

would seem
given over to
had gone into
the white gates
passed through
a great steam
r was fragrant
corn fresh from
tatoes roasting
from the line
of the china and
the hearth-fire
brought in. On
re-cornered tin
basket of pur-
tioned fire-place
rough brown

had run away
rival light in
anyway he must

MERRILL

ens desolate;
that late have

corn-stalks laid
chards whiten

rs and weight
regal stain;
iron reign
state.

ne doleful air
dark rain-drops

sions where
windy eaves
in kisses there
rose lamplight

N DOYLE

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and Ameri-
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and sends out
teric thought
and universal
cosmology." At
past, in the
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claimed by the
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Teosophy has dogmas of its own, by which it explains in a systematic way the mysteries of life and death, of mind and soul and spirit, and of all forces and manifestations of matter. It is more to the point, however, to see what is the outcome of those dogmas in the teaching of rules for daily practice in ordinary life. Whatever may be thought of the doctrines of Re-incarnation, of Karma, with its working out of the great law of eternal justice, it is no new thing for Christians to hear of the "universal brotherhood of humanity," the fundamental article of theosophic faith. It is laid down as a first essential in Theosophy that for the development of the spiritual essence in him, man must live a life of self-denial, virtue and devotion to the helping of others rather than to his own gain. This may seem a visionary rule of life, and certain to prove destructive to modern ideas of progress and civilization, but has not the same difficulty been pointed out in carrying out strict practice the Sermon on the Mount? Among the other requirements of Theosophy are the strictest regard for truth, and the readiness to make any sacrifice for the cause of truth; the love and practice of justice; personal humility; and, while asceticism is not enjoined, intemperance of any kind is condemned. There is certainly a striking similarity between these doctrines and the moral teachings of Christianity, though their universal adoption in practice will probably not be achieved for some time to come.

The theosophic system of ethics is so pure and noble in its lofty altruism, that one is tempted to call it an Eclectic Religion, which has taken to itself the highest conceptions of morality and virtue to be found in all the ages. Its teachers call it the "Wisdom Religion," and assert that it is not the result, but the cause and foundation of all that is true and good in every religion, the pure source of inspiration for all the prophets and saints and sages.

Teosophists lay much stress upon the recombination of portions of their teaching by the recent discoveries in the field of practical science. They claim to have known the theory of evolution before the building of the Pyramids of Egypt, and they say that it applies equally to spiritual as to physical development, and ask us with more confidence to accept their theory of spiritual evolution because science has adopted it on the physical plane. They point to the admission of the chemists that there exists an impalpable and imponderable ether in the interspaces of the atoms, which is necessary as the vehicle to conduct electric currents, and the nerve force that interprets to the brain the messages from the light of Theosophy, which permeates all space, and causes the phenomena of the Astral Bodies, which, they assert, may for a time be detached from the human material body, and often pervade and alarm the world to-day by apparitions of the living to their friends on occasions of imminent death.

There is however, an aspect of the results of modern applied science with which Theosophists are at direct and active issue. They argue that the tendency of science is towards a blind and hopeless materialism, and that their mission is to preach and to prove the existence of a spiritual world surrounding, pervading and guiding man until he shall attain the high and conceivable destiny. Against the material-

ism of science they array the modern psychological phenomena that are generally accepted as proved, such as hypnotism, mesmerism, mind reading and the curious unexplained psychological experiences of most individuals.

Theosophy gives us the doctrine of the direct action of spirit upon matter to produce Life of all kinds, as well as to mould and guide its growth and development. Can science deny the reasonableness of this theory? Is there not an elusive vital spark that can be neither seen, nor felt, nor measured, nor weighed, but is known to intervene and vivify matter, infusing activity, order and consciousness among the dead atoms? It comes out of the Unknown, its arrival we call Life. It goes back to the Unknown, its departure we call Death. All religions that have impressed the world have dealt with this awful mystery, and Theosophy claims to have solved it. Poor Laurence Oliphant bequeathed to us a "Scientific Religion," but his scheme was crudity itself by comparison with the elaborateness of detail and completeness of outline offered us by Theosophy. It teaches that there have lived, and still live upon earth, men who have reached a highly spiritualized condition, and who have penetrated with their intelligences into the shadowy region of the spiritual world, where the microscope can expose no wonders to the human eye, nor the telescope pierce the veil that enshrouds its mysteries. These favoured beings are called Adepts, Masters, or Elder Brothers. They are the final products of re-incarnations extending through ages, and their almost God-like knowledge is said to be carefully used in the service of our race. Their hidden abodes are alleged for the most part to be among the fastnesses of the Himalayas or the mountains of Thibet, and it is claimed that there are, to-day, secret means of communication with them by which advice and instruction can be and are frequently given to those who seek the truth in a right spirit, and for unselfish objects. There can be therefore no excuse for deficiencies in authentic and orthodox statements of doctrine in this marvellous system of science and religion. It is understood that the Adepts have authorized the new movement to enlighten the West, and as in Europe and America nearly two hundred branches of the Theosophical Society have sprung up since its formation in 1875, there are most ample means for the spread of all sorts of information as to its teachings.

