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CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

By KLIF WILD

"The judgment of this court is that you be taken to the state prison and there, on Friday the 13th day of July, between the hours of sunrise and noon, you be hanged by the neck until you are dead—and may God have mercy on your soul."

Ponder these words! Give them five minutes' reflection! Picture the dazed victim as he turns from the bar of "justice" and is led back to his dark and gloomy cell in the vile-smelling jail where he has already spent many miserable months of suspense; a place where pungent disinfectants assail the nostrils in mute apology for the absence of soap and water. Go with him, handcuffed and shackled, to the penitentiary, and imagine the crowds gaping in awe when it is whispered that he is destined for the "rope." Spend several months pacing up and down a dimly-lighted, ill-ventilated stone cell, a place haunted by the spirits of scores of other men who have been taken therefrom to be hanged, while the inevitable appeal drags its leaden course through the higher tribunals. Endeavor to put yourself in his place when the warden finally comes to tell him his case has been "lost," and that he must prepare himself for the end. And finally steel yourself for the rasp of a hard, well-stretched rope about your living neck, and a horrible drop to ignominious separation from what we call life.

I have seen scores of human beings led from "murderer's row" to the death chambers. I have seen defiance and fear, humiliation and bravado, courage and cowardice, hope and despair, love and hate chase each other from a condemned man's heart to his face and back again while being searched, and stripped, and dressed in his last suit of earthly apparel—save the "wooden overcoat." Twice I have seen two boys whisked into this chamber of death—from whose bourne so very few return—together on Tuesday, and carried out in grewsome black coffins on the following Friday. With feelings not to be described I have watched many hurried, furtive processions from the scaffold room to the prison morgue, where a bevy of young medical students receive the corpses, and with ghastly jokes dismember them ere the life warmth has departed. Should I recount in detail all I have actually seen in this particular, no editor could afford to affront his readers with the printed horror.

When a human being is sentenced to death by our courts none of these hideous details are apparent; they are not even thought of. I

know a hangman who officiated at an even two dozen legal murders before he succumbed to acute mania. He is now a hopeless dement in a big state hospital, and no doubt the wandering astral bodies of some of those whom he strangled to death, are feeding, vampire-like, on his dislocated mentality. I have seen a mother stagger from the presence of her eighteen-year-old child who was destined to be a corpse within the half hour, though the warm blood ran freely through his vigorous and perfect body as he kissed her goodbye. I have seen an official who had just slipped a black-cap over a living human head—shutting out the light of life,—and who had almost fallen through the trap with the condemned in the faintness which seized him when the full realization of what he had done came over him, return to his regular prison duties looking more like a shade than a man, and sink into a chair from which he was unable to arise for an hour. I know of an instance where a witness to a double execution fainted when the traps were sprung, who, in order to keep his name out of the papers, and prevent himself from becoming a mark for the ridicule of his acquaintances, was compelled to go with the crowd to the saloon just outside the prison gate, and “treat” them into silence. I have watched men returning from executions smoking freshly lighted cigars, and laughing uproariously. I have heard young “cheese-and-cracker” reporters comment on the incidents of a hanging as unconcernedly as if it had been a christening or marriage. If each member of society could be brought to realize one-tenth of what capital punishment really means, it would be abandoned as the most degrading and inhuman institution extant.

A recent issue of a western magazine contained two excellent reproductions of photographs taken at an execution in China. The first picture showed the victims kneeling in a row, each with his hands tied behind him. As the executioner approaches with his huge two-edged sword, his assistant steps behind the victim and grasping his hands jerks them upward. This throws the doomed man's head outward, much similar to the position of a sniffing animal, and the heavy weapon meets little resistance in cleaving its sanguinary way through the taut neck. The first picture showed this process of execution, the second, the dismembered corpses lying in grotesque abandon on the blood-drenched ground. The article which accompanied these pictures showed the spectators standing carelessly about, smiling and gesticulating in animated conversation, both before and after the executions. There was an air of cold-bloodedness, almost ennui, in the attitude of the onlookers which induced a sense of suffocation. It was almost impossible to believe that human beings could witness such horrible destruction of human life with so much indifference.

But while we occidentals write articles, and are shocked at this characteristic of the mongolian, we engage in “legal” murders just as calculating, cruel, unjustifiable and unnecessary ourselves. It is the

old, old story: Smith's faults and shortcomings engage our attention while our own run to seed. The President of France refuses to authorize any man to perform an act which he feels he could not himself perform with a clear conscience; and for this reason alone he has commuted the sentence of every condemned person to life imprisonment. Well might all rulers, both national and provincial, follow this precedent. How many governors would place the rope about a human neck with their own hands, and give the signal to destroy that which is inherently inviolable? True, the man who is on the scaffold may have destroyed a human life, may even have done so in cold-blooded premeditation, but two wrongs never yet made a right, and no incarnate being should dare assume a responsibility which is purely the prerogative of the Creator. When he does so he contracts a soul-debt which nothing short of intense retribution will efface. This, though a purely selfish reason, should be sufficient to deter any man from committing such an act. And remember, it is not the hangman alone who assumes this responsibility. Every person concerned in the prosecution of the case from the beginning to the end is responsible. The hangman's responsibility requires a certain immoral moral courage—to use a paradox—but the responsibility of the cogs in the machinery of the law, while negative in its character, is just as binding, and is sure to demand its pay. If any reader of this article is ever called for jury duty and asked the momentous question, "Have you any scruples against capital punishment?" tell the truth and say, "Yes, I have!" For every man, I care not how iconoclastic he may be in theory, is bound to condemn capital punishment in his heart when he puts himself in the other man's place. "There, but for the grace of God, go I," said an eminent philosopher and observer on passing a street drunkard, and no truer reflection was ever uttered. It was Christ speaking through the philosopher's heart.

