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THE AURAS OF THE CHRISTIAN SAINTS

By JAMES I. WEDGWOOD

On reading the lives of the mediaeval Christian saints one is constantly struck with the mention of occurrences, supposedly miraculous, but which the student of occultism knows to be well within the economy of nature. The modern skeptic regards miracles as the gloss which subsequent generations has laid upon the lives of remarkable men, with a view to still further enhancing their *kudos*, and looks upon them as the accretion of an age when recourse to the marvelous was the surest means of swaying the human mind. None the less, many of these occurrences seem to be well authenticated, "of evidential value" as the modern psychic researcher would put it and to have been the marvel of the faithful during the life times of the saints, as witness the case of St. Theresa. Moreover, when these strange happenings can be shown to have their parallel in modern times, little room remains for skepticism.

One of the most constant of these occurrences was the appearance around the heads or persons of the saints of lights. It was related of St. John of the Cross, the well-known Spanish mystic who wrote the "Ascent of Mount Carmel," that "a certain brightness darted from his countenance when he left the altar of prayer." When St. John of Mantha celebrated his first Mass, his head became surrounded with light, and he was vouchsafed a vision of his Master. St. Philip Neri, again, was not only seen enveloped in light, but was constantly levitated from the ground. Moreover, St. Philip himself, saw St. Charles Borromeo, and St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, similarly wrapped in a blaze of light.

Now all this is perfectly intelligible to the student of occultism, for these luminous appearances are readily explicable on the hypothesis of the human aura. There is a tradition, witnessed alike in Christian and Pagan art, surviving also in the crowns and distinctive head-dresses of kings and priests, that great persons are surrounded with such luminous rays. These are referred to in the works of occultists like Paracelsus; they were investigated by Baron von Reichenbach in the course of his mesmeric experiments, they are well within the experience of spiritualists, and more recently they have been studied at Nancy and Paris under the title of the N rays. The subject was first, however, treated in a thoroughly scientific fashion in the literature of modern Theosophy, and the book by Mr. C. W. Leadbeater entitled "Man: Visible and Invisible" is likely for some time to remain the standard exposition of the subject. According to theosophical investigators, each living organism is surrounded with an aura. In the case of human beings, this luminous aura is ordinarily ovoid in appearance. The colors of the aura, the degree of luminosity, and the extent to which it stands out from the periphery of the physical form, are determined by the

character and degree of development of the person under observation. The aura is immediately affected by modifications of thought and feeling; and it is known that whenever a person is engaged in lofty effort, whether it be of spiritual, mental, or emotional character, the aura becomes more luminous, its colors clearer, the darker shades becoming correspondingly dimmed for the time being. It is not an uncommon occurrence, in the experience of theosophical lecturers, for members of the audience to rise, after having listened to some reference to the aura, and to say that they have often noticed these luminous appearances around the heads of speakers, lecturers, or preachers in church, but that they never knew there was anything singular in such vision.

In the light of this statement, there is little difficulty in realising why the auric lights should so often have been discernible around the saints. The brilliancy of the aura would naturally be intense in the case of a person engaged in lofty spiritual exercises, such as devout prayer or the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. It would thus be more readily discernible by those whose psychic faculty was not normally operative. Moreover, the intense spiritual vibrations, or magnetism, proceeding from a person of exalted spirituality, would naturally bring about a temporary enhancement of this psychic faculty, in much the same way that highly evolved speakers stimulate their audiences into increased spirituality and psychic sensitiveness. Nor is it unlikely that the lower psychic faculties were more commonly active in the middle ages than now. Whatever opinion may be held as to the value of the religious influence of the period, there can be no dispute that the masses at large were completely under its sway. Those were the "ages of faith," and men's minds were steeped in the atmosphere of religion. That atmosphere may not have been high in influence, but it kept the people firmly linked to, and in touch with, the higher worlds. With the growth of intellect, the rise of science and the spread of popular education, these other influences are naturally, for the time being, occluded. With the sinking of the world into greater materiality and worldliness, with the iron grip of commercialism, small wonder is it that the touch with the adjacent plane of existence is less close than once it was, or that the growth of the free intellect, has temporarily shut out the working of the psychic senses. In the bright future, even now dawning for the race, these higher faculties will again awaken into activity. Then will life be so much the richer and more harmonious, by reason of the power mankind will possess of seeing further into the heart of things. Spiritual realities will no more be thrust aside as worthless superstition, matter will be subdued to spirit, no longer will the body be the fast prison house of the soul, but then shall we pass on from glory to glory, equipped with the sword of wisdom, and the calm certainty of knowledge.

THE OCCULTISM IN THE SHAKESPEARE PLAYS—Concluded

By L. W. ROGERS

It is an extremely significant fact that the Shakespeare plays which the critics are generally agreed upon as being the greatest of them all are those which contain the most occultism. No play has received such universal praise as *The Tempest*. It was the last dramatic work of the poet's life and in it is seen, according to general opinion, the acme of his matchless art. Now *The Tempest*, of all the plays, is the most occult. As would be expected there is much difference of opinion about its purpose, but none about its merit. To its analysis learned minds have given the most pains-

taking labor and it is the theme of many a weighty volume. To the student of occultism this play and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are companions and constitute a class in the Shakespeare plays. The opinions about them, and particularly about *The Tempest*, are almost as numerous as the critics; but perhaps nobody is better qualified to interpret such literature than Victor Hugo. Of these two plays he says: "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* depicts the action of the invisible world on man; *The Tempest*, symbolizes the action of man on the invisible world."

