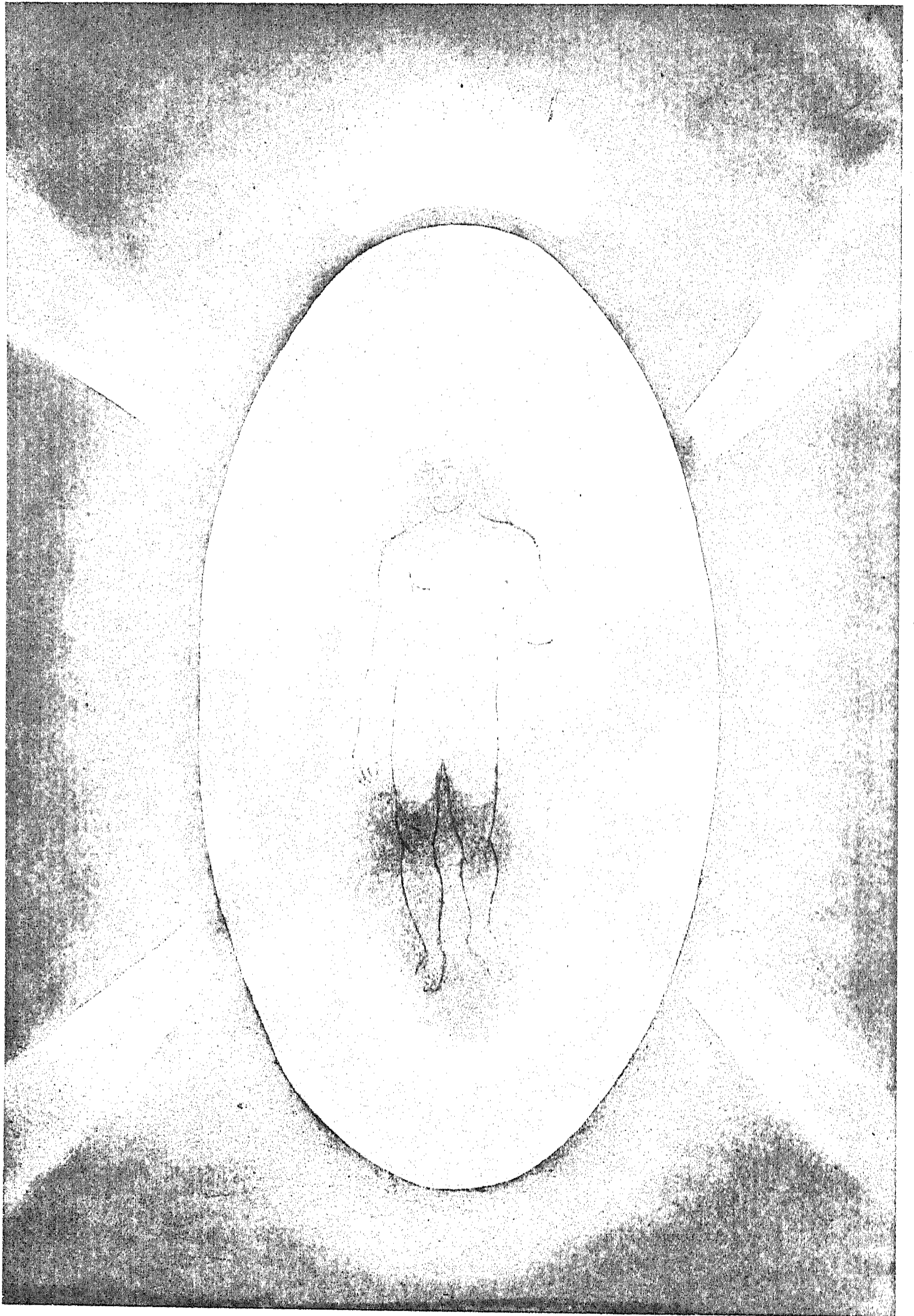


FIRST STEPS IN THEOSOPHY

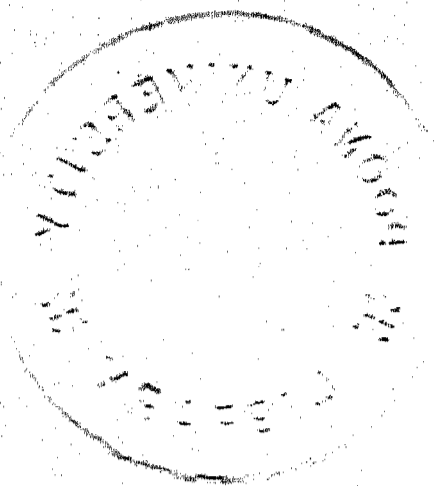
BY
ETHEL M. MALLET



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FOREWORD.

The articles which, in revised form, are here collected, first made their appearance in the pages of the *Lotus Journal*.

In them an attempt has been made to express some of the broad outlines of Theosophical teaching in a simple manner, so that the boy or girl who hears these subjects discussed, may be able, if he or she wishes, to read about them, without danger of being confused by the wealth of detail which is found in our more serious literature.

It is also hoped that this sketch may prove useful to teachers of *Lotus Groups*, as a suggested course of study, which they may fill out, or still further simplify to suit the needs of their hearers.

I desire to express my most grateful thanks to Mr Herbert Whyte for much valuable advice and assistance, and for the ungrudging time and labour which he has given to correcting the proofs and seeing the book through the press.

E. M. M.

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The above five plates (nos: 21, 13, 7, 23, and 11 in *Man Visible and Invisible*, by C. W. Leadbeater), have been printed from blocks kindly lent by The Theosophical Publishing Society, London.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVINE WISDOM.

So and So "is a member of the Theosophical Society". What a familiar sentence this is to many of you! And perhaps you look forward to the time when you also will be a member of some Theosophical Lodge, and will understand the meaning of all those puzzling words — such as "karma", and "astral body", and "psychic faculties", and all the rest of the queer names so freely used by your elders.

Have you ever wondered what is the meaning of this word *Theosophy*? It was not a new word invented by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott when they founded the Theosophical Society in 1875: but it is a compound of two greek words Θεός (Theos) *God* and σοφία (Sophia) *Wisdom*, and so means, you see, the Wisdom or knowledge of God, — Divine Wisdom.

Now in every part of the world, and in all ages, people have been seeking for this knowledge of God; and the different ways of their seeking and the different ways of worshipping Him, have been called *religions*. As you are aware, the national religion in most of the countries of Europe is Christianity; in India it is Hinduism, in Ceylon it is Buddhism, in Palestine it was Judaïsm, and in Arabia and Persia, Zoroastrianism.

You will have learnt from your history books that in times past, (and alas! even today the same thing

happens in some places), terrible persecutions have been carried on in the name of Religion, the followers of one Religion persecuting and torturing the believers of another. It is not the religion that is at fault in these cases; it is that those who profess a particular faith have not grasped one of the central truths of all religion, that although there is but one GOD in the Universe, He may be worshipped through many different forms, and that whilst we may give to Him whom we worship as Supreme Being the name of God, our brothers in Asia, or Africa may be equally worshipping Him under the name of Brahman, or Allah, or by refusing to call Him by any name at all.

Part of the great work that Madame Blavatsky did, for which she is so greatly revered and loved by those who form the Society which she founded, was to bring back to the world the knowledge of this great truth, that had in the course of time been forgotten — this important fact, that all the Religions in the world come forth from the one Divine Being whom we worship under different names, and that therefore the main teachings of them all are very similar; for all the great Religions teach that the Universe, and everything within it, comes forth from God; that man is an immortal being, a child of his Heavenly Father, and that his work is to struggle against the lower side of his nature, and to strive to become true and pure and holy, and spiritually minded, so that in due time he shall grow into the likeness of his Father.

And the differences that are seen on the surface of Religions, and which have for so long blinded men to the likenesses underneath, are such as were necessary in order that each Faith might be suited to the nation to which it was given.

For you must know that just as we are all of us

first babies, then children, then young men and women, and afterwards older men and women, so do the peoples of the world grow and pass through different stages. A "young" nation, that is to say a nation of which the men and women who compose it have not lived so very many lives upon the earth before, a nation of "savages" whose chief pleasures are in eating and drinking and hunting creatures for food, — such a people would need a very simple kind of Religion, a Religion perhaps which would teach them that there is a difference between right and wrong, and that there is a Divine Being above them Who is just and good, that they please Him when they do right, but that when they do wrong He has to punish them. Such ideas as these we find to be the principal ones in the Religions of what are called "primitive tribes" or races; and there is generally also the doctrine that if a man does right he will be happy after death, whilst if he does wrong now he will suffer hereafter.

But when these same men and women have passed through many more earth lives, and have been born into other bodies amongst other and "older" or more civilized nations, they will have learnt a great deal that they did not know when they were "savages", and they will need a different and a higher form of religion. Although they may not be much more able than was the "child-man" to unravel the great mysteries of the Universe, yet they will have developed to a much greater degree their intellectual and moral faculties, and will in consequence need a more spiritual and intellectual form of religion than the races whose higher faculties are entirely undeveloped.

So you see we need not be surprised or distressed when we find that every one does not worship in the same way as *we* have been taught to worship; but

when we come across any who use different forms of worship, or to whom some other Scripture is as sacred as the Bible is to some of us, then we can quite contentedly recognize that we have met someone who is searching in a different way for the Truth which we also are seeking; and putting aside any feeling that our way is best, we may humbly and gratefully learn from him anything that he may be able to teach us, whilst gladly sharing with him any knowledge that we value if it may help him also.

But you will think I have wandered a long way from what I started to explain — the meaning of this word Theosophy! Yet if you understand at all what I have been trying to put before you, you will perhaps be able to catch a glimpse of one of the truths that this word covers. I say “of one”, for this name Theosophy, like many another name, has many meanings, and when you thoroughly know them all you will be wiser and stronger and greater than even the cleverest and best men and women who belong to the Theosophical Society to day, and who are proud to call themselves *students* of the Divine Wisdom!

Speaking generally, then, under the name Theosophy — the Wisdom Religion — we describe a body of teaching about the facts of the Universe, some of which is, from time to time, given to man for his helping. Now you may very naturally ask: — “who has charge of this body of teaching, and how is it given to the world?”

When we study any religion the first thing we see is that it has grown up around some great Teacher, the Founder of the religion, always believed by his followers to be something more than human. The very name of the religion is often taken from its Founder, as *Mohammedanism, Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism.*

Jesus the Christ, as you know, is believed by Christians to be God; similarly the Buddhists claim that *Gautama the Buddha* was divine; to the Hindus the great Indian Teacher *Shri Krishna*, who gave that beautiful Indian Scripture called the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, was a divine Manifestation, and so on.

The Founders of the religions, the Givers of the Scriptures of the world, are all Members of a mighty Brotherhood of Spiritual Teachers, who watch over and guide the nations. In this great Brotherhood there are different ranks, we are told, but none can be a member of it till he has perfected his humanity, till he has become an *Adept*, or *Master*.

These Divine Men have charge of the body of teaching known as the Ancient Wisdom, and from time to time when they see that mankind is ready for some fresh teaching, one of them allows Himself to be born into the world as a Saviour, and the Founder of a new religion. When you come to study the different religions you will find that always much the same events are recorded of their Founders; they are often said to be "born of a virgin" in a cave or dungeon; to be in danger of being slaughtered as infants; to be worshipped by wise men who recognise their divinity, and so on; and They are always represented as being tempted, and as undergoing great suffering on account of the sin and sorrow of the world.

When the light brought to the world by one of these great Teachers is beginning to grow dim, and His followers, instead of trying to understand the spirit of His teaching cling fast to the letter of the Scriptures, and the things of this world are ever becoming more and more important in men's eyes and blotting out from them the spiritual vision, then the great Brotherhood sends forth into the world some servant of

Theirs who will re-awaken men's minds and prepare them to receive higher teachings. Such a servant of Theirs was Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who brought again to the world the truths known as Theosophy, and such servants or "disciples" of the Masters are all those who have progressed far enough along the paths of Love and Knowledge to have been accepted as Their messengers, Fortunate are we if karma has brought us into touch in this life with one or another of such disciples! For although we are not yet ourselves pure enough or wise enough to come consciously into the presence of the great Teachers Themselves, yet through Their disciples we may sometimes catch a glimpse of the glory of the Masters, we may now and again hear faint echoes of those accents of utmost love and tenderness, or feel a touch of that Presence which is perfect peace.

One thing we learn from Theosophy then is that the world is not a mere aggregation of matter and force, created by a God Who afterwards left it, and the beings that dwell upon it, to struggle on alone and without help. Rather may we think of the Universe as a golden stairway coming forth from the Divine Being, (whom we, in our need for a name, call GOD thereby trying to limit the Limitless!) and on every rung of this golden ladder are mighty Spiritual Intelligences in descending scale till man is reached; and then, downwards and backwards, ever less developed creatures as far as the imagination can reach, until in the end, as in the beginning, we come back to that Unspeakable, Unthinkable SELF, of WHOM it is written "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty".¹⁾

¹⁾ Revelation I, 8.

And thus thinking we shall have learnt one most important lesson; namely, that every one, and everything in this wonderful Universe in which we live, is *progressing*, is growing upwards towards the Light which is divine; and that ever as we climb upwards we shall find hands stretched out to help us, if we will only open our eyes to see them, fearing nothing, for we know that we are ourselves in very truth a part of HIM in whom we and all the worlds about us "live and move and have our being".

QUESTIONS.

1. What is the literal meaning of the word Theosophy?
 2. To what does the term refer, and who are the Guardians of the Wisdom religion?
 3. How are the different religions brought to the world?
 4. Why do men need different religions?
 5. Mention any names you know of Teachers who have brought great spiritual truths to the world.
 6. Give one reason why all students of Theosophy owe a debt of gratitude to Madame Blavatsky.
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CHAPTER II.

THE LAW OF REBIRTH.

In the last chapter we learnt that all religions proceed from one source, and are given to the different Nations of the world from time to time. We found that the reason there are several different forms of religion is that men are in different stages of growth; and in passing we noticed that whilst for "young souls" a very simple form is needed, those same egos or souls, when they have passed through many births need a more spiritual and a higher form of religion. Now this passing through many births — returning to earth again and again and dwelling each time in a different earthly body — is what is meant by the term *Reincarnation* (re = again; incarnation = taking a body of flesh). You will find as you grow older that comparatively few people here in the West know this truth of Reincarnation for although it is one of the teachings of the Wisdom Religion, and although it is believed everywhere in the East, and was believed in the early days of Christianity, it has been lost sight of by Christians for many centuries, and is only now gradually being spread abroad amongst Western nations again. You, who have the good fortune to learn the truth of this doctrine whilst you are young, will find as you grow up that it explains many things that have been great puzzles to older people who have not known it.

Let us try now to get a clear idea of what *Reincarnation*

means, so that we could ourselves explain its meaning to any one who asked us about it.

You probably know by this time that YOU are not your body, for that body must some time or other break up in what we call death, whilst YOU are an Immortal Being who can never die. For YOU, the Thinker, the Ego, there is no such thing as death, for you have always lived, and you will always live, however many of the bodies you inhabit may disappear. These different earthly bodies of yours are only like so many different cloaks that you put on for a time, and then, when they have served your purpose and are worn out, you slip away out of them, and take fresh garments.

It will be well for you if you can get firmly into your head this idea that YOU are something real and lasting, quite distinct from the bodies in which you are dwelling.

If you look at the nature round about you it will help you to understand this. In the spring time the woods are full of beautiful flowers, primroses and violets and anemones, springing up everywhere, and the trees bursting into bud; in the autumn these flowers have all vanished and the trees grow more and more to look like bare lifeless sticks, but you know that from the roots hidden under dead leaves, and from those bare stems of trees, will spring in a few months fresh beauties. Although you can see little or no sign of life, you feel quite certain that next spring those dull roots will be dressed with yellow and violet and white, that those branches will be sending forth fresh shoots of delicate green, proving to our blind eyes that the life was only hidden all through the long winter, and that it comes forth again and again, year after year, in different though similar forms. And so all through the kingdoms of Nature, life is ever showing itself forth in different forms, ever withdrawing from the form

which perishes, and after a time putting itself forth again in a new form. And when we come to study the human kingdom we can see something of the purpose of this great Law.