At the present time occidental executions are hidden behind prison walls. The reasons advanced for this secrecy are in themselves sufficient to condemn the practice of capital punishment. One is that the moral influence is bad, that an execution exerts a demoralizing effect on the minds of the young if they are allowed to witness it, or to appulse it too closely. So the victim is practically smuggled in behind prison walls and hanged like a loathsome thing. It makes no difference that there are men of fine sensibilities penned up behind these same walls, nor does it matter that they are filled with intense aversion and a consuming desire to escape the depression, and the horror of helpless propinquity to the bloody deed. For days preceding an execution the prison is filled with a surge of restlessness. At night the corridors become strangely weird and silent and the usual prison hum is not audible. The remote corners take on a fantastic unreality, and the night guards smoke extra pipes of strong tobacco, and whistle to reassure themselves that they are not effected by the general suffocation. The

graphic description of the "bawling hymns" and "banging tins" in Reading Gaol is not an exaggeration—is in fact a mere candle to the truth. It is a horror unspeakable to know that a fellow human being is to be taken out and hanged at a certain hour. One cannot help but wonder how the sun dares to show its face on such a day, or how the birds can flip their tails and twitter at the barred windows. A wail of mental protest goes through the prison, promising to crystallize into open mutiny as the fraughtful hour draws near. But the hour comes, the pound of flesh is exacted, the dark deed is accomplished, and in a few days the prison hum is normal again. The mark is left on the souls of all those who have felt the iron, however. By the time another victim has to go some of those who were forced to suffer with the last victim have gone forth, embittered, into the world; while those who have come to take the "little hells" made vacant do not know what they have in store—so the spirit of mutiny ever remains in swaddling clothes. The "old timers," those who have been in prison ten, fifteen, twenty years, or more, become used to this violation of God's law, and in it find justification for their violation of man's puny law. They degenerate to reason something like this:

"Society is a monster; it has no soul! A weak man commits a wrong, perhaps in the stress of acute want, or in a moment of passion, and society, in its self-righteous might, either puts him in prison for half a life time and starves him body and soul, or else hangs him like a brute in the dark and delivers his quivering body over for desecration. I have no further reverence for this monster—no more than had the revolutionists of France. I have no respect for its laws. I shall prey on this society, and if it tries to retake me I shall be justified in killing its agents," etc.

This is not an imaginary or exaggerated or unusual sample of prison reasoning. It is a temperate presentation of the truth. I have not only heard scores of men express themselves in this strain but I have known them to go forth into the world and practice it, and in some cases not only live it out, but die it out, too. Meanwhile society goes on making provisions for taking animal care of more prisoners; meanwhile smug judges continue sending men indiscriminately to prison, where no effort is made to reach or better them morally; and meanwhile men are being hanged, not to prevent crime or as an example to others, but purely in retaliation and revenge. Society likes to delude itself with the fallacy that capital punishment is a warning to others and prevents murders. This is untenable, however, when facts are arrayed against it. In those communities where capital punishment has been abolished there has been a decrease in homicides.

Even a smattering of occult law suffices to show that like begets like—that hate and revenge breed hate and revenge. From a theosophical standpoint capital punishment is the essence of hate and evil. It works almost irretrievable injury on all concerned. Any life cut short by

unnatural means spends its natural, or karmic, life span in the astral world, where it is actually a "lost soul," and any life which is ignominiously separated from its physical vehicle is bound to work a trail of sin, hate and misery. The astral body of a real murderer (for not all who are executed are murderers) seeks out those with grievances against others, obsessing the individual with thoughts of murderous revenge, so that *many murders are committed by those whom society has hanged by the neck until dead*. This will be startling to many, but it is an eternal fact.

We all recognize and readily admit that the influence of a good man lives long after he is "dead," but we are prone to deny that the influence of an evil life is just as potent. This post mortem influence is by no means a mere reflection; it is the working of an entity conscious on a plane beyond the ordinary mortal's ken. To the initiated there is no greater menace to the growth of mankind than that exerted by an irresponsible and ungetatable being who glories in bringing the same misery upon others which a thoughtless society has inflicted upon him.

Every theosophist should make capital punishment an issue; not from emotional reasons—though an appeal to the emotions is ever justifiable—but from the standpoint of knowledge and love.

THE JUSTICE OF REINCARNATION

By IRVING S. COOPER

Do you believe in immortality? Do you believe in an all-powerful God, ruling His universe with *perfect* love and *absolute* justice? If so, and if your mind is swayed by logic, you will not be able to deny the necessity for reincarnation. How may one reach this conclusion?

Once immortality is accepted—and the Society for Psychical Research is slowly but surely massing up evidence that we at least survive bodily death—then there exists only three theories to explain the relation of the soul to this life. The first theory is that the soul is fresh created at the moment of conception, the second, the theory of preexistence, that the soul existed before birth but had never lived through any life like this, while the third, the theory of reincarnation, affirms not only that the soul existed before birth but that its present innate capacities were awakened by the experiences of many lives spent on either this earth or one like it. As we shall see in a moment, if justice reigns, the first two theories are absolutely impossible. On the other hand, the last theory reconciles the two apparently opposed ideas of a loving, just, merciful Father, with a world filled with human injustice, degradation, sorrow and suffering. How can the world be as it is if God pervades it? The clew is given through reincarnation.

To make clear why justice demands this last solution to the problem let us vividly recall a few of the startling contrasts in birth and opportunity which may be seen any day in one of our large cities.

Come with me into one of the seething, fetid slums, mount the rickety stairs of a tenement house, and, avoiding the dirt and squalor, enter a dark inside room, devoid of light and fresh air. Tumbling about on the filthy floor, is a puny infant. The sloping forehead, the close-set, small eyes, stamps the born criminal. Reared in a room, where perhaps a dozen men and women sleep at night like animals, brought up in the gutter, forced to steal, given no education, every aspiration dwarfed, what other goal lies ahead save the penitentiary?

Contrast the horrible conditions of that life with those of a child born in a good home, tenderly watched over and shielded by a loving father and mother, carefully fed, warmly clothed, well educated, every aspiration encouraged, what other goal lies ahead save a life of usefulness and honor?

If God permitted one soul, fresh created at birth, to be born into the almost hopeless environment of the slums, while giving to another every advantage of a refined home, that God must be either impotent or a demon. This would be equally true if the souls had dwelt before birth in some spiritual realm free from earthly experience. On the other hand if each soul was reaping the harvest it had sown in the past, and thereby learning needed lessons which would lead it one step up the ladder of life; then we begin to see the sun of mercy and justice shining through the mists of doubt.

