be so. Philosophers agree that a knowledge of futurity would be fatal to intellectual and social progress. In much the same way would a too great knowledge of the past. We have only to imagine ourselves gifted with complete retrospective power in order to realize that every faculty save curiosity would be paralyzed. An uninterrupted memory would mean an interrupted life.

Reincarnation is a doctrine taught by Adepts, but it comes much closer home to most thinkers as the necessitated explanation of the facts around them. The ordinary conception of existence on earth is that it is a "probation," upon the termination of which the tested soul goes away to an unending award. Yet the barest consideration of actual life shows that to a enormous majority of souls born into the world there is, and can be, no real test at all. A real test, i. e., such as would determine whether the subject preferred goodness or badness, would require conditions from which every element of injustice had been removed. There must be ample time, adequate intelligence, sufficient knowledge, the absence of any innate bias, hereditary or individual, and of any strong influence from environment, and at least *some* perception of the issue at stake. There is, then, no test to those who die in infancy (as one third of humanity does), or before full experience of life. From the rest must be stricken off all who are weak-minded, or even in any way below a somewhat generous standard of mentality. From the fast-diminishing number must be taken all

who have no just information as to right and wrong, and the consequences of acts in morals. The shrunken list next loses every one—a vast majority—who has ancestral or personal predilections to good or bad; and most of the small remainder are cut off by the requirement that there shall be no undue strain from surroundings. From the few left most disappear as being without at least a faint apprehension of why they are tried and should respond. There comes about, then, this result—that one life can be a “probation” only to adults who are intelligent, well-informed, of entirely normal qualities, with no external influences impinging on them, and understanding that they are on trial. Is it certain that of the 2 billions of the earth’s inhabitants there is *one* such adult?

But if a single incarnation thus utterly fails in the elements of a valid moral “probation,” what is to be said of its adequacy as a training school for eternity? In savage, barbarous, and semi-civilized communities, such adequacy is obviously wanting. But to most individuals in highly civilized lands it is hardly less so. A large part live in rural regions, where broad experience of life is impossible and where ideas are few and narrow. Of those in denser populations the majority are confined by bread winning to a small area of habit and thought. Some freedom from anxiety as to means, and not a little leisure, are the conditions to development of mind. And here again we are made to face the fact that, if this life is the first and only step to eternity, it is fitly so but for the infinitesimal section of humanity which is at ease in mind and body. And even as to these, when we deduct the years of childhood, inexperience, immaturity, and of sickness and other distraction, we find that there is no just proportion between such training as is practicable and the consequences asserted of it.

Considerations like these, together with traditional beliefs from pre-historic times and the steady, if unseen, influence from Adepts, have secured conviction of Reincarnation to a large part of the intelligent world in all ages, excepting the West in the present era. But even here there is perceptible a marked revival of the old belief, and Theosophists hail it, not merely because truth is always better than error, but because this particular truth has a sanitary value, a wholesome influence, a moral impulsion, which will hasten a Golden Age.

Granted Reincarnation, we are at once confronted with two obvious questions; What are the nature and duration of the intervals between successive returns to bodily life, and what is it that determines the quality of a reincarnation. The latter question will be treated when we come to the topic of Karma. The former will be taken up in the next article.

F. T. S.

## V.

The question as to the nature and duration of the interval between incarnations raises the prior question as to the nature and effect of death, and this necessitates some understanding of the nature of the being who dies. The oldest, most obvious, and most general division of the composite creature, man, is into spirit, soul, and body. The deeper insight of Masters in Occultism, however, reaches a finer analysis into seven constituents, called "principles." This has not been explicitly communicated, nor, indeed, could it be understood, for the understanding of it requires certain senses not as yet usually developed. For convenience, and as giving an approximate idea of the subject, the one expounded in *Esoteric Buddhism* is here used, but the above caution must be kept in mind, as well as the palpable fact that, in the brief and condensed treatment of these articles, fulness and entire precision are impossible. Placing the purely immaterial first and the purely material last, they are Spirit, Spiritual Soul, Human Soul, Animal Soul, Astral Body, Vitality, the Human Body. It is not to be understood that these are seven distinct entities welded together, or that they are all of one kind of existence and overlie one another as the separable husks of some fruits; but they are, except spirit, on different planes of existence and of materiality, shade into one another, and cohere during such times, under such conditions, and for such purposes as the great end—spiritual development—prescribes.

