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## HEREDITY VS. REINCARNATION

By DONALD LOWRIE

The belief that human parents transmit psychical as well as physical qualities to their progeny is so deeply rooted that it seems waste of space to attempt its refutation, yet it is unsupported by facts and utterly devoid of reason. Its prevalence is due in no small degree to the fact that the majority of the people do not think for themselves, but are content to accept the views of the daily papers and cheap periodicals,—sources of information which, in pandering to the passions of the masses, almost invariably sacrifice truth to the ogre Sensationalism. Scarcely a current newspaper that does not contain some article which directly or indirectly debits this imaginary law of asomatous heredity with the shortcomings of those who offend against the legal or moral standards of the time. If there is such a law, perpetuating the psychical attributes of parents through their offspring, even admitting post-natal modifications resulting from environment and other conditions, we are the victims of an arbitrary power which determines beforehand just what each human life shall be, and predestination, with its infallibility depending upon the transmission of character from parent to child, becomes a terrible reality.

Happily we know that psychical manifestation is dependent upon and augmented by intellectual, moral and physical development; and we also feel that a doctrine of predestination is in conflict with that subtle but highly reliable guide which we term intuition. It is unquestionably true that physical qualities are transmitted to human offspring, and in the lower animals there is also a transmission, or apparent transmission, of that aspect of knowledge or cosmic consciousness which we call instinct. This apparent transmission of instinct immediately gives the advocate of psychical heredity an analogous case, and he triumphantly asks, If instinct (being incorporeal) is thus transmitted from one animal to another, then why not mental and moral qualities or tendencies in the human species?

The reply is simple. Instinct may be termed the intelligence of a group-soul mentality, bearing the same relation to a single member of the group as the sun does to a single seed of a growing fig; being chronologically quiescent; while reason, manifesting through the mentality of an individual human being, has no limitation, bearing the same relation to the individual as the sun does to this earth—which is one of its children. The instrument through which reason manifests on the physical plane is destructible—perishable, dropping back into comparatively inert and chaotic matter, but reason itself remains unimpaired, just as sunlight and warmth remain the same when the sky is

overcast and the day is dark and dreary. The fact that one human individual may interpret and express more than another does not diminish, nor does it add to the limitless store. All melody, all song, for instance, already exists, always has existed, and always will exist. What a "gifted" individual expresses adds to incarnate knowledge, but does not disturb the universal source or the infinite supply in the least.

When we reflect that the law of physical transmission is not yet scientifically established it certainly behooves us to at least remain neutral on the question of psychical transmission. A tailless tyke does not produce tailless offspring. In fact the offspring of tailless canine parents must be subjected to tail amputation to the tenth or fifteenth generation before a congenitally short-tailed dog is produced. Yet a human being who evinces a tendency to crime must, according to the "ologists," inevitably produce a progeny which will manifest criminalistic proclivities.

How frequently we hear the expression, "Why, those children are just like their parents," or "He is a chip of the old block," voicing a tacit belief in the transmission of character from parents to children, whether applied to the good children of righteous parents or the bad children of depraved ones. The reason for this similarity between parents and offsprings, namely, that righteous parents train their children in the way of righteousness, while vicious parents are careless and indifferent, if not deliberately diabolical, is entirely overlooked. There are exceptions to the generalities, of course, for we frequently see the children of good parents go down the sin toboggan, spite of birth, environment and training; and similarly, we see a child of the slums struggle unaided into the sunlight of pure morals and become a good citizen. But these exceptions, common though they be, are conveniently overlooked, or superciliously ignored by the "ologists."

In a recent issue of one of the representative periodicals of the day, a writer, in discussing the feasibility and value of pre-natal education, said:

"At the moment of birth there is no doubt that a child's whole moral disposition is contained within it, and which, sooner or later, relentlessly develops itself with more or less intensity."

This statement was made in support of the contention that parents may give their child a pre-natal education, insuring its birth with such moral, intellectual, artistic or mechanical qualities as they desire. Assuming that this is true, wherein is the gain? Does it not follow that the good parents will give the child the benefit of good thoughts pre-natally as well as post-natally, and will not the bad or indifferent parents, intentionally or unintentionally give their child the same kind of mental vibrations which they manifest? Furthermore, if this is true, the good life of the child whose parents determined its disposition before it was born, has no personal merit; and the child of bad parents, for the same reason, is not responsible for its evil acts, and should not be condemned for them. Following the assumption to its logical conclusion, we cease to be responsible for our acts; the parents are the child, psychically as well as physically; free will is a myth; and, to indulge another myth for emphasis, we are all Adam and Eve and will never be anything else. Progress depends on diversity and perpetuation of

mind and moral expression in its present limitation does not tend to augment it.

