

POPULAR LECTURES

ON

THEOSOPHY

ANNIE BESANT



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ANNIE BESANT

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?	1
II. THE LADDER OF LIVES.	20
III. REINCARNATION : ITS NECESSITY.	43
IV. REINCARNATION : ITS ANSWERS TO LIFE'S PROBLEMS	71
V. THE LAW OF ACTION AND REACTION	100
VI. MAN'S LIFE IN THE THREE WORLDS	131

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FOREWORD

THESE six lectures were delivered at Adyar, at the Theosophical Headquarters, and were intended to offer a simple outline of the fundamental ideas of THE WISDOM to an intelligent and educated public, unacquainted with these conceptions. They are published in the hope that they may reach a similar public all the world over, and thus help in leavening the public mind with the truths necessary for its welfare. Theosophy alone can avert the catastrophe towards which western civilisation is rushing; already there are signs that it is successfully performing its beneficent mission, and is bringing the younger Āryan nations to drink at the fountains of the ancient Āryan Wisdom. This booklet is only intended to point to the path by which Wisdom may be attained. The treading of that path must be done by each for himself.

ANNIE BESANT

ADYAR, *May* 1910

What is Theosophy ?

FRIENDS :

There have been of late months so many enquiries about Theosophy that I thought I would take advantage of my being here for some time, to give a course of lectures covering practically the main outlines and teachings of this much talked of subject—Theosophy ; so that any one who is not a student may be able to realise the general trend of thought and the scope of the subject with which we shall have to deal in the next five weeks. I shall try to put the subject as plainly as it can well be put, and to avoid technicalities as far as possible, so that nothing more may be wanted for the first understanding of this subject by a man who possesses a certain amount of intelligence and education. I do not pretend that Theosophy in all its aspects can be made intelligible to the uneducated or to the thoughtless. But, for a person of ordinary intelligence and education,

accustomed to use his mind in the affairs of the world, nothing more than sustained attention and every-day intelligence are required in order to understand its main teachings in a coherent and synthetical way. Some of the teachings are so simple that even the uneducated can grasp enough for the guidance of conduct. But the way in which one is linked to another, the fashion in which the whole of them together build up a great Synthesis of Life—this is a conception somewhat difficult to be understood unless a man possesses some education.

Theosophy in its present form only came into the world in the year 1875; but Theosophy itself is as old as civilised and thoughtful humanity. It has been known in the world under many names in the many languages of the world. But although the languages and therefore the names have been different, that which the name conveys has always been the same. The special reason for its re proclamation in our own days was the fact that materialism was making very rapid and dangerous advances in the nations which were leading the march of civilisation in the world. More and more as science developed its knowledge, it tended to run along materialistic lines. The word 'Agnostic' was becoming the characteristic epithet of the scientific man, and at that critical time, under the special conditions of European thought, the idea

was spreading that while man could know all that was observable by the senses, all that the reason could establish on, and infer from those observations, beyond the senses and the intellect he possessed no instruments for the gaining of knowledge, no means of contacting the universe outside him; hence it was impossible that man should know anything about the deeper and perennial problems of life, anything of his origin and his goal, anything included under the words, God, Immortality, Spirit. This mode of thought was also reacting on the East and in the Colonies into which European thought penetrated, and threatened to cover the world. Then the great Guardians of Humanity thought it wise that the old truth should be proclaimed in a new form suited to the mind and the attitude of the man of the time; and just as before, religion after religion had been revealed to man to suit the passing conditions of a new national development, so in our own day was made the reproclamation of the basis of all religions, so that without depriving any nation of the special advantage which his own particular faith gives it, it might be seen that all religions mean one and the same thing and that they are but branches from a single tree. Now, this way of putting religion to the modern world was all the more necessary and important

because science was putting forth much the same doctrine, but in a different way and for a different end. It classed the various religious manifestations under the title 'Comparative Mythology'. A careful examination of the many ruins left by the past, the researches of the antiquarian and the archæologist, the study of the literatures of ancient civilisations, the results obtained from excavations and the scientific translations of antique inscriptions, had all gone to prove beyond possibility of argument, much less of dispute, that the fundamental doctrines of all religions were identical, that their moral codes at a similar stage of civilisation were the same, that the stories of their Founders closely resembled each other; even the outward ceremonies, forms, rites, and sacramental functions of the various religions, though differing as to detail in their outer garb, contained a fundamental similarity of ideas. Now this identity was being used by those who did not believe in any religion to combat and discredit all religions. In every case, it was argued, religion was the fruit of man's ignorance, however it might have become refined in its later stages; and as man grew into knowledge the death-knell of Religion would be rung.

That was, then, the position of the western world when the reproclamation of the old knowledge was made. As the work of Theosophy lay

at first in America and Europe, it was natural to turn to Greek thought for a name which would express the old ideas. Some time after the coming of the Christ, the name Theosophia, DIVINE WISDOM, had been used in the Neoplatonic Schools, and from that time onwards it appeared in one School of philosophy after another; mystic after mystic in Europe had used it, so that it carried with it a certain connotation in European thought, enabling anyone who was versed in religious, mystical or philosophical thought to recognise at once what was implied when Theosophy was mentioned. It had behind it the old connotation, and presented itself with its full content to the educated mind.

If we go beyond the Christian era, we find the same view under another name, not now the Greek Theosophia but the Samskr̥t̥ Brahmagvidyā; but Brahma is God, and vidyā is wisdom, so again we have the name DIVINE WISDOM. It was also put in another way, with a different name again: the Parāvidyā, the Supreme Wisdom.

A great Teacher was once asked by a disciple about knowledge, and he said that there were two kinds of knowledge, namely the lower and the higher. All that can be taught by man to man, all science, all art, all literature, even the Scriptures, the Vedas themselves, all these were classed as forms of the lower knowledge; and then he

went on to say, that the knowledge of the One, whom knowing, all else is known, the knowledge of Him, that is the supreme, the highest knowledge. That is Theosophy. That is the "knowledge of God which is eternal life".

Against the scientific assertion that all religions had their root in human ignorance, there rang out the triumphant proclamation that religions do not come out of human ignorance but out of divine knowledge. They are all ways by which man has sought to find God. What is Religion? Religion is the everlasting search of the human Spirit for the divine, of man for God. The religions of the world are but the methods of the searching. Look where you will in history, go to any civilisation or any people, travel to the furthest East or the furthest West, stop where you will at any place, at any time, and you will find everywhere the ineradicable thirst of man for God. That is the cry which rings instinctively from the lips of humanity. It was truly voiced by the Hebrew singer: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God." Giordano Bruno used an apt simile when he compared this seeking of God by man to the effort of water ever to regain its own level; as water ever seeks to rise to the level whence it fell, so does the human Spirit ever seek to rise to the Divinity whence he came.

But if you would *know*—not only hope, not only long, not only believe, but know—with a sureness of conviction that can never be shaken, then the divine Spirit must be sought not outside you but within you. Do not go to the Scientist, for he can only tell you that there is a law in nature which never alters. Do not go to the Theologian, for he will only give you arguments while you want conviction. Do not go to the Artist, for though he may take you a little nearer, he can only tell you of the Beauty which is God's, and that is not all. Do not go to the Philosopher, for he can only give you abstractions. Go, then, within and not without; plunge fearlessly into the depths of your own being; seek in the cavity of your own heart the hidden mystery—the mystery which, verily, is worthy to be enquired into—and there, there only, you will find Him. But when you have found Him there, then you will find that everything in the universe is hymning His name and His glory. Find Him first in your own Self, and then you will see Him everywhere.

This is the fundamental Truth, the Truth of truths. This is the Divine Wisdom, which we call Theosophy. This is the reproclamation in the modern world of the most ancient, the most vital of all Realities.

Next, Theosophy teaches us two fundamental doctrines: the first of these is the Immanence of God. God is everywhere, and in everything. This

is a truth that may be found in any ancient Scripture, though in modern days it has slipped from the memory of the western world, and seems to many people there something new, foreign and strange, when it is again preached, as it is being preached now, even from Christian pulpits. You will find it in every great Scripture. Take for instance the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, so familiar and so dear :

Nor is there aught, moving or unmoving, that
may exist bereft of Me. (x. 39)

And again :

Having pervaded this whole universe with one
fragment of Myself, I remain. (x. 42)

Let us leave the ancient Scriptures and turn to the hopes and aspirations of the most modern men ; we find the same hope is being voiced. Take, for instance, Tennyson, wistfully appealing to his own Spirit within to speak to the divine Spirit, since " Spirit with Spirit can meet," and he affirms :

Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands and feet.

There is nothing but God everywhere. Nothing but God in all the multiplicity of forms. All thought, all consciousness are His, for He is the One, the only, the eternal Life. He is in us, and that is the pledge of all that we can ever be, the pledge of our immortal life. Immortal life? Nay, for what is Immortality? It is only endless time, age after age, succession of time. Man is more

than immortal, or everlasting; for what in time began in time must end. *Man is eternal*. There is the guarantee, the security, of endless progress. Man is eternal as God Himself is eternal.

He is not born, nor doth he die; nor, having been,
ceaseth he any more to be;

Unborn, perpetual, ancient, and eternal, he is not
slain when the body is slaughtered.

(*Bhagavad-Gītā*, ii. 20.)

Death only means the dropping of a garment and when he needs it, he dons another. While God lives, man cannot die.

The second fundamental teaching is linked to the first, and can never be wrenched away from it. It is the truth of the Solidarity of all the living, of all that is. If there be one Life, one consciousness, if in every form God be immanent, then all forms are interlinked with one another. That is the inevitable corollary of the Immanence of God, and that is Solidarity, that is universal Brotherhood. If God be immanent in all, He is omnipresent, and a wrong done to one is a wrong inflicted upon all. Wherever life is, wherever form is, there is God. Nothing can be shut out of the vast Solidarity of all that is, and that Solidarity, that common life, is the basis of Morality. All things must live in a universe where life is omnipresent, immanent. As the Immanence of God is the basis of Religion and justifies man in

his search after God, so the corollary of universal Solidarity, the unity of life and consciousness, is the basis of all Morality. You cannot injure a brother without injuring yourself, any more than you can put poison into your mouth without its spreading through the blood and tissues until it circulates through the body and poisons the whole organism. Thus an evil thought or action by one goes on poisoning the whole Brotherhood, and none may see its ending. In these two fundamental truths lie the sure bases of Religion and of Morality. These are reproclaimed by Theosophy.

Now I have said that the various religions are methods—methods by which man carries on his search for God, and here lies the justification, the necessity, for their variety. For one method suits one person, and another suits another. We have many temperaments, many types of mind, and therefore many different needs. Besides, we are in different stages of evolution. Among us, some are grown up, some are children; none are alike. Truth is everywhere the same, but there are hundreds of different ways of expressing it, and yet the whole is never perfectly expressed. All these ways should be respected by those who realise the two fundamental verities, and each should tread unrebuked the way that suits him best. Moreover we cannot afford to lose any one of the different religions of the world, living or dead. For each religion has

some special characteristic perfection, and the Perfect Man must acquire each perfection. There is nothing to regret in the variety; rather is it matter for rejoicing that Truth is so rich and great that it can be seen and limned in a score of different aspects, and each aspect beautiful. Each religion has its own message to mankind, each has something to give.

Theosophy comes to the world, then, as a peacemaker. Why should we quarrel? God is the Centre, and from any point of the circumference you can direct your steps towards Him; yet, in the stepping, each will be taking a different direction towards that Centre, according to the point from which he starts. So it is with all the various religions; they are all ways to God. If you wish to reach Madras, you may be coming from any one of the four points of the compass, and you will be walking in quite different directions though you will meet in the same place. One of the oldest of religions has said:

Mankind comes to Me along many roads, and
on whatever road a man comes, on that road
do I welcome him, for all roads are Mine.

And the youngest of the religions has said:

We make no difference between Prophets.

And once more:

The ways to God are as many as the breaths of
the children of men.

Not all men are alike. What to one is food for his hunger, to others is not even a stimulus. Let each take the Bread of Life under whatever name and form please him best. Vessels of many shapes go to the river, but the water that fills each is the same, though it take the shape of the vessel which contains it. Let each drink the spiritual water from the creed-vessel he prefers; one may drink from the graceful tenderness of a Greek vase, another from the sterner lines of the Egyptian; one may use the chased golden goblet of an Emperor, another the curved hands of the beggar; what matters it, so long as the parched throat be cooled with the bubbling stream? Why should we quarrel about the shape and material of the vessel, when the Water of Life is the same in all?

Such, then, is the position of Theosophy in the world of religions, and it asserts that all religions are good in their own way, and that we should learn from each, and use their differences to enrich our own conceptions, instead of noting them in order to combat.

Then Theosophy presents itself not only as a basis of Religion and Morality, but also as a Philosophy of Life, as possessing knowledge on the subjects which will be dealt with on succeeding Sundays, when it will be necessary to speak of Great Hierarchies filling all space; of agencies

visible and invisible; of the Truth of Evolution or Reincarnation, as we call it, by which the world progresses; of the Law of Causation that links the whole together, the law of action and reaction—or simply of action as it is called here—the Law of Karma; then of the worlds in which man lives and sows and reaps. These are the teachings of Theosophy as a Philosophy of Life. Further, in its view of the world, it regards Life as primary, forms as secondary, seeing in forms only the results of the various experiences and manifestations of Life. Thought, life, feeling are regarded by some scientists as the results of the aggregations of matter; to us they are the causes of the aggregations. The Divine Wisdom starts from the opposite pole to that from which Haeckel started in his scientific theories of evolution. The eminent scientist, Sir William Crookes, when occupying the chair of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which twenty-seven years before, Professor Tyndall had held, reversed the latter's famous saying; Professor Tyndall had said that we must learn to see in matter the promise and potency of all forms of life, whereas Sir William Crookes declared that we must see in life the moulder and shaper of matter. This last position is also the position of Theosophy. It is only by the exercise of his life-powers, by thought, that man can become the master of his destiny, and, instead of being a mere

straw on the current of time, tossed hither and thither by every ripple and eddy, can become his own master, "conquer nature by obedience," and by knowledge use the nature which once enslaved him. Theosophy, then, from the philosophical standpoint, is idealistic, seeing in matter the instrument of life, in thought the creative and moulding power.

Then we come to deal with another great department of human thought, namely, Science. Now science is the observation of facts, from which, set side by side, inductions are drawn which reveal laws. Out of the chaos of phenomena it restores the cosmos of ordered reason. The chief difference between Theosophical science and ordinary modern science is that the latter deals only with fragments of the whole, the physical phenomena of this and other worlds, with what can be brought through the physical human brain and senses; hence, very often its conclusions are erroneous. In its operations, it uses the senses and extends them by the most delicate apparatus, but even when it includes psychical phenomena, it hesitates to go beyond that which manifests through the brain, including sleep and trance manifestations. A few, like Sir William Crookes, believe in the existence of a consciousness wider than that which functions in the brain; and Sir Oliver Lodge has gone so far as to represent the consciousness of man under the simile of

a ship in full sail on the ocean, his normal brain-consciousness being as the submerged part of the hull was to the rest. But this is not orthodox science: a new method must be adopted if advance is to be made. Although science is on the right road, many of the phenomena it is beginning to investigate now-a-days are too subtle for observation by the normal senses or by apparatus however delicate. The weight of official science is against the wider outlook. It would not quite expel from its ranks a Sir William Crookes, however unorthodox his opinions, but it still looks askance at any unusual investigations. Yet its position is rather like that of a botanist who, in examining a lotus-plant in a pond, was content to carefully draw and classify the tips of the leaves appearing above the water, without investigating the plant and buds and roots below the surface.

Now Theosophical science looks on the whole world as a manifestation of thought in all grades of matter. Occult science knows of the existence of higher and higher kinds of attenuated matter, far finer than the ether of orthodox science, all interpenetrating each other, and constituting this vast universe, which is all material in this sense, and is capable of being observed, examined, and understood. Man is by no means limited to the physical world alone. Theosophy asserts that the

human race has reached a point in evolution, when many of its children, to an increasing degree, can unfold new senses for observing the phenomena of finer matter, and thus discover the underlying laws. The powers of mind, the powers of perception, will work not only through the five now normal senses, but through others also, keener, subtler, more sensitive. With these, science will be able to extend its researches, continuing to use its own methods of observation and reasoning, into a far larger field and to draw its conclusions from fuller data. The observations already made by the use of these finer senses by those who have developed them need not be accepted as true on statements as yet unverified, but they might be used as hypotheses on which to work and to experiment. Every science has its experts and its conditions of study. If a person went to an astronomer to be taught, he would say : "Do you know Mathematics?" and if the applicant did not know it he would advise the study of mathematics as a preliminary to the more advanced study of astronomy. A man may navigate by the *Nautical Almanac*, may use tables of logarithms, even if he be unable to construct them for himself. But in this way he cannot know ; he can only take expert statements as probably true. And so with our results ; only those can test them, who have passed through the necessary preparatory study ; but they might be utilised as hints for research. In every

science, a student must be qualified to study, he must have the necessary time and the necessary capacities if he would know at first hand; if not, he must be content to take at second hand from those who have studied and do know. Every science says: "You can know, if you will give time and patience to the study, and if you have the innate capacity;" there are conditions everywhere, the botanist must have the power of observation; the musician the delicacy of ear and touch; and so on. So it is also with occult science; and it says further, that if you would study safely in the subtler worlds, then you must purify your bodies, physical, astral and mental, for you must have pure instruments for the higher research. A dirty lens in telescope or microscope will blur the image, and unclean thoughts and desires will blur the vision of the investigator. The impure cannot safely verify or examine or intrude into the higher worlds.

Such then, roughly outlined, is Theosophy, the DIVINE WISDOM, as regards Religion, Philosophy and Science; in each of these departments it has much to teach, some new, living, intelligible thought to offer to those who would understand. In Religion it gives the bases of Religion and Morality; in Philosophy it gives a solution to the riddles of life which have ever set men's brains on fire and broken their hearts; and in Science it points out new roads to knowledge. It makes

all life intelligible, it explains the differences in men and society, it shows a way of collecting fresh facts from the illimitable store-house of nature.

Thus Theosophy gives great principles of conduct, principles capable of application to human life; it holds up great ideals which appeal to human thought and feeling, which will gradually raise humanity out of misery and sorrow and sin. For sin, poverty and misery are the fruits of ignorance, and ignorance is the cause of evil. Over all this sorrowful world, our 'Sorrowful Star' as it has been called, across the struggles of parties, the quarrels of nations, the worse conflicts of internecine social strife, the misery of the poor, the despair of the man who cannot find work that he may feed wife and child, the sobbings of heart-broken wives and deserted mistresses, the wailings of little children, helpless and forsaken—over all this rings out the glad, if startling, proclamation that not misery but happiness is the natural and inevitable destiny of man. Misery grows out of ignorance; poverty grows out of ignorance; these unhappy outer conditions are transitory and shall pass as our knowledge grows. You, the inner You, are an Eternal Spirit whose nature is Bliss, for God is bliss and you are partaker of the divine nature. These outer conditions shall be moulded by you to your own service, and misery shall disappear from your life when you

have learned by it to rise out of ignorance into knowledge. Our miseries are of our own making, and we shall destroy what we have created. Offspring of God, you can rule the lower world, for Spirit becomes master of matter. Bliss and joy are your natural life. You are born in bliss, and plunge temporarily into sorrow only to learn what joy cannot teach, and to return to the happiness which is your inalienable heritage. Such is the glad proclamation of every Messenger of the DIVINE WISDOM. Your troubles, arising from ignorance, shall be transcended by Wisdom, for joy is your innermost nature; from that you come and to that you shall return.

