

"Point out the Way"—however dimly, and lost among the host—as does the evening star to those who tread
their path in darkness."



The Theosophic Messenger

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR

THE INTERCHANGE OF THEOSOPHICAL OPINIONS AND NEWS.

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All readers are cordially invited to send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. All communications should be written plainly and on one side of the paper only, and addressed to the editor, Room 7, Odd Fellows' Building, San Francisco, Cal.

VOL. I.

SAN FRANCISCO, OCTOBER, 1899.

No. 1.

Edited by W. J. WALTERS

NOTICE.

The Executive Committee has unanimously elected Mrs. Kate B. Davis to the seat therein made vacant by the resignation of Mrs. Julia H. Scott, whose broken health has required her to go abroad for an indefinite stay.

ALEXANDER FULLERTON,
General Secretary.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE LETTER.

DEAR CO-WORKERS:

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the National Committee meetings (after noting the earnest spirit and desire for helpfulness manifested) is the difference in the object of their efforts as compared with that which actuates other secular bodies, and the function of the Committee as a focus or centralizing point in the great body of workers composing the American Section. As a rule, the main

object of other organizations, whether religious or otherwise, is the building up of the body of the society, both numerically and from a financial standpoint. The Theosophic spirit manifests itself in effort for the enlightenment of individual members rather than in the seeking of wealth and influence for the Society; in the making of a channel for knowledge rather than in the increase of membership. Its ideal is the measure of human perfection, the liberation of the race from Kamic bondage.

All organizations have a focalizing center of activity—the heart—whose function it is to receive and circulate that which nourishes, strengthens and goes to build up the body. This is the work the National Committee is endeavoring to do. No organized body can exist without a center, but the activity of that center depends upon the co-operation of those other centers, each of which is a necessary factor in its operations; for the health of the whole depends upon the faithful performance of the duty of each. Co-operation is the requisite of success in

all organizations. The National Committee acts as a receiver from those who have something to give, and as a distributor to those who need help and encouragement. It is not its purpose to *create* anything, but only to circulate that which it receives, ensouling something of its own therewith, in the hope that every part of the Theosophic body may receive that which it needs for growth and maturity. Every center of activity can contribute something which will stimulate the general activity and add to the health and growth of the organization as a body. As each Branch is to be a focus of Theosophic thought and endeavor for the benefit of its individual members, so the National Committee is to be a center for the strengthening and encouragement of the Branches.

Shall we, dear co-workers, unite at the beginning of our fall activities in a more determined effort to make the coming year one of unprecedented Theosophic advancement? Service is the royal road to enlightenment and final liberation, and ways and means of service are so numerous that none need be excluded. Each individual member should recognize the part it is his privilege to perform, and then do his best for the good of the whole. Careful study of the weekly lessons, preparation for some part to be taken for the general benefit, even asking a question which starts others thinking and causes further inquiry—all these are ways of doing service. One can render financial help in carrying on the general work of the organization, and especially is this needed in propaganda, in keeping our more advanced and efficient students and workers in the field. These form a strong, living current, circulating from the heart to the body's extremities and accomplishing an amount of good immeasurable. The Society cannot afford to do without them. Service may

also be rendered through patience, by self-sacrificing consideration for others, in the repression of unkind words or words of criticism; indeed, if one is seeking to serve, the opportunity is never wanting.

The spirit of Theosophia is not sectarian. Its aim is to give definite aid in human evolution. And this purpose can only be accomplished when each individual member takes up the work and fulfills its aim within himself. The evolution of the many is effected first by the development of the individual.

This month, we have not the usual suggestions to send abroad, for we have but few letters from outlying Branches, owing, probably, to the summer vacation.

The mental tone which we desire to set in vibration is the thought of harmony. Harmony is, to be "with Nature's heart in tune." This, dear friends, is not effected through the mere *repression* of unkind or discordant thoughts. In addition, their quality must be altered, refined. This cannot be done by quiescence in the midst of existing discords; an ameliorating influence is required. Neither is harmony in life's symphony made perfect through *passivity* among accordant tones; activity is a necessary requirement. To gain harmony means to create a vital, active power, the forces composing which shall be so finely adjusted one to the other that each is stimulated to its highest possibilities, thus producing a symphonious oneness otherwise unattainable. It includes the thought-inspiring impulse for man's final liberation. It is the sympathy of a pure nature with the Divine Will.

