

THE IRISH THEOSOPHIST

NO. 3. VOL. 1

DUBLIN, DEC. 15, 1892.

PRICE ONE PENNY

THEOSOPHY IN PLAIN LANGUAGE.

NO. I. INTRODUCTION

Under the above title we propose to publish a series of articles which will have for their object the exposition, in clear and simple language, of the more essential and radical teachings of Theosophy. In this venture we shall seek to satisfy a much felt want in Ireland — as elsewhere. For numerous and useful as have been the attempts in this direction, they are none too numerous, and their usefulness hardly meets the growing need. The impression is but too common, even among unprejudiced and well-disposed critics, that Theosophy is a purely speculative and unpractical system, a wondrous amalgam of Hindu subtleties, barren metaphysics and mystical phantasies combined with an infatuation for all things wonderful, miraculous and uncanny.

It should therefore be made more widely known, that our philosophy springs from, and is rooted in, certain broad and definite conceptions, which are quite within the comprehension of the ordinary mind and which if realised will and must produce important effects on the conduct, both in thought and action of men towards men. On the other hand, it is none the less true and in no way detracts from its ethical impulse, that in its deeper phases, Theosophy develops a never-ending fascination for the mystic, the philosopher and the occult student of nature. Our little magazine will not lose sight, we hope, of either aspect of *THEOFOBIA*, the Goddess whose bidding we follow. She has come to us friend, guide, helper, comforter; yet wrapped, prophetess-like, in many veils of mystery, and uttering often the dark sayings of One whose thoughts move among things Real and Eternal.

This latter aspect we must keep in mind; even amid the clear daylight which Theosophy sheds around the many riddles of existence. But the daylight itself—the broad teachings of Theosophy on man's divine origin and destiny; on his inner union with his fellow men; on the law of justice, which orders life and underlies its apparent favouritism; the meaning and promise which existence reveals, when the great truth of his many re-births upon earth is known, even as a possibility—this is what we have to bring before the many, on whom the weight of superstition—whether of belief or negation—has lain so long, that they hug their very fetters; denying some the possibility of light, others its existence beyond the range of their own narrow and purblind vision; but all benefiting, whether consciously or not, by contact with a body of men and women, in whom a sane and robust faith is conjoined with perfect intellectual freedom and tolerance, and a fair measure (let us hope) of ordinary human brotherhood.

In successive articles then, we shall endeavour to present, in connected form, some leading features of the system from which our Society takes its name, and which is so much identified with its progress. First taking up the primary and most obvious question "what am I?" we shall try to show what help Theosophy

may afford in the solution of that most ancient and enduring of problems. This will involve a consideration of the "seven principles" in nature and man, their relations and interactions one upon the other. The identity of this more subtle division with the popular one of "body, soul and spirit" will be shown, and the point of divergence pointed out between the Theosophic idea of what is immortal in man and that of exoteric creeds; for Theosophy teaches that the puny creature of a day whom we call "man", but faintly reveals the true Self within; the INNER PERSON who endures, and in whom the real life of "man", through many cycles of evolution is hid. What that evolution is, its methods and its objects, are questions that will engage us, when, in the light of Theosophy, we face the second great problem of existence:—"whence came I?" and the third "whither go I.?" We shall see how man has part in the eternal cosmic process whereby, through cycles and æons immeasurable, life is raised from dim and lowly levels of sentient form, to height after height of ever more conscious union with the ONE LIFE that breathes through all; and how his highest aspirations tend towards the fulfilment of that Universal Brotherhood for which not mankind alone, but the whole creation "groaneth and travaileth in pain together". And it is towards this end that we hear of lofty Beings, divine intelligences, reaching from their high spheres to aid with spiritual guidance the half-conscious animal instincts of newly evolved man. This is the object and goal of the soul's long pilgrimage through body after body; this the AT-ONE-MENT carried on by the divine Ego, the redeeming Christos within, and aided by all those great souls who, made perfect themselves by willing suffering, lighten the load of sorrow that would otherwise weigh unbearably upon the world.

Keeping constantly in mind, therefore, the *ethical* purport of these teachings upon man's inner nature, his past history and his destiny, we shall briefly set forth, along with Reincarnation, the twin doctrine of Karma—the great law of justice and harmony, which treasures up the good, and confronts us also with the evil that we have wrought in present or past lives. The questions of "Heaven" and "Hell," with which Mrs Besant deals in the lecture which we report, will call perhaps for separate treatment, and a consideration of the relations of Theosophy to Christianity and to certain modern questions such as socialism, spiritualism and hypnotism, may fittingly bring our series to a close. The opinion of the present writer is that our members in Ireland should all contribute with suggestions if not original articles to make this effort a success.

VERSES FROM THE DHAMMAPADA. *

Earnestness is the path to Nirvana; thoughtlessness is the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die; those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

Like a beautiful flower full of colour but without scent, are the fine but fruitless words of him who does not act correspondently thereto.

If a man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men; and if a man conquer himself, he is the greater conquerer.