The Ladder of Lives

FRIENDS :

I begin to-day the first of the special departments into which I have divided the whole large subject of Theosophy, and I have called it "The Ladder of Lives". I propose to run over what science would call the scheme of evolution; but this scheme is much larger from the Theosophical standpoint than it is from the standpoint of the ordinary western science. Western science, observing phenomena, only starts in the middle of evolution, and so needs a motive power which shall make evolution possible, a reason which shall explain its method and its significance. The larger science, Occult Science, takes in the whole of the vast series of changes which begin with the descent of Spirit to embody itself in matter, traces

the evolution of forms through stages of ever-increasing beauty, complexity and capacity, so that, within all, the evolving involved life is seen. I have called these stages, these grades, "The Ladder of Lives". These living forms occupy successive steps on the ladder, from the mineral to the throne of the Logos Himself. It is a veritable Jacob's Ladder, with its foot in the mire of earth and its highest point lost in the divine Glory. The Hierarchies of living things are the rungs of the ladder, from the dust to the mightiest Archangel. One of those Hierarchies is the human, some way up the ladder. The method of the climbing we shall study later.

It is clear that in this, as in all other sciences, there must be certain great conceptions, mother-ideas, vital and productive. These may be disentangled from the vast mass of details filling up the master-thoughts, and these can be placed clearly before the mind of any one who is willing to exercise a certain amount of patience and sustained thought. On the other hand, there is a vast mass of details filling up these huge conceptions, and the mastery of that vast mass of details means the devotion of a whole life to a small portion of the mass. The case is exactly the same with Theosophical teaching. There are certain great conceptions of evolution that I propose to try to put before you this afternoon. My hope

is that this outline will inspire some of you with the wish to know more; this 'knowing more' can only be attained by individual study. I shall give you the outline, and you must fill up this outline by study with all the details that make every part of the outline intelligible. I do not pretend that I can give you in the short compass of a lecture the details, which are indefinite in number and almost infinite in complexity. All I can do is to trace out the broad lines for your guidance. A popular lecture can merely trace out the principal ideas, and lay before your minds in succession certain clearly definite conceptions. No lecture can take the place of study. People who learn only by attending lectures can never possess more than a superficial knowledge of a subject. Only a student can master the difficulties of any subject by individual and strenuous exertion. Hence when I have done my work, your work remains for you to do. If you find the conceptions fascinating, as many of us have found them, then must follow the study which will make those conceptions real to yourselves.

First, then, let us try to study a great conception of the Matter side of the world, the conception of the Solar System. I draw as if it were a circle within which is the 'universe of discourse'—as the logicians say; my universe of discourse is our own Solar System, outside which we

shall not go. Both nature and our own life must ever remain unintelligible unless we take into account worlds other than the physical, and Theosophical concepts must remain unintelligible if we try to present them as limited to the physical world, in which we are living; for this physical world is interpenetrated and interwoven with other worlds, and in these interwoven worlds we are all living all the time. Man is not a denizen of one world only, but, in the early stages of his evolution, of three actively and of more passively.

Let us think of the Solar System as a sphere, or ovoid, a large but circumscribed portion of space, filled in the beginning—ere the planets come into existence—with tenuous homogeneous matter,¹ interstellar matter, the matter of space. It is within this great circle of the Solar System that the creative, preservative and regenerative power of God is to guide His creatures from the dust to the height of divinity. Herein is our Ladder of Lives, up which we are in thought, in some sense, to climb.

The matter of our system, with its various densities, is the result of the first creative act, wrought on the homogeneous matter of space, and this creative act prepares the Field of Evolution, as I have sometimes called it. Matter now exists—

¹ 'Homogeneous', to us, with our limited powers of perception.

as you know from your own experience in the physical world—in various forms, or states. Suppose I have an orange in my hand; you can see the solid matter, as the rind; the liquid matter, as the juice; and though you are not able to see the air, the gaseous part, you know that it is there, interpenetrating the solid and the liquid; and you know also that all three are interpenetrated by ether. Similarly if I could hold the Solar System as a ball in my hand, we might see these states of matter existing therein, interpenetrating each other; everywhere physical matter, and that interpenetrated with finer, being to it as the liquid to the solid; that again interpenetrated with yet finer, typified by the gaseous, and that again with ether. Here we go a step further than the science of the day is as yet prepared to go. Science recognises the existence of ether, it being a necessary hypothesis to account for light, etc., but it does not yet subdivide it into various densities. It studies the modes of motion in the ether, and gives them various names, as the forces or energies of nature. It recognises that there are different modes of motion, but not that these are in different densities of etheric matter. In the ether there *are* different densities—different as solid and liquid are different—and these yield what we call electricity, sound, light, heat, and so on. (I am not forgetting that science calls sound vibrations of air, but those are secondary.)

There is one density of ether the motion of which is the kind of electricity by which a tram-car moves, the vibrations of which kill a human body. In that same kind of ether are the vibrations of sound which set the air-waves going which are sound. Another density of ether is thrown into the vibrations we call light, and by these you see. There are others yet which are recognised as the swift and short waves which give the finer forms of electricity. There is a yet finer, subtler, form of ether the vibrations of which are the media for transmission of thoughts from brain to brain. Matter, in states related to each other as are the familiar states of our own world, filled up the whole of our Solar System in mighty interpenetrating spheres, ere the planets came into existence. All these spheres are material, and are cognisable by organs of perception composed of their own elements. Think then of this Solar System as composed of matter, existing in various stages of density; all the investigations into the nature of matter, into the nature of the atom—not only of the physical world but of all the other great spheres as well—must be carried on by suitable organs and instruments. Here comes in the endless complexity of detail that would need years of lives, of many lives, to exhaust. But now, how does this matter of many densities come into being? According to the Theosophical view that Life is primary and matter secondary,

the divine Life forms the motive power in every atom of matter throughout the Solar System. The first mighty Wave of Life poured into the ocean of interstellar matter came forth from God—as the Christian would say; from the third Logos—as the Theosophist would say; from Brahmā—as the Hindūs would say; from the “Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters”—as the Hebrew would say; from the Creator—as the Muhammadan would say. You may think of it as rolling round a mighty circle, descending from the zenith to the nadir, ascending from the nadir to the zenith again. This vast Wave of Life wells forth from the Logos Himself thrilling through the whole Solar System, breaking itself into endless fragments—as the smooth current dashing itself over a precipice breaks into myriads of separate drops—in order to become the life-atoms called matter. There is not one atom, one particle of matter, that has not the life of God as its life. There is nothing that is dead. This vast Wave rolling through the ocean of homogeneous matter crystallises, as it were, the matter into atoms, and becomes the Spirit in every particle of matter; and of this living matter the worlds are built. Hence we sometimes speak of what science calls matter as spirit-matter, as Spirit made manifest. There is not one particle that is only matter, nor can Spirit manifest itself without matter as its vehicle. Matter is the necessary vehicle

of manifestation for Spirit; Spirit and matter are the first pair; neither can exist without the other, for the divine Life only becomes Spirit when it ensouls matter.

That is the first creative action, the first Life-Wave. Having formed the atoms, it draws them together, and builds up the numerous aggregations of the various types of atoms, and these, in our physical world, are called elements¹. These elements are the basic materials for the building of all forms.

It is interesting to notice how our most advanced scientists are beginning to recognise the presence of life in all matter, and use such phrases as the 'diseases of metals,' their 'fatigue,' their susceptibility to poisons and intoxicants. It has been proved that the life in metals and plants responds similarly to similar stimuli as does the life in animals and man. I saw these responses in London, demonstrated by the great Indian chemist Dr. Jagadīsh Chandra Bose; you may remember that he closed his noble lecture to a London scientific audience with the declaration that he had only proved experimentally the great truth which his ancestors had proclaimed thousands of years before, when they chanted the Vedas: "There is only one Life, though men name it variously." This one Life,

¹ See *Occult Chemistry* for the details of this building in the physical world.

poured out into the universe, ensouls the matter out of which all forms are to be made. This is the first root-conception to be grasped and remembered. It shows us the Logos as the Master-Builder, the Great Architect of the Universe.

A second great Wave of Life comes forth from the Logos, the Logos in a new aspect, that of the builder and maintainer of forms—the second Logos, we Theosophists say; Viṣṇu, the Hindūs name Him. That great Life-Wave again rolls round; from the zenith to the nadir, it gives characteristics or qualities to matter, qualities which enable it to answer in different ways to different stimuli from outside; thus to one kind of atom and its aggregations the speciality of answering to changes of thought, to another of response to changes of emotion and desire, and so on. The varying powers of each atom and its aggregations are given by the Life-Wave on its downward sweep, until it reaches the lowest point of its huge circle; then it turns to climb upwards from nadir to zenith. In the upward climbing the Life-Wave begins the building of forms out of the matter now showing the qualities that it has imparted on the downward sweep. This matter, now showing qualities, powers of response, *i.e.*, of internal rearrangement under the impact of stimuli, is drawn together and aggregated into forms—mineral, vegetable and animal forms, and lastly forms of animal-man. The work

of the upward sweep is the building of forms, as the work of the downward sweep is the giving of qualities. This is the second root-conception. It shows us the Logos as the Master-Craftsman, and as He ever works by number and by geometrical designs, He reveals Himself as the Great Geometrician of the universe.¹

We come to the third and last great Wave of Life. There are five spheres, or planes, which make the Field of Evolution. Beyond these in rarest subtlest matter and in splendour of radiant unimaginable Life, in the highest sphere, dwells in the perfection of His own nature the Lord of the system, whom the Hindū calls Īshvara, the Lord, impartite, unmanifest. In the second sphere His Aspects shine out, His manifested Powers, whom we called the Logoi from whom the Life-Waves came, Powers which build matter and forms, and the Power, the Regenerative, from whom the third Life-Wave is to come. In that lofty sphere naught may live that is not God, and there are the seeds of Divinity, parts of Himself, emanations—if the word may be used of those who dwell ever in the bosom of the Father—which are to be human Spirits in the field of evolution, the spheres of form. These are to be rayed down thereinto; for the very purpose of the building of

¹ "God geometrises," said Plato.

the worlds is that these Seeds of Divinity may grow through the many forms of the various kingdoms, until they stand revealed, the triumphant Sons of God, reflecting the splendour whence they came. Has it not been said in the East: "Thou art Brahman"? Has it not been said in the West: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"? So splendid is the object of human evolution; man is a Seed of God, which shall grow, when sown in the soil of earth, into the likeness of God.

The third great Wave of Life consists of these human Spirits, which are sent to ensoul and utilise the bodies which have been prepared for them through the ages, through the long evolution, the slow climbing, from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to animal-man. Then there dawns at last the morning when the human-divine Spirits that have been waiting the time for their advent, hover over the forms that are preparing for them; they are as yet unable to influence them, unable to guide, and unable to control. They form the third great Wave of Life that is poured out into the worlds. This is the third root conception. Out of the Most High the wave rolls downwards into the forms prepared for its coming.

The first Life-Wave, then, made the matter. The second Life-Wave gave the qualities and built the forms. The third Life-Wave brought upon its crest

the fragments of Divinity to ensoul the forms and to make them tabernacles worthy of God.

Think of this as of a great picture. The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Christian Trinity, Brahmā, the Third Logos, is as a river which breaks itself into drops by the force of its descent; so the Life of God is poured out and scatters into atoms ensouled by Himself. The Life of Viṣṇu, the second Person of the Christian Trinity, the Wisdom, builds the forms "mightily and sweetly ordering all things;" and the first Person, the Father of the Christian, the Shiva or Mahāḍeva, of the Hindū, the Liberator, is the pourer out of the human Spirits.

We will not deal now further with the first outpouring, the creative aspect, for this in its details would require that study of many lives to which I alluded at the beginning. We will consider instead the second outpouring, in the upward sweep of which is formed the Ladder of Lives, that ladder up which every one of us must climb, up which each of us has climbed a long way, must climb the remainder.

The second Life-Wave, as we have seen, gave characteristics or qualities to matter, imparting to its compounds and aggregations the capacity to answer to different moods of consciousness. In the three lower spheres, we have first that which Clifford, ahead of his time, called 'Mind-stuff'—

that is the stuff the vibrations of which are correlated with changes of thought. Next the matter the vibrations of which respond to emotional changes, those of sensation, feeling, passion, desire. Such types of matter are not yet recognised by modern science. Then further down—out of the desire-sphere into the physical sphere—our physical world, where matter is already evolved to the point where it can respond by means of external action to the promptings of thought and desire. Changes of vibration in the material vehicle answer every change of consciousness, whether of thought or desire, the change in consciousness and the vibration in matter being linked in inseparable conjunction.

The great work of building up bodies begins with the mineral kingdom, through metals, stones, and what is known usually as inorganic matter. The crust of the earth is rich in stores of this nature, and here is where the first efforts of building begin. Then we pass on to crystals which show out more powers of the organising life, and then by slow steps to the crystalloids found in plants, more plastic, and scarcely either vegetable or mineral. Then through a realm which is neither vegetable nor animal, but lies at the root of both—the Monista; from this branch out the two great evolutions of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. Well-developed members

of the vegetable kingdom, as forest trees, are higher in evolution than many forms of animal life.

Now in the mineral kingdom all the lessons impressed on gross matter have to be given very roughly in order to cause the life within to respond. Earthquakes upheave the surface, volcanoes throw out great liquid masses, the sea dashes itself against the rocks and hurls stones together until they are pulverised into the minutest sand. In this dense mineral kingdom this rough treatment from outside has the purpose of awakening a response from the dormant life within. In the Middle Ages a wise Sūfi Teacher said: "God sleeps in the mineral." And indeed life is not yet ready to turn outwards, to look through its sheath; the one purpose of these violent impacts is to wake up the sleeping Spirit. The mineral kingdom shows many grades of growth and of advance. When the soft iron moves towards the magnet, or another metal moves away from it, you have indications of those faint thrillings of the primary attraction and repulsion which hereafter will show forth as love and hate. You have a response from within to that which is contacted without. This is found everywhere, and the more close the study the more clear the result. After countless ages of similar and repeated impressions, the fragments of living

matter give undoubted proof of response from within to stimulus from without.

For a long time science thought that life and consciousness were products of matter ; but science has of late changed, for it has come to realise that it is not the organ which makes the function, but the function which creates the organ. When we study a fragment of living matter, of protoplasm, such as the amœba, there is no mouth to take in food, no eyes for vision, no lungs for respiration, no heart to drive the nourishing fluid through the body, no hands with which to grasp, no feet with which to move. There is only craving, desire, and desire builds the form, as it seeks gropingly its own gratification. In the Ancient Scriptures has it not been said ? "The Ātmā desired to see ; the eye. To hear ; the ear. To think ; the mind." The mouth was formed by the craving of the life within for nourishment. The craving was there ; so the body at first wrapped itself about the object which touched it, taking it in ; this, repeated over and over again, at last formed a depression, a buccal cavity, and a tube for passage through the body, and thus gradually the mouth and alimentary system grew into organisation ; the complex organisation grew out of the simple desire of the life. So again living matter desired to move ; it put out a little bit of its body in the desired

direction and pulled the body up to it, and this, repeated innumerable times through myriads of examples, produced the leg and the foot for the purpose of locomotion. As matter becomes more and more ductile, the requisite organs are fashioned more and more suitably in response to the inherent requirements of the life. Schopenhauer's "Will to live" lies at the back of evolution, and implies the Will of the Spirit to make to itself a vehicle, and to shape the organs it requires for self-expression as the life unfolds.

One stream of life, for instance, develops herbs, shrubs, trees—in the last of which we can see the first dawning signs of mind-consciousness appear. The constant repetition of the seasons, bringing similar and long-continued stimuli year after year, produces finally a remembrance of the past similar experiences, and out of that an expectation of the next member of the oft-repeated series. Memory begins to stir, and when a living thing begins to remember the past, it also inevitably begins to expect the future. The experiences of the tree are repeated year after year, season after season, the rise of the sap, the putting on of leaves, the heat of the sun, the drenching rain, the alternations of light and darkness, heat and cold, the resistance of the roots and branches to wind and storm, the falling of the leaves, the running down of the sap, the period of inactivity

in the cold of winter. All this repeated for ages rouses in the tree the incipient signs of memory, of anticipation, *i.e.*, the dawning of mind-consciousness.

So scientists who are botanists are talking of the eyes of plants, which enable them to choose particular places of growth and so on for suckers. Still one must realise that the type of consciousness existing in the vegetable kingdom is different from and far lower than that found in the animal kingdom. These two lines of consciousness in the vegetable and the animal exist side by side, and it may well be that consciousness can climb so high in the vegetable kingdom, that when it passes over into animal forms it would by no means enter at the bottom but relatively high in the animal ascent. Let us take this ascent as though it were successive—which it is *not*, and this is also shown in Haeckel's *Genealogy of Man*—for this does not touch the argument. When the power of moving from place to place is enjoyed by a living creature, its opportunities of gathering experience largely increase, for now it brings itself into contact with outer objects and does not merely respond when they come to it; thereby its 'awareness' develops more and more rapidly. It is by the struggle for existence, by the tremendous competition in nature for food, that the animal develops the qualities which serve for the bringing up and protection of its young; through its many vicissitudes, by hunting and being hunted, it develops foresight, craft,

cunning, powers of self-defence, bravery, and even higher qualities, which will eventually make possible the coming of man.

But even when animal-man appears on the stage of life, there is yet something wanting, something lacking for real Manhood.

It is that third Wave of Life, it is the bringing down of those Spirits which have been waiting to take up their habitation in the forms that have been prepared for their reception, now the animal-man. These forms are naturally crude and rough, at first, but they are suitable for the first efforts of the forming Spirit, to evolve the man from the savage to the divine state. He is now on the first human rung of the Ladder of Lives; the Hierarchy of Man begins to manifest. He will gradually pass out of savagery into a low state of civilisation, and will then slowly climb, step by step into a higher. And here a problem arises: What is the method of this advance? There is no apparent reason why a savage should pass from the stage of savagery into that of civilisation, or again why a civilisation which has reached a high state should become disorganised and relapse into savagery. Yet these things happen and there must be a cause. The causes will be dealt with in a subsequent lecture.

Let us now consider the main stages of the unfolding of consciousness which mark the steps on the Ladder of Lives occupied by the Hierarchy of

Man—once more the broad outlines only, with infinite variety of detail within each class. The steps are four, so well described by Patañjali. You may find each type among your own acquaintances.

I. The mind is sufficiently developed to be alert, but is continually changing the object of its attention ; first one thing attracts it, then that is dropped and another becomes the sole delight, and so on and on. It is the mind in the child-stage of its long unfolding, and each new toy is eagerly grasped. Patañjali aptly terms it the “Butterfly mind,” for the mind, like a butterfly, darts from flower to flower, hovers dancing in the air, with no stable purpose guiding its flights. Such is the child-mind in many grown-up bodies, awake to the world around it, but not yet brought under obedience by its owner, the Spirit.

II. The child-mind grows into the mind of the youth, full of surging emotions. Ideals begin to attract, but there is little stability or clear understanding. It is full of hasty impulses, irrationalised longings, confused and bewildered thoughts. It is the stage of confusion, of illusions, of glamour, the “confused mind” of Patañjali.

III. Then follows the stage of the man, whose mind is dominated by a fixed idea ; it may be ambition, philanthropy, patriotism, love of truth. The idea may be of different kinds, but it grips the man. All he does, all he thinks, all he aims at, is sub-

servient to it. If it is ambition, he chooses his friends as they can serve his object; he plans, schemes, toils, all with the one object of gaining power. If gripped by patriotism, he becomes a hero; if by love of truth, in troublous times, a martyr. No reason, no argument, no persuasion, no appeals to the ordinary motives that sway men can divert him from his purpose. I came across such a man in America, dominated by the idea of geometrical forms and their uses; he could think of, talk of, nothing else. Such a one, says Patañjali is becoming fit for Yoga.

IV. In the fourth stage the idea no longer obsesses the man, but the man, becomes master of the idea, the idea becomes his servant. With all the concentration of will and purpose gained in the third stage, he is now able to choose his object and direct his forces to its realisation. Only when this stage is reached, can a man make real progress in the higher life, the life which reaches human perfection. The hero or the martyr can now become the Saint, the Seer, the Portal of Initiation is before him.