Why is it that we come back time after time and are born into a physical body? It is that we may learn many lessons — lessons that can only be learnt by the experiences we pass through in these bodies of ours. A child goes to school, and during his first term there he learns very simple lessons and then he goes home for the holidays; but that does not mean that he has learnt all the lessons the school can teach, it only means that it is good for him to have a rest and a change of occupation. And after the holidays he goes back for another term and learns more lessons, and then has another holiday; and so it goes on, until at the end of his school life he has learnt many lessons and has grown older and wiser, and he then goes forth into the larger school of the World to learn more. Thus do we all come again and again to this earth to learn the lessons that will in time fit us to become Gods; and if we wish to shorten our time in the school of earth life we must give our best efforts to learning the lessons that life brings us — the lessons of love, of unselfishness, of courage, of contentment, and many others — so that we may not have to be born many times in order to learn a lesson which might have been learnt more quickly.

It would not be possible in one short earth life to learn all the lessons that this world has to teach us. We each find ourselves placed here amidst certain surroundings, with certain duties and responsibilities, with certain chances and opportunities, which, as we shall see later, are the results of our own thoughts, desires and actions in the past. One child is born of

very poor parents in the slums of a great city, whilst another is born as the prince of a great kingdom. The lessons that life brings to these two Egos will be very different in kind, though doubtless each will meet with just those particular trials and temptations which, if made good use of, will best develop his inner nature. Or again, of two children in the same family, one is perhaps born a cripple with a feeble mind, whilst another is born strong and well and with a fine brain. If there were but one life on earth how unjust it would seem that one should be born with such much better chances of happiness than the other! But in the Good Law there is no injustice, neither impatience nor hurry. To every Ego opportunities are given, in many succeeding lives of varying outer conditions, so that each may thoroughly master the lessons of life, and each one develop within himself all the possibilities of his higher nature.

When any one earth life comes to an end, and some one as we say "dies", the Thinker who had inhabited that body draws away from it, carrying with him enwrapped, as it were in a seed, all the results in experience of that incarnation. The Thinker passes on into the worlds on the other side of death, where he learns other lessons, and, if he has tried to make the best of his life on earth, experiences great happiness. After a long time, when he has gained everything he can, for the time being, from these higher worlds, he begins to desire again to experience earth life. So he slowly weaves again for himself new bodies of thought, desire, and action, around the seeds of his former bodies; then after a little while he is again born into a family on earth. Now the kind of surroundings into which he is born will depend on how much he has already learnt, and what he still needs to learn. If, for instance, in past lives he has worked hard to make himself

master of some art — of painting, or of playing, or composing music, — he will probably be born into a family where he inherits a good body, quick to respond, sensitive to beauty. Everything will depend on the thoughts and actions of former lives. Here we learn an important lesson: that if we want to come back to earth next time into good bodies, amongst people who are leading refined lives, in surroundings where it will be made easy for us to learn all worthy things, we must prepare for the future by making the best of the conditions in which we now find ourselves. Every day, every hour, we are shaping our future, and as we either waste, or make good use of our opportunities now, so will the number of times be many or few, that we shall have to be re-born upon the earth.

Let us think of ourselves, then, as having lived many times, and died many times in the past, and let us realize that we have many lives before us in the future, ere we shall be ready to leave this earth-school. Thus thinking we shall recognize the fact that all the Egos about us are of different ages; some are 'younger' than ourselves, and we must therefore not expect them to have learnt all the lessons that we have learnt. Remembering this will help us to be tolerant. Again many are much 'older' than ourselves, are in a much 'higher class' than we are, and to them we shall look up with reverence, gratefully learning from them anything they are willing to teach us, gladly rendering them any service that it is in our power to offer.

And so, trying always to do our duty, and to learn our lessons, in this great School which is God's, we shall grow nearer and nearer to the time when we shall have become perfect, and need return no more to a physical body, because we have learnt all the lessons that earth life has to teach us.

QUESTIONS.

1. Describe in your own words the term *Reincarnation*.
2. What is it that re-incarnates?
3. Why are many earth lives necessary for us?
4. How do you account for the fact that some people are wise, and good, whilst others are very ignorant and self indulgent?
5. What becomes of the *Thinker* at the death of his physical body?
6. How may we shorten the number of our lives on earth?

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

“Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,”¹ — so wrote the Christian Apostle, S^t Paul, trying to teach the people to whom he wrote this great law of the Universe, that *effects*, (or results), must always follow *causes*; that, as the Master Jesus taught, “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit”². And this Law of Cause and Effect is very closely bound up with what we were studying in the last chapter, the Law of Rebirth.

Now what is a Law? If you look in the dictionary you will find several meanings given, but they all mean a rule laid down; and a natural law such as we are thinking of now, is a rule laid down in the natural world, a rule which *we* at any rate have no power to change. For us the laws of nature stand fast, sure, and unchangeable. So you see what a help it is to know about these Laws, for we may build upon them, and they will never fail us, and if we rule our lives in accordance with the law, we can live in peace and security and fear nothing.

It may help you to understand this if you think for a moment of a lower form of law, a law made by man and therefore subject to change. Our country, as you

¹) Galatians VI, 7.

²) S. Matthew VII. 18.

know, is governed by certain laws of this kind. A man may not steal; he may not kill another human being, but he may kill an animal, and so on. Now in every country there are some people who do not wish to keep the laws; they are "young egos", and have not yet learnt how much happier we are when we try to keep laws, than when we are constantly breaking them, and so they go about doing all sorts of things that are against the law. There is one thing very noticeable about these people, which is that they are not generally happy, or at their ease, and they are always on the look-out and fearful lest their crimes shall be discovered. They fear to meet the policeman in the streets, and they slink away from the light of day and hide in dark corners. But people who respect the laws of their country have no fears of this sort, they are living in harmony with the law instead of working against it, and therefore they look upon the law with friendly eyes, and think of those who administer the laws as their helpers and protectors and not as foes. If you can realise that Law in its widest sense is something that changes not, and that as long as we work with the law it will be well with us, that when we try to fight against the law we do not change it, but we only hurt ourselves; and if you can learn to apply this thought to your own conduct, you will have learnt a lesson that will make all troubles and sorrows that ever come to you far easier to bear. For this Law that we have been speaking about, acts in our lives as well as in the rest of the Universe, and according to the way we live — whether it be in harmony with the great spirit of Truth and Unity, or in fighting against that spirit and seeking our own selfish ends — so will be the results that we bring about in our lives. If we go through our lives thinking only of pleasing ourselves, and of getting

nice things for ourselves, and not caring how we hurt others, or how many falsehoods we tell, so long as we get pleasures and amusements for ourselves, then we are working against the law of love on which the Universe is founded, and by setting ourselves against the Law, we are sowing the seeds of misery and unhappiness, to be reaped in future lives on earth. If, on the other hand we are always trying to shape our lives in accordance with the best we know, if we strive every day to check our faults, and to become more true and more loving, we are sowing a seed that in another life will ripen and blossom out into a beautiful character, into a life surrounded by love and joy, and blessed by the power to help others. For, as we saw in studying Rebirth, our earth-lives are not separated entirely from each other, (however long a time we may spend in Heaven between two lives), any more than yesterday is quite separated from to-day because we have been to sleep in between. If we broke a leg yesterday we shall feel the result of that broken leg to-day in spite of the night which has come between, and so if we do good or evil actions in this life we shall find the result of those actions in the next earth-life. And so the Sankrit word *karma*, (which literally means action), is used in the Theosophical Society to-day to describe the results of causes we have set going in past lives. Now this *karma* is a law that plays a very large part in our lives; for the *karma* we have brought from our past lives determines what kind of bodies we shall have, what conditions we shall be born under, and, a far more important thing, it decides what kind of mind and what kind of character we are born with. Let us try now to understand how this is.

We have seen that every cause must have its effect, and that what we do in one earth-life has its effect in

another life on earth. Now all day long we are doing three things. We are acting, (speaking, moving, etc.); we are feeling and wishing; and we are thinking. Let us see what result each of these three activities brings about. Speaking very generally, (and you must bear in mind that there are exceptions to these broad rules; that is to say that other causes come in, which in turn will have their effect, and thereby modify or change the results in the next life) — roughly speaking, the person who does good *actions* in one life on earth, will reap the reward of happy physical surroundings and a good body in his next earth-life. If he or she causes happiness to a great many people, whatever be the motive, he will find, when he is born again on earth, many kind friends round him ready to do what he wants. Let us suppose we see a boy or girl in a very happy home, with parents and friends who love them and are good to them, and we feel perhaps a little bit envious of their good fortune; when we know something about the law of *Karma*, we shall say to ourselves: "That boy (or girl) is reaping the fruit of kind actions sown in a past life, and deserves every bit of happiness he (or she) is having". So also if we find ourselves with a weak, or crippled body, or if the conditions of our own lives are not such as we would have them, we shall say again: "All this is the result of my bad sowing in the past. I am reaping the karma of my own bad deeds, and the only thing I can do is to bear this suffering bravely and patiently, and to take care that my actions in this life are such as will give me a good body and better conditions in my next incarnation, so that I may be able to be of more use in the world than I can be to-day".

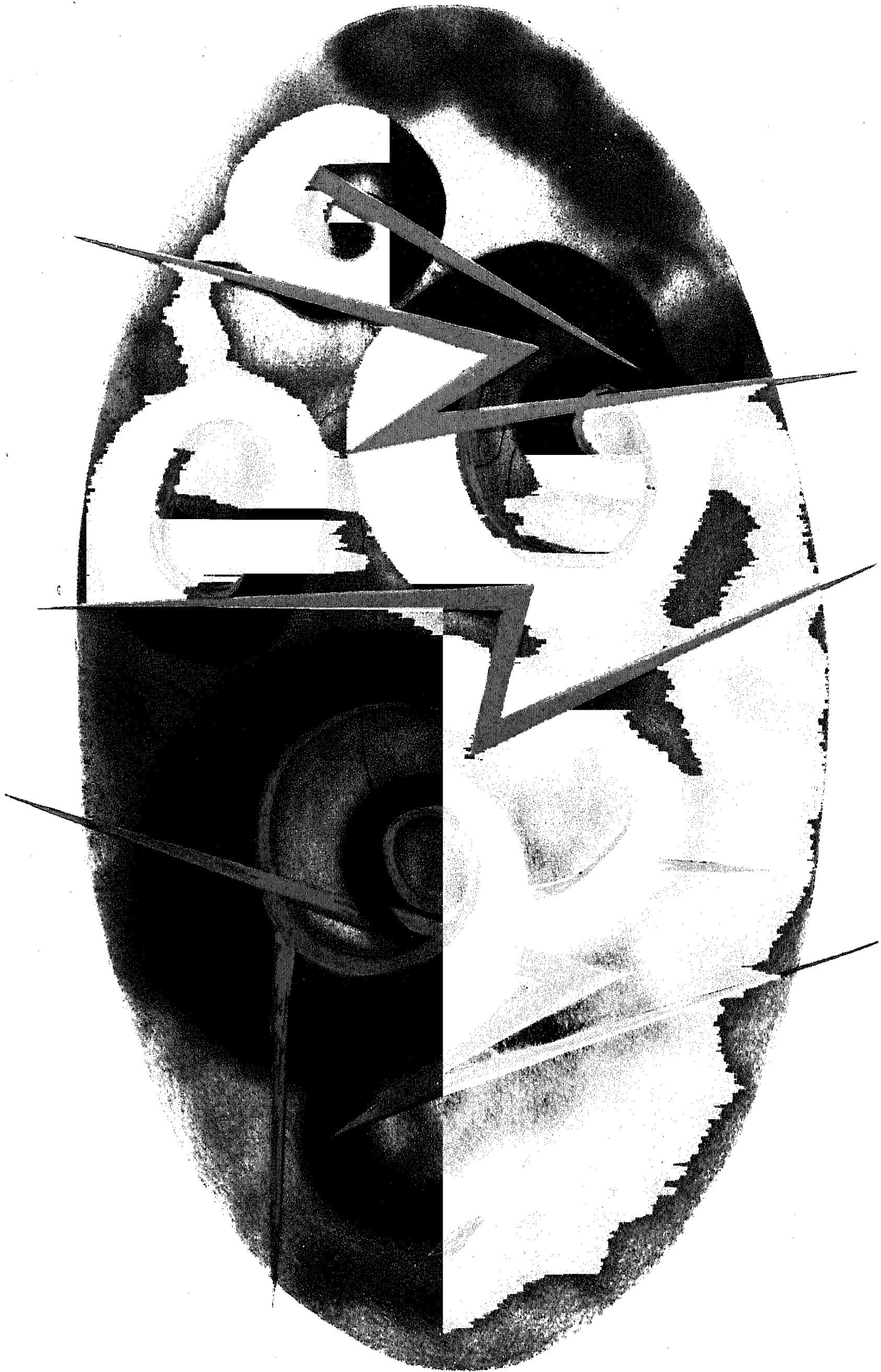
And if we really feel submission and try to be contented with whatever now seems to us unpleasant, our

sufferings will prove to us not hindrances, but priceless blessings, teaching us lessons we could have learnt in no other way, and leading us, more quickly than happiness alone *could* lead us, to the goal we seek to reach, the condition where pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, will be alike to us, for we shall have learnt to identify ourselves with the Self that changes not.

Then there are our *feelings* and *desires* : our likes and dislikes, our emotions of every kind, out of which is built that desire body, or *Astral body*, of which we shall have more to say in another chapter.

If our desires and thoughts are for the most part pure and good, if we want to be helpers of the poor and the distressed, and often try to send out loving wishes to the world about us, we shall find ourselves, when next we are born upon earth, surrounded with love on all sides. We shall have many friends, and everyone will seem to smile upon, and be kind to us. Whilst if, on the contrary, we allow jealous and angry, or impure wishes and desires to take root in our minds, we shall find ourselves on our return to earth in possession of an ugly desire body, and the world will appear to us a harsh, forbidding place, full of people who frown upon, and try to injure us.

Thirdly we are making karma by our thoughts, and by the way in which we are working at our various lessons and studies. You know what a difference there is between the powers of mind of different people. So and so "is so clever", we say; and we feel almost injured because he is able to do his lessons so well and quickly, whilst we perhaps have to plod away at our preparation the whole evening, and even then don't know it as well as the other child. But if we know something of the law of *karma*, we shall understand why we cannot learn our lessons as quickly as our school-fellow. We shall say to ourselves:



“How much that boy must have worked at his mind in the past! When I was amusing myself, he must have been studying, and so he has come into this life with a much better ‘mind body’ than I have got. He has cultivated his power of steady thinking, and so now he can give all his attention to his lessons, and get them into his head, whilst I am letting my mind wander away to half a dozen other things”. And as we admire and envy the power our schoolfellow has gained, we make up our minds that *we* will not waste any more time. but will do all our study as thoroughly as we possibly can, so that next time we return to earth we may have a fine, strong mind body, with which we can study subjects that in this life we find far too difficult to understand.

This is only a very rough outline of a very complicated subject, for the law of *karma* works on many planes, and the *motive* with which an action is done is far more important than the action itself, for it bears its fruit in character whilst the action bears fruit in circumstances. But the great thing to remember is that whatever may be the conditions of our lives, we have made them for ourselves, and every day we live we are forming the character and surroundings for our future lives.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is a law of Nature; and what distinguishes it from a human law?
2. What makes the physical surroundings into which we are born?
3. If I find myself with a weak or feeble mind now, am I condemned to have an equally feeble mind next incarnation? If not what can I do to prevent this?

4. A child is born into the world with a cruel unkind character, but his physical surroundings are luxurious. Can you explain how he has acted in the past to bring about such a result?
5. How will a knowledge of the law of karma help us to become contented?
6. Why does the law of karma imply also the law of reincarnation?

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

We sometimes hear it said that knowing of the existence of some of the great Laws of the Universe helps a person to "hasten their own evolution". Let us consider what is meant by this phrase, and what is the normal course of evolution which it is desired to hasten.

The word *evolution* comes from the Latin verb *evolvere* = to roll out, and is generally used to denote the unfolding of ever higher and higher forms out of lower forms. The whole of Nature — as the great Scientist Charles Darwin, pointed out — is in a state of evolution, lower forms ever giving place to higher forms of life, which are in turn superseded by still higher forms. The butterfly is evolved from the chrysalis; the flower evolves from the bud, the fruit from the flower: the babe evolves into the child, who in a further stage of evolution becomes the man or woman. And so in a wider way the whole world evolves from the Divine Being who holds the Universe within His consciousness, that Being whom we sometimes speak of as the *Logos*, or *God*. Each one of us came forth from God, and when we have passed through thousands of different stages in all kinds of forms, and have become perfectly wise and perfectly loving, we shall again, in our perfected

state, be reunited with HIM who is the Source of our life and of the life of every form within His Universe.