The sixth principle, the Spiritual Soul, is yet embryonic. The fifth, the Human Soul, is the organ of intelligence. The fourth, the Animal Soul, is the organ of desires and affections. The third, the Astral Body, is a tenuous, etherial "double" of the body we see. The second, Vitality, is the life-force which constructs and conserves the first, the Physical Body. Of these the first, second, and third are evidently concerned only with material life. The fourth, fifth, and sixth, and indeed all, are vitalized by the seventh, and become increasingly rarefied as its influence pervades them.

When death occurs, the body decomposes, the Vitality disperses, and the four higher principles withdraw. Thus the Astral Body is left alone, deserted by the principles above and below it. Retaining neither vitality nor intelligence, it is merely a form without will or consciousness; but, because of matter, however etherial, it must, like its physical counterpart, disintegrate and disappear. While still intact, it is occasionally visible as a "spook" or "ghost," and it furnishes the ground-work for some of the manifestations at spiritualistic sèances.

But there is an evident separating influence within the four higher princi-



ples still grouped together. The lowest of these, the Animal Soul, the organ of desires and affections, is clearly allied to earth, and so are the lower elements of the fifth, the Human Soul. Of necessity a rift occurs between these and the purer, finer, more spiritual elements of the fifth principle ; and thus it comes about that the tendencies, memories, desires allied to earth remain close to earth, while those allied to spirit pass away to a quarter where spirit reigns. This division, like the prior one of death, is really between the impermanent and the permanent, between the material and the non-material elements of Man.

We will not stay to consider the region—known to Occultists as *Kama Loka*—where this division occurs, nor the time in years it may consume, nor the mode by which the individuality, now disencumbered of its material associations, is introduced into the purely spiritual region called *Devachan*. Nor can we discuss the length of its stay therein. Upon some of these questions little has been disclosed, and none concern the outlines of Theosophy.

It is not easy to briefly state or to clearly apprehend the nature of *Devachan*. Yet we may approximately conceive it if we keep in view two facts : 1st, it is the scene, not of causes, but of results ; 2d, it is a scene from which all physical conditions and reminders have been expunged. The formative period of character and tendencies ended at death ; now begins the era during which the effects have time to work. Hitherto the occupations, interests, memories, hopes, have sprung from and concerned the affairs of earth ; earth has now vanished, all its associations have disappeared, only what is immaterial in quality or bearing is left. Feelings and tastes springing wholly from the senses were dropped in *Kama Loka*. There remain all purely spiritual or semi-spiritual aspirations, all intellectual and moral activities, all the richer affections and tastes, all the acquisitions in knowledge, disposition, and character. To unify and consolidate these, to give them ample expansion and unhindered growth, to allow the crude to become mellow and the partial complete, to secure symmetry and flavor to the ripening individuality, is one function of *Devachan*.

Observe that it is *not* a world of retribution. Retribution is certain, certain beyond all hope of cajolery or deflection, but the provision for it is elsewhere and otherwise met. *Devachan* is a season of spiritual rest and refreshment, where the consequences of actions are not felt but digested, and where the peace which passeth understanding keeps the heart and mind. Pre-eminently is it a *subjective* state. If the spirit sustained relation with other spirits, or if it was cognizant of events on earth or elsewhere, there would be to that extent a revival of the life of causes, inasmuch as fresh emotions or impulses would be created. But the *Devachanic* life being one purely of results,



nothing objective can invade it, and the individual finds his ample, his exhaustless world in the interests, the dreams, the hopes, the belongings of his Higher Self, never realized on earth, now at last attained.

This wholly subjective character ensures its absolute fitness to each individual. "The Kingdom of Heaven," said Jesus, "is within you." That is, the causes which produce happiness are not in the circumstances of life, but in the soul itself. This must be even more true of a region where there are no such circumstances, where there is nothing but souls. There must, then, be as many varieties of Devachanic bliss as there are inmates of Devachan. Each has created its own heaven, and, indeed, no other would be heaven to it. And here particularly is illustrated that feature of the Wisdom Religion which, insisting on the operation of law as universal and inflexible, yet provides for the well being of each individual as if there was not another tenant of the universe.