Still one more contrast. Feel for a moment that you are a cripple, distorted and knarled through some disfiguring disease. Press to your lips even for one moment the cup of bitterness that is continually held to the shrinking and quivering ones of a deformed human being. Hampered in seeking occupations, stared at on the streets by a heartless public, longing for love and affection yet repelling every one by the repulsive outward appearance, what a life of isolation and heart-agony!

Contrast that with the happy existence of a young man or woman with healthy body and attractive features. A host of friends surround them, gay parties and social gatherings, sports and camping trips fill the bright days. A happy marriage, children, home; with this picture turn back in thought to the other lonesome, unhappy soul.

If the great Creator of all permits, or even built a universe which permits us to live *undeserved lives*, then truly is this world a hopeless jungle, a vale of tears. But reincarnation shows us that we are living deserved lives, that *nothing* ever comes or happens to us that we have not brought upon ourselves in this or in other lives.

We only grow by experience. How would we know that there were right and wrong actions, unless *every* time we committed a wrong act suffering came, *every* time we performed a right act, happiness was the

inevitable result? If the same result did not always follow the same cause, how would we know that a particular law existed? If one day hatred invoked hatred, and the next day love, how would we learn that hatred was wrong? The very essence of natural law, both in the physical and mental worlds is its unchanging nature. A given cause always produces a certain effect and no other. Now in any one human life there is not time enough nor opportunity for all the physical, emotional and mental causes we set going to work out. Therefore, when they work out the next life,—for we must remember that the good law of adjustment never sleeps,—we should not be surprised, even though our physical brains are so insensitive as not to tell us the past causes which we, *as souls*, remember.

If at birth we are souls innocent of wrong, as the two first theories imply, then we are forced to live undeserved lives, and the world is but a chaos of rank injustice, God a demon, happiness a myth. If, however, justice, unswerving justice does rule, then we must be living deserved lives, which, of course, compels us to accept the doctrine of reincarnation.

How reasonable the whole world process appears when we realize that each life we spend here is but a day in the greater soul life, that each lesson learned is a power gained, that growth is the unfoldment of a spiritual germ from latency to active perfection, like the wheat plant springing from the grain, that humanity around us is at different stages of unfoldment, thus explaining the mingled ignorance and wisdom, that mistakes bring inevitable suffering which in turn teach wisdom, that good deeds and thoughts bring happiness, in turn strengthening the good tendency, that knowing the law we may build any future that we will. No longer chaos but purpose, no longer chance but law, no longer resentment against man and nature for misfortunes but quiet acceptance, realizing one's personal responsibility; no longer vague hopes for the future, but definite, deliberate moulding of that future; with this as a life attitude how quick the treading of the path of attainment, how swiftly the goal is approached!

NOT BY IDLE DREAMING BUT BY EARNEST LABOR

At the unveiling of the statue of Colonel Olcott at Adyar Mrs. Annie Besant made an impressive address from which we reproduce the following:

Friends.—Those of you who would really understand Colonel Olcott's life should look upon it as a whole and try to learn from it lessons for the conduct of their own. Sometimes I think, and quite naturally, we let our minds rest perhaps entirely on the life, as we knew it, of the President-Founder of the Society; but I have sometimes thought that

it is instructive for all, and especially for the young, to look back beyond the day when he met this great colleague and see the life that before that meeting he had led in the world; for it was a life full of usefulness, a life full of patriotism, a life full of devotion to public duty. He was when quite a young man, devoting himself to the improvement of the agriculture of his country, working entirely on the material plane; then later, going out to fight for the unity of his country; later again, giving his services, in peril of life and reputation, to the purifying of the public service, to the cleansing of great departments of the political life of his people. And it was after all that experience, after all that clear evidence of real power to serve and to rule, that he was called to organize the world-wide Theosophical Society, to devote himself to a great spiritual work for the uplifting of men. And the reason why I recall that to you this morning is because I would have all, especially the younger among you, remember that to take high work for spiritual purposes, needs a training and disciplining in the lower work of the world. It is not by idle dreaming only, but by earnest labor; it is not by great talk of what we *will* do, but the power of pointing to a record of what we *have* done, that is a justification for being employed in higher service by good record in the lower—it is these things which lead men onwards to service as the great leaders of humanity. That is one great lesson that I would have you draw from the life that, on the physical plane, closed here on the 17th of February last, and if you would in this or in a future life serve the race along the highest lines and for the noblest purposes, then remember that you must find your training in the present possibilities of life, and in the fullest discharge of the duties *now*, and you will justify your election to higher work hereafter. Such is the lesson of the Colonel's earlier life. Of his life as the President-Founder of the Theosophical Society, you all know the outline and many of the details—a life of thorough devotion, of unceasing labor, of complete self-sacrifice; and if these two great colleagues, H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott stand out amongst us as examples to be followed, it is above all, in that perfect self-sacrifice to an ideal, which marked the lives of both of them and made them what they were, very different in temperament and characteristics, very various in their ways of working. Contrasted in many points, they were united in this one, counting nothing as important in face of their duty to their Master, in face of their devotion to His work. In that they will always stand before us as great examples, and our lives will be the nobler if we can weave into them that spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice, which are the ruling characteristics of their lives.

Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruit. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.—*The Voice Of The Silence.*

PSYCHIC MANIFESTATIONS IN DAILY AFFAIRS

Returning From Another World.

The theosophical teaching that during sleep a human being leaves the physical body, and lives temporarily in the astral world, receives occasional verification when there is the rare combination of conditions that permits the memory of such experience to be brought through into waking consciousness. It is not an uncommon thing in cases of illness, and particularly when the illness has been long and the vigor of the physical senses is somewhat abated. Many readers will recall the case of Gail Hamilton, of literary fame, who died about the year 1895 or 1896, and who, after having lain in a trance for some time, being supposed to be dead, revived and gave a most circumstantial and detailed description of the invisible world, and then died.

