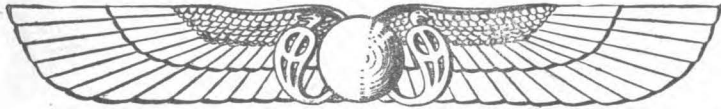


THE VAHAN



A VEHICLE FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF
THEOSOPHICAL NEWS AND OPINIONS.

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LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

The *Theosophist* for March opens with an interesting paper by Col. Olcott, descriptive of his recent visit to Burmah. A special Burmese deputation was sent to Adyar, with an urgent request that the President of the Theosophical Society would return with them, and help them in Council, with reference to the sending of a Buddhist commission to Europe. It may be noted here that although the Theosophical Society is unsectarian, and the system known as *Theosophy* is not a religion, but is the unifying truth which underlies all religions; yet the best work can be done in the cause of truth, by dealing with those forms of religion which are most familiar to individuals or communities, and showing the particular application, derivation, or *esoteric* meaning in each case. Thus in the East, where Buddhism is most prevalent, the work of the Theosophical Society has been principally connected with *Esoteric Buddhism*, leading many people in the West into the erroneous supposition that Theosophy is simply a form of Buddhism. It is, however, quite as much *Esoteric Christianity* as *Esoteric Buddhism*, and must, before long, be recognized as such. In the meantime, however, the Society has accomplished so much among the Buddhist communities, in uniting the scattered elements, and the various sects and churches, which had been isolated from each other for hundreds of years—in particular the two great

schools of Northern and Southern Buddhism—as to warrant the belief that the great object of the Society is within measurable distance of accomplishment, so far as the Buddhist communities are concerned. But what about our Christian communities? “The Union of Christendom” is a phrase which is much in the air just now, by which we believe it is intended that doctrinal differences should be subordinated to the social necessities of the race. But if it can be conceived as possible, that within the near future, doctrine will come to be regarded as subordinate to ethics and conduct, it will be because the basis of all doctrine, as of all conduct, is to be found in our first principle of Universal Brotherhood; in the recognition of the actual scientific fact that Humanity is a Unity: and that the interests, evolution, and destiny of the individual cannot be separated and isolated from that of the race. And it is this for which Theosophists are working, in the West as in the East; by showing that this is the root and basis of the teachings of Buddha and Jesus; and that all religious doctrines are simply exoteric forms of expression of the deep and mystical relationship of man to man, and of humanity to the universe. “As above, so below.”

“Occult Physiology” is the title of a paper read before the Adyar Convention, and which deals with some of the mystical and occult lore contained in the *Upanishads*. Students of Theosophy and occult science are aware that *physical* man is but the shell which contains the *psychic* and *spiritual* man, and that there are certain methods of training which make these latter, which are beyond the reach of mere physical science, to be studied practically and scientifically. Many warnings, however, have been given out from time to time by those who know, against attempting to study practical Occultism without due mental and moral preparation, and without the aid of a teacher. The paper in question is a useful one, as indicating certain possibilities and potentialities which reside in the human form, and the profound knowledge of the constitution of man which is contained in the ancient writings of the *Upanishads* and the works of the *Siddhas*; and may give students in general an insight into this subject which will confirm and support what has been learnt from other sources. It is perhaps as well, however, that the dangers of *Yoga* are indicated in the same number of the *Theosophist*, in an article entitled “A Chat on the Pīal.”

“*Ex Oriente Lux*” is a dialogue between an orthodox Christian and a Theosophist. The following may be quoted: “*C. T.*—Your contention strikes me as paradoxical that the key of all the inner depths of our doctrines should be tendered to us by Buddhistic or Brahmanical hands. *S. T.*—Here you touch upon one of the most

salient qualifications of Theosophy as a valuable guide. It teaches and proves that all religions, in their fundamental doctrines, flow from the same fount, and gradually grow diversified as they proceed on their course of self-evolution. Not only can we trace in the old esoteric religions in all their completeness the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Salvation, but what is commonly called the *Christ-idea* of humanity, also appears to have been the type and consolation of the ancients, thousands of years ago."

