

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.

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NO. 4.

Theological Skeletons.

From time to time in human history, upon some more restless minds there grows a fear and then a conviction that the prevailing religious creeds have lost some or all of the vitality that made them potent in guiding the acts of men towards good. The impulse of most men to do good has continued to emanate from their better natures, but has ceased to be connected intellectually with their creed; and while some do good without accepting any religious system, others accept a religious system without its affecting their lives. In such case it must be considered that at any rate for them the creed is dead and a mere skeleton of formula. It has ceased to be the origin of what good is in them. What, then, is the origin of that good? Theosophy is a study of the science of good in man, of its source, its extent, its mode of action, its relation to ordinary consciousness, and the mode of making it the only potency of our lives. Under close inspection it would seem that there are at least three elements composing our consciousness and having different shares in prompting our acts. Of these three the highest and the lowest are outside reason, and the third *is* reason. We, as reasoning Egos, stand between the god and the animal, and of free-will incline upward or downward. The animal soul does not reason, but if unchecked rushes into bestiality; neither is reason a property of the spiritual soul, or god, but, often in the face of reason, it prompts steadily to unselfishness, the performance of duty, and self-sacrifice at any cost. Between these unreasoning or sub-rational impulses is the reasoning mind. This mind, on the mid-level, has at all times in history oc-

cupied itself with the study of the source of its impulses to good; it has tried to assign reason for, or to clothe in reason those impulses which it recognises as coming from above it. These attempts have resulted in creeds, which are intellectual statements of the relation between ourselves as men and the god of which we are the temple. But from time to time the creeds lose vitality; as men lose sight of truth, and fall into evil and materiality, the creeds attempt to state a relation between man and his god which no longer exists; and at the same time they cease to be even logical or reasonable, and finally make verbal statements which can find no correspondence in thought. It then happens that evil is done by men under the authorization of their now dead creed, whilst the good they do is from native impulse only, and without the help of reasoned religion. Theosophists think that we are in such a crisis, and that those who can think, think no longer of religion. Wherefore has been opened in these last few years once again the door of the primeval religion of mankind, the fountain of all creeds, that intellect may once more attempt to fathom the relation of mind to soul, of man to god. And knowledge of this relationship is Theosophy.

Active Work in Theosophy.

In days of old men are reported to have asked the Teacher: "What shall I do to be saved?" and the answer given was: "Sell all that thou hast, and follow me." To-day, to those who enter the Theosophical Society, the answer is much the same: "Follow Truth, and live for others." Give up some of your frivolous occupations, novel-reading, unnecessary calling and visiting, profitless sight-seeing, etc., and you will soon find that you have time, and a little monny, too, to help and benefit others. The work you take up need not be directly connected with Theosophy. In large towns, some may visit the nearest board-schools, help to feed and clothe some of the most destitute children, or organise some plan for doing so. I know one young lady who collects all the old boots and shoes among her family and friends, gets them re-soled and mended, and sells them at the board-school for the price of the repairs only. Others may form sewing-circles, and patch up old frocks for the children, or make new pinafores and other garments. Clubs for girls and boys for evening instruction or amusement are a good form of activity, and call for much patience and devotion if they are to succeed. A library may be formed at the club, and books lent out, recommended and talked over; a great deal of influence may be exercised in this way with good results, especially if care is taken in the choice of the books, and a studied direction given to the reading. In this way, the degree of intelligence of the members will be arrived at, and mental sympathy established, which may be invaluable

through life. In lending books which treat directly of Theosophy, much judgment will have to be exercised, the surroundings of the reader enquired into; altogether the *fitness* of things must be observed. Again, the teaching of music or singing in a club may be truly numbered among the "good works" to be done, for there is nothing that requires greater patience and perseverance, on the part of both teachers and pupils. Seeking out others to help in all these things, and persuading them also to devote a portion of their lives unselfishly is a work small indeed in itself, but infinitely worth doing, when you think that each human being thus engaged is as a stone thrown into the water, the centre and impulse of new waves of life and motion in the stagnant, nay, putrefying waters of a selfish existence.

The forms of activity in and for Theosophical work, are endless; once stir the will to go forth and labour, and study that you may help others, the means will soon present themselves; the "harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few."

E. K.

Emily K. ...

