



THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO



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Our philosophy of life is one grand whole, every part necessary and fitting into every other part. Every one of its doctrines can and must be carried to its ultimate conclusion. Its ethical application must proceed similarly. If it conflict with old opinions those must be cast off. It can never conflict with true morality. But it will with many views touching our dealings with one another. The spirit of Theosophy must be sought for; a sincere application of its principles to life and act should be made.

—W. Q. JUDGE

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- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः ।



There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth

BOMBAY, 17th December 1948.

VOL. XIX. No. 2.

CONTENTS

Life and Death

A Conversation Between a Great Eastern Teacher, H.P.B.,	
Colonel Olcott and an Indian Reported—By H. P. Blavatsky ..	17
A Remarkable Christmas Eve—By Countess Wachtmeister ..	23
Duration and Time	28
Maya—Illusion	30
In the Light of Theosophy	32

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THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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VOL. XIX. No. 2

LIFE AND DEATH

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GREAT EASTERN TEACHER,
H. P. B., COLONEL OLCOTT AND AN INDIAN

REPORTED BY H. P. BLAVATSKY

[Reprinted from *Lucifer* for September, 1892—February, 1893, Vol. XI, pp. 97-105.—Eds.]

"Master," said Narayan to Thakur, in the midst of a very hot dispute with the poor Babu, "what is it he is saying, and can one listen to him without being disgusted? He says that nothing remains of the man after he is dead, but that the body of the man simply resolves itself into its component elements, and that what we call the soul, and he calls the temporary consciousness, separates itself, disappearing like the steam of hot water as it cools."

"Do you find this so very astonishing?" said the Master. "The Babu is a Chârvâka¹ and he tells you only that which every other Chârvâka would have told you."

"But the Chârvâkas are mistaken. There are many people who believe that the real man is not his physical covering, but dwells in the mind, in the seat of consciousness. Do you mean to say that in any case the consciousness may leave the soul after death?"

"In *his* case it may," answered Thakur quietly: "because he firmly believes in what he says."

Narayan cast an astonished and even frightened look at Thakur, and the Babu—who always felt some restraint in the presence of the latter—looked at us with a victorious smile.

"But how is this?" went on Narayan. "The Vedânta teaches us that the spirit of the spirit is

immortal, and that the human soul does not die in Parabrahman. Are there any exceptions?"

"In the fundamental laws of the spiritual world there can be no exceptions; but there are laws for the blind and laws for those who see."

"I understand this, but in this case, as I have told him already, his full and final disappearance of consciousness is nothing but the aberration of a blind man, who, not seeing the sun, denies its existence, but all the same he will see the sun with his spiritual sight after he is dead."

"He will not see anything," said the Master. "Denying the existence of the sun now, he could not see it on the other side of the grave."

Seeing that Narayan looked rather upset, and that even we, the Colonel and myself, stared at him in the expectation of a more definite answer, Thakur went on reluctantly:

"You speak about the spirit of the spirit, that is to say about the Âtmâ, confusing this spirit with the soul of the mortal, with Manas. No doubt the spirit is immortal, because being without beginning it is without end; but it is not the spirit that is concerned in the present conversation. It is the human, self-conscious soul. You confuse it with the former, and the Babu denies the one and the other, soul and spirit, and so you do not understand each other."

"I understand him," said Narayan.

"But you do not understand me," interrupted the Master. "I will try to speak more clearly."

¹ A sect of Materialists.

What you want to know is this. Whether the full loss of consciousness and self-feeling is possible after death, even in the case of a confirmed Materialist. Is that it?"

Narayan answered: "Yes; because he fully denies everything that is an undoubted truth for us, that in which we firmly believe."

"All right," said the Master. "To this I will answer positively as follows, which, mind you, does not prevent me from believing as firmly as you do in our teaching, which designates the period between two lives as only temporary. Whether it is one year or a million that this *entr'acte* lasts between the two acts of the illusion of life, the posthumous state may be perfectly similar to the state of a man in a very deep fainting-fit, without any breaking of the fundamental rules. Therefore the Babu in his personal case is perfectly right."

"But how is this?" said Colonel Olcott; "since the rule of immortality does not admit of any exceptions, as you said."

"Of course it does not admit of any exceptions, but only in the case of things that really exist. One who like yourself has studied *Māndukya Upanishad* and *Vedānta-sara* ought not to ask such questions," said the Master with a reproachful smile.

"But it is precisely *Māndukya Upanishad*," timidly observed Narayan, "which teaches us that between the Buddhi and the Manas, as between the *Īshvara* and *Prajñā*, there is no more difference in reality than between a forest and its trees, between a lake and its waters."

"Perfectly right," said the Master, "because one or even a hundred trees which have lost their vital sap, or are even uprooted, cannot prevent the forest from remaining a forest."

"Yes," said Narayan, "but in this comparison, Buddhi is the forest, and Manas *Taijasi* the trees, and if the former be immortal, then how is it possible for the Manas *Taijasi*, which is the same as Buddhi, to lose its consciousness before a new incarnation? That is where my difficulty lies."

"You have no business to have any difficulties," said the Master, "if you take the trouble not to confuse the abstract idea of the whole with

its casual change of form. Remember that if in talking about Buddhi we may say that it is unconditionally immortal, we cannot say the same either about Manas, or about *Taijasi*. Neither the former nor the latter has any existence separated from the Divine Soul, because the one is an attribute of the terrestrial personality, and the second is identically the same as the first, only with the additional reflection in it of the Buddhi. In its turn, Buddhi would be an impersonal spirit without this element, which it borrows from the human soul, and which conditions it and makes out of it something which has the appearance of being separate from the Universal Soul, during all the cycle of the man's incarnations. If you say therefore that Buddhi-Manas cannot die, and cannot lose consciousness either in eternity or during the temporary periods of suspension, you would be perfectly right; but to apply this axiom to the qualities of Buddhi-Manas is the same as if you were arguing that as the soul of Colonel Olcott is immortal the red on his cheeks is also immortal. And so it is evident you have mixed up the reality, *Sat*, with its manifestation. You have forgotten that united to the Manas only, the luminosity of *Taijasi* becomes a question of time, as the immortality and the posthumous consciousness of the terrestrial personality of the man become conditional qualities, depending on the conditions and beliefs created by itself during its lifetime. Karma acts unceasingly, and we reap in the next world the fruit of that which we ourselves have sown in this life."

"But if my Ego may find itself after the destruction of my body in a state of complete unconsciousness, then where is the punishment for the sins committed by me in my lifetime?" asked the Colonel, pensively stroking his beard.

