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# The Journal of Practical Metaphysics

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DEVOTED TO

THE UNIFICATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND SPIRITUAL THOUGHT

AND THE

*NEW PHILOSOPHY OF HEALTH.*

HORATIO W. DRESSER, Editor.

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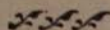
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THE PROBLEM OF LIFE.\*

BY HORATIO W. DRESSER.

[CONTINUED FROM JULY NUMBER.]

A CLOSE analysis of such a situation shows that deep within the mental world lies the primary cause of all that the outer life brings us. For all experiences in life depend on the view we take of them; and if we penetrate deeply enough we may observe the mind in the very act of changing from one attitude to another. Our mental attitude may in fact be divided into two great classes—those which tend to draw in, and those that are outgoing and expansive; in other words, the selfish and the unselfish. With the attitude of giving, for example, there is the outgoing spirit. Anger and fear contract; love and trust expand; happiness sends an expansive, awakening thrill through the whole being; depression tends to draw one down into self, into one's troubles and sensations; self-consciousness, morbid conscientiousness and introspection have the same result. We may safely say of all long-faced philosophizing and gloomy religion that it is wrong. The beauty of life is not to be seen by looking into a pit. The eyes must be turned outward and up-

\* A paper read before the circle of Divine Ministry, New York City, March, 1898.



ward. That is why I say the problem of life must have a happy solution. We are not in an attitude to see things clearly while we look down into self. We cramp or enlarge the whole life according to our attitude of mind, and even of body; for the body follows where the mind leads. The molecules are probably thrown apart or drawn together as the mind opens or closes. Here, then, is a physical reason for happiness, and a method of self-help and cure. Observe yourself closely enough to see how with the outgoing spirit everything in you responds; or if it be a mean act, how the soul itself is shut in by the very smallness of your conduct; when, for example, you may know that you are not loving enough, that you are thinking too much of self. Grief is selfish, for it is the thought of personal loss, instead of the joy of love for the greater freedom that has come to the friends that have departed. The selfish person loves only for what he may acquire for personal development. Then he drops his friend and passes on to the next; whereas the unselfish one is very loyal, well knowing that when the limitations are discovered in another the time has come when one can be of greatest service. The unselfish one is not looking for development. That comes incidentally. He does good unawares, but the selfish man wishes his deeds published abroad: He is parasitic, ungrateful, while the unselfish one has an immediate prompting to share with others.

Again, if I am disappointed in people I should know that it is because I am thinking too much of self, of what others can do for me, instead of what I can do for them. The habit of judging others by one's self is another indication — egotism, superiority, aristocracy, and the method of studying life wherever the tenderest emotions are subjected to cold intellectual analysis. Is there not a profoundly selfish element in the human intellect, that grasping, arbitrary, proud and frigid master which crowds the spirit out, which is willing to sacrifice anything and everybody to science? Its rigidly accurate descriptions are not life. Life is warm, pulsating, outgoing; and one

must love, live, sympathize in order to know it. But the scientific interest is based on love of truth, you say. Yes, but "the kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." The highest that is in us refuses to be trapped and imprisoned. It speaks when the heart speaks, and you cannot force it into the formula and crucible.

Another way whereby we deviate into selfishness is by withdrawing into our shell when circumstances are unfavorable and people displease us. But when others are unkind, when they misjudge us and send out hatred, then is the time to send forth more love. It is our own fault if we become subjectively imprisoned; it is our own fault if we have few friends. The flesh is selfish, and he who would rise to the altruistic plane must first of all learn self-control; he must master impulse and let the spirit govern. All the passions are reducible to selfishness in different forms—envy, spite, revenge, impatience, annoyance, jealousy, hatred, sensuality; and so to strike at the root of these you must live out of and beyond self. One would not fear nor worry unless one thought too much of self. No one need fear who loves enough. Exclusiveness is selfishness, and "the exclusive excludes himself." Selfishness not only lays the blame elsewhere, but it finds excuses for itself. It masquerades as altruism; it is the false Christ; it plans, manages and schemes; it is self-deceptive, pretending it puts its best foot forward, and uses pet names to conceal its real motive; it is two-faced, overbearing, expecting all things to give way before it, and demanding that people shall move to suit its convenience; it will not put itself out, but will let another become its slave; it permits itself to be flattered, idolized, and accepts unlimited favors without a word of gratitude; it uses influence, pressure, even hypnotism; it lives in and coddles sensation, demanding that others shall coddle it, even live a life of self-sacrifice, in order to keep one in the selfish life. Thus invalidism becomes a fine art, and the skill of the doctor is called in to help keep one an invalid. It masquerades as love whenever alleged love

merely desires possession of another. And is not marriage in many forms simply licensed selfishness? It comes in the guise of friendship, claiming to be impersonal. Rather than see itself fail, it will stand between people and create discord, and it will adopt any possible means to carry its end. Its poisoned darts of retaliation and persecution are hurled into the bosom of a peaceful household, and it would rather die than see a rival occupy the place it sought to fill. In a word, it is the devil himself, the tempter, the evil in the world. It presents a solid front to the spirit, inert, indifferent, irresponsive, a wall to be broken and overcome if one would pass into the realms of peace, happiness and health. Yet it is so subtle and sly that it steals into the mind a thousand times after one thinks the larger part of it is conquered.