Special attention is called to our Lecture Bureau. We have considerable material among the lectures for pleasant and profitable meetings, for use in cases where Branches feel too young and inexperienced to furnish the material them-

selves. But Branches should not depend upon the lecture for the entire program of the evening. It is by far the better plan to select a short paper, occupying perhaps half the evening, devoting the remainder to questions or discussion. There is a law in nature that nothing can live that has not *inherent* activity, and this will be found demonstrably true of every Branch. The natural tendency of new members is a feeling of incompetency before the complexity of thought which confronts them in Theosophic literature. But if each member will attentively read one chapter a week, and with pencil and book make note of questions which arise; or, while listening to others, note every definite point which impresses itself upon the mind, having these to refer to at the meetings, there will be ample evidence of the stimulus which such a course gives, not only to the interest of the student, but to others. And interest is a key which will not fail to unlock the door to hidden knowledge. Let the lecture or lesson be thoroughly read and the main points noted before the meeting. Then, with a thorough familiarity with the subject-matter, and the notes to recall to memory the points after the reading, the leader has the material with which to start the discussion which may follow. The hesitancy which sometimes occurs in starting an expression of thought is often due to the inability to give the subject prior consideration, or to diffidence; but both these difficulties can be largely overcome by suggestions of the leader. Few indeed are they who have no inquiring interest or thought concerning the subject presented, and if the impulse is given which starts a flow of thought, timidity is forgotten and all become a band of earnest inquirers seeking enlightenment.

In one newly-formed Branch, where, with scarcely an exception, everyone was in the first stages of inquiry, they re-

solved that they should each, in alphabetical order, take turns at reading and preparing questions. This course was conscientiously followed, resulting in a constantly increasing interest and corresponding growth among the members. Those who did not have time to prepare for replying to questions soon learned to concentrate their attention upon the reading which preceded, and so were enabled to answer, and those who did have time were stimulated to make preparation. One timid girl (for all stood heroically to their agreement), whose voice was so tremulous and low when she took her position as reader that few could have followed her had they been without books, roused such an interest through her well-directed questions that the timid questioner was forgotten, and even forgot herself, and it was conceded to be one of the best meetings ever held by the Branch. Her earnest effort had revealed a natural aptitude wholly unsuspected.

All anyone needs to prove his ability to accomplish all things good, all things true, all things helpful, is persistent effort towards his ideal, for within him slumbers a divinity which will direct his way if he but gives it the opportunity. Then let us resolve, courageously, that through the use of every moment, of every opportunity, this year shall mark an epoch in human advancement unequalled in the past.

Fraternally yours,
THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

BRANCH REPORTS.

CHICAGO, ILL.—Chicago Branch, T. S. most heartily welcomes the THEOSOPHIC MESSENGER, and will gladly send a report each month. As the MESSENGER is freely given, so *we* must give. For the past two weeks our members have been straggling in from their various summer outings, ready for work. We held our first regular meeting September 6th. Most of the

session was taken up with a report of the Program Committee, presenting a plan for the season's study classes. It was this: Three study classes for members only, advanced, intermediate and elementary, the leaders to be chosen by vote. The plan was adopted by the Branch and Mr. R. H. Randall was chosen to lead the advanced class, Mrs. Helen I. Dennis the intermediate class, and Mr. Thomas Prime the elementary. In addition there is to be a meeting for inquirers, Mr. Prime to appoint some one each time to answer questions, the regular Wednesday evening lectures open to the public being continued as usual. The season will be full of interest and hard work; but hard work makes Theosophists. We hope to hear from all of the Branches through the MESSENGER.

L. R.

At an informal meeting of the various Chicago Branches of the Theosophical Society, the following resolutions were read and unanimously adopted:

Whereas, on the 11th day of August, 1899, at 8 A. M., in the city of Columbus, Ohio, our beloved sister and co-worker, Isabel Stevens, after prolonged suffering, borne with sublime fortitude, passed out of the physical body,

Resolved, therefore, that it is befitting us, as members of the Theosophical Society, to extend to the relatives and friends of our deceased sister our most heartfelt sympathy and condolence, and assure them, from our exact knowledge of subjective life, that her so-called death is but a birth into a brighter and happier existence, with added opportunities for carrying on the great work to which her earth-life had been devoted.