As the quality of each life in Devachan is different, so is its duration. Little has been disclosed, nor is the question of moment. When the forces prolonging the time have been exhausted, and when the consolidating process is over, the Ego sinks away from the Devachanic life, and then awakens to a new material existence on this or another earth. The waters of Lethe have passed over it, and it reappears a stranger to the world it once knew so well. Another incarnation has come about; another embodiment of the one individuality in another of the personalities in the long series of its evolution. Death and birth, death and birth, in countless repetitions of sequence, propel the being on to that time when there shall be no more death, for the former things shall have passed away.

It will, of course, be noticed that nothing has been said of "hell," or, indeed, of any experience penal or merely disciplinary, the above being the career of a normal soul normally progressing. But the Esoteric scheme is not so one-sided as to provide only for the lovers of right. For those abnormal natures which are finally, hopelessly lost to good, there is a destiny known as *Avitchi*, recalling the "second death" of the New Testament. For lesser offenders, and, indeed, for all offenses in whatever person, retribution is secured under the law of reincarnation. The explanation of this will come under the approaching topic of Karma.

F. T. S.

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## VI.

The great doctrine of Karma is in itself exceedingly simple. It is the doctrine of perfect, inflexible justice. The word has two meanings. It means first, as defined by Col. Olcott, "The law of ethical causation—Whatever a

man soweth, that shall he also reap." But it also expresses the balance sheet of merit and demerit in any individual character. Thus in the former sense, we say, "The quality of incarnations is determined by Karma;" in the latter sense we say, "A man's Karma is forming during each day of life."

The belief that every one of us receives with absolute precision his exact deserts commends itself at once to reason and to justice. The religious instinct, however, conforms its theories less to these principles than to sentiment, and it is most essential that any doctrine, to be acceptable, should give repose to feeling. Let us see, first in a positive, then in a negative, way how Karma does this.

*Positive.* The distressing element of life is uncertainty. Our inability for either prevision or provision fills the soul with foreboding, and it is this which occasions the incessant injunctions of religious teachers to "faith." Now by "faith" is here meant "confidence in God's character, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding." The advice is sound, yet nothing is more notorious than the difficulty of conforming to it; the difficulty, however, being not so much in the apparent unrighteousness of human lot as in the constant treatment by theologians of the Divine will as a matter of caprice or doubt. Divine justice is, indeed, asserted, but as it is always qualified by an equal assertion of Divine mercy, and as the very essence of mercy is favor, the result is justice tempered by favoritism—i. e., not certain justice, but uncertain. The doctrine of Karma demolishes this whole conception, and substitutes for it a fixed, unalterable, impeccable Law, the Law proclaimed by an eminent Adept—"He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done, *and there is no respect of persons.*"

*Negative.* On this side is the total nullification of every teaching, practice, rite, act, appeal, supposed to block or divert the operation of Karmic law. Almost without exception, religious systems have provided machinery through which destiny was to be modified by some other agency than merit. Even when not set in motion by the grosser forces of cash or influence, it at least required some degree of information and some degree of intelligence, thus at once introducing an element of disparity where all should be upon a level. The doctrine of Karma replaces this with the principle of rigorous equality, sweeping away every distinction of intellect, creed, fortune, caste, and influence, and applying to every man the one test of personal desert. With unsparing hand—for not a germ of deception must be left—it uproots all schemes of substitution, of sacrifice, vicarious or individual, of expiatory rites, of penances and compoundings and vows, clears the ground of every trace of intercession or of priestcraft, and uplifts the simple, intelligible precept—Character determines destiny.

The remark was made in Article II that the doctrine of Karma is "soothing." At first sight the reverse might seem true. The instinctive desire of men is to secure less punishment or more reward than that to which they are entitled. Yet, obviously, the moment we leave the region of inflexible justice we enter that of caprice, and though we might perhaps encounter fewer ills therein, we are quite as likely to encounter more. The dangers are fully equal to the hopes. Hence, while gaining nothing in security, we lose the great advantage of certainty, and, upon returning to the solid ground of Karmic Law, feel that though we can expect no benefit which we have not earned, we need fear no evil which we have not deserved.