But you must not imagine that because we return as it were to the position from which we started, there is no change in us, and that the long millions of years between will have been wasted. When we started on our long pilgrimage we were as if asleep, but at the end of our journey we shall have gained the power of being fully conscious on every plane of the Universe, we shall in fact have become Gods. Think of a great fire burning, and sending off into the air tiny sparks, and then imagine that each of those sparks grows and grows until it becomes in its turn a fire like the one from which it started. If you can picture that to yourself you will have some faint idea of what is meant by the spiritual evolution of man.

Now in the early stages these "sparks", which have come forth to be separate "individuals", grow very, very slowly, for they have not yet much intelligence, and do not know where they are going or what they are doing; but when they have had many births in human bodies, and their minds have become better instruments, and they have learnt something of the great laws which govern man's evolution, they begin to progress much more quickly. Think for instance of a man who is not very wise or good, and who doesn't care much about anything, except pleasing himself. Suppose that man thinks that when he dies he will come to an end altogether, then you can imagine that he might say to himself: "I have only a few years to live, I will get as much pleasure as I possibly can out of those years. It's no use worrying about being good. Let me enjoy myself for this short time." But supposing that man one day learns that he does *not* come to an end when he dies, and that he will have to come back and live

on this earth over and over again, and also that he will have to reap the fruits of every good or evil action, and even thought. You can imagine what a difference that would make in his life! He would say to himself: "I must be careful how I live — I must not waste my time and opportunities now, or I shall suffer for it in future lives. Let me work at my mind, and at the building of character, let me see how much good I can do in the world, so that I may not have to come back and live many miserable lives, but may hasten my own evolution and develop into one of the helpers of Humanity instead of being a mere clog on the wheel of life as I now am."

We must try then to realize that we all have an immeasurable number of lives stretching behind us in the past, as well as many lives lying ahead of us in the future, and that in the course of these numerous lives we evolve from an utterly undeveloped human being, a savage who has only just attained to human form, into higher stages of humanity, until at last we reach the final stage of our humanity, that wherein the human has re-become one with the divine.

But you may very naturally ask: "What forms did we inhabit before we dwelt in human forms?" And the answer to that question is, that just as the human *form* has, as Science tells us, evolved out of the animal form, so has the *consciousness*, the mind that dwelt in those animal forms, evolved into a higher form of consciousness, fitted to inhabit a human shape. And tracing their history further and further back, it has been seen that the divine sparks of life which came forth from God passed downwards until they reached the lowest point in our universe, until they reached the mineral in which, it is said, "God sleeps". From the mineral this life passed upward through the vegetable world, and then into the animal world, until at last the

animal, becoming more and more intelligent, reached the point where he was fitted to be born as a human being. We have seen how in the human kingdom he will gradually evolve into ever higher and higher stages, until he reaches the Divine.

When we come to study the life after death, the long period between two incarnations on this earth, we shall see more in detail how men learn their lessons during earth-life, and assimilate, or digest, the experiences of their earth-lives in the heaven world, so that they come back to earth each time with their store of knowledge a little increased. But for the present let us bear in mind this important fact, that the whole Universe is in process of evolution, from the lowest to the highest. Remembering this we shall never lose hope ; for we know that however low or degraded a man may appear to be, that man has within him the possibility of becoming a God. He will return to earth again and again, until he has learnt how much happier a thing it is to live for others than to live for self.

And when we hear, as sometimes we do hear, of men who have done some terribly cruel deed, we shall remember that the souls in such bodies are probably 'young' souls, undeveloped souls ; and instead of feeling anger and disgust with them, we shall send them thoughts of pity, and wishes that they may soon become aware of the ugliness of their actions, and change them to something better.

Then again we shall not allow our hearts to break over the sufferings of those who are cruelly treated. We often hear of both people and animals who seem to suffer from no fault of their own, but simply because they have to do with cruel people. As we learn something of the law of *karma*, and of the evolution of humanity, we realize that suffering is a blessing in

disguise, which helps us to turn to the Real and the True, and which develops in our characters the seeds of patience, endurance and strength. This realization will not make us indifferent to the sufferings of others, rather will it make us the more tender to the sufferer, who knows not the cause of his suffering. But whilst we do everything in our power always to try to lessen suffering wherever we see it, we shall try not to let ourselves be carried away by grief for the sufferer; for we shall know that at the bottom all is well, and that the suffering comes only to teach a lesson that has not yet been learnt, but which, once learnt, will make the learner wiser and happier, and of more use in the world for all time to come,

Thus will even a little understanding of the laws of our evolution make all life seem happier and brighter, and shed a beam of sunlight upon the part of our journey that still lies hidden from us in the future.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by the phrase "to hasten our own evolution?"
2. What is the goal of our evolution?
3. How does a knowledge of the laws of *karma* and *reincarnation* help to hasten our evolution?
4. How does the knowledge of the law of evolution affect our ideas about sin and suffering?
5. Give some examples of evolution in the world of nature.
6. Give in outline the path of evolution of a 'divine spark'.

CHAPTER V.

MAN AND HIS BODIES.

To some of you who read this the title of the present chapter will seem a very strange one. "Man and his bodies!" you say; "have we got more than one body then?". The question is a very natural one, for in the West most people have not only forgotten that they have more than one body, but, they think of this physical body which eats and drinks, and walks, and sleeps, as if it were *themselves*. We have got into the habit of saying: "I am hungry", or "I am tired, when we really mean: "My physical body is hungry, or is tired".

One of the first things we learn when we begin to study Theosophy is that "You" and "I" are something separate from any "bodies" which we may for a time be inhabiting. The *Thinker*, as we may call the real man who is born time after time on earth, who makes *karma* in one life, which he has to come back and work out in another life; who slowly builds up his character, and grows and progresses from the state of a savage, until at last he becomes a perfected man; — this *Thinker* is something quite different from, and not to be confused with, the bodies through which he works.

You will not find this a difficult idea to grasp, if you think for a moment of yourself putting on different clothes. You may put on a good many garments, one outside the other, and perhaps a thick coat outside all,

and these clothes will change your appearance, but they will not change *you*, will they? You will know yourself to be the same person whether you have on one set of clothes or another, whether the garments you are wearing be few or many; and you would be very much amused, if, say, someone who only knew you slightly, failed to recognize you one day because you had on a different suit of clothes!

Or let us take another illustration, — that of a lamp. The innermost part of the lamp is the wick, which you light to get your flame; then over that flame you place a chimney, and over the chimney you put a globe, and perhaps over the globe you put a rose-coloured shade. Now the light is exactly as it was before you put anything over it at all, but when you see the light through all these things that come between it and you, it appears quite different. If you turn to the coloured plates facing pages 43 and 47, you will see how, in the former, the light of the Ego is almost extinguished by the dull and muddy colours of the lower bodies, so that the appearance is of darkness and heaviness rather than of light; whereas in the other picture we see light clear colours, giving us the impression that the flame of the spirit burns brightly within, and is clearly seen through the other bodies, which, being purified, only slightly veil its light, but do not distort or darken it.

So does the Thinker, the Individual, shine through the different bodies he uses, and according to the nature of these bodies, whether they consist of finer or of coarser materials, will he shine out more or less brightly. We are each of us a *spark* from the great *Flame* which we call God, and the owners of these various vehicles or bodies which we use; and some day, when we have grown wiser, we shall find ourselves able to step out of these

different vehicles of ours, and so to prove to ourselves beyond all doubt that *we* are not our bodies.

But you may say; "Why do we want these different forms to work through, why can't we work directly as the Thinker, without putting on all these coverings which cloud the real light of the Self within us?" The complete answer to that question neither you nor I can know at present, but we can partly understand why we have these different bodies to work in.

For another thing, that Theosophy teaches us is this; this world which we see around us, composed of solids, liquids, gases and ethers, is not the whole of the Universe. All this that we see with our eyes, or through microscope or telescope, makes up only what is called the *physical plane*, and there are other planes or regions of the Universe where the matter is finer than the finest matter of the physical plane, and where therefore this physical body could not exist, and we need different bodies to work in all these regions. You will find this quite easy to understand if you think of the different vehicles a person uses to travel in in the different *elements*, as they are called, on earth, On land he uses a train or carriage of some sort; on the water, he uses a ship; in the air, a balloon; and in each case whilst the vehicle is changed the person himself remains the same. He could not go across the water in a carriage, he could not travel upon the earth in a balloon, but wherever he wants to go he must have a suitable vehicle to travel in. So you and I, when we are active upon this physical plane, (that is to say during the waking hours of our earth-lives), must work through our physical body, but when we are asleep we slip out of that body and go about on another plane, in another body, called the *astral* body. and when we die, and leave behind us for good this physical body, we shall find ourselves in

other planes of the Universe, and using other bodies.

Until we know that for ourselves by experience let us at least try always to remember: "I am not my bodies, and although they may go through all sorts of changes it is not I that change, for I am the eternal, the Changeless Self".

We will now try to study, rather more in detail, the three lowest vehicles, one or other of which we are continually using throughout our lives, namely, the *Physical body*, or body of action, the *Astral*, or desire body, and the *Mental*, or mind body, And first let us take the one we know most about, the physical body. It is this body which we are constantly using all day long, by means of which we can touch, and see, and hear the different objects that surround us on the physical plane; and although it is in one sense our lowest body, that which is farthest removed from our true home, from the spiritual plane on which the Thinker dwells, yet it is on this body that we must begin to work, if we wish to fit ourselves to become the servants of the Great Ones who guide and help Humanity.

We have seen that, without a body built up of the matter of this physical plane, we could not move about upon it, any more than a man can move through the air without a balloon or air-ship of some kind. But not only could we not move, we could not see, or touch, or hear the objects upon this plane. In fact, without a physical body, this world would not exist for us, for it is only by means of these different bodily sense organs of ours — the organs of touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell which are, as you know, the skin, eyes, ears, tongue and nose, — it is only through these organs that we come to know the world in which we live. You know that if a man is born blind he does not know what colour is, if he is born deaf he does not

know what sound is, and so on. So you see that our physical body is really an *instrument*, by means of which we learn to know something of the world in which we live, and the knowledge that we gain through our ordinary life in the world, and work upon with our brains, is passed up to the Thinker, or Ego within, and the Ego grows richer by the experiences we have gathered through our physical instrument.

Now if we use an instrument for any purpose — say a tool for wood-carving, or a surgeon's instrument for performing some delicate operation — it is very important, is it not, that it shall be well made, and clean and sharp, for if it were not so the work could not be satisfactorily done. And so you can imagine that with this instrument of ours that we call the physical body, if it is coarse, and dull, and unhealthy, it will not be nearly such a valuable instrument as if it were finely built, and healthy, and sensitive to the delicate vibrations around it. In the former case it would not be able to receive and pass inwards to the Ego any of the finer impressions with which it might meet, any more than some delicate instrument, intended for registering slight changes in the atmosphere, could do so if it were clogged with dust and dirt; or any more than you could with a blunt tool carve on a piece of wood a fine tracing of figures.

So it is clear that if we want our physical body to become an instrument well fitted for the service of the *Thinker* who is working through it, we shall do what we can to refine and strengthen it as far as possible. "But", perhaps you say, "we are born with a certain physical body, and how can we change it?". Certainly we are all born with a particular physical body, but the body that any one of us has at this moment is not that with which he was born!. For Science tells us that

our body is made up of innumerable tiny "lives" or cells, and that these are continually changing. Every second we are sending out something from our own body into the world around, and at the same time taking something from without into our body; and the physical body which you or I have at this moment, has not in it one particle of the matter of which it consisted seven years ago!. That being so, why should we not try to attract such physical matter as shall build it up into an instrument that will be really useful to us later on? And you, who begin this work of purifying and training your physical body whilst young, have a great advantage over those who begin this work in later life, for when the body is a young one it is more easily guided into the way you want it to go, and as you accustom it to obey you, you will find it repeating of its own accord — *automatically* as it is called — the habits into which you have trained it.

To make your body into a really useful instrument, then, how must you treat it? There are two main qualities that it should possess. It must be *healthy*, and it must be *refined* or *sensitive*.

Now the way to make your body healthy you probably already know, for we are taught that unless we keep our body thoroughly clean, the pores of the skin become clogged and cannot act properly; and unless we give it plenty of fresh air and exercise, the blood becomes impure, and its various functions cannot be properly carried on. So that even by such a simple thing as keeping our bodies scrupulously clean we are *beginning* the work of training our instrument for service later on. And so we find that in some Religions — especially in the East — ablutions, or washing, always forms a part of religious ceremonial, the keeping clean of the outer body typifying the inner desire of the Soul for purity.

But besides being healthy our body must become sensitive to the finer impressions around us. A rough country labourer may be strong and healthy, but he will probably not be very sensitive to the glories of a sunset sky, to the magic of the bursting buds in spring, or to the singing of the birds. To be able to respond to such things we must have in our bodies, especially in our brains, much of the finer kind of physical matter.

How then can we draw into our bodies this finer matter? You know that what we eat and drink goes to build up our bodies, so that if we want them built the finer kinds of matter, we must eat and drink the finer kinds of food.

We should not expect a body that was fed upon large quantities of animal food, and the poison of alcohol, — which is obtained by a process of fermentation and decay — to be particularly delicate and refined. And so it has been taught in many Religions, that he who would strive after the things of the spirit must cease to build up his physical body upon the products of decay and impurity, and must nourish it on herbs, and the purer fruits of the earth. And in this respect those of you who are brought up as vegetarians have a great advantage, for, by nourishing your bodies upon the finer kinds of food, you are building up instruments that will respond more readily to the finer impressions, not only of the physical plane, but to the messages sent down by the Ego himself into the physical brain.

So we see that there is much we can do, even on this lowest plane, to hasten our growth into something higher; and although no amount of purifying or of training our physical body will *by itself* make us spiritual, yet until we have begun to purify our body, and learnt to control and guide it, instead of allowing it to control and guide us, we cannot hope to develop the powers of

higher planes, nor -- which is much more important -- can we properly fulfil the purposes for which we are here on this plane.

QUESTIONS.

1. Why is it incorrect to say "I am hungry", or "I am tired?"
 2. Why does the *Thinker* need different bodies to work in?
 3. What are some of the uses of the physical body and where does it work?
 4. How may it be kept in good health?
 5. Why is it important that it should be healthy?
 6. Have we power to change the materials of our physical body?
 7. What purposes may be served by building up our body on pure foods?
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CHAPTER VI.

THE ETHERIC DOUBLE.

Hitherto in speaking about our physical body we have treated it as a whole, but we must now come to consider it as consisting of two different parts; a part that can be seen, which we may speak of as the *Dense Body*, and a part that cannot ordinarily be seen, to which, in Theosophy the name *Etheric Double* is given.

Now this dense body, as we know, is made up of solids, liquids, and gases. You can easily see and feel for yourselves many of the solids in your body; for instance the skin, the bones, the muscles, and so on. The chief liquid you also know, for if you prick your finger you see a red fluid which we call blood. The gases are not so easily seen; but you know very well that without air in our bodies, we could not live, and air is composed of oxygen and other gases. Even this part of your body can be seen sometimes, as you will have noticed in very cold weather, when we can often see the breath as it comes out of our mouths. So that no one can have any doubt, as to our dense bodies, that they consist of physical matter in the different states, the solid, the liquid and the gaseous.

But it was discovered, not so very long ago, that physical matter exists in a condition still finer than the gaseous. For very many years scientific men had

believed that the smallest particle of matter existing in this world was that particle known as a *gaseous atom* (from the greek *atomos*, meaning 'that which cannot be cut or divided'); but one day somebody discovered the existence of matter still finer than the finest of these gases, and he showed that it was a mistake to speak of an 'atom' of hydrogen or of any other gas, because all such so-called 'atoms' could be broken up, and a true 'atom' is indivisible. When one of these gaseous 'atoms' was broken up it was found to consist of matter in a finer state than the gaseous, to which the name of *ether* or *etheric matter* was given. It is of this *ether* which in turn consists, as some Theosophical investigators have discovered, of matter in four different stages or degrees, that is built that invisible part of our physical body which we speak of as our *etheric double*.

You can imagine how fine and delicate a thing this etheric double must be, as it is composed of states of matter which are finer than the finest gases! And you will readily understand also that such a body would not be visible to ordinary sight. But remember that although we cannot see it at present, it is none the less *physical*, a part of the physical body, and when we have developed our eyesight further, we shall be able to see this part of our bodies just as we can see the denser part. Some people indeed can see it to-day, (probably because they have rather more of this etheric matter in their own bodies), and they tell us that the etheric double is violet grey in colour, and that it is coarser or finer in texture according as the dense body of its owner is coarse or fine.