Oh, grinding taskmaster, tyrant, aristocrat, thief, thou art the fiend whom the world has pursued until in the bitterness of thy spirit thou hast even resorted to subtler schemes, determined at last to wreak vengeance on the god of love. The world hunts thee as never before. It is in vain that thy plots are laid, in vain that, driven from many of thy strongholds in the outer world, thou hast made even the mysterious power of the psychic realm thy instruments of cunning. We press hard upon thee, and even thou dost assume the guise of the seer or the Christ, the mask will be torn from thee, and love, not hate, shall prevail. But why do we dignify Satan with the title of thee? Why is he the most fascinating character in life's great play? Is it not because he is an angel in process of becoming, that selfishness is misdirected God-power, drawn in, turned toward self, and used for self? No one cares for namby-pamby goodness. It is the energy, the enterprise of the world which awakens interest, and calls forth admiration. The life and hope of the world lie within just this passion, this activity and deviltry which we call evil, while it is turned toward self. It is only that activity which keeps us awake and active. Otherwise we should fall into the eternal stupidity and dozing of mere good



nature which has nothing to conquer, which is not sufficiently animated to care whether it lives or dies. What other reason can you assign for the existence of passion in a well-ordered world where perfect wisdom abides? What other solution to the problem of life, which is really the problem of evil?

If you look over the history of the world do you not find that this strongest side is the active factor from the very dawn of life? It appears first as the struggle for self-protection, the survival of the fittest, pushing the weaker side. Might was right for ages. But long ago the wonderful process of transmutation began. The pressure of human beings in groups gave rise to the birth of altruism already latent in animal life. The same power which was once expressed in selfishness began to be turned outward instead of inward, and this change in the directing of our forces is the secret of the whole marvelous process of transmutation. There are not in reality two selves or powers in conflict, but one power turned in two directions. Now inward, downward into self; now outward, upward to the larger self of humanity.

The friction is due to the fact that the outward turning is in harmony with the creative moving; the inward is against it. Man is left little by little to find out the almost numberless subtleties of the indrawing emotions and thoughts; then as a consequence of each discovery to face squarely the other way. This changing process is the one that has been going on for ages in the growth of humanity. It is everywhere going on among nations and individuals today. What we wish to see is to have the power behind selfishness and all its derivatives turned towards the light, so that the wonderful spirit of enterprise which has cleared the forests, overcome all obstacles and built up modern civilization shall be focused on the moral and spiritual planes. Hitherto it has been physical. Today it is triumphantly intellectual, scientific; the centre of activity, or point of application of the creative. Spirit is thus shifted from lower to higher planes. Eighteen hundred years ago it became

focused as never before at the spiritual centre. Each time it is lifted, either in society or in the individual, it arouses into opposition the conservative power of habit. The Christ spirit has tried for eighteen hundred years to overcome the habits of the world. The same struggle is apparent in each of us today, the shifting of the creative centre toward the highest plane and the obstinate resistance of the old. Each must solve the problem of transmutation in his own life because man is first of all a free moral agent. The only remedy is understanding and conscious cooperation; the complete solution of the problem of evil or selfishness shall come only with its complete solution in the life and thought of each individual. I must first choose before circumstances respond, and in order to choose wisely I must understand, for selfishness is not due to perversity, but to ignorance—ignorance of our true inheritance and of our true situation in life. The cure for selfishness must then be wisdom, knowledge of self. For untold generations people have tried the method of fighting, suppression, force, aggressiveness. But the greater the force applied the more hostility is aroused, since action and reaction are equal. He who plans and schemes and uses pressure does not yet know the law. If you go forth into the world taking what you believe to be yours, and making people stand aside, you may indeed have what you seek. Man is perfectly free to be selfish if he will. If God forced us to be good there would be no moral world, and consequently no finite life at all. But he tells us with a patience which knows no fatigue that there is a higher way, the method of altruism, of the outgoing life, the pathway of the spirit, of love, peace and happiness. You may search in vain for happiness and peace along the byways of egoism. Here alone is joy to be found, here alone is health and harmony; and he who would enter here must no longer try to impose his way and his plan upon the universe, but seek out the way the universe is going and choose that once for all. Thus shall the prayer of the Christ be answered in minutest detail, "Not my will but thine be done,"



for it is a universal law. The supreme test of one's faith, therefore, is its application to the petty affairs of daily life. It is the little thoughts and emotions that make or unmake us, according as they are outgoing or ingoing. Let us put this fact strongly enough to remember it: that as selfishness is hatred, so altruism is love. The one tends toward insanity, the other toward sanity. The mind is like a sensitive plant which opens and shuts in response to the least change of feeling or thought. In this egoistic attitude one is buried in the flower, in sensation, in one direction of thought. In the altruistic, one looks outward and upward to the sunshine.

Thoroughgoing optimism is the only sound philosophy, the only wise guide of life. Look, then, at the tormenting passion within you and rejoice. Never again deem it evil or low. It is the highest in disguise. It is literally the prompting of God to your soul to become creative by turning it to the centre where you are best fitted to be outgoing; that is, intellectually through your affectional nature, or spiritually. Within your body, as well as in your mind and heart, I repeat, the great process of transmutation, of creation, is going on. And the way to cooperate with it is to choose its will and its course, and not yours, to look upon it all as a blessing and rejoice. Every time a new experience comes into your life regard it, then, as the activity of the creative spirit. It calls for readjustment and assimilation, just as a new idea is at first combated, thought over, accepted, and finally given forth as one's own. The incoming of power from the highest source touches the lowest that is in us and sets it in motion. If we do not understand we look down into it, think we have lost ground, and become discouraged. If we know what it means we are thankful and rejoice; thus one learns to be grateful for any evolutionary opportunities, although it seems hard, well knowing that without regeneration and a severe test of faith the greatest spiritual gifts can never be ours.

