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NOTES BY THE WAY.

DUBLIN LODGE.

On Monday evening, 22nd January, the Dublin Lodge held its annual meeting. Brother Dick, as secretary and treasurer, submitted his report of the year's work, which was formally adopted. Then came the election of council and officers for 1894. This presented little difficulty, as everyone seemed anxious to manifest their confidence in the trusted and tried members who, during past years, have carried on the work of the Lodge so untiringly, by re-electing them as speedily as possible. The *I.T.* was the next subject for consideration, and its past shortcomings were treated very gently. I was reminded of Jasper Niemand's words, "To say with the whole heart, 'In his place I might do worse,' is truly to love the neighbour." On the whole, it was a satisfactory meeting. It was not "for tiresome or bureaucratic legislation," but "for mutual help and suggestion for the work of another year" that all gathered together.

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THE NORTHERN FEDERATION.

The Federation of the North of England Lodges is a pleasing and healthy sign. The different activities to which attention has been given, are sufficiently varied, and if carried out in the spirit in which they have been started, ought to bear good results in due season. In consolidated movements of this nature lie the elements of true progress in the T.S. "Long live" the N.F. in the love of doing *enduring* good to others.

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NEW CORRESPONDENCE SCHEME.

I notice from current *Vahan* that the new correspondence scheme, proposed to be carried out on the lines adopted successfully by the American Section, has been abandoned, because "scarcely a dozen members" replied to the announcement made by the General Secretary in a previous *Vahan*. This leads me to think that Lodges are apt sometimes to

become engrossed in purely local matters to the disadvantage of the Section at large. Such a state of affairs could easily be obviated by one member of each Lodge being delegated to look after proposals from headquarters, obtain the view of the members thereon, and report to General Secretary. It seems to me this would be more satisfactory than relying on each individual member to respond. We have to sink personal or local aims into "one great sea of devotion to the cause we have taken up." It is no easy task, but we can "try"!

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INDIAN THEOLOGY. It seems difficult indeed for Christian writers to exclude prejudice from their minds when dealing with any system of religion outside of Christianity. Here is a fitting example:—"The great Vishnavite apostle, however, was Chaftanya, born in 1485. He died at about the age of forty at Puri in Orissa, after a most remarkable life of labour, devotion, and faith. Contemplation he taught was one of the chief means of salvation. Obedience to the guru, or religious guide, is still one of the leading features of his sect. Caste was quite a secondary consideration, by him, indeed, it was all but ignored, all men alike were capable of faith. His teaching has led up to the assertion among his followers, of the spiritual independence of women. The great end of his system, however, was the liberation of the soul, that is to say, its deliverance from the stains, and frailties, and sinful desires of earth. Alas that he prescribed such inadequate means. For assuredly neither by contemplation, nor by obedience, nor by the assertion of equality, does this come. But in the Blood of Christ we find the power which cleanseth from all sin." It is about time that we had some definition of the phrase "Blood of Christ." It has become an expression utterly meaningless, used by those who disregard entirely any attempt to apply a spiritual interpretation to what is otherwise mere sectarian jargon.

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HE WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN. Near the great Ferris Wheel you might have chanced upon a Brahmin who was busy turning very pleasing effects, upon little cards, with his thumb nail. He had bright eyes and a plentiful flow of wit. He was usually surrounded by admiring ladies.

"Only one nickel, lady; will you buy?"

The lady had been studying him intently for some minutes.

"No, I believe not. But I would like to know if you are a Christian?"

"A Christian? No, indeed! Why should I be a Christian? I am a Brahmin. As well ask, 'are you a Brahmin?' But I know you could not be. No more could you be a Christian if you were born in Turkey. You would be a Mohammedan, sure; and for Bible you would read the Koran."

"That is not my opinion."

"Opinion! It is not opinion; it is fact. We are all born to our religion. But it is all the same, Mohammedan or Christian. Have a flower, lady?"

Another lady interposing: "I would like one with your autograph."

"Oh, sure! 'Tis but a moment to write it." As he writes: "This is not my profession. I wished to come to the Fair. My people say 'no.' But the vessel come, the vessel go; and I was gone too. So I make my thumb nail—I learned it when a boy—serve me. I earn some money; I see the Fair; I go home. As for my religion, I am nobody here. Here, the Christian on top, I am under; at home I am on top, the Christian under. But we should not be so

unkind. Apple pie you like ; lemon pie I like ; but it is pie all the same. So with religion ; different, but the same."

"But, have you no fear of going to hell?" persisted the lady, intent on his soul.

"To hell? Oh, no! I fear to go nowhere ; so hell is not in me, I am everywhere safe."—*Unity*.

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MRS. BESANT'S INDIAN
TOUR.

As it is likely a considerable number of *I.T.* readers do not see the larger Theosophical monthlies, it will not be out of place to give a few short extracts from January *Lucifer*, regarding Mrs. Besant's Tour in India.

