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IS LIFE WORTH HAVING?

AND

THE ETERNAL HOPE:

AN ANSWER FROM

BUDDHA'S FIRST SERMON

TO SOME QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY.

Part : (Cylinder)
Lecture

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SUNDAY LECTURE SOCIETY,

ON

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BY

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SYLLABUS.

Optimism and Pessimism. The ambiguous and contradictory meanings in which the term Pessimism is used. Practical value of the answer to the question whether life is worth having.

The Future life, and some views regarding it.

Similar questions in the time of the Buddha (Fifth Century B.C.) His answer to the questions as then stated.

His First Sermon — "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness."

I. The Two Extremes (Asceticism and Sensuality); and the Middle Path of intelligent self-culture.

II. The Four Noble Truths :

1. The conditions of sorrow.
2. Why it continues.
3. The state in which it will cease.
4. How we can reach that state.

III. The Noble Eightfold Path :

Correct Views.
Right Feelings.
Kindly Speech.
Upright Behaviour.
Harmless occupation.
Perseverance in well-doing.
Intellectual Activity.
Earnest Thought.

IV. The Ten Fetters. Nirvāna.

The answer which this sermon gives, though in words adapted to ancient forms of thought, to the questions glanced at above.

The historical value of this answer.

BUDDHA'S FIRST SERMON.

THE Buddha's First Sermon is especially worthy of attention from the fact that it presents to us in a few short and pithy sentences the very essence of that remarkable system which has had so profound an influence on the religious history of so large a portion of the human race. And it is the more noteworthy since the scheme of salvation which it propounds, the Kingdom of Righteousness of which it is called the Foundation, are supported by none of those conceptions which underlie the teachings of other religious founders, are entirely independent of the belief in a soul, of the belief in God, and of the belief in a future life.

The First Sermon occupies among the Buddhists a position similar to that held among the Christians by the Sermon on the Mount, and the day on which it was delivered is as sacred in the Buddhist Church as the Day of Pentecost in most of the Churches of Christendom. It is somewhat strange, therefore, that so little stress has been laid upon "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness" by writers on Buddhism. But the reason is not far to seek. A mere translation of the sermon would be scarcely intelligible without an elaborate commentary; and it is a most difficult task to give a clear and simple account of a system so utterly foreign to the habitual conceptions and modes of thought of Western minds. If in my present endeavour to make a dark subject plain, I seem to dwell too long on more familiar topics, and to keep you too long from the sermon itself, I can only hope that the end will, in some measure, justify the means.

Buddhism is often described as a philosophy rather than a religion; and a pessimist view of life is generally supposed to underlie its philosophy. It is somewhat difficult to tell what the word "pessimist" means in popular phraseology, so different and so contradictory are the vague, inaccurate meanings in which it is often

used. It is most generally, perhaps, intended either to brand the man who is everlastingly complaining, and whose mental vision is blind to everything but misfortune and disaster; or to express contempt for the man whose weak heart takes fright at the ills of life, who thinks that all is evil and must remain evil, and who gives up in despair instead of trying manfully to take up arms against the sea of troubles, and by opposing end them. It is no wonder that so one-sided a view, so unworthy a character should be unpopular; and pessimism will scarcely obtain a hearing until it succeeds in removing the misconceptions involved in, and sustained by, such applications of the term.

Neither the great Indian thinker and reformer, nor the modern advocates of pessimism, have advanced any such views as are thus stigmatized with what has become an opprobrious epithet. Their pessimism is confined to the answer which they give to the question, "Is life worth having?"—a question which they answer from two points of view. First, that of life in general, the sum total of existence; secondly, that of life in particular, the life of the individual. On the first point pessimism is a denial of the Christian doctrine that if we rightly consider all things that have been made, we must conclude, in the words of the First Chapter of Genesis, "Behold, it is very good." If a pessimist be an adherent to the theory of a personal first cause, he would deny that the Creator could at the same time have been both omnipotent and benevolent; and in any case he would maintain that the sum of the happiness of *all* creatures is in fact outbalanced by the sum of their misery. It is this opinion, whether true or false, to which the term pessimist is by some writers strictly confined; but it may, I think, be fairly applied also to the corresponding opinion on the second point, so closely do the two questions depend upon each other.

