

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

Awakened India



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upan. I. iii. 4.

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Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य ब्रह्मबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. m. 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXVI]

JANUARY 1921

[No 294

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

PART II.—XXIV.

[Place . Belur Math. Year—1902.

Subjects—*The giving up of national dress, food and mode of life is reprehensible—one can learn from all, but that learning which kills one's individuality is to be avoided by all means—conversation with the disciple about the mode of dressing—the disciple praying to Swamiji for the power of concentration in meditation—Swamiji blessing the disciple—the last parting.*]

To-day is the first of Asai. The disciple has come to the Math before dusk from Baly, which is his present place of occupation. He has come to-day with his office-dress on as he has not found time to change it. Coming to the Math, he prostrated at the feet of Swamiji and enquired about his health. Swamiji replied that he was well, but looking at his dress, he said, "As you put on coat and trousers—why don't you put on collars then? Saying this, he called Swami Saradananda who was near and said, "Give him to-morrow two collars from my stock of clothings." Swami Saradananda bowed assent to his order.

The disciple then putting off his office-dress in a different room of the Math, and washing his hands and face came to Swamiji. Swamiji addressing him said: "By giving up one's national costume and ways of eating and mode of life, one gets denationalised. One can learn from all, but that learning which leads to denationalisation does not help your uplift but becomes the cause of your degradation.

Disciple.— Sit, one cannot do without putting on dress approved by superior European officials in official quarters.

Swamiji.— No one prevents that. In the interests of your service, you may put

on official dress in official quarters. But on returning home you should be a regular Bengali Babu—with flowing cloth, a native shirt and with the *Chudder* on the shoulder. Do you understand?

Disciple.— Yes, Sir.

Swamiji.— You go about from house to house only with the European shirt on. In the West to go about to people's houses with the shirt on is ungentlemanly—one is considered naked. Without putting on coat over the shirt, you will not be welcomed in a gentleman's house. What have you learned to imitate in the matter of dress? Boys and young men now-a-days adopt a peculiar mode of dress which is neither Indian nor Western, but a monstrous combination.

After such talk Swamiji began to pace the banks of the river, and the disciple was alone with him. The disciple was hesitating to ask Swamiji a question about religious practices.

Swamiji.— What are you thinking of? Out with it.

The disciple with great delicacy asked: "Sir, I was thinking that if you can teach me some method by which the mind becomes calm within a short time, by which I may be immersed in meditation quickly I will feel much benefitted. In the round of the world's work, I feel it difficult to make the mind steady in meditation at the time of spiritual practices."

Swamiji, observing the great humble earnestness of the disciple, felt pleased. In reply he told the disciple affectionately, "After some time come to me when I am alone upstairs. I will talk to you about it."

The disciple was elated with joy and repeatedly took the dust of his feet. After a while Swamiji went upstairs.

In the meantime, the disciple started a hot discussion with a Sadhu about Vedanta and made the Math resound with the argumentation and refutation of the dualistic and monistic views of Vedanta. Hearing the noise Swami Shivananda said, "Carry the discussion a little slowly, otherwise such loud shouting will disturb Swamiji in his meditation." On hearing it the disciple became composed and finishing the discussion went upstairs to Swamiji.

Coming up the disciple found that Swamiji was sitting in meditation, facing the West. His face is full of wonderful expression, and so benign and placid as if the lucent rays of the moon are playing about it. His whole body is completely motionless, like a painted picture. The disciple stood by, looking on the figure of Swamiji in meditation with speechless wonder, and when even after standing long he found no sign of external consciousness in Swamiji he sat noiselessly by. After half-an-hour, a touch of the return of external consciousness began to appear. The disciple found that his folded hands began to quiver and five or seven minutes after Swamiji opened his eyes and looking at the disciple said—"When did you come?"

Disciple.— I have come sometime before.

Swamiji.— Very well, get me a glass of water.

The disciple hurriedly brought a glass of water from the vessel, and Swamiji drinking a little asked the disciple to put it back in its proper place. The disciple did so and again sat by Swamiji.

Swamiji.— To-day my meditation was much concentrated.

Disciple.— Sir, teach me so that my mind may also get absorbed in meditation

Swamiji.— I have told you all the methods before. Meditate everyday accordingly and in the fulness of time you will feel like that. Now tell me, what do you like to do?

Disciple.— Sir, I practise every day as you have told me, still my meditation does not attain much concentratedness. Sometimes I think it is fruitless for me to practise meditation. So I feel that I shall not fare well in it, and therefore now desire only eternal companionship with you.

Swamiji.— Those are weaknesses of the mind. Always try to get absorbed in the eternally present Atman. If once you get the vision of the Atman, you get everything—the bonds of birth and death will be broken.

Disciple.— You bless me to attain it. You told me to come alone to-day, so I have come. By some means, make my mind steady.

Swamiji.— Meditate whenever you get time. If the mind once enters the path of *Sushumna*, everything will get right. You will not have to do much after that.

Disciple.— You encourage me in many ways. But shall I be blessed with a vision of the Truth? Shall I reach freedom by attaining true knowledge?

Swamiji.— Yes, of course. Every body will attain *mukti* (freedom) from the worm to Brahmá, and will you alone fail? These are weaknesses of the mind; do not even cherish them in the mind.

After this he said again: Be possessed of Sraddha (faith), of Virya (courage), attain to the knowledge of the Atman, and sacrifice your life for the good of others—this is my wish and blessing.

The bell for the meal ringing, Swamiji asked the disciple to go and partake of it.

The disciple, prostrating at the feet of Swamiji, prayed for his blessings. Swamiji putting his hand on his head blessed him and said, "If my blessings be of any good to you, I say, may Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna give you His Grace! I know no blessing higher than this." After meals, the disciple did not go upstairs to Swamiji, for he retired early that night. Next morning the disciple had to return to Calcutta in the interests of his profession. Therefore, quickly washing his hands and mouth he appeared before Swamiji upstairs.

Swamiji.— Will you go now?

Disciple.— Yes, Sir.

Swamiji.— Come again next Sunday.

Disciple.— Yes, certainly.

Swamiji.— Come then, there is a boat coming plying on hire.

The disciple departed taking his parting from Swamiji for the life. He still does not know, that this is his last meeting with his Ishtadeva (chosen Ideal) in physical body. Swamiji with a glad heart bidding him farewell said, "Come on Sunday." The disciple replying, 'Yes, I will come' descended downstairs.

The boatmen were calling for him, so he ran for the boat. Boarding it he saw Swamiji pacing the upper verandah, and saluting him he entered the boat. In the strong current of the ebb-tide the boat reached Aheeretola Ghat within an hour.

Seven days after this, Swamiji passed away from mortal life. The disciple had got no inkling or a premonition of it. Getting the news on the second day of his passing away he came to the Math, and therefore he had not the good fortune to see his physical form again.



OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THE Prabuddha Bharata enters on the twenty-seventh year of its existence, and we offer to all our readers, contributors and subscribers our warmest greetings and wishes for the new year. In trying to carry out, and give expression to, the message of our religion as interpreted by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda it has tried to explain some of the master ideas of our culture in terms of the present mode of thought and show how they present very fruitful views of life and constitutes the eternal truths of our being which cannot be ignored. For what we need most now is a disentangling of the salient ideas of culture, amidst the variety of their involved applications, the establishment of the norms of our cultural life. A true and right appreciation of ourselves, our cultural past, is an indispensable requisite of our mental equipment at the present day. For only if we have a large vision, see the broad base on which our culture is built, its characteristic life-deductions and its way of arriving at its goal, we will be able to finish the superstructure of our national life and civilisation, where it was arrested and unfinished, with a splendid construction. Swami Vivekananda used to say that the building of our national life is broad-based on the eternal Truth and set to a spacious alignment by the Rishis, who were the creators of its ideals and forms, and saw far into the future, but that the progress of the building was arrested, and therefore it now looks so hideous and dilapidated. Only if we grasp the central truths and their way of realisation in life, which our culture is meant to subserve,