Resolved, further, that a copy of this preamble and resolution be forwarded to her relatives and to the sectional organ of the Theosophical Society for publication.

SAN DIEGO, CAL.—(H. P. B. Branch).—Although in a little obscure corner of the earth, we are an earnest band of workers, who, in spite of many difficulties, have kept steadily on. Our membership, though small, is a harmonious one, and we are slowly but surely progressing. We hold a public meeting every Sunday afternoon, which is generally well attended. Besides this, we have two study classes: one on Monday evenings, when we discuss the fundamental teachings of Theosophy for the benefit of the new students, and another on Thursday afternoons, which is of a more advanced order. This class is now studying Mrs. Besant's "Ancient

Wisdom." Mr. J. C. Chatterji paid us a flying visit, and we regret that his time was limited to but two days. He arrived on August 24th and talked to members and friends the same afternoon. In the evening, the lodge-room was filled to its utmost capacity when Mr. Chatterji gave a general exposition of Theosophy and very clearly pointed out its mission. The following day, he gave an illustrated lecture on the "Seven Principles of Man," which was exceedingly clear and concise. This was followed the next morning by a talk on "The Final Goal of Man", which left a lasting impression on all who were fortunate enough to hear it. H. P.

DETROIT, MICH.—The Detroit Branch had the pleasure of listening to a course of lectures given by Miss Marie A. Walsh of San Francisco, on "Theosophic Mind Training," given at the home of Dr. Meddaugh. She also gave one public lecture on Sunday evening, September 3rd, at A. O. U. W. Hall, it being well attended. She being such a thorough instructor we feel much benefited from her short stay. The last evening was devoted to a general history of the Theosophical movement, and suggestions as to the carrying on of Branch work. The Branch will resume its weekly meetings on the third Tuesday in September. L. M. G.

BUFFALO, N. Y.—Fidelity Lodge has accomplished little in the way of active work during the past few weeks on account of the vacation time detracting from its numbers, but now, with the return of the fall months, we expect to resume activities. Mrs. K. B. Davis paid us a visit of three days, September 8th, 9th and 10th, the evenings of which were spent very enjoyably. The Sunday evening talk to the public, in which Mr. F. E. Titus of Toronto took part, was particularly instructive, Mr. Titus reviewing the subject of reincarnation from a scientific standpoint, while Mrs. Davis inspired us with renewed zeal and vigor by a recital of the progress made by the T. S. during the twenty-five years of its existence, showing that it is not iconoclastic in its nature but seeks the truth in all religions, that in its scope it encircles the globe and that its truths appeal to all classes. We wish it were possible for us to be visited more frequently by these helpers. One member was added as a result of their visit, and probably more will follow. Miss M. A. Walsh is to visit us the last week in September, and we are in hopes of starting a Lotus Circle during her stay. J. H.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.—Golden Gate Lodge has had a most active month in the way of work. It is now holding seven meetings a week of various kinds. One member has been added to our rolls since the last report. Public lectures have been given as follows: "Karma and Astrology," by Mrs. Bell; "The Christ," by Mr. W. J. Walters; "Theosophy and Common Sense," by Mr. W. L. Ducey, and "The Divine Man," by Mr. Charles P. Neilson. Our library has been enriched by the addition of seventy-three volumes of standard Theosophical works, the gift of one of our members.

STUDIES FROM THE ANCIENT WISDOM.

By F. A. HERBST.

(These lessons are intended to give in as few words as possible the most essential points of the text-book—"The Ancient Wisdom", as they are arranged in the "Outline of Study, No. 1," issued from Chicago in 1897. No one should be satisfied with this bare sketch, who can by any means follow the fuller exposition of the text-book and its references. But those whose lack of time, means or application prevents that, may find in these lessons a few points which will save them from misunderstanding many tenets of Theosophy and perhaps awaken their interest, so that a wish for greater knowledge, a determination for deeper study, will take the place of casual acquaintance with the Truth which man needs must know.)

CHAPTER I.

THE PHYSICAL PLANE.

Lesson 1.—The labyrinth of facts. (Ancient Wisdom, pp. 40-45.)