On this second point the pessimist would answer, that the sum of the happiness enjoyed by *each* individual is far outbalanced by the sum of the troubles and evils and sorrows to which he is subject. To form a correct judgment on this question it is necessary to look away from one's own case, to think of the thousand millions of the

toiling multitudes who spend lives of poverty and labour, and to try to answer from an impartial point of view whether, for them, life is really a thing they would have chosen—had they had the choice.

To this question, as to the last, it is not intended on this occasion to offer any reply. I would only point out that a pessimist, in the stricter sense of the term, need not give to it a negative reply; and that any answer that can be given is purely a matter of speculative inquiry, and has but little bearing on practical life. For whatever the answer to it may be, one thing is abundantly clear, and must be granted by optimist and pessimist alike—and that is, that whether life be worth having or not, whether a wise man ought or ought not to have chosen it, had he had the choice, life at all events we have, the choice has not been given us, and the only right thing for each of us to do, our bounden duty to ourselves and to humanity, is, here and now, wisely and manfully, to make the best of it.

As discussions on pessimism are too often vitiated by an ignorance of what is the real question at issue, so discussions on the future life are too often vitiated by a neglect of the curious history of the doctrine. It is impossible to estimate rightly the value and significance of the modern Christian belief on the subject without understanding the long history of which that belief is only one of the latest phases. It was a long time before men believed in a future life at all, and even now that belief is by no means universal. It was longer still before some began to believe in an endless life hereafter, and to make a distinction between heaven and hell. In later times the belief became general that heaven was the reward that the good might look to as their compensation for the unjust distribution here of happiness and woe. In our own time the inheritors of these beliefs have sought to defend their hopes of heaven, and to justify their views of hell, by new modifications of the older theories. An orthodox dissenter attempts to prove that eternal life begins with faith in Christ, and that the unbelieving are doomed not to punishment, but to death. A clergyman, who claims to be orthodox, attempts to rob of its sting the horrible doctrine of hell by promising the unconverted, not, indeed, exemption from punishment, but the hope of

penitence and pardon; and an earnest and eloquent Comtist attempts the task of infusing an entirely new meaning into words by which the ancient creed was expressed. But those who have made themselves free from the inherited beliefs, and who attempt to come to some conclusion on the scanty evidence at their command, either cherish a vague and lingering hope (as John Stuart Mill did in his later years), or feel that the evidence is insufficient even for that.

Now on the question of future life, opinion had reached in India, in the fifth century before Christ, a similar stage to that we have only now reached here in the West. The affirmative doctrine had had a similar history, and was, in some form or other, universally held by all except a few of the most advanced materialists; while its defenders put forward regarding it views as various as the many modifications of the doctrine now taught among ourselves. On the two pessimist questions as to the value of life, the Indians were already somewhat more advanced than Europeans now—whether more accurate or not it is not necessary to consider—for pessimists were in as great a majority there as they are now in a minority here.

It was then that there arose the mightiest thinker India has produced, and one of the greatest and most original thinkers on moral and religious questions whom the world has yet seen, and he propounded a scheme of salvation without any of the rites, any of the ceremonies, any of the charms, any of the various creeds, any of the priestly powers, without even any of the gods in whom men so love to trust. This, at least, is a service which may explain, if it cannot justify, the blind idolatry with which he was subsequently regarded, and by which his teachings were overshadowed and destroyed. But the Buddha had his answer, too, to the questions we have now been discussing, and it will be for you to judge to-day whether that particular and positive part of his system was as original and as far-reaching as the negative side of it undoubtedly was.

