

# THE VAHAN.



## A VEHICLE FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF THEOSOPHICAL NEWS AND OPINIONS.

Issued by the Council of the British Section of the Theosophical Society for free distribution to members. The Theosophical Society is not responsible for any statements made herein.

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, etc., for insertion in the VAHAN to W. B. Ozo, Gen. Secy British Section T. S., 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N. W.

December 1, 1890.

NO. 1.

### Why the "Vahan?"

Because, the word means a *Vehicle*. In Theosophical metaphysics this term denotes a *basis*, something, as a bearer, more *substantial* than that which it bears; e, g., *Buddhi*, the spiritual Soul, is the *Vahan* of *Atmâ*—the purely immaterial "principle." Or again, as in physiology, our brain is the supposed physical vehicle or *Vahan* of super-physical thought.

Thus, this little fortnightly paper is destined to serve as the bearer of Theosophical thought, and the recorder of all Theosophical activities.

The enterprise is no financial speculation, but most decidedly an additional expense which our meagre funds can ill afford, but which our duty urges us to undertake. The journal is to go free of charge to our British Branches and "unattached" Fellows. It is also meant for those who are unable to subscribe to our regular magazines, but the wealthier will profit along with the poorer, for the following reasons. The Karma of those who could, but *will not* subscribe for the organs of their Society, whether from indifference or any other cause, is *their own*; but the duty of keeping all the Fellows in touch with us, and *au courant* with Theosophical events—is ours. For, many of those who being virtually cut off from almost everything that goes on in the Theosophical centres, lose very soon their interest in the movement and continue henceforward "Fellows" but in name.

It has been always held that a true Theosophist must have no personal ends to serve, no favourite hobby to propagate, no special doctrine to enforce or to defend. For, to merit the honourable title of Theosophist one must be an altruist, above all; one ever ready to help equally foe or friend, to act, rather than to speak; and urge others to action, while never losing an opportunity to work himself. But, if no

true Theosophist will ever dictate to his fellow brother or neighbour what this one should believe or disbelieve in, nor force him to act on lines which may be distasteful to him, however proper they may appear to himself; there are other duties which he has to attend to: (a) to warn his brother of any danger the latter may fail to see; and (b) to share his knowledge—if he has acquired such—with those who have been less fortunate than himself in opportunities for acquiring it.

Now, though we are painfully aware that a good number of members have joined the T. S. out of simple curiosity, while others, remaining for some time out of touch with the movement, have lost their interest in it, we must never lose the hope of reviving that interest. Many are the Fellows who, having failed at first to help on the cause, have now become earnest "working members," as they are called. Therefore, we say to-day to all: "If you would really help the noble cause—you must do so now: for, *a few years more and your, as well as our efforts, will be in vain.*" The world moves in cycles, which proceed under the impetus of two mutually antagonistic and destroying Forces, the one striving to move Humanity onward, toward Spirit, the other forcing Mankind to gravitate downward, into the very abysses of matter. It remains with men to help either the one or the other. Thus, also, it is our present task, as Theosophists, to help in one or the other direction. We are in the very midst of the Egyptian darkness of *Kali-yuga*, the "Black Age," the first 5,000 years of which, its dreary first cycle, is preparing to close on the world between 1897 and 1898. Unless we succeed in placing the T. S. before this date on the safe side of the spiritual current, it will be swept away irretrievably into the Deep called "Failure," and the cold waves of oblivion will close over its doomed head. Thus will have ingloriously perished the *only* association whose aims, rules and original purposes answer in every particular and detail—if strictly carried out—to the innermost, fundamental thought of every great Adept Reformer, the beautiful dream of a **UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD OF MAN**.