Another important point in the solution of life's problem is

due recognition of individual rights. What an amount of friction is caused by interference, by the use of pressure, influence and self-assertion! The father and mother think they know so much better what the son should do and be, that they find it almost impossible to let him have his experiences. They forget that he, too, is an individual soul with a work to do in the world, and that just because of that work he necessarily has ideas and methods differing from their own. But each soul has its problem, and each must work it out in a unique way. It is futile to think we can spare another the best experiences of life. Sooner or later it is the order of nature that each soul should stand out from the paternal home to seek the experiences essential to its development. The soul has its work to do and can be trusted. It will seek such condition as it needs. No parent can own a soul any more than there can be ownership in true marriage. That parents have given a soul physical birth should be esteemed a privilege. They have not made the soul. At best what they have done for it is secondary; for the primary cause all along, as we have noted throughout this discussion, is the inner, the God-given individuality. He who understands this in himself and recognizes it in others has the key to the solution of life's problem. Let me see clearly that my own inner self attracts its like, and no one else is to be blamed or praised, and then let one understand that every soul is so situated, and all will be well. The outer environment simply affords the condition essential to the development of the soul, just as a university governed by the elective system opens its doors with every opportunity open to the student, without compelling him to study just what every one else studies. The student under such a system is supposed to understand himself well enough to know what he wants. He is to take what belongs to him, and find out his own method of obtaining it.

Every one, to be sure, is dependent on parents and friends for a time, and much depends on the start in life. In the same way men and women are long dependent on lectures and books,

certain physical comforts and the like. "But books are for the scholar's idle hours," says Emerson. They are essential only until we can do without them by learning at home, by thinking out life's problem for ourselves. And so with physical surroundings. The day comes when one is no longer bound by them. It matters little where one lives if only one be meeting one's problem, taking the opportunity, and reflecting, not upon the mere passing details, but the eternal principles involved.

The upward march of life, therefore, means for each soul the progress toward freedom, the freeing of the powers of thought, progress out of ignorance, the mutual helpfulness whereby souls free one another. The problem of life is the problem of education enlarged to cover the entire scope of human existence. We graduate and pass on to the next higher grade only as rapidly as we free the true self and learn the beautiful lesson of service. Suffering shall accompany us until we understand the law by which we create it. But if the theory advocated in this paper is in any measure true, it is entirely within our power to overcome suffering, and to learn life's wisdom through harmony instead of through discord. Ultimately, I repeat, the universe must be a harmony, otherwise it could not exist. Unless each soul ran through life's varied discords and melodies, it would not at last know the perfect symphony. The lost chord is the unity wrought by love between soul and soul. The Christ life takes up into itself all that has gone before, but in new relations. The majority of us apparently lack faith or courage to try this solution of the problem of life. But the law is plain enough. We can harmonize where we love. We can love where we put self aside, for true love is always unselfish.

We can love where we cease to criticize and to blame, where we recognize individual rights and the needs of the soul. Love fulfils, completes, unifies. Its opposite, or the states of mind which draw one into self, takes away from, depletes, brings discord. Opening out and closing in, loving and hating, this is the story of life until the last bit of mere personality is trans-



formed. You make the problem easy or difficult according to your view of it. Each time our analysis compels us to return to the inner belief and attitude as the essence of it all. "As a man thinketh in his *heart* so is he," not as he thinks superficially. While we go on living and thinking, the conservative forces will run out if we do not pay attention to them. The creative life is with the new, with the young. The old will struggle, but do not mind. Hold fast to the ideal, and work and wait. The ideal is the leaven which shall leaven the whole lump. The remedy always is to understand. Know yourself, know your own most individual ideas and be true to them; understand your friends and your environment, philosophize about life, and think out the relationship of man with God. Fear, anxiety, pessimism, disease, evil and selfishness and all their progeny are the children of ignorance. With them the wise and normally developed man has simply nothing to do. Knowledge of self is power over self, knowledge of people gives freedom from people so far as they enslave. The only repose which neither calamity nor enemy can destroy is the calm reserve power of the man who understands, he who sees the law and governs his life by it. For such knowledge as this is not understanding of self alone, but perception of the power which the law reveals. We are not alone in solving the problem of life. We have not only one another, but the power that put us here and equipped us to live and think is with us each moment we exist. Our individual problems are after all but so many phases of the great problem of the universe. The problem of race evolution is to be worked out by the solution of the enigmas of each and every individual soul, and the social problem is the great question set before himself by the Thinker of the universe. That which each soul shall contribute by way of new experience to the infinite consciousness is the only problematical element of life from this larger point of view; for the ultimate triumph of the good is a foregone conclusion, if we understand that the universe is an order, a system revealing but

one power. This one power moves through it all, granting to each of us the inestimable joy of cooperation. Once let life be imbued with the realization of this truth of truths, and the problem will seem lighter forevermore. The Supreme Power will not stand by and see us fail, nor will it help when we can help ourselves. But it is ever there, ever there, present with us while we think, loving with us while we love.

Selfishness is antagonism and hatred. Unselfishness is cooperation and love. To look outward and upward is to receive unfailing help. To look inward and downward is to burden ourselves with our own weight. He who runs may read the solution of the riddle of life written in plain characters on every circumstance. Each soul contains a secret clue to the heart of the Sphinx. Life is just the enticing play it is because it takes us so long to find the golden thread. But patience and trust betide. To each shall be measured out just that portion of wisdom and virtue which his own deeds have merited.



The Vedānta claims that man is divine, and that all that we see around us is the outcome of that consciousness of the divine. Everything that is strong, and good and powerful in human nature is the outcome of that divinity; and though it is potential in many, there is no difference between man and man essentially, all being alike divine. Each one of us is trying our best to manifest outside that infinity which is within. Therefore the Vedānta lays down that each man should be treated, not as what he appears, but as what he stands for. Each human being stands for the divine, and therefore each teacher should try to be helpful, not by condemning man, but by helping him to call forth the divinity that is within him.— *Swami Vivekananda.*



Dissatisfaction is the prompting of the creative instinct.

## SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

BY FRANK H. SPRAGUE.

[CONTINUED FROM JULY NUMBER.]