"Every mail brings news of the enthusiastic reception given to Annie Besant, both in Ceylon and Southern India, and of the splendid work that is being done by her. Space would fail us to give all the interesting details of the ubiquitous 'triumphal arches,' unceasing 'garlanding and incessant rose-water besprinkling that our travellers have had at every opportunity.' . . . On November 16th Annie Besant first set foot on Indian soil, where she and her companions were enthusiastically received, and again wreathed with flowers. Trimovelly was the first stop. A procession, as usual, conducted them to the bungalow, with tom-toms and other native music. The subject of the first lecture was *Life after Death*. The Countess writes enthusiastically as follows:—"The hall and corridors were packed. Annie Besant spoke as I have never heard her speak before. Those who really wish to hear her at her best must come and listen to her in the East. She spoke with a force and depth of feeling which seizes hold of one like a whirlwind. . . . All the Hindüs were surprised to find what knowledge she possessed of their own scriptures." . . . In Madura they found themselves installed in the Mahârâjah's palace, and the High Priest of the world-famous temple came in state to greet them. . . . At Kumbakonam Annie Besant was interviewed by a "palmist." She says, "they gave a very accurate sketch of my life with one or two details never printed—and then went on to the future, with reasons for future taken from events in past births." He said that she was to be a great religious teacher, besides other nice things. . . . Our latest news is from Bellary. Annie Besant writes:—"Bungalow from which I last wrote, developed into a fever of excitement. The Government gave us a big place to meet in, closed the public offices early that everyone might go to the last lecture ; the Prime Minister came from Mysore, and we had some 3,000 people. Next morning the Minister came with some of the high Indian officials, and discussed the method of education in the Government schools, and especially the best methods for the girls' schools ; we discussed also other questions, and the way of initiating reforms." So far Mrs. Besant's tour has been a complete success.

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RIGHT HON. A. J. BALFOUR
AND
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

At a recent meeting of the Psychological Society, of which he is President, the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour said—"Each age has its own problems, and during the past century all the sciences outside the restricted sphere at present under discussion have been reconstructed from top to bottom. The laws relating to light and heat, the conservation of energy, geology, biology, the whole theory of evolution have all changed since the time of Mesmer. . . . But the time to study the more occult phenomena had now come. There are certain well attested facts that do

not naturally fit into the framework of the sciences. These facts await explanation and investigation, and it is the duty of science to aid us in investigating them. . . . We seem to come across facts which, if they be well established—and they appear to be well established—can by no amount of squeezing or manipulation be made to fit into any of the interstices of the physical world. We seem on the threshold of a whole set of the laws of nature which do not appear to harmonise, are not in drawing, do not fit in, so to speak, with the ideas of scientific men as regards the laws of the universe."

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Mrs. Besant, in one of her speeches at Chicago, contrasting the different methods of social reformers said—"I who have spent so many years of life in dealing with these problems on the material plane, I who have given so much of time and of thought to the effort to bring some remedy to the social ills of man, I take it to be my duty at the outset of this brief statement, to bear witness founded upon knowledge, that the employment of one hour in spiritual energy for the good of man works a hundred-fold more good than years of labour employed on the material plane." To many, the phrase "spiritual energy" suggests something nebulous and intangible—a want of energy, contrasted with physical effort. No sluggard can employ spiritual energy; the whole moral, intellectual and spiritual nature must be quickened, and the aim wide and lofty; only then can such means be employed in service for the good of man. When we hear complaint of how little one can do to help on the cause of righteousness, let us not forget the testimony of one who has used material and spiritual energy alike.

D. N. D.

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THEOSOPHY IN PLAIN LANGUAGE.

XIII. KARMA. (*Continued.*)

WE have already seen that Theosophy rejects altogether the "wild and absurd delusion"—as Schopenhauer justly terms it—that the birth of a man is his absolute beginning, and that there is a newly-created "immortal soul" implanted in every new-born infant. A sense of justice alone should be enough to show how irreconcilable is such a notion with any belief in the moral ordering of the universe. The hard lot experienced, whether from sickness of body or from bad surroundings, by vast numbers of our fellow-beings from their very birth, when contrasted with the luxury or the happy moral conditions amid which others pass almost unscathed through the manifold evils and temptations of life—this is the spectacle which, to believers in Providence, has always been an "inscrutable mystery," and to Atheists a striking example of the rule of chance and blind fate in human affairs. Viewed, however, in the light of pre-existence; of evolution through repeated re-births upon earth, and of Karma, the law which "adjusts effects to causes" and renders to us just those opportunities or hindrances which we have won for ourselves in former lives—the problem of human destiny appears in a new and hopeful aspect.

My brothers! each man's life
The outcome of his former living is;
The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrow and woes,
The bygone right breeds bliss.

Such is the essence of the Theosophic idea of Karma. Its justice and reasonableness commend it at once to our sense of right, and remove from the

laws of existence a standing Reproach. The mere statement of its possibility has taken a weight of oppression from many a doubting heart. And yet there is no tenet of Theosophy, as H. P. Blavatsky herself has said, which presents more difficulty in its deeper aspects; none more liable to misunderstanding or faulty statement.

One mistake which we are prone to fall into is to make a sort of fetish of Karma, to speak of it as a kind of external power or principle in the universe which mechanically renders good for good, evil for evil, with a kind of clock-work regularity as of some great automatic machine. This error is commoner than it should be, and cannot be sufficiently guarded against.

