

THE VAHAN.



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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, etc., for insertion in the VAHAN to W. R. OLD, Gen. Sec'y British Section T. S., 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N. W.

December 14, 1890.

NO. 2.

The Alpha and Omega of Life.

It may interest some of our readers to give a short sketch of the history or life-cycle of those minute yet deeply interesting micro-organisms included under the general term of bacteria, often the cause of such wide-spread havoc in the human organism, and which of late have evoked such marked consideration in the scientific and medical world, owing to the recent detection by Dr. Koch, of Berlin, of the special bacillus, the supposed cause of consumption or tuberculosis, and for which he claims to have discovered a cure and a means of dislodging the unwelcome visitor from its snug abode in the human frame.

These tiny specks, then, for they are little more, the lowest form of living creature in the scale of animated being with which science is at present acquainted, are with difficulty under the most powerful microscopes discovered as minute glistening masses of elongated (bacillus) or spherical (microceus) form, translucent and apparently void of definite structure. An immense number of varieties of these exist in air and water, floating in countless myriads through the atmosphere, adhering to all substances to which air has free access, seeking an appropriate habitat, and bursting, the moment they alight on a suitable nidus, under the genial influence of warmth and moisture, into extraordinary activity, multiplying with enormous rapidity, feeding on the decomposing organic matter everywhere abounding. They may be found wherever putrefaction changes are proceeding. Some possess the faculty of locomotion, propelling themselves by means of the rapid vibrations of a slender hair-like process or cilium.

Fortunately for us, the immense majority are harmless, and, even when not so, the living animal tissues have an antiseptic power of des-

troubling or rendering them impotent to do mischief. Were it not for this power, every breath drawn would be a deadly draught, every sore would become putrid.

If by accident one of the deadlier species should contrive to wriggle its way into the circulation, there then ensues a struggle for life, a mortal combat for supremacy between them and the protoplasmic cells of the body, the battle field being to a large extent in the blood, and probably the white corpuscles of that fluid taking an active part in the strife. Happily, most of those that enter the body enjoy but a very limited term of existence there and soon cease even to propagate there, so that if the constitution can only hold out, its victory is assured.

But let it not be imagined that all these germs are to be regarded as dire enemies. They, as all else in nature, have their uses, and but for that very function of inducing putrefaction and decomposition, the earth's surface would speedily become a mass of organic refuse and heaped-up débris.

Medical science is still in the dark as to whether these creatures take any part in the normal physiological processes of the body or if so in what particular; but from analogy we are perhaps justified in regarding it as very probable that forms of life, which have hitherto eluded the grasp of science and microscopic observation, possess important functions, and that a knowledge of these would give the clue to many of the complex biological processes and chemical changes that accompany the manifestations of the life forces on this our physical plane of being.

W. H. HAND.

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

The *Theosophist* for November contains a deeply interesting article by Col. Olcott on "The First Leaf of T. S. History," in which he gives a sketch of the first efforts of a few students in 1875 to form a society for "the study of occult science and esoteric philosophy, in theory and practice, and the popularization of the facts throughout the world." What the result of those efforts has been, we all know now; but though these results may be far in excess of what was then anticipated, we also know that the work is as yet hardly begun, if we measure it by that which we must yet achieve, individually and collectively. Forward! Brothers—Forward!

"Tamil Proverbs" is an interesting article showing how esoteric truth of the deepest and most metaphysical nature may be wrapped up in Oriental language, which, when translated literally into English, yields nothing but nonsense. Such, however, is the fate of most of the Aryan literature at the hands of our Western "Orientalists," who strain every nerve to obtain a *literal* translation and give us nothing but dry bones.

There are many other interesting articles, too numerous, however, to mention here. The whole number is a good one.