Now he passes through that Portal and climbs the remaining human rungs of the Ladder with ever-increasing swiftness, until he stands at the threshold of superhuman progress, reaches the side of those lofty Beings whom we call Masters, and becomes the Perfect Man. Then before him

opens out another and more splendid evolution; high above him on the Ladder stand the super-human Hierarchies in dazzling splendour, and, almost lost in light, stand the Christs, the Buddhas, the Manus, of past ages. Would he stand where They are standing? He might leave the world and stand in glorious strength and dignity among the Hierarchies of living Beings that rule and guide the worlds, and dwell in the vast fields of space. Great and mighty are They, and wonderful and necessary Their work. But if he would climb to the loftiest rung open to our humanity, then he must not quit the world, whose sorrowful cries have spurred him to his upward way. "Canst thou destroy divine compassion?" whispers the Voice of the Silence. So He returns again across the gulf, wears yet the fetters of the flesh, the burden of gross matter, and gives Himself to be a Saviour of man, a Guardian of Humanity. He climbs the rungs of the Ladder to the height of the Bodhisattva, the Christ, the Buddha, until he vanishes in the Glory, to return again, perhaps, in some future world, as an Avatāra, a divine Incarnation.

Such is the Ladder of Lives, as seen from our earth and the worlds interlinked with it. On some of the rungs of that Ladder we all are standing, you and I, every one of us, whatever we may be. Many a rung lies below us; many a rung lies

above us. We may be climbing slowly or rapidly; there is time enough for all, for the veriest laggard, there is power enough for each, for in the heart of each is God. There is nothing that can change our ultimate destiny, nothing which can finally frustrate the will of the God within. We may play in the meadows of life like children, and linger long in "the primrose paths of pleasure," but the God within cannot be finally denied. He is very patient, because He is eternal, and because He is omnipotent in power. His will is unchangeable and sure, and He is our innermost Self; hence the destiny of man is certain, and, as I told you last Sunday, it is Purity and Bliss.

Some of you have dreamed of endless suffering, of endless sin, and have writhed under the nightmare of an everlasting hell. But God is everywhere; His Essence is Joy and Light and Love, and there is no such thing in His Being as unending evil and unending sorrow.

But you must climb the Ladder for yourselves, and if you delay too unreasonably, if you try not to climb at all, you may so retard the course of your evolution that you will be unfitted for the upward-climbing race of which you are a part; and then will come friction, then pain, and your sluggish vehicles will clash with the more evolved vehicles around you, and the God in you will manifest as pain and suffering and not as joy. You

may even delay so long as to unfit yourself to go on with your race, and you may drop out of the present evolution and sleep through long ages. But at last, at last, your lower nature will learn its lesson, and set itself in harmony with the inner.

Truly is there much to climb, yet Life is endless. Truly we stand at many stages, yet Life is one. And because the Life in all is one, therefore we all are brethren.

Reincarnation : Its Necessity

FRIENDS :

In listening as I sketched for you last Sunday the enormous sweep of evolution, as I traced in rough outline the way in which the divine Life comes down into matter, ensouls every particle, builds up out of that ensouled matter the forms of every description, makes those forms more and more complex, more and more sensitive; then, as I traced the unfolding of consciousness from rung to rung up the Ladder of Lives, showing how the consciousness in man unfolded its powers through the various stages mentioned by Paṭaṅjali; then up to the Portal of Initiation; through that to the superhuman evolution which comes after Masterhood; onwards still further from the Man made perfect until the superhuman being is lost in the light that veils such Great Ones as the Boḍhisattvas, the Christs, the Budḍhas of humanity—some of

you surely must have asked yourselves: What is the method of the climbing? how is it possible from the mire of earth to climb upward and upward ever, until the climber is lost in the Deity? What the method, what the fashion of evolution? It is these questions, so natural and inevitable, which I am going to try to answer to-day and this day week.

I have divided my subject into two parts, dealing to-day only with the necessity for reincarnation. I want to show that it is inevitable, rational, and a fact in nature, and then next week to show how it answers the problems of life, to show how it explains differences in life, the riddle, as I have sometimes called it, of love and hate, the reason for friendship and enmity, the strong links that draw us together and drive us apart; these questions I shall try to answer next Sunday; to-day I deal with its necessity.

The work to be done is so immense, the ground to be covered so incalculably large, that some method which is rational, logical, and intelligible seems to be needed, in order that we may be able to understand how such progress can be made by man; for looking at man as we see him in this life, with the small span of years that comes between the first cry of the babe and the last sigh of the dying, so brief a time and with so much to do, so vast a task, and so short a span—a work so great must need a method extended

and rational, for the whole world is rational, being ordered by the Supreme Wisdom as well as sustained by infinite Love.

Now what is the meaning of reincarnation? We do not use the word when we are dealing with the mineral, the vegetable and the animal; the methods of evolution there are profoundly interesting, but are so complicated that if I dealt with them I should leave myself no time for the special subject of to-day. I can only briefly say that what we may call the embryonic Spirits, those that are to be human, hover over these lower kingdoms, waiting the time when the forms shall be fitted for their definite dwelling-places; step by step, grade by grade—if we care to give the time and take the trouble—we can watch the methods of evolution in these lower worlds. But reincarnation, as it has been used in history, whether in ancient religions or modern Theosophy, has a very clear and definite meaning. It means that man is a spiritual being clothed in bodies made of matter; the man is the spiritual intelligence, the bodies are only a garment. As one of you may clothe yourself in a coat or a cloth, but not regard that garment as yourself, so does a spiritual intelligence clothe himself in garments of matter, the bodies; but these are not the man, any more than your clothes are yourselves. This spiritual intelligence, which is to unfold all his powers, comes

to gain experience in order that the divine capacities in him may thereby be unfolded. His natural dwelling-place is in the higher and spiritual regions; your bodies are born of earth, but *you* are born in the higher worlds; the Christian phrase, "Your citizenship is in heaven," is a literal truth; a man is a citizen of his native country, and men are not citizens of earth but of heaven; there is their birth-place, their natural habitat and their home. Just as a bird soaring in the air may dive down into the water to catch his prey, and then rise again into his own habitat, so it is with the Spirit that is man; his home is in the heavenly worlds; he plunges down to earth to gain the experience which is the nourishment for the Spirit's unfolding; he carries it home for assimilation into innate capacity and power; and only when the experience of one life is assimilated does he return to earth for another life, in order to gain more.

And this conception of a man as a spiritual being belonging to the higher worlds lies at the base of the thought of reincarnation. He comes to earth, takes a body which is prepared for him; he is not yet manifestly divine; he has to learn to master matter by long experience and by many lessons. He comes into the body of the savage, wherein his experiences are crude and rough indeed, but yet yield lessons difficult enough for him to learn—the first lessons of human experience. He passes away to

the other side of death to learn by the lessons of pain the errors which he has made, and by the lessons of enjoyment the right thoughts and feelings he has had, and during the later part of that post-mortem life he assimilates what he gathered on earth. Having changed the experiences into powers, into capacities mental and moral, he comes back and enters into a better body, suitable to the more unfolded conditions of the Spirit which is himself. He goes with this through his next experience of earthly life, again changing experiences into capacities in the other worlds, the after-death life lengthening as he evolves, and so on, and on, and on, and on, until he has climbed from the point of the savage up to the point where he has become the Man made perfect, whom we call a Master. It is a long life composed of many days, in which each day is what we term a life; and just as a man is one man though he lives through many days of earthly life, so is the man one man to whom every life is but a day in his long pilgrimage. The same man who sowed is he who reaps; the same man who incurred debts is he who pays; justice, unchanging justice, rules the worlds, justice that demands the payment of a debt incurred, justice that gives the reward of a virtue achieved. Thus going on life after life, his past expressing itself as character and as conscience, he becomes at length the Perfect Man.

At that stage reincarnation finishes for him; no longer need he be born into the world, for he has learned its lessons; and just as you send your boy, when he has finished with the school, to the college to learn the higher lessons, so is it with man. In this world and in the two connected with it, man is, as it were, in school; having learned his lessons, having learned all that these worlds can teach, he becomes what is called the Ashaikṣha, or Aseka, Adept, the man who is no longer a pupil, he who has no more to learn. Then, and then only, can he be released from the wheel of births and deaths, to pass on to a magnificent superhuman evolution, in which his now unfolded consciousness scales inconceivable heights, until he reaches union with Deity Himself.

This, then, is what is meant by reincarnation. I must try to show why it is necessary for men.

The necessity that I will put to you is threefold.

I. It is necessary from the logical standpoint, to satisfy the reason. Without it, life is a hopeless riddle, a problem which defies solution. There is no suffering keener and sharper to the intelligence than the sense that everything around is hopelessly unintelligible. We can bear everything, if we can understand it. It is not pain and sorrow which is the real misery of human life; the real misery comes from the intelligence groping in

the dark amid objects which it cannot understand; from problems which seem incapable of solution pressing on brain and heart—the intolerable anguish of the mind, faced by that which it cannot understand, till it drops back despairing and hopeless; there seems no reason to be found in the tangled world. Where there is no reason, no order, there can be no hope. But reincarnation makes all life intelligible: a flood of light pours over human life, and we can see it in its inception, its evolution and its goal.

II. Reincarnation is necessary scientifically. The science of the day can no longer answer the questions pressed upon it. It thought it could answer these questions twenty or thirty years ago. Darwin thought he had answered them. But no scientific man will tell you to-day that the Darwinian hypothesis can be accepted in all its main principles as solving many of the most important problems of human evolution. Science to-day is dumb before them. It has lost one solution; it has not found another.

III. Reincarnation is necessary morally, and to some this covers the most important problems of all. Some people are content to live in an intellectual fog, and seem to find no trouble in breathing it; but no one who is really good at heart can face without anguish the moral problems of life, unless indeed they know reincarnation, and

then they realise that all is "very good". For the sake of Reason, of Science and of Morality, reincarnation is necessary, inevitable; and this I shall now proceed to try to prove.

I. You remember that verse that I quoted last Sunday, where it is said in the Hebrew Apocrypha that Wisdom built the worlds—Wisdom "sweetly and mightily ordering all things;" that Wisdom, which the Christian personifies into the Second Person of the Trinity, whom the Hindū speaks of as Viṣṇu. He is the Perfect Reason, and the universe He builds must be perfectly reasonable also.

Let us look at a primeval savage, and try for a moment to realise what he is. Take any savage of the lowest type; the aborigines of Australia, the Veddhas of Ceylon, the hairy men of Borneo—these are scarcely human, and yet they are human; their language is more of signs and of sounds expressive of emotion than of words; it really is little better than the language of an ape, that some have learned to reproduce.

Try to realise him, mentally and morally; he has practically no mind and no morals, only the germs of them. You can read about such men in the records of voyages of travellers, how some of them can only count one, two, three, more. But the cat can do as much as that with its kittens, and a hen almost with its eggs. There is a

story told of how the Australian Government in trying to preserve the aborigines gave them blankets, and it is said that in the mornings, when the sun was warm, not realising that the night would come again, they would change away their blankets for other things. The difficulty arose of a store of blankets that had always to be renewed; so low were they intellectually. Morally? They were quite prepared to take the most handy and convenient person for the next meal. Darwin recorded a case of a man who found his wife the most convenient thing for his dinner, and when a missionary tried to make him understand that it was a wrong thing to do he answered, rubbing himself in satisfaction: "I assure you she was very good." The poor missionary tried to make him understand that good eating and good morals were not identical, but failed. The moral sense was not yet evolved. Savages eat their parents when they are no longer useful, and their children, because they are not yet useful. They murder, they rob, they drink. There the savage is—God-made, all the religions tell us. What are you going to do with him on the other side of death? What could you do with him in heaven? Yet it would be hardly fair to send him to hell, as he did not make himself. Is that narrow brutal life all that the world has to give him, the world which

to some of us is so fair and wonderful a thing? Is that poor inchoate mind of his to be the only heritage of that child of man, that offspring of the humanity which produces saints and heroes and geniuses? Is that all he is to know of this marvellous world, of all the beauty and grandeur and the possibilities of life? What can you do with him? ask yourself, and it will bring you to consider reincarnation. Let us look at him in the light of reincarnation. He has murdered his wife, he has probably murdered various companions; he has slain when strong enough, he has robbed when strong enough; yet he cannot be called criminal; he is only unmoral. He dies. Let us suppose that he is knocked on the head by another savage, stronger than himself, and he dies. But he is not really dead; only his body has been struck away, and he has passed into the intermediate world between earth and heaven; he discovers that the people he killed are living; he meets again all the people with whom he has had troubled relations. They are many and he is only one; and they have not forgotten the past any more than he has; and so they have no very pleasant welcome for him on the other side. He learns certain lessons, though few: if you murder a man to-day, you will meet him to-morrow; if you eat your wife to-day, she will be no pleasant mate when she meets you else-

where ; your old mother and father whom you slew in their weakness are alive again here, and at an advantage as having been longer on the other side, while you are a newcomer and a stranger, frightened and bewildered. He begins to learn some of his lessons. I do not say he learns them all in that one experience ; he comes to earth-life and out of it over and over and over again, until at last the early lessons of life are graven into the Spirit, until he learns that it is not well to murder and to steal, until he dimly begins to recognise a law which gives to every man according to his works.

But these are not his only after-death experiences. He will have had, perhaps, for the woman who was his mate, some little touch of affection, before the greater need of hunger overbore it. That little germ cannot die, for nothing dies in a universe of Law. That little seed of good begins to grow, and makes him happy, and later on when he carries more of good with him, he takes it on into the higher heavenly world, and there changes it into a moral quality, with which he returns ; he brings with him to each rebirth an increasing tendency to hesitate before slaying, to agree if he is told that murder is wrong, and—to run over a large number of lives—that is how he grows a little more civilised and can live in a tribe, and respect the law of the tribe as right, as a proper limitation and restriction. He has

gathered the fruit of experience, and it has nourished him; he has accumulated materials and they are wrought into his life; and he goes on, life after life, until he comes to the point at which many of our children are being born to-day. The great difference between our child and that of the savage is that ours answers to a moral teaching our ideal when it is put before him and the child of the savage does not. I have come across a case in which a savage babe, taken from a village which had been destroyed and all the inhabitants slain, brought over to England by a kindly missionary lady, was found unable, despite all the advantages of moral surroundings and teachings, to respond to the most elementary moral ideas; there was nothing in her which could answer to all the efforts and appeals of her instructor. It is true that there are some that are the degraded remnants of a past civilisation which was higher than their present state; souls a little older would be there, and then you may have a certain, but a very limited, amount of moral response. But take your own child; you tell it that it is wrong to take by force the toy of its younger and weaker brother or sister, and the child understands. You say it has a conscience. True, but conscience is not the gift of God, but the outcome of experience; your child brings with him the harvest of his past, the sense of right and wrong, the tendency to

approve or condemn. You take advantage of this tendency ; you have not to do with a new-born soul, but with one who has passed through many lives. The child of the civilised man brings into the world a ready-formed character, as any one who has had to do with children can observe. Character is the stock-in-trade with which each begins his present life, and the civilised man understands when he is told that he must not take his brother's life nor his possessions. And so on and on, every life getting fuller and fuller, and the life on the other side of death growing longer and longer. When one of yourselves passes over, what will you take with you as harvest, to use in the other world? Certain errors will meet you on the other side, and will cause suffering—the basis of truth in all the terrible stories of hell. When you had learned your mistakes, you will pass on into the heavenly world. There everything of good that you did in this life will be with you, the jewels to set into your crown ; every aspiration, every hope, everything noble and pure and high, you take with you into the heavenly world, and these are the seeds of the qualities you will there grow and develop in yourself. As the sculptor carves his statue out of the marble block, and according to the quality of the marble and the skill of the sculptor will be the finished work, so it is with you. The marble is the experience that you carry with you to that

world; your inner living Spirit is the sculptor that carves the marble into character; hence the importance of the earthly life that gives the material, for according to the purity of the stone will be the colour of the statue, or, to use another simile according to the richness of the sowing will be the harvest you will reap. You see how by the law of reincarnation comes the opportunity enabling a man to build himself; how the experiences are, life after life, stored up and transmuted into qualities; how at each new stage of his pilgrimage, he grows, gathering and crystallising these experiences into faculties. Every virtue you have, you have built during your life of bliss in heaven; every defect marks a virtue still to be acquired; there is time enough for the slowest of us; hence our triumph is sure and the ultimate result is certain. You are the masters of your future character and therefore of your destiny. That is one line of argument for reincarnation given by Theosophy; the necessity of building the savage into the Sage, the embryonic man into the triumphant Son of God.

That is not the only necessity. Take the case of a new-born child who dies shortly after birth. Suppose that reincarnation is not true, what is the use of that brief hour of life? If you take the ordinary Christian theory—I take Christianity because it has lost reincarnation, though it once

had it, and is now recovering it—how can you explain the mystery of this babe that dies? Is human life, the experience gained on earth, of any permanent value or not? If you say that it is, and that the experience will be valuable to you during your immortal life, then that unfortunate child has been for ever deprived of its opportunity of gathering such experience, and can never make up for that loss. Unless it returns to earth for another birth, then that little one has been robbed of the priceless heritage of human life, and no heaven can make up for it, for the earthly experience cannot be had there, and it remains the poorer throughout everlasting ages. On the other hand, if you say that the babe loses nothing, then, if it be true that our fate for ever depends upon the outcome of this human life, it is we who have the grievance and not the babe who died; for we who live on for a long life, have to go through trouble, misery and sin, and we run the risk of going to hell at last, whereas the babe runs no risks and has no misery, and yet is as well off in the end as we are. The whole thing at once becomes unintelligible. But people say it is a mystery, and that we must not pry into God's purposes, for that is not allowed. It is such answers that make sceptics. It is useless to tell people not 'to pry,' when they have been given an intellect for the very purpose of

prying. There is nothing that man has not the right to study; until he has studied, he cannot know whether he is able to understand or not. All questions are justifiable to the seeker for truth.

Let us leave our savage and our babe. There is another difficulty. What is the use of all the qualities that we build up, even in one life, with effort and suffering? A man goes through a long life and becomes wise; we ask the counsel of the aged, and we find his advice better worth having than that of the young and careless; but he dies at the very moment when he is most valuable, when out of the experience of life he has wrought the gold of Wisdom, and he passes away into heaven or hell, where, in either case, the wisdom is useless. It is earth that wants these men grown old in wisdom, and if all our best and wisest and noblest are taken away into worlds where there is no opportunity to use the wisdom they have garnered, into worlds where wisdom is useless, because every one is irretrievably saved or damned, then the whole of human life becomes irrational, and the whole of human experience is thrown on the rubbish-heap of nature. The more you think on reasonable and logical lines, the more inevitable will reincarnation be seen to be.

II. Reincarnation is necessary from the scientific standpoint. In the days when Darwin published his

theory of evolution, everything was made to turn upon the transmission of qualities from parents to offspring, and on the struggle for existence, which secured the best parents for this transmission. But if parents do not transmit, then the whole key to progress as given by Darwin is lost ; for everything turns on that transmission. The reason he desired that struggle should continue was that he saw in struggle the only hope of human progress ; only thus could the weaker be slain and the strong survive, to be the parents of the coming generations. When I was studying the working of the Law of Population, I wrote to Darwin on the subject, and his answer was that we must not soften the struggle, because if we did, the human race would cease to progress. Transmission of qualities gained by individual struggle was the only method of progress. But that is not the view of the scientist of to-day : he now tells us that parents do not transmit their mental and moral qualities to their offspring ; on the contrary, he says that the higher the intellectual qualifications, the lower the reproductive power. He declares that genius is sterile. He points out how musical genius is, as it were, foreshadowed for several generations. As a matter of fact, a family shows some musical ability until a physical body is prepared with sensitive ear, sensitive fingers, sensitive nerves, so that the physical characteristics necessary for a

musical genius may be prepared. Into that body the genius comes, shows his power, conquers the world and dies—and instead of any handing on of his genius, thus lifting the race, his children, if he has any, are mediocre, and ere long the family disappears. Where are the families that produced Beethoven and Mozart, or other great musical geniuses of the past? And everywhere science repeats the same truth! There is no mental or moral heredity, genius does not descend; it is the death-knell of human progress, unless reincarnation be true. So long as we thought that by leading noble lives we could pass on noble characters to those who were to come after us, so long was the magnificent argument of William Kingdon Clifford true and cogent, when he bade every father and mother remember that in their hands lay the future of the race, and urged them to live truly and nobly and purely, in order to pass on the enriched heritage to those who should have the world when they were dead. He had no belief in individual immortality, and from that standpoint there is no nobler argument than that in his admirable essay on the “The Ethic of Belief”. But that cannot be adduced as argument now, and hence, on this question of the how of progress science is dumb. Physical heredity is clear; moral and mental heredity is non-existent; and yet it is on the mental and moral growth of

man that the future depends. Is not the continuity of consciousness the necessary completion of the continuity of protoplasm?