The assertion that the "sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" does not mean that the susceptibility to sin shall be transmitted to the offspring of sinful parents, neither does it mean that innocent offspring shall suffer for the sins of their parents by being endowed with vicious tendencies that are bound to manifest and gain the ascendancy over the ego which comes to dwell for a few years in the fleshly tabernacle provided. Yet it is a fact that an ego frequently comes to occupy a body congenitally weak and susceptible to disease, the result of physical excesses, or violation of law on the part of the parents of that body. But to assert, or even to infer, that the parents of the flesh garment are the parents of the soul is sacrilegious and blasphemous. It is also true that a weak, impaired or imperfect body frequently lends itself to wrong living, though just as frequently it does not. Some of the greatest characters the world has known have been cripples or weaklings.

This effort to account for seemingly undeserved suffering by attributing it to an arbitrary law of heredity is at once obscured when the light of the theosophical tenets is brought to bear. The fundamental theosophical principle is that there is no injustice, that every event, every iota of suffering is deserved and tends toward the ultimate perfection of the ego and of the cosmos. According to these teachings the soul, the vital principle, the life of man being immortal, must extend its immortality (if the phrase will be permitted) backward as well as forward. Immortality knows no time. It is always NOW; always has been NOW; always will be NOW. The entitized life principle which manifests as John Smith, being immortal, must have had experiences before entering its present habitation, and having had these experiences, and absolute justice being the salvation of the universe, it follows that the results of its experiences in the past, its own acts, must of necessity come home to roost; every cause must have its effect, and every event, every "happening" is but the death of a birth. Also, every act of the present carnal imprisonment must have its effect in the future, and it is not until the ego is able to impress this truth upon the incarnate consciousness—bodily consciousness—that intelligent evolution begins. And when this truth is known every thought and every act is fraught with immense possibilities, life ceases to be meaningless, and manifestation becomes a grand opportunity.

When we look about us and see the terrible, the apparently unconscionable injustices of life, one child born of thieving parents, to be taught to steal as soon as it walks, another in affluence of highly cultured parents to be reared like a hot-house flower and never know a moment's want, it is a sacrilege to say it is the "will of God." God, the Supreme Being, The Eternal Intelligence, the Kosmic Consciousness, whatever you will to call it, being omnipotent must necessarily be omnipotently just, and justice can only be reconciled with these two children and their birth conditions in physical life on the basis of reincarnation and karma, and until something more satisfactory, rational and enduring is offered a reasoning creature cannot conscientiously reject it. In this light we see how absurd the heredity bugbear really is. As well say that the seed of a tree which inclines to the north will produce a tree which is bound to incline in the same direction. The geographical and physical surroundings determine the degree of manifestation to which the seed shall spring; the karma of an ego determines what sort of body it shall inhabit during



warning they gave him, which is a warning to dishearten instead of to save, is most natural. It contains a note of triumph. They see his end and do all they can to make it doubly sure. In *Julius Cæsar* the ghost of Cæsar appears to Brutus, and most naturally so. Between the two there had been so strong a tie that when Cæsar discovers Brutus among his assassins he exclaims in astonishment, "Thou too, Brutus?—then fall, Cæsar!" Whether, when he materialized in Brutus' tent, it was in the role of friend to warn him of approaching death, and thus lessen the shock by reflection upon the inevitable, or in the role of enemy and persecutor it is, in either case, a perfectly natural thing. If his love for Brutus had suddenly changed to hatred when he saw him as one of his slayers, and he was unforgiving, Brutus would naturally be the object of his revenge. But if he felt more sorrow than anger and his affection for this "noblest Roman of them all," as even his enemies called Brutus, remained strong despite his error of joining the conspirators, then it is most natural that Cæsar should be drawn to him with a friendly word on what was coming. The ghost does not appear in a dream but as a materialization while Brutus sits reading in his tent; and whether as friend or foe there is no doubt left in the mind of Brutus about the information thus given him. He has no heart in the last battle. His thoughts are of his approaching end and he says to Volumnius,

"The ghost of Cæsar hath appeared to me  
 "Two several times by night,—at Sardis once,  
 "And this last night, here in Philippi fields:  
 "I know my hour is come."

When we turn from tragedy to comedy we find a different, but no less interesting, phase of occultism. Where shall we find a more fascinating and beautiful picture of the nature spirits than in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? In this comedy the curtain that shuts a large part of nature from the vision of most of us is lifted a little and we get a glimpse of the life that cannot be observed with the physical senses. The fairies dance and frolic for us and, while the poet avails himself of the license to which the muse is rightly entitled, he gives us a faithful portrayal of the characteristics of these witching denizens of the world invisible. In their essentials you will find no difference between the fairies of the Shakespeare plays and the nature spirits of the Leadbeater books. Puck makes himself visible or invisible at will and quickly assumes various forms to suit the purpose of the moment; and he greatly enjoys the task Oberon assigns him of misleading and glamoring mortals,—a characteristic familiar to students of the astral and etheric regions.

"I'll follow you, I'll lead you 'bout around,  
 "Through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar:  
 "Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometimes a hound,  
 "A hog, a headless bear, sometimes a fire;  
 "And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,  
 "Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn."

