

CONTINUITY.¹

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON BURQUEST.

REBUFFED by the inscrutibility of nature in the face of universal interest apropos of death, profound minds down the vista of time have persisted in pondering the perennial question:

"If a man die shall he live again?"

Those who are meditative and retrospective have found it difficult to fully realize or believe that the self within us ever had a beginning. We may look back to a certain period and say:

"At that time I was not alive—well, where was I?"

We may thus commune with ourselves and continue—"Where was this deeper self—this 'I' that thinks, wills, loves, aspires? Can it be that this intangible potentiality, this mysterious awareness called 'soul,' 'spirit,' 'ego,' 'mind,' etc., is vastly older than its physical casement through which it manifests? Can it be that this self—this intrinsic 'I'—has actually preexisted in similar physical casements at other periods of time, reappearing through the *modus operandi* of human birth? Can it be that this 'I' is an entity which has been subject to evolutionary processes, rising slowly in the scale of life and consciousness, from the very lowest forms to the human, and upon each return to this world of three dimensions, it is ever in process of unfolding—of becoming more than it was?"

These are metaphysical questions, profoundly interesting, intensely fascinating. Every person who thinks is interested in them.

¹As an introduction to this article we give the following letter from the late Colonel Roosevelt to the author:

OYSTER BAY, LONG ISLAND, N. Y., November 5, 1917.

MY DEAR MR. BURQUEST:—YOUR article "Continuity" contains much food for thought. I like the use of the words, "Objective and subjective," and "Conditioned and unconditioned." The hidden or subjective side of life is unfathomable, and yet if analogy teaches anything, it points to the perpetuity and conservation of all things objective and subjective—and that embraces the phenomena of mind or consciousness. You have presented this great theme in a manner that should appeal to the magazines.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) T. ROOSEVELT.

for sooner or later, in a few days, weeks, months, or years, we will lie cold and still—having gone the way of all flesh.

Savants innumerable, Oriental and Occidental, fearless and original thinkers in all ages, have answered these questions in the affirmative. They have emphasized the logic of preexistence and perpetuity, averring that both were deep convictions rather than borrowed or cultivated beliefs. They have declared that birth was the gateway of life—of resurrection, and that the self in man is subject to repeated births and deaths, each incarnation contributing something to the chemistry of character, but without any definite memory of prior embodiments.

And thus as we ponder, we naturally question whether the millions of battle-slain have gone down into the dust—down to utter oblivion—or whether in response to Immutable Law, they are to live again—to return to the realm of the tangible via the same physiological route that brought us all into our present three-dimensional awareness—or must we assume that absolute blankness is the crown of being and of heroism—must we conclude that death has annihilated selfhood and stamped the seal of *Finis* on the conscious potentiality that was inherent in these men.

Theodore Roosevelt has said that life and death are both parts of the same Great Adventure. Interpreted in the language of metaphysics, this is equivalent to saying that: The objective and subjective phases of existence are both parts of the same Great Adventure of Continuity.

In other words, life and death may be regarded as conditions of objectivity and subjectivity, of activity and quiescence, one being the complement of the other, and analogous to light and darkness, heat and cold, spring and winter, positive and negative.

It appears therefore logical to conclude, using the abundant analogy derived from natural facts, that the pendulum of existence swings to and fro—from the perceptible to the imperceptible—or we may say, from the objective to the subjective and *vice versa*.

The mystery that lies before birth and the mystery that lies beyond death, are both voids, seemingly inscrutable. These voids may be regarded as unconditioned states, and yet from out the birth void we have emerged into our present state of conditioned consciousness. Our pre-birth status was equivalent to a state of death. We were apparently non-existent, just as much as the man who has died. Yet here we are, alive and conscious. Our analogy will still be logical if we assume that we will eventually emerge from the post-mortem

state through the process of human birth, and again move and have our being among men.

ULTIMATE GOAL OF CONTINUITY.

As we advance into maturity, we grow more conscious of the inevitable—Dissolution—and we ask ourselves:

“Where am I bound? What is this silent state that mortals fear? Is it the cessation of all awareness, the surcease of being? Is it the final end of the Great Adventure or is it merely a portion, a fragment of it?”