One's own self conquered is better than all other people. Not an angel or mara, or even a god, could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself and always lives under restraint.

*The Dhammapada forms part of the Sutta Pitaka, and is a most beautiful collection of verses and passages from the three Pitakas. (See Max Muller "Sacred Books of the East" vol x.)

PROBLEMS OF DEATH AND THE AFTER LIFE.*

The subject that I have to deal with to-night is one of eternal interest to men and women, if only for the reason that everyone has a personal concern therein; and not only so, but in the belief of a great majority of people, the belief in fact of every one save materialists, who do not believe in existence after death at all—with all others, existence after death is a very much more prolonged matter than existence before death. From the Christian standpoint the difference in opinion is enormous, some ten, twenty, forty, or eighty years of life as it is called; and then comes death with the strange eternity on the other side. From the Theosophical point of view, a life between cradle and grave; then a prolonged interlude, and then the recall to earth life again. There is a great difference of course between the Theosophical and your own, or at least the popular Christian belief; for in the former you have the renewal of life and this prolonged interlude; but whichever view you may take, the period that intervenes, or the after-death portion, is a period far more lasting and important than the physical and objective; so that it should prove a matter very interesting to us to see how that period or eternity is spent, and it may not be amiss, this evening, to try to see if any light can be thrown upon this beyond, by the Theosophical doctrines which are becoming fairly familiar and almost universally known to the educated western world.

As regards the Christian belief of life after death, there is a very marked difference of what one might call feeling or sentiment existing between the great body of Christians in the Catholic Church on the one side, and the various Protestant communities on the other. It is a strange and a somewhat interesting question, how this great difference has arisen. You will find amongst Protestant communities an enormous gulf between the living and the dead—to use the expressions in ordinary use. When the soul leaves the body, it is thought to leave earth and all earthly ties and relations behind. Such is their idea; and they differ in this from the Roman Catholic, who have the communion of saints, and believe in the power of relieving and communicating with their people, who have passed into the unknown beyond the grave. Catholics are kept, as one great body, very much more in communion by their belief that the dead can be helped by the prayers of the living. The fact that there are celebrations not only of All Saint's day but of All Sou.'s day; the fact that you have prayers to the saints, so making them, if I may say so, although departed, part of the ordinary home-life—these various ideas and teachings make a great difference of sentiment, as regards death, between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant bodies; Death, it seems to me, is a less thing to the Roman Catholic than it is to the Protestant, just because of those many lingering links of communication that have been preserved in the one instance, and have not been preserved in the other. There is a small section of Protestant people to-day, who believe in the efficacy of the prayers of the living to benefit the dead; but this is regarded by their Protestant brethren with suspicion as a step in the Roman Catholic direction. The ordinary Protestant does not regard the living as capable of this communication with the dead; either as regards the prayers of one helping the other, or the prayers to the saints bringing communications from them to this world; so we see that amongst Protestant communities death is a question where there is much difference in ideas and sentiment from the Roman Catholic opinion.

Now with regard to the Theosophist, death, from his standpoint, is a slighter matter still, being only regarded as a recurrent period in the long stretch of life, and looking on that life as stretching from eternity to eternity. After a short stay of life in the shell of the body, then comes that other period, when, bursting through those frail earthly impediments, the life out of the body commences and then life in the body again. Death cannot be considered as making a great difference in the condition of the man; because to him, while still living in the body, spiritual intelligence is essential. In fact life is nothing without it, for the body is a mere covering or shell.

It is through the body that man, when he comes for an experience of earth life, receives such experience; this body is merely used for this purpose, and is put off when he passes into the higher condition. And there is one great difference in the view of death taken by Theosophists from others, it is, that this separation of the spiritual intelligence from the physical shell or body may occur without death supervening, that is, the spiritual intelligence may leave the body, and so may pass in the disembodied state, without the conditions of life in the body, into the realms of the great unknown and then may return to the body, bringing with it the knowledge that in that condition, it has gained. So that death is not to us the unknown; the regions beyond death are not to us the untrodden; and this perhaps is the greatest and most striking difference between ordinary religious views and the Theosophical view; that to the one, death is a veil which once passed admits of no more return to the life of the body; whereas, from

*A lecture delivered by Mrs Annie Besant in the Antient Concert Rooms, Dublin, on Monday, November 21, 1892.

the Theosophist's standpoint, it is a veil that may be lifted and passed, and then the student may return to earth, just as a man may travel from his own country, and come back to it after his travel with the knowledge he has gained. And it is from this Theosophical standpoint that I am going to speak this evening.