The importance which he at least attached to his answer may be estimated not only from the fact that it formed the subject alike of his first and of his last discourse, but from the name which he gave to its funda-

mental ideas—the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

The sermon is preserved to us in the Pāli text of the Buddhist Pitakas in the so-called Sūtra of the Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness,* and is certainly among the very oldest records of the Buddhist belief. The following is a literal translation:—

“There are two extremes,” said the Buddha, “which
 “the man who has devoted himself to the higher life
 “ought not to follow—the habitual practice, on the one
 “hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon
 “the passions, and especially of sensuality (a low and
 “pagan† way of seeking gratification, unworthy, un-
 “profitable, and fit only for the wordly minded); and
 “the habitual practice, on the other hand, of asceticism
 “[or self-mortification], which is not only painful, but as
 “unworthy and unprofitable as the other.

“But the Tathāgata‡ has discovered a Middle Path,
 “which avoids these two extremities, a path which opens
 “the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to
 “peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlighten-
 “ment—in a word, to Nirvāna. And this path is the
 “Noble Eightfold Path; that is to say,

“ Right views,	“ A harmless livelihood,
“ High aims,	“ Perseverance in well-doing,
“ Kindly speech,	“ Intellectual activity, and
“ Upright conduct,	“ Earnest thought.”

And here I would pause a moment to observe how strange a fact it is that such a scheme of salvation should have

* The Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta of the Angutara Nikāya in the Sutta Pitaka; found also in its proper context at the commencement of the Mahā Vagga of the Vinaya Pitaka. Léon Feer has discussed the Sanskrit version of this Sutta in the *Journal Asiatique*, vol. xv., pp. 364—366.

† *Gama*, a word of the same meaning and the same derivation as our word pagan.

‡ That is, the Buddha. He is so called as being the successor and imitator of the many previous Buddhas.

been deliberately propounded at all at so early a period in the history of our race; how almost incredible and how painful a fact it is that after having been once widely accepted and eagerly followed, it was yet overshadowed, smothered, lost,—and chiefly through the very love and adoration which were felt towards its propounder. A similar fate attended the Buddha's Kingdom of Righteousness as attended that new and strange Kingdom of Heaven founded afterwards in Galilee—a brief period of splendid though limited success, and then many centuries of battling creeds and bitter dogmas, religious persecutions, pious legends, and vain idolatries; the sky filled with myriads of semi-deities, the hollow creations of a sickly imagination; the teacher deified, his teaching forgotten; and at last the lowest depth—a return in the very monasteries of his religion to the “low, pagan, and unworthy extremes” of sensuality on the one hand, or self-torture on the other.

It is true that through the centuries of its decline, the Kingdom of Righteousness, like the later Kingdom of Heaven, has not been without its mighty kings and faithful subjects; it has been the source of the support of all that is good within its realm, and its history is not yet done. Still it is necessary to realise how little mankind were prepared to receive it, and how grievously, on the whole, they misunderstood it, in order to realise how far it was raised above the ordinary grasp of average men, and how truly it deserves its name of the Noble Path.

But to return to our sermon, and to a more recondite and metaphysical part of it, the way in which it attempted to sum up all the conditions which are productive of sorrow:—

“Birth,” said the Teacher, “is attended with pain; and so are decay and disease and death. Union with the unpleasant is painful, and separation from the pleasant; and any craving that is unsatisfied is a condition of sorrow. Now all this amounts, in short, to this, that wherever there are the conditions of individuality, there are the conditions of sorrow. This is the First Truth, the truth about sorrow.

“ The cause of sorrow is the thirst or craving which causes the renewal of individual existence, is accompanied by evil, and is ever seeking satisfaction, now here, now there—that is to say, the craving either for sensual gratifications, or for continued existence, or for the cessation of existence. This is the Noble Truth concerning the origin of sorrow.

“ Deliverance from sorrow is the complete destruction, the laying aside, the getting rid of, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of this passionate craving. This is the Noble Truth concerning the destruction of sorrow.

“ The path which leads to the destruction of sorrow is this Noble Eightfold Path alone—that is to say, right views, high aims, kindly speech, upright conduct, a harmless livelihood, perseverance in well-doing, intellectual activity, and earnest thought. This is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the destruction of sorrow.”

