

THE VĀHAN



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, settings of general interest from papers, &c., for insertion in THE VĀHAN to W. R. OLD, Gen. Sec. British Sec. T. S., 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N.W.

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LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

In No. 11 of the VĀHAN we noticed the first of a series of editorials in *Lucifer*, dealing with the negations of modern scientific specialists. But alas! the pen has fallen from the hand which wielded it so well and fearlessly, and the series must remain unfinished. In the current number of *Lucifer* (May) the announcement is made that the second editorial dealing with the "Negators of Science" would not appear this month, owing to the alarming illness of H. P. B.; and before the sheets were through the press that illness had terminated fatally. Yet we may not regret the article that has not appeared, for the sake of the one that takes its place. "Civilization, the Death of Art and Beauty," is the title of one of the most characteristic of those articles which it has been our delight to study since *Lucifer* first appeared in the arena, in September, 1887. Critics may set down the language as extravagant and prejudiced, but we do not care to criticise the language, we want the spirit and the truth. The present article is one after Ruskin's own heart; and as we forgive Ruskin for his extravagant language for the sake of what he teaches us of the beautiful in art and nature, so we must look beneath the personality of H. P. B. at these broad principles of life and conduct which she exposes to our view, by ruthlessly destroying the gloss and superficiality which gives a false appearance to the popular prejudices and fancies of the moment. And so to-day with our modern boast of *civilization*, with our modern pride of intellect, our pride of race, and our *scientific* "discoveries," with all that adds to our natural

life and physical sensations and worship of Mammon, behind all these, however great they may appear for the moment, there lies the deeper truth, that increase in materiality means ever decrease in spirituality, that neither the individual nor the race can serve both God and Mammon. This concentration of the will and motives on physical life means ever the death of the soul. All great teachers have insisted upon this in some form or other, and in nothing is our present age more un-Christian than in this, that the one principle which Jesus most insisted upon is deliberately set aside as *impracticable*. From the earliest centuries of the "Christian" era the church has set the example in this, and the world has been only too glad to accept a teaching and example so much in conformity with its desires. And as materiality kills spirituality, so also it kills ideality in every shape and form, for ideality is but another form of spirituality. There can be no true art without spirituality. This a practical age, we are constantly reminded ; so be it ; but let each one, if he be not altogether indifferent to higher interests than those of the moment, consider well the price that the individual and the race must pay and is paying for the material advancement of which it boasts. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

"Theosophy and the Social Evil" is an article on the position of woman in our social system, and cannot fail to appeal to those who are endeavouring to raise the standard of morality which at present prevails, and to bring about a recognition of the true position of woman ; based upon deeper principles than those of mere physical characteristics.

Bertram Keightley contributes some interesting notes on his personal experiences with Hindū Yōgis. In one case he witnessed a number of physical feats performed by an exponent of *Hātha Yōga*, which were certainly extraordinary enough ; in another case he visited a clairvoyant or "medium," who gave him most remarkable evidence of his power in thought reading, and his ability to read the records of the past and the future in the astral light.

Mr. Edward Maitland commences a series of articles on "The Esoteric Christ," of which more may be said hereafter ; but we note here with pleasure the addition of a valuable series to the pages of *Lucifer*, from the pen of such a well known writer. Much of the success of Theosophical teachings in the West depends on the clearness with which its exponents can present the esoteric character of the Old and New Testaments, and renew that spirituality and deep significance and truth which has been well nigh killed out by ecclesiastical Christianity.

"The Teachings of Kapila" is an interesting article in exposition of the *Sankhya* philosophy.

Of all the articles in this month's *Lucifer*, however, the most important is the one entitled "My Books," by H. P. B. It is an answer to some criticisms which have recently appeared in reference to *Isis Unveiled*, and the charges of plagiarism which have been brought forward. The difficulties under which *Isis* was written, and the circumstances of its publication are now clearly explained; and while fully admitting its literary demerits, and while rather exaggerating than otherwise its defects, H. P. B. claims simply that *Isis Unveiled* did give to the world a mass of information on occult subjects which had never hitherto been divulged. Those who cavil at the letter are the least likely to understand the spirit; and as the book was written for students, and not for literary glory or merit, no amount of hostile criticism dealing with its mere literary construction can damage the truth it discloses, still less affect that system known as *Theosophy* with its now enormous literature, of which *Isis* formed the introduction and starting point.

The articles in the *Path* are somewhat slight this month, a good portion of the space being taken up by the "Mirror of the Movement," which includes a sketch of Mrs. Besant's doings in America, and an account of the Annual Convention at Boston. "The Basis of the Manifestation of Law" presents in a clear and succinct manner some of the considerations on which the idea of the Absolute as Universal Consciousness is based.