But, before going into details of the possible knowledge of the subject, I wish to say that there are two kinds of knowledge which we are inclined to believe. There is knowledge we take on authority; that we have not verified; that we have not the capacity of verifying; knowledge which we take from those who seem to us to be worthy of trust; knowledge which we accept second-hand from those who have studied a subject we are ignorant of, and whose allegations we are willing to take and believe in. The greater part of our knowledge is of that nature. If you take into account the knowledge by which you guide yourselves in life, you will find it can be classified into that which is based on the authority of others, and that which you have personally acquired. If you are able to think for yourselves, you can form an opinion which may be compared with that based upon the authority of works you have studied, and thus you will gain an insight into human life. Our life is so complex, so dependent on knowledge so full of opinions, that we are simply bound to take the greater part of our facts and ideas at second-hand; and sometimes this is thrust upon us in a startling way when we are challenged to account for some belief we hold. Let me take an illustration:—"The earth revolves round the sun." How many of you, if you were put to the proof of that belief, would be able to give an intelligible answer, which would satisfy anyone who was ignorant of either side of the question, and wished to be informed and convinced by proof of the right side. I imagine that many of you are in the position that I am in myself, and would find much difficulty in giving any clear idea of the mathematical calculations which afford the proof of that proposition. Thus it is with us in many cases, we never stop to enquire or examine facts which are supposed to be well known, but just take them for granted as the ideas of the time.

Now all the knowledge possessed by ordinary persons as regards life after death, is based upon some authority: whatever that authority may happen to be, it is still authority, not personal knowledge; whether it be the revelation of some person whom they regard as infallible, or the declaration of some church which they regard as infallible, it is still authority, and from this arises their different opinions with regard to the after-life. With these sentiments and ideas influencing them, they stand before the curtain that you call Death. We claim, some of us, to have gone further. We allege that the student may learn so to separate the Spiritual Intelligence from the body, that it may acquire knowledge at first-hand as regards the post-mortem life; which means, that it is possible to verify the statements that are met with in the course of theosophical study. So the difference is simply between taking a thing on authority once for all, and the acceptance of a statement for the time being, on the authority of others, which later on you yourself can prove. In the one case you can never go beyond your authority; while in the other case you are told that, if you choose to follow the study of the particular subject in which you are interested, the opportunity of verification will be given you. Now it is from this standpoint that I make these statements as regards the post-mortem conditions.

I do not by any means wish to force my ideas upon you. I do not wish them to be taken and swallowed as a matter of course. I wish to afford you food for serious thought; and everyone is free to draw his own conclusions from the facts within his knowledge, as I have before mentioned, and to make his own personal statement therefrom. You may for the moment take these statements as regards post-mortem existence for what they are worth, or you may, if you choose, learn how to verify these statements, and so gain personal knowledge.

Now there is one very striking difference between the opinions ordinarily held by people, and the view taken from the theosophical standpoint. Take for instance the ordinary Protestant notion. A man dies; his soul passes from the body; it passes definitely into the state of damnation or a state of beatitude, and there is practically nothing more to be said about it.

The man is either blessed or damned; and the whole thing is simplified in this way, whether it recommends itself to the reason or not. If you deal with the popular Roman Catholic belief you have much the same teaching, and the same criticism applies. But here you have the state of purgatory in addition to the final states; and though you have this additional complication from the Roman Catholic point of view, still, it is very easy to accept it without any careful thought, and there is no difficulty in understanding it; so the statement is accepted in all points as satisfactory and worthy of belief. The Theosophical teaching on the after life is far more difficult to follow and to understand; and it should be so, if it is to be at all in harmony with nature, which is full of complexity, and is not at all simple, and cannot be classified under one or two divisions. For whatever subject you take up, if you want to understand it, you have to study that particular subject very minutely, and with extreme care. And so, in like manner, it is not possible to arrive at the right conclusion or fall in with the Theosophical views, unless you are willing to give the time and patience necessary to careful analysis and

careful study. You will be rewarded, very probably, for your labor, by getting an insight into the post-mortem state, which is of much more importance than the goal or hopes of our transitory bodies. Now this simplicity in the ordinary opinions about the after-life, does not recommend itself to the Theosophist. Suppose a being from some other planet visited ours, to gain experience outside his own sphere, and to see what sort of beings inhabited a planet which he had never visited before. Would you consider it a satisfactory explanation, if, after he returned to his own country, upon being asked, what wonder he had seen or what experience he had gained from his travels, he replied, that he found our earth covered with strange moving things, but did not say anything more than that they all moved! That would have to include men and brutes, ships, trains and so forth. I fancy your criticism of him would be, that he was a person of very little observation. Now there is this simplicity in the generality of opinion, but it is not so from the Theosophical point of view. These realms on the other side have been crossed and visited, and the knowledge thus gained by the spiritual senses, has been brought back and communicated to the body. There is not much difficulty in tracing the information to the various sources. Some of it is on authority and capable of verification; the rest you must take for what it is worth. I say this, because some of the knowledge is laid down as the result of research, and some as the result of experience brought back from the other states. It is the result partly of personal investigations and experience; for as the student progresses in his study, he is enabled to verify the different opinions and ideas. These verified statements are then necessarily accepted, and taking what they cannot verify as granted, for the time being, they are thus enabled to grasp the whole.