The dramatist lets us see that these non-human but intelligent beings belong to another order of creation and do not understand life as we do. A thing of much value to us has no value in their eyes. They would not exchange a knowledge of the favorite spots in which

"To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,"

for all the wealth and joys of mortals; and looking on at the incomprehensible actions of the physical plane people Puck exclaims,

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

C. W. Leadbeater, in his work *The Astral Plane*, describes these nature spirits—as the whole of this great lower strata of the deva evolution is known to theosophy—as "tricky and mischievous but rarely malicious." These characteristics come out prominently in such characters as Puck and Ariel. Puck describes himself as "that merry wanderer of the night" who devotes himself with great gusto to pure, good-natured mischief, for his own and others' entertainment, and it was when he was playing his favorite tricks on his victims that they would "swear a merrier hour was never wasted." Ariel, in *The Tempest*, takes similar delight in playing pranks on Caliban. He finds Caliban, on account of his ignorance and stupidity, easily frightened and Ariel plays all manner of pranks with him, leading him astray into bogs, suddenly assuming the form of a porcupine, of which Caliban had a particular dread, and again appearing in his pathway as a chattering ape, to the terror of Caliban and the amusement of Ariel. How true to nature this character is drawn may be seen from the description of the author and investigator above quoted. Referring to the characteristics of this class of astral entities he says: "In most cases when they come in contact with man they either show indifference or dislike, or else take an impish delight in deceiving him and playing childish tricks upon him. \* \* \* They are greatly assisted in their tricks by the wonderful power which they possess of casting a glamour over those who yield themselves to their influence, so that such victims for the time see and hear only what these fairies impress upon them, exactly as the mesmerized subject sees, hears, feels and believes whatever the magnetizer wishes." [p. 79 *The Astral Plane*.]

Those who credit the existence of fairies at all, are likely to think of them as a little group of beings exhibiting no great diversity of form or powers. The student of occultism knows what a misconception this is, and here again the great dramatist sets us right both in *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The dislike of these nature spirits for the cities and their love of the secluded places, commented upon by Mr. Leadbeater, also comes out clearly in these two plays, as does the speed with which they move and the distance from which things may be brought in an incredibly short time. When Oberon wants a certain herb and enjoins haste Puck boasts of his ability to "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes,"—not in the least an exaggeration of the possibilities of astral plane locomotion.

One thing that seems to have puzzled the critics of these matchless plays is their consistency. Not crediting the invisible world as a fact in nature they have marvelled that the dramatist unites the visible and the invisible in so complete and consistent a whole. One puzzled critic exclaims,—“by making what is absolute unnatural thoroughly natural and consistent he has accomplished the impossible!”

[To be concluded.]

## THE PRISON PROBLEM

By IRVING S. COOPER

The prison problem is a stirring one. Many thinking people are becoming convinced that the present method of criminal correction is a barbarous relic of the dark ages. Each state has its penitentiaries, each county its jails, each city its prisons. To what end? To safeguard the public, it is said, to punish the offender and *prevent him by fear*, when his term is over, from committing further crimes. By making the prison an object of fear it is hoped to prevent crime and to correct criminals. But **does it do so?** Listen to the convincing words of Judge Cleland, of Chicago. "Persons were often brought before me who had been imprisoned many times and who were no better but obviously much worse as a result of such treatment. I found upon investigation that the city contained a very large number of these persons, who were known as 'repeaters,' and that the time of the police and the courts were much occupied in rearresting and recommitting them to the House of Correction. Upon examining the records of this institution, I found that out of 9,000 persons imprisoned the previous year because of their *inability* to pay the fines imposed, nearly one-half had been there from two to two hundred and one times each. Eighteen women had each served one hundred terms. I was therefore convinced that this method of 'correction' was not only harsh and unjust to the families of such persons, but was of no value as a corrective to the defendants themselves." Surely this is a startling revelation of the inefficiency of present methods of handling criminals. Petty offenders against the city laws are fined or sent to prison to work out the fine at the rate of fifty cents a day. In either case, the poverty-stricken family dependent on the offender for support, slowly starves or is driven into crime because of lack of money. Children are arrested for stealing coal. Why? Because impotent law helplessly tried to correct their drunken father by sending him to prison, leaving his destitute family and broken-down wife to shiver under the icy blasts of winter. Society here is the real criminal.

The criminal is injured, never helped, by present prison methods. Judge Cleland says, "In substantially every case that I investigated, I found, notwithstanding the efficient management of our workhouse, the offender had come out a less desirable member of society than when he went in; his employment was gone, his reputation was injured, his will weakened, his knowledge of crime and criminal practice greatly increased. As one young girl expressed it, 'It is not a House of Correction but a House of Corruption.'"