shall we possess that assumed vision and faith to resist all overtures that come to us, during our temporary eclipse, to sidetrack us off the path of our evolution to ways of life and thinking, which, however tempting for our immediate prosperity, are daily found to be insufficient to arrive at the highest truths of human life or give any secure base for human progress. The one central fact which Swami Vivekananda so often reiterated that Religion and spirituality are the leading principles of our civilisation and life-organisation, that all other pursuits are secondary and helping first to its unfoldment and then fill with its richness and wealth of spiritual values all life and activities, is one which is now being affirmed with greater emphasis by the best of Indian thinkers; but it has not gained universal acceptance or any certitude and clarity of vision which will make it a creative force in life, and therefore needs to be repeatedly affirmed. For we are still obsessed by a mere political or economic solution of our problems (to which an interest in Religion is regarded as antithetical and subversive) to bring ourselves into line with the powerful nations of the West, with their material limitation, or at least, concentration of view. Therefore one meets with such panacea proposed by even some of our recognised leaders of thought as the suppression of spirituality as tending to weaken the force of the gospel of life, an intensive turning to the study of experimental sciences and their applications, and, in the economic sphere, an endeavour to raise the standard of living indefinitely in order to keep up the struggle of life

to a feverish heat which will alone ensue an increasing progressiveness in material life. There is an element of truth in these views, but without being seen in the light of man's Spirit and his ultimate destiny and giving only a material formulation of his method of progress, it not only retards his real advancement and but obfuscates his whole view and tends to greater obscuration and un-enlightenment. The truth is that man being a Spirit involved in Nature and he must take advantage of nature and its laws and utilities to raise himself above it and liberate his Spirit,—that in a state of imperfection he must grow in Nature and take help of its truths and laws and develop their spiritual values and gradually lift himself to the level of the comprehensive Spirit. But when losing hold of the key, material life is pursued for its own sake, it gives rise to the monstrous creations of human greed, love of power, egoism in the forms of the overblown industrialism, commercialism, nationalism, etc. Instead of being the labour of the Spirit on earth seeking for the spiritual terms and significance of life, the laws and secrets wrested out of Nature become dangerous weapons in the hands of man's undegenerate nature by which he kills the seed of Divinity at his heart. Just as in the spiritual realm, the powers that come to the practicers in the path of Yoga are beneficent powers when the goal is reached in Samadhi, but become dangerous side-issues and obstructions below that level in the state of imperfection; so the powers of Nature and their applications to industry, have armed man with weapons, but not knowing their subordination and regulation by a higher goal in life he has made a grievous abuse and exaggerations of them thus obscuring his view of the Highest

as a result of all his labour on earth.

The just balance of the spiritual and material forces it is necessary to maintain in human society, if it is to be made a training ground of souls growing to the Spirit. For the perfected souls such compromise and counter-poise of apparently opposing forces are not necessary and have no meaning, for they have reached the wholeness of the Self, to whom the whole world is deified and divinised and who can take any path as the instrument of self-expression and intuitively in the proper rhythm, without it being a cause of ignorance. For as we have learnt from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, true spirituality is not so much world-shunning as world-enlightening. It may recognise the need of a temporary turning away from certain objects in order to break a present persistent pre-occupation, but ultimately it returns to life to see everything in a deified vision, to see God in everything. Therefore the spiritual teachers, although themselves perfect, recognise the need of material, economic life for souls in a state of imperfection, and try to make them proper steps for rising to a spiritual perfection. In order that they may so serve their purpose, the material, social, political life must not be allowed to usurp the premier place of Religion which is the ultimate goal, giving unity and proper subordination to them. Therefore the present overblown constructions of industrialism, militarism, or other mechanisms of life do not represent the high water-mark of human achievement, or the last word of human progress, but much rather its monstrous exaggerations and defections and are doomed to die on their own soil or be reduced to saner proportions. Least of all, India which has so long

kept its soul unstained by these, will go in for them in their exaggerated forms in the rage for modernism and transform itself in its image.

It is not meant that the present phase of civilisation, its characteristic forms and institutions, have contributed nothing which is of permanent value to the human soul, or its need of labour and progress on earth, but rather that its exaggerations and unhealthy excesses have given a wrong trend to human life. Science, by its discovery of Nature's laws and their application to life, has brought together into closeness and unity the whole of mankind, which has made it possible for man to recognise that his problem is the problem of all mankind. It makes us see that everywhere it is the same human heart under the impulsion of the same joys and hopes, and faced by the same problem. By flooding the mind of men with the light of unfettered reason and by the exchange of thought it has made us see the innumerable points of contact between different races and brought about a sort of intellectual sympathy, of a feeling of unity amidst the diversity of racial manners, traditions, ways and ideals of life. By the application of scientific truths to life it has brought about the possibility of life with all the reasonable wants supplied with greater ease, and without the necessity of fighting and deprivation of others. It has given a secure basis for material life which is man's first condition and indispensable environment in progress. If these results had been preserved and their fruits allowed to be reaped in life, without being abused, thwarted, nullified by man's greed, egoism, love of power, and earth-hunger, it would have made the spiritualisation of human life possible. It

has at least brought about a physical unity and an intellectual closeness with all their many consequences in life on which a spiritual unity could have been more easily built and the collective advancement of humanity aided. But unaccompanied by any influx of spirituality controlling his cosmic tendencies, these truths and powers of Nature and their applications have been turned to the grievous bondage, exploitation and obscuration of man, thus throwing back the progress of humanity.

Everywhere and on all sides, the torturing consciousness of the need of a delivering spirituality, of spiritual forms of thought, living, and acting is felt. For only by that will all the gains of the present age be conserved and made to serve the soul of humanity. So we too when we are out to build a noble superstructure of national life of a proper counterpoise between spiritual, and economic and political life, must build on the rock-foundation of a spiritual destiny of man. A great spread of religion and a building-up of its truth and power in our lives is necessary if we are at all to serve the race and humanity at the present crisis. Religion is not a defunct power, which is used up and exhausted and cast on the scrap-heap, but it is just now beginning to influence humanity deeply and penetrate into every pore of society, shaping all its activities in its image. So a great spread and practice of the great and universal ideas and truths of our Religion is an indispensable necessity of our times and it is to this work of propagation, elucidation and application to life that the Prabuddha Bharata will address itself. For the words of Swami Vivekananda come back again and again to the mind as the years pass: "Let them talk of India's regeneration as they like; let me tell you as

one who has been working—at least trying to work,—all his life, that there is no regeneration for India until you be spiritual. Not only so, but upon that depends the welfare of the whole world.”

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

[RENDERED FROM SWAMI SARADANANDA'S
“LILAPRASANGA.”]

Continued from page 275, Vol. XXV.

WE have narrated above that Narendranath was born with wonderfully holy Samskaras (tendencies). Therefore experiences of a kind different from the ordinary, had come to his life before this. The reader will understand if we narrate a few for examples; Narendranath said: “All my life, closing my eyes to sleep, I would notice a wonderful spot of light in the place between the eye-brows and observe its changes of form with undivided attention. In order to be able to observe it more carefully, I would sleep in the position in which people touch the ground with their head while prostrating in salutation. That wonderful spot of light would change in diverse colours, and growing bigger will gradually assume the form of a globe of light, and ultimately bursting would fill my body from head to feet with a white liquid light. And thus losing the waking consciousness, I would fall asleep. I knew that everybody fell asleep that way, and had that idea for long. Growing up when I started practising regular meditation, on my shutting the eyes the spot of light would in the very beginning come in front, and I would

concentrate my mind on that. On the advice of Maharshi Devendranath when I was daily practising meditation in the company of some friends, we would discuss among ourselves the experiences and visions we had in the hour of meditation. Then I learnt from their words that they did not see the light and none of them fell asleep in the way above described like me.

“Again from boyhood, I would feel with regard to certain objects, places and persons that I was very familiar with them, or that I had seen them somewhere before. I would try to remember but could not bring back to memory the previous circumstances—but never could I believe that I had not seen them before. Many a time, off and on, it occurred to me. For instance, assembled with my friends, I was discussing about a subject, when some one said something and in a flash it occurred to me—really, I had previously been in this room, sitting with these persons in conversations on this same subject, and then this person had made a similar remark. But by thinking I could come to no conclusion, about when and where I had previously conversed with them before. When I learnt about the doctrine of reincarnation, I thought that perhaps I was acquainted with these places and persons in a previous life and partial remembrance of them come to me sometimes in the above way. Later on I felt that it was not the right conclusion about the subject. Now I think I had seen before my birth, in a series of pictures, the persons and things with which I shall have to be acquainted in this life and remembrance of that, after birth, has from time to time arisen within me all my life.

Hearing from many people about the pure life of Sri Ramakrishna and his

entering into trances S. Narendranath came to see him. But he never dreamed that any change in life or wonderful experiences would come to him by his meeting him. But compared to the super-physical experiences which came on him on two successive occasions of his coming to Sri Ramakrishna all his previously-felt experiences appeared pale and of little consequence—and in finding the reason of them even his powerful intellect failed in the attempt. Therefore he was in a great fix in coming to a conclusion about Sri Ramakrishna. For he found not a shred of reason to doubt a little about the fact that the wonderful experiences occurred to him by the inscrutable and Divine Power of Sri Ramakrishna and the more he thought about it the more he was immersed in wonderment.

