

## FIVE MINUTES ON KARMA.

In our last paper we began by asking the question of the occultist James—"What is your life?" It was made clear that a very striking distinction was observed between the life of the animal existence which we associate with the physical body, and that other life of the higher nature whose attributes of character, conscience, courage, caution, and so forth, go to make man human. It is of this higher life that James asks the question, "What is it?" The reply, as translated in the English Testament, states, "Ye are a vapour." This word "vapour" in Greek is *atmis*, and occurs in the New Testament only in this passage and in Acts ii: 19. It means either breath, vapour, or smoke, and it is from the same root that our word atmosphere is derived. The Sanscrit *atma*, soul or spirit, the breath of the Divine, which is used to designate the highest spiritual aspect of man, and which is used in the word Mahatma, that is, *maha atma*, or great spirit, to denote a perfect man, has precisely the same origin. The clever punster who spoke of the mahatmosphere, in the *Westminster Gazette*, was nearer the truth than he would probably care to believe. The breath-sphere, that beyond the fluid-sphere, in which humanity is evolving, is the plane of the higher or *soe*-life, so that when James declares man to be a breath or vapour, that manifests, shines, appears, or materialises for a space and then dematerialises, disappears, or vanishes away from this plane, science telling us that nothing can be destroyed, it can be understood what a definite scientific theory of life he holds.

To understand Karma it is necessary to realise the unity of man's life with that of the Lord. The Great Breath is manifested in the lesser breaths, the souls of men. All sin arises from ignorance or want of appreciation of this fact. The very word sin is from the same root as the word sunder, so that to be sinful and to be sundered from the rest of the universe means the same thing, or in other words to act singly or sinfully for oneself, instead of in union or conjunction with one's fellows, is to be guilty of the heresy of separateness which is the greatest source of error.

All life being one, and hid, as the apostle says, with Christ in God, each man is a ray of that Divine Life, or in other words a Son of God. When that is fully realised by a man he naturally seeks in his spiritual nature for the light and guidance which he needs, and when he has fully united his consciousness with that Christ nature, he is truly manifested as a Son of God, and the whole creation participates in the benefits of his evolution. In the eighth chapter of Romans this subject is fully dealt with, and when it is understood that each man must go through the process of growth or development or manifestation for himself, and that no other can accomplish it for him, the doctrine of Karma, as it is called, ought to be easily understood. For, since all progress depends on a man's own effort, it is easily seen that any man's condition at any time is the exact result of all his previous endeavours, and that whatever disadvantages he may have to contend with, whatever barriers he may find blocking his path, have been created by himself previously, and are built up out of his own willfulness or passion.

If it be asked is there no way of escaping from the consequences of one's own actions, the answer must be decidedly not. We must remember that people do not want to escape the consequences of their good actions, and that upon this side of the law of Karma is based the whole teaching of the "evangelical school," as it is called, of the various religions. The unchangeable character of law is recognized by those who say, "believe and you will be saved," their argument being that the cause, belief, will always generate the effect, salvation. If this were not so, there could be no object in relying upon a capricious and uncertain law which sometimes produced one effect and sometimes another. Everyone is satisfied with Karma in so far as it returns good for good. It can only be a weak sense of justice in men which would desire the law to break down on the other side of its operation, and wish it to become uncertain and capricious in its rendering the just consequences of evil acts. Perhaps if men's sense of justice was not originally distorted by the promise of disproportionate rewards and punishments made by many religious bodies, the absolute justice of Karma, well under-