GENUINE Faith, then, is creative, being itself the substance out of which all things are made, constructed, brought forth into objective realization; "so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear." This polarized consciousness is very different from "such stuff as dreams are made of." Jesus referred to it as "the pearl of great price," "the kingdom of heaven" and "the hidden treasure." No man who invites and cultivates it steadfastly, with singleness of purpose, can fail to create for himself a congenial environment. It will manifest itself mentally in inspiring thoughts; pictures of health, feelings of peace, joy and satisfaction. It differs from the dreams of the visionary idealist or theorist, in that it appropriates the ideal Principle and brings it down into the realm of actual, practical affairs. The visions of idealists and optimists are too often divorced from the world of actuality; the chasm between the two is too wide. But it must be bridged before one can experience the real in life. Every man who takes firm hold of the spiritual principle finds things, forces, events, circumstances, friends and the necessities of life ranging themselves around him as planets follow the sun, and satellites the planets. He can no more push them from him than the man with the negative, material consciousness can ward off the things he fears and hates. The magnet will attract the loose particles that are susceptible to its influence.

It is not sufficient to hold in mind and emphasize specific thoughts of good, definite personal ends, or objects of selfish



desire. That is why so many who long to attain to the higher life go faltering, stumbling and halting along, beset by all manner of perplexing problems, apprehensive lest they shall fail to reach the goal.

The spiritual consciousness is a soul atmosphere—not one of many states of mind to be sought after, but the very mind substance itself, out of which grow all subjective states and their correlatives, objective things. This is the plane of the Logos. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "Before Abraham was, *I am*." This consciousness may be shared by all men who earnestly and persistently desire it.

Broadly distinguished, there are two methods by which men seek to transform their own lives and conditions and those of others. Their attention is directed either to certain objects of consciousness (a secondary matter), or to consciousness itself (the primary factor). The physical scientist deals objectively with physical forces, and their relations in things. The efforts of the physician are exerted from the extreme outer circle of life, its circumference, with the intention of affecting the centre and inducing the inner being to awaken and resume its normal activities. By application of material remedies, by concentration of forces at certain definite vantage points on the surface of life, in the material realm, he endeavors to effect changes in the inner, subjective realm. Ordinarily but an insignificant portion of the whole organism will be affected by this method, while at best it is possible to reach only a mere fragment of the patient's nature; so that, save on its objective side (the physical expression), the life remains virtually unchanged. The physician who diagnoses symptoms of disease, and relies on suggestions which operate on the physical plane, subconsciously, proceeds from effect to cause, and deals primarily with results instead of penetrating to their ultimate source. While in this way he is frequently able to gain the specific end sought, he is utterly

powerless to establish a new, perpetual soul consciousness, which, once implanted, remains as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," being itself the germ of a spontaneous, out-growing life, which can no more be quenched than can the world of nature.

The world in general still continues to assiduously pursue the clumsy, crude, roundabout, cart-before-the-horse method of realizing ends, in spite of the magnificent example of Jesus and the early Christians, and the marvelous achievements that attended their adoption of the reverse method. "Narrow is the gate and straightened the way [spiritual consciousness] that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it." Jesus rejected the objective method *in toto*. He healed only such as were inwardly receptive to the Truth in a degree sufficient to enable him to reach their lives from the spiritual centre of being, at which his thought continually rested. This method (the subjective) assumes the Principle of consciousness to be the basis of all expression. It exerts its activity from the absolute centre of life, working outward toward all points on the circumference. As each individual's centre of consciousness becomes established at the universal centre, the whole outward aspect of things changes for him. According to this method, instead of supposing the basis of consciousness to be in the physical realm, we assume spiritual Principle as the basis of all physical manifestations; and wherever this affirmation is made, not as a theory, but as a fact of self-consciousness, its correctness is proven by results achieved.

God is Spirit, absolute, unconditioned Principle. Nothing real is outside him, external to him. There can exist for him nothing transcending his own consciousness, no objective thing superior to his own subjectivity; otherwise he would not be the Supreme Being. His will is absolute freedom and spontaneity. As we approach this standpoint, where the supremacy of the subjective is realized, we know it through *actual* experience to be the basis of all expression.

We do not realize heaven by going to it, but by assuming that consciousness, now; for, instead of being conditioned by time, it extinguishes time, uniting past and present in an eternal now. "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven" (this subjective, spiritual kingdom which is "within you"), and all else "shall be added unto you." "And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven."

If, then, one is to satisfactorily determine or control his experiences, he must have access to the key to all experiences, the basis of all that is thought or perceived—the spiritual consciousness; for all definite mental states and thoughts are evolved from it, as are forms of matter from the ether. It is only from this subjective viewpoint that he is able to perceive the unity and true relations of objective phenomena. In proportion to the intensity of this consciousness realized, is he able to work changes which shall appear objectively in things; just as the chemist, by dealing with the elementary basis of a certain substance, is able to transmute it into another; *i. e.*, by so altering the structure of its molecules, through agencies which act in their atomic substratum, the substance is made to assume a different form.

Now, if the spiritual, God-consciousness is assumed as the basis of all experience, we have here a factor underlying all individual lives, and therefore common to all minds—a sort of common multiple of all, as it were; an elementary, ideal substance out of which all specific forms of experience are evolved.

According to the degree in which one realizes this fundamental consciousness, is he able to produce the objective results he desires. There is no place here for caprice or wantonness. As his consciousness deepens, and he approaches the absolute centre of life in God, he knows only unity of purpose, singleness of aim, uniformity and consistency in results. As the superficial, ephemeral consciousness produces symptoms of disease



(the disintegrating force), so a deeper consciousness gives rise to expressions of wholeness. By reaching in one's own life the common basis in consciousness beneath all individual lives, and, from the position thus gained, touching the springs of expression underlying another's life, it may be made to assume a more normal character. Jesus said to one whom he healed, "Thou art loosed from thy infirmity"; *i. e.*, through singleness of thought and purpose, recognizing only the ideal in his own consciousness, he was able to reach the deeper self of the sick person, and thereby accomplish a transformation of the outward expression.