Lucifer contains the second and concluding editorial, in the well known style of H. P. B., on "Psychic and Noëtic Action," called forth, it would appear, by a tendency in some quarters to compromise the esoteric teachings by making them "more subservient to, if not entirely at one with modern science." Needless to say that the editor will make no such compromise. The two articles show clearly what a gulf there is between modern psychology, and the teachings of Occultism with regard to the phenomena of consciousness and mind. The dual nature of *Manas* is asserted as the key to the problem, and the difference between the *personality*, influenced and guided by the *Lower Manas*, and the *individuality*, to which belongs the *Higher Manas (Nous)* is clearly and succinctly explained. Theosophists should study well this dual nature, wherever they can meet with any writings which are explanatory of it; for it is the key to the whole question of reincarnation, of free-will, and of the limited and conditioned nature of that *personality* which in ignorance considers itself the *Ego sum*.

Bertram Keightley sends some "Jottings from India," which will be read with interest by our Fellows, and which we trust will be continued.

G. R. S. Mead commences the second part of the translation and commentary of *Pistis-Sophia*. The importance of this Gnostic Gospel has been realized by a few scholars, since its discovery about the year 1850 in a very old Coptic MS. in the British Museum. No translation, however, has hitherto been made into English, and the one now appearing in *Lucifer* is of double value, as being annotated under the direction of H. P. B., so that the student may possess the esoteric key by which alone the real nature of *Christos* can be understood, and the true origin and significance of *Christianity* be explained.

The other articles contain a considerable amount of interesting matter.

The "T. P. S." pamphlets, or *Theosophical Siftings*, have now reached No. 14 of Vol. III, where we find an account of the lecture given before the Blavatsky Lodge by Madame Le Plongeon, describing the archæological researches which she and her husband have been carrying on for many years, in the face of great difficulties, in Yucatan, Central America. The information given in the lecture was necessarily somewhat meagre, yet it was sufficient to reveal a rich mine of facts which go a long way to confirm the teachings of the *Secret Doctrine* with respect to the fourth-race humanity, and the configuration of the globe before the submersion of Atlantis. The similarity, and in many cases absolute identity between the Maya inscriptions and the Egyptian hieroglyphs is significant enough. One of the Maya

manuscripts contains an account of the submersion of a great island, called *Mu*, in the Atlantic ocean; thus adding confirmation as to the destruction of Atlantis. "At last the surface gave way, and ten countries were torn asunder and scattered helter-skelter. Unable to stand the force of the seismic convulsions, they sank, with their sixty-four millions of inhabitants, 8060 years before the writing of this book." Those who wish to pursue the subject further should read Dr. Le Plongeon's book.

In the same number of the "T. P. S." is a well written article on "Individuality and Personality," a subject which the student should endeavour to grasp in all its aspects. The T. P. S. pamphlets constitute a most valuable series of papers relating to Theosophy, and are especially useful for placing in the hands of those who are beginning to evince an interest in the subject, since those numbers can be selected which present it from the point of view most likely to be acceptable. Theosophy has many aspects, and it should always be the effort of those who try to influence others in its favour, to find out what line it is best to take. Much harm may be done by presenting the subject in an unfamiliar aspect. A judicious selection from the T. P. S. pamphlets will often meet all the requirements of the case.

THE ENQUIRER.

SCOTTISH LODGE.—*It is said that the first cycle of 5,000 years of the Kali Yuga terminates between now and 1900. Does this mean that the next cycle will be at a higher spiritual level than the present, or that the course which hitherto has been downward to materialism will reverse and tend upward?*

Ans.—The general evolution of humanity is upon the ascending arc, inasmuch as we have passed the nadir of the fourth round, being of the fifth race of that round. The evolutionary impulse of the fifth race cycle affects all the nations and tribes included within it differently, according to their several karmas, and similarly, as they are all extensions from the same root race. The intellectual principle in man will, during the next sub-cycle, become more active than at present. Consequently, there will be greater power for good or evil in the world according to the determination of nations generally. The paralyzing influence of blind materialism is a mild evil compared with the absolutely destructive influence of intellectual powers consciously employed for sinful ends. We are in the Kali Yuga, an age black with deceit and blood-red with sensuality, and it is for this reason that the acquisition of higher intellectual powers becomes an awful responsibility.