The Source of all the universe is a Manifested Divine Being, called "The Logos." The expression is derived from the Greek language and philosophy, and means: "The Word;" the Voice which emerges from the Silence; The Sound by which all worlds came into being. The Logos appears in a threefold aspect, corresponding to the almost universal conception of a triune Deity (Trinity). The First Logos may be thought of as the Creator of Spirit-Matter; the combination of these two words implying and asserting

that nothing is "dead", that everything is alive, that every atom is a life, that we can never separate force from substance. Spirit is the life of the Logos; matter is His emanation; in their essence both are eternal. Spirit-matter is evolved on seven planes, which differ from each other in the nature of their atomic constitution. The atom of the seventh or highest plane may be imaged as a vortex of life (vibration), veiled in the thinnest film of the root of matter. The atom of the sixth plane is the atom of the seventh plane enveloped in a coating of many folds of the matter of the seventh plane in its densest condition. Repeating this process for each of the lower planes, we find that the atom of the physical plane, which is the lowest or first, consists of a spark of the life of the Logos seven times veiled or hidden within the folds of matter, solidifying more and more.

The presence of the life of the Logos as a spark in each atom of matter is the essence of the Law of Evolution. All that is goes through a process of involution, or descent of spirit into ever denser forms of matter; and, touching the physical or lowest plane as mineral, begins a process of evolution or unfolding, throwing aside covering after covering in its development.

The Second Logos we are taught to consider as "Life-Form". This is the Eternal Duality in which the universe lives and develops. If we think of the work of the First Logos as the preparation of the materials, that of the Second Logos is to be understood as the building of the house. The Third Logos may then be thought of as the growing of the tenant. We call His work the evolution of self-consciousness; Himself, "Universal Mind."

Lesson 2.—Most varied conditions. (Ancient Wisdom, pp. 45-49.)

The physical plane, first and lowest of

the seven universal planes, is that of our world, and it furnishes man with his physical body. On nearer acquaintance we find here a great variety of materials, and even greater variety in their combination. We classify these in various ways, as organic, inorganic; mineral, vegetable, animal; elements, compounds; soft, hard; opaque, translucent; sweet, nauseous; colored, colorless; etc. But the main divisions are: solid, liquid, gaseous. Almost any kind of matter can change from solid to liquid and from liquid to gaseous, or the reverse, under varying conditions, without changing its nature essentially. Closer investigation reveals four stages, more rarified than the gaseous, which have received the name of ether. The rarest stage of this is simply the atom of the physical plane, which, disintegrated, would yield matter not belonging to the physical plane at all, but to the next higher. Elements are then only different aggregations of the same physical atom, which science has not yet succeeded in bringing to the next higher or more rarified state.

The division of the physical plane into seven subplanes—solid, liquid, gaseous, and four etheric—may serve as analogy in the study of other and higher planes, since the subdivision into seven different combinations of the atoms is characteristic of each plane.

Theosophically speaking, a plane is a realm of nature, the constituents of which are derived from the same atomic unit, although its capacity for various combinations gives rise to very different results in appearance.

When the spirit-matter of each plane is prepared, the Second Logos, "Life-Form", moulds it into forms. The governing idea is to create stability, so long as the form expresses the Law and conforms thereto; plasticity, so that these forms may break up and their spirit-matter enter different combinations, when

the form has served its purpose or reached the limit of its capacity. We see, therefore, that change is the law of all form, since ever higher demands must find expression, until a form is found which is stable enough to cohere under any demand which the Life of the Logos may make upon it; plastic enough to meet the various conditions incident to such demands. This form is that of man, whose physical constituents are very unstable, but whose force of cohesion can overcome the most varied difficulties of surrounding conditions.

Lesson 3.—(Ancient Wisdom, pp. 49-56.)

The physical body of man consists of two main principles: the dense body and its etheric double. The dense body is composed of atoms belonging to the three subplanes of solid, liquid and gaseous physical matter; the etheric double takes its component particles from the four subplanes called etheric. The physical body in general is used for the accumulation of experiences on the physical plane, by impact, and sends their results inward to the self-conscious entity, which will elaborate them into feelings and ideas. The etheric double interpenetrates the physical body, and serves as a vehicle to attract, assimilate, specialize and distribute the life-currents radiated by the sun to all beings on the physical plane. This life-force is called Jiva; when specialized for the service of any entity its name is Prana. The health aura is that part of the etheric body which projects on all sides a few inches beyond the physical body; and people weak in health often take from stronger persons a part of this specialized life-force, which the stronger has in superabundance, and which the weaker is unable to assimilate directly.