Prospero is the central figure in *The Tempest* and in him we have a picture of the adept, absolutely controlling the lower orders of life in the invisible world and through that power controlling in perfect mastery the elements. He is the white magician. He has omnipotent power but uses it only for righteous ends and always with mercy. He sometimes temporarily assumes an apparent harshness but is always in fact the personification of gentleness and no offense is too serious for him to unhesitatingly forgive and forget. He returns good for evil, and hardship is brought upon the wrong-doers only for the purpose of bringing the arrogant and conscienceless to their senses. He has clairvoyant vision and moves about in his astral body for he is invisibly present when Ariel arraigns the three evil-doers for their misdeeds. He knows of the danger that threatens the king and Gonzalo and sends Ariel to prevent the would-be assassins from murdering them by awakening Gonzalo at the right instant. He has the power to instantly hypnotize Ferdinand and disarm him with a stick when he draws his sword. To the invisibles that serve him Prospero issues positive commands and exacts unquestioning obedience. Fleming says of this character that Prospero is the personification of wisdom, of power that can execute justice, rewarding right and circumventing wrong.

It was through control of the nature spirits that Prospero produced the storm at sea and drove the ship containing his treacherous brother and his allies to the island shore; and it was through his command of the same entities that his further plans were successfully executed. Ariel, the chief of the invisible host that serve Prospero, not any too willingly, is visible or invisible at pleasure and assumes instantaneously, various forms at will. He possesses the power of glamour in remarkable degree and the shipwrecked men are fully persuaded that the vessel is lost. Ariel reports to Prospero that "the ship, though invisible to them, is safe in the harbor." He separates the stranded men and each group or individual believes all others have perished. The king believes his son is dead while the prince is certain his father has perished; and through the state of mind thus brought about the problem in hand is worked out successfully. In working them up into the condition that finally made them tractable and penitent, Ariel, in the form of a harpy, frightened the king, Sebastian and Antonio—"three men of sin"—nearly out of their wits. Again, at the head of a band of the denizens of the world invisible, who take visible form, he drives the marauders and would-be murderers from Prospero's home. The final task assigned him by Prospero is to carry out the magician's promise to the king that on the return voyage he shall have "calm seas" and "auspicious gales." With the execution of this task Ariel gained his longed-for freedom from serving the magician whom he called "great master" and won the life he much preferred:

"Merrily, merrily shall I live now

'Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

In *The Tempest* there are more actors from the invisible world than from the visible and all are under the control and direction of Prospero,

whose compassion is as great as his power. He addresses the would-be assassins as "my friends" and says "let us not remember our troubles past."

If the critics could accept the very apparent fact that the author of these wonderful plays was a great occultist their difficulties and bewilderment would disappear. For one thing they would no longer marvel at his limitless knowledge on all the subjects he touched. Hazlitt contents himself with calling it genius and says that "there can be little doubt that Shakespeare was the most universal genius that ever lived," and again he remarks that the great dramatist had "the same insight into the world of imagination that he had into the world of reality."

It is amusing to see how different people are struck with the poet's exact technical knowledge on subjects with which they happen to be familiar and how they try to account for it, ignoring the fact that he is quite as much at home with the other subjects. Lord Mulgrave, who was a distinguished naval officer, says that the first scene in *The Tempest* "is a very striking instance of Shakespeare's knowledge in a professional science, the most difficult to attain without the help of experience. He must have acquired it by conversation with some of the most skillful seamen of that time." If the poet dramatist acquired his marvelous fund of information about the visible world, let alone the invisible, by consulting experts on each subject it would puzzle the critics more to figure out how he had time for anything else than to satisfactorily account for his genius. But if we accept the most probable explanation—that he was an occultist to whom cause and effect in the two worlds lay open—the solution of all the puzzles in his literary work become simple.

Those who cannot see that the occultism which permeates such of these plays as it naturally belongs to is there because it is as legitimate a part of them as trees and grass are part of a landscape, have, so far as I know, offered no other explanation than that "Shakespeare was making a concession to the superstition of his times." But such an explanation is wholly inadequate for a number of reasons. In the first place if it were merely a concession—a sop thrown to the ignorant—there would be no reason for it being the notable thing it is in some of the plays. It would be incidental, not vital. We would expect it to be in the form of allusions here and there, as a politician throws out to his audience complimentary and pleasing remarks that have no bearing on his arguments and no part in his purpose. But why should there be a "concession" at all? Why was it necessary? Why was it more necessary in the Shakespeare plays than in any others of that age? Why didn't Jonson and other successful dramatists of the same age have to make the same concession? As a matter of fact precisely the opposite course then, as now, appealed pleasingly to the people. In *The Alchemist* Jonson makes a savage attack upon astrology. He represents its practitioners as barefaced frauds of the most contemptible type and all their patrons as credulous fools. Quite consistently, too, with the temper of the play, he mercilessly ridicules the Puritans and he must have pleased his audiences mightily by painting them as unprincipled grasps among whom you search in vain for a redeeming virtue.