Now this change which we call death, as far as the body is concerned, is not death at all; it is really the outbreaking of the different lives of which the body is composed, owing to the withdrawal or removal of the different links or powers which keeps these lives together. For our bodies are built up of lives, minute lives, infinitesimal lives; we may call them; and the whole of these, built together, make up what is known as the human body. The life and power of that body is the life and power of the many organisms of which it is composed; these constitute or make up the bodily life; so that we see what we call death, death so mysterious and so complicated, is from the theosophical standpoint, as I said before, the breaking up of those different lives which constitute the human or earthly part of our life. With the withdrawal of the power which held together these different forms of life which build and make up our bodies; each pursues its own individual way, each living in itself; while to the spiritual intelligence, death, which is considered so awful and the termination of all human life, is really not death at all, but the transition, so to speak, from one life, one existence to another; the change from life with the body, to life without the body. The body falls to pieces by the action of the lives of which it is composed, and thus ceases to exist; and then begins that form of life known to the Theosophist as life in the Astral Double. This Astral Double is the vehicle by which we are conveyed from one existence to the other. When that separation takes place, death is the immediate result. But in certain cases the astral body can withdraw from the physical while the person is still living; that is, it can be rendered visible, so that you can see, standing before you, an exact duplicate of the physical body, connected to the latter by a slender thread.

Some time ago the particulars of an experiment by Dr. Luys were published in many papers and periodicals in England. In these it was stated, that it had been found possible to remove the sensibility from the human body, and to transfer that sensibility so effectually, that any injury inflicted on the chosen spot where the sensibility had been transferred was reproduced on the physical body; and the person, who was lying in a condition of insensibility, showed signs of pain when the injury was made, not in the insensible flesh, but on the spot removed from the body which had been chosen for the experiment. At one of these experiments, which was reported by the Dalziel agency, the sensibility of a subject was transferred to a glass of water. The glass was then removed from the sight of the hypnotized person; and on the water being touched the subject started as if in pain. On one occasion when the water was swallowed, the patient fell into a deadly swoon. Dr. Luys was also able to confirm the discovery made by Col. Roche, who found it possible to transfer the sensibility of a hypnotized person to the negative of a photograph of the subject, and that the subject not only felt, but showed signs of any mark made on the negative. Supposing, for instance, a scratch was drawn with a pin across the hand in the negative after it had been charged with sensibility, the subject would shriek with pain, and a few instants later a similar mark would be visible on the hand of the subject. These are experiments which are not ours, I know that the testimony of the Theosophist might be regarded as prejudiced; but the testimony of these men is peculiarly valuable when it corroborates the statements that we make about the astral body; for a Theosophist would say, that in these cases, the astral double had been transferred to the place or object selected for the experiment, and if a clairvoyant were present, this double could be seen there.

There is one point in these experiments which I wish to refer to, when you have found it possible to throw a subject into a deadly swoon from which she is revived with extreme difficulty, by simply drinking a glass of water into which the sensibility of that subject had been transferred; at last, people may begin to understand, that you can injure bodily life by forces that are invisible and intangible; but whose existence it becomes daily more and more difficult to deny. It is possible, we say, for the student to perform upon himself the experiment of which the French doctors perform upon another. The Paris doctor's method of working is to throw his patient into a trance; and the patient, when recovered from the trance, remembers nothing whatever of what has occurred. Whereas, the theosophical student, who follows the teaching that may be given to him, may learn to separate the astral by the act of his own volition; and never losing consciousness during the effort, may know what he does, may become conscious in the astral body, may see the physical body lying senseless before him, and know with a certainty, which no second-hand testimony can give him, that he can live without the physical casing, and that his spiritual intelligence can be alive and conscious as if it were working in the physical frame. Many theosophical students can speak on this point not from hearsay or theory but with the certainty of actual experience. I myself have had such experience, but you can only take this for what it is worth. Every one of you, of course, is at liberty to form his own opinions about these statements; but still, you have no right to deny them. I do not wish to force my opinions upon any one who feels that further evidence is necessary; and you are quite right to demand fuller evidence before you believe. I never claim more from any one, than that they should take the facts that are laid before them, and exercise their judgment in forming their own opinions; and I only ask suspension of judgment in any particular direction, until you have considered, and carefully weighed, every particle of evidence that has been laid before you—until you can speak with knowledge of your own, and not simply with the positiveness of ignorance. Practically, my own experience of people is; the less they know, the more certain they are; and the less instructed, the more positive in their denials. If these denials came from the mouth of a highly instructed person, they would have some force, however slight; but coming from a person who has no experience save of bodily things, they are of no importance whatever; so while perfectly admitting your right to deny, I pass on to consider the state of the astral body after death, when having left the physical form finally and never to return, it proceeds itself to pass through different stages of decomposition. Death means for the astral just what it means for the physical body; the breaking up of its constituent parts and the dissipation of its molecules. It disintegrates *pari passu* with its physical counterpart, and remaining in its neighbourhood, is generally seen in cemeteries and churchyards over graves. I here introduce the testimony of a very intimate friend of mine, a materialist, and one who was a disbeliever in the reality of such visions. I mention it with her full permission to tell all as she told me; and, if I chose, to give her name.