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

The *Theosophist* for December opens with an account of Dr. J. R. Buchanan's prophecies of the cyclic cataclysms which are to herald the commencement of the coming century. These prophecies are based on psychometrical observations and a law of periodicity derived therefrom. That there is some element of truth in them, and a scientific basis in occult laws of nature, can hardly be doubted by students of Theosophy and Occult Science; but the real question is, as to how far the *personal* element has been eliminated. The element of *personality* enters into all scientific observations, even into those which are made with mathematical instruments, and this must necessarily be increased enormously where the instrument made use of is a peculiarly sensitive psychic organism. The prophecies relate to social, religious, and geological changes of alarming magnitude. With regard to the latter, Dr. Buchanan says, speaking of America: "It is safe to say that our Atlantic coast is doomed . . . every seaboard city south of New England that is not more than fifty feet above the sea level of the Atlantic coast, is destined to a destructive convulsion. . . . The destruction of New York and Jersey City will be the grandest horror. . . . It will be sudden and brief—all within an hour, and not far from noon." Similar catastrophes are also predicted for the Mediterranean coasts; but it is some consolation to hear that "England will be more fortunate." The reader is referred to *Five Years of Theosophy*, page 388, which was written seven years before Dr. Buchanan's prophecy; the latter seeming, indeed, to be merely the filling in of the details of the former. It would be interesting to know how many

people will actually act upon the warning, and place themselves and their homes at a safe distance from the area of convulsion.

Bertram Keightley contributes a word in season in reference to Madame Blavatsky's work in the West, and its connection with the work of the Society in India. We all know how much H. P. B. was beloved by the Hindus, but her long absence, and the necessity of devoting her energies to the Western World, seems to have led many of our Eastern brothers into a very desponding and apathetic state of mind; some of them even thinking that she was dead! We have no doubt that Bertram Keightley will succeed in reviving their interest.

The December number of *Lucifer* contains a most important article by Annie Besant, entitled "The Theosophical Society and H. P. B.," which should be read and pondered by every member of the Society. The cycle is marching rapidly to a close, and as it does so, the forces which will energize the coming century are becoming more and more marked and concentrated. Within the Theosophical Society itself this movement is also apparent, and as the Society owes everything to H. P. B., so the whole movement, and every individual member, must stand or fall by the use that is made of her teachings. It is not a question of details, or of the acceptance of any of those teachings in their present form, as dogmatic statements. It is a simple question of first principles. It is a question as to whether these teachings—necessarily imperfect, from a variety of circumstances—are the portal to that higher knowledge and wisdom, the perfection of which constitutes *Adeptship*. If H. P. B.'s teachings do not emanate from the Masters, if the ancient Secret Doctrine does not exist, then the whole Society has been a fraud from the commencement. If it is to live on, and become a factor in the progress of humanity during the coming century, it must be on the basis of the teachings already given out, and yet to follow. There will still be room within the Society for all shades of opinion, for those even to whom the existence of the Masters is a mere speculation; but the vitalizing power of the movement must spring from a living faith, on the part of those who carry on the work, in the original traditions of the Society, and in the teachings they have received from H. P. B.

"A Plea for Harmony" is a useful paper, as setting forth the spirit in which Theosophical teachings should be approached. The writer says: "The purpose of this paper is accomplished, if it is shown that the last thing to do is call statements necessarily partial into judgment as if they were exhaustive, and then condemn them as illogical and contradictory. . . . Mistakes may exist, even in our most valued and most reliable works. For us there is no infallible pope, and no infallible scripture."

H. P. B. contributes some valuable notes on "Hypnotism, and Its Relation to Other Forms of Fascination."

The atmosphere seems to be teeming with *bacilli* just now, to judge from the scientific and general literature of the month. There is much in connection with the latest discoveries of the Bacteriologists to confirm the teachings of Occult Science in reference to the basis and manifestation of Life. A writer in the *Theosophist* points out that since the mind acts powerfully upon the body, and produces a susceptibility or otherwise to disease; and since immunity from disease depends upon a power of preventing the germs, which we are constantly taking into the system by the million, from germinating; and since mental states are dependent upon *Karma*; that there is thus a direct connection between Karma and the action of the *bacilli*. It would be interesting to know what connection there is between the *bacilli* and the Elemental Kingdom.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—*On certain days during the present cold season the meteorological department recorded the temperature of a place in the Arctic Circle as being 17 deg. higher than it was in England. Is this due to the cyclic influence spoken of in the VAHAN? I have myself noticed during the past years that the temperature of Great Britain is falling.*

ANS.—As one among a number of indications that we are approaching the end of the cycle, this fall of temperature may be recorded as significant. It is possible to account for this effect, however, by the common course of the winds. Thus, if during the days mentioned, the direction whence the wind was blowing across our country was north-east, the weather here would have been very cold, dry, and frosty, while at the same time a wind from the south-west might have been blowing towards the Arctic Circle, carrying with it the warmth indicated by the register. As an astronomical fact, however, this country is gradually assuming a more polar position with regard to the ecliptic, owing to the increase of the earth's polar elevation, *i.e.*, the decrease of the obliquity of the ecliptic.

QUERY.—*Is there any real need for a person who leads a pure, honest, and unselfish life, to study all the intricate problems of life, such as Karma, reïncarnation, the origin of the human soul, etc., as set forth in Theosophy? Is not GOODNESS sufficient to secure final liberation?*

ANS.—If you had said, is not *conscious* goodness sufficient to secure progress and final liberation, we should say—yes. But "goodness," *per se*, is not sufficient. It affords *opportunity* for, but does not *secure*

progress. The karmic effect of goodness is happiness. To progress, one must combine knowledge with goodness, and follow the Wisdom-Religion. To consciously assist nature, we must understand her laws and obey them.