Verily, of philanthropical, political, and religious bodies we have many. Clubs, congresses, associations, unions, refuges, societies, each of them a social protector of special men and nations, special arts and sciences, or a bulwark against this or that evil, spring up daily, each of these moved by its own party or sectarian spirit. But which of them is strictly *universal*, good for all and prejudicial to none? Which of them answers fully to the noble injunction of the Buddhist Arhats and also of King Asoka? "When thou plantest trees along the roads, allow their shade to protect the wicked as the good. When thou buildest a Rest-House, let its doors be thrown open to men of all religions, to the opponents of thine own creed, and to thy personal enemies as well as to thy friends." None, we say, none save our own Society, a purely unsectarian, unselfish body; the only one which has

no party object in view, which is open to all men, the good and the bad, the lowly and the high, the foolish and the wise—and which calls them all “Brothers,” regardless of their religion, race, colour, or station in life.

To all these we now say: As “there is no religion higher than Truth,” no deity greater than the latter, no duty nobler than self-sacrifice, and that the time for action is so short—shall not each of you put his shoulder to the wheel of the heavy car of our Society and help us to land it safely across the abyss of matter, on to the safe side?

H. P. B.

## LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

Our age is preëminently a *scientific* one, in the sense that the authority which men demand in reference to the deepest problems of life must rest on experience and reason, and not on tradition. *Theosophy* claims to rest on this basis, and in proof thereof we find that every fresh discovery in literature and science tends to confirm the teachings of the *Secret Doctrine*. The VAHAN will endeavour as far as possible to notice this in the current literature of the day.

As the outcome of the work of the Theosophical Society during the past fifteen years, there is now a great mass of literature which few can find time to study systematically. There are also several monthly journals and other periodicals devoted exclusively to the objects of the Society, which are beyond the reach of many members either from want of time, or of ability to subscribe to all or any of them.

The VAHAN will be free to every member of the British Section; a portion of the funds of the Section being devoted to its publication. It is moreover issued from the “H. P. B.” Press, the establishment of which marks a distinct and important step in the progress of the Society. A portion of its somewhat limited space will be devoted to a notice of the Theosophical literature of the month, and also to general literature and science bearing upon the special doctrines which come under the general term *Theosophy*.

The *Theosophist* for October contains an article from the pen of Col. Olcott (also reprinted in *Lucifer* for the same month) on “The Net Result of Our Indian Work.” Our President-Founder is not discouraged because Theosophy does not appear, in comparison with some other movements, to have effected much on the mere outward physical plane. Our work is essentially a leavening one, and will show itself later on in the thought and religion of the next century. No one should despise the day of small things. “A little leaven

leaveneth the whole lump." Yet the influence of our work is beginning to be acknowledged in the public press in India, America and England. Col. Olcott quotes some highly commendatory notices which have recently appeared in the Indian press.

Among the other articles which fully sustain the reputation of the *Theosophist*, may be mentioned the one on "The Hindu Theory of Vibrations as the Producer of Sounds, Forms, and Colours." It is based on the *Tatwas* theory, which has recently been so clearly expounded by Mr. Rama Prasad in the series of articles on "Nature's Finer Forces," (shortly to be published in book form). It is also written in exposition of the phenomena of "sound pictures" which have recently been brought before the scientific world by Mrs. Watts Hughes, and which are full of interest from an occult point of view. The article is to be continued.

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The *Path* contains a short but well written article entitled, "Which is Vague, Theosophy or Science," in which the author points out that all the accusations which have been levelled against Theosophy as being based on mere abstractions, can be retorted with equal force against the basic postulates of science. The lines of latitude and longitude are as *imaginary* as any of the guiding principles which belong to metaphysical abstractions. The theory of the *soul* is at least as good, as a working hypothesis, to account for certain phenomena, as the theories which have been advanced by physicists to account for the heat and radiant energy of the sun. The mechanical theory of the universe, as "a series of natural forces working blindly, without aim, without design," would at least appear to be as *abstract* as the theory of the *Absolute*. The *atom* of science has never been seen, and scientific men confess that they do not know even that it exists. Science refuses to deal with metaphysics, yet all its theories are based on *meta*-physical abstractions.

There is also a well written article on "Evolution and Involution as Synthesized in Man," which helps by some familiar illustrations to elucidate the general idea of the constant interchange and development going on in the destructive and reconstructive processes of nature.