Now, Karma is said to be "the continuance of the act" (the word itself signifies "action"). Just as the rebound of an elastic ball from the wall against which we throw it may be said to be involved in the original discharge of the ball from the hand—in the same way it may be seen that Karma is but a convenient way of naming the after-effects of any action, separated from the first inception of that action in time, but not in fact. What has to be first looked at, therefore, is the nature of action itself, and of the agent or actor man who brings upon himself that reaction or response of Nature, whether agreeable or the reverse, which we call Karma.

Action, then, if we use the word in any real, and not merely conventional sense, is clearly the result of thought or intelligence. What is done without thought, unconsciously or mechanically, cannot properly be termed action, though we often apply the word thus incorrectly for convenience sake. Behind thought again stands desire, for it is obvious that no one sets his mind in motion without an object or motive of some kind in view. In every case, whether recognised or not, the wish is in some sense "father to the thought." Desire is thus the foundation of all human action. Indeed, if we take the word in its widest and deepest sense, desire may be said to be *the* moving or active principle of the universe itself, which is the outcome, or out-breathing, or *action*, the Highest Self, God. It is everywhere the disturber of Nature's equilibrium, the enemy of the existing order or *status quo*.

The effort of Nature to restore that equilibrium and harmony disturbed by Desire, is Karma. Such is the broader aspect of this law of laws—its cosmic aspect, we may say. But how are we to understand its actual method of operation as a moral agent, influencing men's individual lives and fortunes?

A full answer to this question would demand the wisdom of the highest adept or seer. Certain principles and teachings of the occult philosophy, however, will be found fruitful of suggestion, and a study of the known factors in the great problem will show us at least in what direction we must look for its final solution.

We have traced action to desire and thought conjoined, and defined Karma as the tendency towards equilibrium or harmony in Nature. This tendency must act in the long run against the original source of disturbance—in the present case man, viewed as a creature of emotion, thought, desire, passion, will—a *variable quantity*, in fact, not something fixed, constant, or simple in its nature. Men are always changing in some way, whether for better or worse; and were the physical exterior of even the most impassive and sluggish of men to change with each varying mood, we should no doubt be often at a loss to recognise our acquaintances! But what are these moods and desires which we harbour within us, and which take possession of us and work their will with us as though endowed with separate life and consciousness? Theosophy says that they *are* so endowed, and that the ego or "I" of each of us is a veritable colony of such lives, just as our bodies are composed of myriads

of living cells. They derive vitality and energy from the human will, and during our life as well as after that temporary withdrawal from physical existence—which we call death—carry far and wide through nature the reverberation of the desires and thoughts which gave them birth. These are the “elementals” said by occultists to exert so powerful an influence on the lives of nations, families, and individuals, and it is only by some knowledge of these living forces of nature that we may understand how Karma may be deferred from one lifetime to another, and how the good or bad deed is traced back by that law of recompense and retribution to its true author. The “creatures of our mind,” however far they may roam from us in space or time, remain bound to us by organic *rapport*, by natural affinity. They are the “*skaudhas*” which are said to await, “at the threshold of Devachan,”* the return of the ego to earth-life. They act as the “good” and “bad angels” of our destiny all through life, and would seem in fact to be the agents *par excellence* of Karma in all its mysterious workings.

(To be continued.)

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THE CAVE OF LILITH.

OUT of her cave came the ancient Lilith, Lilith the wise, Lilith the enchantress. There ran a little path outside her dwelling; it wound away among the mountains and glittering peaks, and before the door, one of the Wise Ones walked to and fro. Out of her cave came Lilith, scornful of his solitude, exultant in her wisdom, flaunting her shining and magical beauty.

“Still alone, star-gazer. Is thy wisdom of no avail? Thou hast yet to learn that I am more powerful knowing the ways of error than you who know the way of truth.”

The Wise One heeded her not, but walked to and fro. His eyes were turned to the distant peaks, the abode of his brothers. The starlight fell about him: a sweet air came down the mountain-path fluttering his white robe; he did not cease from his steady musing. Like a mist rising between rocks wavered Lilith in her cave. Violet with silvery gleams her raiment; her face was dim; over her head rayed a shadowy diadem, the something a man imagines over the head of his beloved—looking closer in her face he would have seen that this was the crown he reached out to, that the eyes burned with his own longing, that the lips were parted to yield to the secret wishes of his heart.

“Tell me, for I would know, why do you wait so long? I here in my cave between the valley and the height blind the eyes of all who would pass. Those who by chance go forth to you come back to me again, and but one in ten thousand passes on. My delusions are sweeter to them than truth. I offer every soul its own shadow; I pay them their own price. I have grown rich, though the simple shepherds of old gave me birth. Men have made me: the mortals have made me immortal. I rose up like a vapour from their first dreams, and every sigh since then and every laugh remains with me. I am made up of hopes and fears. The subtle princes lay out their plans of conquest in my cave, and there the hero dreams, and there the lovers of all time write in flame their history. I am wise, holding all experience, to tempt, to blind, to terrify. None shall pass by. Why, therefore, dost thou wait?”

The Wise One looked at her and she shrank back a little, and a little her silver and violet faded, but out of her cave her voice still sounded.

