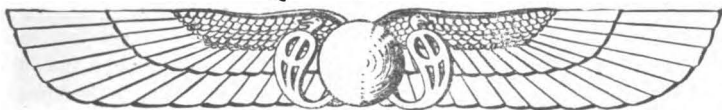


THE VAHAN



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

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NO. 8.

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

In the February number of the *Theosophist* we find a curious article by Col. Olcott on "The Elementals," which, consisting as it does of a mere string of stories, unsupported by any scientific or philosophical considerations, is eminently calculated to cause the average reader to blaspheme. We are told that it is a contribution or "serious thinkers upon a problem of high scientific interest": the question, *viz*: "Whether there is an astral world peopled by elemental races." It is to be regretted, however, that in this article, the very first principle of scientific investigation is ignored. That principle is simply to be sure of our facts: and not to put forward any statements which we are not prepared to confirm. Thus we are treated to a story of a "burning bush," or rather, tree, said to have been discovered at Bishenpore, a village in Bengal, and which gives out "regular volcanic eruptions of cinders and ashes, accompanied with thick volumes of smoke. Through a cleft in a hollow of the trunk can be clearly seen the bright blaze of a furious fire burning constantly within; but the tree is said to be in a state of full growth, and its green leaves and hollow trunk are in no way injured by the fire and smoke." Col. Olcott adds: "Of course, knowing nothing about the case personally, I only give the story for *what it may be worth*. Its value to me is that it exemplifies a law of 'elemental' agency, and, *if true*, could not be covered by any scientific theory hitherto arrived at." But is it true? Of what value is it in a "scientific" article when put for-

ward in this way? And suppose we grant that it is true, how does it exemplify a *law* of "elemental" agency? It looks more like a freak than a law. The principles of Theosophy have a deep and solid foundation in natural law, and the efforts of many of our Theosophical writers are directed towards a true and just presentation of these principles to those, who, trained in the modern school of thought, would otherwise fall into the negation of materialism. On this question, as to the existence of the "elemental" kingdom, there is much to be said which is of considerable value, scientifically and philosophically, though there is much reticence on the part of our teachers in regard to details, as the subject belongs to Occultism, rather than to Theosophy. It is to be regretted that the subject should be so loosely treated in the *Theosophist*. We would recommend students to read the pamphlet on "Elementals" in the first volume of the "T.P.S.", No. 10.

"The Mayas of Yucatan" is an interesting article dealing with the subject of Dr. Le Plongeon's researches in Central America, which have already been noticed in the VĀHAN, No. 2.

"The Future of the Indian Section of the T. S.," by Bertram Keightley, is an article full of hope and promise. We look to our Indian Section to supply us out of their rich stores of ancient tradition and philosophy with that true *spirituality* which is the antidote to materialism and scepticism. The Hindûs, however, as a nation, have lost much of their pride in their ancient birth-right and though the splendid efforts of Col. Olcott have done much to reawaken their interest, the Indian Section of the T. S. has still before it a great and noble task of national regeneration, before the reaction can be largely felt in the Western world.

Professor Max Müller recently delivered an instructive lecture before the Royal Asiatic Society, on "The Antiquity of Eastern Literature." After pointing out the difference between "authentic" and "constructive" history—the one being that of which we have documentary evidence by eye witnesses, and the other that which we construct by induction from a variety of data,—he proceeded to show, on philological grounds, that we must assign periods of immense duration in pre-historic times, for the growth and development of Sanskrit as it is found in the Vedas. He claimed, indeed, that on philological grounds alone we must grant to humanity periods of time more nearly approaching those with which geology deals than the few thousands of years which have hitherto been regarded as sufficient. Such concessions as were necessary to account for the growth of language might even carry us back to pre-glacial periods. He stated that the result of scholarly investigations in Sanskrit literature, as also in Babylonian and

Egyptian antiquities, had been to bring the "ancients" very near to us, and to make that which had previously been regarded as belonging to the remotest time, a matter almost of modern history in comparison with those periods which the necessities of constructive history demand.

All this, as far as it goes, is confirmation of the teachings of the *Secret Doctrine*, and points towards a recognition, as coming from *official* sources, of much which has been and is still derided, in works which have not the necessary charter of recommendation to the *orthodox* world.