The Shakespeare plays were not written to cater to the passions of the times. With their inherent strength and beauty they can win their way against the prejudices of any age. Moreover, if it had been necessary for a play to have some "superstition" in it, in order to succeed, why was it necessary in some of these plays and not in others? If it was necessary

for the success of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* why was it not also necessary for *As You Like It*? If it was essential for the success of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* why not also for *Othello*? The simple truth is that the occultism appears only where it naturally belongs and for the purpose of teaching the lesson that is being presented.

But there are other reasons for rejecting the theory that the great dramatist was making a concession to the ignorance of his times. The plays do not belong exclusively to that age and bear most convincing internal evidence that they were not written for that time any more than for this time or for the future generations. Certainly nobody better than the author himself understood that. It was more than two centuries before this greatest literary achievement of the modern world came to be really appreciated in fair degree. It will undoubtedly be more fully appreciated in future centuries than in our own, for what is its "superstition" to this generation will be its science to the next. It belongs to all times because it deals with the fundamental things in human nature and will be studied with profit as long as men seek to analyze human motives and study the evolution of human character.

Perhaps the most cogent answer of all to the flimsy explanation that the great poet-dramatist was making "a concession to the superstition of his times" is that such a course would have been a prostitution of his genius inconsistent with the character of his work. His greatness as a teacher is beyond all question; and nothing could be more reprehensible than for one who is far beyond others in intelligence to fasten upon the people wrong beliefs. To lend his pen to any such base purpose would be evidence of a moral weakness and cowardice that could not have belonged to the character of the man who produced these plays, for their moral strength and grandeur is more striking than even their intellectual power. No man capable of that ignoble course could possibly have created such characters as Prospero and Cordelia, or have given us the lofty ideals we find in such plays as *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The truth is that instead of degrading his work to fit the popular conception of his times he did precisely the opposite; and in an age when lust, cruelty and revenge were exceedingly popular he exalted purity, pity and forgiveness.

PRISON REFORM—II

By IRVING S. COOPER

The prison problem is possible of solution. Some reforms are already in successful operation in many states, others are being tried tentatively by clear-seeing judges and prison officials. There are also other remedial measures not yet attempted, but which will be within a decade.

Turning our attention to actual reforms, we find that what is called the "indeterminate sentence" is receiving a great deal of attention at the present time. It is rightly assumed that no judge can get deep enough insight into the true character of an offender, during the brief time he is on the docket, to determine how long it will take to cure him. When an offender is given the indeterminate sentence he is sent to prison, not for a specific length of time, but until he is cured, which may take a few months or a lifetime. The prisoner soon realizes that the shortest way to freedom lies in good behavior and an upright character. There is no incentive to

right living in serving a specified sentence. Certain release will come whether the prisoner has reformed or not. The merit system in vogue in some prisons, whereby the term is shortened with every year of good behavior, instills only a careful regard of prison rules but does not change the man's character. Of course, to properly and justly handle the indeterminate sentence, the prison must be controlled by a supervising board who shall personally examine each prisoner from time to time. The indeterminate sentence in some form or other has been successfully adopted in the following states, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Statistics show that the increase of crime in these states is less than in those which have not put this plan in force.

The *Parole* is another splendid idea which has done much to alleviate suffering and crime and to relieve congested prisons. Under this system a well behaved prisoner is allowed his liberty. He is obliged, however, to report at stated times to the prison authorities concerning his movements. When his term has expired, if he has given no offence, he has full liberty without supervision. In this way a man has a chance to become a good citizen once more and to keep his family from starving by securing work. I believe the paroling board of the prison aids him in this. If he reverts to his old associations again he is sent back to the prison and made to serve out his term there. The convicts themselves usually make it "warm" for a returned paroled prisoner because his failure makes it so much the harder for them to secure their own release. The present parole system, however, is wrapped up in a great deal of apparently necessary red tape. Every friend and relative of the prisoner is written to in order to secure his past history. Many a man has preferred to remain years in prison rather than endure such a wholesale publication of his disgrace. The prison authorities could afford to be a little less prying in their investigations, and give a greater number of prisoners their release, if society would modify a little its self-righteous attitude toward a convict and earnestly try to help him lead an honest life. Even as it is the parole system is doing good work and has been adopted in greater or lesser extent by Oregon, South Dakota, Indiana, Virginia, Arizona, New York, Ohio, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Kansas, Michigan, Kentucky, Washington, Illinois and Idaho.