Really, thinking of the wonderful experiences which came to Narendranath so suddenly and quickly after his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, gives cause for not a little wonder. The Scriptures say that in the lives of men of limited power and capacity such experience (of Advaita in the spiritual realm) comes rarely as the result of a long life of renunciation and self-control and when once they come within their realisation they are captivated by seeing the manifestation of Divine Power in their spiritual preceptor and come to surrender themselves wholly to him. That Narendranath did not do so is the cause of no small wonder and from that one can understand what a high capability he had in the spiritual realm. And because he was of more than ordinary capability in the spiritual realm he did not give himself away by the result of the previous incidents, but keeping himself controlled and collected, he was able to set himself for a long time to examine the wonderful

character and life of Sri Ramakrishna, and find the reason of them. But although not wholly overwhelmed or acknowledging full submission, there is no doubt that he was powerfully drawn to Sri Ramakrishna.

After the day of his first meeting, Sri Ramakrishna, on the other hand, felt a powerful attraction for Narendranath. The noble spiritual teacher, possessed of transcendent perception, meeting a worthy disciple becomes seized with the desire of transmitting to him his whole realisations of the Truth. The depth of that holy desire is immeasurable, and that holy impatience without any reason and devoid of the least trace of self comes only by the will of the Divine in the hearts of the great Teachers possessed of full control and established in the Self. And impelled by that on his meeting with the worthiest disciple, he establishes him in the fearless plane of Brahman and makes him satisfied in the Self and filled with It.

There is no doubt that Sri Ramakrishna was seized with the idea of making Narendranath established in the Brahman by means of Samadhi. Three or four years afterwards when Narendranath had fully surrendered himself to Sri Ramakrishna and praying to him repeatedly to bless him with the experience of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (the transcendent meditation), Sri Ramakrishna, raising the topic of the above previous incident, told him many times before us thus: "Why? You said on the previous occasion that you have your father and mother whom you have to serve (and hence do not like your mind being gathered into the depths of Samadhi)." And sometimes he would say: "Look, a person died and after death became a ghost. Living alone for a long time, he felt the need of a companion,

and began to search all round. If he heard that anybody died anywhere he ran there, and thought that perhaps he would get a companion. But he saw that by the touch of holy Ganges-water or for any other reason, he got rescued from the life of a disembodied spirit (ghost). Therefore with a broken heart he went back and lived a solitary life again. Thus his need of a companion was never fulfilled. I am in a similar situation. Seeing you, I thought I would now get a companion who would share with me to the full all my spiritual realisations—but you also said that you have your father and mother (which consideration kept you back from the highest spiritual realisation in Samadhi). Therefore I have also failed to secure a companion.” Thus mentioning the incident of that day he would make fun and banter with Narendranath many times.

We have related before how Sri Ramakrishna desisted, when Narendranath was overcome with fear, on the point of entering Samadhi. On the event turning out like that it is no wonder that he felt a little dubious about what he had felt and seen about Narendranath before. Our inference is that for that reason, on the occasion of the second and the third visit of Narendranath, he overpowered him by his spiritual power and got the truths of his life and mission in the world from him in the state of spiritual trance and felt assured by finding them in correspondence with his previous experiences. If the above inference be right, then we have to understand that Narendranath had not the same grade of Samadhi, on the two days of his visits to Dakshineswar. As a result we find that on the two days he had two different kinds of experiences.

Although he was somewhat assured as a

result of his examining Narendranath in the above way, it cannot be said that he was fully assured. For he saw, that of the powers, the possession of but one or two of which enables a man to earn a great name and position in the world, Narendranath had eighteenfold. And if Narendranath does not employ them aright in the path of spirituality, by the realisation of the highest truth about God, the world and the destiny of human life, the result would be contrary. Sri Ramakrishna would say, as a result of that defection, Narendranath would only found a new sect or party like other founders and earn only worldly fame, but he would fail to realise and help in the establishment of the universal and catholic truths of spirituality whose propagation is necessary in order to fulfil the needs of the age. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna felt a great enthusiasm in his heart that Narendranath might voluntarily follow in fulness the path of his own universal ideal of spiritual life and realise similar catholic and universal ideals of spirituality. As he would always say—that as only in a small stagnant pool of water, *dal* (weeds) and other rank vegetable growth appear, so also where only partial truths of the spiritual realm are realised as the full, it gives rise to *dal* (sects) or limited and exclusive churches. Impelled by the fear that lest Narendranath, endowed with wonderful intelligence, should stray into a limited path, the great effort that Sri Ramakrishna made to fill him with the whole and comprehensive truth, gives rise to no little admiration.

Therefore we see, after meeting Narendranath, Sri Ramakrishna for many reasons felt a wonderful attraction for him, and so long as he did not feel sure that there was no risk of his stray-

ing into a contrary path, his love did not assume a more easy and composed form. Among the reasons of his wonderful love for Narendranath, we can easily understand some sprang from his wonderful visions about him, some from the fear lest in the spell of the time-influence he would take on himself voluntarily the bondages of family, worldly wealth, name and fame and fail to realise, even in part, the great and noble ideals of his life.

(To be continued).

TEACHER OF PHILOSOPHY OF INDIA.

BY ROBERT H. WILSON.

WHEN the Christian world has been engaged for a century or more in sending its missionaries to India, what is it that the priests of the Hindus are now bringing back to America and England?

The question was put to the Swami Abhedananda, who has recently come to San Francisco and gathered about him a circle of followers known as of the Vedanta Ashrama.

"There is a secret of life not contained in any one religion," said the Swami. "The priests of the Vedanta do not seek converts. They would make clear to every man the spiritual understanding of his own religion."

Among the most enthusiastic followers of the Swami Abhedananda is the wife of a San Francisco clergyman occupying the pulpit of an orthodox church. She says the teachings of the Swami are revelations of a higher Christianity.

With this strange paradox of a priest of the Hindus coming back to teach Christianity to Christians, the views of the Swami take on a peculiar interest.

The greatest of the Swamis to come to America was probably Vivekananda. Abhedananda is his associate and fellow disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, the great modern master of the Vedanta philosophy. It was in answer to a message from Vivekananda that Abhedananda came to San Francisco.

WANDERS 14 YEARS.

The Swami's preparation for the priesthood entailed a period of fourteen years of wandering through India "without purse or scrip," sleeping by the roadside or beneath a tree and talking of the spiritual side of life to those who would listen. He was a monk of that ascetic type common to the early orders in the Christian church. He left his native country after he became recognised as a great teacher and went to London. After several years there he came to New York and a few months ago arrived in San Francisco.

Here is a sketchily reported interview with the Hindu philosopher, touching upon only a few of the high spots in a discussion involving the profounder thought of science, philosophy and religion.

"What is it that you have to say to San Francisco?"

"That the Kingdom of Heaven is within you," replied the Swami with a smile to indicate that he realised the futility of so familiar an answer. The explanation was more complex.

"There is within every human being the self or the soul that may know itself. Thought does not know itself. Behind thought is that which knows thought. Then to open the eyes of those who see but dimly is the mission of Vedanta."

"That raises one of the objections of the West to the ancient philosophies of the Orient," was suggested to the Swami. "They are too contemplative for the activities of modern civilisation."

SEE ACTION IN INACTION.

"We learn," he replied, "to see action in

inaction. That is one of the highest conceptions of which the human mind is capable. Behind inertia is the Knower of All, the source of action."

"But to come down to the problems with which the daily lives of men are surrounded—the conflict between good and evil, the question of heaven and hell—what has the Vedanta to offer?"

"There is neither good nor evil but as a man thinks. Good and evil are two aspects of One which is neither good nor evil, but Absolute."

The Swami's answer was profound and spiritual, but it suggested an age old question :

"There is a natural law in the material world which causes the big fish always to eat the little ones. Will it not always appear evil to the little fish that this is so?"

"But," said the Swami, "it is one of the manifestations of the material world that energy is indestructible. We need only see that the one within who directs energy is imperishable and absolute. The Vedanta philosophy teaches that the source of consciousness cannot be found in matter, but stands independent of it. The life of the little fish merely encounters a change, such as is common to all life."

"Then the life of the individual may at any time be merged in a larger life?"

UNEXPLAINABLE "I."

"Life merges and separates and merges again," explained the Swami, "but the 'I' cannot be explained by any physical law. Electronic vibrations are not conscious of themselves. It is the 'soul' that knows itself and that is indestructible, eternal and immortal. The identity of the soul cannot be lost or merged."