"Our Philosophy teaches us," answered Thakur, "that the punishment reaches the Ego only in its next incarnation, and that immediately after our death we meet only the rewards for the sufferings of the terrestrial life, sufferings that were not deserved by us. So, as you may see, the whole of the punishment consists in the absence of reward, in the complete loss of the consciousness of happiness and rest. Karma is the child of the terrestrial Ego, the fruit of the acts of his visible

personality, even of the thoughts and intentions of the spiritual I. But at the same time it is a tender mother, who heals the wounds given in the preceding life before striking this Ego and giving him new ones. In the life of a mortal there is no mishap or sorrow which is not a fruit and direct consequence of a sin committed in his preceding incarnation; but not having preserved the slightest recollection of it in his present life, and not feeling himself guilty, and therefore suffering unjustly, the man deserves consolation and full rest on the other side of the grave. For our spiritual Ego Death is always a redeemer and a friend. It is either the peaceful sleep of a baby, or a sleep full of blissful dreams and reveries."

"As far as I remember, the periodical incarnations of Sûtrâtmâ¹ are compared in the Upanishads to the terrestrial life which is spent, term by term, in sleeping and waking. Is that so?" I asked, wishing to renew the first question of Narayan.

"Yes, it is so; that is a very good comparison."

"I do not doubt it is good," I said, "but I hardly understand it. After the awakening, the man merely begins a new day, but his soul, as well as his body, are the same as they were yesterday, whereas in every new incarnation not only his exterior, sex, and even personality, but, as it seems to me, all his moral qualities, are changed completely. And then, again, how can this comparison be called true, when people, after their awakening, remember very well not only what they were doing yesterday, but many days, months, and even years ago, whereas, in their present incarnations, they do not preserve the slightest recollection about any past life, whatever it was. Of course a man, after he is awakened, may forget what he has seen in his dreams, but still he knows that he was sleeping and that

during his sleep he lived. But about our previous life we cannot say even that we lived. What do you say to this?"

"There are some people who do remember some things," enigmatically answered Thakur, without giving a straight answer to my question.

"I have some suspicions on this point," I answered, laughingly, "but it cannot be said about ordinary mortals. Then how are we, who have not reached as yet the Samma Sambuddha,² to understand this comparison?"

"You can understand it when you better understand the characteristics of the three kinds of what we call sleep."

"This is not an easy task you propose to us," said the Colonel, laughingly. "The greatest of our physiologists got so entangled in this question that it became only more confused."

"It is because they have undertaken what they had no business to undertake, the answering of this question being the duty of the psychologist, of whom there are hardly any among your European scientists. A Western psychologist is only another name for a physiologist, with the difference that they work on principles still more material. I have recently read a book by Maudsley which showed me clearly that they try to cure mental diseases without believing in the existence of the soul."

"All this is very interesting," I said, "but it leads us away from the original object of our questions, which you seem reluctant to clear for us, Thakur Sahib. It looks as if you were confirming and even encouraging the theories of the Babu. Remember that he says he disbelieves the posthumous life, the life after death, and denies the possibility of any kind of consciousness exactly on the grounds of our not remembering anything of our past terrestrial life."

"I repeat again that the Babu is a Chârvâka, who only repeats what he was taught. It is not the system of the Materialists that I confirm and encourage, but the truth of the Babu's opinions in what concerns his personal state after death."

¹ In the Vedanta, Buddhi, in its combinations with the moral qualities, consciousness, and the notions of the personalities in which it was incarnated, is called Sûtrâtmâ, which literally means the "thread soul," because of a long row of human lives strung on this thread like the pearls of a necklace. The Manas must become Taijasi in order to reach and to see itself in eternity, when united to Sûtrâtmâ. But often, owing to sin and associations with the purely terrestrial reason, this very luminosity disappears completely.

² The knowledge of one's past incarnations. Only Yogis and Adepts of the Occult Sciences possess this knowledge, by the aid of the most ascetic life.

"Then do you mean to say that such people as the Babu are to be excepted from the general rule?"

"Not at all. Sleep is a general and unchangeable law for man as well as for every other terrestrial creature, but there are various sleeps and still more various dreams."

"But it is not only the life after death and its dreams that he denies. He denies the immortal life altogether, as well as the immortality of his own spirit."

"In the first instance he acts according to the canons of modern European Science, founded on the experience of our five senses. In this he is guilty only with respect to those people who do not hold his opinions. In the second instance again he is perfectly right. Without the previous interior consciousness and the belief in the immortality of the soul, the soul cannot become *Buddhi Taijasi*. It will remain *Manas*.¹ But for the *Manas* alone there is no immortality. *In order to live a conscious life in the world on the other side of the grave, the man must have acquired belief in that world, in this terrestrial life.* These are two aphorisms of the Occult Science, on which is constructed all our Philosophy in respect to the posthumous consciousness and immortality of the Soul. *Sûtrâtmâ* gets only what it deserves. After the destruction of the body there begins for the *Sûtrâtmâ* either a period of full awakening, or a chaotic sleep, or a sleep without reveries or dreams. Following your physiologists who found the causality of dreams in the unconscious preparation for them in the waking state, why

¹ Without the full assimilation with the Divine Soul, the terrestrial soul, or *Manas*, cannot live in eternity a conscious life. It will become *Buddhi-Taijasi*, or *Buddhi-Manas*, only in case its general tendencies during its life-time lead it towards the spiritual world. Then full of the essence and penetrated by the light of its Divine Soul, the *Manas* will disappear in *Buddhi*, will assimilate itself with *Buddhi*, still preserving a spiritual consciousness of its terrestrial personality; otherwise *Manas*, that is to say, the human mind, founded on the five physical senses, our terrestrial or our personal soul, will be plunged into a deep sleep without awakening, without dreams, without consciousness till a new reincarnation. (In this article *Sûtrâtmâ* is used for the principle later called Higher *Manas*, and *Manas* for that later called the Lower *Manas*, or *Kama-Manas*.—Eds. [*Lucifer*])

should not we acknowledge the same with respect to the posthumous dreams? I repeat what Vedânta Sara teaches us: *Death is sleep*. After death, there begins before our spiritual eyes a representation of a programme that was learned by heart by us, the practical realization of our true beliefs, or of illusions created by ourselves. These are the posthumous fruit of the tree of life. Of course the belief or disbelief in the fact of conscious immortality cannot influence the unconditioned actuality of the fact itself once it exists. But the belief or disbelief of separate personalities cannot but condition the influence of this fact in its effect on such personalities. Now I hope you understand."

"I begin to understand. The Materialists, disbelieving everything that cannot be controlled by their five senses and their so-called scientific reason and denying every spiritual phenomenon, point to the terrestrial as the only conscious existence. Accordingly they will get only what they have deserved. They will lose their personal I; they will sleep the unconscious sleep until a new awakening. Have I understood rightly?"

"Nearly. You may add to that that the Vedântins, acknowledging two kinds of conscious existence, the terrestrial and the spiritual, point only to the latter as an undoubted actuality. As to the terrestrial life, owing to its changeability and shortness, it is nothing but an illusion of our senses. Our life in the spiritual spheres must be thought an actuality because it is there that lives our endless, never-changing immortal I, the *Sûtrâtmâ*. Whereas in every new incarnation it clothes itself in a perfectly different personality, a temporary and short-lived one, in which everything except its spiritual prototype is doomed to traceless destruction."