Now you may ask: "Why is it called etheric *double*?" And the answer is, because it is the duplicate or double of the dense body. Immediately after death, and on certain rare occasions, this etheric body becomes

separated from the dense body to which it belongs, and is sometimes seen by friends of the deceased as a clondy figure, or wraith, commonly called a *ghost*, which resembles the form of their friend. The etheric matter is built into and round the denser physical matter of our bodies. Science teaches us that no two 'atoms'¹ or particles of the dense body actually touch one another, but that every such 'atom' floats in ether, is surrounded, as it were, by an envelope of ether. Each particle of the dense body then has its etheric counterpart, and thus the whole etheric body is a double of the whole dense body.

As the dense body is refined, as it is built up more and more of the finer kinds of solid, liquid, and gaseous matter, so the etheric double becomes gradually more and more refined also, attracting to itself the finer materials out of the great mass of Etheric matter around it. And here comes in question that we shall find continually cropping up when we try to study theosophical, or indeed scientific books of any kind, so we may as well try to get some idea of its meaning at once, I mean the question of what is called *vibration*. The word vibration literally means a *trembling* or a *shaking*, but in the sense in which it is commonly used now it refers to that orderly or rhythmical motion, which underlies all form as we know it, for we are taught by science that matter is in a state of perpetual vibration or movement to and fro. Perhaps the easiest way to get some idea of what vibration means is to think of a wire inside a piano. Open the top of your piano so that you can see the wires, and strike a note on the

¹) Notice that the word 'atom' is really incorrect here, but it is still commonly used to describe a gaseous particle, or, as it is sometimes called, a 'chemical atom'.

keyboard. You will then see a little hammer, to which that note is attached, strike against a certain wire (or a set of three wires if the note struck is in the middle portion of the piano) and set that wire *trembling* or *vibrating*, so that a sound is given out. The nature of the sound produced depends upon the speed at which that wire vibrates. If its vibrations are comparatively slow the note will be what we call a low note, if they are very fast it will be a high note. So we see that the rate of vibration governs the *pitch* (height or depth) of the sound. Now let us go a step farther. Suppose you again strike a note on the piano, you will hear, if you listen attentively, and if your sense of hearing is sufficiently sensitive, certain other sounds faintly mingling with it. If you strike 'middle C' for instance, you will hear the 'C' above that. Why should you hear these particular sounds? Simply because they are what is called "in sympathetic relation to" the note first struck; or in other words the strings which give out these faint sounds *vibrate* at a certain rate which is mathematically connected with the rate of vibration of the note first struck.

Now if you play a piece in a certain key, say the key of A major, you know that A is called the *key note*, and those of you who learn music know perfectly well that when you are playing in the key of A major all the notes you play must have some relation to your key. You cannot, while still remaining in the key, introduce an E \flat or an A \sharp or any note not belonging to the key. But have you ever thought why? The reason is simply this: that the key note A, and its common chord, have certain rates of vibration, and only such notes as have sympathetic vibrations can be sounded in connection with them if you wish to produce harmony and not discord,

Now apply these facts to the bodies or vehicles which the Ego uses, his instruments on which he plays. Each body has a certain key note, a certain rate of vibration which governs the kind of matter built into that body. We may think of a very heavy slow-moving body as being built round a very low note, a note that is vibrating so slowly that there is very little change or variety in the matter which is sympathetically attracted towards it. But take a body at a later stage of development where the key note is much higher, where the central controlling impulse is continually striving to express itself more clearly through the matter that surrounds it. Here we see that the nature of the matter itself has changed. Instead of being heavy and lethargic it is sparkling with life, responding to all kinds of impressions which fall upon it from outside. And as we try to follow out this idea of sympathetic vibration we find that it explains many things in life — for instance the quick response we sometimes feel towards people whom we meet for the first time, whilst towards others we have no such feeling, and many another thing — and we begin to understand that, according to the vibrations set up in each of our vehicles, will be the kind of matter that is drawn in to build up those vehicles. What we have to try to do is to raise the rate of vibration of our bodies. We saw in our last chapter one way of helping to do this, and presently we shall learn that there are still more efficient ways. Meanwhile let us remember the object we have in view.

Now what is the particular function of this etheric vehicle, and how does it serve the Ego who dwells within it? The etheric double is the link between the higher bodies and the dense outermost body of man. It is built afresh for each incarnation on a plan given

by one of the Great Lords who guide evolution, and awaits the Ego on his return to rebirth on earth after his rest in the Heaven worlds. During physical life its particular work is to serve as the vehicle of the life forces flowing from the sun. These forces when they are drawn into the etheric body are known in Theosophy as *prâna*, and it is this *prâna* which animates the etheric doubles, and through them the dense bodies, of not only human beings, but also of animals, plants and minerals. Science is beginning to find out that there is some kind of life within even the dense mineral forms, and that is the Divine Life which flows from the Sun, the physical body of the Logos, and which clairvoyants can see flowing in rosy streams through the etheric portion of all physical bodies. If our etheric double were entirely separated from our dense body the latter would become lifeless — so it is only at death that it can be drawn right away from its dense counterpart.

When we are asleep at night we generally slip out of our physical body and leave it lying there asleep on the bed, and then in the etheric brain the thoughts, images, and ideas of the previous day, are turned over and over, resulting in the peculiar jumble of dreams which are often the only recollection we have, when we wake, of the past night's experiences. These, however, are not the true dreams, of which we shall hear more some other time.

Such then is this subtler part of our physical body, of the body which we have to work with in our everyday life. Do not think that the physical body is unimportant because it is the lowest of those we possess. It is the only instrument we have to work with on this plane, and we can only bring into our waking consciousness as much of our true Self as our bodies can bring

through. Truly we — our real Selves — are much greater than our bodies, but that which cannot pass through our bodies, with which our bodies cannot vibrate in harmony, cannot show itself on earth. And therefore if we want to be as much our real Self as possible down here, with as many of our powers and capacities active as may be, we have got to work away to purify this dense body that we know best, realizing that as it becomes purer, its etheric double will be purified also, and thus the higher currents of emotion and thought will be able to come through into our physical brain.

QUESTIONS,

1. Of how many parts does the physical body consist? Name them, and state why they are so called.
2. What do we mean by etheric matter?
3. Why is it incorrect to speak of an *atom* of gas?
4. What does it mean to say that our bodies have each a certain rate of vibration?
5. How can we change the rate of vibration of the physical bodies?
6. What is the particular function of the etheric double?

CHAPTER VII.

THE BODY OF FEELING.

You know that besides the part of ourselves which *acts*, there is a part that *feels* and a part that *thinks*, and in this chapter we are going to study the body through which all our feelings, and desires, and wishes express themselves, the body which is spoken of in theosophical books as the *Astral body*.

Let us go back to our old simile of a lamp, with its various shades. If we think of the wick as our *Spiritual body*, bearing the flame of *Atma* (Spirit), then we might think of the lamp chimney as our next finest body or vehicle, the *Mind body*; of the globe put over this (and shutting out a little more of the light) as our *Astral body*; and finally of the shade over all as our *Physical body*, consisting of its dense part and its etheric double. Only if we make this picture in our minds to help us, we must think of a very fine and beautiful glass globe as a comparison with our astral body, for the word "astral" means "starry", and the name was given to this body because of its bright and shining appearance. Those who are able to see people's astral bodies tell us that, at first sight, they appear to be very much like the physical, except that they are much more delicate and brighter looking, and shine in a way the physical body does not; and also that they are in constant motion, changing their particles very

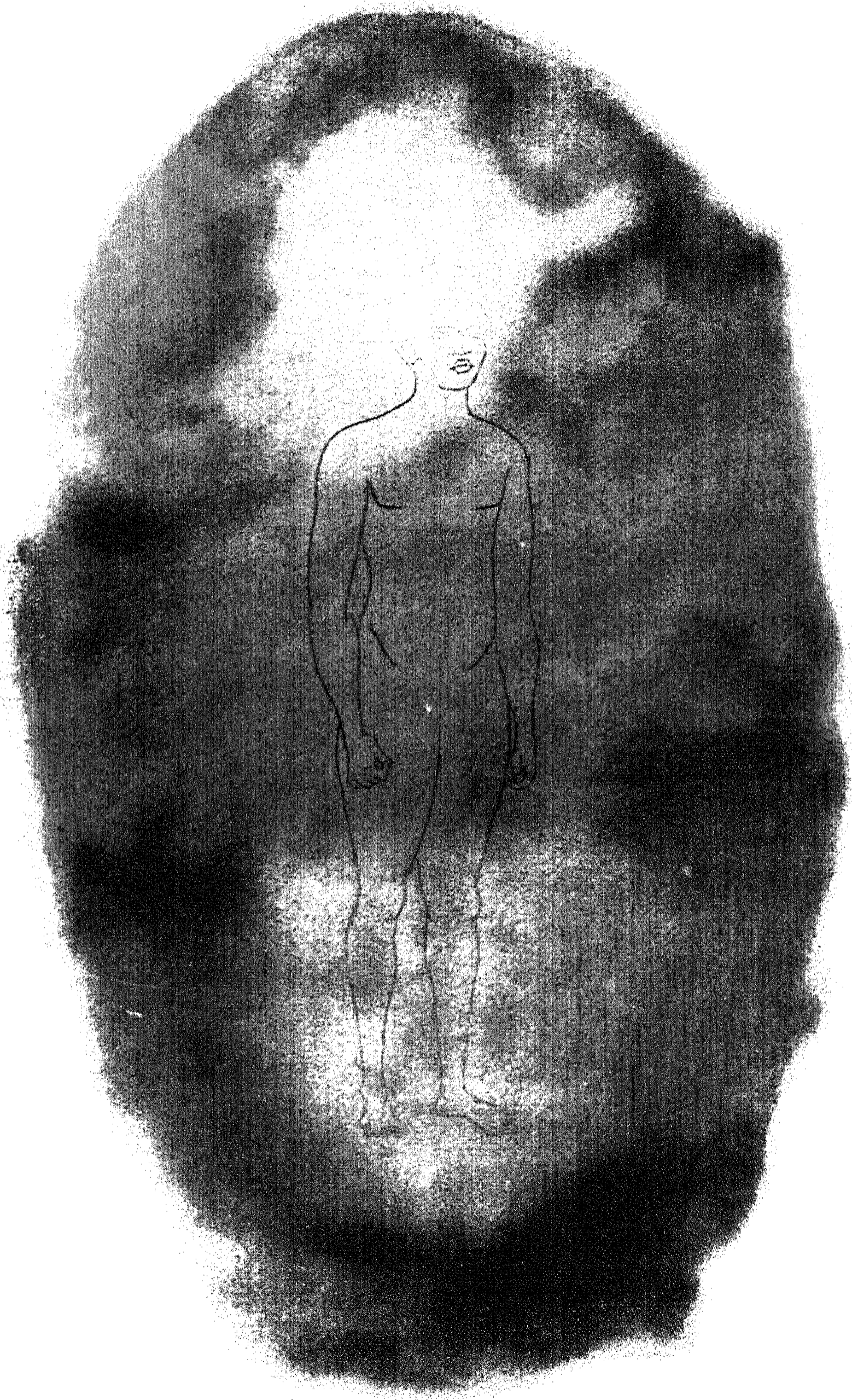
rapidly, and flashing with different colours one after another. All astral bodies are not alike any more than all physical bodies; and the astral body of a good and pure man is a very much more beautiful thing than the astral body of a coarse and ignorant man, in addition to which it has a clear, sharply defined outline, which the astral body of a very young Ego has not.

Let us then first try to understand what this body is made of, and then we will learn something of its uses.

You remember that our physical bodies, (the dense and etheric), are built up from the different kinds of matter on the physical plane, some of which we can see and some of which we cannot. You will also, perhaps, remember that I told you that every atom of dense physical matter (solid, liquid, or gas), is surrounded by an envelope of ether, in which the atom of coarser matter floats. In something of the same way every etheric atom is surrounded with, and interpenetrated by, matter of a finer kind altogether than the physical, and to this matter the name of *astral* is given.

Try to picture to yourselves that there is all round about us, not only outside this physical world, but also within it and within us, another world, or plane, (as it is called in theosophical books), consisting of matter finer even than the finest ethers of which Science is beginning to tell us, and far more brilliant and delicate than anything we can imagine.

Now it is of some of this matter that the astral body of each one of us is made, and just as the astral world is all around and about the physical world, so does this astral body of each one of us surround and interpenetrate our physical body. Those who are *clairvoyant* (clear-sighted), which means that they have



developed the power of seeing this finer than physical matter, tell us that when they look at any one of us they see the physical body, the ordinary form, which is all that most of us can see, and that within this they see a form of finer matter which interpenetrates the denser physical matter, and also stretches beyond the physical form, appearing as a kind of cloudy shell or halo surrounding the physical body.

If you examine the plate on the opposite page you will see a picture of an astral body — in this case the body of a savage, or *young Ego*.

You notice two things about this picture, first, that the body has several different colours in it; and secondly that, though roughly the same shape in outline as the physical body, it is all one whole, not divided up into limbs as the physical body is, and the outline is misty and irregular, not clearly defined as is that of our physical body. You may wonder why this body should have such a different appearance from the one we are accustomed to. If you think for a moment however you will see that the astral body has no need for separate limbs such as the physical body has; for the latter is the body of action, and in order to act, you know that one wants arms, legs, mouth, eyes, ears, etc., through which the Self within can come into touch with the outside physical world. The reason for the cloudy and irregular appearance of the body in the picture, is that it represents the astral body of a man of only slight development, and in the early stages of evolution the astral body, we are told, is a somewhat shapeless mass, which in the course of many lives becomes more and more definitely formed, with ever more clearly defined outlines.

We have to remember that not only the Ego himself, but the bodies he wears, as well as the worlds he

lives in, are all undergoing a process of evolution; and just as at one time, now far back in the past to us, men's physical bodies were not the sharply defined, symmetrical forms we know now, but were shapeless, loosely connected masses, moving cumbrously, and seeming in comparison with the bodies we are now accustomed to, very clumsy and inconvenient vehicles; so at a later stage, when man has developed a well-organized vehicle on the physical plane, his desire body is still a somewhat shapeless, half-formed vehicle, which will only in course of time develop into the compact and well-ordered body in which he can freely move about on the astral plane. And when he has accomplished that, he will have still higher bodies to work at, in order that they may furnish him with vehicles adapted for his use on yet higher planes of the universe.

The other thing we notice in the picture is that there are various colours shown in the astral body. This is a very interesting point, for we learn from those who have clairvoyant sight, that every time a feeling or a desire comes up on our mind, a colour flashes out in our astral body. Suppose we are feeling a strong affection towards somebody, a lovely rosy pink appears, (see illustration page 53); or if we are thinking of some great Teacher, or of God, and feeling a sense of reverence and gratitude towards Him, then a beautiful clear blue will make its appearance; and so on. When evil wishes or desires come into our minds, then ugly colours are seen in our astral bodies, — the ugly red of anger, sometimes seen as red flashes darting out towards some one, (see page 18), or the dull brown of selfishness. Just in proportion to the kind of desires which usually dwell in our minds, will be the colouring of our astral bodies. The picture on page 43 shows, as we said, the

astral body of a *young Ego*, and you see that the colours are not very clear and beautiful. They are mostly tinged with the brown of selfishness which gives a very muddy kind of appearance to this astral body; the outline also is very cloudy, instead of being a clearly marked oval, as it will become later on, and the whole appearance is suggestive of restlessness and variability, with no very definite form.