“The stars and the starry crown are not yours alone to offer, and every promise you make, I make also. I offer the good and the bad indifferently. The

* Devachan: lit., “place of the gods.” The intermediate state of the soul between two incarnations.

lover, the poet, the mystic, and all who would drink of the first Fountain I delude with my mirage. I was the Beatrice who led Dante upward; the gloom was in me and the glory was mine also, and he went not out of my cave. The stars and the shining of heaven were delusions of the infinite I wove about him. I captured his soul with the shadow of space, a nutshell would have contained the film. I smote on the dim heart-strings the manifold music of being. God is sweeter in the human than the human in God: therefore he rested in me."

She paused a little, then went on.

"There is that fantastic fellow who slipped by me—could your wisdom not keep him? He returned to me full of anguish, and I wound my arms round him like a fair melancholy, and now his sadness is as sweet to him as hope was before his fall. Listen to his song." She paused again. A voice came up from the depths chanting a sad knowledge—

"What of all the will to do?
It has vanished long ago,
For a dream shaft pierced it through
From the unknown Archer's bow.

What of all the soul to think?
Some one offered it a cup
Filled with a diviner drink,
And the flame has burned it up.

What of all the hope to climb?
Only in the self we grope
To the misty end of time;
Truth has put an end to hope.

What of all the heart to love?
Sadder than for will or soul,
No light lured it on above;
Love has found itself the whole."

"Is it not pitiful? I pity only those who pity themselves. Yet he is mine more surely than ever. This is the end of human wisdom. How shall he now escape? What shall draw him up?"

"His will shall awaken," said the Wise One. "I do not sorrow over him, for long is the darkness before the spirit is born. He learns in your caves not to see, not to hear, not to think, for very anguish flying your delusions."

"Sorrow is a great bond," Lilith said.

"It is a bond to the object of sorrow. He weeps what you can never give him, a life never breathed in thee. He shall come forth, and you shall not see him at the time of passing. When desire dies, will awakens, the swift, the invisible. He shall go forth, and one by one the dwellers in your caves will awaken and pass onwards; this small old path will be trodden by generation after generation. "You, too, oh, shining Lilith, will follow, not as mistress, but as hand-maiden."

"I shall weave spells," Lilith cried. "They shall never pass me. With the sweetest poison I will drug them. They will rest drowsily and content as of old. Were they not giants long ago, mighty men, heroes? I overcame them with young enchantment. Shall they pass by feeble and longing for bygone joys, for the sins of their proud exultant youth, while I have grown into a myriad wisdom?"

The Wise One walked to and fro as before, and there was silence, and I thought I saw that with steady will he pierced the tumultuous gloom of the cave, and a heart was touched here and there in its blindness. And I thought I saw that Sad Singer become filled with a new longing to be, and the delusions of good

and evil fell from him, and he came at last to the knees of the Wise One to learn the supreme truth. In the misty midnight I heard these three voices, the Sad Singer, the enchantress Lilith, and the Wise One. From the Sad Singer I learned that thought of itself leads nowhere, but blows the perfume from every flower, and cuts the flower from every tree, and hews down every tree from the valley, and at the end goes to and fro in waste places gnawing itself in a last hunger. I learned from Lilith that we weave our own enchantment, and bind ourselves with our own imagination: to think of the true as beyond us, or to love the symbol of being, is to darken the path to wisdom, and to debar us from eternal beauty. From the Wise One I learned that the truest wisdom is to wait, to work, and to will in secret: those who are voiceless to-day, to-morrow shall be eloquent, and the earth shall hear them, and her children salute them. Of these three truths the hardest to learn is the silent will. Let us seek for the highest truth. Æ.

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GLEANINGS FROM THEOSOPHICAL LITERATURE.

* * * All who have time and opportunity are invited to send selections on the subject chosen for each month. These will be arranged, and appear under this heading.

Subject for March—"Dreaming and Deep Sleep" (continued.)

DREAMING AND DEEP SLEEP.

WE may roughly divide dreams into seven classes, and sub-divide these in turn. Thus, we would divide them into:—

1. Prophetic dreams. These are impressed on our memory by the Higher Self, and are generally plain and clear: either a voice heard, or the coming event foreseen.
2. Allegorical dreams, or hazy glimpses of realities caught by the brain, and distorted by our fancy. These are generally only half true.
3. Dreams sent by adepts, good or bad, by mesmerisers, or by the thoughts of very powerful minds bent on making us do their will.
4. Retrospective; dreams of events belonging to past incarnations.
5. Warning dreams for others who are unable to be impressed themselves.
6. Confused dreams.
7. Dreams which are mere fancies and chaotic pictures, owing to digestion, some mental trouble, or such-like external cause.

H. P. B. *Transactions of Blavatsky Lodge.*

The "principles" active during ordinary dreams—which ought to be distinguished from real dreams, and called idle visions—are *Kama*, the seat of the personal Ego, and of desire awakened into chaotic activity by the slumbering reminiscences of the Lower Manas.—H. P. B. *Ibid.*

The Higher Ego lives its own separate life within its prison of clay whenever it becomes free from the trammels of matter, *i.e.*, during the sleep of the physical man. This Ego it is which is the actor, the real man, the true human self. * * * * It acts independently during the sleep of the body: but it is doubtful if any of us—unless thoroughly acquainted with the physiology of occultism—could understand the nature of its action.—H. P. B. *Ibid.*

The ordinary non-concentrated man, by reason of the want of focus due to multitudinous and confused thought, has put his Swapna (dream) field or state into confusion, and in passing through it the useful and elevating experiences of Sushupti (deep sleep) become mixed up and distorted, not resulting in the benefit to him as a waking person which is his right as well as his duty to have.