"But excuse me, Thakur. Is it possible that my personality, my terrestrial conscious I, is to perish tracelessly?"

"According to our teachings, not only is it to perish, but it must perish in all its fulness, except this principle in it which, united to *Buddhi*, has become purely spiritual and now forms an inseparable whole. But in the case of a hardened Materialist it may happen that neither consciously nor unconsciously has anything of its personal I

ever penetrated into Buddhi. The latter will not take away into eternity any atom of such a terrestrial personality. Your spiritual I is immortal, but from your present personality it will carry away only that which has deserved immortality, that is to say only the aroma of the flowers mowed down by death."

"But the flower itself, the terrestrial I?"

"The flower itself, as all the past and future flowers which have blossomed and will blossom after them on the same maternal branch, Sûtrâtmâ, children of the same root, Buddhi, will become dust. Your real I is not, as you ought to know yourself, your body that now sits before me, nor your Manas-Sûtrâtmâ, but your Sûtrâtmâ-Buddhi."

"But this does not explain to me why you call our posthumous life immortal, endless, and real, and the terrestrial one a mere shadow. As far as I understand, according to your teaching, even our posthumous life has its limits, and being longer than the terrestrial life, still has its end."

"Most decidedly. The spiritual Ego of the man moves in eternity like a pendulum between the hours of life and death, but if these hours, the periods of life terrestrial and life posthumous, are limited in their continuation, and even the very number of such breaks in eternity between sleep and waking, between illusion and reality, have their beginning as well as their end, the spiritual Pilgrim himself is eternal. Therefore the hours of his posthumous life, when unveiled he stands face to face with truth and the short-lived mirages of his terrestrial existences are far from him, compose or make up, in our ideas, the only reality. Such breaks, in spite of the fact that they are finite, do double service to the Sûtrâtmâ, which, perfecting itself constantly, follows without vacillation, though very slowly, the road leading to its last transformation, when, reaching its aim at last, it becomes a Divine Being. They not only contribute to reaching of this goal, but without these finite breaks Sûtrâtmâ-Buddhi could never reach it. Sûtrâtmâ is the actor, and its numerous and different incarnations are the actor parts. I suppose you would not apply to these parts, and so much the less to

their costumes, the term of personality. Like an actor the soul is bound to play, during the cycle of births up to the very threshold of Paranirvâna, many such parts, which often are disagreeable to it, but like a bee, collecting its honey from every flower, and leaving the rest to feed the worms of the earth, our spiritual individuality, the Sûtrâtmâ, collecting only the nectar of moral qualities and consciousness from every terrestrial personality in which it has to clothe itself, forced by Karma, unites at last all these qualities in one, having then become a perfect being, a Dhyân Chohan. So much the worse for such terrestrial personalities from whom it could not gather anything. Of course, such personalities cannot out-live consciously their terrestrial existence."

"Then the immortality of the terrestrial personality still remains an open question, and even the very immortality is not unconditioned?"

"Oh no, you misunderstand me," said the Master. "What I mean is that immortality does not cover the *non-existing*; for everything that exists in Sat, or has its origin in Sat, immortality as well as infinity, are unconditioned. Mulaprakriti is the reverse of Parabrahman, but they are both one and the same. The very essence of all this, that is to say, spirit, force and matter, have neither end nor beginning, but the shape acquired by this triple unity during its incarnations, their exterior so to speak, is nothing but a mere illusion of personal conceptions. This is why we call the posthumous life the only reality, and the terrestrial one, including the personality itself, only imaginary."

"Why in this case should we call the reality sleep, and the phantasm waking?"

"This comparison was made by me to facilitate your comprehension. From the standpoint of your terrestrial notions it is perfectly accurate."

"You say that the posthumous life is founded on a basis of perfect justice, on the merited recompense for all the terrestrial sorrows. You say that Sûtrâtmâ is sure to seize the smallest opportunity of using the spiritual qualities in each of its incarnations. Then how can you admit that the spiritual personality of our Babu, the personality of this boy, who is so ideally honest and noble, so

perfectly kind, in spite of all his disbeliefs, will not reach immortality, and will perish like the dust of a dried flower?"

"Who, except himself," answered the Master, "ever doomed him to such a fate? I have known the Babu from the time he was a small boy, and I am perfectly sure that the harvest of the Sûtrâtmâ in his case will be very abundant. Though his Atheism and Materialism are far from being feigned, still he *cannot* die for ever in the whole fulness of his individuality."

"But, Thakur Sahib, did not you yourself confirm the rectitude of his notions as to his personal state on the other side of the grave, and do not these notions consist in his firm belief that after his death every trace of consciousness will disappear?"

"I confirmed them, and I confirm them again. When travelling in a railway train you may fall asleep and sleep all the time, while the train stops at many stations; but surely there will be a station where you will awake, and the aim of your journey will be reached in full consciousness. You say you are dissatisfied with my comparison of death to sleep, but remember, the most ordinary of mortals knows three different kinds of sleep—dreamless sleep, a sleep with vague chaotic dreams, and at last a sleep with dreams so very vivid and clear that for the time being they become a perfect reality for the sleeper. Why should not you admit that exactly the analogous case happens to the soul freed from its body? After their parting there begins for the soul, according to its deserts, and chiefly to its faith, either a perfectly conscious life, a life of semi-consciousness, or a dreamless sleep which is equal to the state of non-being. This is the realization of the programme of which I spoke, a programme previously invented and prepared by the Materialist. But there are Materialists and Materialists. A bad man, or simply a great egotist, who adds to his full disbelief a perfect indifference

to his fellow beings, must unquestionably leave his personality for ever at the threshold of death. He has no means of linking himself to the Sûtrâtmâ, and the connection between them is broken for ever with his last sigh; but such Materialists as our Babu will sleep only one station. There will be a time when he will recognize himself in eternity, and will be sorry he has lost a single day of the life eternal. I see your objections—I see you are going to say that hundreds and thousands of human lives, lived through by the Sûtrâtmâ, correspond in our Vedântin notions to a perfect disappearance of every personality. This is my answer. Take a comparison of eternity with a single life of a man, which is composed of so many days, weeks, months, and years. If a man has preserved a good memory in his old age he may easily recall every important day or year of his past life, but even in case he has forgotten some of them, is not his personality one and the same through all his life? For the Ego every separate life is what every separate day is in the life of a man."

"Then, would it not be better to say that death is nothing but a birth for a new life, or, still better, a going back to eternity?"

"This is how it really is, and I have nothing to say against such a way of putting it. Only with our accepted views of material life the words 'live' and 'exist' are not applicable to the purely subjective condition after death; and were they employed in our Philosophy without a rigid definition of their meanings, the Vedântins would soon arrive at the ideas which are common in our times among the American Spiritualists, who preach about spirits marrying among themselves and with mortals. As amongst the true, not nominal Christians, so amongst the Vedântins—the life on the other side of the grave is the land where there are no tears, no sighs, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, and where the just realize their full perfection."