The concluding number of an interesting series of papers dealing with the doctrines of Spiritualists and Spiritists, appears in this number, and gives us some information respecting the tenets of the Allan Kardec school. A great similarity can be traced between these, and the teachings of Theosophy, one of their distinctive doctrines being that of reincarnation. The principle of Universal Brotherhood is also enunciated by them as follows: "We believe that in the constant elevation towards infinite perfection, our efforts, to be more fruitful, instead of remaining isolated, should conform to the laws of charity, of fraternity, of solidarity."

The subject of *Yoga* is a fascinating one for many minds, and is becoming familiar to a large class of readers even outside of the Theosophical Society, by reason of the translations and publication of several of the Sanskrit works which were quite unknown a very few years ago. The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali are now to be found in three separate translations, all of them due to the influence and work of the Society: the first of Govindadeva Shastri, which was very unsuitable for Western readers; the second, by Mr. W. Q. Judge, and J. H. Connelly, which was more of an interpretation than a translation, and quite recently, a third, and in many respects, the best, has been compiled by Professor M. M. Dvivedi, and issued by the Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund. This class of literature has also been enriched by a second and more extended edition of a work by the same author, entitled *Rāja Yoga*; being an exposition of the Advaita or Vedāntic system ascribed to Sri Śāṅkarāchārya. All that can be said about it here is that it is probably the most valuable and useful book for those who are attracted to the subject of Yoga; valuable in the noble philosophy which it unfolds and expounds, and useful in the clear indications which it gives as to the true method of Yoga. Here is a quotation in point: "119-120. The expulsion of the phenomenal from consciousness, is the real *rechaka* (blowing out of the breath retained in the lungs); and the conviction "I am *Brahma*" is the real *puraka* (the drawing in of the breath); and then the immovable concentration on that very conviction, is the

real *Kumbhaka* (the retention of the breath in the lungs for some time). This is the real course of *Prānāyāma* for the enlightened, whereas, for the ignorant it consists in torturing the nose."

Some more outside evidence is to hand having a direct bearing upon Theosophical teachings concerning the phenomena of consciousness, and the duality of *Manas*. In the February number of the *Revue de Deux Mondes* is to be found an article by M. Alfred Binet, entitled "Alternations of Individuality," in which he deals with the phenomena of double personality. How far this scientific explanation is satisfactory must be left to the judgment of the individual reader, but the recognition of the phenomena of divided consciousness such as is given in the following sentence, is significant. "We are thus brought by a complete series of experiments to this important conclusion: several moral personalities, each having consciousness of itself, may rise side by side without mixing in the same organism." He goes on to add that although this is only demonstrable in certain abnormal states, such as hypnotism, yet there is no proof that it is not equally true of the normal human being.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—*In what did Swedenborg err by revealing his visions?*

ANS.—It is not presumed from the standpoint of Theosophy that Swedenborg was under any mistake at all by the mere fact of his having published an account of his visions. The error, from our point of view, lies in the *interpretation* of these visions, which, when not based upon his religious preconceptions, are decidedly of an untrained nature. The difficulty with the natural and untrained seer is to distinguish between the appearance of truth, and the truth itself; the symbol and that which is symbolized. Thus when he speaks of having seen Paul in Hell, he fails to determine whether this was a fact, or whether it was not an impersonation of Paul by some vagrant "spook," a possibility which the facts of the modern séance room fully admits of, and which the seer himself asserts in more than one passage of his writings.

QUERY.—*It is stated that the T. S. is not responsible for statements made in the VĀHAN. This is natural enough, seeing that it is not likely the members would unanimously agree with every statement made therein. But then on whose authority do we receive the solution of our problems?*

ANS.—If you receive any solution of your problems at all, you

do so on the authority of your own reason or intuition. If you will think over your question you will find that it answers itself.