One finds in his orchard a wild, gnarly apple tree, producing sour, unpalatable fruit. He cuts off the top, and grafts onto the old trunk shoots of some choice variety. The whole appearance of the tree is thereby altered. Henceforth it yields foliage and fruit of a new order. The wild variety does not develop into the cultivated, neither does the material consciousness grow into the spiritual; they are quite independent of each other. Not until one assumes the spiritual viewpoint and begins life anew, from its level, will his outward conditions be completely and permanently changed. "That which is born of the flesh" (the wild apple tree, "the natural man," according to Paul) "is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven."

The higher consciousness in man is grafted onto the lower, the material, which has developed gradually by the slow process of evolution; but it is of a totally different order, and is not to be confounded with its inferior counterfeit. If one waits to reason his way out of intellectual difficulties, he will never see the spiritual light. "Let the dead bury their dead." Assume the spiritual consciousness, and hold to it constantly and exclusively, until it becomes permanently established.

No ideal is in itself extravagant. In most instances where men fail to realize high ideals, it is not because their ideals are preposterous, but because they have entertained them without

a sense of consciousness sufficiently profound and unwavering to effect their realization. They have failed to rightly interpret New Testament history, because, not having become acquainted in their own consciousness with the deeper life of the spiritual plane, the accounts narrated in the gospels have seemed to them either mythological stories, dealing not with actual events, but with purely imaginary experiences outside the realm of fact, or else descriptions of events of a supernatural origin. But science is fast abolishing the supernatural, and bringing all facts within the domain of universal law; and it only remains for innumerable well-authenticated accounts of occurrences at the present day, similar to many of those recorded in New Testament history, to be verified by thoroughly scientific tests, in order that they may be recorded such unreserved acceptance by the thinking world in general as they have already received at the hands of a considerable number of trustworthy independent investigators.



A transforming thought is slowly taking possession of the world. It is a new conception of the infinity of God and of all that must be involved in the meaning of that word. That the Supreme Being is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, has heretofore been accepted theoretically, but it has been little more than a vague generalization. In fact, it could not become a working hypothesis until modern science appeared upon the scene, to show that what are called the laws of nature are simply God's methods of working in nature. Men are talking of the *allness* and *everywhereness* of God, and the *nowness* of eternal life. The allness and everywhereness of God means that no atom of stardust throughout the universe can exist without him, no microscopic inhabitant of the infusorial world can live without his life, no member of the human race, however degraded, can escape his loving plans.—*Theodore F. Seward.*

## A LETTER TO A LONELY SOUL.

BY SINCERITAS.

YOUR kind letter gives me an opportunity which I esteem a rare privilege in human life. It is not often that one can speak straight from the soul. Reticence, conventionality and insincerity imprison us within limits beyond which the boldest of us cannot pass unless by mutual consent of two friendly souls. But I know what it is to live a lonely live, and I would comfort thee with words of tenderest sympathy. It is the fate of the soul born with lofty ideals to live much alone. Yet I believe it also the destiny of such a soul either to find its mate or to enjoy a rich compensation in the solitude of individual thought. Your soul longs for love as hearts have seldom longed. It is a deep, rich soul, strong in its aspirations, pronounced in its tastes, and firm in its partisanship of the truth. It has a wealth of pure, tender and devoted love to give. So great is its longing to love and be loved that the physical body suffers because of the soul's suppression. But you have made two mistakes. You have tried to be content with those who partially meet your love on a lower plane, and you have crowded out love's tender spirit by great intellectual development. I can readily understand why you have sought the companionship of the scholar. Yet the solace is only partial, and should not be accepted at the heart's expense. You seem at times almost coldly intellectual and insincere, so that a stranger might be puzzled to know your thought. You bow to custom when your soul would prompt you to original action. Believe me, then, when I tell you that the expression of the soul's love will alone round out your life, and that you should have greater faith in the power of your



individual ideals. You find yourself in the society of your inferiors. You are even drawn to people on the animal plane and believe for a time that you love them; yet you feel a repugnance to much that ordinarily enters into marriage, and would never be content to live a life of the flesh. This repugnance is wrong so far as it deems any function impure; it is right in so far as it voices a higher ideal, for marriage is possible where natural functions shall have only their natural and never a degraded use. Do not, then, be troubled because the animal instinct in you is so strong. It is good in its place, and the surplus sensation is an earnest of what you are to become when it shall be transmuted into spiritual power. You wonder why such passion exists side by side with such lofty aspiration. It is because your spiritual possibilities are so great, and is not due to any inherent antagonism.

Your life is lonely because there is so much power confined in the subjective world. You reach out for self-expression, then sink back in despair. But the universe takes account of all your longings, and will meet them. You must wait longer because you are to attain a higher level. When freedom comes to you, you will know why your soul remained so long in the latent stage. You will then be able to help those who are in the condition in which you now find yourself placed. Meanwhile, express your love more especially to those who, like yourself, stand in need of help, but have not developed as far. Your soul has capabilities of which you do not dream as yet. I have long observed this fact, as well as your apparent insincerity, but could not speak until you opened the way. You believe your particular "skeleton in the closet" is unique, and so you blame and despise yourself. But all souls have an evolution; all people have passions, and it is no cause for shame that you possess them. Do not give room to spiritual ecstasy, and you will not experience a passionate reaction. Probably every one of a strong spiritual nature passes through periods of depression similar to yours. All have the same great problem to meet.