A REMARKABLE CHRISTMAS EVE

[Reprinted from *Lucifer* for September 15, 1887, Vol. I, pp. 274-281—EDS.]

It was a dark and solitary path, a narrow, hardly perceptible, footway in a dense forest, hemmed in by two walls of impenetrable thorns and wild creepers, covering, as with a network, the trunks of the tall, bare, moss-covered trees. The path led through the woods down to a deep valley in which a few country-houses were nestled. Night was fast approaching, and the hurricane, that blew across the country, boded evil to many a traveller, by land and sea. The wind, which had hitherto been only moaning through the trees, in low sad tones, reminding one of a funeral dirge, was now beginning to roar with fury, filling the forest as with the howling of a hundred hungry wolves. Very soon a drizzling, ice-cold rain veiled the whole forest in a damp shroud of fog.

One solitary traveller was wearily wending his way along this deserted path. The hour was late, and the darkening shadows were creeping on steadily, making the gloom in the thicket still more depressing. The young man looked worn and tired, as he again and again brushed aside the entangled briars which impeded his progress forward. He was well-dressed, and wore a marine officer's cap. But his coat was now in rags, torn by the hard, frozen, cruel thorns, and his hands were bleeding in the struggle he had had with the briars for a whole long night and a day since he had lost his way in the huge forest. Panting, he stopped at last; and, as he heaved a deep sigh, he fell down half-insensible at the foot of an old shaggy oak. Then, half-opening his weary eyes, he murmured in despair, as he placed his hand on his heart:—"I wonder how long *this* will yet beat....I feel as if it were gradually stopping."

He closed his eyes once more, and very soon the feeble palpitations he was watching within himself, turned his half-paralysed thought into a new groove of ideas. Now the hardly audible beatings of his heart seemed to transform themselves into the ticking of an old clock quite near to him. He imagined the old Nuremberg time-piece in his mother's room. He was dripping wet, chilled to the marrow of his bones, and was

fast losing consciousness. But forgetting for one moment his situation, and where he was, he caught himself soliloquising as was his custom, when alone.

"This clock," he thought, "has to be wound up...else it will stop. So shall this heart. A man has to eat and drink to renew the fuel which feeds life, the clock too...no; the clock is different to man. Let it rest for a week, for two, three months, even for a year....Still, if wound up again, it will tick on as merrily as ever. But once the supply of the body is stopped—well, what then? Shall the working power cease for ever, or the ticking of the heart be resumed as that of the clock? No, no!...You may feed the dead body of man as much as you please! it shall awaken to life no more....A queer problem to solve,—What becomes of that something which made the body move? The food is not the cause, is it?...No; the food is only the fuel....There must be some inward fire ever burning, as long as it is supplied....But when the supply of the fuel ceases? Ah!...that is it...where does it go? ...Does anything really die?...What form shall *my* inner fire take?...Shall it return to *its* primordial light...and be no more?...Oh, how I suffer!...No, no; I must not allow this, *my* fire, to go out. No, not before I see once more my loved ones...my mother and Alice...."

Arising with great effort he pursued his way with tottering steps, feeling his way in the darkness. But instantly a wild gust of wind, tearing along the narrow pathway, caused the great trees to sway and rock as if in very agony. Catching in its icy clasp the weakened form of the young man, the hurricane nearly upset him. Being already wet through and through with rain and cold, he shivered and groaned aloud, as he felt a sharp pain penetrating his limbs from the brain downwards. One more short struggle and he heavily fell on the cold hard ground. Claspings his hands over his brow, he could only whisper again: "Mother, I can do no more....Farewell, mother, for ever! Alice—fare thee well!"...

His strength was gone. For over thirty hours he had tasted no food. He had travelled night and day in the hope of being with his family on Christmas Eve, that blessed day of joy and peace. Never yet had he spent a Christmas Eve away from home; but that year had been an unusually unfortunate one for him. His vessel had been wrecked and he had lost all. It was only by the greatest of chances that he had been enabled to find his way back to his country, in time to take the train that brought him from a large seaport to the small town some twenty miles' distance from his home. Once there, he had to travel that distance by coach. But just as he was preparing to start on his last journey, he met a poor sailor, a companion of his shipwreck. With tears in his eyes the man told him that having lost all, he had no more money left to take him to his wife and children, who were yet two days' journey by rail from where he was; and that thus, he could not be with them to make merry Christmas together. So the good-hearted young officer, thinking he could easily walk the short distance that separated him from home, had emptied his purse into the sailor's hands and started on his way on foot, hoping to arrive on that same evening.

He set out early in the morning and bethought himself of a short cut through the vast forests of his native place. But on that afternoon he hurt his foot badly, and being able to move only at a very slow pace, the night had overtaken him in the forest in which he had finally lost his way during that terrible night. He had wandered since the morning during the whole long day, until pain, exhaustion, and the hurricane had overpowered him. And now, he was lying helpless on the bare frozen ground, and would surely die before the dawn.

How long he lay there he never remembered; but when he came back to himself, he thought he could move, and resolved to make a last supreme effort after the short rest. The wind had suddenly fallen. He felt warmer and calmer now, as he sat leaning against a tree. Old habit brought him back to his previous train of thought.

"Never, mother dear, never," he addressed her in thought, "never have I spent a Christmas away from your dear selves.... Never, since my

boyhood, when father died twelve years ago! I made a vow then that, come what would, I should spend each Christmas Eve at home; and now, though life seems slowly ebbing out of my body, I want to keep my promise. They must be waiting for me even now, they, and Alice, my sweet fair cousin, who tells me she never loved but me! Reginald and Lionel, my brothers, who are earnestly waiting for me; my shy pretty May, and little Fanny.... They are all longing to see me, my dear ones, all expecting their old brother Hugo to return and decorate their Christmas-tree.... Oh, mother, mother, see you I must! I will be with you on this Christmas Eve, come what may!"

This passionate longing appeal seemed to give him a tenfold strength. He made a desperate effort to rise from his place, and found he could do so quite easily. Then, overcome with joy, he flew rather than walked through the dense black forest. He must have surely mistaken the distance, as a minute later he found himself in the brushwood, and saw the well-known valley so familiar to him, and even discerned in the bright moonlight the home that contained all his dear ones. He ran still faster, more and more rapidly, and even forgot in his excitement to wonder whence he had found the power of using his lame foot so easily. ... At last he reached the lawn, and approached the cosy old house, all wrapped in its snowy winter garments, and sparkling in moonlight like a palace of King Frost. From a large bay-window poured out torrents of light, and as he drew still nearer, trying to see through it, he caught a glimpse of the loved faces, which he stopped to look at, before knocking at the door....