There was more to the discussion, but this much would serve to explain the Swami Abhedananda's view that the form of religion matters little if it carries with it an under-

standing of the secret which lies beneath all religious and philosophic activity.

He ended with a more or less familiar quotation from the Bhagavad Gita :

"If the slayer thinks that he has slain, or if the slain thinks that he is slain, both of them know not that the soul can neither slay nor be slain"—

—Which is of interest to the students of Emersonian philosophy who will recognise the origin of his lines :

"If the red slayer thinks he slays,

Or if the slain thinks he is slain,

They know not well the subtle ways

I keep, and pass, and turn again."

—The San Francisco Examiner,

EPISTLES OF

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

CLXXVI.

Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna

C/o Satis Mukherji,
Gorabazar, Ghazipur.

Revered Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter of contrition. I am not leaving this place soon—it is impossible to avoid the Babaji's request. You have expressed remorse at not having reaped any appreciable results by serving the Sadhus. It is true, and yet not true; it is true if you look towards ideal bliss, but if you look behind to the place from which you started you will find that before you were an animal, now you are a man, and will be a god or God Himself in future. Moreover, that sort of regret and dissatisfaction is very good, it is the prelude to improvement. Without this none can rise. He who puts on

a turban and immediately sees the Lord, progresses thus far and no farther. You are blessed indeed to have that constant dissatisfaction preying on your mind—rest assured that there is no danger for you. * * You are a keenly intelligent man, and know full well that patience is the best means of success. In this respect I have no doubt that we light-headed boys have much to learn from you. * * You are a considerate man, and I need not add anything. Man has two ears but one mouth. You specially are given to plain-speaking, and are chary of making large promises—things that sometimes make me cross with you, but upon reflection I find that it is you who have acted with discretion. "Slow but sure," "What is lost in power is gained in speed." However, in this world everything depends upon one's words. To get an insight behind the words (specially, with your economical spirit masking all) is not given to all, and one must associate long with a man to be able to understand him. * * Religion is not in sects, nor in making a fuss—why do you forget these teachings of our revered Master? Please help as far as it lies in you, but to judge what came of it, whether it was turned to good or evil account, is perhaps beyond our jurisdiction. * * Considering the great shock which Girish Babu has received, it will give him immense peace to serve Mother at this moment. He is a very keen-witted person. And our beloved Master had perfect confidence in you, used to dine nowhere else except at your place, and I have heard, Mother too has the fullest confidence in you. In view of these you will please bear and forbear all shortcomings of us fickle boys, treating them as if they were done by your own boy. This is all I have got to say. Please let me know by return of post when the Anniversary is to take place. A pain in the loins is giving me much trouble. In a few days the place will look exceedingly beautiful, with miles and miles of rose-banks

all in flower. Satis says he will then send some fresh roses in water for the Festival. * * May the Lord ordain that your son becomes a man, and never a coward!

Yours affectionately,

Vivekananda.

P. S. If Mother has come, please convey to her my countless salutations, and ask her to bless me that I may have unflinching perseverance. Or, if that be impossible in this body, may it fall off soon!

V.

CLXXVII.

My dear—

I hope you are doing well. Do your own spiritual exercises, and knowing yourself to be the humblest servant of all, serve them. Those with whom you are staying are such that even I am not worthy to call myself their humblest servant and take the dust of their feet.—Knowing this serve them and have devotion for them. Don't be angry even if they abase or even hurt you desperately. Never mix with women. Try to be hardy little by little, and gradually accustom yourself to maintain the body out of the proceeds of the begging. Whoever takes the name of Ramakrishna, know him to be your Guru. Everyone can play the role of a master, but it is very difficult to be a servant. Specially you should follow S—. Know it for certain that without steady devotion for the Guru, and unflinching patience and perseverance, nothing is to be achieved. You must have strict morality. Deviate an inch from this and you are gone for ever.

Yours affectionately,

Vivekananda.

STORIES OF SAINTS.

(Retold by G)

V.

THE BAG OF SAND.

IN the early days of Christianity when holy men would dwell in the desert to escape worldly temptations and to give themselves more fully to a contemplative life, a Brotherhood had settled down in a wilderness and through their united efforts had succeeded in making the land fertile. Peacefully they lived there, united by one hope and high purpose,—to serve God in labour and in prayer. In that wild land the Brothers lived then austere lives, content to have left behind them the cares and worries and fleeting joys of the world. Their scanty fare was produced from the soil by their own labour. And nothing from the outside world could interrupt their heavenly contemplations.

But one day, the good abbot of this Brotherhood called the Brethern together on a sad business. One of their little congregation, a young monk, after years of faithfulness, had fallen beneath a sore temptation and committed a grievous sin. What the offence was we are not told, but God's hand had for a moment ceased to hold the Brother and his crime was certified. And now all were called in solemn meeting to decide on the sentence. And wise and learned Fathers from other convents had been called in to assist in the sad performance of the day.

The gloomy tale had been related and discussed and now each in turn was requested to give his judgment.

"Send him from you!" said one, quite confident of the soundness of his advice. "All will be tainted by his staying."

"He has brought on you shame and scorn, let him be as dead!" said another. "He has done harm enough."

But the abbot shook his head. He was willing to punish the youth, but to cast him out, no, that he could not do.

Said another "Justice must be done. Let all know that he is guilty. Do not spare him. Keep him to hard labour but apart from others. And let no one speak to him."

But the abbot prayed in silence for the fallen soul.

Then said another: "Put him in prison for the rest of his life."

But no one consented to that.

And in his little cell sat the offender, once beloved, now scorned and hated by himself, and as he thought, by all. He asked not for mercy, he did not plead his case; speechless he was and tearless and in despair. He feared not his fate for what greater harm could others do him, more than he himself had done? Thus he waited. But outside the minds were divided. Noon had come and the heavy question remained undecided.

One who had seen him in his cell that morning, shrinking from the gaze of others, tried to defend him. And others were there with sinking hearts and pleading eyes, for they remembered the happy days when the Brother had been dear to all. Others again feeling pity tried to harden their hearts, for, 'pity was not justice.'

And so the sentence remained unspoken.

Then it was decided that they should wait for an old Father, their most honoured and best adviser who dwelled in a desert cave. Older than the rest and wiser, many regarded his words inspired

And the abbot pale and silent prayed for light. And light was sent, for toiling slowly over the hot desert-road came the wise and holy Father. Many times he halted to breathe and rest, for he carried a heavy load.

Wasted he was and worn, yet strong to aid others. Tried by many conflicts, he had found great peace and his face shone with a brightness that made the Brothers feel that God was by his side.

By reverent love compelled, they went out to meet him and seeing his shoulders bent under the heavy burden, many hands were stretched out to free him from the weight. "Why this burden is too heavy for you to carry?" one said. And the holy Father answered: "Brother, these are sins of mine, I must carry them with me whenever I go to judge another."

Then the abbot with trembling hands raised the load from the Father's shoulders. And looking inside the bag he found it filled with sand. All were silent now, for the best among them had sins as many as the sand-grains in the bag. The abbot looked up to heaven and a sigh of relief escaped his breast. "Lord, I thank Thee, Thou hast shown us the way, Thou alone art able to judge us all!" And hearing this a great heaviness fell from every heart. Yes, God alone can judge man and He is merciful. No longer was pity crushed or love kept back. Some smiled and others wept and their hearts were light and at peace. And some bowed in veneration and others went in all haste to speak words of consolation to the fallen Brother. Hope they brought to his despairing breast. And that evening found him kneeling with the rest in the little chapel of the convent. And instead of sentencing the youth and driving him from them, the Brothers restored him to his former position. And never did the sinner fall again. Repentance had purified his heart and he became a holy example to others.

VIVEKACHUDAMANI.

(Continued from page 284, Vol. XXV.)

निर्धनोऽपि सदा तुष्टोऽप्यसहायो महाबलः ।
नित्यतृप्तोऽप्यभुञ्जानोऽप्यसमः समदर्शनः ॥५४३॥

543. Though without riches, yet ever content; though helpless, yet very powerful; though not enjoying sense-objects, yet eternally satisfied; though without an exemplar, yet looking upon all with an eye of equality.

[*Powerful* The Atman is his wealth, power, and everything]

अपि कुर्वन्नकुर्वाणश्चाभोक्ता फलभोग्यपि ।
शरीर्यप्यशरीर्येष परिच्छिन्नोऽपि सर्वगः ॥५४४॥

544. Though doing, yet inactive; though experiencing fruits of past actions, yet untouched by them; though possessed of a body, yet without identification with it; though limited, yet omnipresent is he.