Theosophy professes a spirit of broad toleration for all existing religions, and claims to be ready to co-operate with all their best men in elevating humanity. How far existing religions will adopt a reciprocal attitude remains to be seen. While Brahminism and Buddhism, in their esoteric aspects, have largely assimilated, if they have not produced, Theosophy, it does not seem to be possible that either Christianity, Mohammedanism or the Jewish faith could even accept an alliance with it without ceasing to have the right to their present designations. The teachings of the New Testament so closely correspond with those of the "Wisdom Religion" as to indicate a common source for both, yet the cardinal doctrine of the vicarious atonement for sin through the death upon the Cross, is absolutely and irreconcilably opposed to the doctrine of Theosophy that each soul must work out its own destiny, and its own salvation. This it is supposed to have the fullest opportunity for doing in its

various re-incarnations, where it is also to receive due punishment for all its sins until it shall have washed them away, and become a pure spirit of angelic quality and semi-divine nature. No final decree of eternal doom is ever to be pronounced upon a living soul, according to the pleasant lessons of Theosophy.

There is undoubtedly a strong flavor of Pantheism in the new teachings, inasmuch as they inculcate the theory that all animal and vegetable life are initiated by the direct action of spiritual forces which are necessary to vivify matter, and that even matter in its inanimate forms is a result of the all-pervading Spirit of God "which brooded over the waters." Is this universal brotherhood of man and nature, after all, repugnant to our feelings? What else did Wordsworth sing, and Ruskin teach? Is not love of nature the artist's religion and the poet's dream? Are we ashamed to admit our love of flowers and birds, of hills and lakes, of sunlight and moonlight, of clouds and mountains, of all the beauties of color and form? In fact, to some apparently wholesome and well-regulated minds a brotherhood with inanimate nature seems much pleasanter to contemplate than with many of the highly organized, and possibly deserving members of the human family.

The surprising interest which is now felt by the English-speaking world in Theosophy is largely due to the genius of Mrs. Annie Besant. The single fact that a woman of perhaps the highest intellectual standing in England, and of indisputable honesty of purpose, should have publicly adopted this little known oriental cult, was startling. But when it was considered that she had been for years no believer in any spiritual existences, but a cold materialist of the extreme school of Charles Bradlaugh, the wonder grew. It has continued to grow since that lady has mastered the doctrines of Theosophy, has adopted them without reservation, and has, by eloquent pen and tongue, forced the world to hear her message to mankind.

It is rash to predict the limit to which a wave of new doctrine may sweep over the English-speaking world, when with all its empiricism, and its almost total want of a system of ethics, good or bad, Spiritualism numbered its adherents by hundreds of thousands. Theosophy puts forward a beautiful system of ethics, and, while it makes large present demands upon their credulity, it proposes to be able ultimately to give tangible proofs to satisfy all its adherents. With the fiery zeal and masterly eloquence of Mrs. Besant to champion and expound its tenets, Theosophy may, in a few years, create serious breaches in the ranks of the materialists, is likely to attract many of those who are now utterly indifferent, and may capture not a few among the Christian Churches from the attractiveness of the high spiritual standard which it proposes to attain.

It is useless to ignore the prevalence among the educated classes of a growing disbelief in the Calvinistic hell. The very insistence by so many in the Churches upon the unqualified doctrine of eternal punishment, and upon the extreme difficulty of escaping that awful doom, has driven too many towards a hopeless doubt of the heaven that is taught by the same authority as the hell. The materialist, too, looks out upon the workings of the universal laws of matter, and sees, in sadness, no evidence of an existence for man beyond the grave. His wailing cry to the forces of nature has been voiced by Tennyson:—