Now there are preventable reasons why this is so and it is our shame that they exist. In the first place the prisoners are herded all together without regard to youth or criminal knowledge. The boy committing his first crime sleeps in the same narrow cell and listens to the tales and advice of a hardened repeater who has perhaps killed his man. One judge in California sentenced a mere lad, fourteen or sixteen years old, to fifty years in the penitentiary. Statistics show that over one-half the prisoners in the United States are under thirty years of age. And how easy to become a criminal! In the words of Arthur MacDonald, "An individual, becoming excited in discussion, or under the influence of liquor, or on account of an insult, may, on the spur of the moment, strike the offender with the nearest object in his reach. If it is a hammer, he becomes a criminal; if it is a book, he is not a criminal."

Many an honest man and boy has been sentenced to a long term of years for acting impulsively under just such circumstances. He serves his time in a festering hot-bed of vice, becomes hardened and embittered under the present vindictive system and comes out a criminal, though entering a decent man.

In California on July 1st, 1908, there were 2,712 persons confined in the two state penitentiaries—1,703 at San Quentin and 1,009 at Folsom. The majority are under thirty years of age; many less than twenty-one when sentenced. The housing capacity of these two prisons is wholly inadequate, five men sometimes being packed in a single small cell. The cells are small, ill-lighted, smell like stables, and not one of them has the requisite air supply. With such a congested condition it is easy to see the impossibility of the segregation of the young from the old offenders. Penitentiaries are really training schools for crime.

It will be well to dwell a moment on one of the causes sending so many young men to prison, a cause which has not received the deserved attention turned to better recognized evils, such as race-track gambling and drunkenness. The scavengers of human filth and degradation we call newspapers are largely responsible for the stunted morality and bravado ideals of our young boys and girls. Every dirty mess is spread out with suggestive scareheads; suicides, robberies and murders are delineated to the fullest extent. A recent writer says, "A public school superintendent, visiting the schools where the pupils had been encouraged to read the daily papers, questioned them concerning topics of national importance and of characters now much in the public eye. He found that the boys and girls had very little discrimination in reading; they knew a great deal about things not conducive to public morals. When he wrote the names of Taft, Carnegie, Evans, Burbank, Heney, Hughes and others on the board, only one per cent. could tell him anything about them. When he wrote 'Thaw' on the board ninety-five per cent. knew all about him and the history of the case from the beginning to the end." The newspapers are not to blame. They are but catering to our tastes. If we object they will soon improve. Shall we remain silent while our youth are being corrupted?

How is the prisoner himself treated? Caught in some act fostered perhaps by the criminal neglect of society, he is clubbed into submission by a kind-hearted policeman, thrust into a vile-smelling, vermin-infested cell crowded with vice-and drink-sodden derelicts, brought before a judge, who, looking at the down-hearted wretch over his gold-rimmed spectacles, takes it upon himself to deliver a severe lecture, to the edification of the curious spectators present. A long sentence is pronounced because the judge does not like the looks of the offender. Shipped to a penitentiary, deprived of his hair and beard, and clad in a hideous striped suit, he is given a bunk in a rank-smelling cell already overcrowded with men. Here he stays for two, five, ten, twenty-five or fifty years or even for life as the case may be. Nothing to do except watch that he does not disobey the rigid prison discipline and rules. Denied even books in some institutions, he broods over his own revengeful and ugly thoughts, and festers in the putrid cloud of thought-forms his companions spread about. Splendid opportunities you must admit to be converted into a useful citizen! Shut away from friends, every letter opened and read by the prison officials, not permitted to read a single state paper, he has slender chances of improving his mind.

His body suffers too. Instead of cleaning up jails as should be done, shiftless officials hide the dirt and prevent disease by liberally sprinkling



chloride of lime everywhere. The biting fumes of this and other disinfectants are so strong as to cause constant burning and smarting in the throat. Persistent lung diseases are frequently produced in prisoners who are forced to breathe this pungent atmosphere.

Each penitentiary has its chaplain. In him you would think the men would have a true and sympathetic friend. A well-known chaplain is reported to have said in a recent public address, "If I had my way I would work the new or first-term prisoner like the devil; work him till his hair curled. I would work him so hard that he would imbibe an all-enduring horror and dislike for prison life." As if prison life at present was not a nest of horrors! This evident God-loving, but man-hating chaplain, held down his post by political influence. What mockery! Even the condemned prisoners ask him to keep away—they want none of his consolation.

This suggests another point. Executions take place in the penitentiaries. This upsets the men for days and adds more horror to their already miserable lot. Think what a host of morbid thought influences must center around an execution on such a day when, it is said, over twelve thousand requests for invitations were received at one prison to witness the execution of two boys.

Col. G. J. Griffiths relates a suggestive instance of prison discipline which he himself witnessed: "Morphine had been smuggled into the prison by gumming it between two layers of cardboard. One morning when the prisoners were at work the warden called his men together and ordered them to go through every cell and take every picture, frames and all, and also all boxes and books, near and dear to the heart of the unfortunate prisoners, pictures of mother, sweetheart and daughter, and place them in the fire. A great bonfire was kept burning for several days until he supposed everything was consumed. The fire was in full view of the laundry in the middle yard and one day, as I passed, an old prisoner, who was forced to feed the flames, called me, and after making certain that no one saw him, handed me a book, saying, 'For God's sake, Colonel, save this bible.'"