It must not be supposed that the circumstances of a life at a given time indicate precisely its merit at that time. The good are often in adversity, and the bad exult on heights of preferment. The fact that Tiberius was an emperor and Epictetus a slave does not disclose the character of each. The Karmic law asserts itself over vast stretches of time and through numberless incarnations, not interpreting itself intelligibly in each specific incident of each life, but ensuring approximate justice in separate incarnations and absolute justice in their totality. Tiberius suffered agonies on his throne, and Epictetus was happy in his rags. For there is, in the law, a two-fold operation. Not a few, usually the smaller, acts of men effect immediate results to the body or the mind. A kindly word or a snappish tone reacts at once upon the speaker. But there are graver deeds, deeds of heroism or atrocity, too momentous for full payment in one incarnation, and the settlement for such passes over and on till it suddenly appears during some distant birth, the long-pent force discharging itself at last and, to our narrow vision, inexplicably. It is said that Buddha's favorite disciple was slain in his presence by robbers, and that he did not interpose. Questioned as to this, he replied that in a far remote date his disciple, then himself a robber, had committed a murder for which Karma had now overtaken him. As in any one day of any one existence the minor events exhaust their influence and cease with sleep, while the greater acts overpass the night and mould for years the whole career; so in the numberless incarnations which together constitute but one real life, the lesser forces may complete their action during the incarnation which produced them, while the grander ones, undispersed by the intervals between recurring incarnations, only exhaust themselves after ages of time and in circumstances the most unlike. For, in the universal scheme, time is nothing and right is everything.

We are now prepared to see how the moral quality of an incarnation influences the physical quality of its successor. When the Devachanic processes



are approaching their fulfilment and the time is near for another birth of the Ego into material life, all the elements in the Karmic account rally for united influence. With unerring precision, for the system devised by Infinite Wisdom makes no mistake, they indicate exactly the age, race, country, family, and embryo into which the reincarnating ego should arrive, and when the fulness of time is come, it is born, truly, "under the law."

There are, indeed, two cases which other considerations affect ; one, where a spiritually advanced ego is brought into a seemingly retrograde birth in order to perfect some experience hitherto deficient ; the other, where an Adept is able to influence his own or a disciple's re-birth ; but these are apart from the outlines of the scheme possible here.

At this point arises an obvious objection to the teaching that the quality of an incarnation is determined by the affinities generated in prior ones. "If," it will be urged, "eternity cannot justly be conditioned on this life because of inadequate knowledge and opportunity, how can another incarnation?" First noting the vast difference between conditioning eternity upon a fragment of time and conditioning each incarnation of a long series upon its predecessors, the usual reply is that the theory of justice as requiring knowledge of issues and ability to meet them is but human and local, not transferable to the larger field of the universe. To the present writer this reply is wholly unsatisfactory, not merely because an evident makeshift, but because it implies that justice can be one thing here and another thing elsewhere,—a proposition as untenable of justice as of truth, or love, or wisdom. There are, however, considerations which seem to meet the difficulty, and they can be expanded at leisure.

1st. Conscience, or the moral sense, has authority, and obedience or revolt may properly receive its due.

2d. Repeated rewards for merit and punishments for demerit may in time make a permanent impress on the enduring individuality, predisposing it, even without specific memories, to the course experience has shown right. (This was illustrated in Article III, where the moral sense was treated of.)

3d. Though the full scope of moral consequences may be unseen—as is admitted under every system—,enough is evident for the practical appeal of the immediate duty.

4th. Both knowledge and opportunity are immeasurably increased by repeated incarnations, especially as later ones are in periods of more advanced social and moral development.

5th. The most trivial element has its full weight in Karmic administration.

F. T. S.



## VII.

We have thus far considered Man as we now know him, but evidently the Wisdom-Religion must give some account of the long ages introductory to his present state, as well as of those which are to succeed it. Secular science has prepared the way for this exposition by its now universally-accepted doctrine of Evolution, as defined in Article III.