Eusebio Urban. "Path." August, 1888.

By an increase of concentration upon high thoughts, upon noble purposes * * * * a centre of attraction is set up in him while yet awake, and to that all his energies flow, so that it may be figured to ourselves as a focus in the waking man. To that focal point—looking at it from that plane—converge the rays from the whole waking man toward Swapna, carrying him into the dream-state with greater clearness. By re-action this creates another focus in swapna through which he can emerge into Sushupti in a collected condition. Returning he goes by means of these points through Swapna, and there, the confusion being lessened, he enters into his usual waking state the possessor, to some extent at least, of the benefits and knowledge of Sushupti.—*Ibid.*

Our consciousness is *one* and not many, nor different from other consciousness. It is not *waking consciousness*, or *sleeping consciousness*, or any other but *consciousness itself*. The one consciousness pierces up and down through all the states or planes of Being, and serves to uphold the memory—whether complete or incomplete—of each state's experiences. Thus, in waking life, *Sat* (Being) experiences fully and knows. In dream state, *Sat* again knows and sees what goes on there, while there may not be in the brain a complete memory of the waking state just quitted. In Sushupti—beyond dream and yet on indefinitely, *Sat* still knows all that is done, or heard, or seen."

Quoted by William Brehon. "Path." September, 1888.

(To be continued.)

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COMFORT.

Dark head by the fireside brooding,
Sad upon your ears
Whirlwinds of the earth intruding
Sound in wrath and tears.

Tender-hearted in your lonely
Sorrow I would fain
Comfort you, and say that only
Gods could feel such pain.

Only spirits know such longing
For the far away.
And the fiery fancies thronging
Rise not out of clay.

Keep the secret sense celestial
Of the starry birth;
Though about you call the bestial
Voices of the earth.

If a thousand ages since
Hurled us from the throne:
Then a thousand ages wins
Back again our own.

Sad one, dry away your tears:
Sceptred you shall rise,
Equal mid the crystal spheres
With seraphs kingly wise.

G. W. R.

A THEOSOPHIC VIEW OF LIFE AND DEATH.

FEW men know why they exist, and some have been found who ask themselves the question, "is life worth living"? Such men are beings absolutely blind as to their own destiny, and the reason of their existence. Their eyes are shut, and their minds so choked either by ignorance, by religious dogma, by the learning and science taught in worldly schools, or oppressed by poverty and work, that they are not capable of realising that there is any existence higher than the present. Yet they are dissatisfied with themselves and their life. Whatever they have, there is still something more to be reached, which is always beyond their grasp. No man can be found who is altogether satisfied with his earth-life, and the reason is found in the fact, that man was never intended to live for mere animal or even intellectual enjoyment, for he possesses a mind and will to aspire to higher things, and nothing less will satisfy his cravings. The divine instinct is so strong, that even those who possess all that earth-life can give of health, comfort, position, fame or power, still fail of satisfaction, because their nature requires other food—food that will nourish their spiritual nature. And man is thus starved, because he is utterly ignorant as to the cause of his existence, the truth as to his being. One day is like another to him. He lives but to eat, drink, sleep, and take his share of pleasure or work, as they present themselves: as to the future life, it is a blank. He avoids the subject; he knows nothing; and fears death above all things. Such a man may follow a religious life, and have the "praise of men," but if he takes the trouble to use his mind, and to bring the light of reason to his aid, he will very soon find that he is very far off from any answer to the burning questions, what is my life? and why do I exist?

It requires some courage to think apart from the multitude, to be able to face ridicule and contempt, and more than this, the sorrow of well-meaning friends; but those who do so will find that there is a solution to these questions; that there is knowledge to be had, which is life and light to those who can receive it, and an answer to many difficulties. This knowledge comes to us in the teachings of Theosophy—the "Wisdom Religion," the oldest truth—for this truth is no new thing, and though men had hidden it away in their ignorance, it has ever tried to enlighten their minds. This knowledge has never been lost, for there have always existed on this earth some "Sons of God" to preserve it in its purity, and who await the time when men will ask for instruction. That there are now hearts longing for the truth is shown by the fact that this truth *has* been put before us, and the key given which will open some part of the mystery of life and death. It cannot again be so entirely hidden, for the time has come when men's minds are opening to receive it. This is evident to all who will enquire into the great work Theosophy is doing, and each century will now bring birth to men in a higher stage of evolution, whose minds will grasp the realities of being, till, by degrees, all will come into this purer atmosphere.

