

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

January 1, 1891.

NO. 3.

A New Year's Greeting.

[Written for the *Theosophical Siftings*.]

The new year, 1891, has now commenced, and as it is likely to prove an eventful one in the history of the Theosophical Society, I should like to begin by sending a few words of greeting and grateful thanks to all who have helped me by their sympathy to carry out my share of the work.

When I first went to Würzburg in 1885 to visit Madame Blavatsky, I little realized the vast importance and magnitude of the work in which we are now engaged; and though I firmly believed in the mission which H. P. B. was trying to accomplish, and had full faith in her honesty of purpose, it seemed to me an utter impossibility that Theosophy could ever reach the hearts of the people, and so become a living power in the world for good. I looked around me and saw that what most interested the public was phenomena; the sublime and divine truths contained in Theosophy were ignored, or assimilated only by the very few; and when that cowardly and abominable attack was made on Madame Blavatsky by the Psychical Research Society, I feared that it would either kill the Theosophical Society or alienate those who were attracted only by curiosity and desire for the marvellous. At first it seemed as if the Society had received its death blow; day after day came in resignations from those who had hitherto been looked upon as shining lights in the Society, or else insulting letters from men and women who until then had worn the mask of friendship. The remainder of the members of the T. S. were more or less paralyzed, and all they wanted to do was to keep quiet and out of sight, so that no mud should be thrown at them.

But a few bright stars shone through the darkness, jewels of friends

who kept staunch and true through all, and it was really their expressions of sympathy and love which kept H. P. B. alive.

When I think of that long, dreary winter, when we two lived together in that quiet German town, where we had not a single friend; when I think of how my heart used to sink every morning, when the postman's ring was heard, at the thought of fresh insults which the letters would surely contain, I consider it a sacred duty to tell all members of the T. S. how deeply H. P. B. has suffered for the noble cause to which she has dedicated her life. Day after day she sat at her desk from early morn till night, writing the *Secret Doctrine*, which was destined to teach and help so many seekers after truth, we little knowing the work and future which lay before us. As I think of those days there always lies deep down in my heart one eternal regret, *viz*: that my intuition should have been so obtuse that I did not realize the enormous importance of this grand philosophy, and that I did not give every moment of my time to its study. But it seemed so far beyond me in those days, as if the understanding of such sublime truths could never be reached by me in this lifetime, and so I let the valuable hours slip away. And now when experience and study have given me the hope that I could comprehend what before appeared so difficult, my work lies in another direction, practical work for the spreading of Theosophy, which brings me little leisure for quiet reading and reflection. Karma, I suppose!

The winter of 1886-87 I spent alone with H. P. B. in Ostend. Notwithstanding my forebodings, the Society had not collapsed under the P. R. S.'s treacherous blow, and a few straggling members came to life again and rallied round Madame Blavatsky. Visitors appeared one after the other on the scene; confidence in H. P. B. began to revive; and serious thoughts for the future were entertained as to the further development of the T. S. These culminated in the plan of her coming to London. Arriving there in May, H. P. B. settled in Lansdowne Road, Notting Hill, in September, 1887, in company with a few devoted friends. Since that time the work and influence of the Society have steadily increased, notwithstanding the defalcation of a few members whose personal vanity was hurt because they did not receive the homage to which they felt they were entitled. The T. S. continued to widen out, friends rallied round in greater numbers, and after three years of steady work the Society was placed on a firm basis. It became apparent that a larger house was necessary, and a move was made to our present Headquarters, during the summer of the past year; and now in 1891, after all these years of persecution and suffering, Madame Blavatsky is surrounded by a strong and faithful band of tried men and women, who are true to the death, and who will bear the brunt of any new attack or insult which the future may have in store for her. Not only has she formed from among these an efficient

staff of workers, but she has the happiness of knowing that she has about her those who love and revere her, who value her teachings, and who would willingly give their lives to save her a single pang. There is now every hope that the remaining years of her life may be passed in that peace which is essential to the achievement of her great work; no attack from without will be allowed to fall upon her, and no besmearing of her reputation will have the slightest effect upon those who have known and put her to the test, and who now appreciate her as she deserves. On the contrary, any such attack will be sure to rebound on those who may attempt to blacken her name, to disturb her peace, or to depreciate her mission.