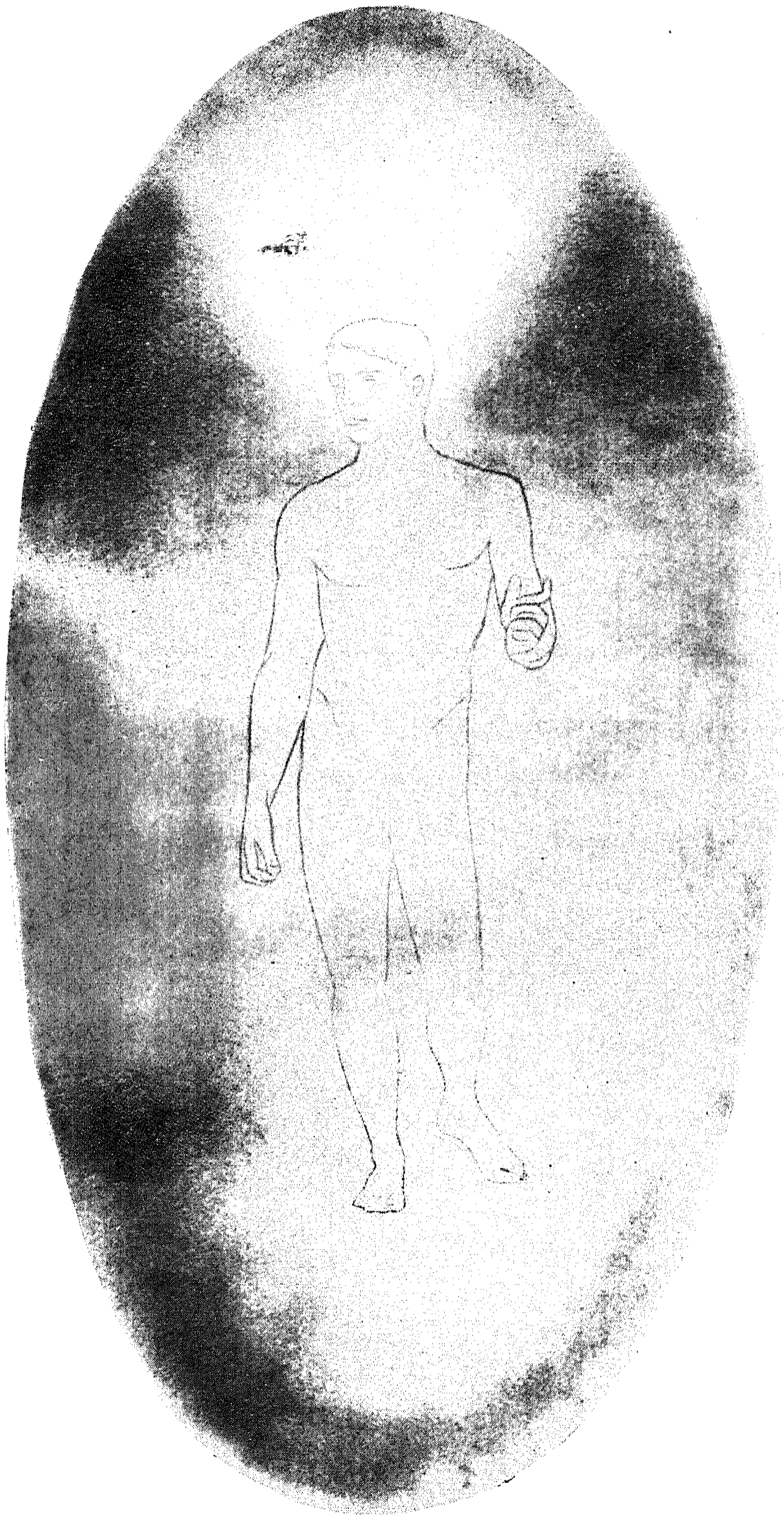
As the Ego evolves, and begins to try to purify his feelings and thoughts, the appearance of his astral body changes very much, we are told. If you turn to the plate facing page 47 you will see the astral body of a developed man. Notice how much clearer and purer the colours have become, how much of the ugly brown and grey has disappeared, the lurid red being replaced by flashes of lovely rosy pink, (unselfish love), whilst around the head is seen the yellow of intellect, and the blue of devotion. If we would have our astral bodies flashing only with beautiful colours, we must be careful to allow only loving, pure and unselfish desires to find a place within our minds.

What then is the use of our having an astral body? Well, first of all, as we have seen, it is by means of our astral body that we *feel*, and if we had none, we should never be able to feel anything at all. We should never feel either happy or sad; never feel any pain or grief, but neither should we feel any of the pleasures that come to us from those we love, and from the world around us. The mineral has, we are told, no astral body, therefore a stone cannot feel. A plant or a vegetable has the beginnings of an astral body, and the animal has a fair-sized one and, as you know, many animals can feel a great deal of pleasure and pain — a fact which we should never forget.

When we come to the human kingdom, the highest of the four great kingdoms of nature, we find that in

man, feeling or sensation plays a very large part. If you watch yourself one day, and try to notice what it is that causes you to speak and act as you do all day, you will find that it is generally what you *feel* or what you *wish* that is the motive behind. And every time you are wishing, or desiring something, you are working through your astral body. So you see what an important part this body plays, and how we are working upon it all day long, changing it for good or evil. The way our desires change it is this. Every time we feel or wish anything strongly, we set up a rapid movement, a *vibration* within the astral body. That movement loosens, as it were, some of the matter in the body, and it pushes out of the body matter not in harmony with the particular matter which is vibrating; besides this some of the surrounding matter of the astral plane, which *is* in harmony with the vibrating matter, is drawn into the body. And as with our physical body we are able to control to some extent the kind of matter that will be able to take refuge in it, so over this astral body of ours we can also exercise a certain control, and by training ourselves never to harbour evil feelings within, can make our astral body impregnable against evil feelings from without.

We see then how we can set to work to improve our astral body. We have got to purify and raise our feelings and wishes, so that they may become of such a kind as will only attract to our astral bodies the finer and purer astral matter. This cannot be done at once, but we can set to work upon it at once, and persevere in it day after day. Every time we check an angry thought, and try to think a loving one instead, every time we send a friendly wish to the people, or the creatures about us, every time we try to check a feeling of impatience or crossness, or fear, we are chan-



ging the evil materials of our astral body. And as we try to replace the bad feeling with a better one, we are weaving into this body finer kinds of astral matter, that will make it in course of time a highly organised, delicate vehicle, responding only to the higher vibrations around it, unable to answer to the grosser and coarser vibrations it meets with, — a really useful instrument for the Self which dwells within it. For in course of time that body will become a well organised vehicle which we shall be able to use freely to travel about in on the astral plane, and learn all that is to be learnt there.

Even now when we go to sleep at night, we pass out of our physical body, and leaving it lying asleep on the bed, we pass in our astral body on to the next plane of the universe, and spend our time in the world of desires and feelings.

Now comes in the importance of having a well-developed astral body, for if we have built up a very good body we shall probably be able to travel about in it on the astral plane, and to see many interesting sights, and be able to help people who are sad or suffering. If you read Mr. Leadbeater's *Invisible Helpers*, you will find several interesting stories of what people have been able to do on the astral plane whilst out of their physical bodies; and as we train ourselves and purify our desires and wishes, we are gaining the power of becoming helpers in such ways as are there described. Sometimes people bring back in "dreams" the memory of what they have been doing out of the body at night, but with most of us our dreams get so confused and mixed up with other ideas that are in our minds, that we cannot, when we wake, disentangle them and get a clear recollection of what we have been doing. It does not however, matter much whether we do or

do not remember, the chief thing is that we should be able to be of use to others when we are out of our bodies at night, and this power will certainly come to us if during our waking hours we are unselfishly working for others to the best of our ability, and trying to improve our own characters in the ways we know of.

After death we pass out finally from our physical bodies, and it then depends upon the state of our astral bodies in which part of the astral world we find ourselves. If during our life on earth we have purified our astral body from the coarser elements, there will be nothing to detain us in the lower regions of the astral world, and we shall pass on quickly through that world to the joys of the Heaven world beyond.

And there is yet another advantage in purifying our present astral body, which is that we shall thereby earn for ourselves a better one in our next earth life. So that for every reason we shall do well to work at our desire nature, purifying it to the utmost, not allowing ourselves to give way to feelings and impulses that we know to be unworthy, but striving every day and every hour to build up a loving, helpful, unselfish nature, that will show itself forth to the trained sight as a beautiful shapely astral body, flashing with all clear and lovely colours, and giving pleasure to the eyes of all who behold it.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is the meaning of the word *astral*; and why is it used for the desire body?
2. What is the astral plane, and where is it?
3. What differences of appearance would there be between the astral body of a good man and that of a very "young soul"?

4. What is the chief use of our astral body?
 5. How could a person with astral sight tell whether the people around him were feeling loving or angry?
 6. How can we improve our astral body?
 7. Do we ever move about in our astral body without the physical?
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CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIND BODIES.

Having learnt something about the body in which we act, and the body in which we feel, we will now turn to the bodies in which we think. On the mental plane, the world of mind or *manas*, we have two bodies; one in which we do our ordinary thinking, called in theosophical books the lower mind or *Lower Manas*, and one in which the results of all we think and feel are stored from life to life, which is spoken of as the *Causal body* or *Higher Manas*. Let us first study the lower of these two, that which, to distinguish it from the Causal body, is often spoken of as the Mind body—the body in which most of our thinking is done.

Now you may say here, that in speaking of the astral body, we found that it was largely affected by our thoughts; that different thoughts produced in it various colours; and so on. That is so, and the reason of it is that most of our thoughts are mixed up with *feeling*, which, as you remember, expresses itself in astral matter. But all that is really *thinking*—the action of the Self as Thinker, distinct from His action as Feeler, or as Actor—this must be expressed in the matter of the mind, on the mental plane. This matter, we are told by those who can see it, is still finer than the matter of the astral plane, and it is being continually thrown into motion by the thoughts of various Beings, by the strong

and powerful thoughts of great Spiritual Intelligences who guide man's evolution, and, to a very much lesser degree, by the feeble, quickly vanishing thoughts, that pass through our own minds in such rapid succession all through the day. Just as our astral body is composed of some of the different kinds of matter on the astral plane, so are our mind bodies composed of matter from the mental plane, and according to the degree of development of the Thinker will be the kind of mental matter which composes his mind body. If the Thinker is a very "young soul" his mind body will be built chiefly of the coarsest matter of the mental plane, and there will be very little activity in it; but in the case of average people like ourselves, there will probably be some of the finer kinds of matter of the mental plane in our mind bodies, and the more we use and develop our minds the finer will be the matter that we shall draw into them.

One of the most wonderful discoveries of recent years, or rather, one of the most important truths the knowledge of which has been brought back to the world by those who have developed the sight of higher planes, is the fact that our thoughts are not the insignificant things that most people once believed them to be, but that they are real living forms, which take *shape* and *colour* on the mental plane. Whenever we think we are sending out into the mental atmosphere around us living images, which have a longer or shorter existence, according to whether they are produced by strong or feeble thoughts. These thought-forms act both upon the people around and upon the man who creates them out of the matter of his mind.

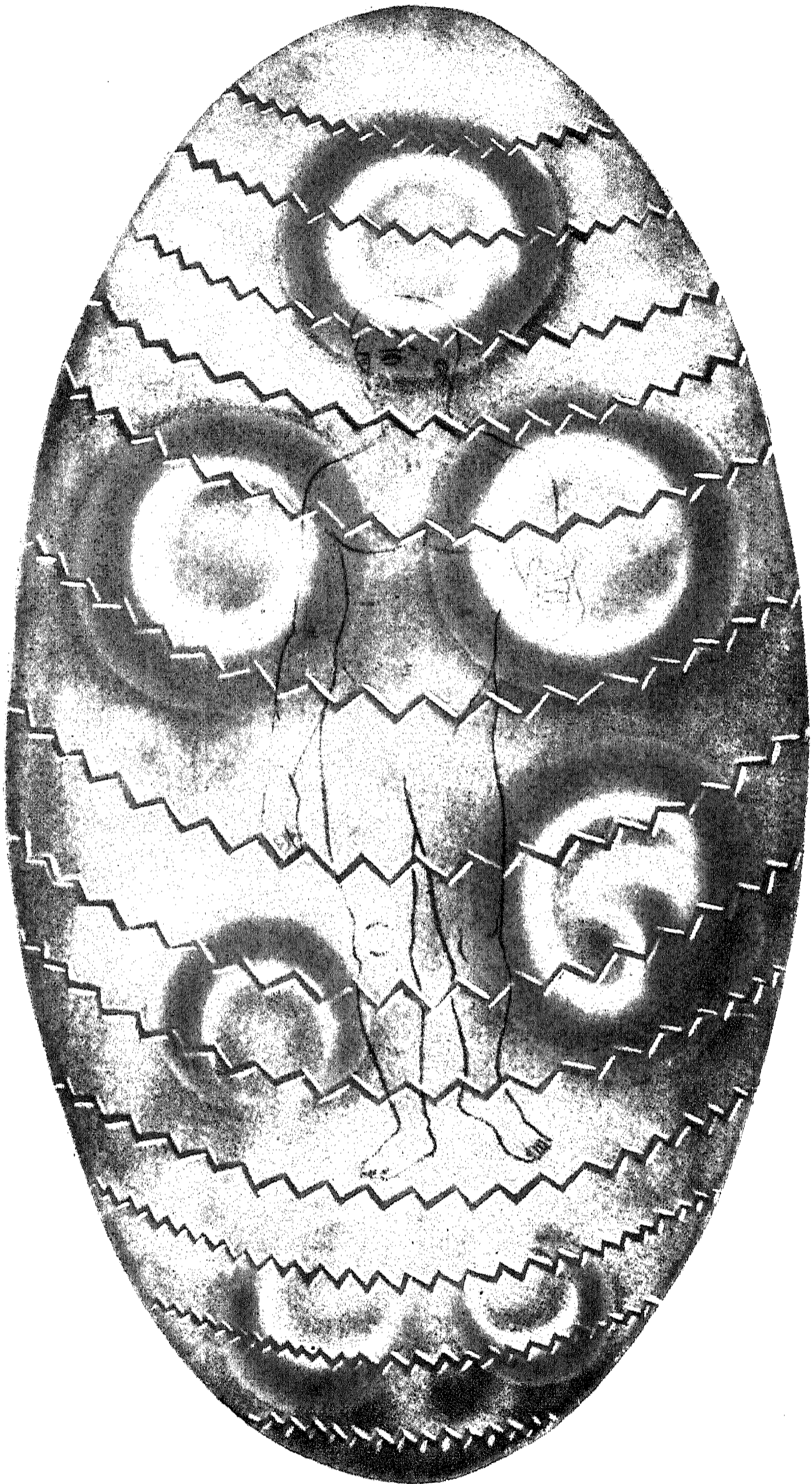
If we are thinking very clearly, the thought-forms we make will have a definite shape, with a clearly marked outline; if on the other hand we are only

vaguely dreaming, our thought will appear as a kind of cloud or mist of no particular shape.

Now thoughts of one kind or another, are always passing through our minds, and going out from us to those around us, and see what a responsibility we each of us have in this direction! If we allow ourselves to indulge in angry or evil thoughts we are peopling the world about us with a number of living creatures of an evil nature which are instruments to injure any one who comes across them.

We have already seen, (plate page 18) what terrible forms are created by angry feelings; and when the power of the mind is added to the desire nature, and our evil feelings are made stronger by the action of deliberate thought, we create, on the higher planes, these dangerous looking weapons, which rush out on to the astral and mental planes, and do more harm than perhaps we can imagine. For such angry thoughts directed towards another would strike upon his astral and mental bodies, and if there were any matter of the same kind within them it would be set vibrating in answer, and perhaps angry thoughts would be sent in return. So that there you would have set up an exchange of evil between the two persons, and though possibly they might be widely separated in the physical body, yet, they would each be injuring the other, and working more harm on the other than by the mere striking of a blow with the physical body.

But happily there is another side to the question, and just as we can work real injury by bad thoughts, so we can give real help by sending out kind and loving thoughts. If, for instance, you know of some one who is in danger, or in trouble of any kind, and you steadily direct towards them a helpful thought, that will surely go to your friend and be a means of



helping him. One beautiful thought-form seen by some clairvoyant investigators, was that of the protecting thought sent by a mother to her absent child, which took the shape of two angels' wings, delicately tinted by the rosy hues which always colour a thought of love.¹

When we learn something of the power of thought, we feel that we should like to get rid of all our ugly hurtful thoughts, and send out only such as may be helpful influences in the world; but when we watch ourselves we find, perhaps, that the bad thoughts come rushing into our minds before we know where we are, and the only thing we can do then is to try to prevent them from becoming words or actions.

How, then, are we to fight against these thoughts which come flying in from we know not where? How shall we set about the task of building up a really useful mind body, to act as a worthy instrument of the Thinker within?