We would also notice the "Theosophical Catechism" for the use of children, which is continued in this number.

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In general literature the interest of the month has centred round General Booth's *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*. It has stirred the nation from the throne to the garret. Whatever may be the opinion of Theosophists in general as to the religious tenets and methods of the Salvation Army, there are none who will hail with greater enthusiasm the advent of the *Man* who can face, and will in all probability achieve a solution of the social problem which has defied the

efforts of generations of statesmen, philanthropists, and religious reformers. We can, and do, sink all religious controversies in a matter like this; and there is no more hopeful sign of the times than the way in which such differences have been forgotten in the response which has been made by all classes of the community to General Booth's appeal.

In the *Fortnightly Review* there is an article by Sir Lexel Griffin, entitled "The Burman and his Creed," in which he deals in a superficial manner with Buddhism as represented in Burmah. The article is hardly worth noticing here, save for the gratuitous attack which the author makes on *Esoteric Buddhism*, Madame Blavatsky, Col. Olcott, Mr. Sinnett, and the Theosophical Society in general by repeating the silly slanders about "trap-doors and third-rate conjuring tricks." Whenever these are mentioned, it is perhaps the best course to point out quietly that, whatever may be the theory as to the means by which the phenomena were produced, no amount of trap-doors or conjuring tricks can account for a work like the *Secret Doctrine*, or for the rapid spread of Theosophy among those who have never witnessed any phenomena, but judge of it on its own literary, historical, and philosophical merits.

## THE ENQUIRER.

Under this head it is proposed to deal with any questions on subjects that may be considered of general interest to students of Theosophy.

As this little magazine is intended to supply information to all who are interested in the Theosophical movement, and particularly to such as are living at a distance from Lodges and other centres of activity, it would doubtless be judged incomplete if space were not provided for the enquirer. This provision having been made, it is expected that many questions of general importance to students and to those who may be approaching the study of Theosophy, will be forthcoming, and every effort will be made to supply direct and concise answers to such. Further questions will doubtless arise out of the answers that are given.

Where the questions are intended specially to elicit information for the benefit of others, and not simply to cover an individual need, the answers can be given by the querents themselves. In view of our limited space, however, such communications should be as concise as possible, and where necessary they will be condensed by the editor.

When two or more questions bear upon the same point, they will be answered under one head; but, for the satisfaction of the querent, each question should bear his or her initials, so that they may be repeated when the answer is given in the VAHAN.

All communications should be directed according to the instructions

given on the first page of the VAHAN, and should reach us as early as possible after the issue of each number.

Following the initiative of several ladies who hold special evening receptions in order to interest the outside world in Theosophy, a series of monthly evening "at homes" will be given at the Theosophical Headquarters, 19 Avenue Road, Regent's Park, in order to gather together in this centre of Theosophy many friends and acquaintances who are not yet sufficiently interested to attend the regular Lodge meetings, but who at the same time desire to discuss and know more of Theosophy.

The first of this series was held on Monday, Nov. 3, and was very successful; the large hall was used as a reception room, tea and coffee being arranged in the drawing room. The house was charmingly decorated with autumnal foliage, owing to the kindness and efforts of members both in and out of Headquarters.

The general tone of harmony was most encouraging, all members present trying to do their best to make the outside world warmly welcome at Headquarters, and especially to make them interested in Theosophy. These gatherings will give a valuable opportunity to many members of coming in contact with strangers and trying to change some of the prejudices and misconceptions which exist about the real work and basis of the Theosophical Society; and much good can be done by those who attend these receptions, who understand something of Theosophy, if they will endeavour to enlighten those who do not, by making the general conversation turn on Theosophical subjects.

### **Theosophical Working Members' Half-Yearly Conference.**

The Conference to be held the second week in January, of which notice has been given in *Lucifer*, will be of great service in bringing together scattered members of the T. S., many of whom have no opportunity of meeting, and thus getting to know each other, and understand the work.