"One Woman's Vision" is a beautiful allegory of love and self-renunciation, based upon the idea that we are most tested by Love and by Death, and that the one conquers the other.

"Attitude to Karmic Law" presents the subjects of the impartiality of Karma, thereby satisfying the innate craving of our nature for absolute justice, whereby the rebellion against law ceases.

THE PRASNÔTTARA.—The first four numbers of this most interesting and instructive magazine are now to hand. Members who wish to study the occult teachings of Yôga Shâstras and the deeper problems of the Oriental philosophy, will do well to study the questions and answers which the *Prasnôttara* contains. Each number of the magazine will be sent to subscribers as soon as issued. Subscription, 2/6 per year.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—*What determines the length of the Devachanic period?*

ANS.—To a very large extent the Devachanic period would be controlled by the nature of the individual Ego. The more active

natures would take less time in which to recuperate their forces and to assimilate the experiences of the past life. If we compare Devachan to the state of sleep, and the Devachance to the personality, we shall have a very fair analogy. According to the intensity of the personal feelings, the dreams will be vivid and real, so that consciousness may, in a few moments of time, pass through years of pleasure or pain. But an active nature is not always the most susceptible to pain or pleasure, and it is the degree of activity in the nature which determines the duration of sleep. A man who is by nature very active, will do his work quickly, and his rest will be effected with the same rapidity. A sluggish nature however will require a longer period of sleep, although its day is no longer than that of others, and its work far less. The duration and quality of Devachan therefore would from this analogy, depend upon (a) the activity of the nature and (b) the intensity of the feelings of each Ego. As, however, no two natures are exactly alike in their characteristics, no two Devachanic states can be exactly alike nor of the same duration in consciousness, though all are determined by Karma, and therefore exactly adapted to the case of each Ego. Of course there are exceptions to this general analogy, but these cannot be here discussed.

BY W. Q. JUDGE, EXTRACTED FROM A LETTER FROM K. H. . :—The moral and spiritual activities find their sphere of effects in Devachan. For example, the views, physical attractions, etc., of a philosopher may result in the birth of a new philosopher, a king, a merchant, a rich Epicurean or any other personality whose make-up was inevitable from the preponderating proclivities of the being in the next preceding birth. Bacon, for instance, might appear in his next incarnation as a greedy money getter with extraordinary mental capacities. But the moral and spiritual qualities of the previous Bacon would also have to find a field in which their energies could expand themselves. Devachan is such a field, hence—all the great plans of moral reform, of intellectual and spiritual research in abstract principles of nature, all the divine aspirations would in Devachan come to fruition, and the abstract entity, previously known as the great chancellor, would occupy itself in this inner world of its own preparation, living, if not quite what one would call a conscious existence, at least a dream of such realistic vividness that none of the life realities ever could match it. And this dream lasts until Karma is satisfied in that direction, till the ripple of force reaches the edge of its cyclic basin, and the being moves into the next area of causes. This it may find in the same world as before, or another, according to his or her stage of progression through the necessary Rings and Rounds of Human development.

. . . No, there are no clocks, no timepieces in Devachan, though the whole Cosmos is a gigantic chronometer in every sense. . . . I may remind you also that *time is something created by ourselves*; that while one short second of intense agony may appear, even on earth, as an eternity to one man, to another more fortunate, hours, days and sometimes whole years may seem to flit like one short moment. Time is not a predicate conception, and can therefore neither be proved nor analyzed according to the methods of superficial philosophy, and unless we learn to counteract the negative results of that method of drawing our conclusions as agreeably to the so-called system of pure reason and to distinguish between the matter and the form of our knowledge of sensible objects, we can never arrive at correct, definite conclusions. . . . The stay in Devachan is proportioned to the unfinished psychic impulses originating in earth life. Those whose attractions were preponderatingly material will sooner be drawn back into re-birth by the force of Tanha. . . . _____

QUERY.—*Can a person tell, without long experiment, whether their positive pole is in their head or their feet?*

ANS.—The human body has a double polarity, one from head to foot, known as the paramagnetic line, the other at right angles to this, known as the diamagnetic line. This polarity bears a definite relationship to that of the earth and also to the environment of the body. Certain changes in the magnetic aura will cause the body to assume, as far as the natural resistance of other bodies will allow, a recumbent position. Similarly, the voluntary placing of the body in a horizontal position effects a change in the magnetic aura, whereby the polarity is reversed. The physical effect of this change in the aura is to produce greater sensibility to the impact of the etheric pulsations. Every normal body is positive at the head and negative at the feet. In sleep the polarity is reversed. In health the polarity of the body is strongly determined in these directions, and the normal working of the physical functions depends entirely on the response of the several organs of the body to this polarity. In certain abnormal cases of hysteria, exstasis, etc., we find a reversal of the whole polarity of the magnetic aura, accompanied by the involuntary power of levitation. This power when voluntary is one called by the yōgis *garimā*, and is defined in Patanjali's *Yōga Philosophy* as "the power over the attraction of gravitation so that one's body may weigh tons if one chooses, or acquire such levity as to be like a flake of cotton for lightness." Reference to the introduction to that work will afford the reader many interesting and instructive records of this phenomenon.

