

THE VAHAN



A VEHICLE FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF THEOSOPHICAL NEWS AND OPINIONS.

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MEMBERS and others are invited to send opinions and questions on Theosophical subjects, notes on current Theosophical literature, reports of activities, cuttings of general interest from papers, &c., for insertion in THE VAHAN to W. R. OLD, Gen. Sec. British Sec. T. S., 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N.W.

MAY 15, 1891.

NO. 12.

The Departure of H. P. B.

Our beloved teacher and friend, H. P. B., left us at 2:25 on the afternoon of Friday, May 8th.

No words of ours, as all who read this will understand, can express the great loss which the Society suffers by her departure from among us.

The time is so short and the hurry of the last few days has been so great that the VAHAN can only give a brief notice of this momentous event in the annals of the Theosophical Society; and we must refer our readers to the June number of *Lucifer* for a full and detailed account of all that has passed during the last week.

H. P. B., as all the Fellows of the Society know, during the last years of her life, was never free from physical pain. Yet in spite of her sufferings, never for an instant did she relax her untiring efforts to carry out her life's work and make our Theosophical movement an assured success. Day after day she toiled on bravely at her desk, writing and preparing those teachings which she imparted to the Society so generously and which it was our privilege to receive. All this she did for no material reward; for she ever gave what she had for the furtherance of the Society's work.

Few, even among those who knew her most intimately, will ever realize what H. P. B. has suffered for Theosophy. But still, in spite of the bitterest calumnies, vituperations and slanders the malignancy of which was perfectly appalling; in spite of the misrepresentations and sneers of a sense-loving and incredulous public, given voice to in the press of nearly every country in the world; in spite of her most painful illness and sufferings,—H. P. B. never

for one instant swerved from her purpose, but steadily went forward accomplishing the task that had been entrusted to her by her beloved Master and Teacher.

It is only two weeks ago that our dearly loved leader fell a victim to the prevailing influenza. This was followed by quinsy and acute bronchitis. Weak as these attacks left her, still no apprehension of a fatal termination to her illness was felt either by her friend and physician, Dr. Mennell, who had attended her for three years, or by the members at Headquarters, who continually watched over her in her illness. H. P. B. had so often passed through apparently more serious crises that all our expectations were for a speedy restoration to her normal state of health. In fact, so far from apprehending so serious an event were those at Headquarters, that two of their number had left that very day for Belgium, one to recruit from the effects of the influenza, and the other for companionship, and others had gone to their daily tasks as usual.

Dr. Mennell called between 10 and 11 in the morning, and pronounced H. P. B. to be better and stronger, expressing every hope of her restoration to health. Between 11 and 12, however, a sudden change for the worse took place, and the nurse hastily summoned all the available members of the household. Signs of great weakness and laboured breathing warned the anxious friends who surrounded the sufferer that a very serious crisis was approaching, and telegrams were at once dispatched to those absent. But before any could arrive our beloved teacher and leader abandoned a physical instrument that could no longer be used. During the last few moments of her present incarnation, H. P. B. was sitting in her own arm-chair, her head supported by Miss Laura M. Cooper, and her hands clasped by Walter R. Old and Claude F. Wright. After the change, the face, we know so well, wore an expression of the most complete serenity and dignity.

The doctor, on calling later, could hardly believe the news, so sanguine had he been of the improvement of the morning continuing. It was, however, too true, and the last service he could render was to hurry the cremation forward with all despatch. In fact, if a Sunday had not intervened, the last honours paid to the body of our great instructor would have taken place a day earlier. The notices, therefore, of the sad event and of the date of cremation were necessarily brief, and prevented the attendance of many. All the arrangements were of the simplest description, it being H. P. B.'s express wish that nothing resembling the gloomy paraphernalia of a funeral, should mar the harmony of the last services required by her body.

In a few hours the purple draperies that covered the simple en-

casement were loaded with gifts of flowers, the tokens of the affection of many Theosophists.

On Monday, at 10 in the morning, the dead body of her we love so well was conveyed to Waterloo Station, where it was met by a large gathering of Fellows of the Society and many friends.