All must learn through experience the wise balance and use of their powers. Hatred of self comes only from excess, and is prompted by "the love of the best." Be moderate and wait. Your own nature bears within it the essentials of its relief. Love will come to you, and love will yet speak its full message from your heart. If not through marriage, then to humanity by means of your special work. Take courage from the fact that others have traveled the same road and succeeded. Hold up your head in calm confidence. Read Emerson upon "Self-Reliance" and *think*. Be more frank with people, and write more freely to me. Accept my kindest sympathy, and believe me always your faithful friend.



"Fill your life full of great things to be done. Make your loss, or other sorrows, only a stimulus to higher, nobler effort. Life at the longest is only too short for what may be done in it. To entertain, to read, to study, to come into contact with the unfortunate, the poor, the tempted, to mingle with the refined and virtuous, to change and exchange ideas with the thoughtful, to set in motion moral forces, to chasten your own nature, correct what may be amiss, and stimulate all with whom you come in contact. Try to live in the thought and feelings of others. Get out of yourself. So train your mind and cultivate it that you will be ready in any circle to meet the requirements of the hour. Be yourself, but be such that you will always be glad to be yourself. Study those qualities of heart and mind that ought to adorn your character. Read, study, grapple with the thought of our best writers. Divert the current of your thoughts to something other than yourself. Form, inform, transform your nature into that which shall be attractive and influential. Few are aware either of their capabilities or of their opportunities. Some will build a palace where others find materials only for a hut. Build thou a palace."

## A SOUL'S BIRTH.

BY G. SW. D.

Down the pathway of the worlds the wind went. By times it crept with tender, cooing sound, and then rushed on in eddying swirls, and always as it went it bore an unborn soul; a soul that waited long with patience and with hope to live its earthly days.

For ages past the long, unbending walls of Fate had barred its progress on, and often cruel hate had stood to watch some tender heart, lest in unguarded tears this soul should find its birth. But still it withered in travail pains waiting for the stone to be rolled away and for a voice to call, "Come forth!" . . .

Now there was a woman who was a sinner, and in the day's dying light she left the city with its noise, and its cold, hard glitter, and walked into God's open fields, and out under his wide skies to follow a wandering river, and as she went the wind played in her curling hair, and wrapped her dress in scanty folds about her aching limbs.

The twilight came and swallowed up the sunset's yellow film, yet on and on the woman went with hate and anguish ever in her breaking heart, and on, on the river went, and ever deeper and darker grew, and the wind moaned ever louder and louder, and there were only the stars with pitying eyes to guard the woman's shame.

The wet grass tangled around her awkward feet, and brambles threw their sharp, thin arms across her path, and the woman cried, "God! curse and damn —"

The long dark night rolled up its hours, and in the cold gray dawn the woman laid herself beside the river to meet the agony of her motherhood, and when the dull gloom grew into rosy light a little hand lay clasped in hers, and two other eyes met hers with love and faith, and the woman cried, "O God, forgive!" Then was the Soul born in a baby's smile.



## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

### MENTAL ATMOSPHERES AND DISEASE.

IN general terms the human mind is (1) the agent which transforms for us the phenomena of nature and makes us *conscious* of them; (2) the organism of thought, and (3) the instrument of our wills, through which we accomplish changes in the external world. The ideas which regulate our mentality everywhere depend upon the voluntary attention which we give them. If an impulse arises, if painful sensations intrude upon our consciousness, it rests with us to yield or to turn away. Yet this must be done *in time*, for ideas have a dynamic power; they grow like seeds in the ground until they form fixed habits; they work in subconsciousness, attracting their like; they make us prisoners, and color the world in accordance with their own peculiar character. Self-control, then, means not only to know the real self, the larger or more deeply reflective self which is capable of drawing upon spiritual resources, but also the power of turning the attention, of inhibiting fear, doubt, worry, despondency and all disease-making states of mind, and of making wise suggestions to the subconscious mind. Thus one learns gradually to become master of one's own moods, to do one's own thinking, and to exercise the will intelligently; whereas the majority are not only swayed by bodily sensations, but accept the beliefs, dogmas and opinions of others, and become the slaves of fear.

If, then, it is clear that consciousness in some form is fundamental to all our experiences in life, let us consider the very subtle mental influences known as thought atmospheres. Every one knows from experience more or less about the subtle effects

of mind on mind. Yet although we all suffer the consequences, we are often unconscious of the causes until our attention is called specifically to them; for if people in general were acquainted with these influences many diseases would be avoided, unhappy marriages would be far less frequent, to say nothing of the dishonest and immoral proceedings that would be stopped in the business and social worlds.

Every one knows that the mental atmospheres of cities, towns and houses vary according to the people who dwell there; how hard it is to command one's self in some places where the whole tendency is toward mere pleasure, or money-getting, or orthodoxy. A building like Cologne Cathedral, where for ages people have bowed down and worshiped, is imbued with an atmosphere to which thousands of minds have contributed their share, while in the forest or in the solitude of a solitary mountain-top one is rejoiced to find a region where no minds have left their thought traces behind. Members of a household grow to think alike, not merely because they observe and imitate each other, but because they interchange thought atmospheres. Frequently two persons start to express the same thought simultaneously. Colds and other troubles run through a household. If one person feels depressed others will feel it, without knowing where their depression comes from; and a cheerful person will lighten up an entire household by his mere presence. Clothing partakes of one's general condition, and it is sometimes easy to change the mind by changing the clothes. Even the walls of a room seem to partake of one's mental state; at any rate some are able to ease their minds by repapering and painting a house where a crime has been committed, or where people have been ill. Atmospheres come with letters, and the acute can read far more in this way than in the written word. In fact a letter seems to establish a complete connection between one mind and another, so that there is both give and take of invisible influence. If one enters a room in the dark one can tell by the mental atmosphere whether or not a person is present there.