There followed a few words of personal explanation, but here the real sermon was, in fact, ended ; so that it had at least a merit often accounted great in sermons—that of brevity. In this respect I shall try to imitate it while explaining the deeper meaning of these pregnant sentences. For, as in all such cases, a mere translation into English words is quite inadequate to convey the ideas expressed in the original.

Where the conditions of individuality are there is sorrow, is the summing up of the First Truth. Now sorrow is a word easy enough, too easy, to understand ; but behind the expression, individuality, lies a fuller meaning than is at the first sight apparent.

Let us picture to ourselves a river, deep and rapid, hurrying on its course through and past a bridge. A man standing on the bridge will see, as the water whirls along past the buttresses or pillars of the bridge, that eddies form and bubbles take shape. For a moment they seem to have a separate existence, they move hither and thither as though endowed with life. But almost immediately they are seen, as people say, to burst ; the thin film which gave them their individuality is dissolved, and they have a separate existence no longer.

Or let us imagine ourselves on the battlements of some hill-fortress watching a horseman as he urges his horse far below over the distant plain. The rider is full of the consciousness of his individuality, and the horse seems to scorn the earth from which it thinks itself so separate. But to the watchman above horse and rider seem to crawl along the ground which it is beyond their power to leave; they seem to be as much a part of the great earth as the horse's mane, waving in the wind, is a part of the horse itself.

And the watchman, according to Buddhism, is right. Never for one moment do men escape beyond the influence of the rest of existence which is ever drawing them back into itself. For a brief interval, and by a great effort, they may resist the force of gravitation; and so also for a brief period, by a continual effort, they may resist the powers of the great non-self in the midst of which they live and move and have their being. But each effort leaves them weaker for the next. Before long the dream, the struggle of life will be over; the thin film which separates them, which gives them individuality, will dissolve, and, like the bubble in the river, they will fall back into the great permanent stream of existence, and as separate entities their place will know them no more.

Now it is the effort, the struggle necessary to maintain individuality which, according to the Buddha, is the essence of sorrow; and the conditions of this individuality are the conditions also of sorrow. At birth, at the starting into life of the individual, there is a mighty effort; Nature is arrayed, as it were, against itself, and there follows a pain, severe because the effort is severe. With a bound and a leap, full of the strength born with the pain, the individual starts along his course. But the new strength soon flags and becomes exhausted. To maintain itself as a separate being, the effort must be continually maintained; but the effort is pain—the pain of decay—and dies out at length in its last flicker in the pain of death. And in its course from birth to death, whenever the individuality, the separateness, is brought most distinctly into play (in the severance from what it loves, for instance, or in the union with what it hates), there, with

the assertion of the individuality, is found also the production of pain. This is the first Noble Truth, the truth about sorrow.

I can scarcely ask you to acknowledge the accuracy of a theory which must be so new to you and so strange. But it is surely not premature to claim for it the credit of being a bold and most original attempt to deal earnestly with perhaps the greatest problem that the human mind has ever grappled with, and to maintain that it contains at least a great amount of truth.

The second Truth carries the argument somewhat farther. These being the conditions of sorrow, what is its cause? Its cause, says the teacher, is a strange and almost irresistible craving felt by every individual—a craving it seeks to gratify in various ways, but especially in the lust of the flesh, or the lust of life, or the attempt to escape from the consequences of its separation.

The protest against sensuality is common to all religions and all philosophies, and the universal existence of this first form of the craving will not be disputed. On the second point a few words of comment are necessary. The protest against the craving for existence includes the desire for that future life of which we have been speaking. And necessarily so, for what can future life be unless it is a continuation of individuality? Without that no future life is conceivable. Even in the very highest heaven of heavens the individual must be separate, limited, conscious, or its life would cease. Being thus finite, how will it maintain itself against the infinite without the effort which there, as here, will show itself in pain? Being thus finite, how can it be otherwise than ignorant? But if ignorant, capable of error, and liable therefore to the fruits of error, painful here, and painful also there. No future life, in short, is possible without just those conditions which are inseparable from sorrow, and the craving for continued existence will be a hindrance, not a help, on the only path to the only true salvation.