अशरीरं सदा सन्तमिमं ब्रह्मविदं क्वचित् ।
प्रियाप्रिये न स्पृशतस्तथैव च शुभाशुभे ॥५४५॥

545. Neither pleasure nor pain, nor good nor evil, ever touches this Knower of Brahman who always lives without the body-idea.

[A reproduction of the sense of Chhandogya VIII. xii. 1]

स्थूलादिसम्बन्धवतोऽभिमानिनः

सुखं च दुःखं च शुभाशुभे च ।

विध्वस्तबन्धस्य सदात्मनो मुनेः

कुतः शुभं वाऽप्यशुभं फलं वा ॥५४६॥

546. Pleasure or pain, as well as good or evil, affects only him who has connections with the gross body etc., and identifies himself with these. How can good or evil, or the effects thereof, touch the sage who has identified himself with the Reality and thereby shattered his bondage?

तमसा अस्तवद्भानादग्रस्तोऽपि रविर्जनैः ।

अस्तइत्युच्युते भ्रान्त्या ह्यज्ञात्वा वस्तुलक्षणम् ॥

547. The sun which appears to be, but is not actually, swallowed by Rahu is called as swallowed up by people, through delusion, not knowing the real nature of the sun.

[The reference is to the solar eclipse.

Nature. . . sun—which is a mass of light.]

तद्देहादिवन्धेषु विमुक्तं ब्रह्मविद्यमानम् ।

पश्यन्ति देहिवन्मूढाः शरीराभासदर्शनात् ॥५४८॥

548. Similarly, ignorant people look upon the perfect knower of Brahman, who is wholly rid of bondages of the body etc., as possessed of the body, seeing but an appearance of it.

अहिर्निल्वयनीं वायं मुक्त्वा देहं तु तिष्ठति ।

इतस्ततश्चाल्यमानो यत्किञ्चित्प्राणवायुना ॥५४९॥

549. In reality, however, he rests discarding the body, like the snake its slough; and the body is moved hither and thither by the wind of Prana, just as it listeth.

Discarding the body—ceasing to identify himself with the body.

Like the snake etc.—A reminiscence of Bṛhadāraṇyaka IV iv 7.

Wind—‘Vayu’ which strictly speaking means ‘force,’ in which sense Pranas can be called ‘Vayu.’

There is another reading to the first line अहिर्निल्वयनीं वायं मुक्त्वा देहं तु तिष्ठति— which should be rendered thus “ But the body of the liberated man remains like the slough of a snake.]

स्रोतसा नीयते दारु यथा निम्नोन्नतस्थलम् ।

दैवेन नीयते देहो यथाकालोपभुक्तिषु ॥५५०॥

550. As a piece of wood is drifted on to a high or low ground by the current, so is his body carried on by the momentum of past actions to the enjoyment of their fruits as they present themselves in due course.

[*Enjoyment*—includes ‘suffering’ also.

प्रारब्धकर्मपरिकल्पितवासनाभिः

संसारिवच्चरति भुक्तिषु मुक्तदेहः ।

सिद्धः स्वयं वमति सात्त्विकदत्र तूष्णीं

चक्रस्य मूलमिव कल्पविकल्पशून्यः ॥५५१॥

551. The man of realisation, bereft of the body-idea, moves amid sense-enjoyments like a man subject to transmigration, through desires engendered by Prārabdha work. He himself, however, lives unmoved, in the body, like a witness, free from mental oscillations, like the pivot of the potter’s wheel.

[*Like . . . transmigration*—only apparently. The Prārabdha has no meaning for the Jnanī who is identified with the Self. See Slokas 453-463.

Pivot—which is fixed—on which the wheel turns]

नैवेन्द्रियाणि विषयेषु नियुङ्क्त एष

नैवापयुङ्क्त उपदर्शनलक्षणस्थः ।

नैव क्रियाफलमपीषद्वन्दते स

स्वानन्दसान्द्ररसपानसुमत्तचित्तः ॥५५२॥

552. He neither directs the sense-organs to the object, nor detaches them from these but stays like an unconcerned spectator. And he has not the least regard for the fruits of actions, his mind being thoroughly inebriated with drinking the undiluted elixir of the Bliss of Atman.

[For स्वानन्द in the last line of the Sloka, there is another reading सानन्द which should be translated as ‘including all minor joys.’

लक्ष्यालक्ष्यगतिं त्यक्त्वा यस्तिष्ठेत्केवलात्मना ।

शिव एव स्वयं साक्षादयं ब्रह्मविद्युत्तमः ॥५५३॥

553. He who, giving up all such considerations as this is a fit object of meditation and this is not, lives as the Absolute Atman, is verily Shiva Himself, and he is the best among Knowers of Brahman.

[*Fit object*—and therefore to be welcomed, while the other is to be shunned]

जीवन्नेव सदा मुक्तः कृतार्थो ब्रह्मविद्युत्तमः ।

उपाधिनाशाद्ब्रह्मैव सन् ब्रह्माप्येति निर्द्वयम् ॥

554. Through the destruction of the supervening adjuncts, the perfect Knower of Brahman merges himself in the One Brahman without a second—which he had been all along, becomes very free even while living and attains the consummation of his life.

[*Merges himself in Brahman which all along* (ब्रह्मैव सन् ब्रह्माप्नोति) —Quotations from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka IV. iv. 6*]

शैहूरो वेवसद्भावाभावयोश्च यथा पुमान् ।
तथैव ब्रह्मविच्छेदः सदा ब्रह्मैव नापरः ॥५५५॥

555. As an actor, when he puts on the dress of his role or when he does not, is always a man, so the perfect Knower of Brahman is always Brahman and nothing else.

यत्र क्वापि विशर्गी सत्पर्गामिव तरोर्वपु पततात्
ब्रह्मीभूतस्य यतः प्रागव तच्चिदग्निना दग्धम् ५५६

556. Let the body of the Sannyasin who has realised his identity with Brahman, become withered and fall anywhere like the leaf of a tree, (it is of little consequence to him, for) it has already been burnt by the fire of Knowledge.

[*Burnt etc* — hence he need not even care about the cremation of the body after death]

सदात्मनि ब्रह्माणा तिष्ठतो मुनेः

पूर्णाद्वयानन्दमयात्मना सदा ।

न देशकालाद्युचिनप्रतीक्षा

त्वङ्मांसविट्पिण्डविसर्जनाय ॥५५७॥

557. The sage who always lives in the Reality—Brahman—as Infinite Bliss, the One without a second, does not depend upon the customary considerations of place, time etc. for giving up this mass of skin, flesh and filth.

[He may give up the body any time he pleases, for it has served its purpose]

देहस्य मोक्षो नो मोक्षो न दण्डस्य कमण्डलोः ।

अविद्याहृदयग्रन्थिमोक्षो मांक्षो यतस्ततः ॥५५८॥

558. For, the giving up of the body is not Liberation, nor that of the staff and water-bowl, but Liberation consists in the destruction of the heart's knot, which is —Nescience.

[*Staff and water bowl*—the insignia of a Sannyasin — Mere outward giving up is nothing ; they must have no place in the mind

Heart's knot—to bind as it were the Chit or Absolute Knowledge to the inert body]

कुल्यायामथ नद्यां वा शिवक्षेत्रेऽपि च चरे ।

पर्या पतति चेत्तत्र तरोः किं नु शुभाशुभम् ॥५५९॥

559. If a leaf falls in a small stream, or a river, or a place consecrated by Shiva, or in a crossing of roads, of what good or of evil is that to the tree?

[Places of varying purity are meant]

पत्रस्य पुष्पस्य फलस्य नाशव-

देहेन्द्रियप्राणाश्रियां विनाशः ।

नैवात्मनः स्वस्य सदात्मकस्या-

नन्दाकृतेर्दृक्त्वदस्ति चैवः ॥५६०॥

560. The destruction of the body, organs, Pranas and Buddhi is like that of the leaf or flower or fruit (of a tree). It does not affect the Atman, the Reality, the Embodiment of Bliss—which is one's true nature. That survives, like the tree.

Pranas —Vital forces *Buddhi* —the determinative faculty, may stand here for the mind itself.]

प्रज्ञानघन इत्यात्मलक्षणां सत्यसूचकम् ।

अनूत्रौपाधिकस्यैव कथयन्ति विनाशनम् ॥५६१॥

561. The Srutis, by setting forth the real nature of the Atman in the words, "the Embodiment of Knowledge" etc., which indicates Its Reality, speak of the destruction of the supervening adjuncts merely.