A similar instance of the association of a thought with a material substance is that of food. One will eat and enjoy an unknown article of food until told its name — something, perhaps, to which one has a natural repugnance — and after that one is unable to eat another morsel. Doctors know well that much more depends upon the faith of a patient in medicine than in the medicine itself, and many times plain water or a simple white powder has wrought a cure when the sufferer believed it to be a powerful drug.

But a far more subtle effect than that of atmospheres associated with objects or opinions put into food and medicine, is that of the positive mind upon the negative. Contiguity often leads to interchange of atmospheres among those who would not naturally care for each other. Those who sit together side by side, though silently, in a lecture room, find after a time that they have been drawn together, and then conversation follows as a matter of course. Every one has known people so deeply involved in an atmosphere that the persons were utterly unlike themselves, hypnotized in fact to think a witch a saint, or a brute an angel. If people could know how wide the dominating influence of one personality can become it would indeed be a most astounding revelation. There is nothing more fatal to healthy individual development than the acceptance of another's dogma as law. The mind is utterly closed to reason, and there is apparently no way to arouse such a mind to a sense of its servitude.

Again, the effect of mental atmosphere is noticeable in children. Mothers frequently bring their babies for mental treatment, for instance, for convulsions, when it is useless to work with the child. The mother's atmosphere is the cause, and her fear and nervousness must be taken away before the child can be cured. Doctors, nurses and over-kind friends create an atmosphere of expectancy of death about a sick person's bed, and nature and the physician have indeed a hard task to counteract such an unfriendly influence. Nurses tell in the hearing of the



sufferer of similar cases which proved fatal. Every mention of symptoms tends to keep them prominently before the mind. Indeed discussions of disease in general tend to create a mental atmosphere favorable to their continuance. The advertisements of patent medicines and the descriptions of diseases given by doctors act like so many suggestions upon some minds, just as sensitive medical students suffer slight attacks of the maladies they study. Many a disease has literally been created by the doctors out of some slight disturbance which would have passed off quickly, and perhaps painlessly, had it not been examined and named. Again, the patient is sometimes so insistent that a name shall be given that one symptom after another is described until at last one is found which fits the case. Then the doctor tells what stages one must pass through, and these suggestions are carried out so faithfully that in the patient's opinion it is a real physical disease, and the mind has had nothing to do with it.

On the other hand, there are many cases where those who understood these mental forces have had all the first symptoms of some dread disease, but who were wise enough not to name the symptoms, to keep their fears down, and look upon it as a temporary upset of which they soon freed themselves. Names strike terror into the soul, and it is well to avoid them; for "fear" after all, as a wise man has said, "is the back-bone of disease." It is the worst of all atmospheres, and if one can rise superior to it, and especially the dread of death, the victory is half won.

If instead of an atmosphere of fear a spirit of trust, hope and the expectation of good health could be created in the household, then a race of children would grow up with some possibility of overcoming all disease; for even if disease were always a physical thing, due to germs, or contagion, or impure drainage, it would be better not to fear it, while at the same time taking every wise means to avoid impurity. Worryment, anxiety, nervousness, may be set down as genuine causes of disease, and

always these secondary states run back to the atmosphere of fear in which they originated. We fear that calamity may overtake us, that we may lose a fortune, or be separated from our friends. We fear to eat this and to drink that; that the house may burn down; that robbers may enter, or illness strike us down in our prime. Thus we create a general atmosphere of nervous haste, of pleasure-destroying anticipation.

Half the trouble with some people is that they can never give themselves up to a given experience or pleasure. The mind is always traveling here and there, thinking, perhaps, that one ought to be elsewhere, at home, at work, doing something else—anywhere or anything but this present experience, which is very likely the wisest occupation for the time being. Yet, if having decided that the task at hand is the wisest one, we could avoid all anticipatory planning and fear regarding the future, we might get some enjoyment out of life, and make the atmosphere of calm contentment with well-doing a habit of life. Surely there is nothing better worth doing in life than to attain this inner serenity, that one may carry an atmosphere of peace wherever one goes. There is no better preventive of disease than this, namely, to be ever looking for and inviting its opposite. One is then ready to meet whatever experience fate may bring, knowing that in calmness and peace one will see how to meet it. The power of the mind is sufficient to meet its problems, if only it be all here, and not scattered about and wasted upon fears and anxieties. Concentration is what is needed, and he alone who is master of himself can rise superior to the atmospheres about him.

Concerning atmospheres in general, then, it seems probable that from each of us there is a sort of emanation, just as the odor emanates from a rose. Probably we are more or less affected by all people we meet with whom we have anything in common; that is, when we converse with them, write to them, or become *en rapport* with them. The orator creates an atmosphere by which his hearers are affected, according to their

receptivity. The revivalist works upon his hearer's emotions, until through this forced and most lamentable process the ignorant are made to believe. In the same way one's sympathies are appealed to by accounts of suffering when one is with the sick and sorrowful. Indeed some people find themselves so susceptible to mental influences that they are at times almost at the mercy of other's feelings, and some have hesitated to take up mental healing for fear that they might not be able to throw off the atmospheres of their patients. The discovery of this interchange of atmospheres leads one to believe that thousands of people are unconsciously affected in this way, but think their suffering due to some other cause. Sometimes indeed people are affected by two or three different atmospheres at the same time, so that during a silent treatment the mind is freed from one person after another, until at last only the right individuality remains. In such cases the different atmospheres seem like layers which are removed one after another.