"Oh, my mother! I see her there," he exclaimed. "There she is, seated in her arm-chair, with her knitting by her side, her beautiful silvery hair as soft and glossy as ever under her snow-white cap. I see her kind eyes and placid features still unmarked by the furrows of age.... She looks troubled.... She listens to the fierce gusts of wind which cause the windows to shake and rattle. How that wind *does* try to get into the house, and, finding itself no welcome guest, hark, how it rolls away.... How strange!... I *hear*, but I do *not feel* the wind.... Oh!... Kneeling at my mother's feet, there's Alice. Her arms are clasp-

ed around mother's knees; her golden curls fall on her back....But—but, why are her large violet eyes filled with tears as she looks with upturned face into mother's sad eyes? Hush! What is she saying?...I hear it, even through that wall....

"Don't be uneasy, mother, dear, Hugo will come back. You know he told us so in his last letter. He said that after their shipwreck he was kindly cared for by those who saved the crew. He wrote also that he had borrowed money for the journey, and that he would be with us at the latest on Christmas Eve!...Bad roads and the stormy night will have detained him....The coach, you say? Well, and though the coach has long since passed by, he may have taken a carriage. He will soon be here, mother."

"Ah, dear Alice, I see—she looks at her finger, with its little ruby ring I placed on it. She puts it to her lips, and I hear her murmuring my name...."

* * *

(From Hugo's diary, where he recorded that night's experience.)

....I rushed into the house at that appeal, and, as I now remember, without knocking at the door, as if I had passed through the stone walls. I tried to speak, but no sound appeared to reach their ears. Nor did anyone seem to see or greet me....I drew Alice by the arm, but she never turned round, only continued to murmur sweet words of consolation into my mother's ear. Good God, what agony! Why do they not hear, or even see me....Am I really here? I look round the room. The old home is just as I had left it nine months since. There is my father's picture hanging over the mantelpiece, looking at me with its kind smile; the old piano open, with my favourite song on it....The cat sleeping as usual, on the hearthrug, and purring, as she stretches out her lazy paws. Albums on the table, my photograph, with its bright and happy look! How different to my present self! Here am I standing in an agony of doubt, before my loved ones, seeing them, feeling them, touching them... and yet unseen by them, unnoticed, as one who is not there....Not even my shadow on the wall over their own. But who then, am I?...Why

have they grown so blind to my presence? Why do their hearts and senses remain so dense? I try again and again. I call them piteously by their names, but they heed me not. My heart, my love, all is here, but my physical body seems far away. Yes, it is far, far away, and now I see it, as it lies cold and lifeless in that forest, where I must have left it. It is surely for *me*, not for that body, that they care! And is it because I am no longer clothed with flesh that I must be as only a breath, an empty naught, to them?...

Full of despair, I turned away, and passing through the folding doors, arrived in the adjoining room, where my young brothers and sisters were busily occupied decorating the Christmas tree. There it stands, the old friend of my youth. I see it, and even discern its resinous perfume.... Towering up towards the ceiling, its lower branches are bending to the ground, laden with golden fruits, with toys and wax tapers. My brothers and sisters are gathered around it. But Reginald looks grave. I see him turning to May, and hear him saying:

"Are you not anxious about Hugo? I wonder what can have become of him!"

"I did not like to tell mother," May replies with a little shiver, "but I had a dreadful dream last night. I saw Hugo white and cold. He looked sorrowfully at me, but when he tried to speak he could not. His look haunts me still!" she softly sobbed with tears rolling down her cheeks.

But now little Fanny gives a scream of delight. The child has discovered among the Christmas presents a real pipe, a pipe with silver bells.

"Oh, *this* shall be for Hugo, and then he will have music whenever he smokes!" exclaims the little one, merrily laughing, and holding out the toy in the direction where I am standing.

For a moment I hope she sees me. I try to take the pipe, but my hand cannot clasp it, and the toy seems to slip away from me as if it were a shadow....I try to speak again, but it is of no use...they see me not, neither do they hear me!...

Grieved beyond words, I left them, and returning into the next room, went up straight to Alice, who was still at mother's side, murmuring to her

loving words. I spoke again, I entreated, I besought them to look at me, and my suffering was so great that I felt that death would be preferable to this!

Then came a last and supreme effort. Concentrating all my will, I bent over Alice, and gasped out with my whole soul:

"If ever you loved me, Alice, know and hear me now!" I exclaimed, as I pressed my lips to hers.

She gave a shudder, a start, and then, opening her eyes wider and wider, she shrieked in terror:

"Hugo! Hugo! Mother, do you see? Hugo is here!"

She tried to clasp me in her arms, but her hands met together, and only joined as if in prayer.

"Hugo, Hugo, stay, why can I not touch you? Mother, look! look! Here is Hugo!"

She was growing wilder and more excited with every moment.

My mother looked faint and frightened, as she said:

"Alice, what is the matter, child? What do you see? Hugo is not here!"

The children, hearing Alice's cry, flew into the room, all eager with expectation.

"Where is Hugo? Where is he?" they prattled.

I felt that I was invisible to all but Alice. She was the only one to see me. Therefore, realizing that the body had to be saved from its danger in the woods without loss of time, I drew her after myself with all my will. I slowly moved towards the door, never taking my look off her eyes. She followed me, as one in a state of somnambulism.

My mother looked stunned and bewildered.

Rising with difficulty from her place, she would have made for the door also, but sank back into her arm-chair powerless and covered her face with her hands.

"Boys, follow Alice," said May. "Wait... the carriage is there ready to go after the doctor's children. Take it. Call the gardener and John to go with you. I will stay with mother." And whispering to Reginald, she added, "Tell John to take rugs and blankets...but I am afraid poor Hugo is dead!"

She then turned to mother, who had fainted. I would see no more, but *willing* Alice to follow me, I left the house.

She came slowly after me, her face all white, her large eyes full of a look of terror, but also of resolution in them. On she would have gone on foot, in the drizzling rain, her golden hair all flying about her head, had she been allowed to do so by my brothers and servants. The strange cortège was ushered into the open carriage, the coachman being ordered to follow her directions. On it went, as speedily as the horse could go. I found myself floating now before them, and, to my own amazement, sliding backwards, with my face turned towards Alice, strongly willing that she should not lose sight of me. Two hours afterwards, the carriage entered the brushwood, and they were obliged to alight.

The night was now very dark and stormy, and notwithstanding the lanterns, the group made way with great difficulty into the thicket. The wind had begun to blow and howl with the same fury as when I had left the wood, and seemed to have caught them all in its chilly embrace. The boys and servants panted and shivered, but Alice heeded nothing. What cared *she* for that! The only thought of my beloved was I, Hugo.... On, on we went, her tender feet wounded with the brambles, and the wet sprays of branches brushing against her white face. On, on she ran, till, with a sudden and loud cry of joy and terror mixed, she fell down....