First let us try to find out how much we do at present use these powers of the mind that we all of us have. Perhaps you say to yourself: "Oh, I am thinking all day long; I have to think at school, and over my lessons, and then I have all sorts of things to think about all the rest of the day". But let us look a little closer, and see if these thoughts really are your own, or if they are just stray thoughts drifting about in the world, which you catch hold of. It has been wisely suggested that those who are beginning to try to train their minds should try an experiment with their thoughts in this way; that now and then in the course of the day they should stop and ask themselves: "What am I thinking about?" And those who have tried the plan very often find that, when they thus pull themselves up, and examine their minds to see what is in them,

¹ See *Thought Forms* by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater.

instead of their having been really working with their minds, they have been just dreaming, drifting along from one thought to another without any conscious effort from themselves, and picking up any stray thoughts that happened to come along. It is as if a careless driver of a team of horses were to let the reins fall loose in his hands, and his horses wander on from one place to another without his noticing, until he suddenly wakes up and finds himself far from where he started, and in a place he does not at all wish to be in! This sort of idle dreaming will never build up for us a useful mind body; for you know that if a man is building a house he chooses his materials carefully, and puts each brick in its right place. What would happen to him if he just picked up any material that came to hand, any rubbish or straw or dead leaves that might happen to be within reach? The result would be that he would never make his house a compact building, fit for the purpose for which it was needed. And until we begin to take in hand the building of our own mind bodies, choosing the materials which we build into them, and rejecting the unsuitable materials, we are like the lazy driver, or the foolish builder, and we shall find ourselves with a feeble, unserviceable mind body, which refuses to answer our purposes when we do want it to do something. The first thing, then, is to try to get control over our thoughts. This sounds easy perhaps, but it is really one of the hardest things in the world for most of us, and probably during this whole life and for some lives to come, we shall not completely accomplish it. But the important thing is to begin the work *at once*, for the longer we leave it, the harder it will become.

And we have the great help of knowing that no effort we make can possibly be lost.

In this Universe of Law every cause has its effect, and every effort we make to gain control over our minds, must bring nearer the time when our mind body will have become the perfect instrument of our will.

When we have discovered what a small amount of control we have over our thoughts, the next step is to set to work to increase that control. This can only be done by treating our mind as though it were a wild horse that needed taming, drawing it back every time we find that it has wandered away, and patiently trying to fix it where we want it to be. Let us take an example. Suppose you have lessons to prepare, and perhaps you feel hot and disinclined to work, and the garden looks very tempting outside, and your thoughts wander away to it, until suddenly you wake to the discovery that time has been passing and you have got no further with your work. Now here is an opportunity for the driver! He determines not to let his horses wander any longer at their own sweet wills. He pulls them up, and sets them steadily in the direction in which he wants them to go. Or, in other words, you take your lower self in hand, and make up your mind that you will think of nothing but the lesson you have got to do. Probably your thoughts will very soon begin to wander off again, but if you pull them back each time and doggedly keep to your task, you will, when you have finished, have made one step in the direction of complete control of the mind.

You can see for yourselves that this practice can be carried into almost every region of life. Whatever you may be doing at the moment, you can use as a means to your end, for by giving your whole mind to it, and not allowing outside thoughts to distract you, you are learning to *concentrate your attention*, and thereby acquiring for yourself a power that will be enormously

useful to you later on, both in this world and in the higher worlds where we hope some day to be able to work.

But besides striving to develop the power of concentration we have another responsibility connected with our minds, namely the making them into centres of pure and peaceful thought, so that all who come into contact with us shall be the better and not the worse for it.

Just as a person suffering from a contagious disease, is a source of infection to all who come near him, so is any one who gives way to impure or angry thought, a source of harm to all whom his thoughts reach; and whenever we allow ourselves to harbour any such thought we are doing harm not only to ourselves but to people whom perhaps we have never seen.

We shall need a tireless patience in striving against these angry or selfish thoughts that seem to come unbidden to our minds, for they will return to us again and again when we fancy we have got rid of them. The one thing we must never do is to let such undesirable guests *stay* with us when they come, for then they would grow stronger and more powerful, and would draw towards our minds the same kind of evil thought sent out by other people. The only thing to be done is to turn the bad thought out of doors as soon as we recognise it. If we do this steadily, every time it comes, after a time it will cease to trouble us.

Suppose, for example, that someone injures us, says or does something unkind, — our first impulse is to feel very angry. Then we remember what cruel, ugly thought-forms we must be sending out, and we want to stop doing so, but cannot all at once make ourselves feel friendly towards the other person. But what we *can* do is to resolutely turn our thoughts in a different direction, — turn them perhaps to the thought of some

one we love, and from that make ourselves say in our heart: "I wish good to all beings", trying to make ourselves feel it, and gradually as we do this, the tumult within will quiet down, and we shall begin to see that after all it was not such a terrible injury that was done to us, and we shall feel that our angry thoughts are leaving us. If we can make ourselves go through such a process as this, we shall be doing good doubly, for we shall be both fighting against our own lower impulses, and also, instead of sending out angry thoughts to react on the other persons and strengthen any evil that may be in their thought, we shall be sending out a force that will help to counteract any such evil, so making it easier for the other person as well as for ourselves to think rightly.

However young and unlearned we may be, and seemingly unable to help, we all possess this one "talent" which we may make into a great power if we will. In the world the evil forces are ever fighting against the good, and every bad thought we allow ourselves to harbour, goes out a little stronger for evil, for having been dwelt upon in our minds, to increase the evil forces in the world. For when a thought comes up against another thought-form of a similar nature, the one strengthens the other and gives it a longer life. Suppose for example, that we see evil being done, and we then ourselves become very angry with the person who is inflicting the cruelty, (or whatever the evil may be), we are only adding fresh evil to that which already exists. There is a great saying attributed to the Buddha, which we shall do well to bear in mind if we want our thought to become a force for helping in the world: "hatred ceases not by hatred at any time; hatred ceases but by love". So if we want to help any creature that is being cruelly treated, we must not only

send out helpful thoughts to the victim, but also thoughts of love and pity to the oppressor, and if these thoughts are strong enough they will tend to lessen or to stop the evil that is being done.

As we try continually and perseveringly to train our minds, our thought power will increase, and the matter of our mind body will become purer and more refined. And may we not rejoice to think that at any moment of the day, by thinking rightly, we may be helping those that are in trouble or in danger, or may be sending out our tiny rills of loving thought to strengthen the hands of those who bear the burden and the heat of the day, who have brought to us and to all who will accept the light they offer, this priceless teaching of the power of thought?

QUESTIONS.

1. Which is the body in which we think, and of what matter is it composed?
 2. How many vehicles has the Self for use on the mental plane?
 3. Explain what happens when we think?
 4. Are all our thoughts our own? If not where do they come from, and what effect does their passing through our mind have upon them?
 5. How shall we set to work to gain control over our own mind?
 6. What happens when two thoughts of the same nature meet together?
 7. How can we help the good forces in the world?
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CHAPTER IX.

THE THINKER AND HIS HIGHER BODIES.

Let us turn now to that second *Mind body* which we mentioned in the last chapter, the body of the Higher Manas, or — as it is called in theosophical writings — the *Causal body*. You must think of this causal body as a great treasure-house, in which is stored up the results of all the experiences we go through in our lives on the three lower planes, the physical, astral and mental worlds; and you will not find the name a difficult one to remember, if you understand that it is upon the treasure stored up in our causal body that we have to depend for our character and capacities each time we come back to take birth on earth, so that in this body does indeed lie the *cause* of our faster or slower progress. Let us try to understand how this is.

You remember we saw that every kind of force must work itself out in the matter of its own plane, *action* is motion or movement on the physical plane; *feeling* is motion in astral matter; *thought* is motion in the lower matter of the mental plane, but there are certain kinds of thoughts that cannot find expression in this matter of the lower levels of the mental plane, for they are of a more lasting nature than the constantly changing thoughts that fill the lower regions

of that plane with ever changing shapes and forms. And these thoughts, which are sometimes spoken of as *abstract* thoughts, need the still finer matter of the three higher levels of the mental plane in which to clothe themselves. Such are the thoughts of a great philosopher pondering over the mysteries of nature, seeking to discover the underlying causes that link together the different facts that have been observed in nature. Any high ideal that we build up for ourselves, weaving together in thought several of the concrete virtues that we admire, into an ideal whole, which perhaps we then take for an inspiration to ourselves for nobler living — all such thought as this clothes itself in the subtle matter of the higher mental planes, the region where the causal body of each one of us dwells throughout our earthly pilgrimage. All that is lasting in our thought is built into this body, and whilst the hundreds of thought images that take shape within our mind throughout the day, live their short life for good or ill and then disappear, that which underlies them all, the motive and purpose of our life, the character we are building, *this* is permanently registered in the higher mental world.

The causal body of each one of us came into existence when — millions of years ago — we began to be separate individuals, and it will last through the whole succession of our births and deaths. For this reason it is sometimes called the “thread-self”, on which are strung, like so many beads, our numerous lives on earth. These lives follow on one after the other, but persistent through all of them is this higher body of the Thinker, the causal body.

It is this body which makes the great distinction between man and the animals. Both in them and in us is the one Life; they have wonderfully organised phy-

sical bodies, they have also astral bodies enabling them to feel acutely, and some of them possess the beginning of a mind body. *Body* and *soul* we find in the animal world, but it is not until the Thinker is united to the lower bodies, not — that is to say — until the stage of human life is reached, that we find this vehicle of the higher mind, in which dwells the *Spirit* that makes man a separate individual responsible for his own growth and progress.

In the early stages when we were very “young souls”, differing but very little from the animal stage we had left behind, this causal body of ours was small, and almost colourless, and grew very, very slowly; for as one earth life succeeded another, there was very little in each that could be handed up from the lower vehicles to help in the growth of this higher body. Our thoughts and feelings in that stage were chiefly concerned with food, and the getting of bodily pleasures, and for very many lives there can have been almost no thoughts at all that could find expression on the higher mental planes. But very gradually as the Ego evolved he would begin to obtain the sense of right and wrong, he would probably be taught to think of some divine Being who was the Ruler of the earth, and such teaching would awaken in his mind the beginnings of reverence and worship, and of what are called the higher faculties of the mind. And so in the course of ages there would gradually come some faint stirrings of life in this causal body, some faint signs of colour, and the beginnings of a clearer outline of shape, visible to those who could see with the vision of this high plane. But the growth would be very much slower than, for instance, that of the astral or mental bodies.

Even to-day there is not very much in our thought of sufficiently high a nature to form part of such a

body. With most of us even today, we are told, the causal body appears only as a delicate film or cloud, which has "to be strengthened, to be made beautiful with colour, made active with life, made radiant and glorious, increasing in size", as we grow and develop. In our Frontispiece we reproduce, from *Man Visible and Invisible*¹, a figure of the causal body of an advanced Ego, that is to say of some one who has made a good deal of progress along the road that leads to the perfecting of humanity. The character of which this would be the causal body, would be one in which most of the ordinary sins and failings of men had been overcome, where self-sacrifice and love, strength and wisdom, had grown powerful in the nature, and replaced the selfishness and passion of earlier days in lives far past. If you have the opportunity of seeing the book for yourselves you will there find represented the causal body of a savage, and comparing it with the picture you will see what a change has taken place; how the whole shape has altered, has become clear and definite, and how in the later picture delicate shades of pink and blue and yellow, representing the higher kinds of love, devotion, and wisdom, have replaced the almost colourless appearance of the early stage. Notice that there are no repulsive colours in that early stage, such as we saw, for instance, in the astral body of the savage. Nothing that is evil can enter into the causal body at any stage, for it is the storehouse of all the good that a man gains, and nothing but good can be built into it. If there is little in him of the higher good, then his causal body will manifest that by the lack of beautiful colours.

You may ask how we can help on the growth of this

¹ *Man Visible and Invisible* by C. W. Leadbeater.

higher body of ours. There is not very much we can do by direct action, but as we work at the lower bodies we have been studying, and seek to build up a pure, noble and wise character, our causal body will inevitably grow and improve also. All aspiration and longing for what we feel to be the highest, as well as all the nobler artistic feelings, will go to strengthen this higher vehicle. Every time we harbour a loving thought untinged by selfishness, a desire to serve some one, every time we seek to sacrifice ourselves in order to help another, we are setting in motion a force that can only work itself out fully, on the higher planes of mind; we are adding a touch of beautiful colour to the body that is our vehicle on those higher planes. The growth must indeed be slow, but if, in spite of all our weaknesses and follies and shortcomings, our will is steadily set to live the higher life, and not to fritter our time away in selfish pleasures with no thought for the good and the true, it must needs be that, when this earth life is ended, there will be at least something to pass upward to the causal body, some germ of unselfish aspiration and of loving thought, to enrich it with the colours of the heaven worlds.

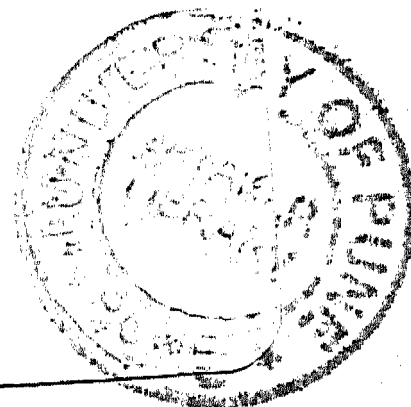
Then when, after a long period of rest, the Thinker begins again to take new bodies from the lower worlds of matter for his next sojourn upon the earth, he will draw, from the storehouse of his causal body, higher powers of heart and mind than were his when he last came to birth. And during his new incarnation he will be able to build up again still finer qualities, to be passed on in course of time to enrich his lasting Self; until at last that higher body will shine as a globe of light, full of glorious colour, and flashing out in every direction rays of love and helpfulness to man.

Still higher bodies we hear of sometimes, such as the

Buddhic body and the *Atmic* or *Nirvânic* body, but of these we can at present know but very little, for they are the vehicles used by Those who have completed the course of man upon earth, who have entirely mastered their lower selves, and who shine out simply as glorious Channels through which the divine Life may perfectly manifest itself.

QUESTIONS.

1. Do we hear of any higher vehicles than the Astral and Mental bodies? Name them.
2. What is the vehicle of the Thinker himself, and on which planes of the universe is it found?
3. Why is the Causal body so called?
4. What is the great distinction between man and the lower animals?
5. Explain the term "Thread-Self".
6. What kind of thoughts find their expression in the Causal body?
7. How does the condition of the Causal body affect future incarnation?



CHAPTER X.

LIFE AFTER DEATH.

Death! what a sad sound this word has to the ears of most people in this western world. It brings to the mind thoughts of grief and mourning and sometimes even of terror, as of something dreadful and incomprehensible.

But this is not so in all countries. Amongst the people who profess the Hindu or Buddhist religion, for instance, death is not looked at in this light; it is not regarded as an enemy to be dreaded, and ignored as long as possible, but as one of the regular incidents that come to all men, as birth and growth come, or even as a friend that comes to release man from bondage and to open the gateway for him into higher spheres of being. For the followers of these religions realize that "certain is death for the born, and certain is birth for the dead".¹

Sad is it for Western lands that the doctrine of rebirth has slipped out for a time from the Christian Religion, for it is the feeling that man has only one life on earth and then passes on into conditions of which we can know nothing, that gives to the thought of death its power to depress and terrify men. But we who are trying to learn something of the Divine Wisdom ought not to have any feeling that death is some-

¹ Bhagavad Gîtâ, chap II. 27.

thing terrible, something that we are afraid of, and that we try to put out of our minds. For we have at least learnt that we are not our bodies; and we are beginning to understand that it cannot make very much difference to us whether we are working on the earth in a physical body, or on another plane of the universe in a body suited to that plane. Any difference that the absence of a physical body would make would be on the right side — that is to say that the fewer the vehicles through which we are working, the more freely and usefully shall we be able to work.

To us, then, *death* can only mean *birth* into another region of the universe, where — although our work may perhaps be of a different kind from what it was before, — we shall still be ourselves, feeling and thinking, and loving and working just as we do on this plane.

Perhaps you fancy that no one can tell us anything of the life after death? If you do think so you are mistaken, for there are a good many people — in different parts of the world — who have had proofs of the existence and happiness of friends of theirs who are, what is commonly called, dead. Several books have been published, the writers of which have collected true stories from all sorts of different people, relating the appearance to them of friends who had cast off the physical body; and there is a great deal of testimony to the fact that people do return from the world next to ours — the astral world, as we should say, — to visit friends of theirs still living in the body.