We are taught that the life-impulse from the Supreme slowly wrought its course of animation through the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, till Man himself was evolved. In the millions of requisite years, not one planet only was needful, but a series; and as a rose acquires its perfection of color, shape, and odor through accretions of influence from modifying environments during generations, so Man has become endowed with his present faculties and senses as the peculiarities of life on successive planets and in successive states called them into being. Originally a spark from the Eternal, enveloped in a tenuous, hazy material, he is now, still with that celestial origin, encased in a body of flesh and blood, with physical senses at present numbering five, through which comes his knowledge of the external world. The process is a gradual condensation, solidification of his exterior form, with a consequent two-fold result,—an increase of the desires and interests centering in material life, and a decrease of power to apprehend supersensuous truth. And we at once infer from this that, when the destined course of earthly experiences is completed and the developed Ego is fully enriched with all the discipline and knowledge gained through manifold incarnations, his restoration to a purely spiritual existence will be by a reversal of this process, i. e., a gradual subordination, etherialization of the material body, and a steady advance in power to perceive truth without the use of senses and through intuition.

For the purposes of the present outline, (details may be learned in *Esoteric Buddhism*, *Man*, and like works), it is only needful to say that the course of human evolution winds over the series of planets assigned to it, circles around each in a succession of races and sub-races, and conducts through periods of inconceivable length to its ultimate goal.

As spirit and matter are the poles of being, so, considered as to perception of truth, must be spirituality and materiality. And this explains why Theosophy, when discoursing of “spirituality,” does not mean devotional aspiration or piety, but “the capacity to perceive by intuition supersensuous truth.” This is a larger, richer range of import, for it embraces the whole scope of fact,—in short, everything. The relation to the Divine is of course

included, but so are morality, philanthropy, the topics of intellect, emotion, and will. And, further, it explains why there may be good spirituality and evil spirituality, just as there may be good power and evil power, the quality not residing in the faculty, but in the objects to which it is applied.

Thus understanding the rationale and the purport of human development, we are prepared to forecast its future. Between these poles of spirituality and materiality in disposition stand the countless millions of human beings. Evidently the disparity in their status is enormous, and hence an equal advance impossible. Some are more and more opening their natures to the in-pouring of the highest truth, while some are intent only on the things of time and sense. Many reincarnations will be necessary before the latter diminish their material affinities, but that diminution has been attained to by the former. Their present status proves their past career. Fewer reincarnations will be needed, because the work of reincarnations has been so far accomplished. Now comes, under the all-pervading Karmic law, an opportunity for the aspirant's specific training. In some mysterious way, wrought by the advanced souls who are far on the path to perfection and who show it by their unselfish consecration to human progress, he is confronted with the privilege of direct discipleship. Accepted, adhered to, he learns the methods of self-culture which the experience of untold ages has verified, gains the mastery of self and circumstance, unveils the secrets which Nature hides from the fleshly mind, communes with the Unseen, ripens into the Seer, the Master, the Adept. Incarnation after incarnation may be demanded to correct imperfection or deficiency, but each advances on the path. That path conducts at last to Nirvana,—reunion with the Infinite. As there have been countless stages through which, in eras past, the life-germ evolved into the Man, so shall there be countless stages in eras future, through which the Man shall evolve into the God. "If he called them Gods unto whom the word of God came," much more may they be called such in whom that word is perfected.

"But," it will properly be asked, "have these developing natures no other function than the selfish one of personal culture?" The answer opens wider our conception of the universe and of our future.

Occult Science, in its exposition of cosmogony and teleology, includes these two great facts:

1. Every form and relation of matter being transient, spirit is the permanent essence of life, and hence the common element which connects and unifies all sentient beings. From this comes the principle of Brotherhood, and then the law that advance is possible only as that principle is realized, as

the wall separating each from all is disintegrated, and as unselfish effort for the good of others becomes habitual.

2. Progressing culture discloses, among many other truths, the law of cyclic evolution and the contents of the "Astral Light." The former affirms that human affairs develop in cycles, the movements of which are distinct and immiscible. The Astral Light is a universally-present, subtile ether, permanently recording every event and thought, the repository of unseen forces and agencies, the sphere of nature-spirits, "elementals," conscious but unintelligent beings forming a connecting link between mind and matter. To perceive, to enter, to control this astral sphere is an important step in the Adept's training.

Imagine, then, a disciplined intelligence, no longer hampered by material clogs, profoundly versed in natural law, at home in the unseen world and master of its occupants and powers, understanding the rate and quality of cyclic progress, and, in addition, warm with the feeling of sympathetic Brotherhood, and impelled to use its gifts for the melioration of mankind.

What must be its vocation? Evidently some office in the hierarchy of Nature, where, within the scheme of Law, it can preside over a department and further the advance of men. "There are," as the Apostle truly says, thrones and dominions and principalities and powers," and Occult Science shows how and by whom they are filled.