The current number of *Time* contains an article of the greatest importance to members of the Theosophical Society. It is entitled "The Great Mare's Nest of the Psychical Research Society," and is written by Annie Besant. We trust that members will make this article as widely known as possible, as it deals with the report of Mr. Hodgson to the Psychical Research Society in 1884. This report is often brought forward by our opponents as conclusive evidence against the integrity and character of Madame Blavatsky, and was referred to in the December number of *Time*, in an article by Mr. F. Podmore, of the S. P. R.; hence the present reply. Mr. Podmore admits that Mr. Hodgson's report does not seem to have had the slightest effect upon the Theosophical movement; and this appears to him to present a special exemplification of the "transcendant and cosmopolitan miracle of human credulity." The credulity, however, appears to us to be better exemplified in the fact of the S. P. R. having accepted as gospel a report which was so prejudiced that only witnesses for the prosecution were examined. Mrs. Besant's article will put members, who may not as yet have had the opportunity of understanding the nature of the report, in a position to refute it whenever occasion demands.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—*If it be true, as stated in the "Key to Theosophy," p. 153, that after death "no SPIRIT will revisit the earth, though the animal soul may," how do Theosophists account for the communications received through honest mediums from persons long since passed away?*

ANS.—Providing the communications can be properly authenticated and indubitably referred to the sources whence they purport to come, there are two means by which it is possible for them to be received through the "medium." The first includes the supposition that the matter communicated is already on record,

although unknown to the medium. In this case it is impressed in the astral light, and thence transferred to the brain-consciousness of the medium while in the supersensitive condition.

The second means by which such communications might be received, is by reflex action in the brain-mind. Thus, if in the normal state of consciousness, the medium were to receive certain impressions, either from sight or hearing, such impressions, although not noted by the medium at the time of their reception, would be subsequently transferred to the subconscious memory, and when the psychic state ensued, they would be awakened into activity, and given out as if they were direct messages, and would fall again into passivity as soon as the medium returned to the normal state of physical consciousness. Psychics are peculiarly sensitive, even in the normal state of wakeful perception, to promiscuous impressions of all sorts, and in passive moments these will present themselves to the mind's eye in rapid succession, detached from all association with the things of conscious memory, and unless the mind is trained to discern between the different classes of impressions by which it is affected, they will often pass for psychic phenomena of quite another nature. But in any case, there is no need to drag deceased entities into the question. Where Spooks are not on parade in the abandoned vestments of genius that has passed on, the alleged source of a particular communication will generally be explicable under the law of the unconscious association of ideas acting within the mind of the medium. A pertinent remark by M. Fauvety must close this answer. The well-known Spiritist says: "We have been trying for a long time, a great deal has been published, a great many communications have been received, but I don't think it can be said that a single new thought, a single discovery, has been gained by those means."

QUERY.—*In the "Theosophical Siftings," No. 13, on the subject of NATIONAL KARMA, it is urged that, in respect of the inequalities which exist in the class conditions of our nation, Theosophists should refrain from indulging in all luxuries, and everything that is not really needful. But do not those luxuries bring a great deal of work to the needy; and what would become of every industry if every one limited his personal expenses to his real wants?*

ANS.—The question is a very subtle one, and strikes deeper into the problem of class inequalities than perhaps the luxurious may be willing to admit. Taking the two main points of this query, it is to be noted in the first place that the capital which is expended in the purchase of luxuries does not reach that class which has

most *need* of it. The industrial classes who are employed in the production and manufacture of the said luxuries, often work from morn till night for a bare pittance, which forces them to forego most of the bare necessities of healthy living, while it imprisons and cramps their souls. And yet it is they who give to raw materials its first extrinsic value by their industry and manufacture, and it is they who are therefore the producers, though not the possessors, of capital. Luxurious living breeds capitalists, but fails to relieve the needy. The reversion of accumulated capital to its first producers could alone affect this, under present conditions. In the second place, we have to decide what would become of the various industries if luxuries were abandoned. No doubt this is intended to question what would become of *those employed* in the industries which produce the luxuries, for, of course, the supply would correspond with the demand. We can only think, of course, that they would go to augment the staff of workers in *necessary* products or commodities, and before we can decide what would be the result of this movement upon the labour market, we should have to be informed as to what would become of all the unemployed capital of the erstwhile luxurists. Luxury is a *sin*, and a nation which depends upon the sin of one-half of its people for the support of the other, is rotten at the core, and must die. The question is a simple one if honestly regarded, but while a luxurious minority have all the pleasures of life at their command, what do they care where the money comes from, or how it goes? Little do they reckon that the gold they so easily acquire, and so heedlessly spend is nothing if not the concentrated sweat of hundreds of weary hands, the equivalent of long days of honest toil, carried on by the very brink of the grave; of nights of unrest and misery, eked out at the Gates of Death; long days and nights of heart-ache and sorrow for many, of luxurious ease for the few. Tears of pity and compassion may fill our eyes, and sorrow may cramp our hearts with its sickening pain, but the sin and wretchedness of this unloved world grows none the less for that. (*Vide Key to Theosophy*, p. 202 *et seq.*)

QUERY.—The “*Times*” of 24th February contains an account of a buried town near Kachar, in Eastern Turkestan, and of MSS. in archaic writing on birch bark, supposed to be Buddhist. Is this one of the subterranean libraries alluded to by H. P. B. in “*Isis*” and the “*Secret Doctrine*,” and is the writing, which is said to be in a primitive form of Thibetan, in fact, *Senzar*?—*Scottish Lodge.*

ANS.—In the old sacerdotal days it was the custom to bury the dead with MSS. relative to the deceased, which contained invoc-

ations, biographical notes, etc. The MSS. referred to are doubtless of this nature, though it is possible that they may also be of quite another kind. But in any case, the writing is not Sensar, according to H. P. B.