CONSTANCE WACHTMEISTER.

Should Men Wear Long Hair?

Prof. Alexander Wilder, M.D., F.T.S., writing in the *Phrenological Journal*, says:

“Whether the hair should be cut I could never quite satisfy myself. As a physiological practice I doubt the propriety. Every cutting is a wounding, and there is some sort of bleeding in consequence, and waste of vital force. I think that it will be found that long-lived persons most frequently wear their hair long. The cutting of hair stimulates to a new growth to supply the waste. Thus the energy required to maintain the vigour of the body is drawn off to make good the wanton destruction. It is said, I know, that after the hair has grown to a certain length, it loses its vitality at the extremity and splits or ‘booms up.’ Whether this would be so if the hair should never be cut, I would like to know. When it is cut a fluid exudes and forms a scar or circatrix at each wounded extremity, indicating that there has been injury. Women and priests have generally worn long hair. I never could imagine why this distinction was made. The ancient priest was very often unsexed or devoted to the vow of celibacy, but I cannot surmise whether this had anything to do with it. Kings wore their hair long in imitation of Samson and the golden Sun God Mithras. I suspect from this that the first men shorn were slaves and labourers, and that freedmen wore their hair un mutilated as the crown of perfect manhood. If this be correct, the new era of freedom, when it ever shall dawn, will be characterized by men unshaven and women unperverted. I wish that our science and our civilization had better devices for preserving the integrity of the hair. Baldness is a deformity and premature whiteness a defect. If the head were in health and the body in proper vigour, I am confident that this would not be. I am apprehensive that our dietetic habits occasion the bleaching of the hair; the stiff arsenic-prepared hat is responsible for much of the baldness. Our hats are unhealthy from the tricks of the hatters. I suppose there are other causes, however. Heredity has its

influences. Certain diseases wither the hair at its roots; others lower the vitality of the skin and so depillitate the body. I acknowledge that the shingled head disgusts me. The most sensitive part of the head is at the back where the neck joins. That place exposed to unusual heat or cold is liable to receive injury that will be permanent, if not fatal in a short period. The whole head wants protection, and the hair fills this office as no other protection can. Men have beards because they need them, and it is wicked to cut them off. No growth or part of the body is superfluous, and we ought, as candidates for health and long life, to preserve ourselves from violence or mutilation. Integrity is the true manly standard."

NOTE.—Fashion, which has somehow succeeded in making "respectability" its queer ally, forbids Christian civilized society wearing their hair long at this period of our century. In this the so-called Christian civilization is guilty of inconsistency, and its clergy of disrespect, since Jesus and his apostles are shown to have worn long hair—every one of them except Paul. The Nazars of the Old Testament never allowed the razor to touch their heads. The Aryan Rishis, the Yogis, the Saddhus, of every kind, wore and still wear their hair long. The Initiates of Thibet do the same. In Europe, the Greek and Russian clergy alone, along with their monks, have preserved the wise habit; and the longevity of some of the last named is proverbial.—*The Theosophist, June, 1884.*

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

The *Path* for December contains a most able and suggestive article on "The Basis of the Manifestation of Law," in which the author, "H. L. C.," deals in a clear and succinct manner with the problem of what it is that lies at the back of the acknowledged law and order of the universe. The inductive method of science must necessarily stop just at the point where the real problem begins, for it is based solely on observation, and sensuous perception, and therefore limited to the phenomenal world which is cognized by our physical faculties. It is moreover dependent on a long series of accumulated observations, which are in themselves necessarily incomplete. It is probably a very common error to suppose that science is *accurate* so far as it goes; but a very slight acquaintance with some of its generalizations and hypotheses will soon convince the student who is endeavouring to get at *truth* as to his own nature, and that of the universe in which he lives, that science and the inductive method cannot help him. After pointing this out, the author proceeds to deal with the deductive method of the Platonic school, in which the subject is approached from the other end, the widest generalization which the mind can form being taken as the basis, and supported by an appeal to experience. From a The-

