

A CURE FOR SOCIAL UNREST.

BY W. P. STEWART.

"East is East and West is West, and never these twain shall meet."—*Kipling*.

NEVERTHELESS, to bridge the gap that separates Occidental from Oriental thought is the most pressing need of the hour. Upon the successful bridging of this gap depends the cure for most of the ills with which the Western world is afflicted. A religious revival is being widely advocated as a means of bringing humanity back to its senses. The idea is excellent, as it is high time people had something else to think of than their own selfish desires.

The religious revival, however, is not making much headway and the reason is not far to seek. This is an age of rationalism; people insist upon thinking logically. It is no longer sufficient to tell a man that he must be good, and to offer him no reason why except that some one 2000 years ago said so.

The average man sees others acquiring what seems to him an undue share of the world's goods, and he sees no sufficient reason why he, too, should not "get his" while the getting is good. In the wild scramble to get something for nothing he overlooks, or more likely he has never heard of, the fundamental fact that *it cannot be done*. Christ taught that it cannot be done, but only in the Oriental systems of philosophy are we plainly shown *why* we cannot get something for nothing, or why we must be good if we would be happy.

To the Western world the main stumbling-block in the way of an understanding of the Oriental view-point is our failure, popularly, to understand the real nature of what we call matter. In Oriental countries it is generally admitted that matter is not real, that what we think are material things are in fact only mental images, thoughts as the Christian Scientists have it.

Western physicists have come much nearer to proving the non-

existence of matter than they themselves believe. This does not imply that they have reached by any means a point where they are willing to admit the Eastern view-point—far from it. However, the foremost investigators along purely physical lines admit that a radical readjustment of currently accepted theory is necessary.

The whole fabric of modern theory regarding the ultimate constitution of matter presupposes the existence of the ether, a substance that never has been seen, heard, felt, tasted, smelled, measured, nor weighed. It is purely hypothetical, and was invented to explain certain operations of nature that did not appear capable of explanation on any other hypothesis.

Recent investigations, however, have cast serious doubt upon the existence of this hypothetical ether. To fill the office required of it the ether must have no viscosity, and yet recent experiments have shown that, if there is such an ether, it must possess viscosity, for the following reason: To give the observed constant velocities of light in all directions on the earth's surface, the ether must be carried along with the earth in its motion through space. That could not be unless the ether possessed viscosity. But if the ether possesses viscosity it no longer explains those facts in the operations of nature for which it was invented. Yet all modern theories regarding the ultimate constitution of matter are based upon the ether hypothesis.

A few years ago an atom was defined as the smallest possible division of matter, a quite definite quantity of a particular element, incapable of being divided or of being changed into any other element. To-day we know that all of this was a mistake. Investigations in the domain of electricity, magnetism, and the radio-active substances have shown that, not only can the atom be divided, but that the atoms of all the elements consist only of groups of electrons, and that by varying the number of electrons in an atom it can be changed from an atom of one element into an atom of a different element. Finally it is shown that the electrons themselves probably are only vortices in an hypothetical ether, the very existence of which is seriously doubted.

It seems that if ever we are to arrive at the truth regarding the ultimate constitution of matter we must start, not with a supposition or a theory, but with something we know. The starting-point of our investigation should be a certainty, something of which there can be no doubt. The physicists have shown us that we do not know that matter really exists, notwithstanding the evidence of our senses. They have proven that the grosser forms of what we call

matter, such as hydrogen, nitrogen, gold, iron, etc., do not exist as such, but really consist of atoms, which are made up of electrons, which in turn are only vortices in the ether, and finally they have practically proven that the ether itself does not exist. Suppose we shall be compelled to abandon the ether hypothesis; what have we to offer in its stead; can we frame another hypothesis which will explain all of the observed phenomena? The Oriental thinkers have had such an hypothesis for the last three thousand years. If it is a fact that some one has an hypothesis which really does account for all the observed phenomena, would it not seem the part of wisdom to examine carefully that hypothesis.

If we review the history of scientific discovery we are impressed by these two apparently inconsistent phases of the matter: That whereas there has been no permanence to any theory regarding the ultimate constitution of matter, one theory after another giving way before newly discovered facts, it is altogether different when it comes to the *laws* that govern the operations of nature. These laws appear to be fixed and permanent. It is an undisputed fact, for instance, that chemical combinations occur in certain definite proportions and not otherwise, regardless of what we may think of the ultimate constitution of those substances. We know that light is reflected, refracted or polarized, in a perfectly definite way, regardless of what light really is.

The point is this: When we investigate the *laws* that govern movements, changes, combinations, in fact all of the operations of nature, we are able to arrive at results that are permanent. On the other hand, when we attempt to define what substances really are, we meet with defeat, or at best impermanence. These laws of nature are the only permanent things science has given the world. They are all based upon, and are only variations of, one fundamental principle, the principle of the conservation of energy, which in turn is only a broad statement of the law that action and reaction are equal and opposite.

In all nature is found vibration, a wave motion, in which one phase is balanced by its opposite. In everything there is a periodicity, like the swinging of a pendulum, in which motion in one direction is equalled by a corresponding motion in the reverse direction. A positive charge is always held by a negative charge. These laws are definite and permanent, but they are laws regarding the movements of things which, in their ultimate nature, are strangely illusive, and which as yet we have been totally unable to define. Let us start with something of which there can be no doubt, not a sup-

position but a reality, something we know, and see if there may not be an explanation much simpler than the currently accepted hypothesis, an explanation which will account for all of the experiences of humanity.

In the last analysis there is only one thing we are quite certain actually exists. That thing is our thought; we *know* that we think. We are sure that certain mental pictures or images are passing through our minds. Only by a process of reasoning can we be certain of anything else. The physicists have shown us that we cannot trust the evidence of our senses. From this view-point let us study the matter in some detail.