At the same instant *I* collapsed, and *fell also on the ground, as it seemed to me*; and then all became a blank.... As I learned later, at that moment the boys drew near, and lowering their lanterns found Alice with her arms clasped around a form, and when the lanterns were placed close to it they saw before them the body of their brother Hugo, a corpse!

"Sure enough he is dead, the poor young master!" cried John, our old servant, who was close behind.

"No, no!" Alice answered. "No, he is not dead.... His body is cold, but his heart still beats. Let us carry him home.... Quick, quick!"

Lifting up the body gently and placing it in the carriage they covered it with rugs and shawls,

and drove at a furious speed back to our home. It was near midnight when the carriage stopped at the gate.

"Reginald, run on quickly and give the good news to mother!" cried Alice. "Tell May to have hot bottles and blankets ready, on the sofa in the drawing-room. It is warm there near the fire....Tell them all that Hugo lives, for I *know* he does," she went on repeating.

More lights were brought out, and the servants carried carefully their burden into the house, where they placed it on the sofa, hot flannels and restoratives being immediately applied. Noiselessly and breathlessly went on the work of love around the apparently dead body, and was at last rewarded. A sigh was heard, a deeper *breath* was drawn, and then the eyes slowly opened and I looked round in vague surprise at all those loved and anxious faces crowding eagerly around me.

"Don't speak yet, Hugo," whispered Alice anxiously. "Don't, till you feel stronger."

But I could not control my impatience.

"How am I here?" I asked. "Ah, I remember. I lost my way in the old forest....Ah, yes; I recollect now all....The cold biting wind, my lame foot, after I stumbled and fell, knocking my head against a stone, and all became a blank to me!"

"Hush, Hugo, hush, my boy," said my mother wiping tears of joy from her still pale and suffering face. "You will tell us all that presently.... Now rest."

But I could not refrain from speaking, as thoughts crowded into my head, and recollections came vividly back. "No, no, I am better," I went on. "I am strong again, and I must let you know all that I dreamed. I was here, and I saw you all....Oh, the torture I suffered when you knew me not!...Mother, darling, did you not see me, your son? But, she, my Alice, saw and followed me, and it is she who saved me from death! Ah, yes! I remember now, you found my body, and then all was darkness again. Kiss me, mother! Kiss me all, let me feel that I am really with you in body, and am no longer an

invisible shadow....Mother, I kept my promise; I am here on Christmas Eve! Light the tree, my little Fan, and give me the pipe with the bells I saw you holding, and heard you say it was for old brother Hugo."

The child ran into the other room and returned with the pipe I had seen her playing with a few hours before. This was the greatest and final proof for me, as for my family. The event was no vision then, no hallucination, but true to its merest details! As my mother often said afterwards, referring to that wonderful night, it was a weird and strange experience, but one which had happened to others before, and will go on happening from time to time. Of late years, when I had been happily married to my Alice (who will not let me travel far away without her, any longer) I have dived a good deal into such psychic mysteries, and I think I can explain my experience. I think that by privation, cold, and mental agony, I had been thrown into such abnormal conditions, that my astral body, as it is now generally called, my "conscious self," was able to escape from the physical tenement and take itself to the home I so passionately desired to reach. All my thoughts, and longings intensely directed towards it, I found myself there where I wished to be, in spirit. Then the agony of mind from the consciousness that I was invisible to all, added to the fear of death unless I could impress them with my presence, became finally productive of the supreme effort of will, the success of which alone could save me. This joined to Alice's sensitiveness and her love for me, enabled her to sense my presence, and even to see my form, whereas others saw nothing. Man is a wonderful and marvellous enigma; but it is one which has to, and *will*, be completely unriddled some day, the scepticism of the age notwithstanding.

* * *

Such is the simple story told to the writer by an old naval officer, about the most "memorable Christmas Eve" that came within his own experience.

CONSTANCE WACHTMEISTER

DURATION AND TIME

Duration *is*; it has neither beginning nor end. How can you call that which has neither beginning nor end, Time? Duration is beginningless and endless; Time is finite.... Time can be divided; Duration—in our philosophy, at least—cannot. Time is divisible in Duration—or, as you put it, the one is something *within* Time and Space, whereas the other is outside of both... existence has limited and definite periods, whereas Duration, having neither beginning nor end, is a perfect abstraction which contains Time. Duration is like Space, which is an abstraction too, and is equally without beginning or end. It is in its concreteness and limitation only that it becomes a representation and something. Of course the distance between two points is called space; it may be enormous or it may be infinitesimal, yet it will always be space. But all such specifications are divisions in human conception. In reality Space is what the ancients called the One invisible and unknown (now unknowable) Deity.

Then Time is the same as Space, being one in the abstract? As two abstractions they may be one; but this would apply to Duration and Abstract Space rather than to Time and Space.—H. P. BLAVATSKY

Mr. Thomson King, who writes in the October *Scientific Monthly* "On Time as a Product of Motion" comes very close in some of his statements to the Theosophical position. He brings forward several arguments in support of his main thesis that "Time is a product (or derivative) of motion." He confines his argument to time within the universe, though he finds interesting and worth quoting Newton's differentiation between time as we know it and duration, *i.e.*,

Absolute, true, and mathematical time of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration; relative, apparent and common time, is some sensible and external, whether accurate or unequable measure of duration by the means of motion and this, which is commonly used instead of true time such as an hour, a day, a month, a year. (*Principia Mathematica*, Book I, Scholium I)

That absolute time or endless duration is not the product of motion, according to the Wisdom-Religion of Theosophy. The absolute "perpetual motion which is the "breath" of the One Eternal Element, is co-existent forever with endless duration as also with dimensionless space and primordial matter. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I. 55) But within the limits which Mr. King has imposed upon himself for his scientific analysis, he brings out a number of very interesting and valid points.

"Motion," he declares, "is the fundamental, the creative, reality," if time is its derivative. "If we know anything of the nature of the universe, it is that it is dynamic.... Perhaps we can say *energy is motion*." Occultism sees no difference between force and motion. (*S. D.*, I. 512)

Mr. King suggests that, since matter and energy are to some extent at least interchangeable, they may be considered "two aspects of one entity." An echo of the First Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*.

The conservation laws tell us that matter and energy are enduring realities. They change their form, but they are not destroyed. Something cannot become nothing, nor can nothing become something.

Of motion Mr. King adds:—

Motion cannot be an incidental attribute of matter, rather it is motion that possesses matter. Motion gives the universe its most important characteristic as a dynamic system in which change is continuous, a sense of before and after is possible, and there is a continuous flow of the future through the present to become the past. All events are due to change, change is always the result of motion, time is a sequence of events, motion is the begetter of change, events, and time.

The complete unity and interdependence obtaining throughout the universe seems to be implied by his remark that "to stop or reverse time for one particle of matter it would be necessary to stop or reverse all the motion in the universe."