A somewhat similar case is that of Miss Florence Bennett, of Kankakee, Ill., whose death-like trance covered a period of more than a week, with infrequent waking periods. The *Chicago American* says:

Miss Bennett, who is fifteen years old, went to sleep in the afternoon. When dinner time came the members of her family found it impossible to waken her. She slept almost continuously after that. Sometimes she would awaken and remain in a conscious state for a few minutes when she would again sink into unconsciousness. When she was asleep it was impossible to arouse her.

Here are some of the things Miss Bennett has told in her waking intervals, which startled the psychologists:

"When I am away from you I am in another world, where all the people we knew before they died are now living. I do not know where it is, but my life there seems as real as my life here. The hardest part of it is going and coming."

"I do not believe it can be heaven, because the people there look as they did when we knew them here. Willie Meuve, who was killed by the engine, has the hole in his head, and his arms are gone. I met Mabel Blake (dead two years) in one of the halls. The first thing she asked me after I kissed her was whether she hadn't got fat. Nobody talked to me about dying. Nobody seemed to realize that they were dead."

Notice the striking points in the girl's story. It is another world where the "dead" are all living. It is as realistic as this life. People were going on with affairs in the most commonplace way. She met an acquaintance "in one of the halls." Nobody seemed "to realize that they were dead." Naturally not, since they were very much alive! But she does not think it could have been heaven. That is not surprising since the popular idea is that there are no divisions in the invisible world except the broad one of heaven and hell and what she saw did not fit either description. It reminds one of the blunt old chap who, on the astral plane, asked a theosophical investigator where he was, adding: "If this is heaven I don't think much of it. If it's hell, it's better than I expected!"

The Society for Psychical Research was invited to investigate the case and the professors of psychology at the University of Chicago became deeply interested but we have not learned what conclusions they reached. Investigators must at least be struck with the remarkable agreement of the facts given by different people who thus bring back memories of the other world and with the additional fact that they confirm theosophical teachings.

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A Repeated Dream Guided Him.

A New York paper publishes the following account of the recovery of a ring five years after its loss:

George Chester, a wealthy resident of West Livingston, N. J., told a story yesterday of how, through the medium of two dreams, he recovered his wife's wedding ring, which had been lost five years.

He says he dreamed he was on Roseland avenue, going toward Caldwell. Being weary, he sat beneath a tree, and when he arose his foot slipped, overturning a stone, and he saw the ring.

The dream recurred on Saturday night and so impressed the man that, with his wife, he drove to the point on Roseland avenue where stood a tree similar to the one in the dream. He sat down, he says, and on arising his foot actually slipped, overturning a stone, and there lay the ring.

* * *

A Little Occult Knowledge Would Have Saved Life.

Had Mrs. Thomas Flood possessed enough occult knowledge to credit what her husband said to her she might have saved the life of a neighbor. But, like most people who do not believe there is any such thing as clairvoyance she went quietly on with her work while the man she was warned about strangled to death. One of the local papers tells the story as follows:

Thomas Flood, who lives at 1507 Point Breeze avenue, Philadelphia, and who is critically ill with typhoid fever, called loudly for his wife at 6 o'clock on the morning of January 9.

"There's a man in a cellar over on Dickinson street with a rope," he said. "He's trying to hang himself. Stop him."

Mrs. Flood thinking he was raving with delirium, tried to quiet him. He then became wildly delirious, but the woman paid no further attention to him.

At ten minutes after 6 o'clock Mrs James Sullivan, who lives three doors from Mrs. Flood's mother's house, started down stairs. As she stepped from the stairs she felt a hand brush her face. The light she carried showed her the body of her husband hanging from a beam.

To one who knew nothing of occult affairs of course it was perfectly natural to attribute such a startling statement to delirium. Very likely Mr. Flood had never before given any exhibition of clairvoyance, but when critically ill the physical brain was in the impressionable condition that made it possible.

Clairvoyance Used to Detect Crime.

The Norwegian police have successfully employed clairvoyance in detecting crime. Johan Floettum, whose feat in discovering the dead body of a lost girl was recently referred to in these pages, a little later, added to his fame by clearing up a robbery mystery. The *Journal of Man*, discussing the efforts of the scientists to analyze the remarkable faculty of the boy, relates the story, and after describing other clairvoyant feats, continues:

Naturally, public confidence in Johann's clairvoyant powers has come to be shared by public officials in the part of Norway where the boy lives. Upon several occasions the police have sought his aid in solving criminal mysteries—usually with complete success.

Last spring the police were at their wits' ends to account for a series of robberies committed in a fine country mansion not far from Sir Henry Seton-Karr's hunting lodge. Several tramps were arrested, but the robberies continued. Finally Johann was appealed to. He went into his trancelike state and "saw" the confidential man servant of the owner of the house stealing money and plate, which he hid until able to dispose of it in Christiania. Confronted with Johann's statement, the man confessed.

HINTS TO YOUNG STUDENTS OF OCCULTISM—XII

Old sayings often contain great wisdom. That is why they are old. If they were not the vehicles of wisdom they would have died young. They survive through the centuries because they are successful teachers. Their age is equal to their utility. One of these old saws should have the respectful consideration of young students of occultism. This ancient saying runs like this: "The longest way around is the shortest way home." It is a sage warning against injudicious haste. It is a concise statement of the fact that human experience has demonstrated that it is unwise to take "short cuts" to a given destination instead of following the well established road; and, that the desire to save time is liable in the end to lead not only to the loss of time but to invite disaster, also.

Now, there is probably no field of activity where this is so true as it is in the study of occultism. The young student is likely to be strongly attracted towards psychic development and to find himself ardently desiring to possess the power of clairvoyance, and this desire may tempt him to abandon the longer but safer way. It is well to desire the opening of the inner faculties in order that one may become more efficient and useful in the great work of uplifting the race; but it is a sad misfortune to make it an end in itself and thus lose sight of more important things in the effort to attain it. Such a desire may tempt the unwary into the by-way of artificial development,—and the slough of despond and disaster that lies at the farther end of it. Be content with the upward path, though the hills are rugged and the climbing is slow and difficult. It is the shortest way home.