The recent impulsion to Theosophic study in the West is an illustration of this function. For ages the tendency of men has been to deeper sinking into the concerns of time, and a loss of spiritual interest and vitality. Gradually the guardians of Truth withdrew into obscurity, and even a knowledge of them perished in many lands. But of late has come a re-action. Partly from the spreading palsy of Positivism and Materialism, partly from the unsatisfying, artificial, irrational doctrines of conventional religion, partly from dim perception that the deepest wants of the spiritual nature are now unmet, there has been borne to the venerable East a cry for instruction, for guidance. It could hardly be unheard. Responsive to it has come a re-unveiling of the old Truth, a glad welcome to every sincere seeker after the verities of spirit, a promise that more shall be given as that now given has been used. Emerging from their retirement enough to meet the needs perceived, the Masters have imparted a portion of their treasure and sanctioned its exposition to the world. Of its fate we shall learn later on.

F. T. S.

## VIII.

In so brief a statement of Theosophic teaching, a statement which avowedly is but an outline, many most interesting questions must be wholly passed. Cosmogony, geological cataclysms, extinction of races, origin of religions, are examples; and, in greater detail, the sixth sense, the fate of suicides, the Astral body, the symbolism of numbers, the death of children, the phenomena of spiritualism, the qualifications for a chela or disciple. These, and many more, can be studied in Theosophical literature. Yet, before going on to the last topics we can touch, one matter of exceeding import must be emphasized.

In every age the problem of how to reconcile the goodness of God with the patent ills of human life has sorely tried the reverent soul. The existence of sin, of suffering, and of sorrow; the spectacle of prostrate right and triumphant wrong; the unequal distribution of happiness and opportunity; the waste of talent through unfitted environment; the miseries from tyranny, misgovernment, and war; the want of correspondence between destiny and desert; the seeming heartlessness of Nature's operations, and the injustice suggested by her very uniformity; the suffering of children, the prevalence of accident, the inscrutableness of "Providence," the untimeliness of deaths;—all are problems admitting of but two solutions. One is the theory of Divine caprice, the other the Theosophic teaching of Karma and Reincarnation. "Without the doctrine of metempsychosis," said Hierocles, "it is not possible to justify the ways of God."

The thoughtful man, the kindly man, the devout man, all are interested in removing from the Supreme Being the stigma that must come from the management of earth with carelessness, incompetency, or whim. Potent indeed must be the arguments which forced so clear a thinker as Mill to the conclusion that God must be wanting either in goodness or in power. From this difficulty there is one, *but* one, exit. It is the unqualified admission of unqualified justice, that things happen because they ought to happen, that "whatever is, is right." In this belief, intellect, benevolence, and piety find repose. The Wisdom-Religion dissipates misgivings, and clears the air of doubts and fears.

We are often asked, "What is the attitude of Theosophy to religions?" Nothing can be simpler. It goes below to the foundation on which all are reared, and considers each as a varying interpretation of the common truth. No one can be absolutely false, else it would not endure a day; no one can be absolutely true, or it would be universal. Its measure of truth keeps each



alive; its measure of error keeps each restricted. In the endurance of religious systems Theosophy sees the undying vigor of the principle of spirit; in their hardening into dogma and ceremonial, the influence of materializing forces; in the appearance of prophets and reformers, the earnest of a better, freer life. For the Founders of the world's great faiths it has reverent homage. It brushes away, indeed, the myths and legends which conceal them, but only that it may honor what they have said and done rather than what their followers have said and done about them. It knows that Jesus uttered no creed, that Buddha founded no church; and if disciples have invented what the Master never did, the responsible ones are they, not He. It itself proclaims neither creed nor church, for it notes the history and the present of both, yet it does not seek to abolish, but to enlighten, them. It would reinterpret the sacred books, open the choked fountains of spiritual aspiration, recall the energy which has been dissipated in polemics. Teaching that Divinity is omnipresent, that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him," that the kingdom of Heaven is "within" men, it reaffirms the oldest of religious truths and the strongest of religious motives. It is not controversial, it is expository; it does not denounce, it inspires. For all that is noble and elevating and free, it has words only of greeting and fellowship; if it turns away from the dogmatist and the sectarian, it is because they belittle the image of God and fetter the movements of aspiration. For in unrestricted liberty of thought and experience and endeavor, it finds the condition of progress towards the Infinite.