["*Essence of Knowledge etc* —*Bṛhadāraṇyaka IV v. 13*. "As a lump of salt which is without interior or exterior, whole, one homogeneous salt mass, so is verily this Atman, O Maitreyi, the

Embodiment of Knowledge which assumes differentiations through contact with the elements and ceases to have them when these elements are destroyed (by Illumination) After this dissolution It has no distinct name." It should be noted that the passage in the original is so worded as to confuse an ordinary enquirer, as it did Maitreyi actually. Then Yajnavalkya had to explain that he meant only the destruction of the supervening adjuncts, and not that of the Atman—the Eternal Reality—which ever is

Supervening adjuncts—Such as water in which the sun is reflected, or the rose which casts its reflection on the crystal, or the air which produces a bubble on the surface of water. When these Upadhis are removed the special differentiations cease to exist, but the principal thing remains as it was]

अविनाशी वा अरेयमात्मेति श्रुतिरात्मनः ।

ब्रवीत्यविनाशित्वं विनश्यत्सु विकारिषु ॥५६२॥

562. The Sruti passage, "Verily is this Atman Immortal, my dear," mentions the immortality of the Atman in the midst of perishable things that are subject to modification.

Sruti—Brihadaranyaka IV. v 14 "Verily is this Atman immortal, my dear, indestructible by Its very nature']

पाषाणवृक्षतृणाधान्यकडङ्कराद्या

दग्धा भवन्ति हि सृष्टेव यथा तथैव ।

देहेन्द्रियासुमनसादि समस्तदृश्यं

ज्ञानाग्निदग्धमुपयाति परात्मभावस ॥५३३॥

563. Just as stone, tree, grass, paddy, and husk etc., when burnt, are reduced to to earth (ashes) only, even so the whole objective universe comprising the body, organs, Pranas, Manas and so forth, are, when burnt by the fire of Realisation, reduced to the Paramatman (Supreme Self).

(To be continued).

LIFE

I am a bird which has been trapped by five talconers, the senses, who are greedy for my Spiritual Being. I am captured by things,—that like strange thieves have stolen me from me The Plumage of My Soul.

But then I flitted down from heights celestial into the caverns of this earthly life. I descended from unspeakably glorious heights into the dark shadows of this nether world.

I moan for My Mate, Who is the Larger Self of my life, He Whom they call God I moan but I know that this is a terrible cage. It is so big. O! the whole world can easily be placed inside it. It is so tight and so strong that if even the world fell against it, it would not give way.

This is a terrible cage, and stealthy must have been my trappers. But I can never sing again. That is sure. How could I, when I know that all my life has been stolen from me and that I have been dispossessed of all my glories. O caged, caged in a net of finite things! But in my inmost nature I am one with The Great Bird who rests on the top of the world and remains firmly seated in its Great Nest, though the tree of life sway to and fro and with terrible, swift motion.

I am downcast and forlorn. The stars do not interest me, nor the so-called glories of the day. The sun's rays seem but a paltry light, for I know there is another Light. O! this misery shall kill me. I must fly out of the world, but then when I desire to fly, I find that the winds of life mock me as I beat against the Cage.

Only My Mate who is the Largest Self of my life. who is my God, can save me.

But when shall He fly to my assistance?
 "When shall He make haste to help me?"
 O cruel, cruel falconers of Sense why have
 ye wounded my Being with the Arrows of
 life and why have ye trapped me into this
 cage of the world!

F. A.

RADHA'S LAMENT.

O Trees, Where is my Krishna? He's not come,
 Alas,, promised but did not, and my heart is undone.

And Thou Jamuna of silvery sheen,
 Thy sylvan bowers, tryst of Krishna's love,
 Are they too love-lorn, my riv'ain queen,
 Agloom without Madhava?

O shrubs and creepers and cypress stately,
 Ye flowers and foliage, grass off glee,
 All ye are sighing, crying and dying innately,
 For my heart's Hero Keshava to see.

O Ye Earth and hills and dales yonder,
 Ye silent Moon, do ye know where Hari has hied,
 Ye all-pervading Vayu, tell me, don't rend my
 heart asunder,
 Anywhere Ye My Mohan have espied?

But vain did Love yearn and pant and pale,
 Mysterious Murari but her heart did play,
 The All-seeing Vihari Himself did sport and revel,
 When Radha unmet-of Krishna like listless lay.

But lo! When Radha so love-sick fell aswoon,
 Krishna in trailing glory shone soon,
 And His All-Self dispelled her delusion of
 being alone,
 And made her for evermore at-one

MULCHAND DEOMAL.

I WANDERED THROUGH A MOUNTAINOUS RETREAT.

I wandered through a mountainous retreat
 into a silent and sequestered place in an
 effort to forget the ways of men and know
 the ways of God. I felt unrelated to my
 age and the conduct of my age palled on me
 for it lacked all the sweetness and the soul
 of poetry. It loved and lived the dead, dull
 things that cheapen life and make shop-
 keepers of men who should be Gods.

I had felt for a tremendous time that
 life should be a long, continuous and divine
 out-reaching to the Heart of life itself, that
 it should be natural, simple and as beautiful
 and as lovely as the rose or forest, the
 rolling ocean or the painted cloud.

I had communed with Nature for years
 before I thus wandered through a mountain-
 ous retreat into a silent and sequestered
 place in a supreme effort to forget the ways
 of men and know the ways of God. And the
 Supreme Soul of Nature into whose Being
 flow with instinctive longing all the lesser
 loves and souls and forms of life had urged
 me on saying.

"Self of my Self who yearnest for the
 things that the poet sees and loves but
 partially, thou who yearnest for the Life of
 love itself and for the Life of all that has
 formed itself into the beautiful, into the sub-
 limely true and good, know that no single age
 or time can e'er make thee know or feel the
 Greatness and the Singleness of God.

"The life of the man who loves the world
 for the world's own sake and not for God,
 is too complex to be truly beautiful. Only
 he who searches and finds the Infinitely
 Simple, the Supremely Single in which all
 the world with all its varied and complex
 expression loses itself into a glorious single
 form which is the form of God—only he is
 wise,

Know that no single desire can of itself give thee that happiness Supreme which is thy soul's own bliss and for which thy soul must first know and love itself even as it knows and loves and dies for lesser things in its present and untutored stase"

After this blessed message which the Heart of Life had given to mine own heart of hearts I felt that I had been initiated into the Solemn and the Ominous Mystery of the Ages through Whose Veiled Splendour shone in Shadowed Glory the Presence for which man searches wide but which he misses—the Presence he has called God.

I lingered for many a year with Nature wandering through a mountainous retreat into a silent and sequestered place in an effort to forget the ways of men and know the ways of God. Slowly and surely did I begin to realise that nothing in the world which men love could give me That for which I sought, for God is the Reality behind the appearance of the World. The world is a curtain which man not God has woven before the Face of The Most Beautiful Thing in Life.

F. A.

REVIEWS.

Rabindranath Tagore A study of his Later works.
by K. S. Ramaswami Sastri S. Ganesan & Co.,
Triplicane, Madras PP 220 Price Rs. 2.

This is one among the many works which are coming out to interpret the writings and bring out the message of the great poet with regard to the various subjects which his master-mind has touched. The poet writing under the impulse of aesthetic excitement creates forms of beauty to give delight to the soul, and is under no necessity to argue out any system of thought or present any message to the understanding of man. So even Tagore's prose writings in which he strives to definitely set forth a view of art or an attitude towards creation float in such an atmosphere of the infinite suggestiveness of the poetic expression,

charged with imaginative phrases and images, that their definite statement is swallowed in the ring of a poetic atmosphere. Therefore an expression and definite statement of the thought-contents of the poet helps his readers to follow with a more understanding interest and appreciation all the forms of his poetic expression.

The standpoint of the author of this book has been no other than an interpretation to reveal the true inwardness of Tagore's mind and moods—collecting all his later works and interpreting them as a synthetic and harmonious whole. In this work we think the author has succeeded well within a very small compass. We will try to pass this synthetic collection under a still shorter review, insufficient as a whole statement, but sufficient to arouse the reader's interest in the beauty and force of Tagore's writings.