ACTIVITIES.

We are informed by the matron of our "Working Women's Club" at Bow, that a "jumble sale" in aid of the funds will be held on June 1st.

Mrs. Labouchere has kindly consented to open the sale, and the matron will gladly receive contributions of goods, and especially appeals to those ladies whose homes are undergoing the process of spring cleaning.

It should be remembered that nothing is too old or too insignificant for a "jumble sale." Chairs without legs or seats, kettles that leak, toys, broken crockery, old clothing and boots, and in short everything of every description that is commonly considered to be of no use. The Club has done very good and useful work among the factory girls of the East End. A good dinner is provided at a cost of 3d. per head, and other meals at proportionate prices.

As everyone may not have had an opportunity of visiting a "jumble sale," perhaps it may be as well to explain upon what principles it is conducted. The contributions are classified, and marked at very low prices, and many have an opportunity of finding the very thing which they most want, and for which at such a price, they would have searched the shops in vain. Good clothes and shoes, although not quite suitable for the Park, might still render valuable service in the East End, perhaps for some years, whilst articles for household use though despised in West End kitchens would prove invaluable in humbler abodes.

Contributions should be sent to the matron, Working Women's Club, 193, Bow Road, E.

In answer to many scandalous notices which appeared in the daily press in reference to the death of Madame Blavatsky, a joint protest drawn up and signed by some members of the Headquarter's staff, and other leading Theosophists, was sent the round of the press. It was published by most of the London papers and by many in the provinces.

On Thursday, May, 14th Mr. Kingsland lectured at Stanley Hall, Battersea, on "Theosophy, its Meaning and its Teachings." The lecture had been announced by Herbert Burrows, but as he was commissioned to go over to Queenstown to meet Mrs. Besant on her return from America, Mr. Kingsland consented to fill his place. The audience was a good one, and both intelligent and appreciative. The questions at the close of the lecture were very

numerous, and the answers appeared to give full satisfaction to the questions, while there was a complete absence of the bigoted antagonism which is sometimes a prominent factor in public lectures on Theosophy. Mr. A. A. Harris made a most efficient chairman.

The Scottish Lodge is engaged in the formation of centers of Theosophic thought in various towns and districts of Scotland, with a view to establishing nuclei to which in course of time charters may be granted, and in the meantime of supplying Theosophic information and help, the loan of pamphlets and books, etc., to such embryo centers. Any persons in any part of Scotland who, or whose friends, are interested in Theosophy, are requested to communicate with A. P. Cattanach, Esq., 67, Brunswick St., Edinburgh, through whom all possible advice and assistance will be given, and so far as possible, introduction to others in the same neighbourhood who are also interested in the subject.

BRITISH SECTION LIBRARY.—Our members will be doing a good work for Theosophy if they will contribute copies of books which they have found useful in their general reading or study. Many members of the Section already avail themselves of the advantages placed at their disposal in the new reading room attached to the Headquarters, and as the weather improves we anticipate frequent visits from many others. The library is open from 2 to 10 p.m. Tea can be had from 3 till 5. The members of the Staff will be at home in the British Section Reading Room every Tuesday evening except the first in the month, when the usual *Conversazione* is held.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Owing to the urgency of the work which has devolved upon the members of Headquarter's Staff in connection with the departure of H. P. B., it has been impossible for them to acknowledge, individually, the numerous letters of condolence and fraternal sympathy which have been received from fellow Theosophists and friends, and it is now requested that this expression of their gratitude and fraternal assurance may be received.

We are requested to inform our members of the existence of the Bayswater Vegetarian Society, the acting secretary of which is M. K. Gandhi. Members of the T. S. who are living or working in that district may become acquainted with the vegetarian methods to their advantage. The secretary's address is 17, Stephen's Square, Bayswater.

The *Key to Theosophy* Class, under the direction of G. R. S. Mead, began its course of study on Monday, the 25th inst. There was a full attendance and the discussion was very brisk. The class is evidently going to do good work. Members and associates are requested to bring their copies with them. G. R. S. MEAD.

Large photographs of the Theosophical Headquarters, Adyar, Madras, and of the Convention held at Adyar, Dec., 1890, are now on sale at the Theosophical Publishing Society, 7, Duke St., Adelphi, London, W. C. Price 5/- each.

* Duplicates of this number can be had by sending 2d. in stamps to the General Secretary. Annual subscription 4/-.



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