It is earnestly hoped that members at a distance will avail themselves of the kindly invitation to Headquarters, so that the coming year will see a large amount of hard work spreading on all sides.

Members unable to meet their expenses will have free board at Headquarters, and lodgings in the neighbourhood are inexpensive.

At this Conference a programme of work will be discussed, and all suggestions from country members as to methods and organization will be gladly received. These Conferences have been held yearly in India, and have proved most beneficial, giving members an opportunity

of meeting, which in the wear and tear of the whirlpool of life they would not otherwise have.

Any suggestions from country members for discussion should be sent to the Secretary of the British Section before December 31st.

### **Formations of New Centres.**

A very studious group of enquirers are meeting every Sunday at Battersea, and doubtless will soon form themselves into a Lodge, to be named the "Wachtmeister Lodge." The Battersea group is working with Mr. Claude F. Wright, the secretary of the Blavatsky Lodge. It is owing to his unremitting diligence that they are so interested, and he reports highly of the appreciative intelligence and keenness of perception of his Battersea friends.

In Whitechapel there is also a growing group of thinkers at the very valuable centre focussed at 345 Mile End Road by Mr. Chapman, whose generosity and kindness are most thoroughly appreciated by his fellow-workers at Headquarters. The charming little hall he has arranged is found invaluable by the Secretary of the British Section, Mr. W. R. Old, under whom the group is studying. If we could number a few more Theosophists like Mr. Chapman, Theosophy would indeed become helpful to the world at large.

The Brighton Lodge holds monthly meetings, but we hear that interest in the subject is growing sufficiently great for the members to wish for fortnightly meetings, and to enter on a course of real study. This Lodge counts two very able men, Dr. Alfred King and Mr. Edward Ellis, who have been interested in Spiritualism, Magnetism, and kindred offshoots of Theosophy, for years past. It is owing to the hard work of Mr. Kingsland that this Lodge has grown up. Mrs. Cooper-Oakley has attended two of the meetings, and W. R. Old will attend the next.

From Manchester do we hear of a Lodge in process of formation. This will be largely due to the powerful lectures delivered by Mrs. Annie Besant, and also to the able organizing capacity of Mr. Sidney Coryn, who is working in both Liverpool and Manchester.

Space fails us, and we must defer to our next issue further details of work.

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### **Notice to Subscribers.**

It has been decided that the VAHAN will better serve the purpose for which it is intended by a fortnightly instead of a monthly publication. The subscriptions of 2/- already made will therefore cover the first twelve numbers, instead of the whole year as at first notified.

As the VAHAN is to be supplied free of charge to all members of

the Section, it will of course entail a considerable expense, for paper, printing, and postage. It is hoped, therefore, that our more fortunate brothers will do their best to reinstate us financially, so that the mass of the other important work to be done may not stand still for want of the necessary means.

As soon as funds will permit, the pages of the VAHAN will be increased.

Taking into consideration the rapid increase in the number of those attending the weekly meetings of the Blavatsky Lodge, the Council has proposed that a *conversazione* be held on the first Tuesday in each month at 8 p. m. This reunion is quite distinct from the "at home" given by the Countess Wachtmeister and Mrs. Cooper-Oakley (noticed on page 6), which is for the benefit of strangers; it is to give members the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with each other, and infuse a warmer spirit of fraternity among them, there being no possibility of private conversation at the regular Lodge meetings.

The Council feels that each member ought to be encouraged to take an active interest in the supporting and carrying out of the work at Headquarters, and to make the Headquarters as far as possible a living centre of Theosophic thought and life.

Members are likewise asked to invite any of their friends that may evince interest in Theosophy, and, owing to the number of strangers that will naturally be expected, are requested as far as possible, with other members and associates, to assist in entertaining the guests.

The first reunion will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 2nd, at 8 p. m.

Tea and coffee will be served. Evening dress optional.

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

*Members of the British Section T. S. are requested to notify the General Secretary of every change of address, as otherwise many important papers are sure to go astray, and much trouble and annoyance be caused.*