Judge Cleland, of the Maxwell Street Court in Chicago, has inaugurated a modification of the parole system which he calls the "suspended sentence." When a guilty offender is sentenced, he is given the maximum sentence, but with the permission of the police department, is released on parole *without going to jail at all*. He is made to promise, however, that he will not do the thing again which led to the wrong doing, and is obliged to report at stated intervals to the judge. If he fails to keep his promise he is sent to prison to serve out the full term. The results have been astounding. The men and women were put on their mettle, they felt they were being trusted, and during thirteen months, out of one thousand two hundred and thirty-one persons placed on parole, 92% faithfully kept the terms of their agreement. Police officers assured the judge that crime in the worst district in Chicago was reduced one half. After the time of their parole elapsed, none, with a few trivial exceptions, afterwards committed any offence against the law. By this merciful method a man's reputation was not ruined and he could go about his work without terror of discovery or shrinking from the scorn of neighbors. Probation officers were of course

necessary to watch the offenders. Without funds to employ such the judge hit upon the plan of securing the help of the business and professional men in his district. Four hundred of these gladly offered their services, and frequently did splendid work by giving the paroled men employment. Liquor was found to be responsible for a large proportion of crime. Judge Cleland invited all the liquor dealers in his district to his chambers and after outlining his plans secured their promise not to sell any liquor to a paroled man. They all lived up to their word with one exception and he was given summary punishment. Many of the offenders gave up the drink habit altogether.

For some time an experiment has been carried on at Elmira, N.Y. under the supervision of Mr. Brockway. Here a genuine attempt has been made to reform the prisoners, not to punish them. A recent report of the board of managers states, "That there has not been a case of flogging for nearly seven years, nor putting in irons for nearly four years, and for nearly two years past there has been no form of corporal punishment whatsoever. Punishment has simply gone out of use, no apparent necessity for it having arisen." What a contrast with systems used elsewhere! How is this result accomplished? "At this reformatory a newcomer enters the second grade, from which by good records he may advance to the first and by bad records fall back to the third. There are during the year nearly three thousand inmates treated, whose ages range from sixteen years to thirty years. Several trades are taught, and in both trade and school work great care is taken not to give the prisoner tasks beyond his physical and mental capacity, and equal care to make such tasks such as to call forth the best work that is in him. When a prisoner is said to violate any of the rules, he is entitled to a full and fair trial by the board of managers, who spare neither time nor trouble to make these investigations thorough and impartial."

Here is the keynote of the prison ideal, possible but not yet actual, which we should work for with all our energy. We should do away with our prisons and penitentiaries and substitute in their place schools. A criminal ought to be looked upon as a *morally ignorant* man and *taught*, not punished. We should eliminate the institutions under state control, where intriguing politics place totally unfit persons in responsible positions, and found a series of schools under national control, handled by men who have passed a rigid civil service examination. Each state would pay its proportional share of the total expense in running the schools, determined by the number of offenders sent by each state to the schools. One school should be reserved for the most hardened and incorrigible offenders, another for the youngest, and most youthful in crime, the others for grades lying between these two extremes. In this way the schools could not teach crime. These national schools would teach each one a trade or occupation, surround him with regenerative influences such as books and music and encourage study and thrift. The prisoners should not work for nothing but ought to receive a small wage. If the person was married that money would go toward supporting the family, if single a bank account would be started in his name. I have great faith in the influence of a bank account to make a man lift up his head and feel that he is becoming a good citizen. The indeterminate sentence would be in effect. Only patients would be sent to these schools who were manifestly unfit to profit by the suspended sentence. By including agriculture in addition to the manufacturing trades, the schools would be practically self-supporting, thereby reducing the tax rates very materially. In California alone the two penitentiaries cost one million dollars annually.

Another criminal blunder we should battle against with all our might is that of judicial murder, called capital punishment. This is not an educational method and its value as a scheme to remove a dangerous man from society is pure illusion. As we know from our study of the astral world, a morally ignorant man, thirsting for revenge, can work far more harm on humanity after death than he can while alive but confined in a school. Besides, by murdering him, we are preventing him from gaining needed lessons.

All of these reform measures demand that vigorous and sustained influence be brought to bear on our legislatures. Let us by speech and pen, by the power of the public press and the pressure of reform organizations force laws to be enacted which will aid the criminal in his bitter struggle for an honest life.

[In the next number, Mr. Cooper will discuss some of the ways to]
[introduce and maintain theosophic study in our prisons.]

ANENT HUMAN EVOLUTION

By F. MILTON WILLIS

NECESSITY AND FREE-WILL.

Evolution has been well defined as "latent potentialities becoming active powers." In civilized society a very important factor in man's evolution is his daily work. This work should be, if possible, in conformity with our particular genius, for thus we most quickly unfold ourselves. But howsoever humble or mean be the work, let it be done with the whole heart, and there will flow from it an abiding spiritual good,—a growing conception of harmony and proportion, whence will flow and increase a living idea of justice and so on. And we may rest assured, and draw from the thought a glad and sufficing inspiration, that from the least shall the persistent self-activity or loving concentration cause to evolve the greatest and the all; for one thing will be found to lead to another until, in our enlargement, we levy upon the whole world and upon all of our faculty.