In recent years, there has been a marked and increasing interest in the subject of death and continuity. Men of science and renowned intellect have mobilized their wisdom for a new drive upon the subject. We observe such men as Sir Oliver Lodge, Crookes, Lombroso, Maeterlinck and others, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, all of whom were once pronounced materialists, coming forth and asserting the existence of the psychic, and championing the logic and necessity of continuity.

The ultimate goal of continuity, however, is an insoluble enigma. It is equally true that the most elemental fact considered in itself is beyond full comprehension, and that in its final essence nothing can be known. And so from the outset human reasoning is limited to the tangible and conditioned. Hence in discussing continuity we have recourse only to objective analogy and our reasoning is confined within the limits of our conditioned consciousness. However, in contemplating the subject of ultimate destiny, most of the representative metaphysicians are favorably impressed with the Hindu hypothesis that the destiny of human selfhood is union with Nirvana or the Absolute Cause which lies far beyond the phenomena of appearance.

It has been estimated that there are fifteen hundred million human beings on this planet. Within a hundred and fifty years all of them will have vanished—just as the millions and millions that preceded. Whither have they gone? Have they entered a subjective state—a fourth-dimensional world of consciousness? What has become of the fifteen hundred million selves or “I” units that had expressed themselves in these fifteen hundred million bodies? These are baffling questions, but science maintains its probing with magnificent persistence. By almost imperceptible advances, the unknown is being explored and annexed to the known, but of course the riddle continues to tantalize, and hence the direct question:

"What is there beyond the range of the tangible and objective?" Alfred Russel Wallace answers without equivocation: "I hold that the presence of consciousness beyond the grave has already been proved. An unbiased and honest examination of all the facts gathered by modern psychologists would certainly open the eyes of even the most doubtful of all the Thomases!"

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE MODES.

May it not be quite reasonable to assume, according to all the vast evidence we adduce from inductive and deductive analogy, that death is the subjective mode and life the objective, and that there is a perpetual transit of human selves from the subjective to the objective mode and *vice versa*?

Viewed dispassionately and in the light of science, there is nothing inconsistent in the hypothesis that the subjective state entered by the dead is the same kind of state as that escaped from by the newly born. Is there not strongly presumptive evidence that those millions who are continually entering the objective, corporeal state by birth are the same individuals who have previously lapsed by the door of death into the subjective mode which theologians are so fond of designating as "Heaven" or "Hell"?

Manifestly it would seem the height of logic that a method good enough to be used by the Absolute Cause in bringing the self or "I" out of the loins of the living, into a conditioned, objective state, is good enough to be employed in bringing the same self out of the subjective or death state a second time—innumerable times.

To the mind untrammelled by creed and dogma, this hypothesis is far more reasonable and in accord with scientific thought than the abstract and orthodox idea that the self or "I" which has passed into the subjective or death mode should perforce remain there until some very remote resurrection period.

The arguments advanced for reincarnation are in accord with the principles of science—namely, that no energy can be created or lost, but that all energy is but a form of the universal energy which flows on from manifestation to manifestation, ever the same—never born, never dying, but always moving on and on to new manifestations. Therefore it is but logical to suppose that the self or "I" follows the same law of reembodyment, rising higher and higher throughout time, until finally it reenters the Universal Consciousness from which it emerged, and in which it will continue to exist, as it existed before it emerged for the cycle of objective manifestation—or for the Great Adventure.

VIEWS OF A VETERAN JOURNALIST.

William D. Eaton of Chicago, the veteran journalist who has enjoyed the friendship of many famous men of letters during a long and interesting career, has for many years been a deep student of metaphysics and the esoteric. Relative to reincarnation he said recently to the writer:

"In these days abundant evidence is offered, of a nature legitimately admissible, that certain powers of incarnate intelligence are active in the world, while physical science has advanced its method so far beyond the old horizon that a clear inference of continuous and teeming life everywhere is not to be avoided.

"The province thus doubly indicated has been known to a few in all ages. The mind of our Western world is uneasily curious about it, and that uneasiness is symptomatic of an approaching change in our whole body of spiritual, ethical, and physical ideology, but the time for it is not yet. The people are not ready.

"The message of Jesus, like all the others that ever have been delivered by the High Ones, has at its heart a steadfast assurance of the continuity of individual existence, and on this we may rest, whatever doubt or denial may have been thrown in by physical science or applied religion. If it will make my meaning any clearer, I may describe what we call death as an incident in life, involuntary as birth, and quite as necessary. This implies life before birth as well as after—in other words, the doctrine of repeated lives, of which we hear so much, so vaguely.