As a matter of simple fact there are more important things than clairvoyance to be developed by the young student of occultism—things tremendously more important. Without them clairvoyance is but a dangerous instrument to possess; with them, the inner faculties will open as a matter of course,—will open as a flower unfolds before the rising sun.

The psychism that dazzles many people and appears so wonderful and desirable—the faculty that enables the psychic to describe another's characteristics, to trace a little of his past and to foretell a few future events—is of extremely small and uncertain value. It is rarely, if ever, under the control and direction of the psychic and is no more like the higher clairvoyance used in occult investigation than a flaw in a window-pane that happens to magnify the stars seen through it, is like the astronomer's telescope that sweeps the heavens with scientific accuracy. Such minor psychic development does not imply spirituality any more than the ability to hypnotize implies it, and may be possessed by the good or the bad just as intellect is. Perhaps its chief merit lies in the fact that it has served to arouse many people to an interest in occultism and has impelled them to an investigation that has led them away from materialism.

Even if the occult student, at the peril of his health and at the risk of generating unfortunate karma that may retard his higher development for several incarnations, acquires this lower psychic faculty it will avail him little in added ability to gain knowledge. Lacking the training necessary for accurate observation and interpretation he is as helpless, for all practical purposes, as an uneducated man would be in possession of a chemist's laboratory. He would have reached such minor psychic development only after giving it much time and attention that could have been turned to far better account in another direction where it would have resulted in permanent gain of the greatest value to him. The value of the slight psychic development that is exhibited by the fortune-telling variety of clairvoyant, and that is chiefly used for commercial purposes, is very greatly exaggerated. Because a few things are accurately given us we get the erroneous impression that our whole future lies open to the psychic and that he could, with perfect ease, forecast any part of it. At the same time we pay but little attention to the things about which he is altogether in error, so strongly are we impressed with that which is correct. The actual value of this degree of clairvoyance, or of mediumship, as the case may be, is but little, if any above that of palmistry. The skillful palmist, without possessing a trace of clairvoyance, can read from the open hand nearly as much of the life record of the past, and the life plan of the future, as can a person possessed of this minor psychic development, and with less liability of error. Of course the psychic gets a somewhat different class of facts, a little more of detail, perhaps, than the skilled palmist,

yet nothing more remarkable and certainly not of greater accuracy or value than the capable palmist is able to give.

With nothing of real value to gain, but with the possibility of losing much in the effort to acquire that uncertain and impermanent little, it is clearly enough a foolish thing to give time and energy to such development. Many persons have tried this supposed "shorter way" to their sorrow, and by a certain kind of peculiar breathing exercise, or other method, have succeeded in gaining astral sight and also in wrecking the nervous system and destroying health and happiness for the remainder of this life. Sometimes it happens that by such artificial development astral sight is gained on the lower levels of the astral region, only for the experimenter to find to his horror that he cannot then control it and must, against his will, remain conscious of unpleasant things. He finds, when it is too late, that he has made haste unwisely and has done worse than merely waste time. He has not only failed to find what is truly the shortest way home but he may easily entangle himself in difficulties that may prove a handicap on the right road when he finally comes to a realization of his error and resolves to set out properly on the forward journey.

But what is this longer way around that is really the shortest way home? It is the development of the spiritual nature, and it is only apparently the longer way on account of the delusion regarding the supposed shorter one. This method instead of dealing with psychism gives its attention entirely to spirituality; and instead of regarding the present life as the field of operations its outlook is from the viewpoint of the ego's general and continuous welfare, and necessarily extends over many lives. In other words it takes into consideration the whole of the journey instead of a little fragment of it and refuses to sacrifice the welfare of the future to the whim of the present. And just here is one of the points that the beginner should keep clearly in mind,—the necessity of thinking of more than one incarnation at a time, for if he did only that his plans for his development would thus be greatly limited and narrowed. He should try to free himself from the idea that death is in some way the end of the program and endeavor to accustom himself to the thought that it is merely an incident, a change, as finishing a given task or retiring for an afternoon nap is a change in the day's routine. He should keep it steadily in mind that there is no death; that there are only various states of consciousness and that one who is following out a consistent plan of evolutionary development may carry it along unbrokenly from life to life, thus moving forward with constantly accelerating speed. He should think of, and plan for, the far away future,—never alone for the few years that may perhaps remain of the present incarnation.

With a view then to permanent, instead of temporary, results let the attention be turned to the work of spiritual development, to the elimina-

tion of one's undesirable characteristics, to the purification of the lower nature, to the task of bringing the whole of the activities of the waking consciousness into harmony with the loftiest ideals one can conceive. This is the apparently longer way around which is really the short and sure way home. On this road we may travel as rapidly as we choose. The rapidity of our progress will depend entirely upon the earnestness and the energy put into the work and when the right time comes, or, speaking more accurately, when the right inner condition is attained, astral sight will come as a natural result and be a blessing instead of a curse.

One thing that the aspirant for spiritual development should not forget is that he does not work alone. He probably will, for a considerable time, be unconscious of the fact that any other being in the universe has the slightest interest in his efforts. And this is well; for one of the lessons he is learning is to stand alone and persevere. But the fact is that every aspiration is known and every effort is observed. Just as much help is given as the aspirant is able to receive, and long before he knows it in his waking consciousness the earnest student is, during the hours of sleep, receiving instruction on the inner planes. Without such help spiritual progress would be practically impossible; and an extremely important thing to remember is that we can get help only as we deserve it. Now, we deserve it in proportion that we give it; and this is why it is that to "forget oneself in the service of others" is a wiser course than to give time and energy to developing psychic faculties for our own satisfaction that are of no real value to anybody. Some of us have heard it said by others farther along on the road that "it is precisely when we are thinking least about ourselves that we are making the greatest progress." Try hard to be useful, to deserve much, rather than to secure entertaining faculties for the personal satisfaction it may give.