Not in any one life shall the greatest and the all be evolved; not in one life can it be, but in a grand succession of lives, each the manifestation of our spirit for the purpose, among others, of affording a field and opportunity for the continued activity of our genius. For be it remembered that the spirit can never be all incarnated, that behind, above, inclusive of all that appears of us in this world, it, the true being, persists, superior to death—to which death is but a vicissitude—calmly experiencing the passage of life into death, of death into life; ever growing in self-knowledge; ever by its own free activity striving to guide through the realm of rigid necessity the weak vessel of its self-limitation; and ever storing up in itself for its weal or its woe the potent interpretations of its deeds and misdeeds.

This thought of traversing a realm of necessity cannot be too carefully pondered. It has a critical bearing on our view of life. Despite the fact that we find ourselves acted upon by heredity, chance (as we ordinarily believe), illness and all other sorts of constraint, both internal and external; despite the fact that we may perhaps be born amid sin and poverty and wretchedness, we are conscious of a freedom of choice—free-will, we will call it. Free-will is an essential characteristic of the true and abiding self which has partly merged itself, for its greater realization, in physical matter. Through free-will do we place ourselves amid and

emerge from maze after maze of our own creation, for, by our own free acts in one earth life do we weave the circumstances in which we find ourselves in the next, and through our inner, inherent freedom have we the power to escape from the webs we have woven. In this interaction with our environment are we constantly evolving within us powers which the slow processes of nature could hardly develop in time interminable, succession of lives without end.

Essentially gods, we yet are ignorant on the lower planes of the universe, and must learn the lessons of those planes if we are to rise into realized godhood; hence this free merging of ourselves in this realm of necessity. It is as if a person of fine insights, broad learning and sympathetic heart should find himself wanting in the free, orderly sequence of thought, and should, of his own accord, for the purpose of acquiring that power in which he is deficient, apply himself to logical written expression of his ideas, thus merging himself, for his own discipline and the greater realization of himself, in one phase of himself, the rigid limitations of logical expression—his own creation.

In regard to this realm of necessity, it even seems that it is by a wrathful, spiteful God that some of us have been foisted upon the world,—so miserable our beginning of life, so wretched our surroundings; and that our struggle out of the mire of our limitations is in very defiance of Him. Inasmuch as most of us know not that we are self-limited, that the mazes in which we find ourselves are of our own creation; since we see not that we are just what we have made ourselves, that the general conditions of our birth we have ourselves predetermined, that we are by no means created at birth, but are merely coming back with a vast, complex mass of experiences to our credit, to begin again the discipline of life; inasmuch as we ordinarily see not these mighty truths, we nevertheless struggle to rise as against constraint from without, we battle, as it were, against God Himself,—striving to grow in self-realization, we confront defiantly even the universe: seeking the satisfaction of our desires and knowing not that we are baffled only by circumstances which are but the result of our own activities, we nevertheless pause not in our seeking, even though, to our thinking, God and His Universe oppose us!

Whence this god-like confidence in ourselves? Whence but from kinship with Him, the Author of our being? And can we believe that from Him the All-knowing, even a parricide seeking a seeming good by the murder would call forth anger? No more than that we should become angered at the wounding of a child by a bauble it had grasped. Indeed, could we fully realize how truly one is humanity, even we should no more grow angry at one who has injured us than we do at a finger that pains us.

So necessity—these hard conditions of our lives, this army of difficulties to be overcome—is but the discipline, self-imposed, through which our true self is time after time to pass, each time to return to its own high plane, the heaven-world, successively enriched with the wealth of its outer and inner lives; and free-will is, as already intimated, that divine characteristic of our nature which has led us forth into these outer planes of the universe, has woven about us this cocoon of constraining circumstances, and is in the course of the ages to release us, transfigured.

* * *

CONSCIENCE.

The condition of sin is conscious knowledge. The animal, the savage, the cultured, are guilty only in so far as they know. Were I entirely wise and completely free, I should understand all evil and invariably will the

good. Being, however, a bond-slave in so far as I am ignorant and circumscribed by barriers, yet feeling an inherent and impelling desire to increase at almost any cost my experience and knowledge, I at times strive to pass beyond my limitations. How often, though, does the line of least resistance lead me blindly into opposition to nature's higher laws! The suffering and misery resulting from these errors, are, however, gradually—in the course of a number of earth-lives—to lead to the accomplishment of my highest good; for thus is conscience built into the soul, the reincarnating self.

Founded upon experience, conscience is as authoritative—so far as the experience has gone—as the remembrance of a child, that fire burns and is to be shunned. Individuals, however, or souls, being of different ages—from childhood, the stage of the savage, to perfect manhood, the stage of the Christs,—and consequently the earth-lives of one person having perhaps been far fewer than the earth-lives of another, and therefore his experience far less, the conscience of the one must of course be far less developed than that of the other.

Placed before certain crises in life, the conscience sometimes flickers—emits an uncertain light—the path of action is not clear to us, we hesitate, wondering which way to turn. The secret of our doubt is, insufficient experience in the past. Unguided by the dim remembrance of pain from errors of the sort in the past—that is, our conscience raising no voice to warn, one way or the other,—we turn to our reason. Conscience has been called the voice of God. It is, however, as intimated, but reminiscence, and should ever be scrutinised by reason.