QUERY.—*Will the change of cyclic phenomena be cataclysmic or gradual?*

ANS.—This will depend entirely on the causes produced and the forces set in motion by our collective actions. The suppression of a single bad cause will annul a thousand evil effects. Individuals, communities, and nations will share the common fruit of their collective karma, the termination of a cycle being a period of readjustment. (*Vide p. 634 et seq., Secret Doctrine.*)

QUERY.—*Has the close of cycle any connection with the recent change in direction of the earth's axis?*

ANS.—The changes which have occurred in the direction of the earth's axis during the period since the appearance of the fifth race on this globe are all synchronous with the changes of the various cycles treated of in Eastern esoteric cosmology.

QUERY.—*What conditions are necessary for an individual, a movement, or an association, to put it in the best condition for beginning the new cycle?*

ANS.—It is above all else important that all individuals having the same upward aspiration, and the same desire for the betterment of the human race, should mass themselves together and unite their efforts in the common cause, sinking all minor differences of opinion, setting aside all class prejudices, and fitting themselves individually to preserve the greatest possible harmony of thought, feeling, and action. By this means a nucleus is formed, around which will gather the psychic and spiritual forces which make for good in the world. The tocsin of this cycle has sounded, and the marshalling of the powers for good and evil is silently going on. They who are prepared and properly equipped will have no cause to fear the result.

QUERY.—*In view of the law of karma, is it right for a person to resist evil that is threatened by another?*

ANS.—Certainly, the preservation of life is justifiable, and self-defence cannot be considered in the same category with resentful malice. But better than self-defence is the avoidance of the opportunity for evil in others. It is our duty as far as possible to prevent the contagion of evil effects, for by this means we make the first step towards "returning good for evil," in that we limit the generation of bad karma in the world, and reduce the liabilities of the evil-doer.

ACTIVITIES.

THE CLUB FOR WORKING WOMEN AND GIRLS, FOUNDED BY THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.—This club for the benefit of working women and poor girls has been opened in the East End by the Theosophical So-

ciety; it is named "The East London Club for Working Women," 193, Bow Road, E. It was opened on the 16th of August, when a large tea was given to a number of girls belonging to various factories. They spent a pleasant evening, winding up with an impromptu dance, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

This club owes its existence to the kindness of a gentleman who brought a cheque of £1,000 to Madame Blavatsky, asking her to devote it to the use and benefit of working women. Madame Blavatsky, being too much of an invalid to undertake the responsibility, deputed Mrs. Annie Besant and Miss Laura Cooper, members of the Society, to do the practical organization for her. The kind donor only stipulated that no dogmatism should be taught.

The house is a large old-fashioned building, with fine rooms, and has been charmingly arranged to be as home-like and comfortable for the girls as possible. A good library is now in course of formation, many friends and members having sent books, which have been gratefully received by the librarian, Miss Mabel Besant.

There is accommodation for twelve girls who are homeless and friendless. The club is for everyone, without distinction of any kind, either political, trading, or social, this being one of the fundamental principles of the Theosophical Society, and the club will accordingly be worked on these lines.

A large dining hall, to which Messrs. Bryant and May contributed £50, has been built, where food can be obtained at cost price, a good dinner of meat, vegetables and pudding being supplied for 3d.; from 40 to 140 girls dine daily, the latter being the largest number of girls who have dined at the hall at one time. The number of the members has nearly reached 200. Many of the girls who are now out on strike come for an early breakfast, which they have for 1d., and about the same number come for tea.

Different lady members of the T. S. have kindly consented to help amuse and interest the girls on the various evenings of the week, and the Countess of Portsmouth has generously offered to give either a tea or dinner to the members of the club at Christmas. It is hoped that a Christmas tree or some small festivity may be organized for the benefit of these hard-working women; and Miss Emily Kislingbury (Head-quarters) is kindly interesting herself in getting small donations to be spent in buying warm woollen gifts for the girls, and she will be grateful for any small amount that may be sent to her for the purpose. It is hoped that various small entertainments will be organized during the coming season, and every effort should be made to render the club a centre of brightness for the women and girls of the East End.