A very dear woman friend of hers had died suddenly; a woman to whom she was passionately attached; and for weeks and weeks after the death of the physical body, she saw the astral form in the air around her. She saw in fact the process of disintegration and gradual decay; saw it in fact breaking up, as it were, bit by bit; a most painful and horrible experience for my friend, and one which it is well that few people have to pass through. I was not a Theosophist myself at that time, and the circumstance puzzled me very much, until I became acquainted with theosophical literature, and found there the theoretical exposition, which explained these appearances. So here I had independent corroboration of that which had already been laid down with regard to these matters in theosophical works.

When the vesture of the physical body has been shaken off; when the vesture of the astral body has been shaken off; the soul remains for a time in the vesture of a yet remaining form, called the *Kama Rupa*, or *body of desire*; the name is of no importance; the meaning, body of desire, expresses exactly what it is—the model or form created by the passions and emotions of the man during his life in the physical body.

In considering what now befalls the disembodied entity, we will have to distinguish between different types of human character, for these persist and have an influence during the stages of post-mortem life. The transition stage; the passage from the physical life of the body to that other state of life without the body; the passage from the earthly existence and experience which all must necessarily undergo, to that higher and more spiritual existence after death which is only attained by some, is effected in a region called *Kama-Loka* by Theosophists. It is here that the separation or severing of the links which bind the astral to the physical body takes place. In this stage, man is still able to communicate with those who are left behind; but communication of this kind is both dangerous and mischievous. By these communications you disturb the astral entity in its ascent to the other life; its face is turned to the spiritual state; you drag it back to earth and the interests of earthly life; you check it in its onward

movement, interrupting the course of evolution which should pass on unbroken; dragging the soul back within the magnetic sphere of earthly attraction. It is during this intermediate stage that the practises that are called mediumistic are possible, and take place in the seance rooms. They have all the bad effects I have mentioned upon the departing entity; and they have also on those who take part in them, influences of a distinctly mischievous character; and, whether they are really enacted with those who have passed from earth life, they are disturbing and harmful to those by whom this communication is attained. And this is why we set our faces so distinctly against practises of what is called spiritualism. Suppose that during life all the interests had been the interests of the body; suppose that during the physical life, physical interests and ambitions had been those by which the man or woman had been most actuated; suppose the hopes had been physical hopes, that little thought had been given to, or concern taken in the nobler and higher interests of the life beyond; and that the things of intellect and spirit had been matters attended to from a sense of duty and compulsion, instead of with a feeling of enjoyment and real devotion—what will be the effect of this intercourse after death, with a being that has been, while on earth, actuated by these hopes and interests?

The teaching of Theosophy is, that such communication between the living and those departed souls, whose hopes and interests have been earth-bound during life, is indeed very harmful. For in its passage to the higher life, before the consciousness has attained, and become settled in the spiritual intelligence, the departed entity must undergo an interlude, or period of slow transformation and purification; and, if the lower nature has asserted itself during life at the cost of the spiritual, then, in the transitional stage the lower nature is the stronger; and as this has to wear out before the spiritual nature is set free, it means a long continuance in the state of Kama-Loka, during which the physical desires and physical longings are still acutely felt by the disembodied entity, although unable to gratify them; so that the awakening or stirring up of old attractions and distasteful memories must certainly be a source of pain and distress to the persons with whom this communication is attained. But if a man on the contrary has looked more to the higher life, and if this had been the life upon which his interests had been centered; if he has controlled and commanded his body, and used it, not as his master but as his servant for the work he had to do on earth, if he has subdued and restrained it during this life of trial, then the transition stage is easy and quick. For on entering into it, these two types, the souls self restrained and masters of the servant body, and the souls overwhelmed by the physical passions, are found so in this intermediate world. For as a man's life was, so it finds him in the disembodied state. As he has been animated and interested in the higher or lower natures here on this earth, so, the one or the other is master there, and the soul remains there the shorter or longer time, as each power or principle has been stronger or weaker.

Such are the states, and conditions on the withdrawal from earthly life. When the spiritual intelligence has shaken off the vesture of earth life to pass into the disembodied state, when disentangling itself from all earthly ties and attachments, as the butterfly from the chrysalis, it finds the last vesture of earth has fallen from it, and life with the body or physical existence is at an end; at this period, when halting between the different states, before passing into the purely intellectual or spiritual state, it is perfectly conscious of, and perfectly susceptible to, the many feelings and earthly interests which swayed it during life in the body, the recurrence of which must be both painful and annoying. But still passing on it withdraws its interest and hopes from earth life, and places and centres them in its own eternal being, in that state which we speak of as Devachan. This is the state in which the spiritual intelligence remains, until the time comes for it to return again to the earth life, from which it has long departed. Here it knows its past; it realises its highest hopes; it assimilates the experience it has gained in physical life. Here it rests, as it were, after the struggle of earthly existence, and here gains strength, and learns new lessons which may help to strengthen the man when he renews his life in earth once more. Now the Kama-Rupa, the body of desires, is left behind when the spiritual intelligence enters Devachan, and retains for a time some vestiges of its former life, some remembrance of its former union with the thinking entity which had ensouled it, but has now passed beyond its sphere. And therefore spiritualistic seances, with their painful practices, (of course I am speaking now of genuine seances, not of those that are fraudulent,) which so disturb the progress of the departed soul, and prolong the time of its passage to the higher life, by bringing it back to earthly remembrances and earthly thoughts while deceiving the living friends with false appearances and delusive hopes—these are the things which delay the soul's progress and obstruct its course, and prevent its rising to the higher and freer life. For remember, there is but one way of gaining spiritual knowledge, there is only one way of communicating with the other states; it is only by the expansion of the spiritual consciousness that you can enter into, and have experience in the regions where spirit lives and has its being—not by dragging it down to your level and forcing it to sud