"Since we abandoned the finalities that prevailed before the advent of Galileo, science has found new light, as yet imperfect, but tending to show humanity as included in that scheme of perpetuity which lies at the base of existence in the lower orders, and gives us the only definition of the universe that responds at all to reason.

"The realm of tangibility is nature's transitory phase, appearing and dissolving in processes that are slow only in terms of our exterior consciousness. Only the unseen is immortal. Sense, dimly manifested in our outward contact, indicates the one enduring quality. Man passes, but the spirit of man is not to die."

The belief in the continuity of selfhood or the "I" through human reembodiment was firmly rooted in the minds of the early Christians. To-day it is the keystone in the arch of all eastern religion and philosophy—the belief of nearly two thirds of the population of the world.

As a doctrine hoary with antiquity, we find it advanced by such men as Scotus, Leibniz, Kant, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Maeterlinck, and commanding the respect of such scientists as Lodge, Flammarion, Figuier and Brewster. Poets have plainly leaned toward it—among them Henry More, Schiller, Goethe, Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson, Emerson, Shelley, Whitman, Arnold and even Whittier.

The story of mankind—the romance of consciousness, takes a fresh meaning in the light of eternal continuity, and the perpetuity of all that exists, is, and can be.

EARTH'S CYCLE OF DEATH AND REBIRTH.

In this light, the glacial periods, the wavering poles, and the evidences of change in land and water surface begin to clear themselves up, according to Mr. Eaton. Two thousand years take our solar system but a very little way on its long travel to and from its gravitational seat. Almost 150,000 years are calculated as required for the circuit; yet the last 2000 years have shown a steadily increasing warmth. In the time of Cæsar the rivers of Italy were thickly frozen in the winter, and the north of Europe was a sullen forest, whose scant barbarian tribes clothed themselves in fur.

Egypt and India were the lands of sunshine, whose people had inherited from millennia beyond much of the knowledge we are rediscovering now. The knowledge of the skies that enabled the builders of the pyramid of Gizeh to make an orientation sixteen lines nearer the true than Tycho Brahe could define four hundred years ago, was not held by men who viewed only with naked and unaided eyes the stars above the bare sands of their Libyan desert. High knowledge alone could have enabled them to place the pile in the exact center of the earth's land and water distribution. They were the heirs of an earlier summer of science, that gradually ebbed away as the sun rolled forward into fuller geniality, and spread more fruitful life toward the north.

Time after time the world has spun that far-flung oval, and life has risen and flourished in the rising heat, to fail in fiery floods. Time after time has the world returned to the days of Arcady and golden ages, to sweep away again into the stellar north so far that "the stars grew old and the sun grew cold," and the grip of icy death was fast upon it.

And in the many thousand years of springtime that led to each of these sidereal summers, the other many thousand years of autumn that closed in unimaginable sidereal winters, how many

races of men have risen, and striven, and been perfected, and passed away, each to itself the sum of all that ever was or could be? How many more will walk the earth, and live and love, and strive, and pass into the oblivious void, before the earth itself shall cease to be?

Races and nations innumerable, busy with their gods and governments, have possessed the world before and since the last long winter, as we possess it now. Names have filled it, worship and sacrifice have been given to deities, all as real as the names and races and the gods we know, and have departed into the forgotten dark, as we shall go; and so it will be through all the unguessable eons that Arcturus and his groups, our own among them, will swing on their appointed journey around some other sun to which Arcturus is as ours to him—forever and forever. The ineffable stars are unaware of us.

Astronomical history is old enough in authentic records to show that somewhat more than two thousand years ago Arcturus was visible only as a luminous speck. Now it blazes in the evening sky, a star bright as Jupiter, a beacon among the glittering points of fire that strew the firmament this side of the Milky Way.

The rate of travel of our sun through space with its little group of satellites has been determined. Southward through the heavens we race, five hundred million miles a year, along an arc whose segment shows undeviating progress in the one direction of that growing point of light, and whose projection in unmistakable modes will carry us close around it, and then away, along a wide and awful sweep, toward Polaris, to the extreme curve that must be passed before the journey back again begins.