While the development of clairvoyance is so attractive to many we seldom hear questions asked about how to develop intuition,—a matter of very much greater importance. Developing the intuition is a process of illuminating the lower personality with the light of the higher self and it comes about by pure living and lofty thinking. Intuition is from a high level of the inner worlds—from the source of wisdom—and it is the ability of rising to such spiritual heights, of bringing into the physical consciousness such unerring insight, that the student of occultism should strive for instead of for the development of psychic faculties. Once this is attained the other desirable things will follow. "All things come to him who waits"—and works. To travel along this road of intuitional development necessitates some knowledge of the art of character building,—of the evolution of certain essential virtues which are not only sure, firm steps for the progress of the aspirant in his upward climbing, but are also in themselves rich adornments of personal character. To this subject we shall next turn our attention.

EDITORIALS

KNOWS ALL ABOUT IT

The Emanuel movement does not appear to be having things all its own way among the churches. While in some places this effort to relieve people of their physical ailments as well as their moral weaknesses is meeting with much encouragement there are others where the opposition is open and pronounced. With characteristic conservatism some of the ministers,—and they are not of the ignorant and uncultured variety that still insists that the world was made in six days as the clock measures time—are declaring that this new style laying on of hands is of the devil, albeit the difference between it and the old style laying on of hands that is such a dramatic part of the early history of the church is a bit difficult to discover.

Among the opponents of Dr. Worcester is a Michigan clergyman who kindly rises to explain to the rest of us some things he does not himself understand. Our whole consciousness is here in manifestation according to this Michigan divine. "We have sub-conscious functions and activities of mind and body," he tells us, "but it is altogether wrong to try to make one's own life and being more mystical and complex than it really is." It is comforting to find out that at least one man knows exactly how "it really is" and is willing to spend his time warning the rest of us not to waste ours in useless explorations. Nevertheless this reverend gentleman's confident pronouncement on the simplicity of human consciousness does not quite satisfy the enquiring mind and there will be those among us who, instead of being convinced, will only be reminded of Josh Billings' homely philosophy: "The trouble with some folks ain't that they're ignorant but that they know so darned much that ain't so!"

"Life is not nearly so hard to find out the truth about," says this enlightener of the world, "as these faddists would have us believe. They claim to be searchers for the light, but most of them look for light in dark times and dark places and some of them out of night darkness bring us only glow worms; others bring us fire bugs; others bring us phosphorescent fire-damp." To which we may truthfully add, some preachers bring us nothing.

EQUALITY OF SEX

A quarterly magazine has been established in London under the title, *The Co-Mason*. To most people in this country the idea of Co-Masonry is rather startling and few appear even to know that in other parts of the world women are admitted to the order and can rise as high in its mystic degrees as the men can. In England the movement

has gained considerable strength and the magazine that has been created as its organ of public expression presents a most creditable appearance. Among the contributors are the familiar names of Allen Leo and Edith Ward, of the Theosophical Society.

The Masonic order is one of the most ancient of the mediums for teaching great spiritual truths and while, like the Christian church, it has lost much of the real teaching and retained only the forms, there is reason to believe that the time may come when through its system of symbolism the life and spirit may again flow forth into the world of men. Masonry and the various great religions have a common source as in the beginning they had a common purpose, and it is worthy of notice that the keynote of the coming great religion and of Masonry are the same—brotherhood. All theosophists will extend a cordial greeting to Co-Masonry and cherish the hope that it may soon be as well established in America as in France and England.

The new magazine in setting forth the reasons why the order is, and should be, open to women says the first one is "because a movement which professes to be a brotherhood of humanity can not accomplish its object if it refuses the right of entry to one-half of the human family." That is certainly sound logic. Such a statement appeals to the theosophist with especial force because he knows that sex is but an outward and changing expression of the ego—that the soul is sexless—and therefore that distinctions resting upon sex are as baseless, as unjust and as foolish as those resting upon race, color or nationality.

The Co-Mason, which is published at 13 Blomfield Road, Paddington, London, W., England, and is sent to foreign countries for three shillings a year, has before it a most useful work in a wide field and, we trust, a most prosperous career.

A SANCTIMONIOUS SLANDER

We have all heard the tales of returned missionaries from India, giving us vivid word pictures of the "terrible conditions" said to exist in that country and the urgent need of more money to carry on the "great work" of enlightening the people of the orient. William T. Ellis is quoted as saying recently that the whole life of the people is impregnated with the religious idea and "yet a lower level of immorality and degradation is reached in connection with the religious rites of India than I have ever been able to discover anywhere else in the world."

One of the easiest ways to falsify is to tell part of the truth—and stop there. It requires very little knowledge of the subject to know that the statement as it stands is downright misrepresentation of the most libelous description. The inference of those who read such a state-

ment is that Buddhism and Hinduism have signally failed and that the people generally are on a very low moral plane from which only the efforts of Christian missionaries can save them. This is, of course, wholly false and yet the man's statement may be true so far as mere words go. No doubt there are to be found among the vast population of India degraded religious rites, precisely as may be found in our own country among the Voodoo people; but any statement that leads to the conclusion that this is true of the people in general is as false of one country as of the other.

The truth is that all nations have false conceptions of other nations and to aggravate such hostile misunderstanding by partial truths is as contemptible a bit of business as one can engage in, no matter how literally true the half-truth may be. By laying false emphasis on particular things the truth about the people as a whole is distorted and obscured. It is as though a resident of India, after spending several years here, should return to his native land and tell the people that in America he had observed that the Christian religion was so complete a failure that the people gave exhibitions of stupidity and lawlessness such as he had been unable "to discover anywhere else in the world." He could truthfully say, without naming the "Flying Rollers" and "Holy Jumpers," that religious rites consisted of grotesque gymnastics and inarticulate cries; and that as to reverence for the law, there were constant assassinations and train robberies. This would be literally true but it would give an impression of the American people that would be wholly false.

There are people much nearer to us than we are to India who have gross misconceptions about us because of the false emphasis placed by travelers and writers upon what is merely incidental and not material. Probably the majority of the people of England to-day believe that the United States is a half-wild country with a considerable population of Red Indians and would not believe it if told that the total aboriginal population at its best never was as large as that of one of our present third-class cities. A few stories of Kentucky feuds, of train robberies and of mob violence, easily give to the far-away stranger an impression of general lawlessness throughout the country, while a European tour of a Wild West show convinces everybody that Americans are largely engaged in the industry of killing off the savages! As for India, she probably also has her opinion of us with something pretty substantial to base it upon. She knows more of us than we do of her. She is at least personally acquainted with our missionaries!