LECTURES AT LIVERPOOL, MANCHESTER, AND COLN.—A very successful lecture, we hear, was delivered by Mrs. Annie Besant at Liverpool,

where she was very cordially received. The secretary of the Liverpool Lodge writes to us that "Mrs. Besant was in splendid form," and the audience responded by asking very intelligent questions, which materially aided in explaining some of the most difficult and abstruse parts of the lecture. We are much indebted to the Spiritualists in Liverpool for the kind and cordial way in which they placed their hall and every facility for success at our disposal; nothing could be more gratifying than the *entente cordiale* shown by the Liverpool Spiritualists to the London Theosophists.

At Manchester, also, Mrs. Besant was well received, and much interest shown by the audience. Up to the present time there has been no regular Lodge formed in Manchester, though there are many friends interested in Theosophy. Mr. Sidney Coryn, who has worked so ably in Liverpool, is hoping to form a Lodge shortly in Manchester, and as interest grows it will create a centre round which the Lodge will grow up. Mrs. Besant has also lectured at Coln, in Lancashire, and at various Working-Men's Clubs in and around London, and it is proposed that she should give a course of lectures on Theosophy, at Steinway Hall, on Saturday afternoons, early in the New Year. This course has not yet been finally arranged; and members shall have full notice in due time.

J. T. Campbell, F.T.S., lectured at Winchester Hall, Peckham, S. E., on the 16th ult.; subject, "Theosophy and Spiritualism." In the course of his address the lecturer complained, in common with many Spiritualistic writers, that "it was impossible to prove whether a given communication did or did not come from its alleged source." Mr. Campbell quoted Pirogoff to show that "the Cosmic Mind can function through the most infinitesimal and all but structureless organisms seen by the microscope"—and hence denied to the "spirits" a monopoly of conscious intelligence. The highest phases of mediumistic phenomena under the best "conditions" contrasted unfavourably with the daylight performances of naked Indian jugglers. Several mediums informed the lecturer that mediumship is entirely free from peril, though like the knife and fork, its use and abuse were equally possible. To this the lecturer replied that "the knife and fork were like the 'spirits,' good servants *outside*, but dangerous things if *taken internally!*"

Proposed Conference.

We must draw the attention of members very seriously to the proposal about the Conference which was laid before them in our last issue. Unless members desire to have this plan carried out, and will notify to the secretary that they propose attending, it will be no use for the Headquarters staff to waste time in planning arrangements. It is therefore very earnestly asked that each member receiving a copy

of the VAHAN (and especially country Lodges) will kindly send a post-card to the Secretary B. S., intimating their views on the subject, and if they can attend any suggestions will be most cordially received. The whole Conference is to be devoted to the one point of trying to work in mutual concert and understanding; and therefore the members must themselves aid in this, if any real result is to be arrived at. Members who are desirous of attending this Conference, and who will require lodging for the three days, can have arrangements made for them in advance, if they will notify the secretary as to the expense they can afford. Members resident in London can of course attend in the evenings, after business hours.

NOTICES.

—Press cuttings are useful to us as a basis for correspondence and discussions on Theosophy and kindred subjects in the public papers. Members who cannot undertake such correspondence themselves should send to Dr. H. A. W. Coryn, Trewirgic, Acre Lane, Brixton, S.W., or to Mrs. A. L. Cleather, 19, Gayton Road, Harrow.

—Articles on Theosophy, or any of its phases, intended for publication in the weekly journals, should be sent to the Baroness de Pallandt, 26, Bryanston St., Marble Arch, W.

—All changes of address should be immediately notified to the General Secretary, B. S. T. S., 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, N.W.

—We have to thank members and friends for the generous and ready response made to our request for assistance. The amount thus far received for the VAHAN fund is £4 11 6.

—Members and visitors of the Blavatsky Lodge are requested to note that the usual Thursday evening meetings will not be held on December 25th and January 1st.

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



H. P. B. PRESS, 19 AVENUE RD., LONDON.