How many times the sun and this our planet have swung that course, only the power that hangeth the worlds upon nothing ever can know. That we are now a little more than half way down the journey to the turning-point, and entering on a spring-like opening to a young summer of celestial weather, is made clear by those whose study is the sky, and by those to whom the stars present but partial mystery.

Recent astronomy has shown by a comparison of the gravitational power of all the greater stars in our region of the universe, that the line we are traversing is shaped by the influence of Arcturus, and that its direction will carry us around that star in somewhat more than twenty-five thousand years. The turn will bring us so near to it, and into a zone of heat so high that physical life in its present form will be impossible; for the sun Arcturus is incan-

descent. The shadowy old belief that the world shall die in fire, enwrapped a truth—as all beliefs do when they are understood.

At the other end of the oval are thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice. Flung to the extreme limit of its course, before it turns again in answer to the other magnet of its orbit, the sun and the worlds that circle it, being farthest from their source of heat, will dim and fall into a sleep of cold so deep that life again will be suspended, to again awaken and again begin a new development as the southward turn is made, and warmth flows in once more.

ETERNAL ROMANCE OF CONTINUITY.

And all of this unceasing motion is simply nature, life, mind, destiny. It is but a phase of the evolution and involution of life and matter, of the subjective and the objective sides of existence. 'Tis assuredly the eternal romance of continuity—the Great Adventure of life and death. 'Tis the Cosmic Consciousness swinging forward into endless futurity, split up into countless billions of evolving selves ranging upward in tangible variety to the apex of the human.

In the actinic light of the lessons taught by nature in all her mysterious and boundless magnitude, we learn that we are living in a millionth-rate world which is revolving around a millionth-rate sun. Dogma and creed after creed may flourish and have its little day, but the unchanging creed of nature which science is interpreting ever more clearly, points unerringly to continuity and periodical renaissance of all that is, lives and thinks.

That which is aware of itself cannot escape from that awareness. We cannot elude ourselves—the ever present "I" within ourselves. The suicide seeks to do it, but nature refutes the idea in her teeming manifestations of regeneration. We are as atoms of awareness which have been detached and may be for eons, from the central—the Supreme Awareness.

TRAINED REPORTERS IN WONDERLAND OF SCIENCE.

Men in their myriad struggles to attain ephemeral, objective realities are prone to be oblivious of the deep and enduring realities of the subjective side of the tangible—the side which is revealing itself fragment by fragment to those few who are out on the assignment in the Wonderland of Science, intent upon securing new and hidden gems of eternal fact which will amaze mankind and awaken ignorance. The trained reporters in the wonderland are

loyal and steadfast, each engaged on special assignments—physics, geology, astronomy, psychology, psychic phenomena, etc.

Newton went out on his assignment. He saw an apple fall, and he reported the law of gravitation, writing a story that was the beat of his time. His story of an eternal fact made possible a knowledge of the trajectory of our sun, and now we know the course and at least the story of the world we inhabit.

Henri Fabre went forth on his assignment—entomology. He saw an insect and marveled. He was one of the first to demonstrate the value of imagination in science, but the fact that we may rely upon his observations is shown by his caution in dealing with the life of the spider. He marveled at the geometry of the spider's web, but was careful to report that the instinct in this case practises higher geometry without knowing or caring about it. What shocked Fabre was the immorality of the insect world—its cruelty, its ruthlessness, its insanity, varied with displays of wonderful hedonism or love of pleasure.

"Life has unfathomable secrets," said Fabre. "Human knowledge will be erased from the archives of the world before we possess the last word that the gnat has to say to us."

Fabre reported upon continuity—reembodiment. He showed how the caterpillar weaves his own silken tomb, and within it passes those months of trance or subjectivity which precede its glorious birth into a new element.

Covering the psychic and psychological, Lodge, Wallace, Meyers, Hyslop, James, Hudson, Münsterberg and others, have gathered facts, wonderful data which future reporters in the Wonderland of Science can utilize in their quest of truth.

Science tells us of the romance and perpetuity of all existence. Thus shall we realize that rank after rank, the souls of men will sweep with the swinging sun toward its turning-point, growing with each return to bodily integuments, finding out as every season passes toward the Arcturus solstice, till the earth is cleared for yet another cycle.