Torture and punishment are still in vogue in many prisons. An intelligent prisoner, wrongfully accused by a warden of knowing where morphine was concealed in the prison, in spite of his many truthful denials of any such knowledge, was squeezed in a strait-jacket for 140 hours, or nearly six days and nights, and then released only because he was about to die. The man is now free but is a physical wreck unable to work a full day at his trade. Another happy plan is to give the man a powerful cathartic when he is thus bound helplessly like a log. Men are still hung up by their thumbs, given the "water cure" and diabolical cell door treatment, flogged until their backs are a raw mass of bleeding flesh, and kept in dark confinement for years until almost insane. How proud we should be of our splendid civilization!

When a prisoner completes his sentence his debt to society is supposed to be paid. In reality his punishment is just beginning. He returns home to find his family shunned, his children hissed at by scornful playmates. If he changes his name and moves to another place, he immediately loses his job, even though he has gained the confidence of his employer, as some one "gives him away." The police hound him, and arrest him whenever there has been a suspicious crime in his neighborhood. He dare not vote nor take part in social or public affairs. When he applies for a position he cannot give references without being ruined. Judge Cleland exclaims, "Every released convict is a shrinking coward, fearful that each person he

meets knows his record. If he succeeds in getting employment by changing his name and concealing his past, he lives in mortal terror lest his deception be discovered." A story was told me the other evening of a man who escaped from prison, and in spite of a thousand dollars reward, eluded arrest and commenced to lead an honest life. He secured one position after another, prospered, started in business for himself, married and had two children. Twelve years afterwards an ex-convict who knew him, met him on the street, remembered the reward and reported to the authorities. In spite of an appeal to the President of the United States he was forced to spend six months in jail. Justice? What is our motive in sending men to jail? Vindictive punishment or correction? Is it justice when a boy who steals a bicycle, his second offence, is sentenced to nine years in a penitentiary, and a wealthy law-breaker, who wrecks a bank, causes one suicide and innumerable failures and renders destitute hundreds of families is sentenced to eighteen months? These travesties of justice, this horrible life an ex-convict must lead, are due to the miserable self-righteous attitude assumed by society. We mingle socially with and invite into our homes many a man or woman guilty of far worse offences than most of the imprisoned. We may suspect or even know their errors but overlook them because of their social standing. Immediately they are imprisoned, however, we turn our backs upon them and look the other way should we meet them later in life. It is true that "there is no criminal class, but only a caught or punished class." We have mighty work to do in modifying the public attitude toward the released offender, and the best way to commence is to change our own.

[In next number will be discussed the actual and possible prison reforms alleviating these distressing conditions.]

### THE DERELICT

By CALVIN LOUIS CURTIS

Theosophy, unlike man-made philosophy, cannot, from its very essence, draw a line of demarkation between the human derelict and his less unfortunate brother. This is one reason, perhaps, why the erring take so kindly to divine wisdom. The more thoughtful and intelligent among them—having seen the seamy side of life, felt its stings and apparent injustices, have, through experience of the opposite gained a keen perception of justice.

Few stop to analyze or consider the true state of our social progress and attainment. The pulpit, the platform, and the press assure us that we are far in the van of progress compared with the most favored nations. When required to be more specific our material prosperity is cited, and those with a vivid imagination may even venture to assert our superior intellectual attainments, but never a word is said about our moral and spiritual development. They fail to tell us that in times of peace it costs us more than twice as much to prepare for war as it does to educate all our children. They forget to mention that our corporations maim or murder a human being every alternate minute during the daily work hours. They never explain that our treatment of the erring and defective is still based upon the almost forgotten and wholly discredited concept of man's total depravity; nor do they mention the fact that vicarious atonement, a twin fallacy, is the means by which society hopes to win salvation from its social sins.

The bare mention of human sacrifice would most likely shock the sen-

sitive ears of society, which, in the innocence of its heart thinks of such horrid cruelty only in connection with savagery. It is indeed a cruel, savage practice. But what else is it when a human being is corrupted, confined, tortured, offered up on the altar of greed for the social and economic sins of the many?

We pay a thousand millions of dollars annually for the repression of vice and crime and the punishment of criminals. The expenditure of this vast sum germinates a perennial crop of derelicts. Vice and crime are not in themselves attractive, but repulsive. They live and flourish not because they gratify normal, healthy appetites and instincts but because material profit can be made in manipulating them. The dens of vice in our centers of population are fostered and protected by corrupt officials and politicians, frequently aided and abetted by the police, who share in the profit of the nefarious traffic. Sad as is the derelict, sadder still are the parasites who live off his weaknesses. Make the parasite the accomplice of the profligate—equally guilty under the law as he is in fact—and the slums will disappear as if by magic.