Reason—each individual's reason—is so much of his divine heritage as he has attained to by his own exertions; it is so much of the divine light as can shine in him at the stage of development he has reached.

It is through conscience that we are being led gradually into unison with the divine will. While founded upon painful experiences, conscience does not develop solely through such experiences. When a high stage of culture has been reached, in the course of a great number of earth-lives, observation and thought supplement painful experiences, and conscience is carried to such a degree of refinement that a mere wrong thought causes remorse.

The time is coming to every human being when conscience will have become intuitive wisdom so complete that he can do no wrong in this world, for he will have passed through every type of experience and will have definitely and consciously aligned his will with the divine will, as have already the Elder Brothers of humanity, the Lords of Compassion, the Christs.

HINTS TO YOUNG STUDENTS OF OCCULTISM—IX

Some sound advice can be given to seekers after occult wisdom in two words: *act now*. Don't postpone good intentions. The world is full of people who have a vague notion that at some indefinite time and in some dimly comprehended fashion they shall get to the point of being unselfishly useful to the world. Everywhere we meet the people who are going to do something "sometime." One is waiting until real estate takes a "boom" so that the enhanced value of his investments will pay his debts and *then* he will be free to devote himself to theosophical work. Another has ability as a public speaker and, with theosophical knowledge to impart, could render

invaluable service. He realizes it but feels that he must stay in business until he "has made a lot of money," not realizing that he doesn't in the least need a lot of money but that competent and sincere work will win its way. Another has put his financial faith in mines and is only waiting till they develop and *then*, well just wait, something tremendous will happen. This victim of delusion misses the point that a dollar in the hand is worth more than a million in the mine that have not been found. The dollar he really could give might put a theosophical book in a public library or buy a dinner for a hungry family or mend the shoes of a shivering child; but the millions he dreams about will very probably never do anything for him except keep him impoverished in the search for them; and if the highly improbable should occur and they ever really appear they will so engross his attention in taking care of them that he won't have time to think of anything else. Another tells us he is studying theosophy carefully and thoroughly and, when he has mastered it, he will begin to teach; quite overlooking the fact that if he were to live a thousand years in this particular life he would not have "mastered it;" and that if he really desires to teach others there are always those at hand to instruct in some way. The test of ability to teach is not the fact that the would-be teacher knows everything but that he knows more than those to be taught. "Every contact is an opportunity."

And thus it is with those who wait. The delusion may have one form or another but the result is the same—inactivity and loss of opportunity. The very fact that they feel that they should do something is the evidence that they have reached the point in evolution where they *must* do something or miss their opportunity; that is to say, fail in what the Hindoo calls their *dharma*, the next step in their evolution that can be taken along the line of least resistance.

Act now. It is a thousand times better to do a little at once than to decide that a great deal shall be done in the indefinite future. Mexico is sometimes called by the travelers the *mañana* country. The peons who serve you readily agree that anything you desire to have done, shall be done, but—*manana senor*,—to-morrow! Never to-day on any account, if it can be avoided. But to-morrow, oh, yes, *si senor!* anything you like, only not now. And so they sit in the sun, and doze and dream, in perfect confidence that it will be easier to-morrow. It is an attitude of mind in perfect keeping with the accompanying poverty of results. It is the same species of delusion that afflicts those of higher intellectual development who yet do not stop to analyze their own motives and to see the inconsistency of their declarations. Anybody who really will do something in the future will be found doing a little something now—mingling at least a little present performance with his future promises. He will realize that the way to do things is to begin, no matter how feeble the beginning.

* * *

Act now. An occult significance invests those two little words. Action is the very expression of life on the physical plane. We are missing the purpose of life by inaction. We are simply marking time, not moving forward in the evolutionary march. So important is action that it is better even to blunder, while trying to do our best, than not to attempt to do anything at all. It is better for an infant to try to walk, and fall, than never to make the venture. The pain of the fall will pass and a permanent lesson will be learned. In India a mistaken class of devotees withdraw

from the world of affairs and by cutting off almost entirely all relationship with the rest of the human race seek through isolation and inaction to avoid responsibility for wrong acts and seek salvation for the self. It is said by occult investigators that they succeed so well in the desire to hold themselves aloof from the race that a terrible isolation is their future fate. Against this foolish course a great spiritual truth was once proclaimed: "*Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.*" And so none may escape his responsibilities to others by withdrawing, tortoise-like, into his shell of self-interests.

* * *

The second word shares the importance of the first. "Now" signifies the most vital period of all time. The magic of success lies within that little word. The man who procrastinates necessarily misses opportunities. The very essence of success is the ability to instantly seize and utilize an opportunity. Every event has its "psychological moment." The most momentous affairs of the world swing this way, or that way, with the instantaneous decision of some master mind. On the other hand the results in many a battle and in many a national crisis have been changed and the tide of success turned in the direction of disaster by the hesitation and indecision of one who was the unfortunate victim of procrastination. To form the habit of quick decision and prompt action is to arm oneself with a mighty weapon for successful work; and with the cultivation of such a habit of life gradually comes the ability to recognize the propitious moment when it arrives. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries." That tide is often at the flood for a moment only and he who, through procrastination, fails to utilize that golden moment has paid dearly for his negligence.