The third protest is directed against the doctrine, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." "If you have so far accepted my system," a Buddhist teacher would say, "as to have discarded the current pagan notion of a soul, cast not therefore all scruples to the

“winds, devote not yourself therefore to the gratification of your baser capabilities. This would indeed be to escape one evil only to fall into a greater. You must get rid, it is true, of the delusions regarding your individuality, but it would be as vain to attempt now to escape from that individuality itself as it would be wrong to attempt to escape from its responsibilities. And it is only the base and cowardly whom the struggle against the lust of life, or the sense of the evils of existence, can drive to suicide or to despair.” The only true corollary from the second Truth is the third. You must conquer the evils of life, which are due to this strange but undeniable craving, by the destruction of the craving from which they spring. And this is to be done in no other way than that laid down by the fourth Truth—the cultivation, namely, of the opposite condition of mind, of the equanimity that will result from kindness, from self-culture, and from self-control.

With the Noble Eightfold Path the argument begins, and with it the argument closes. It is at once the foundation and the top stone of the stately bridge which the great teacher tried to build over the mysteries and sorrows of life. The eight divisions of the Noble Path contain the answers which he would give to the deepest questions that theologians have raised, and they are the description in detail of the only salvation that in his opinion is worth contending for—this middle path of intelligent self-culture which he declares “will open the eyes and bestow understanding, will lead to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to complete enlightenment—in a word, to Nirvāna.”

We are thus brought to the question of Nirvāna; and I should not be doing justice to the subject before us if I passed the question by. I purpose therefore, as clearly and shortly as I can, to explain what is meant in the earliest Buddhist writings by this goal to which the Noble Path will lead, the highest aim for every wise and earnest man to seek. But before doing so, it is right to let you know that you will not have to grapple with any deep and difficult metaphysical reasoning. You will already have climbed the hill in mastering the doctrine of individuality, and, having mastered that, you will have

only to make a comparatively easy descent on the other side.

Every one, according to the Buddha, ought to be walking along the Noble Path; but the entrance is narrow and the path is long. There are lions, too, in the path, and few are they who conquer all its difficulties and reach the end of it. The chief of these difficulties are ten in number, and are called the Ten Fetters or Hindrances.

These are, firstly, the Delusion of Self; and it is instructive to find that this is made the first of the series, the very entrance to the Noble Path. So long as a man is wholly occupied with himself, chasing after every bauble that he vainly thinks will satisfy the cravings of his heart, there is no Noble Path for him. Only when his eyes have been opened to the fact that he is but a tiny part of a measureless whole, only when he has realised how impermanent a thing is his temporary individuality, has he even entered upon the narrow path. After what has been said above, the meaning of this First Fetter will be easy to grasp.

The Second Fetter is Doubt, Indecision. When a man's eyes are opened to the great central truth, the impermanence of every individuality, he must make up his mind to follow the teacher, and to enter on the struggle, or he will get no farther.

The Third Fetter is Dependence on the Efficacy of Rites and Ceremonies. No good resolutions, however firm, will lead to anything unless a man gets rid of the low, pagan, and degrading error of ritualism; of the belief that any outward acts, any priestly powers, any holy ceremonies, can afford him any assistance of any kind. It is scarcely surprising to find this doctrine so close to the entrance of the Buddha's Noble Path, but it is interesting to learn the curious fact that it is under this Fetter that the modern Buddhist ranks all those representations of Christianity that have been urged upon his acceptance by missionaries of different schools. When he has broken this Fetter, and not till then, a man has reached the state of Conversion, he has fairly "entered upon the stream," and sooner or later he will win the victory.

The next Fetter consists of the Bodily Passions, and the fifth is Ill-will towards other individuals. With the

long battle against the powerful temptations of these great foes to progress, two entire stages of the path are occupied, and to have conquered them is to have reached the fruit of the third stage of the Noble Path.

Then begins the acquisition of what is called the Highest Fruit, the result of the breaking of the last remaining fetters: First the Suppression of the desire for a future life with a material body, and next of the desire for a future life in an immaterial world. By the first of these the hope and belief of the early Christians is anticipated, and its wisdom denied; by the second a modification of that early belief often held by modern Christians is equally repudiated and condemned.