Another scientific problem arises. How were the social qualities evolved? By the struggle for existence? But in that struggle those who are least social will be most successful. You can see it around you; in the competitive struggle of human life to-day it is not the most honourable who is the most successful man; it is rather the man who accepts the business morality of the day and does not look into it too closely; in the modern commercial struggle not the best men come to the top, but the worse—clever, yes, but unscrupulous also. In such countries as America, the keenest brain and the most unscrupulous conscience carry the man to the top of the tree. The man who builds his fortune by the laying waste of thousands of homes becomes the multi-millionaire and is held up as an example. Gold gilds every crime which the law does not touch, and what the law does not touch the social conscience does not condemn. The late Dr. Huxley, in his last lecture, before an Oxford audience, put this very difficulty in striking fashion. He pointed out that man, a mere atom, set himself against the universe in his evolution of the social virtues, of that which made him *man*, and raised him above the brute; he showed that man was

evolving not by trampling on the weak, but by tending, cherishing, and helping them; that the human qualities are those of compassion and tenderness, and the use of strength to guard the weak and the helpless; and he summed up in one phrase, borrowed from a Theosophical Master, the profound truth: "The law of the survival of the fittest is the law for the evolution of the brute, but the law of self-sacrifice is the law of evolution for the man." But this cannot be true, unless we come back to reap the results of the self-sacrifice in greater power to help; for the man who sacrifices himself dies, and his qualities are lost to humanity unless he returns, while his fate is apt to make others shrink back. The mother-bird who, to save her young, pretends to be crippled in order to draw away from her nest the cruel sportsman, and is sometimes shot, leaving the young to perish miserably; how shall her maternal instinct, so precious to the races, be handed on? And so with the death of every martyr, and the sacrifice of every hero who dies for humanity; if reincarnation be true, then the man who died comes back with richer, fuller consciousness than that made the sacrifice, for that love and sacrifice have been wrought into his nature during the heavenly life and he comes back the richer, the stronger, to help with greater force.

One other point we must note in passing, although it bristles with points that one must leave unnoticed. The children are born, as a rule, during the youth of the parents, and not during their old age, when they have garnered the fruits of experience and have turned them into wisdom. The father and the mother grow by the parental and married life; the power of self-sacrifice in them is nurtured by the weakness of the children, by their need of help, and so the noblest and most advanced show their highest virtues in mature life, when the time of child-bearing is over. The child obviously can inherit only the virtues possessed by his parents at his birth, even if he could inherit qualities at all. Hence the recruiting of the population is chiefly from the young and therefore the more thoughtless; when thought is mature in age, the time for child-birth is over. There again comes in a difficulty which only reincarnation can solve. For if reincarnation be true, nothing is lost. That daily sacrifice of the mother and father for their children crystallises in heaven into the virtue of self-sacrifice for all who need help, the virtue which makes the saint, the hero, the martyr. Nothing is lost, nothing is wasted. And how perfectly this agrees in the higher world with the scientific view of the conservation of energy the indestructibility of force, in the lower world. The

evolution of consciousness—or better, its unfolding, in which it demands ever better and better bodies for its expression in matter—gives to science the motive power in evolution, and shows the two sides of human nature, mind and body, developing side by side in the long climb upwards of the man.

III. To my mind, the third necessity, the moral, is the most potent argument of all for reincarnation, for justice and love must be dethroned in this universe unless reincarnation be true. There are two other possibilities. One is special creation by God; the other is heredity. The first is that in which most Christians believe. Now both of these leave man paralysed and helpless, in the grip of a destiny he cannot influence. When a child is born into the world, he is not born with a mind like a blank sheet of paper on which you may write what you will. No one who knows children can deny that a child comes as a living being with a character, with qualities, characteristics, powers and deficiencies, and you have to deal with them as they are. Our Musulman brother says that when a man is born, his destiny is tied about his neck. And this is largely true, for a man comes into the world with his character ready-made. You may to some extent mould and modify it, but your powers are very limited. As Ludwig Büchner said: "Nature is stronger than Nurture." If special creation be true, where is justice, to

say nothing of love? One is born a congenital idiot, another a genius; one a cripple, another strong; one grasping and greedy, another magnanimous and generous; these differences show themselves in the nursery, nay, even before the babe can walk. Who made the differences? God? That implies Injustice enthroned over the universe; it implies the helplessness and therefore hopelessness of man. I have sometimes drawn a picture of what is implied in special creation, in each human soul coming straight from the hands of God. People do not realise what it implies. I know much of London, and much of the darker side of London life, for I was a member of the London School-Board for the poorest district in the East End, where there were ninety-six thousand children in my charge. Also, outside the children, I worked much among the poor. Those who know the East End know something of the misery of human life. As a member of the School-Board, I found that there were some children coming into our hands so foul, that we were obliged to remove them from the schools built for the children of decent parents however poor, children congenitally physically diseased and mentally and morally criminal. Whence come such children? Why are they born among us?

Come with me into the slums, where the houses are rotten with age, ingrained with filth,

untouched by sun or air. Come along a narrow, filthy lane, full of rotting vegetables, into a little court. Come down the broken stairs that lead into an underground cellar which the sun can never touch; heavy and foul and filthy is the air which the miserable creatures who herd there must breathe. In the corner of the cellar a woman is lying on a heap of filthy rags. She has just given birth to a child, a man-child. Look at the shape of its head and features; see that he has no forehead; the brain slopes back from the eye-brows to the back of the head, which comes up to an almost acute angle. That child is a congenital criminal; he will have strong passions and weak intelligence; he is doomed to crime and misery throughout the span of his unhappy life on earth. He is a poor wretched little mortal with a human Spirit; fresh-made, they tell us, from the hands of God; the mother? a harlot of the streets: the father? perhaps a drunken sailor from the docks; who knows? From infancy this child only hears foul language, curses and filthy terms. His baby lips learn to stammer curses before he knows what they mean. He is brought up on blows and kicks, sent out to steal, and sent supperless to bed writhing in pain, if he does not bring enough of the results of theft to pay for the evening meal. And so from year to year, knowing nothing of love, nothing of kindness and caresses, until, still

a child, he falls into the hands of the police. It is before the days of Children's Courts, of "first offences," and the child-thief is sent to herd with elder criminals in the gaol, and to come out worse than he went in. He knows the law only as an enemy not as a helper, a teacher. No one teaches him; every man's hand is against him; now he has the brand of the gaol on him, though verily that matters little to him; back and back he comes to crime after crime, and punishment after punishment, bewildered, confused, savage, until that miserable product of modern civilisation, the habitual criminal, is known in every court to which he is brought. At last in some moment of passion, perhaps of drunkenness, he strikes too hard and kills one of his companions; the law grips him for the last time; standing in the dock he dumbly hears the evidence against him; confused, miserable, he is led back to the condemned cell; and then from the condemned cell, in the chill of the winter morning, to the gallows, and from the gallows his dead body is thrust into the pit-lime grave in the prison-yard. And then? What will you do with him? He is obviously too foul for heaven nor would he be happy there, and yet you cannot send to everlasting hell a man who never had a chance. That is the story not of one, but of many, in all civilised lands. It is not as though that were the best work that comes from the creative

hands. Better can be done. Into another home in that same London a child, a man-child, is born with every advantage, amid pure surroundings and welcomed by tender, parental love; his head is marked for the indwelling of genius, with well-modelled skull, with delicately chiselled features, that tell of sensitive emotions and high ideals. He is watched over with scrupulous care. He is coaxed into virtue and caressed into nobility, as the other was kicked into crime. He never hears of foulness and impurity. His mother and father guide and guard his steps. He is given the best education which civilisation can offer; he passes on from the public school to the college, the university. He is praised and laden with prizes for abilities he did not make; he goes on from joy to joy, from achievement to achievement; he is as much favoured of the Supreme, as the other was made an outcast by Him; and he dies after a life of glory, as the other after a life of crime, amid a nation's mourning, with his name written in the roll of great men illustrating the nation's history.

What had each done? He had been born! Nothing more! You *cannot* believe in special creation when you face these difficulties. To believe in it is to blaspheme the Justice upon which the hopes of humanity are set. I say nothing of Love. I appeal only to Justice. I put it in the coldest, driest way of Justice. That man, flung from the

gallows into the so-called Presence of God, standing at the divine Bar of Judgment, has the right to say: "Why hast Thou made me thus?" And equally the genius also may reasonably ask: "Why hast Thou made *me* thus?" Oh! it is no use to answer with the words in *Romans*: "Has not the potter power over the clay?" No, not if the clay is sentient, not if it is instinct with life, able to suffer and enjoy. None has the right to create in order to torture or destroy, to condemn to crime here and to hell hereafter. That is the necessity of reincarnation from the moral standpoint, and it is stronger than the intellectual necessity, more truly unanswerable. You may say that I exaggerate, and that I have taken extreme types. I have taken extreme types, but both types exist, and all I have done is to put them side by side, so that the contrast may startle you into thought, and that you may ask yourself—and answer—whether God can have specially made both the congenital criminal and the genius. *If not both, then neither.*

According to reincarnation there is no difficulty; the criminal is a young not yet unfolded spirit, a savage; the other is a spirit, aged in experience; both are the results of their own past, self-created from within.

That is the moral problem with which I leave you to-day; for not by listening to a speaker can you ever gain certainty on these great studies in

human lives. Face the problems, seek the answers; no ready-made opinions of other people will ever finally satisfy you; they do not fit, any more than do ready-made clothes. You have to think for yourselves, or else to go ignorant and foolish all your days. I have only acted as a kind of sign-post, to point out difficulties that demand solution. How perfect the solution is that comes with the wider thought, that I shall show you this day week. For the moment let me say: the lowest criminal is but a younger brother, who will come some day where you and I are standing; the greatest Master or R̥shi is but an Elder Brother, who is standing now where you and I shall stand in millennia to come. Reincarnation is the message of the Gospel of Hope, of the certainty of ultimate success. Reincarnation is the method of the climbing up the Ladder of Lives through its human stage. You can work with the law when you know it, but you cannot escape it. Human likings have no power over natural law, but knowledge enables you to co-operate with law, and thus quicken your evolution. And not only may you quicken your own evolution but you may also help your brothers to quicken theirs, and so may you climb together with them ever higher up that Ladder of Lives.

Reincarnation :

Its Answers to Life's Problems

FRIENDS :

Several questions have reached me in letters, in addition to the problems I had in mind when I chose the title of this lecture, and I shall answer those in addition to the problems I had thought of.

One question I will take first, so as to clear it out of the way : whether there is a definite number of human Spirits, so that in all reincarnations the same Spirit would return over and over again, or is there an influx of newly-created Spirits. I omitted altogether, as I said last Sunday, the progress of the intelligence and the conscience through the animal kingdom, and began at the human stage. But up to a certain point in evolution there is an influx from the animal into the human kingdom, but that point is long since

past ; including those who are still in the lower kingdoms and who will not enter the human kingdom in this cycle, there is a fixed number who will, in the course of ages, pass through the school of reincarnation. But, it is said, if the number of human Egos is thus fixed, what about the increase of population ? The answer is a very simple one : those who are in incarnation at any one time form a very small minority of the Egos who are tied to the wheel of births and deaths ; and just as in the city of Madras, with a large, practically fixed population, you may have, on the occasion of different lectures, this hall half empty, full or over-crowded without changing the population of the city, so with the population of the globe. It might increase very much in the number of Egos present at any given time, without increase in the total number of Spirits. Those who are out of incarnation remain longer away from earth as they evolve, as mankind progresses, for the higher types of men reincarnate more slowly than the lower ; but a little quickening of reincarnation, a little shortening of the heaven-period, would increase the population of the globe very largely, since only a relatively small number of Egos are in incarnation at any particular time. One may, however, point out that there is no reliable proof that the population of the globe *is* increasing ; look back, for example, to the invasion of

Greece by Xerxes and notice the immense army that was gathered together then, and you will see that though the census was not taken in those days, there are proofs enough that the world was thickly populated. Some countries now take a census fairly accurately; but as regards the population of most it is merely guess-work, as in China for example. So far then as the increase of the number of Egos in incarnation is concerned, there is no difficulty; for with the enormous population on which the globe can draw the number of Egos in incarnation might be doubled in a few years without upsetting the balance of nature.

Before I deal with the questions which demand solution, I want to say a few words with regard to Causation, without which the answers will scarcely be intelligible. There is a law in Nature which links together causes and effects. In its most general form it may be stated in the accepted axiom of science: Action and Re-action are equal and opposite. The Hindūs and Buddhists call it simply Action, Karma, for the re-action is bound up with the action. This law means that when the equilibrium of nature is disturbed, that equilibrium tends to be restored; this is a universal truth in nature. If you fling a ball against a wall, the strength of the rebound is in exact proportion to the force of the impact. This law,

continually working, has much to do with the questions with which I have to deal, and its existence must be assumed in all my answers. I shall deal with it next week. This is not a world of accidents, of chances ; its administration is not one of favouritism, of partiality ; it is a world of changeless law, which works in every region of nature—not only in the physical world, but in the mental and the moral as well. Law in nature is nothing but the expression of the divine Nature, in which, as a Christian Scripture says, there is no “shadow of turning”. That statement is literally true. This far-reaching law of action and re-action lies underneath every answer connected with re-incarnation, and an understanding of it is necessary for a perfect comprehension of the answers which I have now to give.

The first question turns upon difference of capacity, as in a savage and in a genius. The difficulty is insoluble from the standpoint of science, but readily soluble from that of re-incarnation. Each one of us is an evolving Intelligence, growing from life to life as a seed grows up into a tree season after season. The savage is nothing more than a young Intelligence, one who has come into incarnation at a later period of time than an Intelligence which has reached the height of civilisation ; but both are divine. It is the difference between the sapling and the oak, one

sown as an acorn last year, and the other the growth of the same acorn when, after centuries, it will have developed into a gigantic tree. Growth, evolution, is not confined to the bodies ; you find it equally in the mind and moral nature ; and the difference between these in the savage and the criminal compared with the genius and the saint is only a difference of degree, due to growth—God is unfolded more in the one than He is in the other, but He lives in both. It is a question of time, not of injustice ; there is a later date for the perfection of one than for that of the other ; but nothing less than perfection is the destiny of each, and endless time in which to gain it stretches in front. He who is the savage now was resting in the divine bosom, while he who is now the genius was battling in the strife of evolution ; now he is nearer to his rest, and the hour of struggle is dawning upon the other. You acknowledge the evolution in bodies ; why not in minds and consciences ? Compare your own body with the remnant of the Neanderthal savage, of which we have only the skull ; compare your own skull with that. Compare your forehead with his retreating frontal, your jaw with his prognathous outline. You say in the case of the skull that the differences are due to the efflux of time, to the progress of evolution ; that the one is the skull of a savage, the other that of a civilised person.

Granted. Apply the same principle to the mind and conscience and you will see why there is difference ; there is growth everywhere ; there is injustice nowhere. We who are here are not divine favourites, who have come for the first time into the world undeserving of the position which we hold ; and the savage is not a divine outcaste, only fit for the position into which he is thrown. We began alike ; we shall end alike. Both began in nescience, knowing nothing ; both shall end in omniscience, knowing everything ; and all the differences between us are transitory, the differences of age and growth.

Then it is said : even supposing that this does account for these differences in human evolution, is it always the case that the child born of parents of a low type is itself entirely low ? Is it the case that the highly developed child will always be born of parents developed to a high stage ? No, it is not. There are two reasons why you may have from a comparatively savage type an Ego, a soul if you prefer the term, more or less developed. The average child of the savage will be of the savage type, but there are exceptions. You may remember a well-known Negro, Booker Washington, a most remarkable Ego, who developed to a high point of intellectual and moral greatness, who is eloquent and labours for his people, and tries to raise them in the social scale. He has often been pointed to as a proof that the Negro can rise to a

high elevation both mentally and morally. He is not an Ego suited to a Negro body ; but rather is he one moved by compassion, who, though dowered with higher faculty, deliberately willed to enter a low type of body, in order to help a degraded and despised class. From time to time a great soul, sacrificing himself, will be born into a degraded position in order that he may uplift the degraded, that he may encourage them by his example, and thus stimulate them to rise to a higher level. Some of the greatest Saints of Southern India were born among the Pariahs, and these are revered everywhere as men so saintly and so spiritual that the proudest Brāhmaṇa is willing to recognise them as Saints and Devotees, though born in the lowest class in the southern communities of India. Such souls come, born into that degraded class, in order to lift it and to win for it the chance of evolution, by showing that even the lowest type of body cannot in any way mar the grandeur of the God within. Such cases are, however, exceptions. So also you will sometimes find in a London slum, among people of a degraded type, a saintly and pure man or woman, or perhaps a child, who is growing up like a unstained flower from the mire of slum life. And sometimes in a noble and good family you have what is called a 'black sheep' born, a hopeless creature with whom the parents can do nothing but send him away out of the

country to be a cow-boy or a shepherd in some far-off land. These abnormal cases we must recognise. They are to be explained by the law of karma, which had made between Egos in the past a link which brings them together in the present. The black sheep may have in a past life done some deed of kindness which linked him to a nobler Ego, and now he comes that the debt may be repaid to him by the advantage of the influence of good surroundings. To understand such cases in detail the causes must be looked up, and I shall deal with some of these exceptional cases next Sunday.

Another question arises: What about that newborn babe you spoke of who died almost immediately after birth? How would that useless birth be explained on the theory of reincarnation? The explanation from the standpoint of reincarnation is that in the past (and I am speaking here from facts which we have looked back and seen) such an Ego had become indebted to the law by causing the death of some one, but without malice, without intention, killing by some passing carelessness or folly. To take a particular case: a man threw away a match when he had lighted a cigar, without seeing if it were out, and it fell upon a heap of straw, which blazed up and set fire to a cottage, and a person was burned to death. You cannot call that a case of wilful

murder, and he could not justly be called a murderer. It was an act of carelessness, an act not criminal, save as all carelessness is criminal. His debt to the law is but a small one, and it is paid by the slight delay in taking a new body in reincarnating; the Ego loses that body, but at once seeks another birth, which often in such cases takes place almost immediately, with only the necessary delay of a few months. But in such cases, for the most part, it is the karma of the parents which is the chief cause of such a birth, and an Ego is chosen for their child who owes such a debt as I have mentioned, in order that their heavier karma may be worked out. It is the parents' karma which plays the larger part in the cases of children who die soon after birth. The case of the parent—it is there that there is the real suffering. The child, as I have said, practically loses nothing, as he comes back in a few months; he only suffers a brief delay; but the father and mother, they suffer in the loss of the long-hoped-for and expected child. It is their karma brought into touch with that of the person who owes the debt of a life. Both destinies are worked out in the death of the child. Putting aside some cases, we may give as an example one in which the father and mother in a previous life had shown unkindness to a child which had some claim upon them, though not born in their own home;

or one in which, the father and mother being dead, the relative or guardian had been cruel to the child; that lack of love, or active cruelty, stood against them in the debit book of nature. The debt is demanded in the body of their child who is dear to their hearts, and they pay that body for the debt, and thus learn greater tenderness and kindness to other children. I have heard of a woman, left childless, recognising that the fault was her own, and I have heard her say: "I will be a mother to every child who comes in my way, and so pay to them the love I would have lavished on my baby." There the lesson had done its work, and the kârmic debt was fully paid. Such a woman, knowing the law, accepting it without bitterness or complaint, made her own sorrow a benediction to many a helpless child, and they reaped that love a hundredfold. So wisely does nature, which is God, teach His children how to grow in love and tenderness.