Procrastination is one of the fetters that binds, one of the bars that imprisons. If we would make progress worthy of students of occultism we must free ourselves from this encumbrance. We must acquire the art of swift decision and immediate action. We must not be postponers. We must not be content with resolving that a thing ought to be done, and then quieting the divine insistence of the higher self with the comfortable thought that sometime, somehow, we will do it. We must acquire the beneficent habit of doing things for the common welfare and of doing them now.

PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES

One of the most promising of the organizations recently formed for theosophical propaganda work is the "Theosophical Mission League of Greater New York." It is composed of members of the Central and New York Lodges, of New York City, and of the Newark Lodge, T. S. The proposed work is to disseminate the more important truths of theosophy, such as the brotherhood of man, his unity with the Divine, reincarnation, karma and the existence of the Guardians of humanity, among those in prisons and reformatories, the people in tenement districts and the children of such people. This branch of the T. S. Order of Service has issued a circular letter to the theosophists in its locality calling upon them to "show to the world that theosophy means more to its followers than a mere intellectual cult, a mass of philosophic abstractions with which we are

dreaming away our lives; that it is what it is represented to be; living truth—a knowledge of the wisdom of God, which brings to those who accept it a wonderful illumination of understanding, a right perception of life's phenomena, an ennobling of character, and a great step forward and upward in their evolution; that it is, in every sense practical, forcing people who realize its truth mentally, to live it actually."

The chairman is Mr. M. J. Whitty and among the members are several other energetic and capable men and women who will undoubtedly give a good account of themselves in the work to be done.

The editor of this magazine is at work upon a little pamphlet entitled "What Theosophy Is," and especially designed for propaganda work. It is intended for circulation among those to whom theosophy is new—as a simple, concise statement of the principles and teachings and their value in every-day life. It will be printed in a style to permit it to be mailed in an ordinary envelope and on paper of such weight that it can be mailed in an ordinary letter without increased postage. The price will not exceed five cents per single copy and a close figure will be given those buying in quantities for distribution.

The itinerary of Mr. Jinarajadasa for the winter is as follows, the dates being approximate and subject to slight revision:

Minneapolis, until December 27; Freeport, Illinois, December 29 to January 5; Kansas City, January 6 to February 6; Lincoln and Freemont, Nebraska, February 7 to 28; Denver, March 1 to 21.

Mr. Irving S. Cooper returned to Chicago November 18, after a most successful lecture tour to the Atlantic coast and back, stopping on the return trip from Boston at Springfield, Rochester, Buffalo, Grand Rapids and Battle Creek, where he addressed audiences of from 150 to 200 people at the Macfadden Sanitarium. Leaving Chicago the 19th he stops for lectures at Kansas City, Butte and Anaconda, Montana, and probably at Seattle, on the way home to San Francisco. At nearly all the points visited Mr. Cooper organized new activities among the members of the Theosophical Society in addition to his work with the public.

Two public lectures by L. W. Rogers have been arranged for Chicago in addition to those previously announced at Handel Hall, where the best audiences have numbered between 450 and 500 people. The additional lectures are at Recital Hall at 3 p. m., November 29 and December 6.

Ten lectures have also been arranged for Detroit, at Schwankovsky Hall, on the following dates: December 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th and 21st, at 8 o'clock in the evenings.

To attain to a knowledge of ourselves, we must banish prejudice, passion and sloth.

—*Socrates.*

THE THEOSOPHICAL BOOK COMPANY

Between Boston and Chicago, a distance of more than a thousand miles, there has been no agency for the sale and circulation of theosophical literature. I have tried to give some attention to the matter but with constant travelling it has been done under great disadvantages. The deficiency is now supplied by the organization of the Theosophical Book Company, the executive of which is the secretary, G. E. Boughton, as announced on the cover page of this magazine. It is a great relief to me to be able to turn over to the new institution all orders for books and for my published lectures which have heretofore taken time from the lecture and magazine work that could not well be spared; and it is especially gratifying to be able to place that important matter in the hands of one whose efficient and disinterested work for theosophy in the past is the guarantee that it will receive the most careful and faithful attention. Those who have been ordering the lectures and other literature from me at 1404 Osgood St., Chicago, will please address future orders to G. E. Boughton, 98 Jay St., Albany, N. Y.

L. W. ROGERS

THE AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST TO BE ENLARGED

With the next issue of this magazine its size will be increased by one half, giving fifty per cent more space and thus relieving the editor of the embarrassment of occasionally omitting some of the regular features that readers are wont to look for each month. Hereafter the department for questions and answers will be a fixture and our readers can resume sending questions with the certainty of obtaining answers. A theosophical magazine can have no more useful and instructive feature. Other additions will be made which will speak for themselves next month.

A WEIGHING IN THE BALANCE

While the British Section of the Theosophical Society seems still to be hopelessly lost in the fog of misunderstanding relative to the misrepresentations about Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, the German Section and others, including the American, have put themselves right in the matter by suitable resolutions, and the Indian Section is moving with apparent unanimity in the same direction. A letter from President Besant on the subject is eagerly awaited by the American members, for her sage views may be relied upon to clear away some of the mental fog that obstructs the vision of many. Sometime, we shall all look back with astonishment upon the misconceptions and misunderstandings that have so acutely agitated the Society, and have served as one of the severest testings the membership has ever had.