All things have or exist in a rhythmical vibration of their own. Identical or harmonious rates of vibration are mutually

attractive; different and inharmonious vibrations are repelled from each other. Our bodies are therefore fine or coarse accordingly as we replace worn out particles with finer or coarser material. Gradually we can refine the body by giving proper attention to the necessity for doing so. Pure food and a pure mind are the greatest factors; add what is called "a constant memory of God", and man will eventually become fitted for the position which he ought to occupy in the household of Nature Universal. Besides this, we must note the fact that the refinement of the body makes us sensitive to ever higher rates of vibration, for with purification comes enlarged consciousness. All vibrations which the body is able to receive are transmitted to centers which are part of the nervous system. This applies also to the etheric double. From these centers they are passed on, although in changed form, to the astral body and thence to the Thinker.

We see that man dwells in various bodies, possessed of different capacities, and conditioned by the limitations of each. He must learn to develop self-consciousness step by step in each of these bodies and control them, as he has now learned to control his physical body. He must learn to separate the knowledge of each from all others, and his self from its vehicles.

During life and normal health the physical body and its etheric double are not separated, although anesthetics and mediumistic practices can part them for a little while. But these are abnormal conditions, and therefore injurious to health, physical and mental. In sleep the connection is not so close; automatic action of their molecules, and interdependent vibrations from without, especially from the astral world, affect them separately, and thus dream-life exhibits many of its grotesque features. The

purity or impurity of our waking thoughts determines largely the pictures we see when asleep.

Death, so-called, separates the etheric and physical bodies finally, the magnetic connection between the two being broken. The consciousness resides in the etheric double for a few hours after the physical body has been deserted; and in this condition, and even after the consciousness has passed away from it, the etheric body can be seen by people slightly clairvoyant. It remains in the neighborhood of its physical counterpart and disintegrates slowly. At rebirth the development of the etheric body precedes that of the physical, it being the mold into which the physical particles are built during the period of gestation.

ENQUIRER.

QUESTION I.

W. B.—With regard to the broad laws governing reincarnation, how is it that when one meets an Indian ascetic, and finds that all his teachings fall into line with the purest Theosophy, and that his life is in the best sense holy, yet in this one question he is unhesitatingly at variance with our Theosophical concepts? For he states positively that reincarnation is practically immediate, or within a few hours, and that the problematic 1,800 years spoken of is only a human method of calculation, nine hundred yogin breaths being equal to one hour.

C. W. L.—Immediate reincarnation is certainly *not* the teaching of the holy men of India as a whole. The questioner is evidently speaking from personal experience as to the opinion of some individual ascetic, but further inquiry will probably satisfy him that his friend stands alone in this opinion, or at any rate that it is not shared by the real philosophers and

teachers of the East. It is quite true that many people in India would assign a much lower average to the devachanic period than is given to it in Theosophical literature, but I have never heard it put at much less than a century except amongst the Burmese. I think many Indian teachers would give it as their belief that while the life in the heaven-world *ought* to be not only as long as we suppose but even much longer, yet in the present material age it is a good deal shorter, because men now are so entirely ensnared by the affairs of this world that they no longer fix their thoughts and hopes upon the higher life as they should.

After all, however, this is a matter not of opinion, but of fact. Fifteen hundred years was mentioned in the earlier Theosophical teachings as a rough average for the man who lived to moderate old age, and as far as the recent researches touch the subject they have all testified to the accuracy of this statement. In a list of sixteen successive incarnations of the same individual it was found that his average earth-life was forty-eight years, and his average period out of incarnation 1,265 years. This list, however, includes two lives in which the man dies almost in childhood—at the age of twelve, and has therefore only twenty-two and forty-one years of heaven-life respectively—the difference between these two results being apparently a question of development and education. On the other hand a long life of eighty-five years under exceptionally good conditions produced in the same man a devachanic period of no less than two thousand three hundred years. Other lines of lives which have been followed show a somewhat higher average, so that the trend of later observation has been distinctly to confirm the information given at the beginning. It may be taken as abundantly proved that the fifteen-hundred-year average holds good for the

section of humanity which we have called the first-class pitris, but of course that is after all only a very small section of mankind, and there is room for great divergence from its rules in the comparatively unexplored region which lies outside it.