The object of Theosophy is the enlightenment of men, teaching them to escape the fetters with which they are loaded, and to find their own divine nature. This enlightenment will come to them through the knowledge of their relation with "God" and with the "Universe." The great First Cause is an unapproachable mystery, for ever hidden from the comprehension of man. Yet this mystery is ever present with us in our Life—Life being one aspect of the manifestation of Deity. It is the vitality and consciousness produced by the presence of the "One Eternal Principle," and there is no being separated from it. It is the same, whether in mineral, plant, animal, or man; for the Universe

is *alive*, and every atom in motion, bathed in a great electric ocean of Life. When an object is spoken of as *alive*, it means that it contains a manifestation of this unknown Presence, this concealed Force. It is hidden away, as the spark is hidden in a stone—*yet we know that it is there*. And this spark, this vital principle, this life, is an aspect of what is called "God." We feel its presence, and we live in this great mystery.

The life that each person holds is not separate from the One Life; yet for the time it is his own, and every moment may be of incalculable value if used rightly. These earth-lives are short, but they are momentous, and we cannot over-estimate the value of a life-time; for notwithstanding the fact that man never loses his conscious being, he is only able to *work*, when he is in a body. This is his opportunity in which he has the power to make his own future—for good or evil.

Theosophy teaches, that in this manifested universe, the heavenly orbs, man, animals and plants, all obey a great law, called the "Law of Periodicity." The working of this Law is one of the fundamental teachings in Theosophic philosophy, and is also well known in all departments of nature. It shows that the universe is not constant; that it has its periods of "ebb and flow," of "flux and reflux," and that, as there is day and night, so has this whole universe its days and nights. Our lives also follow this law—we sleep—again we are awake; we are born, and we die—we die but to live again. Night follows day, and day night, in endless succession; the awakening always comes, for nothing is *dead*. We lay down our lives only to come again and again, for the experience of our life-time is but a fraction of what has to be gathered in our ceaseless effort to reach the eternal.

Fear of death comes only with ignorance, and is more to be found amongst western nations than any other. The state of death appears to them as an unknown and dreaded region, and even those who speak of departed friends as having gone to "glory," seem to lament them as though they had gone to "misery." And this because they have no knowledge of the Truth as to the cause of man's existence or of the doctrine of Reincarnation—that doctrine which shows how the Law of Justice (Karma) will bring every spirit back to manifested life over and over again, until it is in harmony with the one Great Principle.

The love of life is inherent in our nature; all creatures cling to it. Life is the one thing they are conscious of, and it is the apperception of the Divine Essence which pervades them that causes them to dread separation from it. They hold on to it, they cannot bear to part from it; and because dissolution seems to produce this fatal separateness, men fear above all things to be disconnected with life and consciousness, and until this ignorance is put away, and they learn that they cannot be parted from the One Life, they will have this fear, for it is a natural horror that they cannot overcome.

But to those willing to receive Theosophic teaching comes the knowledge that the terrors of death are imaginary; that there is no place of punishment beyond this earth; that it is but a change of *state*, and that in this state we have a conscious existence free from the physical body, and a period of rest from earthly toil. Here we live according to our highest wishes, until the time when we are again called to earth-life; for death is but as a sleep from which we arise, *alive*, refreshed, and ready for our daily work.

In this life outside the body, there is a greater nearness to the "Light," an existence nearer to the "Great Soul," and, therefore, when the hour strikes for us to return to our task, such nearness must each time have made us stronger

and more fitted for work in earth-life. Our rest cannot have been in vain, and we return, refreshed as it were, by our flight on to a higher plane, bringing back something from its calmness which will help us on our upward way. Thus we come to know that in life and in death lives that which is incorruptible—that part of the Divine Essence called *our soul*—life and death are but different phases of our being, and each earth-life a sort of landmark from which we take a new departure. Our earthly bodies we part with for ever, but the soul exists evermore alive, and has other garments in which to clothe itself; and where we look for death we find Life, for this death is a valley of Light and not of darkness.

E. W.

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THE Gnostics.—II.

THE spirit of religious unrest, which so markedly characterises our own times, was also a prominent feature of the period we are considering. During the years preceding the establishment of Christianity the religions of the ancient world (Greece and Rome) were rapidly disintegrating. The paraphernalia of worship were maintained, and all the outward pomp of ceremony still observed; but from social and political considerations only. The multitude was rapidly sinking into a blind and selfish materialism, into which mere empty observance dragged them further; the cultured classes professedly disbelieved in the gods; the playwright and satirist openly caricatured them; and the philosophers argued against the current conceptions of them. Among the Jews, changes as great were to be noted. The letter of the law began to be thought capable of more than one interpretation; and Pharisee, Sadducee, and Kabbalist, each gave his rendering. In the general body of the teachings, also, many changes and additions appeared. During the captivity of Babylon, numbers of the Persian and Babylonian conceptions crept into the Sacred Books, and many more into the common life and thought of the people. Besides, the Jews, after the release from captivity, ceased in a great measure to be the exclusive race they had theretofore been. Numbers of them settled in and around the cities of Asia Minor, where, mixing in the daily life of the inhabitants, they could not fail to influence the life and thought of the people around them, and be influenced in turn.