Society should realize that vice is not a personal disease but a social and economic malady. The acceptance of this truth would make apparent the injustice of treating its victims as foes to be tortured and exterminated, for they are weaklings and defectives who should be nursed back to moral health and vigor. They are deserving of profound pity and commiseration for they bear the crosses of others as well as their own.

The resources of civilization are by no means exhausted as many suppose. Theosophy has a vast and fertile field of endeavor in the practical affairs of every-day life. It must be a living verity in the hearts of its students, made manifest by their daily lives. Its chief tenet, brotherhood, must be shown by example as well as precept. It must shape the relations of its students with other units of humanity or it is useless to the world. At the door of each lies an opportunity to awaken in the heart of some brother a spark of humanity toward the erring ones, to the end that they may be treated with loving kindness, guided by common sense, instead of being treated with savage brutality incited by cupidity and revenge.

To the weary and heavy-laden the truths of theosophy come like the gentle rain from heaven upon the parched earth. It quenches the fires of hate, subdues the lust for gold, replaces lawless license with self-control and gives purpose and stability to life. Proofs of its great truths must be sought in the heart, for things spiritual can only be cognized by the soul. When the light is once found all else is illumined by its radiance.

It might seem at first blush that the derelict of all men, his errors being many, would be the last to welcome a truth making himself alone responsible for his present condition in life. But he has been so wont to suffer more than his due proportion of retribution that he seizes with avidity the assurance that he is on a potential equality with all the units of humanity. The egoistic idea so common to the fortunate and happy, that the world cannot well wag on without him, has long since been crushed out of his imagination, and he is quite willing to take his place on an equality with his brother and share his burden. The derelict who has been wont to bear the sins of society in this life ought not to quail at the certainty of having to face the consequences of his own in another aspect of existence.

The derelict who has been cast by the storms of passion upon the desolate and island-waste of prison life is deserving of succor and rescue. These are proffered him in the assurances of Divine Wisdom. A prison affords ample opportunity for introspection and retrospection. These when

carried on persistently and honestly will, sooner or later, force the conclusion upon one that he has himself forged the chains which bind him. True liberty does not consist in the freedom of body and mind, but on the contrary in their complete subjection to the higher self. The man only is free who is a slave to no desire. Hence true liberty may be attained in prison—nay, in certain stages of development is more apt to be attained in prison than elsewhere.

Theosophy, to the derelict, appeals not to his intellectual but to his spiritual nature. Physical and mental perfection are best subserved by favorable environment, whereas spiritual development is more rapid in apparently adverse circumstances. Pain, sorrow, injustice and disgrace seem to be necessary conditions for the spiritual birth; hence theosophy is more welcome and more helpful to the derelict than to the fortunate.

### HINTS TO YOUNG STUDENTS OF OCCULTISM—VIII

One of the things to be constantly aimed at is self-reliance. It should be most assiduously cultivated. The sincere student of occultism is striving to perfect himself as an instrument to be used in quickening human evolution. He may now be serving that sublime purpose in the very humblest way but he will not overlook the fact that great tasks await the willing and capable worker; that volunteers for selfless service are very, very few and that the need of them is great. Therefore he will understand that as rapidly as he can fit himself for effective service the larger tasks will be found at hand, awaiting him. But only those who have evolved the necessary qualities are available for the work and can hope to be given a part in it; and of what use would one be who has not become self-reliant? Worlds are not shaped with the helpless hands of infants. We must get beyond the clinging, timorous, dependent stage that characterizes children, before we shall be of much real service in the evolutionary work. There is an attitude of mind that means "Well, I'm willing enough but I don't know what to do. I'm ready to work if somebody will furnish me a place." That is much better than indifference but it is not the self-reliant attitude that one should strive to reach. The desirable mental attitude is one of strong, resolute determination to find a way to serve without anybody's help,—a desire to be useful, directed by steady, self-reliant purpose.

In the most prosaic affairs of life and in earth's hurly-burly business grind it is the self-reliant who move the world. The self-reliant man comes to the front in times of difficulty and peril as naturally as oil comes to the surface of water. He belongs there by right of ability to manage, to direct. Being in control of himself he can control events. Being master of himself he is master of the situation. In a crisis all instinctively turn to the masterful man.

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One of the magnificent things about occultism is its absolute justice. Each is exactly what he makes himself and gets precisely what he earns; not a jot less nor more. He merely comes into his own. But he must come in on his own account. He cannot play the role of Micawber in occultism, waiting for "something to turn up" that will carry him into useful and desirable occult work as a political upheaval sometimes carries an indifferent candidate into office to the surprise of everybody. The successful ones who have made rapid progress in occultism are those who have

resolutely forced their way forward. They did not even wait for an opportunity, but made it. The four most conspicuous figures in the history of the Theosophical Society, two of whom have passed on, are striking examples of what comes of a self-reliant determination to serve; that does not wait even for an invitation to work for the common good. Each created a field and filled it. Colonel Olcott, for example, did not wait for the growth and maturity of an occult society that could furnish him the office of president and thus give him an opportunity to be uniquely useful. He set to work and built the organization, thus becoming signally useful to the world at once. The other three did not wait for the western nations to ask for a theosophical literature. They anticipated the demand by producing a literature that will some day be recognized as marking an epoch in the history of western civilization.