But there are also other people, still living on earth, who tell us about the life on the other side of death; and they tell us this, not because people from these worlds have brought them messages from thence, but because they themselves can pass at will out of their physical body and into these worlds, and can then

return to us here and tell us what they have seen. When we begin to examine what these people have to tell us we find that the general outlines of their descriptions are in agreement with the teachings in the great World Scriptures as to after-death conditions; and moreover we find that what they tell us explains much that before was difficult to understand, and that it sounds not only reasonable but also very hopeful and encouraging. So that we begin to think that what these people tell us is probably true, and we feel very grateful to them for clearing away the mystery and terror that used to surround the idea of death, and helping us to feel that death is not a thing at all to be dreaded, but rather that it is the gateway into a fuller and happier life.

Let us see what some of those, who are able to investigate the life on the astral and mental planes, have to tell of the conditions of life after death.

The first thing they try to teach us is that life is eternal, always existing. It may change its conditions, but it cannot cease to exist. We cannot see life, we can only see the form in which it dwells, and when some form is destroyed, we say such and such a person, (or plant or animal), is dead, and feel as if what we had known has vanished or come to an end. What has really happened in every case, is that the life, the real being within, has passed on to some other stage of existence, leaving the form, which has served its purpose, to be broken up again into the matter of which it was built.

This life that is undying, then, ever dwells in this universe of ours, in separate forms, through which it gains experience on the different planes. Our life as separate individuals reaches backwards to the time when, in far distant ages, the divine Spark entered into

the form that had been prepared for it, when the causal body, as we have seen, was formed as a link between the bodies up-growing from below, and the Divine Spirit existing from all time. And it stretches forward to the time, still far in the future for most of us, when we shall have become perfect as far as this stage of evolution is concerned, and when our separated selves will have again become one with the All Self, the One Life of the universe, so that we too shall consciously live and move and have our being in everything that exists within the universe.

But although this is true, and a thing to be remembered, it is also true that that endless life is divided up into certain periods of time, and it is convenient to consider the life of an individual as consisting of these periods, or *life-cycles* as they are sometimes called, each of which may be thought of as a bead, strung upon the "thread-self" of the causal body. One of these life-cycles reaches from the time when the Thinker on the higher mental plane, beginning to desire life upon the lower planes, puts himself down, as it were, into the lower worlds, and draws round himself first a lower mental, then an astral, and lastly a physical body. When this last makes its appearance in the world, he is said to be born on earth, and he then lives his life through childhood, youth, and old age, until in course of time death comes to his body, and he passes out again through the astral and lower mental world back into his causal body. Each of these life-periods or cycles thus consists of two parts, of which the periods spent outside a physical body are longer than the span of life within one, for this can last but 90 or 100 years, whereas the time that elapses between one earth life and another may last a thousand years and more! So that we should be

much mistaken if we imagined that our earth-lives occupied the greater part of this endless life of ours. They only occupy a very small proportion of time, but they are nevertheless of great importance, and upon the use we make of them largely depends the speed of our progress, and also our happiness or suffering, both in this and in higher worlds.

What happens to us when we die, when for one cause or another, — either through disease, or the natural decay of old age, or through what we call accident, — this physical body has ceased to be a useful vehicle for the Thinker to dwell in, so that he withdraws himself from it, and leaves it to be broken up into its original elements? You will remember that the physical body consists of two parts, the dense body and its etheric double, — and that these two parts are held together throughout earth-life by a slender thread. When the Thinker passes finally away from his body at death this thread is snapped, thereby making it impossible for him to re-enter his dense body, in the way he has been accustomed to do morning after morning when waking from deep sleep. We are told that for a few hours after “death” the Thinker — wrapped in his mental, astral, and etheric vehicles — is unconscious of his surroundings. During this time he is gradually withdrawing himself from the physical plane, and some hours after he has freed himself from the dense body he shakes off also the etheric double, which then breaks up gradually into etheric matter.

When the person who has passed through “death” wakes to consciousness again, he often does not realise that he is dead at all, for he sees around him the same objects, and the same people he has been accustomed to see. If he tries to speak to his friends, however, he soon finds that some change has taken place; he speaks,

and they do not answer, he touches them, and they take no notice. You can imagine that anyone who had been brought up to believe that at death we go right away into another world, where everything is quite different from what it is here, would be rather puzzled when they found themselves apparently in their accustomed surroundings, but unable to make the people around take any notice of them.

But we who have learnt something about the other planes of the universe, (and who know that death is only a passing out from a vehicle on one plane to a different vehicle on another plane), shall be able to understand, when we find ourselves in such a situation, that we have said good-bye to the familiar physical body we knew so well, and that the things and the people we see around us are the *astral doubles* of the things and people we knew on the physical plane. We shall then perhaps remind ourselves that there will be no use in trying to attract the attention of our friends, for they are wrapped in their denser bodies for the time being, and unconscious of our presence — just as when we were alive we were unconscious of the presence of those whom we called dead. Happily they are none the less able to benefit by our loving thoughts, and no doubt we shall pour these down upon them, thereby lessening their grief and sorrow for having — as they think — parted from us; and then we shall turn our attention to the world in which we find ourselves, and try to make ourselves useful there, and also to hasten our progress into the far happier state which we know lies in front of us.

We are held in the astral world until the desires which have built certain kinds of matter into our astral bodies are worn out. That means, that if during earth life we have longed very much for certain kinds of

pleasure, or of gratification of our senses, we must then remain after death on the astral plane until these desires have gradually died out, and the astral matter in which these desires clothed themselves has dropped away from our astral vehicle, leaving the Thinker free to pass on, clothed only in his mental and higher bodies to the mental or devachanic world. You will easily see that as Egos are all in different stages of advancement, every person will not spend the same length of time in the astral world after death, neither will they all be equally conscious. The very young Soul, who has during his past incarnation lived almost entirely in his passions and desires, always trying to grasp enjoyment for himself, and caring only for pleasures of a very low type, such as eating and drinking too much, will spend a good long time in *kâma-loka* (as that part of the astral world is called where dwell the Souls who have passed from their physical bodies). If — as is probable at the stage we are considering — he has not hesitated to kill or injure others in his pursuit of pleasure, he will suffer a good deal in *kâma-loka*, for he will find there the people whom he thought he had got rid of for ever by killing them, and if they are not much more evolved than he is, they will probably try to avenge their injuries, and so the evil-doer will find that he has prepared rather a terrible time for himself in his after-death state. Those of you who know anything about the Roman-Catholic doctrine of *purgatory* will remember that it is a condition where the Soul wears out his sin by suffering, until he is purified enough to be able to enter Heaven. The purgatory of the Christian is the *kâma-loka* of the Theosophist under a different name.

Those, however, who have reached a much higher stage of evolution than the person we were considering, will not be detained nearly so long in the astral world

neither will they be in the lowest regions amongst the most undeveloped souls, but in one or other of the higher sub-planes of this astral plane. If they have had in them during earth life only very little of selfish desires or animal passions, they may not wake to consciousness at all in kâma-loka, but may sleep on peacefully till they wake to the glories of devachan. For whether after leaving the physical body the time that elapses be longer or shorter, everyone will, sooner or later, pass on from the astral plane to the mental plane, there to enjoy the most perfect bliss.

It is said that after death a curious change takes place in our astral vehicle. Instead of being a somewhat loose cloudy mass extending for a short distance round the physical body, it gathers itself together as it were into a compact shape, in which the coarser astral matter is outside, the next coarsest within that, and the finer kinds within that, something in the way that the various skins of an onion enclose one another. With a man of low, strong desires, there would of course be a great deal of this coarsest matter, whilst with a man of purer desires there would be less. Now the progress of anyone in kâma-loka depends upon his being able to get rid of these casings of astral matter which detain him in purgatory, and as he loses his lower desires and longings for earthly things, the denser coatings will drop away, and the wings of the Thinker within will as it were, begin to unfold themselves. If a person during earth life had entertained a very great number of trivial longings and vain desires, he or she will have in their astral body a great deal of the matter of the lower sub-planes of kâma-loka; and they will have to dwell on those planes, surrounded by people with similar desires and wishes, until they learn to see that something higher awaits them, and

try to turn their thought upwards. When they begin to do this, they will be sure to find some one who knows more than themselves to help and guide them; and as the Thinker within is ever trying to draw them upwards to his own plane, they will probably pass on fairly quickly to higher levels. As long as they seek to continue their earthly enjoyments and gratifications, and are constantly trying to attract the attention of people still in physical bodies, and to experience perhaps through their bodies the physical enjoyments they have left behind, people in kâma-loka cannot make much progress onwards, nor can they benefit greatly by the advice and help of disciples and pupils of the great Masters, who are striving to help upwards into the Heaven world the dwellers in the intermediate world. But whether it be a long or a short time after leaving the physical body, everyone who has in him a spark of good feeling, who has ever experienced a feeling of love or kindness towards another being, must sooner or later pass on from this part of the astral world into the perfect peace and happiness of the Heaven-world.

But we must leave the consideration of that world to our next chapter. For the present let us bear in mind that we shall be exactly the same person just after death that we are before it, that our thoughts and feelings will be the same as they ever were, and that if on earth we have tried to control our passions, and to feel and act kindly towards others, we need have no fear of death, but may regard the next stage through which we are to pass as a new sphere of work and knowledge, and as the antechamber to a world the joys of which "it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive".

QUESTIONS.

1. Why need we have nor fear of death?
 2. Can we learn anything of the conditions after death?
 3. What becomes of the *Thinker* when his body dies?
 4. What is *kâma-loka*? Give another name for it.
 5. What is the use of our life on the astral plane after death?
 6. What must happen before a person is able to pass on to the higher planes?
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CHAPTER XI.

THE HEAVEN WORLDS.

In all the great religions of the world we find mention of a state of perfect happiness, which is to be the reward of those who have lived good lives upon earth. Although each Religion has a different name for this blessed state, they all describe it as a condition in which the good man obtains his heart's desire and is perfectly contented.

Suppose you had been born in an Indian family and brought up as a young Hindu, you would then have been told about a place called *Svarga*, and would probably have learnt that it is the land of blessedness, or the land of the gods, where all those who deserved happiness will be found after death. If you have been born in the West, into a Christian family, you have been taught that after death those who have lived good lives on earth, pass into what is called *Heaven*, where they will be very happy. And so in the old Norse Religion we hear of *Walhalla*, where their heroes experienced perfect happiness; and this same idea of a state of bliss, which rewards those who have done well on earth, is, as we said, to be found in every Religion.

Now when an idea is spread over the world, and is found everywhere, amongst quite different types of people, and in different periods of the world's history,

we may be sure that there is some good foundation for it; and one of the great benefits conferred on us by the works of those students of theosophy who have developed the power of seeing in higher regions of the universe, is the light they have thrown upon this life in the heaven-worlds, showing us something of the reality which lies behind all the attempts in the different Religions to describe the condition.

You remember we said that when the Thinker, wrapped in his desire body and dwelling in *kâma-loka*, gradually ceased to desire earthly things, and turned his attention inwards or upwards to the worlds in front of him, the shell of astral matter which detained him in that region would wear away and finally disappear, leaving him free to pass onwards. For some time the person in *kâma-loka* has been becoming less and less conscious of his surroundings, and at last he sinks into a state of peaceful unconsciousness, similar to that which accompanied the passage from the physical world to *kâma-loka* at the death of the physical body. From this state he gradually wakes up to the bliss of the Heaven-world, of Devachan, the "shining land", as it is called in theosophical writings. A passage from one of Mrs Besant's books will give you some idea of what meets him as he wakes. She says: "The sleeper awakens to a sense of joy unspeakable, of bliss immeasurable, of peace that passeth understanding. Softest melodies are breathing around him, tenderest hues greet his opening eyes, the very air seems music and colour, the whole being is suffused with light and harmony. Then through the golden haze dawn sweetly the faces loved on earth, etherealised with the beauty which expresses their noblest, loveliest emotions, unmarred by the troubles and passions of the lower worlds. Who may tell the bliss of that awakening, the glory of that

first dawning of the Heaven world?"¹ No wonder all the Religions of the world have agreed in speaking of this Heaven world as a place of happiness unspeakable. And Theosophy gives us a clue by means of which we can understand how it is that Heaven is equally happy for all who dwell there.

Thoughtful people have sometimes been puzzled to understand how any one place or condition can be equally satisfying to every-body, for we all have different ideals and different aspirations, and a Heaven which would give perfect satisfaction to one person, might have little or no attraction for another. Let us see if we can solve this difficulty. Remember first where this Heaven world or Devachan is found. It exists, we are told, in a specially guarded part of the mental plane, from which all sorrow and evil is kept away, by the action of some of those great Devas or Intelligences of whom we have spoken before. When any one passes on after death from Kâma-loka to Devachan, he is without a physical, and without an astral body. What vestures still remain to him? The Ego in Devachan is clothed only in his spiritual and mental bodies, and whilst he is there it is through his mental body that he will be working. Now you know that we see all around us people with very different kinds of minds; some people are clever and seem to have wonderful brains, that can think, and reason and remember, in a way that seems quite marvellous to us, whilst others again seem to possess very little intelligence indeed, often not more than, if as much as, some of the higher animals; and the tastes of such people would be very different from the tastes of those we spoke of first. What would give pleasure to one class of mind would have no attraction at all for the other.

¹ The Ancient Wisdom, p. 194.

Well, if there are these differences between people's brains down here on the physical plane, you can imagine how very great the differences would be on the mental plane, where the real mind is working, and not only the very small part of it that works through our physical brains down here.

Now on that plane, as you remember, every thought is a form; and every Ego is there surrounded by the different forms he has created, and is constantly creating by thinking, the thoughts he allows to dwell in his mind actually producing in mental matter the scenery and the forms he loves.

It is not difficult then to understand that the thought-surroundings of a great artist, or composer of music, who had spent most of his life in calling into being wonderful harmonies of colour or sound, would be very different from those of, say, a poor little ignorant slum child, who had lived a sordid life on earth, with very little in it of beauty or of anything that appealed to his higher nature. There would perhaps be only one point in common in their Heaven, for there is one characteristic of *everybody's* Heaven, and that is in its being perfectly happy, and completely satisfying.

When we realise that we each make our own Heaven, does it not clear away the difficulty we alluded to? For — to take our comparison again of the artist and the slum child, — would the child be happy in what appears to us to be the glorious surroundings of the artist? Of course he would not, for they would not appeal to him. The Heaven he would create around him, and which would be bliss to him, would be perhaps a land of flowers and sunshine, with kindly faces around him, and his mother, or the person he loved best, always with him and always kind to him. No poverty, nor cold, nor hunger; no hard work or unkind

words; but always sunshine and happiness, and the faces of Jesus and the angels smiling down upon him. Some such surroundings would probably form the Devachan of a little child whose life had been passed in the slums of one of our great cities in the West. The point to grasp is that we each create our own Heaven, and that according to the nature of the ideals we form on earth, will be the kind of surroundings we shall find in Devachan. Here everyone has his highest desires gratified. All the unfulfilled longings to be or to do something really great or beautiful, all the unsatisfied yearnings of love and worship, meet here with full satisfaction. For in Heaven is found the fairy Godmother who gives to man everything his heart has longed for, provided only that his longings had in them something of the Good, the True or the Beautiful.

Nothing that is evil can enter the Heaven world, for it would find there no matter in which to express itself; but the faintest desire in a man's life for something higher and better, the most fleeting thought of love and unselfishness, will carry him into this blessed state after he has cast off the physical body, and worn out the lower vehicles of desire on the astral plane.

The life of a person in Devachan is divided into two stages; the first, and usually by far the longest part, lasting often for several hundreds of years, is that passed on one or other of the four lower sub-planes of the mental plane, whilst the last part, (the short period that elapses between his leaving these planes and his passing outwards again to take new bodies in the lower worlds), is spent on one of the three higher or *formless* regions which we mentioned, you remember, as being the dwelling place of the Thinker in his causal body.