I have but mentioned a few of the circumstances that could lead to only one result: a reaction. It was necessary that men should again turn to the old teachings of the mysteries, and seek for the spirit within them. The mixture of Greek, Roman, Jewish, Persian, and Babylonian systems gave new light to the truth-seekers, and material for a new presentment of the mystic philosophy. Those mystic searchers after truth, adopting Christianity as the outward expression of the goal they sought, are known to us as Gnostics. In the nature of their knowledge, and in their mode of cognition, they were Oriental Theosophists, moving amid symbols and notions, to the Western minds but abstract ideas, but to them living objective truths. They explained the outer world from the promptings of their own intuitions, which they said could not be doubted, and which should be men for all the test of truth.

In the writings of Philo Judaeus we find a convenient point at which to begin a sketch of the Gnostic doctrines. He was not a Gnostic, but a Hellenic Jew, one of those that lived out of Judea after the captivity; his date is generally given as about twenty years before the Christian era. He taught that God is the only Reality—the final cause of all things which emanate ceaselessly from Him. He is Absolute, Unknowable, and Unthinkable; and can only be named

in terms of His unnameableness. He is without qualities, or they are negative. An immediate influence of this Absolute Being upon the world cannot be imagined; hence, an intermediate class of beings must be created. These latter, infinite in number and degrees, are not merely ideals, but personal powers. Eternity is the motionless duration of the Absolute Being, and Time is but the illusion caused by the ever-shifting phenomena of life. Man is the middle point of creation: he is the microcosm of the macrocosm, and contains within himself the potentiality of all that has been, or that is to be. He is immortal by his heavenly nature, but there are degrees to his immortality corresponding to the degrees of spiritual development arrived at. Paradise is a Becoming-oneness with God; the human soul is a direct emanation of the Deity, subject meanwhile to the sense-bondage, and the object of development is to rise above sensuousness; for the souls that have so risen enjoy the direct vision of God. Matter is an eternal but purely passive principle; and the origin of evil and imperfection is not in the opposition of matter to spirit, but in that of the evanescent and impermanent to the eternal and permanent.

J. E. PARDON.

(*To be continued.*)

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MRS. BESANT ON EDUCATION.

EDUCATION can do no more than legislation, for legislation is only dealing with the plane of action, whereas education goes farther inward and deals with the plane of mind. But what mind? The lower mind alone. And even then, not the lower mind at its best, but the lower mind as it may be most easily turned into an instrument for struggle and the gaining of advantage over one's neighbour. For the whole of the educational system is founded on the idea that the child is to be trained into a successful man, and success on our modern lips does not mean success in service. It means success in self-aggrandizement, so that if you take one of the favourite books given as a prize in our English schools, you will find it a book called "Self-Help," and if you read the book "Self-Help" you will find that it is full of the stories of self-made men, so that the rather caustic remark arises in the mind when looking at the self-made man—proud, pompous, and self-opinionated—well, at least it is some consolation to find that he has made himself, because he would not be a credit to anyone else.

If education is to be real, you must change your system; you must put a stop to competition in the school; you must no longer set child against child in the struggle; you must give up the system of making the prize the symbol of victory over others, and the pride of the successful student that so many of his comrades are behind him and not in front. The whole thing is false, fitted only for a society which takes the law of the survival of the fittest which belongs to the beasts in the jungle instead of that law of self-abnegation by which only the soul of man can rise. So, when the child comes into your hands with its outer envelope ductile, with its nervous system plastic, the soul of the child has scarce yet got grip on its outer envelopment, and the contact is not yet complete between the thinker and its vehicle, what do you do with your modern education? You distort the outer vehicle that the soul is to use. You plant upon that fertile soil the evil seeds of competition, of desire for triumph, of wish to succeed at the cost of others; so that every child in your class is glad when the pupil above him stumbles, because it brings him nearer to the top of the class, and to stand

as the successful child when the examiner shall come round. Rather teach your children that the child who learns most quickly should be the helper of the child who learns most slowly. That every power of brain and body is to be given for the helping of others, and not for dominance. That is the duty to the souls that come into the hands of the teachers, and they ill perform their sublime mission who try to dwarf and stunt the habitation that the soul has to dwell in.

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"LOTUS CIRCLE" FOR CHILDREN.

THE "League of Theosophical Workers" has opened a Sunday class for children, in order to supply a want that has long been felt by parents who are members of the Society, and wish to have their children educated on unsectarian lines.

"Lotus Circles" for children were started in America some time ago, and have been a great success. Miss Stabler, one of the well-known workers in New York (now staying at Headquarters in London), and who has had much experience in starting the "Lotus Circles" in America, has kindly consented to take charge of the class.

The parents and friends of the children are cordially invited to attend and aid in giving the little ones a right conception of true Brotherhood.

The class will be held every Sunday at 2.30 p.m., in the Conservatory, 17 Avenue Road.

All Members of the Society who are in sympathy with the undertaking are invited to co-operate by sending any suggestions to the Secretary of the League, (MRS.) ISABEL COOPER-OAKLEY, F.T.S., Hon. Sec. L.T.W., 17 and 19 Avenue Road, Regent's Park, N.W.

THE "LOTUS CIRCLE."

17 Avenue Road, London, N.W.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—The opening words of "Our Children's Page," in your January number, are so full of love for young people that the children of the "Lotus Circle" here think that all their papers and questions may be forwarded to you. They are sent just as they came in.