Then there is this matter of progress in nations; not now progress of the individual, but the rise of a nation and the decay of a nation—how does this work in under this theory of reincarnation? The rise of a nation is brought about by more and more highly developed Egos being born into that nation, thus lifting it up step by step to a higher level; for they themselves are the nation. Into the comparatively uncivilised condition the younger souls

of the race would be born; and when they come back improved, they will be fit for a more civilised nation; the rise of a nation is due to the influx of more advanced souls, which, born into the better bodies provided by a good heredity, lift the nation upwards and help its rise into civilisation. An important lesson, this, for those who have to deal with the social conditions of a people. A nation can attract either nobler or baser souls by the social conditions it provides. If the conditions are bad, as we have them here in India, with one-sixth of the people outcaste and untouchable, inevitably we must draw into India a very large number of young and childish souls, in order that they may here learn the earlier lessons of evolution. If you educate these lower types in right living, if you train them, lift them up, teach them to be cleanly, honorable, temperate, then you are making for India better conditions for her lowest people, and the youngest souls will have to seek a less civilised nation, while the higher souls will be born here because the conditions are suitable for their further evolution. It is so also in England. There the conditions are favourable for some, but we have the plague-spots of the slums, which offer suitable conditions for the incoming of savages. Part of our lowest population, the congenital criminal class, is simply made up of savages, anachronisms coming into a civilised race. If England cleared the plague-spots away

there would be no conditions into which such souls could be born. We are concerned with England and India, but it is the same with other nations also. Evil social conditions will bring into a nation little advanced souls; good social conditions will bring into it the highly advanced. The destiny of a nation is under its own control. Neglect of its poor brings the inevitable nemesis of national decay. It has been so in the past; it is so in the present. And when a nation has reached its highest point, so that the physical type has reached its limit, can go no further, but must change in order to advance, then comes the time for its decay. We find it in Rome, Chaldæa, Egypt—history is full of such records. The types of the decaying nation are still useful for the less developed souls, and the less developed are sent in. Then the type gradually deteriorates, each influx of lower souls slowly degrading the physical type, until at last, by slow steps, that nation has become degenerate, and gradually passes away from the pages of history. If you study the books of naturalists, you will find that they tell you that savages gradually become sterile; the type is too low for the incoming Egos; the human race has outgrown it; and when there are no longer any souls so little developed as to inhabit these bodies, the women cease to bear children, the type diminishes and gradually dies out. That is what causes the

stoppage of the influx from the animal kingdom. There is now a gulf between the lowest human and the highest animal stage. The human types have perished with which nature originally bridged the gulf, and so Egos rising out of the animal kingdom can find no bodies low enough for their use. They must therefore remain at rest, until, in another world, types are born sufficiently simple and low for their indwelling. In this way you can trace the causes of the rises and falls of civilisations. It all turns on the incarnations of Egos. This is one of the reasons why some of us oppose certain forms of scientific cruelty. Cruelty is degrading, to the human type, and, if persisted in, will gradually cause physical degradation, the physical following the moral downwards as well as upwards. Thus they will bring about the ruin of the nation. Vivisection belongs morally to the past, not to the future; it will prove to be one of the passing bells of our civilisation, unless the social conscience arises, and puts an end to these crimes against humanity.

Another problem is that of the evolution of social instincts. Darwin failed to explain them, though he tried, saying that the children of the good and self-sacrificing parent amongst animals would survive. But that is surely not so. He forgot that the good and self-sacrificing parent as a rule perishes, and that the children, left by

their mother, have less chance to survive. Huxley, as I said last week, saw that that was an insoluble problem from the standpoint of the struggle for existence. He pointed out that all the human qualities were a disadvantage in the struggle of life, while the brutal were an advantage. Take the case of a mother who sacrifices herself for the sake of a child; of a doctor who sacrifices his life in a desperate effort to face the inroads of some terrible disease; of a hero, who sacrifices his life for his country; of a martyr, who dies that the truth may live—how do such noble souls benefit their race beyond the inspiration of their example? Passing into the other world, they find that on that side the sacrifice they made on earth is material for the building of quality. The act and thought of self-sacrifice are built up into a permanent virtue. Virtue has been well defined by an Indian writer, Bhagavān Dās, as the “permanent mood of a good emotion”. Take the emotion of love; it becomes a virtue when it is universal and is shown to all, whether known or unknown. The love of a mother for a child, the maternal emotion, becomes the virtue of love when it is shown to all children alike. This emotion, then, which showed itself out in the heroic action becomes crystallised into a virtue in heaven, and the man or woman is reborn with that virtue as a part of the character; nothing is lost. The

more they are who sacrifice themselves, aye, who even perish, the richer is humanity for the sacrifice, for they all return, greater and nobler. It is said that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," not simply because the example is inspiring, but because the martyrs come back to serve their religion once more, the noble soul having become more noble in the heavenly world. The heavenly life makes permanent, makes definitely fixed, the emotion that was fluidic and changeable. The social instincts are the more prominent in the man who comes back after sacrifice, for he has grown them to a still greater height during his long stay in the heavenly world, and has then brought them back on his rebirth to the service of the race. This is the answer to Huxley's question, an answer which he was groping after in that last lecture when he said: "Perhaps man is a part of the consciousness that made the universe." Man *is* a part of that consciousness, and being a part of it he is eternal. Unfolding the divine qualities, he comes back to use them for the helping of humanity. The saints and heroes bring back with them the harvest which they sowed on earth and reaped in heaven, as bread for the feeding of man. That is the explanation of the higher growth of the social conscience, of social instincts.

The criminal is explained by reincarnation, as we have seen. He is only a young Ego in the

savage state—nothing to be very sorry about, but something to help. Here again, comes the application of reincarnation to life. If you believe in it, you will not send your criminal to gaol, and let him out again, and then send him back again when he commits another crime. You will no more do this than you would send a small-pox patient to the hospital for a week, and then let him out again, and then send him back again for a fortnight, and the third time for three weeks. No, you send him *until he is cured*. That is the way in which you should deal with the morally diseased as well as with the physically. Train the criminal and educate him; do not punish him with harshness, for punishment which is revengeful injures still further the Ego who has come into our hands. Certainly do not set him free, any more than you would set free a dangerous animal to prey upon society, for he also is dangerous in his criminal state. But do not make his life miserable. Train him, educate him, and do not let him go until he has shown that he has learnt the lesson of right living. There is much talk of liberty, but you must learn that liberty is useless, nay dangerous, unless with it comes the sense of responsibility, unless self-control takes the place of outer compulsion. That which criminals want is training and discipline, and what they have a right to demand at our hands is not liberty, but education,

not the license to commit crime after crime purging each with the imprisonment which follows it, but the discipline which will teach them industry, self-control and right living. When criminology has become a science based upon reincarnation then, and then only, will habitual criminals disappear. Prisons will become schools which shall educate, train, and refine, the elders will begin to realise their duties to their youngers, and instead of giving them votes will help them to develop virtues. That is a better way of dealing with criminals than the methods we employ in the so-called civilised nations of our day.

Why are some people born deformed, dwarfs and cripples? That is the result of cruelties inflicted upon others, paid for by deformities in another birth. The Inquisitors, for instance, are born again deformed. (Laughter.) I don't think it is a question for laughing about, my friends, for it is a matter that goes all along the line of cruelty, now as in the past. Vivisectors to-day will be born deformed in the future. All who are cruel will similarly reap the results. The cruel school-master who rules by fear, not love, who terrorises the children who ought to learn to love him, who abuses the power which is put into his hands, and feels not the responsibility of his high office, and knows not the divine law which puts the helpless in his hands to protect, not to oppress

—reincarnation for him is, in truth, a message with a menace in it; although ultimately for him also a hope, because by his own suffering he will learn to do better. Cruelty is not taken as seriously as it ought to be taken among us. It is one of the worst crimes, because it is against the law of love, and when inflicted on the helpless who are in our grip, it is the worst of all. Good intention is sometimes pleaded as an excuse for cruelty. The inquisitor wanted to save men's souls, but he ought to have found out a better way of saving them than rack and fire. So with the vivisector; he wants to save men's bodies, but he ought to find a better way of doing it than the torture of animals. So with the school-master; he had far better eradicate faults by love and by good example than drive them under the surface by the cane. For every cruel act on the part of the strong is bad not only for the suffering it inflicts, but also for the moral results, the cowardice, the servility and the fear which it implants, as well as for ensuring its own perpetuation, for the weak, treated cruelly, becomes in his turn cruel when he is strong.

These are some of the morals that grow out of reincarnation. Those who believe in it dare not act as the ignorant act, who have to learn by suffering that which they might learn by reason if they would. For whether by reason or by suffering all must gain knowledge of the Law.

Why do we love and hate? Because of our past relations with the people we now love and hate. Some think that reincarnation means that they will be separated from those they love. That is not so. First of all, in the long heavenly life—lasting sometimes for thousands of years—the whole of the time is spent with the people you loved upon earth, and when you come back you tend to come back in groups, together with those you loved before. There is nothing more striking in tracing a series of lives, than to see how husbands and wives, relations and friends, come back together. If for other reasons they have been born on opposite sides of the world even, they will be drawn together as friends and lovers, if they had love for each other in the past. Nothing in heaven or earth can slay love, or break its tie. Where there is love, a link is formed between the Egos, and it cannot be broken by the icy hand of death, nay, nor by re-birth. Back we come, old friends together—old enemies together too. Have you never felt when you met a person for the first time as if you knew him? Two or three hours of talk between such people, and they will be more at home with each other than children of the same family. And some people you shrink back from at sight. You should follow such a feeling—it is the warning of the Ego against an ancient enemy. It is wiser to keep away from a person

who arouses such a feeling, and then, deliberately, send to him or her thoughts of love and goodwill, paying them back in benediction and goodwill for the ancient wrong. Then, after some years you may meet again the same person, an enemy no more, but changed into a neutral or a friend. And when you meet a person for the first time, and your heart springs out with strong affection, then realise that Spirit is calling to Spirit across the veil of flesh. Bodies may differ to any extent, for reincarnation takes us into nation after nation, but the Spirits, knowing each other, will spring forward at the meeting of the bodies, and the hands will clasp in instinctive affection. That is the answer to these strange impulses of sudden attraction, as ancient wrong is the explanation of the sudden repulsions. When you feel the attraction, you have the foundation for the firmest friendships earth can know. That deep, instinctive call from the invisible is surer than any reason or argument or knowledge, and when it is deep and strong, it is absolutely reliable. But be sure that it comes from within and not from without, as it sometimes does in what is called 'love at first sight'. That may indeed be the call of Ego to Ego, but may also be only the call of body to body, the attraction of the senses between man and maid, and that merely physical love will break and vanish with custom,

and the marriage based upon it has little chance of permanent happiness. But the deep recognition: "This is my mate"—as when Sāvitrī first saw Satyavān, the man she determined to marry, and refused all others, even holding steadfastly to her choice against the prophecy that he had only one year of life before him—such a definite will from within is worthy to be trusted, and from that grow the best unions, whether of wedded love or friendship, that earth is able to produce. Reincarnation gives a permanency to friendship that nothing else can give; you feel you will never lose your friend. Sometimes it helps you very much also, when a person whom you dearly love does not love you, or when you love much more than the other, so that the response is insufficient to give happiness. The one who knows reincarnation says: "My strong love has its root in the past. If it is not answered now, it is due to some injury that I have done to my friend in the past. Let me pour out more love, that I may pay my debt of wrong and then draw us together." Reincarnation makes us strong, able to bear and to endure; nothing in life is really unbearable, however sorrowful, when you know the origin and see the end. For those who are eternal, where is sorrow? where is pain?

One question remains: "Why do we not remember?" That is the question which is always,

and naturally, asked. "If I have been here a hundred times before, why should I not remember?" Let me try to answer this question, even though I cannot hope to do more than make out a case that will urge you to enquiry and study. In your present lives you forget much more than you remember. Go back to your childhood—how much of it do you remember? Just a few things stand out—the first pony that was given to you, or, if you were a studious child, the first book; the first time you went in a boat, or on a railway journey. These you remember, but all those many, many days which made your childhood are lost. No, they are not. They are all bringable back to the memory. If any one of you were taken and thrown into hypnotic trance, the memory of your childhood would come back, its events would arise before you. You do not really forget. The many past things fall into the background, and are hidden by the more vivid memories of later events, but in the trance state the whole comes back. Nothing is lost. The man will talk in the language which he knew as a little child, but which he has since forgotten, even though the hypnotiser does not know it; so thought-transference, which people disbelieved a short time ago but which is now used to explain every abnormal phenomenon, is out of court. I ask you in the trance where you were born, and then trace your early life, and you will speak the

language you heard in infancy. You talk it in the trance, but forget it when you are awake. I ask you some small incident, perhaps about a lost toy, and you remember it, and say where it was put. This has been done over and over and over again, especially in Paris, where they have tried it in small things—the menu on a dinner table of three weeks back, not remembered by the person when he was awake ; hypnotised, he was able to give the whole of it without a flaw. The same thing sometimes happens in a fever. Once a man had lost a pin of some value and in a fever, in his delirium, he remembered where it was. This is all very interesting when you come to deal with the problem of memory. Why do you remember when your brain is thus thrown out of order?—for that is what happens both in delirium and in trance. Why does the brain thrown out of gear remember what in its normal state it forgets? Because the memory of a past event has been pushed into the background by a succeeding one, and it has sunk just below the threshold of consciousness ; the strength of vibration in the nerve-cells of the brain, which is the physical expression of that which you call memory, has decreased, and when they are no longer active you forget. And they work in interlinked groups. Sometimes a new impact, as that of a scent, reinforces the dormant memory of a scent, and thus calls back an event

in which that scent was prominent; you apply a stimulus to one of your brain-cells, and the whole of the group of brain-cells interlinked with it answers. These facts are my basis for the answer to the problem: "Why do I not remember my past births?" When I take you back to your childhood by mesmerising you, the proof that you learnt the language you speak is in the fact of your speaking, as being able to read shows that you learned reading. The fact that you forget learning to read would be no proof of your not having learned, if you can read. Take my own case, for example. I do not remember being taught to read. I do not remember any time when I could not read. But the fact that I read shows that I must have been taught. And the fact that you have a character and a conscience shows that you have a past where these were formed and built up. But we can go further. You are not living now in the brain, nor in the desire-nature, nor in the mind, in which you lived in the past. Your Ego is the same, but the garments of the Ego are different, and the body you wear remembers only that which the body has experienced, and that comprises only the physical, emotional and mental events and expressions of the present life. The brain is new. How should the brain that was not in the past life remember the events of the past life? Your desire-body

is new ; how should it remember the desires felt and satisfied in its predecessor ? Your mind is new ; how should it remember past thoughts ? It is only you, you yourself, the living immortal Ego, who can remember, because he has passed through all the experiences, and he forgets nothing. But he does not engrave his own eternal memory on the new garments he endues for the gathering of fresh experiences. You can gain your memory if you choose to take the methods to gain it, and those are simple enough. Your energy is ever running outwards to the outer world ; your interests, thoughts and pleasures are there, and so all the inborn energy of the lasting and permanent you, the true 'I,' is always running outwards through the mind, the desire-nature and the physical body. It ever seeks the outer. You must reverse its direction. You must turn it inwards, if you would remember ; inwards to the Spirit, manifested as Ego, in which alone resides the memory of the past. Only when you realise the Ego as yourself and reach his memory, can you remember. The Ego alone has been through all these events of past lives, and when any particular life is over and you have in heaven worked up its experiences into faculty, then the memory of those experiences passes on into the spiritual treasure-house of the Ego, and only the results, the faculties, are impressed upon the new mind and

body. It is rather like a merchant who, in his book-keeping, carries on to the new year only the balance in his ledger; he does not enter in the new ledger all the items belonging to the last year; he writes down only the balance which is the result of the year's trading, with which he begins the new. That is exactly what the Spirit does in the higher world. He balances up and closes the ledger of the past, but it is not lost, it remains in his memory. He carries his balance only into the new ledger, and calls it intellect and conscience. The tendency to think murder wrong—that is part of the balance, and has grown out of the past trading. It is only a *tendency to think* so, remember—that is all which is handed on to the new mind and brain—tendencies to think along certain lines, and it is these tendencies which respond to education, and make it possible. That is the fundamental reason why we—*i.e.*, the brain-consciousnesses—do not remember. And is it not well that it should be so? I said that you could recover the memory by inward-turned meditation, by living in the higher instead of in the lower, by living in the Spirit instead of in the mind, the desire-nature or the body. Live the spiritual life, in the Spirit who realises the Unity, who realises his own Divinity, who knows himself, and then your past will be spread out before you, and you can recover the whole of it at will.

Several of us know this to be true, because we have done it, and to each who has done it this is the best of all proofs. But it is no proof to another. I am telling you what I know to be true, and I know also a very fair number of people who can remember, who can compare notes, and verify facts, and recognise one another through the millennia of the past. But I asked: Is it not well you should not remember? You may recall what Goethe said when he was approaching his death-hour—he believed of course in reincarnation, as every philosopher must: “What a comfort it is to think that I shall come back fresh-bathed” (his German expression), the past washed away. It is truly well, and you will see in a moment why. Suppose there were a young man and woman who had just married, and they knew that death would come to one of them in a year. The whole of that year together would be shadowed by approaching death. Or if one of you has done a wrong thing, perhaps when you were a boy, do you not still look back with remorse or pain on that wrong? How many a criminal, to take a graver case, could go forward if only he could forget, but the memory of his crime is a fetter on him, preventing his recovery and progress.

How much happier many of you would be if you could forget much of the past of this one life. Some

things are better forgotten. The wrong things others have done to you, the injuries they have inflicted on you, for example. You remember how it was said of Shrī Rāmachandra that twenty wrongs done to Him in the day He had forgotten by the evening, while one kindness He never forgot. There is the perfect man. The memory of all the kindnesses remained and shone out as gratitude ; the memory of all the wrongs faded away. Not until you are strong enough to bear the memory of the present life without regret, remorse, or anxiety, and above all, without resentment or sense of grievance, should you desire to add to that burden of one life, the burden of a long millennial past. When you are strong enough to look at your present life merely as a lesson which you are learning, without complaint, remorse, discontent or anger, then will you be beginning to be strong enough to bear the memories of the past ; but until you can bear the past of one life serenely, do not crave to know the past of hundreds. You have a new body, a new desire-nature, and a new mind, and the fact that the Ego only hands on to the new instruments as much as is useful for the new life is a wise and merciful arrangement ; when you reach that memory of the Ego, then you, being one with him consciously, will be strong enough to bear the added burden, and you will remember in your new brain.

That is the last answer to life's problems that I will put before you to-day. Let me say, in concluding, that every answer which I have given ought to be analysed and judged by yourselves, and not accepted unless it justifies itself to you. By repeating simply instead of thinking, no real progress is made. Try to think and to understand, and then you will grow. Do not build up a new set of opinions which are only the reflection of somebody else's thought. Imitation is, in this case, by no means the sincerest flattery. Earnest individual thought is the best thanks that you can give to a speaker who is appealing to your reason. Throw aside the bias and the prejudice that make you reject a thought because it is new; or, with some of you, make you accept it because it is old. The aim of these lectures is to win you from prejudice to study, to persuade you to think for yourselves. To think imperfectly is better than merely to repeat a right thought coming from somebody else. If you would learn wisdom, then you must think, strenuously, patiently, perseveringly; by repeating what you have heard from another, you will acquire only the faculty of the parrot, and not that of the man.

The Law of Action and Reaction

You will remember that, last Sunday, in speaking of reincarnation and the answers that it can give to many questions, I stated that there was one fact that ought to be understood before the answers would seem to be thoroughly satisfactory, and I called this fact the Law of Causation. I chose that term because it is one which is familiar to those who have read anything of western literature and science, though it is not quite the best word to describe the fact in nature which it is intended to cover. Emerson saw the natural fact better when he said that with every action its results were bound up; there was no real difference, according to him, no dividing line, between that part of an activity which is above the surface, the action, and that part which is below the surface, which we often speak of afterwards, as the consequence.