The Crematorium at Woking was reached at 1:30. Its situation amid pleasant country lanes, the beauty of a glorious May morning, and the fresh spring foliage of the trees, lent their charm to the scene, and all nature seemed to give its gracious aid and bid a joyous farewell to the body of one of her dearest children.

The Headquarters Staff and officers of the Society surrounded the flower-decked bier, and G. R. S. Mead, the General Secretary of the European Section, who has also been Secretary to H. P. B. for the past two years, stood at the head, and, amid the deepest silence, read the address that accompanies this number. Every Theosophist should read in it what H. P. B. has told us, and what rules she laid down for the conduct of a truly Theosophical life.

A brief silence succeeded, and then the flower-decked vehicle that bore the body of the greatest of the Theosophists, passed through the folding doors into the crematorium.

Two hours afterward the urn containing the ashes of our beloved leader's body were reverently received and carried back to Headquarters and deposited in her own rooms.

Seldom, perhaps, has been seen so simple and yet so impressive a ceremony as that witnessed by those assembled at Woking Crematorium on Monday, May 11th. With no useless ceremonial or display, with no unnecessary pageantry, or show of grief, the Theosophists disposed of the worn-out garment that their friend and teacher had worn for one incarnation.

Of H. P. B. herself, she with whom many of us have enjoyed such close and affectionate intimacy, we have ventured to say but few words here. *Lucifer*, her own magazine, will tell the world what those who knew and loved H. P. B. thought of her.

Briefly, the task before us is to raise a *living* monument to her memory. The record and outcome of H. P. B.'s life work must be seen in ourselves, in our characters and in the success of the Society. The noble teachings she has striven to implant must grow in our daily lives and blossom forth as a grand future for the Theosophical Society. The T. S. is the building raised chiefly by the untiring efforts of H. P. B., and it is for us who love her and honour her memory to keep it strong and firm, and add to it, so that it may last throughout the ages.

Hundreds of telegrams and letters are being daily received. They all without exception express the greatest sorrow at the

sad news, and are filled with reverence and affection for her who has left us; and, more important still, all express determination to work with renewed energy for Theosophy and the realization of its great ideal.

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

In the April number of the *Theosophist* the first place is given to an article on "The Vampire," by Col. Olcott. The paper is a useful one to those who wish to follow the subject further, as it gives several references and quotations. We do not quite know what would be the effect of such a paper, however, upon anyone unfamiliar with Occult subjects, who might take up the *Theosophist* for the first time; and we could certainly wish to see the interest and reputation of the leading organ of the Society sustained by a better class of editorials.

A short note entitled "Our Duty," by P. A. Mehta, is an appeal to the members of the Indian Section to supply the West with that knowledge of religious philosophy which lies buried in Sanskrit and vernacular books, and to disseminate which is specially the object of the Society. The American Section has lately been making a special appeal and effort in that direction, by establishing an Oriental Department, but the supply must of course come from native scholars. The writer of the article says: "As Theosophists we want nothing less than a revival pure and simple of the mode of life of the ancient Aryans in their palmiest days. We should aim in this way to bring about a transformation of the world by trying to uplift the thought and conscience of the masses, giving them beliefs which they can understand, and which can mould their character and destiny. . . . We have to supply not only a philosophy which can satisfy intellectual cravings and aspirations but facts as to life, nature, man, God, which would influence their thoughts and their lives."

The series of articles on the practices of "Obeah" is continued. The writer, Miad Hoyora Kora-Hon, F. T. S., has collected a great number of stories at first hand with regard to the powers and performances of the "Obeah men." *Obeah* appears to be a remnant of some ancient system of magic, and includes the use of *glamour*, induced clairvoyance, projection of the double, and *mantras*. The narratives are amusing, and also interesting to the student of the occult.

Mr. E. D. Fawcett contributes a lucid article on the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. Careful students of the *Secret Doctrine* will be able to trace many parallels between the former and the latter. Mr. Fawcett, however, is antagonistic to the Secret Doctrine.