Last October the "League of Theosophical Workers" issued the enclosed leaflet, and Miss Stabler, from the New York Headquarters, put all the energy of her bright personality into the work, so that our "Lotus Circle," when once started, might prove a success. The young ones immediately responded to her sunny influence, and when she told them that all children should be sweet, like flowers, and send out kindly thoughts as perfume to all around, they were delighted at the idea. Each child at once took his or her name, and we have Forget-me-not, Hyacinth, Red Rose, Daffodil, Lily-of-the-Valley, Pansy, Violet, Primrose, White Rose, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Marguerite, Sweetbriar, Sunflower, Loy, Wallflower, and Jasmine—altogether forming a sweet nosegay in our "Lotus Circle."

We meet on Sunday afternoon, from 2.30 to 3.30, in the Conservatory here. We sing the "Lotus Circle" songs, set to the pretty tunes in use amongst the children in America and Australia; broad Theosophical ideas are given to the children in simple language, and stories are told and their meaning discussed.

The flowers drooped their heads when Miss Stabler went back to New York, and many little hearts beat lovingly at her remembrance; but she has

promised to write and tell us about the "Lotus Circles" in America; and the promised assistance of Miss Kislingbury, Miss Haregrove, Mrs. Whyte, Miss Bright, Miss Stanley, Mr. Faulding, Mr. Price, and other kind friends, makes us certain of success. The parents and other "grown-ups" come to help or listen, and the wish underlying all that is done is to realise, as far as may be, H.P.B.'s ideas on the education of children, as given by her in the *Key to Theosophy*.

ANNIE. F. WILLSON (Sec. "Lotus Circle").

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS.

- I. Do our "thinkers" ever grow old?
- II. Do our "thinkers" ever die?
- III. If God did not make us, who did?
- IV. Do our physical bodies ever return to this world again?
- V. Has anyone ever known what is above the sky?
- VI. Could we ever see what is called "God"?
- VII. What is Reincarnation?
- VIII. What is the white colour caused by?

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The Editor will be much obliged if all "grown-ups," who have the interest of the "Lotus Circle" at heart, will forward brief answers to above questions in a form suitable for children.

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CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS.

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UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

UNIVERSAL Brotherhood is the first great principle of Theosophy. It has been taught by most religions, Christianity included, but it has been practised by few. In other words, the theory has been admitted, but the practise has never been pressed. This may be accounted for by the difficulties which attend it. Universal Brotherhood has been neglected for so long that it is almost a new teaching or, at least, a revival of a long disregarded principle. Class distinction is, and always has been, the great enemy of Universal Brotherhood. At the present day, in India, we see the effect of caste in preventing communication between those of the same race. But the Jews also had their Scribes and Pharisees, and the thing, if not the name, is not unknown among ourselves. This class-distinction has less foothold in America than elsewhere. But even there the evil has been evaded and not overcome. No one can pride himself on his honesty unless he has overcome the temptation to be dishonest; but what *are* the means which have been employed to get rid of these distinctions? The American Constitution admits of everyone reaching a high position in the State, and the Americans make this their boast. In this way a great race for material power has been entered upon which, as history shows us, is always the first step to decay. There always will be certain differences among us. For example, we are not the same as the Mahatmas or Adepts, but

the difference is not of kind, but of degree. All these things show that the only way to combat the evil is by example.

So it becomes the bounden duty of every Theosophist to carry out in practice this teaching of Universal Brotherhood, without which, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity are but empty names.

G. H. WHYTE (age 14).

The Editor thanks all the "flowers" for their interesting little contributions, and he will try and do justice to all, as space and time permits.

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
AND HOW TO JOIN IT.

The objects of the Theosophical Society are :—

1. To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.
2. To promote the study of Aryan, and other Eastern literatures, religions, philosophies and sciences, and to demonstrate its importance.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature, and the psychic powers latent in man.

Anyone who accepts the first object of the Society, without reservation, can become a member. The rules of the Society, and all information, can be obtained by writing to the General Secretary, Theosophical Society, 17 and 19 Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N.W., or to any of the Secretaries of Lodges or Centres.

:O:
DUBLIN LODGE,
3 UPPER ELY PLACE.

Subjects for discussion to end of February :—

Feb. 21st - "Why do we not remember our Past Lives?" - F. J. Dick.
 „ 28th - - - "Post-mortem Existence." - - -

The officers for the current year were duly appointed at the annual business meeting on 22nd January, and the following Balance Sheet for the year 1893 was submitted by the Hon. Treasurer :—

DR.	£ s. d.	CR.	£ s. d.
To Dues	17 5 6	By Deficit from 1892	14 7 11
„ Entrance Fees	1 5 0	„ Entrance Fees to European Section	1 5 0
„ Donations	26 0 0	„ Dues to ditto	7 5 0
		„ Rent of Meeting Rooms	20 0 0
		„ Balance in hand	1 12 7
	44 10 6		44 10 6

Examined and found correct,

G. W. RUSSELL,
D. N. DUNLOP.

It was unanimously decided to take up the study of "Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms" on Monday evenings. FRED. J. DICK, *Hon. Secretary.*

All literary contributions to be addressed to the EDITOR, and business communications to the PUBLISHER, 71 Lower Drumcondra Road, Dublin.