It is obvious that less developed entities would be likely to have far less of the higher spiritual forces in action within them, and their stay in the heaven-world therefore could not but be much shorter. To some slight extent this shortening of the period between incarnations would be compensated by the increased length of the astral life, caused by uncontrolled desire, but nevertheless the lower classes of pitris must undoubtedly return into earth-life much more rapidly than comparatively highly evolved beings would do. Although but little investigation has as yet been devoted to these problems, it is probable that the average given to us was not intended to apply to any but the highest class, from which all those who were keenly attracted to the occult life would be likely to be drawn.

There is a certain amount of evidence from outside which tends to confirm this view, although as it has not yet been sifted or specially examined it is impossible to pronounce definitely upon its reliability. The widely-spread belief in India that incarnation takes place after an interval of a century or two, and the numerous stories (related on apparently good authority) which reach us from Burma and some parts of America as to children who distinctly recollect a comparatively recent previous life, and have in some cases, it is said, been able to prove their recollection of it satisfactorily, are some of the items of this evidence.

So that while the questioner may set his mind entirely at rest as to the general accuracy of the teaching, he may also

solace himself with the idea that there are probably a large number of variations from the rule given to us—quite enough, I should imagine, to account for the diversities of opinion which have puzzled him. Another vast question which is so far almost entirely uninvestigated is that of the difference (if any) between the average incarnation-periods of man in the third, fourth and fifth root-races.

QUESTION II.

E. B. W.—Can any explanation be given of the excessive destruction of life which seems inseparable from the evolutionary process? In every division of life, the vegetable, the animal and the human, there is very great over-production, resulting in constant warfare and extermination; nature apparently creating only to ruthlessly destroy.

T. B. C.—Does Theosophy offer any explanation of the enormous prodigality of Nature in providing for the perpetuation of species? Physiology shows that for every germ that matures myriads upon myriads of spermatozoa and ova fail of development and pass out of physical existence without having accomplished any known purpose. Having reference to the human kingdom—are entities awaiting for reincarnation in any way concerned with what would seem to be lost opportunity for re-embodiment, in that so many possible human forms fail to come into being?

[*Note.*—The questions of E. B. W. and T. B. C. cannot be answered separately. Perhaps that of T. B. C. covers the ground most completely.—A. A. W.]

A. A. W.—The difficulty of this question arises from our forgetfulness of the very simple fact that the universe exists for a great many other purposes than merely to make men—such as we are here and now. We need do more than

remind the querist that it has been stated that our earth is at this present time the seat of evolutionary processes which have no relationship to man at all; for even in what is taught us of our own there is sufficient to suggest the direction in which we have to look for the explanation of what *does* at first sight seem strange. We are told that in the process of our own evolution there are first three kingdoms of matter imperceptible to our bodily senses, then mineral, vegetable and animal, and so up to man; and from him upward again. Now it has perhaps not been made sufficiently clear that *all* these inferior kingdoms are, to a very considerable extent, dependent upon us for their advance. We think a vast number of thoughts—entertain a vast number of desires—in themselves indifferent or even injurious to our own development, but all these, good and bad alike (considered from our point of view) are movements by which the appropriate elemental essence is stirred and its development advanced. We have been informed, indeed, that this is true to so large an extent as to form a real danger to us; the blind “elemental” within us becoming an actual tempter to actions which are good for it, but *not* for us. Nor does this action cease when we come down to the physical world. We are taught that the physical atom itself is in process of evolution, and needs (so to speak) ensouling; that it has to learn newer and higher combinations—to form new and more complicated “elements”, as the chemist calls them. So with the atoms which form part of all living beings; all have to make their own advance, and this is done by their becoming successively portions of ever higher organizations. Hence there is, in reality, no action in the world which does not give to *something* its next step upwards. As each being in its turn breaks up the forms beneath it, it is no

blind "destruction of life," as we are apt to call it, but the only way in which their elements can be raised to their higher life, and made fit to rise in the scale. "That which thou sowest cannot be quickened except it die" is the universal rule; and the physical life-system is not without its counterpart in the moral and political world. That matter should come to be organized in so high a type as "spermatozoa and ova" is in itself, without *anything* following from it, a very considerable progress. It is true that if nothing follows, the matter falls back to the lower type, but we were not long ago assured that even then the advance is only rendered latent, as it were; it is much easier to renew it than it was at first to cause it.