The two things, the visible and the invisible, are really parts of one thing, and the Lord Buddha put it in a very striking way when He said that you could no more separate the action from its results than the sound of the drum from the drum. When the drum is beaten there is sound; when an action is committed there is an invisible something before, that is spoken of as the cause, the motive, for the action, and there is an invisible something afterwards, which is spoken of as the consequence, the result. But looked at philosophically these are parts of the one activity. Because of that the philosophically-minded Hindū has always used the one word Karma, which means simply Action, to describe this definite relation, or rather identity, between the invisible and the visible parts of every activity. Now it is that which we are going to consider this afternoon.

There is no question as to the truth of this fact, called karma, so long as you remain entirely in the physical world. No one who has studied anything of science will deny the existence of the laws of nature. Those laws are not commands. They do not tell you: "Do this," or, "Do that." They are simply statements of certain successions, or sequences, that have been observed to happen, so that when one thing has happened, another definite thing invariably follows it. Such an observed invariable sequence is called a 'Law of Nature,'

and these laws of nature for science, are based on innumerable observations and experiments. A law of nature, then, is nothing more than a succession of happenings. This is fundamental for the understanding of what is called karma, and must be clearly understood. As I just said, there is no such thing in nature as 'law' in the sense of 'command'. The laws of Kings, of Parliaments, of Legislative Chambers, are commands to do or to abstain from doing, and the penalty connected with their breach is arbitrary; there is no connection between the offence forbidden by the statute and the penalty imposed on the breach; this is attached by the will of the law-giver, and there is no causal connection between the two. But with regard to a law of nature it is different; it is not a command; there is only a definite sequence, and the penalty following on its disregard is inevitable and natural. A natural law cannot be broken; it can only be disregarded, and the results of the disregard are inevitable. Certain conditions are stated, and wherever these are present, some other definite condition will and must follow. That is all that we mean by a law of nature. If you sow rice, you will reap rice, not barley: but nature does not say: "Sow rice," or, "Sow barley." She leaves you perfectly free to sow whichever you please, and the law of nature is seen in the definite relation between the sowing

and the harvest. If you want rice, it is of no use to sow barley or thistles. That is karma.

You have it again, put in another form, in the Christian Scriptures, clearly and unmistakably stated: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That is karma; it is stated precisely, karma, neither more nor less. And when you come to think over these laws of nature on the physical plane, if you appreciate what is meant by them, and understand their bearing, you will have no difficulty in extending the idea of law to the mental and moral worlds. To an ascertained sequence acting in the mental and moral worlds, this word is constantly applied in Hindū, Buddhist and Theosophical books. All the worlds are connected, and in all, Law, which is karma, holds sway. It is an invariable sequence, and has nothing of the nature of a command; it leaves you free to choose, but points out that such and such will inevitably happen as the consequent of your choice, and whatever the condition you choose, you must accept with it the inevitable consequent condition. The statement of this on the physical world by a scientific man might make an ignorant person think that he is not a free agent, and can do nothing. If you have the bare statement of a natural law, it would be quite easy for an ignorant person to think: "Such and such a condition is laid down by nature, and therefore I

cannot do so and so." Take what is called the law of gravitation—a special case of the general law of attraction—that bodies tend to move towards the centre of the earth. An ignorant person might think that everything had to move in that way, and, sitting down at the foot of a staircase, might declare: "The law of gravitation forbids me to move away from the earth; therefore I cannot walk upstairs." How is it possible for you to move upwards? By putting against the force of nature that draws you towards the centre another force of nature by which you may raise yourself away from it—i.e., muscular force. That is another fundamental idea which you must get hold of. Although there is the tendency to go towards the earth, you can yet rise from it by the utilisation of another force equally natural. You do not break the law of gravitation. You feel its working in the exertion by which you lift yourself against gravity; that exertion vindicates the truth of the scientific proposition that you cannot break a law of nature. Coming downstairs, effort is not necessary; for in that the law helps you. Thus as you go on studying, you find that a statement which at first seems paradoxical is true; because the laws are inviolable, therefore a man can move freely among them; but on one condition, and on one condition only—that he knows and understands them; otherwise he is a slave. Exactly in proportion

to your knowledge are you free in the midst of these forces of nature. You can trust their working, you can calculate upon them. They work changelessly; therefore you can reckon upon them, can neutralise those which hinder you and utilise those which help you. Just because nature is full of forces acting in every possible way under changeless laws, *therefore* a man by knowledge can become the master of nature. That is another point clearly to realise on the physical plane.

You remember the famous statement of a great scientist, that I have often quoted and that is profoundly true; "Nature is conquered by obedience." You cannot fight against nature; she is too strong for man's puny powers; but you can make her do exactly what you will, if you understand and know the laws within which her forces work. If you understand, you will be her master, and the only way in which science has become possible, the great truth which has made the magnificent and useful triumphs of science during the last century, is the fact that the world is a world of law. If it were not, its workings would be beyond calculation. We could never move with certainty. Accidents would be constantly happening, and we should never know what to expect. But because the laws do not change, they are calculable; because they do not change, they are comprehensible;

therefore in a world of changeless law man, by reason, becomes a free agent, can compel the laws to his service, and make them do for him what he cannot do unassisted by himself. There lies the secret of the famous phrase of Emerson : "Hitch your wagon on to a star." The force symbolised by the star will move our wagon, no matter what may be its weight. Man is not commanded by nature, is not her slave ; he is in the midst of discoverable and calculable laws and forces, which by knowing he can rule and use. In the midst of this net-work of changelessness he is able to bring about the thing he desires, and to be sure that nature will never fail him, nor swerve from her changeless road. When he fails, it is because he has not rightly made his appeal, because his knowledge is imperfect, and that imperfection has betrayed him.

Is it possible to transfer that certainty of law, that changeless inviolable security, to the realms of mind and morals? Ancient religions say so ; some modern religions say the same thing, but not quite so fully nor so clearly. If this be possible then is man indeed the master of his destiny, for he can then work in those worlds which shape the future, and make himself what he wills to be. But for this, as in physical science, detailed study is necessary, and the knowledge of the methods whereby laws are applied to bring about the desired results.

There are three subsidiary laws under the general law of action: (1) That thought is the power that builds up character; as you think you will be. (2) That the force which we call desire or will (two forms of the same force) draws together you and the thing you desire, and that you are bound to go to the place where that thing can be found, and that desire can be gratified. (3) That the effect of your conduct upon others, causing to them happiness or misery, brings you happiness or misery in return.

Last week I reminded you of the scientific fact that Action and Reaction are equal and opposite. If a man understands these three laws and knows how to apply them, he becomes master of his own future, maker of his own destiny. Instead of being helpless, as he would be under the hypothesis of special creation, or under the hypothesis of mental and moral heredity from his ancestors, he becomes no longer helpless, but the master of himself and his future, able to shape it in exact proportion to his knowledge and his will. I want now to show you how these laws work out, for without the knowledge of these laws and of the method of their application, the more general statement, however rational, would hardly be as satisfactory as I hope to make it.

(1) **THOUGHT BUILDS CHARACTER:**—You may test that statement either by the authority of the past, which speaks very strongly upon this in the

world's great Scriptures; or by your own experience—and this is, in many ways, better, because your own experience remains with you as yours, and cannot be shaken. The authority on this is very clear. In the *Chhāṇḍogyopaniṣat* it is said in so many words: "Man is created by thought; what a man thinks upon, that he becomes." The 'wise King of Israel' said just the same; "As a man thinks so he is." A similar idea is found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: "A man consists of his faith; as his faith is, so is he." Professor Bain, five thousand years later, you may remember, also gave conduct as the test of belief. I might quote many other sentences, and show you how entirely on this point the Scriptures of the world are in unison. We find it everywhere. Now if that is really a law of nature, it is subject to, is capable of, verification. Every statement of a law in nature—if the statement be true—can be verified by individual experiments; and so with this. If you want to know with absolute certainty that thought makes character, try. And the way of trying is very simple, and proves the law to be true in a very short time. I say that because the modern people are always in a hurry. But remember that no first-hand knowledge can be gained without patience and effort. Suppose you want to find out whether by thought you can add or take anything from your character—selfishness, or any other weakness;

let us take as an example that you are irritable; this is not a crime, but a very common and ordinary weakness. You recognise that you are very easily made irritable. Having recognised it, never think of it again; because if thought builds character, thinking about a weakness will put more life into it and make it grow; thought on your irritability would make you more irritable, and strengthen this undesirable characteristic. Instead of thinking about irritability you will think about the opposite quality—patience. Think about patience for some five minutes every morning; not once, and then forgetting it for three or four days, and then doing it again. Irregularity undoes what you have done, and you will be only marking time as a soldier does, when he wants to keep the step but not move from his ground. You must do it regularly, for this is a scientific experiment. Every morning, then, you will think for five minutes about patience. Think in any way you like; vary the thinking; for it does not matter much what you think provided you think about it; one very good way is to imagine yourself perfect in patience, a perfect model of the virtue you are trying to develop. Then think of the most aggravating people you know, and whom you often meet, and imagine them provoking you as they do whenever you come across them. Image them as aggravating you to the uttermost,

and image yourself as absolutely patient and unmoved under all their provocation. There must not be, in your thought, the least giving way to irritability. Whatever you think of their doing in the way of provocation you must be patient in this mental picture. Repeat that, with whatever variations you like, every morning for a week. Then you will find that the thought of patience comes up in your mind without being summoned in the course of the day. That is the first sign that your morning thought is working. You have made in your mind the tendency to think patience. At first it will come up after a little outburst of irritability; the morning thought asserts itself and you think: "Oh! I ought to have been patient." Go on still, until *with* the provocation comes the thought of patience, and there is an effort to be patient. Go on still, until the thought of patience comes *before* provocation, and the provocation glances off, from the mental habit of patience. Still go on, until you will find in the end of a few months (the time will depend upon the force of your thought) that you have established patience as a part of your character, and you no longer feel the least irritability under the small provocations of life. I know that this is true, because I have done it. I was naturally irritable, but am now a very patient person. Try it for yourselves, and when you have proved the law you will have

a feeling of certainty, you will *know* that it is true that thought makes character. In that way we can go on, eliminating weakness after weakness, until each is replaced by the corresponding strength. You can definitely build up character, build it as certainly as a mason can build up brick by brick, a wall. There shows itself the certainty of natural law, as sure in the mental as in the physical world; as you think, you will be. And if you will try that simple experiment, and, remembering the importance of the question, be willing to sacrifice to it five minutes a day for a few months, you will find that you have that power; then, as far as character is concerned, you have become the master who knows how to make it, and your success is only a matter of time and of resolute effort. Is not this enormously better than going on all your life sighing: "Oh! I wish I were good!" and yet going on every day doing the same stupid wrong things? There is no other sure way. The power of thought is the power of creation. God made the worlds by His divine thought. We build our own little worlds by our human thought. There is no other creative power in the universe, and if men knew and used that power, their evolution would be much more rapid than it is.

(2) Next comes desire. DESIRE DRAWS TOGETHER THE DESIRER AND THE DESIRED. This may not at

first strike you as so palpably true as the preceding. Yet is desire, will, the one motive power in the universe. You see it as attraction everywhere. You find it present in chemical affinities and repulsions; it is playing in the magnet which attracts the soft iron; in every force of cohesion and disintegration, attraction and repulsion, the double-faced power in nature, it is the one motive power. So long as it is drawn out from you by outer objects we call it desire. You desire to possess this, that or the other. As long as you are attracted or repelled by these outside things, you are in that butterfly stage of consciousness of which I spoke, moving towards, grasping at, one object after another, inconstant, errant. But when, instead of being swayed by desire for outside objects, the same power is directed from within, not by outside objects but by accumulated experiences weighed by reason, then we call it Will. The difference between a weak and a strong character is that the one is moved by outside objects at the moment, and so cannot be depended on, and the other by inside experience, which decides his course among attractive and unattractive objects and may be relied on. There is the tendency in us, desire, to move towards an attractive thing, or to call it to you, just as there is attraction between a magnet and a piece of soft iron. It is the same power. The reason for that attraction

is that there is one life in all, and the lives separated by their different forms are ever trying to rejoin; all things tend to move together, or to push one another away, whether they be animate or inanimate, to use the ordinary words. Everything you desire to possess is drawn towards you by that desire. You see it even in the limit of one short life. When a man sets his desire on an object, it tends to come within his grasp. If a person has a strong desire to visit a country, the probabilities are that, before he passes away, an opportunity will present itself and he will find himself there. And when you come to the wider sweep of many lives, then indeed you realise the tremendous power of desire—the desire which carries a man to the place where it can be satisfied, which draws him back to the spot that he may grasp the thing after which he has longed. Desire thus makes our opportunities. The desire draws the object towards us, and carries us to the place where the object can be attained. That is the second of the three subsidiary laws.

And this brings with it a warning. *Be careful what you desire.* You may take an illustration from the commonest of all desires—the desire for money. See a man who piles up an immense fortune; after he possesses it, he often does not know what to do with it, and it becomes a weariness to him. There is nothing more common

than that. He has spent the greater part of his life in accumulating wealth, and at the end he is very often a disappointed and disheartened man. As long as the contrast between past poverty and present wealth lasts in his mind, the wealth is most enjoyable; but gradually he becomes habituated to his immense power of acquiring objects, and it palls upon him. In that struggle and that weariness is hidden the whole secret of evolution. Man advances by desires, and the moment he grasps the object of desire it breaks into pieces, it crumbles, it no longer satisfies him. It is by these toys which so attract us that God induces His children to make the efforts that are necessary for the drawing out of the powers of Divinity within them. The prizes of life are useful, not for the enjoyment they yield when we have obtained them, but for the efforts that they stimulate while they are unattained and desired. But there is nothing worse for progress than for a man to lose desire, until his will to do the Will of God has taken the place of desire for individual possession. He falls into lethargy, becomes useless, will not exert himself. In everything there is inevitable disappointment except in the realisation of the Self. It was put very strongly and beautifully by George Herbert:

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let me," He said "pour on him all I can,
Let the world's riches which expanded lie
Contract into a span."

Then strength first made its way,
Then beauty followed, wisdom, power, pleasure;
When almost all was spent, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone, of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should" said He,
Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He will adore my gifts instead of Me,
And rest in nature, not the God of nature,
So both should losers be.

"Yes! let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least
If goodness move him not, then weariness
May toss him to my breast."¹

Everything breaks except the Divine. Man, having tried all and found everything fail him, realises his own Divinity, and then and then only does he find rest and peace.

(3) AS YOU GIVE HAPPINESS OR MISERY TO OTHERS SO SHALL YOU REAP HAPPINESS OR MISERY FOR YOURSELF. According to the effect of our action upon others comes a similar reaction upon ourselves. This law explains a class of life's problems which I did not touch upon last Sunday. Sometimes you find a man wrapped in luxury, who has not a

¹ This is given from memory, and I am unable to verify, so I must apologise for probable blunders.

good character. "Why should he be so richly endowed? he is selfish and altogether undesirable." Virtue does not bring wealth; its reward, as Tennyson sings, is "going on, and never to die". Suppose a man does some charitable action, gives a large amount of money—as in England or in America a man very often gives a park to a town, or over here gives money to build a hospital, not because he cares for the poor, but because he hopes to get a title by his gift, to be made in England a Baron or an Earl, or here a Rai or Khān Bahādur. What has he done really, and how would it work out? He has given pleasure to a number of poor people; the park gives happiness to thousands of the poor; the hospital brings relief to thousands of suffering men and women and children. The harvest of this will be physical surroundings of a comfortable kind, wealth, luxury. He reaps as he sowed. As by sowing rice you reap rice, so by sowing pleasure you reap pleasure. But—he has done it from a selfish motive, not for the sake of giving pleasure, but for a personal gain. How does that work out? In character. It works out in his next birth as selfish character, and that means unhappiness, no matter what the outward comforts may be. It appears a paradox; outward comfort and luxury, and a character that none can admire; and yet the law has

worked out. Nature has paid him physical pleasure for physical pleasure. She pays for the selfishness of the motive with the selfish character, which ensures personal unhappiness in the midst of all his luxury. Every law works on its own lines, with its own inevitable consequences; nothing is forgotten; nothing is omitted; nothing is forgiven; and all these methods by which karma is working are the explanations of the paradoxes of human life.

Realise those three laws and that you can make your future by applying them; you make character by thinking, you make opportunity for the gaining of objects by desiring, you make happiness physically, mentally, morally, by giving physical, mental and moral happiness to others.

Seeing these laws and understanding to some extent how to apply them, let us carry the study a little further and meet one or two of the difficulties that rise in the mind before the whole of this is understood. Naturally so many interlinking and interweaving desires, thoughts, and actions must make a very complicated web of life. How shall we understand how all the past works in the present, and how will these principles enable us to guide our conduct more wisely? A little knowledge of this law is often distinctly dangerous, because one of the results of knowing a little about it is the tendency to sit down and say:

“Oh, it is my karma,” just as an ignorant person might sit at the bottom of the stairs and say: “I must move down towards the centre of the earth, and so I cannot go up.” This little knowledge has caused karma to have a very paralysing effect upon many Indians. Instead of realising that, like all the laws of nature, it is not a compelling but an enabling force, they have sat down with the idea that they can do nothing because it would be ‘against karma’. It is not the fault of the old writers; they have put the whole thing clearly enough. You remember how Yudhishthira went to Bhīṣhma, the Master of Dharma, and asked him which was the greater, exertion or destiny, the present effort or the past results. Bhīṣhma went into a long explanation and showed how karma was made up of past thoughts, actions and desires. Having shown the strands which made the rope of karma, he wound up by saying: “Exertion is greater than destiny.” How can that be true, when there are so many lives behind you? Exertion is greater than destiny, when there is this immense mass of causes from the past, and you have to meet them in the present? Let us see the reason for the statement. Consider the results of one day’s activity. Look back in the evening, and see what your thoughts have been; they have been very mixed, some good, some bad, and

some indifferent; the net results, the balance, is very little, either of good or bad. So with your desires; they have been very mixed, some noble and good, some poor and even base; the net outcome of this second force is not all in one direction. So with actions; some of our actions have made people happy, some of them were unkind; the net result is a balance almost between the two. Apply that to all days of all the past lives and you will realise that there is not one great stream of karma of one sort which sweeps you on, but a very large number of small streams of karma, working in different directions, some neutralising one another; so that the net result is, as a rule, extremely small. A man may have thought so steadily and deliberately that he has made a part of his character undesirable; very well. Then by persistent and steady thinking in the opposite direction he will have to undo what he has done. But in the great majority of cases that happen to you, many streams are converging upon you and pressing you in different directions, and you are now mingling with them present thoughts, desires and activity. Hence, it is often the case that the force of the moment, the thought, the desire of the moment, is—to change the metaphor—just enough to balance the opposing weights, and turn the scale a little on the one side or the other. It is not as though in the balance of karma all the weights were in one scale and none

in the other. As a matter of fact, they are often very evenly balanced and a finger's weight will often make one scale go down. That is why Bhīṣhma tried to stimulate his hearers to exertion, saying: "Exertion is greater than destiny." You thought, desired and acted in the past, and now, out of all that mass of thoughts, desires and actions, some are with you and some are against you, and you, the present thinker, desirer and actor, may add the weight which makes one scale or the other touch the ground.

There are indeed cases where bad karma is so one-sided that it is too strong for present exertion to overbear it. In such cases, the knower of karma ought to strive against the evil to the very last ounce of his strength; for by this he diminishes the force of the past which is working in that evil direction, and thus weakens it for the future. Suppose a man in the past has always desired things that are not his own, and has in this life a strong tendency to thief. Suppose he gives way to that, when it comes upon him as an over-mastering temptation. Should he sit down and say: "I cannot help it?" He should fight against it to the last moment of resistant power. Even though he may then fail, may fall again into crime, the force will be so much the weaker in the future for every effort which he has made. He

may fail for the moment, but he will conquer to-morrow. The lesson that comes out of the knowledge of karma is that whatever the temptation may be, we should fight against it until our last bit of strength is gone. Though men may judge you hardly for your final failure, knowing nothing of the preceding struggle, the law of karma has placed your endeavours to the credit side of your account.