Indeed it is difficult to discover what he is not antagonistic to in matters of philosophy and metaphysic; and he now declares that as a "Pantheist and Idealist, the metaphysic, as opposed to the psychology and cosmology of Spencer, is one which must be rejected root and branch by every maintainer of the philosophy of Spirit." This latter we presume is his own specialty.

"Topics in Reincarnation" is the title of No. 4, vol. iv, of the T. P. S. pamphlets, and is from the pen of the well known American Theosophist, Alexander Fullerton, the author of *The Wilkesbarre Letters*. The present pamphlet deals in a plain and lucid manner with some of the many considerations which present themselves to the thinker, when he comes face to face with the law of Karma and rebirth, and begins to realize what these mean in their application to his own individual existence. The teachings of religion are so hazy and vague with regard to a future life, they are based so much on authority and so little on experience, they are so disconnected from all that is familiar in nature, that the great majority, professing to accept them on *faith* seldom if ever *realize* them. To make the best of the world, and get to heaven by vicarious merit, but at least to make the best of this world first—is the prevailing idea. The result is curious to one who studies this matter from a philosophical point of view. But Theosophy, with its appeal to experience and analogy, awakens men to the reality and potency, for good or evil, of every thought and deed and of every moment of life. There is no shuffling out of the law of Karma, and when once a man has realized this, it sobers and steadies him as no amount of preaching could do. It is with something like terror that some people realize for the first time what Karma means, with its inevitable accompaniment of reincarnation. It brings a man to his senses with a shock. But once the principle has been understood there is no escaping from it. There is nothing vague or indefinite here; the man stands face to face with a reality which he measures out of his own inner consciousness; he becomes a law unto himself. Both those who are thus facing the reality for the first time, and those to whom the subject is more familiar, cannot fail to find the deepest interest in the pamphlet above mentioned.

The current number of the *Nineteenth Century* has an article by Mr. F. H. Myers, of the P. R. S., on the question of immortality, which is indicative of a "scientific" solution of the problem; or in other words it would appear that "orthodox science" is going to pronounce at no very distant date that there is a survival beyond the grave.

Murray's Magazine for April contains an account of a good clairvoyant, who psychometrized very accurately a broken fragment of a Greek bronze statue, which had been obtained at Alexandria. There is nothing very remarkable in the experiment itself to those who are familiar with occult subjects, but its publication by the editor of *Murray's*, who formally vouches for its trustworthiness, is certainly a sign of the times; although there is still some risk of ridicule for those who openly avow a belief in the genuineness of such phenomena.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—*Respecting such heavenly bodies as are known to us, the first condition assumed is that of COMET; this ends by being a SUN, the latter by breaking into FRAGMENTS; each fragment becomes a PLANET; and every planet ends its career as a MOON. ("Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge," No. 2, pp. 29 and 45.) In "Secret Doctrine," vol. 1, pp. 155, 156, it is shown that the moon gave birth to the earth, whence it is to be inferred that all satellites as dead bodies, are also the origin of planets. The Sun is older than its planets, but younger than the moon. ("Transactions," p. 45.) Can the case be made a little clearer, so as to understand how living planets originate from sun-fragments, as well as from worn-out planets or moons?*

ANS.—Every earth or planet has two planets, which you rightly show to be respectively a *sun* and a *moon*. The former supplies the germ of the forthcoming planet, its essence, and the psychospiritual qualities inherent therein; while the moon, which stands in the relation of the female parent, gives of its psycho-physical principles, all that which, in the planet, corresponds to the four lower principles in man.

The earth is thus a sun fragment, vitalized and nourished by the moon, which dies in giving it birth, fading out as the life impulse passes from it to the growing planet. This does not infer that the sun of our own system is the parent of the earth; on the contrary, we are told that the sun is but the "elder brother" of the planets in our system, which are called "the eight sons of Aditi" or the world-soul, from which every sun, and hence every planet, is originally born.

THE SERPENT STONE.—The anecdote about the serpent stone may have two lights thrown on it, one by the "folk lore" of one English county, and another by the decoration of West African savages.