Thus we see that the "prodigality of Nature" has its own ends to serve. In referring to human reincarnation we turn to quite another set of considerations. We are not now dealing with a practically unlimited Nature, but with a *certain* fixed and determined number of entities who, living habitually on another plane of existence, find it needful at long intervals and for very short periods to "manifest" themselves in the physical world. It is evidently convenient that the normal course of nature should furnish them with the means of so doing, when required; but there can be no question of "lost opportunities," when these are *not* required. Even at our present stage, men and women are not earth-dwellers, continually pressing to get back, if by what we call "death" temporarily removed; and complaining of "lost opportunities" each time what might have been a body for one of them fails to come to perfection. When, in the words of the question, possible human forms fail to come into being, the reason is simply that at that moment there is no ego requiring such a body, and hence the preparation for one is utilized by Nature in her ordinary way, as

so much raw material for other new forms. This may happen, as we are taught, not only to single forms, but to whole races of mankind. As they fall behind the needs of the ever-advancing humanity, the egos decline to utilize bodies so inefficient for their purpose; and the prodigality of Nature at least prevents their being forced into unsuitable bodies, by abundantly providing for their choice, or rather for that of the Lords of Karma, who make it for them. Thus the relics of worn-out races which we call "savages" are dying out, and not savages only. Many of the highest names and what are mistakenly called the highest families have died out in our own country, as in others, during the past century. To say that this is simply because their members have deliberately set themselves to make their offspring such as no human ego, even the very lowest, could possibly live in, may sound somewhat startling, but is true.

B. K.—The answer to these two questions can best, I think, be given by taking them together, and so far as the essential idea is concerned, seems to me to be a very plain and simple one, since it involves one of those fundamental truths in its most obvious and striking form which ought to be thoroughly familiar to every student of Theosophy.

In the working out of details no doubt difficulties will be met with; but in its broad outline the conception in question is so simple, and on a little reflection, so obvious, that there ought to be no difficulty in grasping it.

This conception is the oft-repeated and frequently elaborated distinction between Life and Form, a distinction which forms one of the key-notes of the "Bhagavad Gita," as indeed of all the great scriptures of the world. Forms are ever changing, being built up, destroyed, and

re-shaped incessantly. Life alone is eternal, continuous, unbroken.

In evolution, it is true, we seem to deal mainly with the evolution of Form, or rather, to speak accurately, with the ladder or succession of forms in which the evolving life expresses itself and gains fuller unfoldment and a more perfect expression and realization of the innumerable possibilities which are latent therein. But in truth and accuracy, it is the Life which evolves—not the Form. For the forms are not, strictly speaking, continuous, but successive.

In other words a wolf, say, does not evolve into a dog; that is, no single wolf-form passes through a series of changes and becomes a dog-form. But if we arrange all the various wolf-like and dog-like forms in ordered sequence, we find a series of small and gradual changes by which the typical wolf-form is linked to the typical dog-form. But it is not, in strictness, the form which has "evolved"; it is the Life which finds expression through these forms, which, as it evolves, causes these gradual changes and gives us in the series of its expressions on the physical plane a history of what has been going on in the, to us, imperceptible Life itself.

It is the Life, therefore, which is of paramount importance, the forms being merely its expression and the instruments by means of which its unfoldment and evolution are carried on. Hence the importance of the forms is merely as a means to an end, and they exist only for the sake of the evolving Life. Therefore, too, it follows that the moment a form has ceased to assist and further the evolution of the Life manifesting through it, the sooner it is broken up and the Life set free to find another vehicle the better, for such destruction and breaking up of form means a hastening and quickening of the evolution of the Life.

We are ever making the mistake of clinging to the form and attaching supreme importance to its preservation, and this mistake is one of the great elements in the "illusion" with which our life on this plane is so densely enveloped. Even Arjuna in the "Gita" falls under it, and so almost insurmountable is it for most men, that few indeed realize the truth of Shri Krishna's declaration that the Life dies not nor is it born, it slays not nor can it ever be slain.

The "struggle for existence" therefore in Nature, and all the ruthless destruction to which the question alludes, belongs wholly to the form side of the evolutionary process. The Life goes on its evolving way untouched by it all, and its terrors and its ruthlessness are such only for those who cannot even mentally pierce below the veil of form and realize that it is the Life and not the form which is the eternal reality.