serve your wishes. You can succeed in reaching the higher condition by awakening in yourself the higher consciousness; then, and then only, can you acquire true knowledge of the other state. Only in this way can you touch, or communicate with the true spirit of man when it has left the body, and rests in its own sphere. You have in yourself the same spirit, and you can, if you will, by living in the spiritual, rise to these realms; and this is a very different thing from attracting and drawing it down to the commonplace things of earth.

Thus I have endeavoured to trace for you some of the different post-mortem states. First, life in the astral double, which we have seen is merely a transitional state; then in the body of desires with the attachments of the earth life clinging around it; then the state of the disembodied spiritual intelligence, the higher life in which it dwells for a time in full and perfect consciousness, resting from the labours of the past, gathering into itself the experiences and reaping the harvest of life, in preparation for its next descent to earth. Insight into, and knowledge of this can only be gained by the spiritual intelligence; and that strange journey from state to state, that journey which each of us without exception has to tread, is a journey which can be trodden by the yet living man, and he may, if he will, regain memory of it, and learn the truths concerning that final devachanic state, which is familiar to the Theosophist and to the student who interests himself in it and tries to gain the knowledge.

Into these truths some among you may be led to enquire and explore for yourselves, and so gain the knowledge and experience of those states which I have endeavoured to describe to you to-night. The description and explanation of this subject may arouse an interest in you: This subject, to many of you so strange, so outside your ordinary every-day life, I have laid before you in its different phases; not for your acceptance, but for your consideration; not to be swallowed wholesale, but to be thought upon, to be carefully weighed and considered.

Study it as you would study any strange phenomenon; and, if you work practically in your investigations, if you work earnestly, you will succeed in unveiling these mysteries, and gain the knowledge I have spoken to you about. And, is it nothing to overcome the fear of death by learning what death really is? Is it nothing to become acquainted with life outside the body, and so to know by personal experience of these different phases of the post-mortem states, of life in the astral body and in the spiritual intelligence? It is worth while for each and every one of us to consider these problems, to go outside this physical life and follow the spirit in its new state:—for, as I said before, as a man lives here so is he found in this other state; and so it is well for you and for me, and for everyone of us to stop sometimes in the rush of life, with all its fleeting pleasures and delusive joys, to go out of the whirl of worldly interests and hopes, and quietly and calmly to think and deliberate on these questions, which are of such paramount importance to every one of us. And, let us ask ourselves, is it worth while to make so much of, and become so engrossed in this temporary state; is it worth troubling ourselves about this transient bodily life? The consideration of these problems will make us value far more our future, will make this life less engrossing, will bring us to see matters in their true light. No matter how pleasant this life may be to some of us; let us have wealth, power and happiness; these are merely temporary—merely for a time. How far more important then, is it to look forward to, and interest ourselves in the spiritual life! And when, by thought, consideration, and the exercise of the intelligence which is given to everyone, we can view these states and understand these problems; when we have reached a point from which every one of them appear clear to us, and have borne all examination, we can then extend a hand to our less fortunate brethren, and by elucidating these mysteries which we have successfully grappled with, we can raise them to the same state. Thus we see how a few having arrived at this stage, may become centres of hope and interest; a few in a town will become centres of new life and work, pillars of spiritual strength.

When we learn to think less of this false and fickle world; when we shall learn to think of our bodies, not as ourselves, but as instruments to be used, as a means towards an end, we shall take a greater interest in these important questions, which should possess so much interest for us all; and, it is to try and present these in their proper form for your consideration and investigation, that I appear before you to-night.

[We regret that the lecture is not given quite verbatim, as the report sent in by the stenographer was incomplete.]

OM

Faint grew the yellow buds of light
Far flickering beyond the snows,
As leaning o'er the shadowy white,
Morn glimmered like a pale primrose.

The word which BRAHMA at his dawn
Out-breathes and endeth at his night;
Whose tide of sound so rolling on
Gives birth to orbs of golden light;

Within an Indian vale below
A child said "Om", with tender heart
Watching with loving eyes the glow
In day-shine fade, the night depart:

And wisdom, beauty, love and youth,
By its enchantment gathered grow
Thro' age-long wandering to his truth
Thro' many a cycle's ebb and flow

And here all lower life was stilled,
The child was lifted to the Wise,
A strange delight his spirit filled,
And BRAHM look'd from his shining
[eyes.