THE CLOSE OF OUR FIRST YEAR

This number of THE AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST closes its first year. Everything considered, it has been a most satisfactory beginning. What

is commonly called financial success was not, of course, expected. The purpose was to establish something that was much needed, but did not exist, in America—a magazine devoted to teaching elementary theosophy. This has been accomplished and because of this the interests of several hundred people in theosophy has been maintained after the lectures that first attracted them to it became only a memory of the past.

The magazine was started with sixteen pages. Three months ago eight more pages were added,—not much as numbers go, but still an increase in size of fifty per cent. When it is practicable another improvement will be made.

The series of articles running through the first year under the title "Hints to Young Students of Occultism" comes to a close with this number and with the next issue, beginning the second volume, will appear a somewhat similar series on the occult possibilities and methods of character building,—a thing of great practical value to everybody. The following month a new department will be opened in which will be given the gist of what the popular magazines and reviews are presenting on occult subjects—things of value that are likely to otherwise be missed by the busy reader. As the months go on other improvements, we trust, will be noticeable.

During the past year the work has been done under peculiar difficulties. It is not always a simple matter to edit a magazine from the field, while moving constantly from city to city, with one's hands very full of other work. The necessary writing, the examination of manuscripts offered and the proof reading, frequently have to be done in the midst of the conversation of several people or even under more distracting conditions, and subject to constant interruptions. Naturally enough satisfactory work can not thus be done,—for good work requires a tranquil environment and undivided attention. But this is not a magazine for fine writing and carefully coined expressions. It is a medium for conveying ideas, a utilitarian teacher, a plain pioneer in new ground, a torch bearer in the evolutionary wilderness, caring little about methods but much about results.

ARE YOU WITH US?

"We are advertised by our loving friends"—*Shakespeare*.

THE AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST is now approaching the point where it will be self-sustaining—that is, where the cash receipts will pay the printer's bill and the postage. The work, of course, is freely volunteered—like most theosophical work—from that done by the contributors and the editor up to the work of bookkeeping and mailing done in the office at Albany. A number of people are thus engaged in this effort to establish in America a magazine to teach elementary theosophy—

people who believe that such work is well worth the doing. Now, there is still room in this group of volunteers for others who may desire to help. One way in which valuable assistance can be given is to interest others in the magazine and induce them to subscribe. It will now take only about 150 more subscribers to make the accounts balance—to reach the coveted point where the cash income will equal the cost of production. The large majority of our readers are not members of the Theosophical Society. They are students of the philosophy, readers of occult literature and searchers for truth. But all are more or less interested in spreading the light and many have no greater desire in life. It is therefore not unreasonable to hope that a number will join in the good work of calling the attention of others to the magazine and thus increasing its circulation. Free copies will be mailed to any person who desires them for such work. With every increase in the number of subscribers the cost per copy of the magazine decreases.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"Was the instruction of Jesus to his disciples about going forth without purse or script a condemnation of the use of money, and is it practicable for theosophists to try to approach that attitude toward money?"

Answer: We must always take into consideration the circumstances that give rise to a saying before we can venture to pass judgment upon it. One of the commonest ways of misinterpreting a thing is to assume that what is addressed to particular persons under unique circumstances is intended for general application. Putting aside all question about the matter being correctly reported, and taking it without regard to any esoteric meaning that may attach to it, the injunction is, then, one addressed to religious teachers going out into the world to proclaim the gospel, with no other purpose in life, and in a country where it is the custom to expect that sort of thing—where such teachers would be received in the homes of strangers and entertained as a matter of course. When we consider the striking differences between the countries and the times it will easily be seen that instructions given in one age in one part of the world are hardly applicable in another age and place. As to whether it is practicable for a theosophist to assume an attitude so indifferent toward money it will doubtless depend upon his place and work in life and the point he has reached in his evolution; for the word "theosophist" covers a very wide range indeed. It may mean one who has been attracted

to the teaching by some passing incident and whose interest may very quickly wane; or it may mean one who has not far from finished his human evolution. One man may be a theosophist and still be in the midst of a most strenuous business life while another has reached the point of devoting all his energies and every thought to doing work for the enlightenment of the world under the direct supervision of one of the Masters. Such people may still be accepting money but not for themselves and they would have no interest in it. They would regard themselves merely as agents, accepting, or earning, and using money to carry out the work. Perhaps the correct answer to the question whether theosophists should have an attitude of indifference toward money would be that it depends largely upon how they feel about it. We must reach a certain place in our evolution before theosophy in the very least appeals to us. It is quite as true that later on we reach a point where such material activities for the self as accumulating money and property no longer appeal to us in the slightest degree. After one feels that way about it an indifferent attitude toward money is both natural and right for him.

"Is there any one book that a beginner can get that covers the whole subject of theosophy so that other books are not really needed?"

Answer: If you want to read only one book perhaps *The Ancient Wisdom*, by Annie Besant comes nearer than any other to meeting the requirement; but while it deals fully with the fundamen-

tal teachings of theosophy it can not, of course, "cover the whole subject," because the subject is as great as the universe itself. Hence other books are necessary, and all of them put together make only a very partial presentation of theosophy. The earnest student should read many books and get a broad general view of the subject. Then he should change from reading to studying, going over the ground carefully and systematically, meantime doing much thinking on the subjects studied. Such manuals as *Man and His Bodies*, *The Astral Plane* and *The Devachanic Plane*, should be read and re-read many times for they are dealing with fundamental things that should be clearly and fully understood. While *The Ancient Wisdom* discusses the subjects considered by the manuals named, these little volumes make a specialty of their themes and fill a field of their own.

"What is the standing of Sir Wm. Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge in scientific circles and how are the ideas of the latter on the identity of the dead regarded by scientists?"