The second question calls into play the same fundamental principle, but in another aspect—that of production. Ova and germs are but as it were the points in our physical world at which the evolving Life, ever seeking expression, impinges on physical matter.

Regarded in *themselves* they are the centers in which various grades of life are at work. The evolution of these relatively low grades of life goes on whether or not the ovum is impregnated by the spermatozoon or not. Similarly the higher orders of life which come into play when impregnation takes place, each gain something in unfoldment, whether or not the impregnated ovum develops into a living form or not. With each step in the development of the complex form, higher and higher kinds of life find a vehicle for their own further unfoldment, until—say in the case of man—when the infant body is sufficiently perfected, all these lower kinds of life become the vehi-

cle for the expression of the human ego. There is no real waste in Nature, whether or no a given form becomes the vehicle for the highest kinds of life or not. And indeed we may do well to realize that even in adult men and women of our own days in Europe, but a small fraction of the really higher orders of emotional, intellectual and spiritual life can find expression. We must remember, too, constantly, that the Logos looks with equal love upon every grade and order of life, and that the needs and interests of the very lowest and most imperfectly unfolded drop of the divine life are by His wisdom and love cared for no less than those of the highest man or God.

If we confine our attention to one part alone, say to the human kingdom, it may seem to us that there is enormous waste of ova and spermatozoa. But that is due merely to our ignorance and narrowness of outlook. Regarded as a part of the whole, we should see that there is no waste at all, but that all this making and disintegration of forms is merely the expression of the unfolding and expansion of lower grades in the divine life.

Much more might be said on so fertile a subject as this, but enough, I hope, has been done at least to indicate where the clue lies which we must steadfastly follow if we desire to unravel such mysteries of life as those with which these questions are concerned.

BOOK REVIEWS.

"DHARMA," published by the Theosophical Publishing Society, Benares, India. (For sale by Mercury Publishing Office, price fifty cents [cloth]).

This latest addition to our literature consists of three lectures delivered by Mrs. Besant at the Eighth Annual Convention of the Indian Section, held at Benares in October last. These are entitled "Differences", "Evolution", "Right and Wrong." Dharma is defined generally as duty, law, righteousness. But a more definite conception of the word is given as "the inner

nature of a thing at any given stage of evolution" and the law of the next stage of its unfolding." In other words, it is the point in the great life journey which has already been attained, and which is the result of past experiences, *plus* the law which determines the next step to be taken. So that the Dharma of any one entity must necessarily be different from that of every other. Duty must vary for every soul, according to the stage of its development. The heights are not to be reached by leaps and bounds, but by slowly climbing upward, step by step. Therefore, what is right for one man would be wrong for another, because for one it would mean a going forward, but for the other, who has already reached a higher level, it would be retrogression. Therefore, morality is relative, depending entirely upon the place in life's evolutionary journey which has been reached. For the human family, after a certain preliminary stage is reached, there are four stages of Dharma. This was recognized in ancient times, and embodied in what is known as the caste system. It represents the natural order in soul-growth, step by step slowly up the ladder of life. At first, the Dharma is service, the power of initiating action being limited, the reason as yet undeveloped, and the desires as yet uncontrolled. A stronger soul is needed to lean upon and to help the weaker one upward. Obedience, fidelity, devotion, mark the law of this stage. Self-reliance—the power to stand on one's own feet—marks the man of the next caste. He having learned to serve, to obey, is now fitted to pass into a position of more authority and to evolve new faculties which can best be cultivated in a life of trade, where the man insists on fairness and justice from those with whom he deals and gives the same in return. Frugality, justice, self-dependence are the law for the Vaishya. Coming to the warrior caste, we see the qualities acquired in the lower classes—those of service and self-reliance—put to the test in the man of power who is to rule, to protect, to guard those weaker than himself, to recognize the right and uphold it as a sacred duty. Strength, courage, loyalty to duty mark the Kshatriya. The Brahmana includes in his nature all the qualities of the others; he is at once the servant and the teacher; the man on whom others may lean, because he is capable of standing alone and self-controlled. The law of his being is piety, self-sacrifice, love for all creatures. So each follows the law of his own being, when each does his own duty. The ideal which the Brahmana strives to attain is as yet far beyond the Sudra. So no fixed standard of right and wrong can be applied to all men alike. Each must know his own Dharma; each must strive to discover where he stands in the journey of life, and bend his energies to take the next step onward.