G. W. R.

PAGES FROM THE UPANISHADS

[Translated from the Sanskrit, for the *Irish Theosophist*]



THE FOUR STEPS OF THE SELF.

[From the Māndūkya Upanishad]

The syllable Om is all; its expansion is what has been, what is, what shall be; all is Om. And whatever is beyond the three times, is also Om. (1)

All that, is the Eternal, and this Self is the Eternal; and this, the Self, has four steps. (2)

Waking life, which perceives outwardly, which has seven limbs, which, being one, has nineteen mouths, an eater of gross things, like fire, is the first step. (3)

Dreaming life, which perceives inwardly, which has seven limbs, which, being one, has nineteen mouths, an eater of subtle things, astral, is the second step. (4)

Where, asleep, he desires no desire, beholds no dream, that is dreamless life. Dreamless life, become one, collectively perceiving, blissful, an eater of bliss, dominantly conscious, intuitional, is the third step. (5)

This is the all-lord; this is the all-knower; this is the inner guide; this is the womb of all; the coming and going of all beings. (6)

Nor perceiving inwardly, nor perceiving outwardly, nor both, nor collectively perceiving, nor perceiving nor not perceiving, unseen, intractable, ungraspable, unmarked, unthinkable, unindicable, the residual essence of the one Self, in which the expanses have ceased, who is at rest, benign, and secondless, this they think is the fourth, this is the Self, the knowable. (7)

(to be continued)

C. J.

REVIEWS AND NOTES.

The Theosophist [Nov.] "Old Diary Leaves" VIII begins the story of the formation of the T. S., and gives some interesting details of the people who first took part in it. J. W. Brodie-Innes contributes an article on "The Hermetic Philosophy, the Esoteric Key of East and West." Colonel Olcott's short biographical notice of "M. A. (Oxon.);" reveals some pleasant incidents about his connection with T. S.

... ..

The Path. (Nov.) "17 Years Ago and Now" gives some idea of what has been accomplished by T. S., under difficulties of an exceptional character. In this short space of time the whole movement has spread itself over the globe, and to-day the sun never sets on those devoted to the movement. A number of letters appear from prominent Theosophists in America, declaring that the charge of dogmatism in T. S. is without foundation.

... ..

Lucifer. (Nov.) The 'Watch Tower' Notes are as usual well worth reading.

G. R. S. Mead continues his learned articles on "Simon Magus." "Death and After" by Mrs. Besant is also continued.

"Libra" writes some common sense about the "Co-operation of Man and Woman in Human Life." In "Gleanings from the Dawn Land" it is intended to "chronicle the secrets uncovered as cyclic time rolls up the curtain of the past."

The *Irish Theosophist* gets a kindly pat on the back, for which it is not ungrateful.

... ..

We have received a copy of *The Critic*, a Ms. monthly produced by the Sheridan Literary Club. Although every effort has been made to make it clear and legible, it shows some deficiencies which

with practice will disappear. J. Coates has an article on the Ethical Society and D. N. Dunlop has a word on Socialism. We heartily wish the venture success and admire the pluck of the S. L. C.

... ..

The Ethical Echo. Dublin. 64 Dame St. The important item in Dec. issue is the report of Dr. Coit's lecture, on "The Principles of the Ethical Movement." "We speak" he says "to the 'God in you'.. We exchange the outside authority for the inner authority." This was the strong point in early Quakerism.

But we hardly agree that public opinion always bound men to the right. He points out that the ethical movement says that the reason will never give any truth save the laws of logic. This has always been our contention. With good effect he also points out that we may never reach a theory of life which shall be so deep as life itself, "for with the deepening of life the problem and the wonder deepen." J. C. B. has a plea for the "purging" of the Bible. This of course casts a reflection on the good taste of the "holy ghost" which those in authority would resent.

... ..

We have on our Review Table:— Magic Squares of 34, 136, 15, 36, with keys to all; London, Nicholls & Co. 23 Oxford St. "The Supernatural," Its Origin, Nature and Evolution; 2 vols. London, Williams and Norgate. T. S. Indian Section Branch Work Paper XXII. on "Methods of Philosophical Research." "The Prasnotara" No. 22 Vol. 11. American Section Branch Work Paper No. 28 "A Theosophical Chat." "In defence of Theosophy" Lecture by Mrs. Besant in St. James' Hall; London, T. S. Publishing Co. 7 Duke St. Adelphi W. C.

Mrs. Besant's lecture on the 21st. Novr. was quite a success. The Antient Concert Rooms were well filled with an attentive audience. As we print a full report, our readers can judge of its interest for themselves.

... ..

The usual practise of question and answer after the lecture, was supplemented by a ten minutes oration by a protestant clergyman from the front gallery. He was sceptical as to Mrs. Besant's conclusions, but not so as to Christianity being a comforting belief. That there are certain aspects of Christian belief decidedly discomfoting need hardly be pointed out. The cases of religious melancholy and insanity are unfortunately too numerous. But, as Mrs. Besant pointed out, we cannot regard comfort at the expense of truth.