The next on the list are Pride and Self-righteousness. These are the last Fetters but one to be broken—the temptations to which the most advanced are the most liable; the failings which, with one exception, it is most difficult for men to conquer, and to which superior minds are peculiarly liable—a Pharisaical contempt for those who are less able and less holy than themselves.

Lastly (and the fact is again most instructive and most interesting) is placed the Fetter of Ignorance. When all else has been conquered this will ever remain, the thorn in the flesh of the wise and good, the last enemy and the bitterest foe of man.

Of course the order in which the Fetters are given is not intended as an actual representation of the order in which a man always conquers his weaknesses and errors; but it is an attempt in a general way to suggest the course the Buddhist must pursue, and to compare one with another the difficulties he will meet in his progress along the Noble Path. As the Eight Divisions of the Path show the qualities of mind he should sedulously cultivate, so the Ten Fetters show the qualities of mind he should most earnestly contend against. From the two combined the reader will be able to gather a very accurate idea of the state of mind called in Buddhist writings *Arahatship*, or the FRUIT of the Noble Eightfold Path. It would be easy to fill pages with the awe-struck and ecstatic praise lavished in Buddhist writings on the condition of mind in which this state has been fully reached, the state of a man made perfect according to the

Buddhist Faith, when the Noble Path has been traversed and all the Fetters broken ; but everything that could be said is implied in the word by which this state of mind is designated, the word *Nirvāna*.

There have been many mystic and long-drawn discussions as to whether *Nirvāna* means the annihilation of the soul, or an eternal existence of the soul in a state of trance. It can mean neither, for the simple reason that the Buddha did not teach the existence of any soul at all in the Christian sense ; and the confusion which gave rise to these varied interpretations was entirely in the minds of the interpreters. They took for granted that the *summum bonum* must be in a future life. That any one could seek for a salvation to be perfected here, on earth, did not occur to them. That the highest aim of man could be considered to consist only of an inward subjective change, during this life, was an idea so strange that it was beyond the grasp of those who were accustomed to think the highest happiness could only be obtained in heaven, when all the *outward* conditions of men's existence would be changed. When they were told, therefore, that the Buddhist salvation was *Nirvāna*, they not unnaturally presumed it to be some sort of future life ; and in attempting to apply to a future life, and to a soul, expressions meant to apply to a state of mind to be reached here on earth, and used by thinkers whose system was independent of the idea of soul, they inevitably fell into those curious errors and misconceptions which make their discussions of *Nirvāna* as wearisome as they are unreliable.* These misconceptions might, perhaps, have been avoided had the disputants gone to the original Pāli texts, instead of to second-hand authorities ; but probably such errors are inevitable whenever two systems, whose elementary principles are so radically opposed, come first into contact.

* The etymology and meaning of the word *Nirvāna* play a great part in the discussions referred to ; but *Nirvāna*, of course, for the reason stated, cannot be the "going out" of the *soul*. It is the going out in the heart of the three fires of lust, anger, and delusion, and of the craving from which they arise.

The fact is, that in spite of the general belief to the contrary, popular Christianity is at heart more pessimist even than Buddhism. To the majority of average Christians this world is a place of probation, a vale of tears, though its tears will be wiped away and its sorrows changed into unutterable joy in a better world beyond. To the Buddhist such hopes seem to be without foundation, to indulge in them is only possible to the foolish and the ignorant; while thus to despair of the present life, thus to postpone the highest fruit of salvation to a world beyond the grave, is base, unworthy, and unwise. Here and now, according to the Buddhist, we are to seek salvation, and to seek it in "right views and high aims, kindly speech and upright behaviour, a harmless livelihood, perseverance in well-doing, intellectual activity, and earnest thought."