The first book studied is "My reminiscences" of Tagore, which contains the self-revelation of the growth and efflorescence of a rare poetic genius and a rare spiritual personality. It consists of a series of memory pictures about which Tagore himself says: "Thus over life's outward aspect passes the series of events, and within is being painted a set of pictures. The two correspond but are not one.....Why the ever-busy painter is painting; when he will have done, for what gallery his pictures are destined—who can tell?.....I then discovered, as I opened the door, that Life's memories are not Life's history, but the original work of an unseen Artist.....The variegated colours scattered about are not reflections of outside lights, but belonging to the painter himself, and come passion-tinged from his heart"

Tagore thus speaks of the sense of mystery which filled the world in his childhood's days. "Looking back on childhood's day the thing that recurs most often is the mystery which used to fill all life and world. Something undreamt of was lurking everywhere, and the uppermost question every day was, 'Then, oh!, when would we come across it?' It was as if nature held something in her closed hands and was smilingly asking us, 'What would you think I have? What was impossible for her to have was the thing we had no idea of.'"

He thus speaks of a feature of the social life of Bengal of his time, the pleasure of mutual meeting

"The faculty our predecessors had of becoming the centre of groups and gatherings, of starting and keeping up animated and amusing gossip, has vanished." How true—as true as it is bitter—is what he says: "In those days everything from furniture to festivity was designed to be enjoyed by the many, so that whatever of pomp or magnificence there might have been did not savour of hauteur. These appendages have since increased in quality, but they have become unfeeling, and know not the art of making high and low alike feel at home." Tagore thus pleads for freedom in the life of boyhood saying full freedom, "was as necessary for my soul after its vigorous repression during infancy as are the monsoon clouds after a fiery summer..... This experience of mine has led me to dread, not so much evil itself, as tyrannical attempts to create goodness. Of punitive police, political or moral, I have a wholesome horror."

Love of country and genuine patriotism was a prominent feature of the Tagore family: "From an outside point of view many a foreign custom would appear to have gained entry into our family, but at its heart flames a national pride which has never flickered. . . . Our educated men then kept at arms' length both the language and thought of their native land. Nevertheless my elder brothers had always cultivated Bengali literature."

Tagore's visit to Europe as a student of Law gave him opportunities to study English life and he thus describes Mrs. Scott's devotion to her husband. "In all her actions her reverence for her husband was the one thing that stood out. The memory of her sweet self-abnegation makes it clear to me that the ultimate perfection of all womanly love is to be found in reverence; that where no extraneous cause has hampered its true development woman's love naturally grows into worship." He characterises a trait of English literature. "In the social life of Englishmen passionate outbursts are kept severely in check, for which very reason, perhaps, they so dominate their literature..... And for this, the fact that in English literature the reticence of true art has not yet appeared is responsible."

The characteristic appeal of Indian and Western music is thus indicated: "European music seems to be intertwined with its material life, so that the text of its songs may be as various as that life it-

self..... For our melodies transcend the barriers of everyday life, and only thus can they carry us so deep into Pity, so high into Aloofness, their function being to reveal a picture of the inmost inexpressible depths of our being, mysterious and impenetrable, where the devotee may find his hermitage ready, or even the epicurean his bower, but where there is no room for the busy man of the world... It (western music) seemed to me so romantic... What I would refer to is the aspect of variety, abundance, of the waves on the sea of life, of the ever-changing light and shade on their ceaseless undulations. There is the opposite aspect—of pure extension of the unwinking blue of the sky, of the silent hint of immeasurability in the distant circle of the horizon."

The poet had a new self-revelation which deepened his poetic vision. Says he: "One morning I happened to be standing on the veranda looking that way. The sun was just rising through the leafy tops of those trees. As I continued to gaze all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. This radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart and flooded it with this universal light. The very day the poem, *The awakening of the waterfall*, gushed forth and coursed on like a veritable cascade. The poem came to an end, but the curtain did not fall upon the joy-aspect of the universe.... From infancy I had seen only with my eyes, I now began to see with the whole of my consciousness..... I could see the fathomless depths of the eternal spring of joy, from which numberless sprays of laughter leap up throughout the world."

It would take us out of limits to quote from all the imaginative passages in which the poet discloses his penetrative vision into things and subject, so we close this chapter with a quotation as to why he stood aloof from the noisy elements of political movements. "My mind refused to respond to the cheap intoxication of the political movements of those days, devoid, as they seemed, of all strength of national consciousness, with their complete ignorance of the country, their supreme indifference to the real service of the motherland."

The next study is *Shantiniketan*, by W. W.

Pearson, which describes the origin, the ideals and methods of the new type of school which Tagore sought to build up at Boipur. The poet thus describes his consciousness of the place of forest Ashramas in Indian cultural life and education: "The greatest teachers in ancient India, whose names are still remembered, were forest-dwellers. They lived in the bosom of primeval nature, meditated upon the deepest problems of the soul, and made it their object in life to grow in sympathy with all creation and in communion with the Supreme Being. Their students flocked round them and had their lesson of immortal life in the atmosphere of truth, peace and freedom of spirit." "These forest sanctuaries have no doubt disappeared but their ideals and method are a light and an inspiration for all time.....In modern India we have to build the ideals of that great age of 'simplicity and wisdom of pure life' into the fair fabric of the future India.....My heart responded to that call and I determined to do what I could to bring it to the surface, for our daily use and purification, the stream of ideals that originated in the summit of our past, flowing underground in the depth of India's soil, the ideals of simplicity of life, clarity of spiritual vision, purity of heart, harmony with the universe, and consciousness of the infinite personality in all creation."

One characteristic of this educational institution is thus described: "The emphasis on efficient and expensive equipment which is a characteristic feature of institution of learning in the West has never been accepted in India, where simplicity of living is regarded as one of the most important factors in true education."

The prominence given to music is another noteworthy feature. The spiritual culture is thus described: "Each boy is induced to acquire the habit of meditation. Mr. Pearson says: 'There is no instruction given as to the method of meditation, the direction of their thoughts being left to the influence of the idea of silence itself and to the Sanskrit texts which are repeated by the boys together at the close of the period of silent meditation. That many boys form the habit of such daily silent worship is enough.' The most attractive and important feature about this ideal school is its general spiritual atmosphere."

The next book studied is *Personality* which

contains six discourses on the interrelation of life's deeper things and of the outer world with the inner universe. The first discourse is on--What is art? The expression of the emotional relation of the personality to the Universe is Art. Indian rhetoricians have laid down that enjoyment is the soul of art and literature, but enjoyment not in vulgar hedonistic sense, but in the sense of bliss, Ananda, the delight-soul of the Universe. Tagore thus describes the origin of the artistic impulse of creation: "When a feeling is aroused in our hearts which is far in excess of the amount that can be completely absorbed by the object which has produced it, it comes back to us and makes us conscious of ourselves by its return waves.....This efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression. Therefore in Art man reveals himself and not his objects." The difference between the world of personality, of emotional thought in which art dwells and the world of science, of impersonal, abstract and mechanical thought which science deals with is thus described. The world of personality is guided by a law—"This law is Reason, which is universal,—Reason which guides the endless rhythm of the creative idea, perpetually manifesting itself in its ever-changing forms. Our individual minds are the strings which catch the rhythmic vibrations of this universal mind and respond in music of space and time." He concludes about the central position of the world of personality by saying: "I have known certainly that the earth and the sky are woven with the fibres of man's mind, which is the universal mind at the same time. If this were not true, then poetry would be false and music a delusion, and the mute world would compel man's heart into utter silence.I live in a world whose life is bound up with mine."

The next book studied is *Nationalism* which is the master principle of human organisation at the present day. A nation is thus described: "A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organised for a mechanical purpose; Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself. It is a spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being." Therefore the nation is a mechanical organisation and by it in the relations of men in

place of "completeness through union in mutual self-surrender, we have elements of wasteful and unnatural conflict. On the chapter of Nationalism in India, the author says: 'Our real problem in India is not political. It is social. I do not believe in an exclusive political interest.' But India must not forget her special history. 'She has tolerated difference of races from the first and that spirit of toleration has acted all through her history.' 'For India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own differences. The tie has been as loose as possible yet as close as the circumstances permitted. This has produced something like a United States of a social federation, whose common name is Hinduism.' The poet's message to India in the light of these ideas is thus concluded: "Let our life be simple in its outer aspect and rich in its inner gain. Let our civilisation take its firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict."

Some miscellaneous works and Dramas are studied of which the Autumn Festival is of great beauty and spiritual significance. The poet's Novels and Stories are studied of which the Runaway appears to us of great beauty. The character of the boy Tara is that of a Nature's child, "His eyes, his limbs, his mind were always on the alert. Like Nature herself, he was in constant activity, yet aloof and undistracted. Every individual has his own fixed standpoint, but Tara was just a joyous ripple on the rushing current of things across the infinite blue."