It is a common superstition in Gloucestershire, which I have often heard in my boyhood, that the common vipers or adders, congregate themselves together to produce a stone, which is supposed to possess mystic virtue.

All over Western Africa, especially at Lagos, the "Popo bead" is venerated, and is supposed to proceed from the agglomeration of serpents. It is found at Herculaneum, and is in Africa, supposed to be derived from the interior, the country of the Atlanteans.

Anthropology, when pursued in the proper spirit, will throw many lights on Theosophical problems. Yours truly,

C. CARTER BLAKE.

ACTIVITIES.

THEOSOPHICAL GROUPS AND CENTRES IN LONDON.—The arrangements in connection with the Battersea group have been somewhat remodelled. A syllabus of discussions has now been drawn up and printed *gratis* through the kindness of two Battersea enquirers. The discussions are held at Stanley Hall, Battersea, by various members of the Society on Sunday evenings at 7:15.

Members of the Theosophical Society who live in the neighbourhood of any of these centres should endeavour to be present occasionally and to take part in the discussions. Members, more especially beginners and any of their friends who may be interested in Theosophy, living in the same locality, would find it of great advantage to form among themselves small groups for the reading and discussion of Theosophy. Some book like the *Key to Theosophy* could be taken and a portion of it read, to be followed by a discussion.

The following new lending libraries have been opened by the Countess Watchmeister. *Leicester*, R. Boynton, 64, Derwent St. *Stoke-on-Trent*, T. Ousman, 36, South St., Mount Pleasant.

Mrs. M. E. Tippetts, of 19, Brunswick Road, Brighton, has undertaken to act as Secretary and Librarian for the Brighton Lodge T. S. in the place of Mrs. Chase, who is about to leave England. All official communications concerning the Brighton Lodge should therefore be addressed to Mrs. Tippetts at the above address.

The Chiswick Lodge now holds its meetings every alternate Monday evening at 8 o'clock, at 37, Barrowgate Road, instead of on Saturdays as heretofore. A *Secret Doctrine* class, for members only, is held on the intermediate Monday evenings.

Official Notice.

Irreparable as is the blow suffered by the Society, and especially by the European and British Sections, by the departure of H. P. B., yet it will make no difference to the organization of the T. S. except the lapsing offices of Corresponding Secretary of the T. S. and President of the European Section, with delegate powers from the President-Founder.

As, however, both the President-Founder, Col. H. S. Olcott, and the Vice-President, William Q. Judge, are on their way to London, most probably on their arrival a General Convention of the members of the European and British Sections will be summoned. Meantime, everything will proceed as usual, except the issuing of new diplomas, which must await the President-Founder's signature; applications for membership will continue to be received.

W. R. OLD, *Gen. Sec'y British Section T. S.*

G. R. S. MEAD, *Gen. Sec'y European Section T. S.*

The "Key to Theosophy" Class.

As twenty names have not been obtained, the proposed class for the study of the *Key to Theosophy* has not yet been commenced. As soon, however, as that number is reached, Members and Associates will be notified and the class will be held as proposed on Monday evenings in the lecture hall at Headquarters, at 8:30 P.M. Those who desire to attend are requested to kindly send in their names to

G. R. S. MEAD, *Secretary European Section.*

Blavatsky Lodge.

NOTICE.—The meeting for the study of the *Secret Doctrine* will continue as usual on Thursday evening from 6:50 to 7:50. All *members* are cordially invited to attend.

CLAUDE F. WRIGHT, *Secretary.*

European Section.

NOTICE.—The reason why the notices of the departure of H. P. B., sent to the European Section, were signed by the General Secretary of the British Section, is that I had on the very morning of Friday, May 8th, started for Brussels for a week's holiday to recruit from the effects of the influenza. Brother Old, therefore, very thoughtfully in my absence sent the notices he had had printed for the British Section to the members of the European Section. The present notice is made in the VĀHAN as it is intended to send a copy to all members in Europe and not to the members in Great Britain only.

G. R. S. MEAD, *Gen. Sec'y European Section.*