One question remains which ought to be cleared up. Has then the Buddhist salvation, the salvation of a religion which once counted among its adherents half the human race, and which has even now more followers than the Roman Church, the Greek Church, and all other sects of Christians put together—was this a salvation without any reference at all to God? Strange as it may seem, it was so. Doubtless the doctrine would have changed, certainly its expression would have changed, had it been formulated in modern times, and in the West, where the faith in one God has driven out the faith in many. But the popular Gods of India—as numerous and as varied in character as their relations, the Gods of Greece and Rome—seemed to the Buddha to form no exception to his rules. They were liable to all the evils inseparable from individuality. Their characters were such that they themselves stood in need of salvation, and to salvation the only way, for men and gods alike, was along the Noble Eightfold Path. Hindu thinkers, indeed, before the time of Buddha had evolved a unity out of the many popular impersonations of the forces of nature, had postulated under various names a Primeval Being of whom all the other gods, and all men, and all matter were but the sportive and temporary manifestations. But this belief was still confined to the schools, and the Buddha denied the cogency of the arguments by which it was supported. He only regarded the newer and purer divi-

nities, born of Hindu philosophy, as more well-meaning and more powerful than the gods of the multitude. But they were alike liable to error, dazed with the delusion of individuality, and in need of salvation; and the Arhat, the man who had reached Nirvāna here on earth, was, in spite of his lesser material advantages, in spite of his less favourable outward conditions, better, and wiser, and greater than they. This was one of the most important tenets of early Buddhism, and very fairly represents the position which the gods have always occupied in the varying creeds of Buddhist believers. We find it not only in the earlier books, but in later and popular representations of Buddhist belief; and I annex a curious story from the Jātaka Book as evidence of the form which this belief had afterwards adopted among average Buddhists in India.

But to return now from this theological digression to our sermon. Without attempting to estimate its value as a permanent solution of the questions with which this lecture opened, it may fairly be contended that it marked a great advance on the systems of salvation supported by its principal opponents in India, and that some of its most essential doctrines are not without their value even now. But its chief value, as might be expected, is historical. It shows us that in India, as elsewhere, after the belief in many gods had given rise to the belief in one, there arose a school to whom theological questions had lost their interest, and who sought for a new solution of the questions to which theology had given inconsistent answers, in a new system in which man was to work out his own salvation. In this respect the resemblance, which Mr. Frederick Pollock has pointed out, between Nirvāna and the teaching of the Stoics, has a peculiar interest; and their place in the progress of thought may help us to understand how it is that there is so much in common between the agnostic philosopher of India, and some of the newest schools in France, in Germany, and among ourselves.

EXTRACT FROM THE JĀTAKA BOOK REFERRED TO AT
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ON TRUE DIVINITY.

Long ago Brahma-datta was king in Benares, in the land of Kasi. At that time the Bodisat was conceived in the womb of the chief queen, and on the naming-day they called him Prince Mahingsāsa. When he could run alone, another son was born to the King, whom they called the Moon Prince. And when he could run alone the mother of the Bodhisatwa died, and the King appointed another lady to be chief queen. She became very near and dear to the King, and in due course she had a son, whom they called the Sun Prince. When the King saw his son, he said in his delight, "My love, for this son I will give you whatever you ask!" But the Queen postponed her choice to some more suitable time, and so kept the gift in reserve.

And when her son had grown up, she said to the King, "Your Majesty, on the day my son was born, offered me anything I would ask. Give me the kingdom for my son!"

"My two sons," said the King, "are glorious as pillars of fire! I cannot give your son the kingdom." And he refused her. But when he found her beseeching him again and again, he thought, "This woman may devise some mischief against the boys." And sending for his sons, he said to them, "My children, when the Sun Prince was born I pledged myself to grant a boon; and now his mother is demanding the kingdom for him. I am not willing to grant this; but womankind is cruel—she may plot some evil against you. Do you retire into the forest, and when I am dead, rule over this city, our family's hereditary right." Thus weeping, and lamenting, and kissing their foreheads, he dismissed them.

Now the Sun Prince himself was playing in the palace yard, and saw them descending from the palace after taking leave of the King, and perceiving how the matter stood, he said to himself, "I, too, will go with my brothers," and went away with them.