QUERY.—*We are told in "Isis" that we continually meet soulless men and women in the world. As they, obviously, are mentally superior to animals, are we to conclude that they are still illumined by the lower Manas? Can the Higher Self, under any circumstances, again overshadow the lower self it has been divorced from? In the case of fright, for instance, we are told that this separation may occur. We know that insanity is often produced by a shock to the nervous system. Is this an illustration of the theory? Seeing how terrible is this soul death, who knows that he or she is the fortunate possessor of the light of the Higher Self?*

ANS.—The soulless man or woman who is not born so, will, after the separation of the Higher Manas from the lower self, continue to function along the lines to which its particular nature adapts it; gradually expending all the forces which it has stored. A plant that is cut off from its root will serve as an illustration. It does not immediately die, but fades. But mere intellectual power and brain function infer nothing more than the possession of life, and a more or less perfect nervous organism adapted by use to certain processes of action. It is necessary to distinguish between the brain-mind and the individual Manas, before we can fully understand the problem of an intellectual person being soulless. The same distinction has to be made in the case of the Higher and lower Manasic principles. Read Chapter X in *Key to Theosophy*. The effects of a fright or other nervous disturbance upon the brain, may be such as to prevent it from responding to the action of the thinking principle or lower Manas; but this is not an illustration of the soulless man, who may be possessed of full mental powers. If the functions of the injured brain be restored, the mind may again come into activity—why not then the Higher Manas in the case of a reformed individual? A man can have no better surety of his union with the immortal Ego, and Higher Self, than the presence in his mind of spiritual thoughts, noble ideals, and unselfish motives, which do not belong to the nature of the lower Kamic mind.

QUERY.—*I have been told that the cobras in Ceylon mount guard daily over some species of luminous pebble or stone fragment, and that they carry it about with them. Is this false, and if not, what is the reason of their action?*

ANS.—This is a legend in Ceylon, but so far as we can ascertain

there is nothing in Natural History to support the assertion. A fuller account of this matter, with quotations from any author who mentions it, would, no doubt, be appreciated by readers of the VĀHAN. All through the folk-lore of the old Deccan days we read of Cobras, and their treasures over which they kept guard. Thus we read that "the Cobra, unless disturbed, rarely goes far from home, and is supposed to watch jealously over a hidden treasure. He is, in the estimation of the lower classes, invested with supernatural powers." An interesting discussion on the Snake Race of India will be found in the proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for February, 1877. The Nāgas were a race of people said to have sprung from Kadroo, the wife of Kasyapa, in order to populate Patala, the Earth and the regions below. They were said to have a human head, with the body and tail of a serpent, and an expansion at the neck like a hooded Cobra.

QUERY.—*What were the first MSS. of the Bible?*

ANS.—We quote from Keeler's *Short History of the Bible*:—"The greater number of the books of the Bible are anonymous. No one knows who wrote them, and no one knows when they were written. They are, in the cases of the most important books, of those most relied on for doctrinal support, compilations from preëxisting records. But who wrote those records, and who made the compilations, are entirely unknown. When the books of the Old Testament came into use they were not considered inspired. That idea was an afterthought. And the Christian Church places a higher value on some of the books than the original possessors, or than Jesus himself did. In the same manner when the books of the New Testament came into use they were not considered inspired or the word of God. Many gospels, epistles, and revelations, not now in use, were read in the churches in the early centuries. About the close of the second century or the beginning of the third, when the Catholic Church was forming, a source of authority for appeal in case of dispute over new doctrines was necessary, and the fathers instituted the theory that certain books were inspired. But the books which they said were divine were not always the same books which we have now. They declared many books to be inspired which we do not think to be; and they ignored and rejected many books which have since been invested with divine honours. The contentions of the sects made it impossible for the new Church to unite on the gospels which had been first in use, and they were, therefore, discarded, and our present four gospels were substituted. To give them greater authority, the names of apostles who had been with Jesus were forged to

them, literary forgery in those days not being considered a crime."