Purity, honesty, and unselfishness will bring opportunity for progress, while knowledge will enable us to *use* that opportunity. Nothing is so likely to fall short of efficiency than goodness unaccompanied by knowledge; e.g., indiscriminate charity assists vice as much as virtue, and prolongs the fierce struggle for existence even in this world.

QUERY.—*What is the relation of the Tanhas to the Devachanic Entity?*

ANS.—When a man dies, his three lower principles are separated from him. That is to say, his physical body, astral body (*linga sharira*), and vital principle (*prāna*), are dissipated and restored to their respective elemental conditions. Then the Kama-rūpa (or spook), with such intelligence as it has acquired by association with the Lower Manas, finds itself in Kama-lōka, there to await the “second death.” The Devachanic Triad, with such spiritual aroma as can ascend to it from the now excarnated Lower Manas, enters into the Devachanic state. Upon emerging therefrom, it attracts to itself the elements of its scattered Tanhas, and is thereby drawn into some psychic vortex and goes through the process of rebirth. The relationship, therefore, which exists between the Devachanic Entity and the Tanhas is the same as that between the mind, and the desires which move the physical brain through the impulses of the animal soul, when in the state we call “sleep.” The conscious control of these latter is only re-assumed upon awaking, as are the Tanhas upon the return of the Devachanic Entity into earth-life.

ACTIVITIES.

A very successful members' reception was held at 19, Avenue Road on Tuesday, January 6th, where, in spite of the inclement weather, the hall was thoroughly well filled. By the exertions of some of the house staff, under Mr. Claude F. Wright's able directions, the hall had been charmingly decorated and arranged, and every effort was made to make the evening pass brightly. The members had the honour and pleasure of having Madame Blavatsky with them for a short time, her first appearance out of her own rooms for many weeks, as she has been suffering more than usual during the severe weather we have had.

The evening was enlivened by some very good music contributed by the guests; especially to be noticed was Mr. Blackmore's refined and cultivated rendering of Shelley's exquisite words, “I arise from

dreams of thee," which charmed his hearers; the enunciation of which was particularly to be appreciated for its delicacy, in these days when words are generally lost in sound.

The difficult part of accompanist during the evening was most ably filled by Miss Connah, who is a very thorough musician. Several pieces on the violin were also contributed by Miss Ingham, who is a very accomplished player. In conjunction with Miss Connah and some others, a few glees were arranged and prettily rendered. The music was very much appreciated by all the guests, and helped greatly to make the evening a very enjoyable one to all present.

The Secretary of the Liverpool Lodge sends us the following report of the latest activities:

"At our annual meeting, the following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, S. G. P. Coryn; Vice-President, Charles Savage; Secretary, John Hill; Treasurer, Joseph Gardner. It was unanimously agreed to reelect Mr. Coryn, as it is probable he will frequently be in Liverpool in connection with his business, and of course will be with us as much as possible. The meetings will be held at 17, Great George's Square, on the first Thursday and third Saturday in each month, at 7:30 p.m. A syllabus of subjects for our future discussions is being prepared, and a copy will be given to each member when completed. We have also had the name and address of the Society inserted in the Liverpool Directory, so that friends visiting this city will have no difficulty in finding out the locals of Theosophy in Liverpool."

Notices are being sent to all members, with our present issue, of Mrs. Besant's lecture at Steinway Hall, Seymour Street, on January 24th, at 3:30 p.m.; and it is hoped that all members will make use of this opportunity and try to bring friends who are not yet sufficiently interested to attend the Lodge meetings at Avenue Road. These notices should be spread as widely as possible, in order to fill the hall, and it is hoped that all members will do their best to further this end.

CHISWICK LODGE.—This Lodge is now in course of formation, three preliminary meetings having been held, and about thirty members are being enrolled. This centre of Theosophical activity owes its existence to the untiring work of Mr. W. Kingsland. It will be, we hear, formally chartered at the next meeting, and will be a great acquisition of strength to the Society.

From Bradford we have the good news that two Lodges are being formed, one at Baildon and the other in Bradford. They are being or-

ganised with the able assistance of Mr. Pattinson and Mr. O. Firth. Details will be given in our next.

The address of the Baroness de Pallandt is 36, Bryanston Street, W. Articles upon Theosophy for insertion in the public papers will be acknowledged if sent to that address.

The amount thus far received as donations to the VAHAN fund is £9 6d. We greatly appreciate the assistance thus afforded to us.

The address of the Liverpool Lodge library was given as 17, Great George's Street. This should have been 17, Great George's Square.

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



H. P. B. PRESS, 16 TOWNSHEND RD., N.W.