And now we may see what Theosophy teaches of the method of Self-Culture. Already has been stated the great aim of de-materializing and spiritualizing conception and effort. Evidently this must be strictly individual. Each man is to work out his own salvation. Yet he does so by ceasing to make it his own. It is in the growth of unselfishness, the steady disintegration of the casing which encloses him from the universal and restrains the influx of spirit, the atrophy of every desire for mere personal delight and the nurture of every satisfaction in the broadest generosity. *Unselfishness* is the very essence of Theosophy.

Coupled with this must be knowledge. "Know thyself" was the Greek maxim,—first human nature as the substratum of personality, then the specific features of the individual himself. They are the capacities, tastes, tendencies, faults, weaknesses which, aggregated, make the Me, and I can neither cultivate the one nor repress the other till I perceive both. Beyond the personality lies the infinite expanse of truth, and this is the heritage of each man, occupied

less by the appropriation separately of successive sections than through the enlargement of the intuitive faculty which perceives all.

The performance of duty is unflinchingly insisted on. The Bhagavad-Gita and the New Testament sound the same note. No attainment of spirituality dispenses from the smallest claim, nor is attainment possible save through performance. Yet it is to be performed for itself, without reference to reward, without concern for results which are the care of law.

In preceding Articles it has been stated that enlightenment comes through the subordination of material interests and pursuits to those of the spirit. From the experience born of many ages of such practise, the Eastern philosophy gives methods with much detail. Some are unsuited to Western life, but we may accept their principle. It is to so train the interior being to concentration of thought, to control against diversion or wandering, to fixedness of attention and insight, that gradually every perturbing influence is removed and the light streams in through meditation. When a man is master of himself, of his mind no less than his appetites and his will, he is able to maintain silence while the Truth speaks.

But wherein, it may well be asked, does such training differ from that prescribed by any devout and earnest school? So far as unselfishness, study, acts of duty, spiritual aspiration are concerned, very little. But most schools point to some external fact as the condition of the soul's felicity, and make that felicity the one aim for effort. Theosophy reverses this conception. It insists that, for determining the destiny of a soul, there is no other factor in the universe than that soul's own character; and that a selfish aim, however exalted, defeats itself. Not to gain good, but to be good, may define its theory.

Moreover, the object of the training is different. It is, in brief, *to lift beyond the affinities which generate reincarnations*. To lessen the number of his incarnations is thus the true Theosophist's wish. The initial steps to present duty are simple, clearly taught, and of immediate practicability. Beyond the fact that much of a chela's course consists in the arousing of faculties we all possess but which are usually dormant, little is said as to the higher progress, though even hereof enough has been disclosed to give an intelligent idea. Of the steps to Mastership we know nothing. But we know that Masters exist, that they are the outcome of perfected spiritual training, and that it is to their marvellous acquaintance with the Astral Light and with science in all forms that we possess our present measure of truth.

In the next and last article will be given a sketch of the Theosophical Society.

F. T. S.

## IX.

In the month of November, 1875, the Theosophical Society was founded by Madame H. P. Blavatsky and Col. Henry S. Olcott in New York. There had been some local desire for Oriental Studies, especially as to psychical subjects, but this would not of itself have justified organization. It has always been understood that the impulse came from Masters, and was given because of foresight that the time was near when Occult Science would meet with welcome.

Madame Blavatsky, however men may interpret her, is certainly the most extraordinary woman of the age. In capacity, learning, industry, courage, intrepidity, she is unequalled. Her psychic powers were from childhood the astonishment of her acquaintances. Her travels have been enormous, and even the small part of her adventures and experiences known to the public would seem incredible if unverified. Her many-sided nature, her gifts and faculties, her fixedness of purpose, make her absolutely unique. To this point there can hardly be divergence of opinion. But over and above these qualities on what one may call the purely-human plane, are that command of super-human forces which has been described as characterizing the Adept, and that privilege of communicating with Adepts which discloses her as their fellow. (1) It is these endowments, exemplified in many cases imparted to the public and in numberless others privately told by witnesses, which make her the centre of interest to all Theosophists, and the revered channel through which pours so much of the information and stimulus which are the life of the Theosophic cause. In her, it is felt, are embodied the genius, the energy, the exaltation of Esotericism.