Among the essays one of the best is the, Message of the Forest, in which the poet emphasises the central fact of man's kinship with Nature as a central idea of Indian thought and traces it through the range of Sanskrit literature, "In India there was no sense of hostility of nature and soul; there was perfect harmony. The world is not a mechanism for the production of results to us, it is Sacchidananda. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy and emancipation of consciousness, not alienating and domi-

nating it but comprehending and uniting with it in blissful union."

This book is a succinct and harmonious review of the later works of Tagore and going through it the reader will get an idea of the writings studied as a harmonious whole.

Bhakti Ka Pantha—by Dharmananda Tripathi. To be had of B. Tripathi & Co., Barabazar, Calcutta. Price 8 annas. A translation into Hindi of the Path of Devotion by Swami Paramananda. The original book contains discourses on the religion of love and the means of acquiring it in life. The translation is well executed and retains much of the spirit of the original. We recommend it to the Hindi reading public.

An Analysis of Prof. J. B. Bury's History of Greece—by T. R. Rajam. Published by the Standard Swadeshi Market, Truppathur. Price 10 annas. A short sketch of Prof. Bury's History which is a recognised text-book on the subject for students. It gives a good skeleton of the book which will prove useful to students as an outline for mastering the subject.

REPORTS.

The Third Annual Report of the Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Narayangang (From 1918—1920).

The record of varied activities of the above institution in the direction of rendering succour to suffering humanity renders the existence of such institutions an unquestionable necessity. It is a instrument ready at hand which is turned to very good account whenever a cry of distress and voice of help arise in the country, and it furnishes a noble expression for those among the youths of this country who are ideally-minded to their passion for service and self-sacrifice. It is a most fruitful channel of expression of the ancient impulse of spirituality in the land.

We will just note in outline the activities of the Sevashrama Educational (1) A Free Pathshala, in which fifteen boys are given free education, (2) A library, recently reinforced by a gift of a whole library

and open to the public (4) Educational stipends to poor students. Charitable work (1) Outdoor hospital relief, 1008 patients were treated (2) House to house relief of 184 cases (3) Relief of helpless patients in the Ry. Station or on the road side, (4) Cremation of the dead, (5) Monetary help in erecting houses, (6) Relief to the aged, the invalid and helpless families, (7) Help with passage money, (8) Relief of epidemic in the town (9) Muffusil relief works.—On nine occasions when epidemics broke out in different parts of the country the Sevashrama sent out relief parties to alleviate the distress, (10) Relief during the Rice Crisis.—When there was distress on account of scarcity and high prices of rice the Sevashrama helped in the importation and distribution of Burma rice at a less price by opening shops. (12) Cyclone Relief work.—When a terrible cyclone swept over the country devastating a large portion of Eastern Bengal, to relieve the distress, the workers prepared the list of sufferers and helped in the distribution of Burma rice at a reduced price. Religious activities include Bhajans, daily worship and study of religious scriptures for the spiritual improvement of the workers and of the public. There was public celebration of the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda

Such a record of activity reflects much credit upon the workers and the management of the institution and testifies to what an amount of work can be performed by persons infused with the spirit of service in a humble way.

The Ramakrishna Sevak Sampradaya, Cuttack, is doing useful work among the poor students of Cuttack. It was first started in 1906 to look after the moral, intellectual and spiritual welfare of poor students. A boarding house for this purpose was opened in 1909 by the Sampradaya and was named Ramakrishna College, and is maintained by donations and subscriptions. The Society maintains seventeen poor students in a rented house under the guidance of a Superintendent. There is a library attached to the College. The Society is trying to have permanent quarters for which it has collected a sum of Rs. 2,536 out of an estimate of Rs. 5,000. The work of the Society is commended by distinguished visitors

NEWS AND NOTES.

THE Birthday Anniversary celebration of the Swami Vivekananda comes off on the 30th January 1921. The Tirthpuja falls on the same day. All centres, branches, and societies, associated with his name are requested to kindly send us the reports of their celebration for insertion in the Swami Vivekananda Number of the P. B.

IN the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, a Weaving School has been opened. A Brahmachari who learnt the industry in the Ramakrishna Weaving School, Koalpara, has taken charge of the teaching. The school has started with six students. Two looms have been set up and weaving clothes and towels are being turned out. One student has joined the school from the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Kalma, for learning the hand-loom weaving with the object of establishing a similar weaving institution at Kalma.

IN Silchar Ramakrishna Sevashrama a Night School has been opened which is doing good work. The said institution conducts the monthly "Navajuga" which has a promising future

A department has been opened in the Nivedita Girl's School for the teaching of hand-loom weaving. One lady-teacher is teaching a few girl-students the weaving of cloth and towels. When a few among the students acquire proficiency, it will be possible to teach a large number of students. In these times of economic stress, a spread of this art of weaving among the ladies of the household is desirable. In times of distress due to high price, insufficiency of cloth, they will be able, with a little capital, to turn out clothes, towels at a small cost to meet the needs of the household or if any surplus is left over, to earn some money by the sale.

ON the 31st Dec. corresponding to lunar month of Agrayahan, the 7th day of the dark moon, the Holy Mother of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna was born, sixty-seven years ago. In the holy re-

membrance a special worship was observed in Belur Math and at the Holy Mother's place of residence in Baghbazar.

THE Ramkrishna Mission Famine Relief Work in the district of Puri has been closed. This is the season for the harvesting of one crop. Many will obtain employment. The price of rice has also gone down. The Famine Relief Work at Bhuvaneswar was closed in the month of October, at Kanas and Gansacodar in November. The work at Jenapur in District of Cuttack is still going on in December.

SWAMI Paramananda returned to Boston from his Western tour on October 15th and at once resumed charge of all Services and classes. On Thursday evening, the 21st, he held an informal reception for the students and friends of the Centre. Although it was arranged at the last moment, the rooms of the Centre were full. The first part of the evening was devoted to music and impromptu speeches. Professor Perrin of the Boston University told something of his recent experiences while teaching at the University of Nankin, China. Mrs Spaulding dwelt with warm appreciation on the pervading influence of the Centre, which brought constant blessing into the lives of many who were deprived of the privilege of attendance at the meetings; and Miss Shepherd recited one of Longfellow's poems with deep feeling. The Swami spoke at intervals as he called upon the various ones who contributed towards the evening's entertainment. In giving an outline of his Western tour and of the many lecture invitations now coming to him, he showed how rapidly the interest in Vedanta is spreading and how many are the new links being formed between the Centre in Boston and the outside world.

THE Swami's recent visit to Los Angeles, although shorter than usual, proved very fruitful. The numbers at the meetings of the Centre grew very large. The Swami also spoke on one Sunday afternoon at Krotona, the National Theosophical Headquarters, to an overflowing audience. His subject was "The Science and practice of Yoga." A special lecture was arranged at the Hotel Darby

by several prominent ladies of Los Angeles and the keen interest awakened led to a second meeting in one the most beautiful homes of Los Angeles. Another outside lecture was at the Metaphysical Library. The Swami was asked to speak also at the Woman's Suffrage Victory celebration; given by the Friday Morning Club, one of the largest Woman's Club in the United States. He chose as his subject, "Ideal of Womanhood in India."

—The Message of the East.

WE are sorry to record that Srimati Sudhira, the director of the Nivedita School and the founder and soul of the Girl's Home called Sri Sarada Mandir, breathed her last on Tuesday, the 23rd Nov. '20. 'For the salvation of self and the good of the world'—was the motto of her life-work. She was in her thirty third year, but possessed of such skill in works and firm perseverance, she laid the seed and carried through such great works, as might well be the glorious record of a more prolonged life. Selfless love and divine grace of character were so perfected in her life, as were known only to those who knew her.

During the Puja holidays she in company with some of her colleagues and students visited Hardwar, Hrishikesh and other holy places and returned to Allahabad whence he proceeded to Benares to inspect and see to the management of the woman's department of the Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama. On her way, she accidentally fell from the train and became unconscious. She was picked up into the train in an unconscious condition and brought to the Sevashrama, Benares, at 10 o'clock in the night. That night her consciousness did not return, nor the following day, but her condition growing worse, all hope of her recovery was given up. Towards afternoon at about 3 o'clock, her face was suddenly lit up with radiance and assumed divine beauty, and everybody present felt the Divine Mother has taken up her beloved daughter to Herself on the completion of her lifelong service, transfigured as a radiant Goddess.—The Udbodhan.

ERRATA—P. 4, l. 2 for 'twenty-seventh' read 'twenty-sixth.' P. 5, l. 31 for 'undegenerate' read 'unregenerate.'