osophic point of view this generalization consists in the idea that a universal consciousness is the basis of all manifestation; that cosmic mind or intelligence guides natural law in all its operations. The great difficulty which the modern materialistic school of thought has to deal with, is to account for the manifestation of law and order apart from intelligence, or of intelligence and consciousness evolved out of *dead* matter and *blind* force. That it is impossible to do so is indeed conceded by the materialists and agnostics themselves; and from the standpoint of the opposite school, the marvel appears in the fact that the phenomena of natural law should present to any thinker no higher idea than that of an unintelligent and fortuitous interaction of matter and force. Yet so it is, and there are men to-day who are not content merely to confess their ignorance, but must needs put forward materialism as the final solution of the problem. Yet, as the author well points out, the conception of universal consciousness is one of the earliest as well as one of the grandest generalizations which the human mind has achieved, and nothing illustrates more forcibly the tendency of this age than the fact that this conception has almost faded from the minds of men. We need only add that this materializing tendency of the age is one of the main reasons for the existence of the Theosophical Society, which endeavours to combat it by bringing forward the ancient Secret Doctrine, and giving back to humanity their lost inheritance of knowledge and WISDOM-RELIGION.

“Shall We Teach Clairvoyance” is a note of warning from W. Q. Judge, in which he gives cogent reasons why the phenomenal side of occult science should not be forced, but left to natural development. He says finally, in answer to the question, “What shall we pursue and study?”—“Study the philosophy of life, leave the decorations that line the road of spiritual development for future lives, and—practice altruism.” Sound advice is this. There is far too much evidence that many members of the Society are seeking after the mere phenomenal side, and personal development. The path to perfection lies not that way.

The *Theosophical Forum* is a small monthly pamphlet published by the American Section, and devoted exclusively to questions and answers. It is very valuable for beginners, who are liable to form conclusions in a hasty manner, or to accept certain Theosophical teachings in their mere doctrinal form, without understanding the first principles upon which they are based. A note of warning is sounded in the November number (No. 17), in relation to the subject of Devachan. Our ideas with regard to Devachanic consciousness are far too liable to be coloured, perhaps unconsciously, by notions derived from religious teachings; but the matter cannot be really understood without a knowledge of the inter-relation of the various planes of conscious-

ness and states of matter. There is perhaps more for the student, trained in the Western modes of thought, to *unlearn* in connection with the post-mortem states, than in any other matter with which Theosophy deals.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—What position in the Life Cycle of our system does the Kali Yûga hold; and how can it be said that we are only now completing the first cycle of 5000 years in the Kali Yûga, if we are already on the ascending arc?

*Ans.—*Every race, as every globe and every round, has its “seven ages,” or yûgas; and each of the seven rounds is also a yûga. When we mention the Kali Yûga, it should be well understood of which one we are speaking: whether of the fourth round of our planetary chain, of the fourth age of that round, or of the fourth race of that age. As the life-impulse is upon the fourth round of our own earth-chain, we are in the Kali Yûga or Black Age, which is always the fourth in the septenary division of every round, globe, or race. Moreover, we are on the fourth globe of the earth-chain, which forms another cycle of this same age, a Kali Yûga within a Kali Yûga. The initial epoch or turning-point on this fourth globe was reached in the middle of the fourth race, commonly known as the Atlantean. The Aryan race is the fifth on this globe, and like every other race it will produce its seven branches before it attains to its fulness of life. From this we may see that the Kali Yûga which began on February 17th, 3102 B. C., is only a minor cycle in a vast period of time.

QUERY.—What, in orthodox Theosophy, is understood by the word “faith”?

*Ans.—*To correct a manifest error, we may as well say, first of all, that there is no such thing as *orthodox* Theosophy. The Theosophist is a truth-seeker pure and simple, who studies to comprehend, as much as in him lies, the Wisdom-Religion, which he believes to be the one spiritual philosophy which can most effectually and speedily remove the uncertainty that prevails with regard to the problems of life. He accepts nothing upon authority, except tentatively, pending the confirmation of his own experience and reason. Faith, with the Theosophist, is an intellectual attitude with regard to the domain of the *Unknown*, to whose forever receding threshold his own knowledge and reason have led him. Beyond this the spiritual faculty of intuition can alone reach.