Answer: Sir William Crookes has long occupied a very prominent place in the scientific world on account of his various scientific discoveries and inventions. Notable among these were the

discovery of thallium and his invention of what is known as the Crookes tube by which the use of the X-Ray is possible. He is also widely known as an eminent astronomer and as editor of the *Journal of Science*. He is regarded by some other scientific men as the world's greatest living chemist. Sir Oliver Lodge, of the Birmingham University, is chiefly famous as a great physicist. He has given much time to the investigation of psychic phenomena and is the author of various books and articles refuting materialistic theories, notably the book *Life and Matter*, an answer to Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* which points out the scientific weakness of the latter. As to how scientific men regard the most recent of the Lodge psychic experiments one can only speculate upon that. Naturally they will be divided in opinion because they represent both the progressive and conservative schools. But on this point it is interesting to note that on other questions, such as the nature of physical matter, the progressives, led by Lodge and Thompson, of electron fame, are having their theories steadily confirmed by experiment while the conservatives are being defeated by the facts as rapidly as facts are becoming known.

FROM THE FIELD

KANSAS CITY, Mo., February 15, 1909.

Cities, like people, have their characteristics. We have been told many a time that New York is *blasé*, Boston sedate and Chicago voluble. Whether these descriptions are accurate I am not prepared to say, but I cheerfully venture the opinion that Kansas City has a strong individuality. It is genial and alert. The city as a whole, lying largely in Missouri and partly in Kansas and having a total population of well toward a half million, is the gateway of the great Southwest. One has a feeling that this is the very outpost of the East and that here you say farewell to everything that marks the eastern states as different from the western states. The western face, and the western alertness, with a trace of reckless disregard of formality and a genial adaptability to varying circumstances, make their appearance. The social distinctions of the older states fade out. The head of a small business is called "Tom" or "Dick" by his employees instead of Mr. Brown, and the delivery man talks to the people he serves as though they were friendly neighbors, while the letter carrier, quite free from that deferential attitude of more easterly places, blows a peremptory blast on his whistle and bangs on the door if you fail to respond to his ring with satisfying

alacrity. Even the winds that blow do it in the western style—energetically and thoroughly until they have finished that particular stunt and are ready for the next number on the program. This spot is the dividing line for the kinds of weather, too. You know without anybody telling you that the nasty weather comes in from the east and north and that off to the south and west is the region of genial sunshine.

Kansas City, with its western freedom from conventionality and its adaptability to the new in anything, ought to turn out some good audiences to listen to theosophical discussions. Mr. C. Jinarajadasa has but recently finished a course here and this will doubtless help materially. But there is a counter attraction in town in the person of the Rev. "Gypsie" Smith, who has the reputation of being able to "convert" a larger number of sinners in a smaller number of minutes than any other evangelist now in the business. He is backed by the Ministerial Association, has taken Convention Hall and has, among other attractions, a choir of a thousand voices! That sounds like something pretty big and Americans take to big things so naturally that the little ones instinctively look for some place to hide till the big things leave town. But in this case the circumstances seemed to force the theosophists into the arena. "Gypsie" was not thoughtful enough to let us know that he had pre-empted the town until it was too late to change the program so we must take the consequences whatever they may be. The Academy of Music has been engaged for eight lectures on the Missouri side of the city, and the First Congregational Church Lecture Room for four on the Kansas side, while weekly question meetings will be held on each side till March 7, the date of the closing lecture.

It was a joy to trade Joliet off for Kansas City. Joliet will always remind me of the expressive remark of the Dutch comedian: "Too much is plenty!" Joliet was "plenty," and a little more. Chicago always seems a noisy and dirty city but Joliet, with its steel mills belching eternal smoke that rolls away in black billows through which the red glare of the blast furnaces bursts at frequent intervals; with its numerous railways which all cross each other at that point; with its dilapidated, ancient wooden stations reeking with dirt; with its interminable coal trains bumping over the crossings and winding slowly through the city like huge black serpents; with its great prison walls enclosing the miserable men and women of an inner City of Silence, comes a little nearer to a materialized bit of purgatory than any other spot I have encountered. And yet Joliet is not without its "salt of the earth." After a final question meeting, held, by the way, in the home of a reporter of one of the daily papers, a number of additional names were sent in to the Chicago members who have interested themselves in the spiritual regeneration of Joliet. This reminds me that Central Lodge, Chicago, is "doing things." This is the new Lodge recently organized there. It seems to be bubbling over with healthy energy and enthusiasm. The

class out of which it grew was not organized until near the close of my course of lectures there, and did not get down to steady work until just before the holidays. The new year had only well begun when they obtained a charter. Within a week after it began its career as a Branch of the Society, Central Lodge had rented Recital Hall, seating over four hundred people, engaged Mr. Thomas Prime as lecturer and announced to Chicago a course of Sunday afternoon lectures! That's what the newsboys call "going some." It must not be supposed that all this was because some wealthy member came forward to finance the enterprise. It was simply the working out of the earnest desire of the members to give to others the light they had received,—to return the gift. Fortunately the secretary was a man of affairs as well as an enthusiastic propagandist, and the whole matter was conducted in that business-like way that means success. Large audiences have been attending; the collections have met all expenses, and a live center of theosophical activity has been established. That's what earnestness and energy can do, almost anywhere. If one may judge anything from such a beginning Central Lodge, Chicago, is destined to become one of the most useful members of the great theosophical family.

It was a part of my field-work plans to go to Omaha and to Salt Lake City and at the latter place to establish a midway theosophical center between the eastern and the extreme western parts of the country. But going into territory where there is no Lodge to offer some help—to even furnish people to sell books and take the collection—involves a considerable financial investment for advertising, hall rent and general expenses, with no certainty that the meetings will be successful enough to return a part of the money; and as the propaganda fund of the Society has provided me with but a hundred dollars in the last ten months, with no indication of when there will be any more, it is obviously impossible to attempt that kind of work. We shall therefore go direct from Kansas City to San Francisco, where arrangements are now under way for a three-months' course of lectures.

L. W. R.

HAS YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRED?

If your subscription to THE AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST began with No. 1, whether you subscribed last April, or later, it expires with this number. If this is so will you kindly send in your renewal at once or else send a postal card asking that the magazine be discontinued? Remittances can be made by personal check, bank draft or money order, payable to THE AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST.

Wit is the lightning of the soul.—*Robert G. Ingersoll.*