They entered the Himalaya Mountains, and the Bodisat, leaving the path, sat down at the foot of a tree, and said to the Sun Prince, "Dear Sun, go to yonder pond, and first bathe and drink yourself, and then bring us too some water in the leaves of the lotus plant."

Now that tank had been granted to a water-sprite by Wessawana (the king of the bad fairies), Wessawana saying to him, "All those who go down into this pond, save only those who understand divinity, are your prey; but you have no power over those who do not enter the water." Thenceforward the evil genius asked all those who went down into the water what were the divine beings, and devoured those who did not know.

Now the Sun Prince went to the tank, and without hesitation descended into the water. And the evil genius seized him, and asked him, "Do you know what beings are divine?"

"The gods," said he, "are the Sun and the Moon."

"You don't know divinity!" was the reply; and dragging him down, he put him in his cave.

The Bodisat, finding that the Sun Prince delayed, sent the Moon Prince. The evil genius seized him, and asked him, "Do you know what beings are divine?"

"Certainly I do! The divine being is the far-spreading sky,"* answered he.

"You don't know divinity," said the genius; and seizing on him too, put him in the same place.

And when he, too, delayed, the Bodisat, thinking some accident must have happened, went there himself. Seeing the mark of both their footsteps, as they had gone down, he was convinced that the pond must be haunted by a demon, and took his stand with girded sword and bow in hand. The water-sprite, seeing that the Bodisat did not enter the water, took the form of a woodman, and said to him, "Well, my man, you seem tired with your journey. Why don't you get into the pond, and bathe, and quench your thirst, and then go on merrily eating the edible stalks of the water-lilies?"

* Literally "the four directions." The elder of the lads is more advanced in his theology.

When the Bodisat saw him, he knew "this must be the demon," and he called out, "It is you who have seized my brothers!"

"Certainly, it is I!"

"What for?"

"I have been granted all who go down into the pond."

"What, all?"

"All, save only those who know divinity."

"And is, then, divinity any good to you?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, if so, I will teach you divinity."

"Speak, then, and I shall hear who have the nature of gods."

"I would tell you who they are," said the Bodisat, but "I am all unclean."

Then the demon bathed the Bodisat, and gave him food, and brought him water, and decked him with flowers, and anointed him with perfumes, and spread a seat for him in a beautiful bower. The Bodisat seated himself with the demon at his feet, and saying, "Give ear, then, attentively, and hear who it is that have the real attributes of gods," he uttered this stanza:—

"Pure men, and modest, kind and upright men,

"These are the so-called divine beings in the world."

The genius, when he had heard the discourse, was converted, and said, "Oh, Pundit, I have received peace through you! I will give you one of your brothers; which shall I bring?"

"Bring the younger."

"Pundit, you know all theology, but you act not up to it."

"Why so?"

"Because, in passing over the elder, and telling me bring the younger, you do not pay the honour due to seniority."

"I both know theology, O demon, and walk according to it. It is on his account that we came to this forest. For him his mother begged of our father the kingdom, and our father, unwilling to grant the boon, permitted us for our own safety this life in the forest. That lad

“came here all the way with us. Should I now say, ‘A demon has eaten him in the wilderness,’ who would believe it? Therefore it is that I, fearing reproach, tell you to bring *him*.”

“You speak well, teacher, most well! You not only know theology, but walk according to it,” said the water-sprite, honouring the Bodisat with believing heart; and he brought his two brothers and gave them over to him.

Then the Bodisat said to him, “Friend, it is by the evil you have done in a former birth that you are born as a demon, feeding on the flesh and blood of others. Yet now you still sin. This your sin will prevent your being saved from hell. Henceforth, therefore, put away sin, and do good.” And he succeeded in subduing him. After converting the demon, he continued to dwell in that very spot, under the demon’s protection, until, one day, when observing the stars, he found out that his father had died. Then, taking the demon with him, he returned to Benares and assumed the sovereignty, and appointed the Moon Prince heir-apparent, and the Sun Prince Commander of the Forces. And for the demon he had a residence prepared in a pleasant spot, and made arrangements so that he should get the best flowers and food supplied to him. And ruling the kingdom in righteousness, he passed away according to his deeds.

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