Of time as we know it, Mr. King writes:—

We know of time only by a succession of events, by our sense of before and after. The flow of time is the result of the succession of innumerable events produced by the innumerable motions taking place in the universe.... The present is indeed a boundary line between the future and the past.... Consider water rising or sinking in a vessel. We can think of the surface as a boundary plane of no thickness between air and water.... As the water rises, in this parable, the unsubmerged area is the future, the surface of the water is the present, the submerged area is the past.

Full appreciation of how closely parallel is this line of thought to that expressed on page 37 of the First Volume of *The Secret Doctrine* requires the reading of that passage *in extenso*; here it is:—

Time is only an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness. . . . The present is only a mathematical line which divides that part of eternal duration which we call the future, from that part which we call the past. Nothing on earth has real duration, for nothing remains without change—or the same—for the billionth part of a second; and the sensation we have of the actuality of the division of “time” known as the present, comes from the blurring of that momentary glimpse, or succession of glimpses, of things that our senses give us, as those things pass from the region of ideals which we call the future, to the region of memories that we name the past. In the same way we experience a sensation of duration in the case of the instantaneous electric spark, by reason of the blurred and continuing impression on the retina. The real person or thing does not consist solely of what is seen at any particular moment but is composed of the sum of all its various and changing conditions from its appearance in the material form to its disappearance from the earth. It is these “sum totals” that exist from eternity in the “future” and pass by degrees through matter, to exist for eternity in the “past.” No one could say that a bar of metal dropped into the sea came into existence as it left the air, and ceased to exist as it entered the water, and that the bar itself consisted only of that cross-section thereof which at any given moment coincided with the mathematical plane that separates, and, at the same time, joins, the atmosphere and the ocean. Even so of persons and things, which, dropping out of the to-be into the has-been, out of the future into the past—present momentarily to our senses a cross-section, as it were, of their total selves, as they pass through time and space (as matter) on their way from one eternity to another: and these two constitute that “duration” in which alone anything has true existence, were our senses but able to cognize it there.

He recognizes the power of man to change the order and sequence of events, through his power to direct motion purposefully, which recalls what was written by one of the Great Teachers in 1882:—

...it is motion that governs the laws of nature; and
...it governs them as the mechanical impulse given to running water which will propel them either in a correct line or along hundreds of side furrows they may happen to meet on their way and whether those furrows are natural grooves or channels prepared artificially by the hand of man.

This universal perpetual motion He called
“the only eternal and uncreated Deity we are able

to recognize,” but in the same context He negatived the suggestion of Mr. King that motion began only with time as we know it and might conceivably one day cease, when the universe, so to say, ran down. For this “universal perpetual motion,” He wrote,

never ceases, never slackens nor increases its speed, not even during the interludes between the pralayas or “night of Brahma,” but goes on like a mill set in motion, whether it has anything to grind or not (for the pralaya means the temporary loss of every form, but by no means the destruction of cosmic matter which is eternal).

Commenting on Sir William Grove’s statement in his *Correlation of Physical Forces*, Madame Blavatsky endorses his claim that “all motion is, in one sense, perpetual,” remarking:—

This is precisely what Occultism maintains, and on the same principle that “where force is made to oppose force, and produce static equilibrium, the balance of pre-existing equilibrium is affected, and *fresh motion is started* equivalent to that which is withdrawn into a state of abeyance.” This process finds intervals in the pralaya, but is eternal and ceaseless as the “Breath,” even when the manifested Kosmos rests. (S. D. I. 497 n.)

There are, however, in pralaya, not “the smaller ‘Breaths,’ which, living, intelligent and independent of all but Law, blow in every direction during Manvantaric periods.” (S. D. I. 496)

As there are two kinds of time, so there are also two kinds of motion; a definition which might help to clarify the position is this:—

Intra-Cosmic motion is eternal and ceaseless; cosmic motion (the visible, or that which is subject to perception) is finite and periodical. (S. D. I. 3)

The specious scientific differentiation between living and non-living matter betrays even an original thinker like Mr. King into another statement which Theosophists could not accept, *i. e.*, that “events and, consequently, time existed long before there was life on this planet and would continue to exist if all life were destroyed.” For Theosophy equates Motion with Life, “to know which in physical order is to know time past, present, and to come, in the existence of successions of phenomena; to know which, in the moral, is to know what has been, is, and will be, within human consciousness.” (S. D. I. 3 n.)

MAYA—ILLUSION

Theosophy teaches that every effect has an antecedent cause; the application of this principle shows us that, this being so, we can never see the original cause of any effect. The eternal problem of which came first, the hen or the egg, remains unsolved.

In the attempt to solve this difficulty we are driven backwards to the limit of thought, and then must *postulate* a First Cause for any particular cycle of cause-effect-cause. But behind this First Cause there must logically be the Causeless Cause. Whatever we do we can never break the sequence from the Causeless Cause to the present effect; but neither can we break the sequence from the present effect to the Causeless Cause.

At any intermediate stage we centralize on the effect and see it in its two aspects only, as effect-cause—then to us a tangible reality. But behind any effect-cause are thought-feeling and experience, and what we see is the actional aspect only. For example: someone loses his temper—an effect. An effect from two points of view: (1) His own uncontrolled temper and (2) the action that provoked it. The first the bystander sees—and blames the actor; the second more often is unseen by the bystander and no blame is attached to the perpetrator of the action. Neither does the bystander see the cause why the temper was uncontrolled, nor why the perpetrator was the cause of the action, nor what brought the two beings into conjunction at that moment. The bystander is therefore seeing but a portion of the whole occurrence, while he thinks he is seeing the whole.

This half-knowledge or perception runs through life and nothing is what it appears to be. Yet, at every step what the perceiver sees is real to him. His physical eyes see the action; his understanding *may* sense the cause behind, but the long line of causes producing the character of the actors is unseen. Thought is more punishable than action, says H. P. B., so that the thought behind the action is actually more real than the action itself, for the action could not be without

that thought-feeling. All of us therefore suffer from the effects of illusion, Maya, and, thinking illusion to be the real, are deluded in our judgments.

To understand the relationship of the real and the apparent or illusionary, a study of metaphysics, *i.e.*, the physics of the hidden side of Nature, is necessary. We see the present universe; we dissect it, we analyze it and find out the laws pertaining to it. Occult science continues the process and dissects, analyzes and finds out the laws pertaining to the invisible side of Nature, the "soul of things," and has the whole knowledge of antiquity behind it to help it in its search.

Occult science teaches that our search for the Real, the True, can never end while we study manifested objects only, for these appear and disappear, and are non-eternal. The Cause, or the Causeless Cause, for them lies in the Eternity or Absoluteness, beyond Time and Space. Nevertheless:—

...if there were no Maya there would be no differentiation; or, rather, no objective universe would be perceived....