... ..

Mrs. Besant and Mr. Sinnett contribute one or two interesting parts to the Xmas No. of the *Idler*. Referring to "Esoteric Buddhism", Mr. Sinnett says, he contemplates recasting it, together with some further teaching, in a new book.

... ..

A conversazione was held at Dublin Lodge on the 24th. Novr. at which Herbert Burrowes made an excellent little speech, in an informal way, on one or two practical points of Theosophy. — but as we hope to publish it in our next issue, in the form of an article. we will not presume further.

... ..

The *Daily Chronicle* of 18th Nov. devotes two and a half columns to an interview with Mrs. Besant before her departure for America. She gives an instance of how she cured a case of blindness by mesmeric power, adding that she uses this power for curative purposes only. "Let Theosophy stand or fall by its philosophy and its ethics," that is the advice of my teacher, and I mean to abide by it" she says.

The *Ethical Echo* quotes what it pleases to term a "sensible and trenchant criticism on Mrs. Besant's Theosophy" from the *Freethinker* of Nov. 27th.

The *Freethinker* declares there is something "irresistibly comic in the solemnity" with which Mrs. Besant touches on Universal Brotherhood as if it were a "theosophic discovery." Now Mrs. Besant touches on the brotherhood of man as no new discovery. She has pointed out over and over again, that although every church may hold it as a doctrine, Theosophy offers a scientific basis for the statement, and demonstrates that *thought* is the mightiest power that one man can hold, either for good or evil on his fellow man. We must add wisdom to our love.

... ..

With the increase in advance-thought Societies comes an increase in meetings and it is well nigh impossible that they can all be attended by those interested.

It is right and necessary that each should have a separate working executive; but, as their interests are identical in more senses than one, it would be well if there was some common meeting ground.

... ..

We would suggest therefore, that something in the nature of a Saturday evening club be started, where those interested in the Ethical, Theosophical, Fabian and kindred societies could meet in open council. Whatever our methods of working may be, there is surely something we can learn from each other.

Above all, general good feeling would be sure to result, and oppression and intolerance would less easily withstand such united effort.

... ..

We invite enquiries from every one interested in Theosophy or its literature.

The letters will be answered personally by the members of the League of Workers, and not through our columns. All letters should be marked "Enquiry" and addressed to Editor 3 Upr Ely Place

We are glad to welcome an important addition to theosophic literature. *Le Secret de l'Absolu* by our well known French brother E. J. Coulomb, (Amaravella) has just been published as No. I of a series which bears the promising title "Bibliothèque de la Renaissance Orientale." Prefaced with an introduction by Emile Burnouf, and written in the vigorous and epigrammatic style of the author, the work is sure to arrest the interest of many whom books of a more technical and doctrinal character might fail to attract. It is a powerful appeal from the materialism (in philosophy and religion) of the West, to the profound spirituality of eastern teachings on God and Nature. The essential unity of these teachings is shewn in a masterly chapter, and is finally traced through Plato and the Gnostics, to the New Testament writings themselves. Most forcible and eloquent is the appeal to Christians to forsake the dead-letter of "orthodox" creeds for the deep and broad Catholicity of Theosophy.

OUR WORK.

The Dublin Lodge has issued the following syllabus of discussions for the next three months. Dec. 14th, "Is Theosophy unpractical," D. N. Dunlop; Dec. 28th, "First Steps in Occultism," G. W. Russell; Jan. 11th, "'Maya,' or Illusion," E. Harrison; Jan. 25th, "Theosophy as it appears to a beginner," Mrs. Varian; Feb. 8th, Wm. Blake on the Symbolism of the Bible," W. B. Yeats; Feb. 22nd, "Theosophy and present-day problems," Miss K. Lawrence.

The meetings are held at 3 Upper Ely Place on alternate Wednesday evenings commencing at 8.15 p. m. A group of members for the systematic study of "The Secret Doctrine," by H. P. Blavatsky, meets on Monday evenings from 8.30 to 9.30. Groups of members and associates for the study of Theosophical books of an elementary character, meet every Friday evening, from 8.30 to 9.30. The Library and Reading Room is open daily to 11 p. m. The annual subscription of members including dues to Headquarters of European Section, is Ten Shillings. The Subscription of Associates is Five Shillings per annum.

Visitors are invited to hand in questions on subjects connected with Theosophy and these will be dealt with at the following meeting if possible.

The North Dublin Centre has had to suspend its meetings for the present, on account of pressure of work in the printing office. In a few weeks they will issue a new syllabus and extend their field of operations generally. Our banner must be carried right on!

The new correspondence scheme inaugurated in Oct, *Vahan* has been heartily responded to, and ere long its results will be felt. Members and Associates wishing to join will get all information from the Secretary, F. J. Dick.



Notice:— All communications should be addressed to the Editor at 3 Upper Ely Place, Dublin. Articles for insertion should not exceed 750 words, and should reach us not later than the 1st. of each month.

Subscriptions 1/6 per annum, post free.