The period in Devachan is not spent only in worship and adoration, or in getting rest and refreshment for

the Mind and Soul, for there is much for the Ego to do whilst he is here. As his chief work in Kâma-loka was to purify his astral body from the passions and desires that chained him to earth, so now in Devachan, his purpose is to work up into character, and power, the intellectual and spiritual materials he gathered whilst on earth. The student who has struggled to gain knowledge, the man who has longed and striven to become a great musician, a great artist, and whose heart has over and over again been filled with despair at the poorness of his own achievements when compared with the Ideal he has set before himself, yet has gone on working and striving, — now finds his efforts beginning to bear fruit. And during his long peaceful time in Devachan, the Soul digests and assimilates as it were, and builds up into capacities and powers, the separate struggles of his past life. So that according to the earnestness and persistence of the efforts we make now to cultivate our own emotional, intellectual and artistic powers, will be the richness of our devachanic life. If we lay up small store now we cannot expect rich harvest then, but every effort we make now will add to our treasure then, and truly we shall be laying up for ourselves "treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through or steal".¹

When, you come to read such books as *The Ancient Wisdom* and *The Devachanic Plane*, you will find some most interesting descriptions of the Heaven-worlds of different classes of people, descriptions which have been given to us by those who have developed the sight of the mental plane, and who therefore, whilst still in the body, can pass on to that plane, and observe

¹ Matthew VI, 20.

the conditions there, and then return to tell us about them. Such *clairvoyants* tell us that they have seen in Devachan the saints and devotees of all Religions, and that these are constantly in the presence of their Lord, worshipping and serving Him; they tell us too of great philanthropists who spent their lives on earth in trying to help the poor and outcast, and who now in Devachan are building up, out of their past struggles and efforts, wonderful new schemes for the helping of Humanity, which they will put into practice when next they come to earth; of musicians who, untrammelled by the dense physical matter which impeded their genius here on earth, are constantly pouring forth into the world around them divinest harmonies, faint echos of which sometimes reach our earth, lifting those who hear them up to heights of unimagined joy. Of such, and of many others, do the *seers* speak, as inhabitants of the Heavenly spheres.

At last after a long period of great blessedness spent on these lower mental levels, the Ego having sucked in, as it were, the essence of all the experiences of his past life, and built this up into character, passes onward yet again, (taking with him the germ, or seed, of the flower which has blossomed in Devachan), to his own place — the three higher levels of the mental plane. These are the "formless worlds", on the lowest of which dwells the immortal Thinker, the Self who has been using all these lower vestures of thought, feeling, and activity.

Between two incarnations every man passes up, even if it be but for a moment, into his causal body on the higher mental plane; for a brief time he is *himself*, without any lower vehicle, and he glances back over his past existence on the lower planes, seeing what kind of beads he has been stringing on the immortal thread of his causal body; and then, glancing forward, he sees

the next incarnation that awaits him, with all its possibilities and opportunities. Then swiftly he descends again through the mental and astral to the physical plane, and takes birth once more in a human form on earth.

QUESTIONS.

1. What happens to us when after death we have passed through the region of purgatory or kâmaloka?
 2. What are some of the purposes of our life in Heaven?
 3. Are the surroundings in the Devachanic existence the same for all? If not, explain why they are not?
 4. Which part of our nature finds its fruit in Devachan?
 5. What takes place at the close of the Devachanic existence?
 6. How can we use the teachings we have received, as to the life after death, to help our fellow-men around us?
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CHAPTER XII.

THE LAW OF BROTHERHOOD.

When any person wishes to join the Theosophical Society, there is one thing in which it is necessary for him to affirm his belief, namely, that all mankind are brothers. For the first of the three great objects which that Society sets before itself as goal, which all its members are pledged to help in forwarding, is the bringing back into daily life the recognition of this fact of the underlying brotherhood of mankind, a brotherhood which is untouched by differences of race, of religion, of social position, or of sex.

At first sight it may seem to you a very simple thing to say "all men are brothers", and you may think there could be no difficulty in agreeing to such a statement. But when we come to look more closely into it, and to try to see the bearing of such a belief as this on our life and thoughts, we find that it is not such an easy thing, as at first sight it appeared to be, to *live* this life of brotherhood day by day.

Let us examine the idea rather more closely.

And first we observe that we have not got to create some new thing. Brotherhood is a fact, a great underlying Law of our universe; and our business is so to order ourselves, our attitude of mind, and our actions towards the rest of the world, as to make it possible for this Law to work fully amongst us. For it lies

within the power of even the youngest and weakest of us, every day of our lives, either to help forward, or to retard, the coming of the time when the great truth, of the brotherhood of all living beings, is recognized as a factor governing the lives and actions of mankind in general.

Why do we say that brotherhood already exists? and where does it exist? Certainly, if we look round on the world, it does not appear as if men were brothers, for it is not the work of brothers to kill and to deceive one another, and we know that in the world about us such things are being done. But these things arise from our forgetfulness of the truth of brotherhood, and although men throw themselves against a Law and vainly try to alter it, they will never be able to turn it one hair's breadth. The sooner we learn this lesson, the better for ourselves and for those with whom we come into contact.

Can we, by looking a little deeper, find traces of this Law on lower planes, the physical, astral and mental worlds of which we have spoken? You remember that when we were studying the physical body we learnt that our dense body is made up of tiny cells or lives, and that these are in a state of constant motion, some continually passing out from us to the air about us, and others being taken in, in their place, to form part of our body. So that we cannot say of any particular set of cells which happen to form our body at one particular moment: "these cells belong to me and to no one else", for these cells came to us from other bodies, and perhaps before we have finished speaking some of these tiny lives will have passed away from us to some other body, and will have been replaced by other cells. So that there is certainly a brotherhood of our physical bodies, the same materials being used over and over

again to build up the myriads of forms on this physical plane. Then if we turn to the astral and mental planes, we find the same thing. For did we not see that, just as the particles of our dense bodies pass from one to another, modified by the bodies in which they dwell for a time, so do our desires and thoughts and emotions come to us from other astral and mental bodies, and pass from us in turn to other bodies, being changed somewhat for better or for worse by their passage through our astral and mental vehicles. So that it is absolutely impossible for any one dwelling on any of these three lower planes to separate himself from the great Family of which he forms a part, each one of the vehicles in which he dwells being closely connected with the vehicles of hundreds of other beings. We must however raise our thoughts to a plane still higher than the mental, to the plane of *buddhi*, the fourth (counting from below) of the seven great planes of our universe, if we would form some dim idea of what this Law of brotherhood really is. For it is only when a man becomes conscious on that plane, that he first actually realises the union of all living things, and if we would catch some faint reflection of that consciousness which *feels* itself to be one with every other self in the universe, we must strive to understand, as far as may be in our limited brain consciousness, what that marvellous realisation is like.

After many lives have been devoted to the efforts to purify and gain control of his lower vehicles with the object of becoming a better instrument for the service of the Great Ones, the time comes when a person is ready to pass on to the buddhic plane. This means that he has reached a very important stage in his long pilgrimage, a stage when what is called the first Initiation takes place, a stage which St. Paul holds out before his fellow Christians as some thing to look forward to

and to strive towards, when he says: "My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."¹ When a person has passed this first Initiation, it is said, he finds himself in full consciousness on the buddhic plane, and here he for the first time *knows* that which he has hitherto only believed, that the great divine Self is within each one of the myriads of beings in our universe, that each one of them is but a ray sent out from the great central Sun, and that though, wandering in these lower planes, these rays are for a time blinded, and imagine themselves to be separate, when the veil is lifted they are seen to be in reality inseparable from their Source, part of it and part too of each other. What such a realization must be, and how great the difference it must make in one's life, we cannot know until the time comes when we too are ready to pass through that great Initiation and on to the buddhic plane, but we may help to prepare ourselves for that wider knowledge by trying to put into practice in our every-day life this teaching that has been given to us of the truth of the underlying unity of mankind.

Let us consider some of the characteristics of a Brotherhood, One of the first things that occurs to us is that all the brothers in a family would not be of the same age. You remember we noticed in talking about the condition of humanity that the beings on our earth were of many different ages; that is to say that they did not all come forth at one time from the great Central Life, some being older Souls, who have now run the whole course of their pilgrimage and are ready to become the glorious shining Suns of future universes, whilst others are still very young Souls, inhabiting the

¹ Galatians IV 19.

grosser bodies, and learning the first and simplest lessons in the great School of life. And between these extremes are countless stages, some more and some less advanced. Now see how this carries out the idea that men are brothers. Think for a moment of a large family in which some are grown men and women at work in the world, whilst others are in the school-room and others again in the nursery. Here you have an image on a minute scale of the great family of humanity; and may it not be that the divine Wisdom which arranged that men should be born and brought up in this way, did it in order teach them the lessons of brotherhood; lessons of obedience and submission, lessons of forbearance, of self-sacrifice, of helping and guiding, that could not be learnt so well in any other way?

In such a family as we have just pictured, there would be great differences both in what each one *knows*, and in what each one can *do*. No one would expect from the baby in the nursery what he expects from one of the elder children. Again, the eldest son at work in the world, will not expect from his parent the same fostering care and attention that he received when he was younger, rather will he — if he understands his own duties — seek to share in his parents' efforts to smooth the path of the younger and more helpless children. The elders will have certain privileges and certain responsibilities, the younger ones will have other duties and privileges, which, as they grow older, will gradually take on a different character. The important thing to observe is that each in his own place has *opportunities of growth suited to his own particular stage*, and the way in which he can best fit himself for higher knowledge, and responsibilities, and privileges, is by fulfilling as perfectly as he can the duties which he finds awaiting him, in the particular stage in which at any time he may be.

Each one of us is a member of this great Human Family, and whether we stand on a high or a low rung of the ladder of life, we have each certain duties and responsibilities, and certain privileges. And we know that if we desire to grow quickly, and to hasten the time when we shall be amongst those elder Brethren, who being Themselves full-grown, ever work for their younger brethren, we need first to understand, and then to try our hardest to fulfil, the tasks that belong to our own stage. Standing thus, as we mostly do, on one of the intermediate steps of the ladder, our obligations must be threefold — to those above us, to those on a level with us, and to those below us; for just as there are around us many “younger” than ourselves, who have a right to expect from us help and sympathy and timely counsel, so are there many “older” than ourselves, to whom we must be ready to give reverence and love.

As the little child, in his ignorance of the difficulties and trials which are troubling his elders, may yet make their burdens easier to bear by yielding to them ever ready obedience and loving service, so may those of us who are still comparatively “young souls” in the world’s family do much, by our attitude of mind, to help in the great work which the Elder Brothers of our race, and their disciples are doing. We cannot weigh the measure of their burdens, for we are yet too weak and too ignorant to understand them, but we may — by loyal service and unfailing devotion — lighten some of the load which they have voluntarily taken upon themselves to bear, until the time comes, when we ourselves shall be strong enough and wise enough to be co-workers with them, sharing in their great and glorious work for Humanity.

To those whom we may roughly consider as on a level with ourselves we owe the duty of comradeship,

a word which implies trust and good faith in every action. If we go through the world with the idea that every man we meet is our brother, and therefore some one whom we have an opportunity of helping — if it be only by a smile or a kindly word — we shall find that the barriers of distrust, and pride, and suspicion, with which people are apt to surround themselves in the presence of strangers, begin to break down and melt away before our attitude of friendliness; and as we steadily, day after day, strive to break down any such barriers that we learn the existence of in ourselves, we shall find that those who are wanting help and sympathy and comradeship will feel encouraged, and not repelled, when they meet us, and so will break through *their* enclosing walls, and stretch forth a hand to grasp the one they feel us to be holding out to them.

Amongst those whom we think of as younger brothers are of course the Souls who, we are told, came into evolution at a later stage than ourselves, and who are therefore now occupying bodies less developed than ours, the bodies of savages, and of some of the lowest classes in our great cities. With the former of these our nation may sometimes come into touch through war, and as a nation their duty is then to show justice and kindness to their less developed brothers. But towards those who are born within our own land, we must surely owe a still greater duty. Every thinking man knows that the State (which is only the combined voice of the whole nation) has duties and responsibilities towards every unit in the nation, and it is a blot upon any great Civilisation if it allows conditions to exist within its borders in which numbers of people can not earn enough money to live decently, and free from danger of starvation. As you grow older you will find that there are many problems of this kind to

be faced, and we are not doing our best to bring into realisation the law of brotherhood, unless we try to face these difficulties, and to do what little we may in removing them. Even the young ones among us may do something to help by the power of thought.

But besides this great Human kingdom in which each of us is a tiny unit, there are other kingdoms inhabiting this globe of ours, and towards each of these we have a duty, for our life is linked up with theirs by chains that cannot be broken, and without passing through these other kingdoms of nature we ourselves could not have reached the position we hold to-day.

You remember we learnt that our physical body is the result of a long evolution through the lower kingdoms of nature, of which Theosophy teaches us that there are seven. The Life in all these kingdoms is the same, for there *is* only the one life in the universe, the life of God.

Think of that life as coming forth on the highest plane, passing downwards until it reaches the dense physical plane, and then turning upwards again. Now as the life comes downwards it passes through the three earliest kingdoms, called the *Elemental kingdoms*. Then when it touches the physical, the lowest plane, the life draws round itself the dense matter of this plane, and we get the *Mineral kingdom*, in which there is very little sign of life at all. Here the Divine Life touches its lowest point; it has reached the limit of Its journeying away from Its source, and now begins to turn upwards again, and passes into the *Vegetable kingdom* where it shows more signs of being present. From here it again passes upward into the *Animal kingdom*, and thence into the kingdom to which we belong, the *Human*.

So that we share the divine life, you see, not only with every human being upon this earth, but with every animal, every plant, every stone, — nay with every atom that exists in earth, or sea, or sky and that goes to build up animal or plant or stone. And the Life which moves and sustains our bodies has passed through all these earlier kingdoms, building up in them gradually more and more complicated forms, which at last developed into our human bodies, with all the wonderful and complicated mechanism within them by means of which the different processes of their existence are carried on.

When we come to see how closely all the kingdoms of nature are related, and how dependent we humans are for our very existence upon the work that is always going on in the lower kingdoms; more especially perhaps in the three kingdoms nearest our own, we begin to feel very differently towards this great silent world around us. We begin to recognise the ties that bind us to the dumb things of earth, or rather we begin to open our ears and to hear the message that these living things about us, which we have hitherto looked upon as dumb and lifeless, have to give us. And then we realize that our lives are more closely bound up than we knew with the animal and the vegetable world, and we try to discover our duties towards these younger brethren of ours. Space will not permit us to go in detail into the consideration of these duties, but you will be able to find out many of them by thinking for yourselves upon the matter. You have heard something of the *nature spirits*, or fairies, and the gnomes that belong to these lower kingdoms. It is they who, under the direction of the great Builders of the Universe, work out the myriads of wonderful forms in the mineral and vegetable worlds. Though few of us to-

day can see them, we may sometimes feel the presence of these creatures in a wood, or in some lonely part of the country, and at any rate we can think of them with friendliness, and forbear from injuring their handiwork as is often done by thoughtless people. Then we are told that plants and flowers have the beginnings of an astral body, and here we may show our feeling of brotherliness by carefully abstaining from injuring these living things, which already have the power of feeling pain and pleasure.

But it is perhaps more especially with regard to the animal world that we have the power to greatly help or injure, for here we often come very closely into touch with these young brothers of ours, and we know that most of them can feel very acutely both pain and pleasure. To these Souls evolving upwards our attitude should be one of protection and guardianship, of gratitude for their services to us, of careful watchfulness that no harm shall come to them in that service, and of fostering the budding mentality within them. No harshness, no torturing for selfish amusement or personal gain, no injustice nor thoughtlessness, will be shown to any animal by one who recognises the brotherhood of living beings, but only loving care and gentlest guidance.

If we accustom ourselves to the thought that the life of God is pulsing through every living thing, there is not much fear that we shall fail to carry out our duties to the forms taken by that life in all the kingdoms; and when we have grown perfect in that practice we shall find ourselves possessed of the power of S^t Francis of Assisi, and of many a *Yogi* in India to day, to whom the wild beasts of the forest and the jungle come in friendliness and trust, feeling in them their own life, recognising them as friends and helpers and brothers.

And though we may often feel sad at the lack of brotherliness shown in the world around, and at the amount of suffering caused by the selfishness of man, yet we should remember that *each one* who realizes his kinship with the other kingdoms of nature, and who guides his life in accordance with this knowledge, is adding his mite to the forces that work for righteousness. Such an one is helping to bring about the time when there shall be no more strife between God's children in the different kingdoms, but when the One Life pulsing through the different forms shall have wrought harmony between them all, and in the universal recognition of the Divine Self in all, one purpose of the universe shall have been fulfilled.

QUESTIONS.

1. Why do we speak of brotherhood as a Law of our universe?
2. What signs are there of this Law on the physical, astral, and mental planes?
3. Where shall we first realize fully the fact that all men are brothers?
4. Describe some of the distinguishing marks of brotherhood, comparing the universe to a great Family.
5. How may we fulfil our duties as brothers to (a) those above us, (b) those on a level with us, (c) those below us in the Human family?
6. Is it the Human family alone to whom we are united by ties of brotherhood?
7. Describe some ways of showing brotherliness to the members of the lower kingdoms of nature.