Take another case. Let us think of a case wherein I have often heard karma misused, both in the East and in the West, by people who have begun to study it but have not understood its working. When another person is in difficulty or suffering, they say: "It is his karma: why should I help him?" There are all kinds of evils and sufferings around us, and it is true that they are the results of karma, but that is no reason why we should not labour to change them. Bad thoughts, desires and actions have created the sufferings; but that does not justify the present withholding of good thoughts, desires and actions which will change the sufferings into happiness. As yesterday created to-day, so are we to-day creating to-morrow. Even, selfishly, you should help when another suffers under his karma, for if you do not do your best to help him, then you are making a karma which will entail absence of help in the hour of your own need. It is no answer to the cry of human

pain to say: "You deserve it: you were wrong or foolish." Your duty is always to help. It is true that Divine Justice rules the world, and that none can suffer aught which he does not deserve; but the carrying out of a law of nature which inflicts suffering may be safely left by us who are blind, in the Divine Hands which guide the world. Leave you the Rod of Justice to God who alone can wield it rightly, and be you the messengers of the Divine love and mercy to the sufferers. Know that if the law exacts suffering, nothing that you can do will prevent its working, but you may be the messengers chosen to carry the kârmically-due relief to the one who has paid his debt of pain. Will you refuse to be the agent of the law which brings the sufferer before you in order that you may relieve? If we make our own hardness, our own selfishness, our own indifference take shelter under a law that is not understood, we only add a blasphemy against justice to the faults we have already accumulated, and in the hour of our own suffering there will be no hand outstretched to help. That will be the karma of leaving a brother unhelped. This mistake arises from not understanding, or from knowing a little bit of the law and not realising its workings. If anything is a man's karma, you cannot prevent it from coming to him. You may leave the law of karma to take care of itself.

Nature does not want our help in defending her laws. Our duty is action, work and rescue when possible; we can only work within the law and through the law. And if karma neutralises our efforts we can only submit. A man who knows nothing sometimes acts more effectively than a man who knows only a little. An Englishman, not knowing the law of karma, will fling himself against an obstacle and will often compel circumstances to give way before him; while an Indian, who knows a little of the law, will sit down helplessly in front of similar circumstances and suffer under them. Neither of these conditions is good. It is not good not to know the law. It is not good to have only enough knowledge to paralyse. It is good to know the law and to use it. The whole of it is in the Shāstras for the Hindūs, but these are forgotten and so men blunder in their ways.

Suppose we apply this law of karma to one or two of the problems I turned aside from last week: The death of a son, but not now of a babe. The case was that a young man, seventeen or eighteen years of age, the only son of his parents—the boy suddenly died. He passed away and the parents came to me in terrible distress and said: “Can you tell us what is this karma which leaves unhappy children with poor and helpless parents who care little for them and cannot provide for

them, and takes away this our son, whom we love so dearly, and can put out in life, surrounded with every comfort?" Such questions are often asked, so I looked back into the past, and I found the reason. They had been husband and wife in a previous birth, and had had three or four children of their own. A brother had died, leaving an orphan child with none to care for it. To leave a brother's child in the streets was impossible, so they took him in. But they were not at all kind to the boy. They made him a household drudge, fed him badly, treated him unkindly, and he died between the ages of seventeen and eighteen, heart-broken, for he was an affectionate little fellow and had had no love given to him but only harshness. He came back as their own son, with their whole hopes, as father and mother, centred upon that one child, with all their strong affection clinging to him; karma struck him down and took him away from them at the time when he had died in the previous life, and left their home desolate. Thus karma works. There is no escape. There is no such thing in nature as forgiveness, there is only conquest by knowledge, when you learn to balance one force against another, and neutralise past evil by present good.

Studying in this way the working of the law, you gradually become scientific in the view that you take of life. You do not complain, for you

know that you are yourself the cause both of your sufferings and of your joys. The scientific man, if his experiment does not work out, blames himself, not nature. If he had arranged his apparatus and his materials according to the laws, it must have worked out, for nature never fails us; if the experiment does not come off, he knows that the error lies with him and not with nature, and he searches for his mistake. That is the way in which a knowledge of karma works in our lives. We may not always know why a particular trouble has arisen, but we know that it cannot have come without a cause, and we at once concern ourselves with the best way of meeting the outcome of the past in order that out of the trouble of the present we may make good destiny for the future. In all the troubles of life a knowledge of karma is of the greatest help. No injustice, no partiality, anywhere; every man reaping the harvest of which he sowed the seed.

You may say that karma is a difficult philosophical problem, and that you cannot expect the masses to understand it. That is not found impossible in India. A peasant in the field will tell you in simple language what karma is. He understands that he made his present life, and that in his present he is making his future. An Indian and an Englishman were talking about

karma. The Englishman said: "People cannot understand it. It is not for the common people." They were passing a house, where a lot of coolies, bricklayers, were working. The Indian said: "Ask one of those men why you are what you are, and he is where he is." "He won't understand." "Never mind: go and ask." He went up and asked the coolie: "Why am I rich and comfortable, and why are you here working in the hot sun?" "Because in the past you earned what you have now and in the past I earned mine. And if I do well, I shall be comfortable and happy in my next birth, and if you do badly now, you will be unhappy in yours." Karma influenced the man's life and work. He could not have talked about it as I have been talking to you to-day. He could not have argued or used philosophical terms. But he knew the main facts and lived by them; not the scientific statement of natural law, but the effect upon life of conduct in successive births. There is nothing that rules men's lives more practically than this law of karma. I have indeed pointed out that a little knowledge may paralyse. But the remedy for that is not to take away the little knowledge men have, but to increase the knowledge, and to show it as a stimulus to action, because it gives power.

There is one difficulty which may strike some of you as to desire. It does not seem to be quite

under our control. How can we weigh our desires and choose those which we will allow ourselves to feel, and thus choose also the objects we shall possess and the lot which we shall enjoy? We want, we wish. How can we make ourselves like what we do not like, and dislike what we like? You cannot do anything directly to change desire by desire; you cannot cure it by desire. Yet you are not powerless. There are three parts in every activity: the desire, the thought and the act. Thought once more is your helper. If you find that you have desires which, working out, will ultimately bring unsatisfactory results; if you find physical desires too strong—love of food, drink, bodily enjoyment of any kind—you cannot directly stop these, but you can change them by thought. Look into your life and see what desires you have which will “become wombs of pain”. Suppose it is gluttony; you are fond of dainty food; you eat too much. You must say to yourself—not at the moment of enjoyment—but when you are quiet and in a thoughtful mood: “What will be the result, if I give way to this? I shall get gradually too stout and helpless; I shall disorder my digestion; I shall become diseased. I will stop this desire, because it leads to suffering in the long run.” Then by that thought you begin to rein in your desire. You

mentally picture the disastrous results of the vice, and thus breed a disgust for it. You deliberately make up your mind not to yield to a passing pleasure which brings long-continued pain as a result. By thought you struggle with and grip the desire. You can thus use thought to master desire and to change it. If you thus picture the painful results vividly and see how the vice will lead to wrong or suffering, then you can deliberately set your thought against it. Choose your wishes well and scientifically, with a view to their results. You may have a choice between spending a rupee upon a book or a dinner. You had better spend only two or three annas on the dinner, and the rest on a book, for the book lasts, while the dinner is soon over and the pleasure it gave is forgotten. Deliberate choice by thought—you being a reasoning creature—is your weapon against every desire that has in it pain as a result. It means, certainly, that your life will become thoughtful, that you can no longer live without reflection; but surely you who are men and women should not live as the brutes do, moved by passion and desire, thoughtless of the future. Your very name means the thinker, for you are men. The root from which comes 'man,' in European languages, is the Samskr̥t root 'man,' think. You are thinkers by your very name, by the place you are in through evolution, by the rung upon which you stand on the ladder of lives.

For those who reason, for those who think, for those who deliberate, knowledge is absolutely necessary, for reason is futile unless there are data on which that reason can work, compare, weigh, and pronounce judgment. Therefore is it necessary that you should study the law and, understanding it, act in accordance with it.

Such is the object with which I have been speaking to you this afternoon. I have put to you the fact of karma, with the law in its triple division, bearing on desire, thought and act. Instead of being discontented with what you are, make up your mind to be that which you want to be. Clear, strong thought is for the reasonable man and woman, and just as in the physical world, if you find things not as you would have them, just as in that you look for the causes, and having found them, change the causes and with that the effects; so also with your character, with your desires and your actions, realise the creative power of your thought, the directive power of your desires, and the fact that your happiness and misery depend upon your action upon others. Knowing the law by study, act upon the law as reasonable beings; create for yourselves a better destiny, a nobler future. Remember that as thought is a creative power and builds character, so is character the chief factor in your happiness, that upon which it most depends. Noble character, strong

character, developed character, mean a great destiny in the future. Yours is the power of making it, for the choice—Ah! that is in your own hands.

Man's Life in the Three Worlds

We have come to the last of the present course of lectures, and I am to deal with man's life in three worlds, not only in one. Let me begin by reminding you that only at certain times in the history of the world does the idea arise and spread through certain sections of the population, that all that there is of man is what we see of him in this life and this world, limited to the time between birth and death, and with no relation to other worlds nor to consciousness connected with those worlds. It is a remarkable and interesting fact that that phase, which appears over and over again in the world's history seems always to appear at corresponding periods. It is never seen when a civilisation is young and vigorous. It is found when a civilisation has grown old, when it has become over-luxurious,

when bodily enjoyments are dominating the life of the intelligence; when high living, to use a well-known phrase, has rather taken the place of high thinking—and that always comes hand-in-hand with the decay and the speedy passing away of the civilisation. Lord Bacon pointed to this fact in one of his famous *Essays*, in which he remarked that times of atheism are always civil times, quiet times. (I do not know whether he would have said the same after the French Revolution, but we must remember that the Reign of Terror occurred after the reproclamation of a Divine Being, so that the bloodshed cannot fairly be put down to philosophical thought, however sceptical.) The fact is that materialism appears always when a civilisation has touched its climax, the climax which precedes its decay. It seems as though in the normal healthy condition of the mind and body of man, he has never dreamt of considering himself as confined merely to the physical life. When, however, the body is overbearing the mind, when the senses are dominating the intelligence, then it is that in over-luxurious living, in the pampering of the body and the over-indulgence of the senses, the idea comes to the front that man is not an immortal being. We also notice that it is in the midst of such a decaying and materialistic civilisation that you will always find the embryo, the

beginning, of a new civilisation, which is to replace the one which tends to disappear. Imperial Rome became distinctly materialistic before the decay of her power began, but then, in the very midst of that failing Empire the new faith which was to build Christendom was growing. For ever in history, just at the time when many are losing belief in spiritual things, there is a new influence poured out from the spiritual realms, so that the embryo of the new civilisation is seen within the dying body of the old.

Surely something of this kind has again been seen in our own day. If you look back over the last thirty years of the last century you will see that there was an enormous spread of militant unbelief, that science was becoming very sceptical, that her very discoveries were leading her deeper and deeper into materialism. Side by side with the decay of religion and with the dangers menacing it from all sides, there was a similar tendency in literature and in art, which both became imitative rather than creative. Most of all was this seen in France, where materialism had triumphed more than elsewhere, and French literature and art suffered more than in the more religious nations; her literature became unclean, her art indecent, ugly reproductions of ugly facts. But now, everywhere, there is seen a great impulse to the religious life of the world; and with

it has come a tendency to new schools of art ; you can see it in painting, in sculpture, and in music especially ; for ever where there is a fresh impulse of spiritual life, there is also a fresh impulse to a new creative art—creative, not imitative. A new civilisation is once more being prepared, and although the present civilisation is passing into decay, humanity, as ever before, will go forward with new strength and vigour, prepared to reclothe itself in a new garment of glory and of beauty.

There are many signs to-day, not only of a revival of religion—though that is seen everywhere—but also of the recognition, outside of what technically is called religion, of man's larger consciousness ; that he is related to more worlds than one ; that he is in actual touch, while still in the physical world, with worlds which are not physical, nor cognisable by the senses of the flesh. I am not thinking of the Theosophical Society especially, but rather of the wider movement in the world at large, which we always call the 'Theosophical Movement ;' we see, especially among psychologists, the tendency to recognise and to try to understand the working of human consciousness outside the brain ; the recognition of worlds which we dimly sense, but do not yet perceive ; which are not yet understood but are dimly felt to exist ; that which has been laid stress upon by such men

as Sir Oliver Lodge, and very definitely by Frederic Myers, who speaks of a planetary and a cosmic consciousness: meaning by the first, a consciousness contacting only our planet, our earth, and working through the brain; meaning by a cosmic consciousness, a consciousness which stretches out towards realms outside our earth, and which comes into relation with a larger life, and scans wider horizons; and he pointed out in *Human Personality* how many indications there were, especially in our own days, that man was beginning to develop within the circle of his planetary consciousness the recognition of a cosmos, not only of a planet; and that that larger consciousness was the justification for religion, for art, for poetry, in a word for the Beautiful in life, all of which was useless from the standpoint of ordinary materialism. He quoted a statement from a French materialist that the object of evolution was that man should conquer the physical world, subdue it to his service, and that everything which did not tend to that one end was merely a bye-product. In manufacturing, as you know, when you desire to produce a certain thing, and in the course of production certain other things arise, which may or may not be useful, but are not meant to be produced, such things are termed bye-products. So it is, he said, with evolution. The goal of evolution is the conquest of this planet by man, using

material means; and everything else which arises from man is a bye-product; among these bye-products he classes religion and art; in fact he gave a list of the things which make man MAN, which make man more than the head of the animal kingdom. If we have an exquisite nervous system which puts us into touch with the physical world only, and if we possess nothing more delicate, bringing us by similar means into similar contacts with other worlds, if our consciousness be earth-born and earth-perishing, it is very difficult, nay, it is impossible, to meet this argument of the materialist; in such case all those things are fanciful, imaginary, unreal; they do not help in the evolutionary process, they are merely bye-products, and sensible men ought to concentrate themselves upon the conquest of this world, the only world they can have. If that be true, human life becomes miserably poor; for the very things which make life real, which make it worth living, which raise man above the tyranny of circumstances, are those very bye-products. We may lose money, health, and everything that belongs to the physical body apart from the working of the mind, but if religion, imagination, literature and art be left to us, then life would still be worth living. These do not depend upon wealth, they do not depend upon other people, they do not depend upon circumstances; they are inner treasures; none can rob us of them, they are

of a world whereinto destruction cannot enter; upon these men's happiness really depends, and they stretch onwards into worlds immortal, into worlds which death cannot wither.

Let us consider the life in the physical world first, and see what it really is. There is a consciousness, a living—thinking, acting, willing—Self. That is the essential man. But how does that consciousness come into touch with this physical world? Not directly, but indirectly, through a certain mechanism made out of the matter of the physical world, which has been formed and shaped into organs wherein and wherethrough that consciousness can work. If you take such an unfortunate creature as that American girl (Helen Keller) who became dumb, deaf, blind, had no sense left, except touch, taste, and smell, to connect her with the physical world, and think how that outer world could be contacted by her, you will at once realise that such a consciousness is in prison, shut out from the world in which we all are living. The use of the body, the perfection of the body, depends on its power of contacting the world for which it is built, thus bringing the consciousness, which is yourself, into touch with the world that surrounds you. Every step forward in physical evolution is the making of the body a better means of contact with the outer world. The value of the body is that it is the apparatus by which

the consciousness comes into touch with the outer world; and this is the thought which must be definitely grasped in order that you may realise the relation that exists between an Intelligence and the body which he wears.

We have here a number of senses—five senses; but the proverb says seven, and we Theosophists say that is so, that there are two still to be developed, that we are still in course of physical evolution; there are two more senses still to be developed in the physical body which will bring the consciousness more into touch with the outer world; we Theosophists say that these two senses will work through two little organs in the brain, that ordinary science will tell you are vestigial organs—that is, organs which were once active but have become atrophied, of which only a remnant remains, no longer utilisable; these two organs are the pituitary body and the pineal gland. We declare not simply on theory, but on observation and experience, that these two organs are not simply vestigial, but are rudimentary, preparing for the future. We do not deny that the pineal gland was once an eye, a ‘third eye’ *i.e.*, a medial eye; we admit it to the full; but we say that that organ has another function to play in the future, a function which it is playing at the present time in some people who have artificially quickened its evolution. This development will become normal

and universal, as the race in general develops. The pineal gland is really the organ by which thought is transferred from brain to brain; an organ which will bring the human being into touch with the currents of thought which are continually playing in the world round us, which will be able to receive them and to utilise them; and that as literally as the eye to-day receives the waves in ether that we call light, and by these rays is able to see, so will this pineal gland in the future receive the vibrations in the physical matter set going by thought, and utilise those for communication. The pituitary body has another function. It is the organ which puts us into connection with the astral world. When it is working in the human brain, active, having been brought into activity by meditation, then you have a bridge between the consciousness in the physical and the next, or astral, worlds.

Both worlds are present with you at the same time, all the time that you are awake; when you go to sleep, you leave the physical world and are living in the astral world. If the pituitary body be in full working consciousness, then that which you do in the astral world, or, as you would say, in sleep, remains in consciousness as a memory, just as there remains a memory of what you did yesterday. This part of the physical brain is now undergoing evolution, and so near is it to functioning

in our own days that a very little stimulation will bring it into activity. That pituitary body is the next sense-organ, and its working will enable man to know accurately and definitely in his brain-consciousness that which he now senses dimly ; to see that other world as now he sees the physical ; and to unify the physical and the astral consciousness, so that both can play easily through the astral and physical bodies so that consciousness becomes one in both worlds.

I have run, in thus speaking, just a little beyond the point on which I want especially to dwell for a few moments. Your physical body, then, it is, which puts you into contact with the physical world, and every organ it has evolved is related to some special rates of vibration in the world outside. Professor Crookes, writing in the *Fortnightly Review* in, I think, 1891, pointed out that our knowledge of the outer world depended on our senses, and that if the eye were modified, the whole world would change to us. Now the ether in the eye vibrates under the impact of the vibrations we call light. He suggested that it might vibrate instead under the impact of electrical waves, so that it should respond to the vibrations of electricity instead of to those of light. He then sketched a description of the world as it would appear to a man who was seeing by electrical waves instead of by light waves, and

showed how completely different it would be. That is only a specimen of the difference which might be made in consciousness by a little change in our present sense-organs; and when you remember we are still evolving, that we have not finished our evolution, you will readily see that it is possible, even probable, that some such changes as I have indicated may be beginning to come; and as a matter of fact we find them in an ever-increasing number of the educated and cultured people of the great fifth, or Āryan, Root-Race to-day.

In all this, so far as the physical body is concerned, we are on ordinary scientific ground, with a forecast of the future in addition. Let us go a little further, and consider the world of dream. Here, again, we need not at first leave this same safe ground, for science has investigated dreams very much during the last thirty years. First it tried to investigate dreams by finding out the effect of suggesting a dream to a person by a touch on the body. You will find a large number of these experiments in Du Prel's *Philosophy of Mysticism*, which well deserves your attention. It was found out by experiment that a large number of people can be made to dream by a touch. In one case the back of the neck was touched. On waking up, the man had had a dream in which he had committed a murder, had

been tried, went through the whole scene in court, heard the charge of the judge and the verdict of the jury, was sentenced, taken to the condemned cell, brought out, bound down on the guillotine, and—"as the knife fell, I awoke". There are very many of these experiments recorded, large numbers of them, and in addition to that some of us have tried similar experiments ourselves. The vividness and richness of the dream depend upon the richness of the person's imagination and thought power who is the dreamer. Some water was sprinkled on the head of a rough settler in Australia, and he jumped up and rushed out of his tent, thinking a terrible thunder-storm was raging. There was no storm. The same thing was done to an educated man, but it brought a long panoramic dream of various storm-effects. The richer the imagination, the richer the dream, even when thus suggested. In all these cases the person experimented on awoke, and related his dream, but it was a rather clumsy way of making experiments; so next they tried to catch the dreamer while he was dreaming. That they managed to do by throwing persons into the hypnotic sleep, in which you can get at the man while his dream is going on, and question him as to what he saw and what he was doing. In this way a fairly full theory was made. But then arose a curious question: not in these dreams which were suggested

from outside, not in the trance conditions into which the man was thrown artificially, but without suggestion and in normal dreaming. In this certain other phenomena showed themselves. Myers has given cases in which a man dreamed of a thing that he wanted to know, but which he did not know in his waking mind. One remarkable case is that of a gap in a hieroglyph; the student puzzled over it in vain, and one night an ancient priest appeared to the archæologist and supplied what was wanted. There are many cases in which knowledge was not within the reach of the man in the waking consciousness of the brain-mind, and yet came to the same man when he was out of the brain, when the brain was in the condition of sleep.