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself; nothing, but the triumph of principles.

—Emerson.

PURELY PERSONAL

To our friends:—

There are many readers of the AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST who take a deep interest in its fortunes and some of whom often express a desire to assist in some little way that does not take too much time from their limited leisure. Here is one way: the editor is an extremely busy person, being constantly engaged with public lectures, besides attending to both the editorial work and business management of the magazine, and acting as chairman of the Propaganda League of the Theosophical Society,—all of which require close and constant attention and involve a heavy daily correspondence. Add to this the fact that it must be done under the difficulties of continually moving about from one part of the country to another and you will understand how it is that there is very seldom an opportunity to look at a newspaper or current periodical, much less to systematically read them. And yet many things are appearing in them that would furnish excellent material for editorial comment. If the good friends of the American Theosophist would clip out such of these articles as they may encounter as they read and send them to the editor it would be of very great practical assistance.

There is a wide range of matter that would be useful. Anything along the line of what might be called current psychological events would be very acceptable and also articles appearing on any metaphysical or theosophical subject. Anything *against* theosophy is particularly desirable, because it may be answered and a misconception may thus be set right. Any alleged fact, or any argument that supports materialism, is also good material.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

When Mrs. Besant visited Chicago in the autumn of 1907 her public utterances were so grossly misrepresented by the newspapers as to lead her to say, according to an Australian paper recently received, that the American reporters are the most reckless of truth of any in the world. The editor of the AMERICAN THEOSOPHIST has recently had cause to ponder over that statement. Soon after beginning a course of lectures in Chicago he chanced to see in flaming headlines the announcement that a theosophist had declared that in his next incarnation Mr. John D. Rockefeller would certainly be a tramp, begging for his bread and "stealing" rides on the railways he now owns. "What theosophist could have uttered such nonsense," thought the editor as he read. A wonderfully vivid and realistic account of just what awful things would happen to Mr. Rockefeller in his next incarnation followed, and just as the editor had asked himself the second time what ass could have said anything of the kind, his eye fell upon the opening line of the next paragraph, which read: "such were the statements of L. W. Rogers, in his lecture yesterday at Handel Hall!"

And this was only the beginning. It was soon discovered that one or two of the newspaper men came for the express purpose of "getting a sensation" and if the lecturer did not furnish it they kindly helped him out. The Rockefeller story grew out of a question from the audience on the point of whether a man like Mr. Rockefeller would necessarily be the world's richest man in another incarnation, or whether another side of his nature might show forth. The simple answer of two or three sentences grew under the imaginative pen of the reporter, into a lengthy story with several pictures of the oil king in various rôles provided by the description.

A week or two later somebody asked if the fact that Miss Katherine Elkins was engaged to be married to the Duke of Abruzzi would indicate that in a former incarnation she was a titled personage. A few remarks on the impossibility of determining a person's place in evolution by a title, or the lack of it, gave the sensation reporters their opportunity. A half-column story appeared in which Miss Elkins in a previous incarnation "walked the imperial courts of Rome" and did other dramatic things. The story was given to the Associated Press and was wired to the Italian newspapers. Nearly a column of what the Italian press had to say about the impertinence of Americans was wired back to the American papers, expressing the hope that Senator Elkins, the father of the young lady, the theosophical lecturer, and all the rest would stop discussing the duke's affairs. The reporter must have been overjoyed at the size of the row he created. And now comes Senator Elkins with a statement to the press, evidently the first word he has uttered on the subject notwithstanding columns have been printed, to the effect that his daughter is not, and has not been, engaged to marry anybody! And so perhaps the whole matter is another sensation dream! The moral of which is, don't take press stories too seriously but remember that the mission of the newspapers in this part of the world is to get interesting news and if it isn't readily forthcoming to get it anyway.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

In a thoughtful article on human life *The Outlook* gives expression to the following sensible ideas:

It is unjust that this child shall begin his life in the slums! How do you know that he began his life in the slums? Are you sure that life begins at the cradle? That there is no other life back of that cradle out of which he emerged into this? It is unjust that this man, who has lived all his life in an atmosphere of crime and superstition, with no Gospel preached to him that he could understand, should go out at death into the darkness of a hopeless night! How do you know that he goes out into the darkness of a hopeless night? What revelation has given you the right to say that God's mercy does not endure forever, but stops at the grave? It is unjust that this useful citizen, this great statesman, this indispensable mother, should have life broken off in its prime when so much depends on that life's continuance! How do you know that life is broken off at its prime? How do you know that this statesman is not called to a higher service? That this indispensable mother cannot render greater service to her child through the ministry of the spirit than she ever could tabernacled in the body and hampered by housekeeping cares?

Of thy word unspoken thou art master; thy spoken word is master of thee.

—*Eastern Proverb.*

We often dislike those whom we harm more than those who harm us.

—*Tolstoi.*