QUERY.—The scheme of evolution, as presented in Theosophical writings, embraces periods of time so vast that it seems impossible that there can

be any real evidence in support of their exactness. Whence are they derived?

Ans.—The certain evidence of the mathematical truth of these periods treated of in the *Secret Doctrine* and elsewhere is in the source of their computation. They are all based upon astronomical calculations, and are of the most remote origin. The Eastern Rishis or Sages have long since proved their right to be considered the oldest and most exact astronomers of whom we have any record. A comparison of the present positions of the fixed stars with those given in the calculations of Surya Siddhanta uniformly shows an antiquity of 58,000 years. But these periods—which seem so impossible to the Western mind that measures time by mere milleniums and that not any too exactly—are not, after all, so disproportionate when compared with some of the geological periods covered by modern science, especially if we remember that the age of the earth is one thing, and the revolutions of thousands of stellar systems is another!

ACTIVITIES.

CHISWICK.—Under the direction of Mr. F. L. Gardner and Mr. W. Kingsland, a series of fortnightly meetings have been commenced at Chiswick. On Saturday evening, the 6th December, the first meeting was held at Mr. Gardner's residence, where about thirty enquirers met together and listened with great interest to an address delivered by Mr. Kingsland, setting forth the origin and scope of Theosophy, and the aims and objects of the Theosophical Society. Mr. Kingsland dealt very specifically with the objections, limitations, and prejudices which so often prevent people from giving the subject due consideration, before passing judgment upon it; and stated that the object of the next few meetings would be to present a clear idea of the first principles on which Theosophy is based, dealing with these from a scientific standpoint as fundamental principles of natural law. When these have been grasped, the student might pass on to the consideration of special Theosophic doctrines, and their relation to the problems of life. Following the lecture, a number of questions were dealt with, which evinced a deep interest on the part of those present, and a desire to continue the subject into its deeper aspects.

Owing to the extreme inclemency of the season, and the consequent difficulties in travelling, it is thought advisable that the proposed Conference should be postponed until the summer months. The Conference was specially designed to give our country members a fuller representation in the work of the Society than they have hitherto possessed, and without a fairly good attendance of such members, the

movement would be incomplete, if not aimless. Members are therefore requested to note that the Conference is postponed till after the next General Council meeting in May.

The Theosophical Lodge which is in formation at Battersea is making considerable progress, but is somewhat deterred for want of literature. Donations of suitable books, or money for the purchase of them, will be gratefully acknowledged if sent to Mr. S. V. Edge, at Headquarters.

Theosophical Lending Libraries.

Theosophical lending libraries are to be found at the addresses given below. The list of books and terms on which they are lent will be sent by the respective librarians on application.

BRIGHTON.—Mrs. S. I. Chase, 14, Stamford Road.

DUBLIN.—The Secretary, Dublin Theosophical Society, 105, Stephen's Green, South. (Books issued to members and associates only.)

EDINBURGH.—A. P. Cattanach, 67, Brunswick Street. (Monday is the most convenient day for enquirers.)

LIVERPOOL.—J. Hill, 17, Great George Street. (Books issued to members and associates only.)

LONDON.—Theosophical Publication Society, 7, Duke Street, Adelphi, W.C.

Philalethean Lodge, 153, Acre Lane, Brixton, S.W. Librarian, H. Coryn. (Open to members and associates.)

East London Theosophical Library, 345, Mile End Road, E. Librarian, F. G. Chapman. Reading room open every evening free. Meetings every Tuesday, except the first of the month.

J. P. Dowling, 11, York Road, Battersea. The librarian is present every day except Thursday, from 11 to 3 and 6 to 9. Sundays, 11 to 12.

MYRTHYR TYDFIL.—Theosophical Free Library, 18, Park Place. Librarian, E. M. Thomas.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—F. Bandon Oding, 30, Hartington Street.

SHEFFIELD.—C. J. Barker, 503, Intake Road.

BIRMINGHAM.—S. H. Old, 102 Hall Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.

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