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A beginner in the study and practice of theosophy is often inclined to think that it is only a few who can do important things and the rest are necessarily doomed to be satisfied with looking on and applauding. They forget that a multiplicity of agencies and methods are used to hasten human evolution and that the apparently unimportant things are quite as necessary as those that attract public attention. They also forget that those who are doing the great things once stood where the beginner now stands and that the younger student can as certainly reach an equally important and useful field of activities in the future, if he really desires to, and now seeks to be of service in the smaller way. If he puts his hand to the small work now he shall grasp the great task later as certainly as he lives and thinks. But no one may hope to be entrusted with great responsibilities until he has proved that he is capable of discharging small ones.

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And what is the small work? A very necessary part of it is the careful cultivation of the character qualities that are indispensable in those who would work beneficently with the great evolutionary forces playing through the universe. Of course that is but a part of the work, for the wise student will never forget that a fatal error is to become absorbed in self-culture,—will never lose sight of the fact that the reason for such culture is to make himself more useful to all, and he will not forget to give a part of his energies to exercising his newly acquired attributes in the helping of others. These two things should go together,—the cultivation of necessary qualities and their employment in serving the highest interests of the race.

It is certainly an unwise thing to devote one's time exclusively to study, to the neglect of practice. And yet there are many who make that mistake. You may hear them say: "The Theosophical Society is not for material work. It is for the purpose of training students of occultism!" And you may observe those who hold such views diligently studying the *Secret Doctrine* and other profound works in occultism for years—and doing little else! They acquire much occult information, which doubtless gives them the same sort of mental satisfaction that some people feel in accumulating money. But they make no use of the information for the world's helping. It is as though a would-be hero should spend a lifetime training to become the most valiant member of a life-saving crew and, in his anxiety to learn everything to be known about storms, lifeboats, signals and resuscitations, he should never find time to join his comrades in the actual work of rescuing shipwrecked people! Students of that class naturally

settle into the study rut and the real living theosophical movement sweeps past them and is lost. To be of any value to a person theosophy must be *lived*, not merely intellectually comprehended, and it is in order to live it to the uttermost, to the very fullest, that the young student should seek to blend precept and practice in an ideal life.

## REINCARNATION

One of the best tests that we can apply to any given hypothesis in order to determine whether or not it is reasonable and probably true is to enquire whether the conditions it would give, if it is true, would be favorable or unfavorable to the human race—whether such conditions of life would be for or against the general welfare. Since the trend of all evolution is toward improvement and what we know of the history of the population of the earth shows that even within a few centuries very great gain has been made in what we may call the public conscience, it may safely be assumed, whether we all agree that a beneficent intelligence rules the world or not, that, at least, the processes of the universe are favorable to higher moral development. If this is so, then, in trying to find out by the faculty of reason the hidden evolutionary methods of nature which we cannot get at with the physical senses, we can accept as probably true only those which would obviously be favorable to the general race welfare, and reject those which are clearly against it. With this fact in mind let us look at some of the beneficial effects of reincarnation.

Which will have the better effect in promoting morality among people: to have them believe, and live according to the theory, that when they have finished this life they will have no more to do with the earth and the people they have known here—except the few who may have been of their particular religious belief and their grade of moral excellence, whatever that grade may happen to be,—or to have them believe, and live according to the belief, that they must in future lives on the earth meet again the people with whom they are associated, and live again in such earthly environment as their present manner of living shall entitle them to? Would not the one with the rather vague and indefinite belief about the future be less careful about his conduct toward other people than the one who believed that he must meet these people again and with them must work out and adjust any wrongs done them? Would not such a belief have a restraining and most salutary effect upon those people—and they are extremely numerous—whose chief concern about a wrongful act is that it shall not be found out and brought home to them? And as for the other class—those who are earnestly seeking to do the right for the love of it—can there be any greater incentive, or need there be any richer reward, than to live again among those whose gratitude they have earned? Would not the whole people, if the belief in reincarnation were general, have more constantly and practically before them the necessity of living correct lives? The business conduct of the average man toward another is influenced very largely by the probability he thinks there is of his again meeting the other. If he thinks there is no probability of ever seeing him again he will much more readily resort to “sharp practice” than if he thinks there may be future dealings with him. The head of a somewhat notorious firm selling “shoddy” made-to-order clothing that looks well for a few days, at least, is said to have as his business motto: “There’s a new fool born every minute.” He never expects to see a customer again. Would he follow that business method if he knew that being drawn into contact with these “fools” in a future life was in-

evitable and that in the final adjustment of the matter his supposed gain over them would prove to be no gain at all but only the foolish use of his intellectual faculties in a way that raised barriers against his own progress?