QUERY.—*For what purposes did the ancient Egyptians seek, by means of mummification, to prevent, rather than to aid the decomposition of the body after death?*

ANS.—The process of mummification was taught to the embalmer by the Priests, who were the originators of the art. The embalmers were persons of the lowest class, and their ignorance and insensibility were their best qualifications. The ostensible objects of embalming were (*a*) to preserve the identity of the physical atoms by preventing their transmission into other bodies, and (*b*) to preserve the astral body from entire dissolution. The custom was first practised on those most respected, but subsequently extended to all who could afford the expenses. It thence became a custom, and what passed for the original art was practised almost uniformly in Egypt.

ACTIVITIES.

NOTICE.—The Presidents of Lodges are requested to take notice that the Half-Yearly General Council Meeting of the British Section will be held at Headquarters on March 27th, at 8 p.m. Secretaries are kindly requested to prepare, in addition to their half-yearly Report of work, a letter of greeting to the American Section in Convention, which should embody an expression of feeling from the whole Lodge. These letters will be presented to the President of the Convention by Annie Besant in person.

To ensure the due presentation of these letters, they should be sent to the General Secretary at Headquarters, together with any motions to be considered by the Council, not later than the 21st inst.

DUBLIN.—The Lodge has a new scheme in process which we hope to see completed to the satisfaction of those concerned. It consists in the gathering together of some of the most energetic workers under the same roof, where the meetings will be held and a library established. This will form a working Headquarters for Ireland. Some local institutions founded by Theosophists are making good progress. The Dublin Vegetarian Society, for

example, presents a splendid record; and another restaurant on the same lines is to be opened in a few days.

SCOTTISH LODGE.—The attendance at the Lodge during the month of February has been quite up to the average, and much interest evinced in the discussions. The addition of new members has been the cause of much satisfaction. The Lodge closed its winter session at the end of the month, to reassemble in May.

GLASGOW.—It is gratifying to learn that there are some prospects of reviving this old Lodge, which went into *pralaya* some years ago. It is extremely important that the Glasgow members should lose no time in forming a united body to coöperate in the activities of the Section, which has at most but a few years in which to develop its internal forces.

BLAVATSKY LODGE.—The meetings of the Blavatsky Lodge are now so crowded that the hall, which was once so commodious, is rendered almost inadequate for the assembling of members and friends—the number of Lodge members alone being over two hundred.

Among Annie Besant's lectures the most important have been one on *Reincarnation*, at Manchester, and one on *Theosophy*, at South Place Institute, Finsbury; the halls being crowded on both occasions.

On Sunday, April 12th, at 3 p.m., the discussion on Herbert Burrows' lecture, "The Spiritual in All Religions," will take place at the Rev. Fleming Williams' church, Rectory Road, Stoke Newington, N.

A BUDDHIST COUNCIL.—As soon as Col. Olcott knew that a Burmese Buddhist League had raised a large sum of money to send a preaching party to Europe, and that it was the national wish that he should lead and direct the party, and also that Delegates were being sent to Adyar to confer about the matter, he telegraphed for Sinhalese and Japanese Buddhist Delegates to come from Colombo to meet the Burmese. Col. Olcott laid before them his views, and invited full and free discussion. All points of belief of the Southern and Northern Sections of Buddhism having been compared, Col. Olcott drew up a platform upon which all Buddhist sects could agree. It embraced fourteen clauses, each couched in simple phraseology, so as to be easily understood by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

A fair copy of this document was signed by all the Delegates, and by Col. Olcott personally. The nations represented were the

Burmese, Sinhalese, Japanese and the Chittagong Mughs. This document is to be submitted for approval to the High Priests of the several nations, before being made public. Whatever slight modifications it may receive, it is unquestionably a document of the deepest importance, for it will give that mutual ground of compromise and coöperation upon which the mighty forces of the Buddhist world may converge for the spread of their religious ideas throughout the whole West.—*Theosophist*.

BURMAH.—Our President-Founder has received a call which, in spite of his ill-health, he has not been able to resist. The earnest appeal and strong representations of a delegation representing a large and influential section of the Burmese nation, have induced him to sail for Burmah, where a repetition of his experience in Japan is to be expected. According to our latest advices, his visit has been attended with great success.—*Lucifer*.

Members are requested to kindly observe the important rule of advising the General Secretary of any change in their addresses; otherwise it will be quite impossible to keep members in touch with the movement, and many valuable opportunities for coöperation may thereby be lost to them. The frequent receipt of letters "on her Majesty's service" necessitates this call to attention.

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



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