Maya is everywhere, and in every *thing* that has a beginning and an end; therefore, every *thing* is an *aspect* of that which is eternal, and in that sense, of course Maya itself is an aspect of SAT, or that which is eternally present in the universe, whether during Manvantara or Mahapralaya. (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, p. 31)

Hence, Maya is not to be despised and the whole of manifestation, ourselves included, thrown aside as of no account. We are, and everything is, "as an aspect of that which is eternal," and as there are seven planes of manifestation and seven states of consciousness, we need to remember that

whatever plane our consciousness may be acting on, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I. 40)

The last phrase here is important for unless it is understood we shall succumb to the "illusion" of earth life and scorn the "illusions" of Devachan. If any good is to be gained by living it is by realizing that something can be done by

us with both these illusions, for recognizing them as such, in itself will not avail us. To try to see them for what they are, and to use them for the purposes of evolution should be our task. We can never get away from Maya, illusion, but we can try not to be deluded by the illusions. Then we shall see Maya to be, as it is :—

simply something coeval and coexistent with the manifested Universe or the heterogeneous differentiation of pure Homogeneity. (*Transactions*, p. 31)

Everything, therefore, has only "a relative, not an absolute, reality." (*S. D. I.* 39). How shall we try to see the relationship between Maya and Reality, ourselves and the ONE Absoluteness? H. P. B. tells us that "the unity and mutual relations of all parts of Kosmos were known to the ancients." (*S. D. I.* 480). They can be known by us also, theoretically now and practically in the course of time for, though it is true that "alone the Initiate, rich with the lore acquired by numberless generations of his predecessors, directs the 'Eye of Dangma' towards the essence of things in which no Maya can have an influence" (*S. D. I.* 45), yet

as we rise in the scale of development we perceive that during the stages through which we have passed we mistook shadows for realities, and the upward progress of the Ego is a series of progressive awakenings, each advance bringing with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached "reality," but only when we shall have reached the absolute Consciousness, and blended our own with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Maya. (*S. D. I.* 40)

In the process of awakening we can find great help if we separate "form"—Matter, from Life—consciousness, provided we remember that "Spirit is matter on the seventh plane; matter is Spirit—on the lowest point of its cyclic activity; and both—are MAYA." (*S. D. I.* 633). Atoms and Monads are not just specks of matter, but they, associated or dissociated, simple or complex,

are, from the moment of the first differentiation, but the principles, corporeal, psychic and Spiritual, of the "Gods,"—themselves the Radiations of primordial nature. Thus, to the eye of the Seer, the higher Planetary Powers appear under two aspects: the subjective—as influences, and the objective—as mystic FORMS, which, under Karmic Law, become a Presence, Spirit and Matter being One.—(*S. D. I.* 633)

Our vision is not that of a Seer, and the real

Maya for us is "the perceptive faculty of every Ego which considers itself a Unit separate from, and independent of, the One infinite and eternal SAT or "be-ness." (*Transactions*, p. 31). Also "all labour more or less under...the great illusion (Maya) that they are, as personalities, distinct beings from other beings." (*Ibid.*, p. 32).

To overcome the illusions of life, we must, therefore, concentrate our attention on the "beginningless and endless WHOLE, or that which ever was, is, and will be" (*Transactions*, p. 32) while striving to realize that all phenomena are the shadow or reflection of that WHOLE, each shadow having within or behind it the "influence" and the "Presence" of the "Gods" themselves.

The unveiling at Parel, Bombay, on the Vassana Pravarna Festival of the Buddhists in mid-November, of a replica of an Ashoka Pillar was the occasion for recalling the Great Teachers of the past and the moral values for which They stood. Shri S. K. Patil referred to the definite unity of purpose running through the teachings of Lord Buddha and other world Prophets and said that, if the world was to be saved from suffering, the leaders of the great nations should be guided by Their teachings of peace and non-violence.

Shri V. L. Mehta, Bombay Finance Minister, declared that the name of Ashoka was associated with all that was good and great in the world. "The great volume of human suffering and conflict through which the world was passing at present could have been avoided if they had followed in the footsteps of these great men."

Gandhiji, Shri S. A. Brelvi said, had symbolised in the modern world what Lord Buddha had lived and died for and had kept alive the Buddha's great teachings of peace and non-violence.

The fundamental oneness of all religions was stressed by the Chinese and American Consuls in their addresses, and Ceylon's Trade Commissioner in India, Mr. Annesly de Silva, declared that Buddhism was one of the greatest spiritual ties between India and Ceylon, a bond that was stronger than geographical or cultural links. Ceylon was indebted to India for giving her this great religion.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

A recent release of the British Information Services entitled "Prisons Without Bars" describes some of the measures developed in the last few decades in the United Kingdom for the reform of prisoners, so necessary if their term in prison is to serve any other purpose than retaliation—a motive which society should have outgrown.

Not only is vocational training offered for law-breakers, but there are organized evening classes, lectures, discussion groups and even plays and concerts. The offender against society has put himself outside the fold of law-abiding citizens; every link which he can be helped to forge with them, by a broadening of his interests and sympathies, is a help towards his rehabilitation. The subjects taught, in addition to a wide range of vocations, include foreign languages, current events, appreciation of art and music, mathematics, drawing, etc. It is our conviction that leading the prisoners' attention to some of the great gems of ethical and moral wisdom like the *Gita*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Kural*, *The Voice of the Silence*, the teachings of Lao-Tse and Confucius and the Sermon on the Mount, would give them the food for mind and character which they most need in the effort of self-reform, which is a *sine qua non* of lasting regeneration. Such an unsectarian approach to the comparative study of religion would admirably supplement the efforts represented by the training prisons for first offenders, etc., with open agricultural camps attached, and even open prisons, to rebuild prisoners' self-respect and sense of responsibility by a measure of trust.

On April 14th, 1948, the House of Commons made penological reform history by passing the

clause in the Criminal Justice Bill providing for the experimental suspension of capital punishment in Britain for a period of years. The subsequent rejection by the House of Lords of both the suspension of the penalty and the proposed compromise which would have made it applicable only to particular types of murders was very disappointing but not discouraging, as was recognized by the National Council for the Abolition of the Death Penalty. In spite of the frustration of their valiant efforts in favour of suspension, the National Council's Annual Reports for 1946-47 and 1947-48 contain, on the front cover, the profound and heartening words of India's Tagore:—

Truth raises against itself the storm that scatters its seed broadcast.

Not to know when one is defeated is one of the necessary qualities of the reformer, and this quality is demonstrated in the National Council's Bulletin No. 27, in which the Council's Secretary, Mr. Frank Dawtry, writes: "Let no one be discouraged: the ultimate result has been made certain."

The reissue at 2s. of Mr. Charles Duff's satirical and convincing *Handbook on Hanging*, which was reviewed in *The Aryan Path* in May 1930, the same year in which Mr. Duff's article, "Abolition Succeeds" was published in its November issue, should help to keep alive the agitation against the cruel and barbarous punishment.

It is good that the close connection between the abolition of the death penalty and penal reform in general is increasingly recognized and the proposed closer linking of the efforts of the National Council with those of the Howard League for Penal Reform should bear good fruit.

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