That she has been misconceived, traduced, reviled was inevitable, perhaps natural. Apostleship and martyrdom are rarely disconnected. Her relinquishment of rank, property, and ease in the service to which she had already given herself was not held, as it usually is, to prove sincerity. Even her obviously supra-natural powers were denounced as charlatanry, and an English Society proclaimed an "exposé" which is still influential and would have been more so but for a prompt description of the mistakes, fallacies, and even ludicrous blunders into which its author had stumbled. (2) Misjudged, hated, and maligned, she has, at least, some compensation in the reverent affection of those who know her, and of those who, without that privilege, have read her words and been incited by them to a loftier life.

Col. Olcott was another character fitted to lead. A trusted army officer, a

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(1) See Sinnett's *Memorials of the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, and *The Occult World*.

(2) See Sinnett's *The Occult World Phenomena*.



lawyer, a journalist, a littérateur, an accomplished man of society and affairs, he had peculiar winsomeness of personal quality and an indomitableness of purpose to which his hourly life still bears impressive witness. He, too, when the time arrived for that sacrifice, discarded country, home, habits, income, comforts, and dedicated what was left—himself—to the work assigned him. They who are honored with his friendship, or who have read *Theosophy, Religion, and Occult Science*, know that the Masters made no mistake when they selected him as the President of the T. S. and afterwards called him to India. Before that journey, he was privileged, as he tells us, with a visit in New York from one of these Masters in his Astral Form, who, as proof against self-illusion or the charge of falsehood, left with him in memory of the visit the head-dress worn. (1)

The Theosophical Society was designed to aid inquiry, and hence did not disbar inquirers. It existed for 3 ends:—

1. To be the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood;
2. To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions, and sciences;
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

To only the first of these was adhesion a prerequisite to membership, the others being quite optional. It was explicitly stated, moreover, that the Society represented no particular creed, was entirely unsectarian, and included professors of all faiths, only exacting from each member that toleration of the beliefs of others which he desired them to exhibit towards his own. Its entirely cosmopolitan character is illustrated in the photographed group of delegates to the General Convention in India, where the colors and costumes exhibit the variety of races and religions represented. In the West, one Bishop, ministers of several denominations, and laymen from still more are members.

In 1878 the Headquarters of the Society were moved to India, and ultimately a property was purchased at Adyar, Madras, where the Permanent President, Col. Olcott, oversees the work. Of the Society there are 113 Branches in India, 19 in America, 10 in Europe, and 14 in other parts of the world. (April, 1888.). The address of the General Secretary for the American Section is P. O. Box 2659, New York, from whom the terms of admission may be obtained.

The principal periodicals devoted to Theosophy are *The Theosophist*, Adyar; *Lucifer*, London; *The Path*, New York; *Le Lotus*, Paris. The leading publishers in America are *The Occult Publishing Co.*, Boston.

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(1) This has been handled and examined by the writer.



The Theosophical Society is but a small body in this country, though of late exhibiting in its growth one evidence of the remarkable interest in Occult Science which is now so wide-spread. Any active system of propagandism is not viewed with favor by its members. It is conceived that, until an individual has reached a certain stage of interior experience, Theosophic doctrine will be repellent and therefore premature; when that stage is reached, the doctrine is sure to be encountered. This is not fatalism or indifference, but rather an observation of practical facts and a conviction of the working of Karma. Hence the Society's publications are mainly for the better instruction of its own members and for the guidance of persons desiring information, any large scheme of missionary effort, still more, controversial or polemical writing, being without its sphere. It is also conceived that, beyond an expression of clear desire for membership by applicants, but little should be exacted as qualification. The inducements—other than sincerity—to join a group of inquirers are not great, and if, as will happen to any Society, unworthy persons sometimes secure admission, the uncongenial atmosphere will usually effect voluntary withdrawal. A man intent on gain or glory or amusement will not long frequent meetings which provide none of these.

If these Articles, now concluded, have given any reader a distinct idea of what is certainly a very interesting theory of life and destiny, they will not have been a failure; if they are imperfect or inaccurate or unsatisfactory, the blame must rest, not upon the Wisdom-Religion, but upon one of the least of its disciples.

F. T. S.

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