Most of us will be willing to admit that the religious ideas popularly held are not conspicuous for practical results in affecting the mode of life. In our business life we are, as a people, completely indifferent about what happens to others. There are a few who, at least, think about the welfare of coming generations, but they are few indeed; and so reckless and selfish have we been in this respect, as a nation, that it has recently been necessary to call a conference of the governors of states, and of other influential people, to decide upon measures to preserve our natural resources, that are being so rapidly depleted by enterprising greed. In the insane scramble for wealth no thought is given to either coming generations or to that part of this one that is not financially concerned in the particular exploitation in hand. Would this wanton waste of natural resources continue if the fact of reincarnation were understood and those engaged in impoverishing the earth knew they were to return to live upon it in the future? The criminal waste that is thought of so lightly by those engaged in it, because the discomfort resulting from it will fall on future generations, would stop very suddenly if it were known that they, themselves, will be the future generations and be compelled to live in the environment they are now preparing. If this great truth of human evolution were better known it would be the source of tremendous incentive towards shaping personal conduct for the common good and would give us a regenerating influence in the business world. A morally careless tenant temporarily occupying a house may have no scruples about permitting the drains to be choked up by improper usage, if he thinks they will serve their purpose while he remains, and the trouble it may give and the disease it may cause, in the future, will fall upon another. But if he knows that he must, from time to time, live in that house again and that all the trouble his carelessness causes must fall upon himself, then he must be fool as well as knave to depart from the path of righteous conduct.

If, then, reincarnation so clearly has a tendency to stimulate morality,—if it is so undeniably calculated to promote the spiritual development of the race, to act upon each for the good of all, is it not reasonable to suppose that it is one of nature's verities? And when, in addition to its inherent reasonableness, we have personal testimony, from those whose psychic faculties enable them to transcend the physical senses, that it is a fact in nature, even the most conservative thinkers must see the strength of the position occupied by the advocates of this evolutionary truth.

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### NOTES

The recently finished lecture tour of Mrs. Annie Besant through Australia and New Zealand was a most pleasing success. As usual she did an enormous amount of work in the time allotted to the tour, lecturing to the members as well as to the public in all the principal cities, and giving interviews to the press that must have brought theosophy to the favorable attention of tens of thousands.

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The *Lotus Journal* for October has a most deeply interesting article by C. W. Leadbeater, entitled "Faithful Unto Death." It gives an account of the past of Colonel Olcott,—the far past—tracing his relationship to the theosophical movement of the present.

Those of our readers who are interested in comparing the Shakespearean fairies with the painstaking and invaluable investigations of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, or who would like to have a scientific description of the great population of the astral plane, human and non-human, will find his book on that subject useful. It is sent to any address by the AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST, postpaid, for thirty-five cents.

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The field work of the Theosophical Society is going vigorously forward. Mr. C. Jinarajadasa is at work in Pennsylvania. Mr. Irving S. Cooper, our youngest public lecturer, is giving three weeks to Boston, and a short time to New York, having stopped for several lectures en route east at Buffalo, Rochester, and Albany. L. W. Rogers is still in Chicago. The winter months will probably be given to public lectures in Illinois, with occasional trips to adjoining states.

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To those of our friends who desire to do something for theosophy and are somewhat puzzled about what to undertake we venture to suggest the circulation of the lectures advertised on the inside cover page of this magazine. The set is designed to cover the ground for those who have not read much, or anything, of occultism and deals with the various divisions of the subject in a simple way, while always keeping well to the front the inherent reasonableness of theosophy. As the entire set, including the "Questions Answered," can be had for a dollar it makes a small investment go a long way, because the twelve pamphlets can be put in circulation among different people and be kept moving about in any combination desired and can be mailed and remailed almost as easily as letters. Some of our readers who have tried this plan of propaganda work have found it so satisfactory that they have written of their success and ordered more for such use. It may interest some of our readers to know that these printed lectures are in circulation from England to Australia.

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### A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

The connection between theosophy and prisons may not at first be obvious to all readers, but when we remember that one of the three objects of the Theosophical Society is to lay the foundations of a universal brotherhood it will be seen that any part of the social mechanism that violates the principles of brotherhood should be the especial concern of theosophists. Mr. Cooper's article, "The Prison Problem," in this number, is not written for the purpose of harrowing the sensitive nerves of sympathetic people, but is presented with the belief that a knowledge of conditions is the first step toward their improvement. In the first installment of what he has to say on the subject the foundation only is being laid. It were worse than useless to torture ourselves with the tortures of others unless there were hope of practical gain by it. In what is to follow there should be profit for all concerned,—no less for our readers than for the unfortunates whose silent miseries are walled away from public sight.





L. W. ROGERS