Observation has gone still further. A person may see a thing before it occurs, and so be warned of the coming of an event before it happens. One case happened only the other day. You know there is a ship that is supposed to be lost, the *Waratah*, sailing from Australia. In that ship there was one man, a passenger, whose friend in England tells the story. In his cabin one night a man suddenly appeared holding a blood-stained rag and sword, and he put the sword between the rag and the man: he appeared three times. The dream does not seem particularly significant, but it had its effect. It scared

the man, and he left the ship at Durban. Four nights afterwards he dreamt that he saw the ship battling in a heavy sea; it rose on a large billow, turned over, and vanished. The safety of the ship is despaired of. The underwriters have paid the insurance; she is given up. The interesting point in that is the warning conveyed and acted upon, and then the dream of the sinking ship afterwards. There are many such warnings on record and you may study them, if you will. What do they indicate? According to those who have developed consciousness so that it can work outside the brain as well as through it, they indicate the existence of another world interpenetrating the physical; a *material* world, but a world composed of finer matter than that which we call physical, and the fact that man has a body of that finer matter, interpenetrating his physical body, and contacting the world composed of its own material; that second coating, as we may call it, of the matter of the second world, the intermediate or astral world, is a body in the same sense as the physical body is a body, *i.e.*, an apparatus to put consciousness in touch with an outer world; the second body serves this purpose to that second world, as it develops. That second body is now in course of evolution, and is more evolved in the higher races and the more educated people. It is the next body to

develop in evolution, and is developing now in the more advanced nations of our world, and this body as it evolves, puts consciousness increasingly in touch with the other world and enables man to sense it. The dreams which give information and warning are merely the results of the human consciousness working in finer matter, in a body not yet sufficiently evolved to work as freely as the physical body works, which has been in course of evolution for millions of years. The evolution of this second body can be much quickened by strenuous meditation; as people meditate, this body develops its organs just as simply, just as naturally, just as much under law, as the physical body has developed its organs one after another. There is nothing that can be called supernatural about this. All of you are on the verge of it, and now and then the dim impressions you receive come from the fact that that body is sufficiently evolved to respond to the vibrations of the finer matter, but not sufficiently evolved to be under complete control, and to be working deliberately. In that body you are every night, when you go out of your physical body during sleep. It is working the whole time, both day and night; in the night as the vehicle of consciousness in the subtler world; in the day as the vehicle of desires, stimulating the physical body into action; for this body of astral matter

is the body by which you feel and desire—hence called ‘the desire body’—the body which is driven out when you use chloroform, ether and other anæsthetics, and when it goes, it leaves the body senseless, insensitive; for the real sensation is not in the physical body, in the denser body; that no longer feels when these anæsthetics have driven out the subtler matter which normally interpenetrates it. ‘Going to sleep’ is simply going out of your coarse body in your finer; just as literally as, when you come home, you take off your overcoat, and remain in the coat underneath which you wear in the house. You are using this body now, not only after death; and I want to emphasise this fact. You are not a naked ‘spirit’ after death; you are clad in a familiar garment. And this garment will become more and more familiar to you, as you become more and more conscious during your sleep. As you develop this body more, use it more fully, your ‘sleeping’ life will become as fully conscious as your waking; in very truth the ‘sleep’ life, the life in the astral world, becomes more real than is the life of the physical world; as the gas is finer than the liquid or the solid, so is this astral world finer than the physical. Just as colour shows by the light-ether, though you do not find it in the coarser matter shut out from light, so all kinds of colours, of delicate hues,

appear before you as this finer body becomes organised; and you find yourself in another world, which is indeed more real than the physical because there is a thinner veil of matter between the consciousness and the contacts of the outer world.

I pass on to the third, the mental, world. We normally live in the three worlds all the time while we are awake. Whenever you are thinking, you are using a still subtler kind of matter, that which Prof. Kingdon Clifford called 'mind-stuff,' the stuff that answers by vibrations to the changing moods of consciousness just as really as the vibration in the ether gives rise to the consciousness of light. In that also you are living, but the apparatus of consciousness in this yet finer matter is even less developed in the majority than is the astral body; but as evolution goes on, it is becoming more and more developed, so that it is possible to leave the astral also behind, and to be in full consciousness in the mental world. It is the world which, after death, is called the heaven-world, the svarga of the Hindū.

Take it as a theory, if you will, and think it over: that you are living in three worlds *all the time*—the physical world, the desire world, and the mental world. That you use three bodies and that each of these bodies is related to the world

of the same matter as that of which it is itself formed, and is meant to be an apparatus for consciousness working in each world. Evolution brings these bodies to perfection one after the other; as the perfecting of the physical body is going on, the astral is being organised, and in the same way the mental is also evolving, and each comes into touch with its own world. You will find that these facts explain an enormous number of the phenomena around you, especially those on which the new psychology is founded; not only dreams, but also second-sight, prophecy, the visions of the Seer, the power of the Prophet to foresee and foretell events, all religious experiences—they all come within the Larger Consciousness, and if a true psychology must be founded on the testimony of consciousness, then, as Professor James pointed out, it is impossible for the scientist to ignore the testimony of the religious consciousness. It has been ignored too long by science. If you ignore the testimony of the Mystics, the Prophets, the Saints, witnessing to their own experience, and, apart from these highly developed people, if you ignore the normal religious experiences of the ordinary person in touch for the time being with the higher world, whether by prayer or by meditation, then you may as well throw aside the testimony of consciousness altogether, for there is no rationality

in rejecting these testimonies and accepting others. But if you throw aside the testimony of consciousness to its own experiences, then you have nothing on which to build; for your whole knowledge of matter is based upon the experience of consciousness. It is only an inference that matter exists; it is a fact to each of you that you yourself exist. You *infer* that other people exist and that matter exists, because *you* are affected by them. The testimony of consciousness is primary; everything else is secondary. If you are going to try to get rid of all testimony, save that which arises from the eyes of the flesh, even then you have nothing to rely upon but that to which your consciousness bears testimony, *i.e.*, that *it has been affected* through the eyes.

How does this bear on death, and on your attitude towards it? Let me now take the religious terms. There are our three worlds; the Christian calls them the earth, the intermediate world, and heaven; the Hindū calls them *bhurloka*, *bhuvarloka* and *svarga*. Exactly the same three worlds, because all the religions teach the same truths. These worlds are: the earth we are in, part of the astral world, part of the mental; they are all interpenetrating, not separate, so that if you have your three bodies in working order all these three worlds are visible to you, and you are in them all the time, seeing their inhabitants,

communicating with them, as fully as in this world. To have the bodies in such working order means long practice and hard work. All men will find themselves successively in these two later worlds after death, but they often mistakenly think that the after-death worlds are only entered at death, and are separate from the physical during earth-life; modern religions have made a great gulf; there is no gulf; the three lives and worlds are intermingling all the time. Some of you think you have lost your friends; you have not lost them; they are with you, they are conscious of you; they are conscious of you though you may not be of them, because you both possess the body of the intermediate world but they are conscious in it and you are not. They have lost the physical body by which they communicated with you in the past, and hence cannot affect you. You say that you have lost them, but they do not lose you. They are conscious in the desire body of another world in which you both are living, though you cannot bring the knowledge of it into your physical brain. In sleep you are with them, for then you also have put away the blinding veil of flesh, and you are both in the desire body. During waking life, you do not pay much attention to that world, for your energies are running outwards, but still they are there and conscious of

you; and if you would turn away your consciousness from the outer physical world, you would come into touch with them also when you are awake.

It is more difficult to answer when they pass on into the heavenly world, for that is of finer matter, and its vibrations are more difficult to bring through; but even there, if all of you did what the religion of each of you tells you to do, if you gave more time to meditation and to prayer—for both have the same result, although one is more purely mental than the other—that would bring you into touch also with the heavenly world. Then would you indeed find that death loses not only all its terror but also all its pain, and life would be unbroken in the three worlds, and death would no longer separate.

You are exactly the same man after death that you were before. You have the same thoughts, the same feelings, the same desires, the same hopes, the same fears. There is no more difference between the man on this side before death, and the same man soon after death, than there is between a man before he has changed his outer clothes and after. The 'dead' man has dropped his outer garment, and hence cannot now affect the outer world. Sometimes he is so much the same man that he does not know he is 'dead'. He finds it out only gradually by

noticing that he cannot affect physical things or people in physical bodies; when he speaks, they do not answer, when he touches them, they do not feel. He can see the finer matter of an object, but the object does not move if he pushes it as it would have moved before. Over and over again we have come across people who have not realised that they are 'dead' and do not understand how it is that all their friends are unreachable and irresponsive.

The time will come, when all of you will drop your physical bodies and will find yourselves in the next world, where you will be greeted by your friends and find yourselves conscious. What will be your condition then? It depends entirely on how you are living now. You vitalise this intermediate body of feelings, desires, and emotions according to the life you pour into it by your regular waking consciousness every day. If you have given yourself over to the pleasures of the senses, it will be the coarsest matter which will be most strongly vitalised; if you fill your life more with the higher emotions, love of family, affections for friends, with cultivation of the artistic faculties, and with the interests of the larger world, then the finer matter which vibrates to those emotions will be the most vitalised part. So everything will depend on the conditions you are making now. If all your pleasures are of

the physical body, eating, drinking, enjoyments of the flesh, then death is indeed a very great shock and pain. For the desires for these continue on the other side, and you suffer the ever-frustrated cravings for these pleasures of sense. It is out of this act that all the ideas of hells have arisen in the various religions; the cravings unsatisfied make up the sufferings of these hells, and very real hells they are. They are real tortures, these longings which cannot be satisfied, these cravings which cannot be stilled. Religions are right in pointing out that if you care only for the things of the lower world, you will have a very miserable time on the other side of death. You will; and there is no kindness in ignoring the fact, and talking sentimentally about "the mercy of God". The mercy of God does not save you from being burned, if you thrust your hand into a fire. Nor will it save you from suffering after death, if you create the conditions of suffering. God has made His worlds as worlds of law, and this is the truest mercy in the end. But the suffering will not last for ever—that is the new horror brought into life by the loss of the knowledge of reincarnation. The suffering only lasts until the coarser matter drops away, and this happens as soon as it is starved out by lack of nutriment; as soon as this is starved out, you have learned your lesson and are free; you have found

by your own experience the truth taught by the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, that the contacts of the senses are "wombs of pain". This great and salutary lesson is imprinted on the Ego, and he comes back to earth later on wiser than he was when he went out of it.

Suppose, however, that you have conquered these lower sense-pleasures here, suppose that they have no longer the power to rule and compel you, suppose that your sense-pleasures are of a higher kind, such as those yielded by music or painting or sculpture or poetic literature—anything that appeals to the higher emotions—then on the other side of death you will find that these are still yours; for in that case you will have vitalised those parts of this desire body in which you will be living in this intermediate world that will bring you happiness during your stay in that world; moreover you may pass fairly rapidly into the heavenly world. So with scientific pursuits; the man who vitalises that part of the astral body which serves as bridge between the mental body and the physical brain, who is fond of scientific experiments *which injure none*, and clings to the physical methods of working—observation and experiment—he will carry with him rich material for the other side. Clifford and Huxley and many another of that type of scientist are still trying to help the men of

science in this world, suggesting discoveries and fruitful lines of experiment, and throwing their mental force out through this finer body into the corresponding bodies of the men still living here. Especially is this the case when this is the world the man best loves, and that is very often the condition when a man has not believed during the earth-life in the life on the other side. He remains in touch with the physical world, helping others to do good work. So also with politicians—not the small ones who work for their own gain, for position and power, but the men who really love their country—such men very often remain for a very considerable time in the intermediate world, helping those with whose work they sympathise. My late friend, Charles Bradlaugh, for instance, works much along this line. As you know, he had no belief in life after death, and when he died, he believed that all was at an end for him, and only expressed a dignified regret that his work was over. A man of noble character, of high ideals, of splendid self-sacrifice—he has now the reward for that in the intermediate world, and he has lost none of the interests of the larger kind, and is ever trying to help the people he loved. One constantly finds him labouring to inspire statesmen and speakers with high ideals and useful lines of work. Thus he is still continuing the labour from which he was too soon cut off here.

Into the third, the thought-world, the heavenly, the man passes when he has worn out all the links with the lines connected with the physical world ways of working. Such men as I have mentioned would go on into the thought-world very rapidly were it not for this clinging to physical methods. Heaven is the native land, the birth-place, the country of the soul. You may remember that in an earlier lecture I said that we were born in heaven and only dipped down into earth-life as a diver-bird into the water. It is indeed true that our birth-place and citizenship are in heaven, the natural habitat of the human Ego; and into that world all go on out of the intermediate, in order to change into intellectual and moral faculty all the mental and moral experiences through which they have passed. Thus the joy of heaven is the joy of affection, of the life of love—unselfish love of family, friend or country, poured out on all whom we try to serve—the joy of intellectual achievement, of deep insight, of high æsthetic emotion; all these flower in heaven into faculty, with which the man is reborn on earth. The whole life of heaven is one of growth, in which everything of which we here sow the seed shall flower; but—as we live here we must go on there; we cannot begin anything there that we have not begun here; there comes in the limitation. You cannot initiate fresh lines of activity in heaven. You are using the same

mental body, and you can only use the matter which you vitalised during your earth-life. Law is law. You may grow and expand and increase there, but you must begin here. Just as a field which has no seed in it will not send up a harvest, so a mental body in which the seeds of mental and moral effort have not been sown cannot bring forth the flower of joy and the fruits of faculty. But you can sow for that harvest now, and the wise do this. For if you study now—to take one example—if you make it a habit every day to read something worth reading and worth thinking over, not mere rubbish; if you keep in hand beside you only one book of which you read a page every day, which makes you think and adds to your mental stature, you are laying up treasure in heaven that you will find awaiting you, in that land into which no thief can break, whereinto moth and rust do not enter. Just as is your thought-harvest, so is your love-harvest. The more you love here, the more will you develop the love-faculty in heaven, and the richer will you be when you come back to earth. But remember that virtue is not rewarded with riches or worldly happiness. Virtue is rewarded with increased virtue—a thing which people sometimes forget. To sow love here means to reap the harvest in heaven as increased faculty of loving and then to have that power of love innate in you when you return to earth. The late

Lord Shaftesbury was ever seeking to serve the wretched, was ever thinking of the misery of the poor, and ever trying to help the unfortunate. When he went, as a young noble, into the House of Commons, all the work he strove to do was to relieve the suffering people—the women and children who were working underground in the mines, the over-driven slaves of machinery who were protected by the factory legislation he helped to carry. What was it that impelled that man to philanthropy? Why did he, highly placed and wealthy, care for these miserable strata of the population? Why was it that throughout a long life, it was always the most miserable whom he sought to help? The love he brought with him had grown out of smaller services in the past wrought into great capacity for service in heaven. Just as an architect draws a plan, so does the Ego plans out his future work in heaven. This world is the place for building—it is the world of action; heaven is the place for drawing the plan—it is the world of thinking; and the materials that you take with you from the past life, these are with you there, and you return on earth to complete that which you planned in heaven.

And so you are always living in three worlds; and those you will be conscious in after death are worlds you are now in unconsciously, but which you may be conscious in, if you will. I do not

pretend that it is easy to unfold that consciousness. I should be misleading you, if I said that you could gain it without working for it, without strenuous, persistent endeavour. But that is true of every science. If you ask me whether you can become a great mathematician, I should answer that, first you must have some innate mathematical faculty, then you must study strenuously, and then in time you can become a first-rate mathematician. For great success in this life you must bring an inborn faculty with you. Then the time—you must be able to give time to its cultivation, for faculty does take a considerable time day by day to cultivate. Then you must have the will that never swerves, a great perseverance. So in this case. If you have some faculty, and given time and perseverance, then you can do as others have done, and can live consciously in the three worlds in which you are. Think what this means. It means that death has no longer any power to separate heart from heart, life from life; it means no separation, but continual communion with those whom you love. And it means that this earth cannot really make you anxious or miserable, for you are living in three worlds and the earth is only one of them. You have your work in other worlds if this earth fails you, and none can shut you out of those, whatever they may be able to do to you here. It means that life is rich and full;

it gives you three worlds as your kingdom instead of one. And it is true for each of us as the Christ said of the children when He was last on earth, that "in heaven their angels ever behold the face of the Father". For what is the angel of the child or of the man? It is the Higher Self, the spiritual consciousness, and that spiritual consciousness is ever living in the heavenly places, although the music of his voice is so often drowned in the harsh clatter of the world. You cannot hear the sweet strains of the vīna in the clatter of a bazaar; you cannot catch the softest breathings of the violin in the clamour of the bullock-carts and the rough clangor of the tram-cars; and so is it with the delicate voice of that inner consciousness, that exquisite music of the Spirit, which is symbolised for the Hindū in the flute of Shri Kṛṣṇa, the music that attracted all that heard. He played it in the fields by the running waters, on the mountain and in the forest glades, where fawns were playing and cows were grazing; for it is not in the crowd that man can hear the voice of the inner Self; we must seek it first in the silence, where the music is not drowned in the coarse sounds of earth. But this is also true: that when once you have learned to hear it, then your ears need never be closed to it again, and it will steal to you even through the noises of worldly life. Effort is wanted to open the inner

hearing and the inner eyesight; but once opened, they are yours for all time to come.

And so we finish our talks with this great lesson: that this life of ours is full of splendid possibilities; that we are all unfolding Spirits living in evolving bodies; that as the Spirit unfolds his powers he shapes the bodies; that thought, the creative force, is the tool with which that sculptor carves his image, that Spirit shapes his bodies. Oh! if you could see with the inner eye, and not only with the outer; if you could realise in the spiritual life what the great artist, the artist of genius, realises in the artistic life when the great creative impulse comes down from the heavenly spheres into his brain. Ask the musician. He will tell you that he has heard his noblest melodies in another world than this, and is only singing here in poor successive notes the music which there he heard in one splendid multi-chord, and not in slow succession, as Mozart declared, when he tried to tell his marvellous experiences. Ask the sculptor what he is doing when he faces the block of unhewn marble with the creative impulse strong upon him. He will tell you that he sees within the marble the statue that shall be, and that it is his work only to hew away the superincumbent marble which hides the Beautiful within it from the eyes of men. O friends! such is also the work of the God within you, of

the Immortal Artist who is Beauty, who dwells within the form of the body unseen by the eyes of men less keen-sighted than the Seer. The Spirit within you—he is the sculptor, the sculptor who hews away the rough marble from the polished statue which is himself, the Inner God ; he is the musician who hears the heavenly music, and must sing it out that all may hear its harmony. All you have to do is to take the marble of the lower self, and with the chisel of will and the hammer of thought to cut away the matter that prevents the Beautiful within you from being seen ; to let the God within you shine out in glory and lighten the world in which you live. You are children of heaven living upon earth ; you are Gods in the making, and you too often live like brutes. You are divine, not only human ; will you not rise to the height of your splendid possibilities ? You are of royal birth, sons of a King ; will you not realise your nature and claim your birth-right ? Sons of the immortal King, you are, too many of you, living like the scavengers of earth, raking over its rubbish-heaps. Your crown is shining above you ; will you not wear it ? Your throne is vacant ; will you not ascend it, and rule the kingdom which belongs to you ? Will you not take your birth-right as the Sons of God, and, lifting up your eyes, claim the heritage which is yours ?



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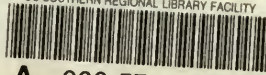
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