QUERY.—*In Forbes' Oriental Memoirs, Vol. 2, p. 55, is the translation of a deed of sale of land in a district near Madras. The deed is in Tamil, and its date 1720, the Indian equivalent being "of the Kali Yuga 4,899." I take this to be the 5,000 year cycle alluded to by H. P. B., but if these dates are right it should end in 1821, between 70 or 80 years earlier than we understand it does. Is the Kali Yuga a recognized point of secular calculation in India as the Christian era with us? Is there any authority for the date of its beginning? Is there any variation in different districts?*

ANS.—The Kali Yuga which is generally recognized as beginning in the year 3,102 B.C., is founded upon the astronomical calculations of the Hindus. The positions of the planets given on page 662, Vol. I, *Secret Doctrine*, have been tested and found to be accurate. Moreover, the position of Eta Tauri, and Cor Scorpionis, Cor Leonis, and Fomalhaut, four brilliant fixed stars, which the Hindus affirm were then on the equinoctial and solstitial points, "guardians of the four corners of the world," these positions set the matter at rest, and beyond doubt prove the Kali Yuga to have begun at the time stated. The document, however, is curious, and it would be interesting to know upon what data the Kali Yuga period corresponding to 1720 A.D. was fixed.

ACTIVITIES.

The monthly receptions given by the Countess Wachtmeister, and Mrs. Cooper-Oakley on the first Monday of each month, will be discontinued during the summer months. The last of these was held on March 2nd, and fully preserved the reputation these receptions have received for their brilliancy and attractiveness. Much good work in certain circles of Society is reported as due to this source.

The Half-Yearly General Meeting of the British Section Council was held at Headquarters, Avenue Road, on March 27th, at 8 p.m. Herbert Burrows in the chair. The following were present: H. P. Blavatsky, President of European Section; G. R. S. Mead, Secretary of European Section; Annie Besant, President of Blavatsky Lodge; Wm. Kingsland, President of Chiswick Lodge; Mrs. Cooper-Oakley; Jas. M. Pryse; L. S. de Iastrzebski; Thos. Green; Claude F. Wright; Dr. Wynn Westcott; Sydney V. Edge; and Miss Kislingbury, as delegates and proxies of the

Blavatsky, Scottish, Dublin, Liverpool, Newcastle, Bradford, Birmingham, West of England, Brixton, and Chiswick Lodges, the Treasurer of the Section, and the General Secretary.

The reports of the various Lodges, and the General Report of the Secretary were read and received. East End propaganda was discussed. The greetings of the British Section to the American Section in Convention were read, and handed to Annie Besant for transmission to our delegate at the Convention.

By a unanimous vote of the Council, Brother Archibald Keightley was elected to be the special delegate of the British Section at the forthcoming American Convention.

The transfer of the British Section Reference Library and Quarters to 17, Avenue Road, effected by the order of the Emergency Committee on the 16th February last, was confirmed by the Council. An appeal from the Indian Headquarters for a donation to the Maintenance Fund was read. This appeal was authorized by the fact that at the inauguration of the British Section, the customary entrance fee of £1 is., payable to Headquarters at Adyar, by each new member, was rescinded on the understanding that the British Section should make an annual donation to the Indian Headquarters. Through wanting funds, however, we have been unable to make this donation. The Secretary was instructed to represent the matter to the General Secretary of the Indian Section, and to express the regrets of the Council at their present inability to make any donation from the funds of the British Section. The question of Scottish Territorial Powers was next discussed, the matter being finally postponed for special representation to the President of the Section. The meeting was dismissed at 11.45.

Extracts from the General Report will be given in our next number. Other matter is held over for want of space.

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