One should, of course, exercise unusual caution to avoid such contamination as this. The safeguard is to set apart a little time each day to settle down to one's self; and the best way to throw off an unpleasant influence is of course to turn the attention toward one that is pleasant. Think, for instance, of some one whom you love, some one who is exceptionally pure, or a person whom you greatly respect. Usually it is sufficient simply to discover that one is involved in another's atmosphere, for the discovery leads to an act of will; one turns subconsciously from it. Even young people who are infatuated with each other would be freed if they could *know* that they are infatuated, if they could see themselves as they truly are.

To the acute mental healer little more is necessary in order to detect the real nature of a patient's trouble than to read the mental atmosphere which, like any first impression, reveals that which may be otherwise concealed. In fact the healer cares more to know what this atmosphere is, and whether it may be readily changed, than to know the nature of the disease; for it



is the disposition or temperament of the individual which has most to do with the patient's trouble.

What, then, is this atmosphere which emanates from a person, and which reveals so much that is otherwise hidden? Is it physical or mental? It seems to partake of both, for it reveals both the state of mind and the state of body; that is, besides the atmosphere which surrounds people which we feel when near them, there is evidently a part of the mind which shades off gradually into brain and nerves. The thought which is put into the mind as a suggestion the night before, and has the power to awaken one at a given hour in the morning, evidently either becomes a physical state or at least gives rise to a physical state, calls the blood to the brain and starts up the body into its waking condition. In the same way fear arouses a physical state and causes contraction of muscles and nerves. Anxiety takes off the flesh and wears deep lines in the face. Serenity makes the brow placid. Anger starts up heat and often results in headache.

Is it not probable that if the subconscious mind could give forth all its knowledge that it would narrate in minute detail every slightest change that occurs in the body, every sensation we receive, every sound we hear, every thought we think, and every mental influence that comes to us? And would it not surprise us if we could learn of the impression left by every mind that brushed against us, so to speak? And what a wonderful process would be revealed could we trace all the stages between a thought of fear or a word of love and its gradual retreat into subconsciousness, there to give rise to a physical change and register its effect in the nerve substance? As we elect to think, to suggest to ourselves, to believe, to become interested, so shall be the result in the long series of subconscious, and therefore involuntary, phenomena. That which we hold in consciousness at a given time is incomparably minute when compared with the vast changes wrought below the threshold. Evidently there is an unlimited possibility en-

larging outwards from this present moment. The only serious question is, Do we know where we stand, or are we deceived? Do we think for ourselves, or are we subservient to dogma, personality and atmosphere? If one is easily influenced, then one must become acute enough to know when the influence takes place, and thus throw it off. But, most important of all, one must take care to live habitually in the right inner thought that one may create a peaceful, health-giving atmosphere. Every experience will then be of benefit, if we meet it in the right spirit, and no atmosphere shall harm us if we keep free from fear. Our safety lies in understanding.



"We need not assist in the administration of the universe. If in the place God put us, and faithful to him, we shall assist in the administration of the universe far more effectually than if we run hither and thither, anxious and distressed, and thereby weakened. In the present state of society, is there any way of doing good so sure as *being* good oneself, and doing the work assigned to one patiently, perseveringly, faithfully? Have faith; good influences radiate though not a word be spoken. Life is full of opportunity and deep interest to one who has his eyes and heart open to receive and reciprocate the love of those around him. And then to think of that wonderful, though it may be silent, process that is ever going on in ourselves and those with whom we come in contact."



Suspicion is a sign of diseased brain. The best rule is that of Confucius: "Judge all men on the presumption of their innocence."

## METAPHYSICAL CLUB.

201 Clarendon St., Opposite Trinity Church, Boston, Mass.

**ORGANIZED** to promote interest in, and the practice of, a true spiritual philosophy of life and health;—to develop the highest self-culture through right-thinking, as a means of bringing one's loftiest ideals into present realization;—to stimulate faith in, and study of, the higher nature of man in its relation to health and happiness;—to advance the intelligent and systematic treatment of disease by the mental method.

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## BOOK NOTES.

THE METAPHYSICS OF BALZAC. By URSULA N. GESTEFELD. 112 pp. Price, \$1.  
Gestefeld Publishing Company, New York.

Balzac could not have wished a more appreciative or sympathetic interpreter than Mrs. Gestefeld. In this book we have a brief review of "The Magic Skin," "Louis Lambert," and "Seraphita." It illuminates Balzac with the radiance of the New Thought of later days. The inner meaning of his work can be understood only by one who has herself perceived that "the faculty of comprehension comes only from the united understanding—the union of reason and feeling, which saves feeling from a false and fatal sentiment, and reason from an equally false and fatal frost."

Mrs. Gestefeld strikes the keynote of Balzac in her own lofty interpretation of love as the secret of life. "Throughout the soul's travail and ascension love rules all things, and according to its quality. What we are at any given stage is determined by what and how we love. How we appear to others is determined by what and how they love. Sensuous love is the despot of the valley where dwells the shadow of death, but the divine love is the absolute monarch who reigns in eternal calm where are mountain heights scaled only by the knowing and all-daring soul."

CHARLES B. NEWCOMB.

THE ROAD TO IMMORTALITY. By BROTHER PAUL. Paper. 75 pp. 50 cents. Esoteric Publishing Company, Applegate, Cal.

This is not the pure idealism that the title would imply to the average reader, but has much to commend it for practical use, as well as much that, strictly speaking, is neither ideal nor particularly practical. Its main object is to teach the necessity of constant endeavor on man's part to overcome the lower or animal nature.

"The character of the perfect man is so well balanced in its unfoldment that all sides of his nature work together without friction in complete harmony *with the design of God*. Unless *this* condition obtain, immortality is impossible, the Spirit will be unable to express its divine likeness. The man who would obtain and retain perfect health and consequent happiness must have the physical organism under perfect control. He must be master in the house he occupies, and in which he gains an understanding of laws that enable him to become a creator, a king, a son of God."

F. N. B.

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(See Club announcement on another page.)

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