In our delving into the mysteries of scientific investigation perhaps after all we have not really been studying *physical* phenomena; possibly we have been studying only *thoughts*, the mental pictures or impressions that have been passing through our minds. It may be that we have been investigating only our own thoughts, and what we have mistaken for the fixed and permanent laws of nature were in fact only the laws by which our own minds operate. Possibly these so-called physical phenomena which we have been investigating have had no existence outside our thoughts, and this whole universe is only an interesting dream. If this is so, it is evident at once that this dream, or illusion, conforms to a very definite law, and it follows that the one basic law that has been found to underlie all so-called natural phenomena, the law that action and reaction are equal and opposite, the conservation of energy, must be a mental rather than a physical law. It also follows that we have reached certain logical conclusions in regard to the laws of nature, not because we have been following nature faithfully in her various operations, but because our minds work that way, we could not think otherwise, and should we follow any line of thought whatever in a clear and logical manner, the finished product would be found to conform to this law, because it is the law of mind.

As a working hypothesis let us assume that the foregoing proposition is true; that *the only real phenomena are mental phenomena*, and that *mental operations can occur only in conformity with the principle of the conservation of energy*. With this proposition granted, albeit only for the sake of the argument, let us examine some of the conditions which must logically follow. At this point it is well to recall to mind that the test of a theory is not at all whether it squares with previously formed opinions, but simply, does it or does it not explain all of the observed phenomena.

If the law that action and reaction are equal and opposite is in

fact a law of mind, then there must exist a balance in mental operations, the same as we have found in so-called physical phenomena. If such a balance in mental operations and mental states is found to exist, if our moods, passions, every-day mental experiences, even our vagrant whims, are found to balance or neutralize each other, then the theory is, at least, greatly strengthened.

It does not require an extended investigation to convince a clear-thinking person that such a balance does exist. One has only to go into one's own intimate experience to see it on every hand. Our whole mental life is qualified by either desire or aversion; this pair of opposites is in fact the very foundation upon which the structure of our experiences is reared. Our every mental state is balanced by its opposite, and we *like* one of the phases and *dislike* the other. Candidly examine every complete experience and it will be found that like balances dislike, pleasure equals pain, happiness compensates for unhappiness. Love and hate go hand in hand—one quarrels most with one's sweetheart. As the light balances the darkness, so do the opposite phases of every experience. This can be verified by any one who cares to take the trouble to go back into his own experience, and it is well worth the effort. Even a little investigation along this line reveals the explanation of many difficult problems. For instance, how seriously have we pondered the inconsistency of evil and suffering in the world with the existence of an omnipotent and all-merciful Deity, and here is the simple answer.

The disposition or character of an individual swings from one extreme to the opposite; the minister's son proverbially goes wrong, while the reformed criminal makes the most successful preacher; the popular politician loses his popularity and retires in disgrace if he remains in power too long. Nations and races of people obey this same law, so do even geographical locations, and history is only a chronicle of this wave motion that characterizes everything. This periodicity of disposition, or of character, or of the characteristics of nations and races is nothing more than a mass reaction; that is, the sum total of our mental states swings to the one side or to the other the same as do the individual items. This is only another way of saying that action and reaction are equal and opposite when applied to the aggregate of our experiences as well as to each thought. The law is universal. As experienced by the individual, each of these pairs of opposites constitutes in fact only one complete thought; one thought consisting of two opposite phases. One of the phases comes into existence, more accurately into conscious-

ness, because we want it; the other phase follows as a natural reaction and we do not like it, but we cannot escape it. The one phase could not exist without the other. For instance: If there was no desire there would be no aversion; if there was no heat there would be no cold; if there was no wealth there would be no poverty. One cannot experience pleasure without incurring an equal amount of pain; the two coexist and together constitute but one experience. We cannot accept one half of the thought without the other half; we must pay the price. Our thought may be compared to an alternating current of electricity, in which the opposite phases balance each other and in which the two phases must coexist.

Viewed from a still different angle, if the law of action and reaction applies to mental experiences, then one's life may be compared to a game of give and take in which, eventually, what we give must equal what we receive. If we are parsimonious, we must expect to be treated niggardly. In this view, the Golden Rule is based upon sound reasoning, for, in order that our experiences shall balance, others must, in the long run, do unto us as we do unto them. It behooves us, therefore to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. If we examine our own experiences closely we find that in the end we get just what we give. "With what measure ye mete it shall be meted out to you," is as true to-day as it was two thousand years ago. If we trample on the rights of others we must expect that our own will be ignored. It must be so, or the law we have postulated is not universal.

The only pleasures we get that do not leave a sting behind are those that come as compensation for labor. Pleasure always is balanced by pain, and labor—either physical or mental labor—is a form of pain. In this case we have earned our pleasure. The advantage consists only in the fact that we are able to distribute the more or less painful labor in such a way that we can endure it. The privilege of earning one's daily living by honest work is an unmingled blessing.

Confucius is said to have discountenanced all invention or improvement in mechanical methods. In view of the present state of mechanical perfection and the manifold comforts of life resulting therefrom Confucius's stand appears almost criminally foolish. But was it so? Did not the Chinese sage see farther into this matter than we? Let us see: Most inventions are designed either to save labor or to increase our comforts or pleasures. But according to the law all comforts must be equaled by discomforts, all pleasure must be balanced by pain. If, then, we invent machines or methods

of doing things that save labor and at the same time contribute to our pleasures, are we not burning both ends of the candle? Shall we not eventually have to pay for our comforts and pleasures by enduring severe discomfort and pain. During the last quarter of a century creature comforts and the machinery for enjoying life have multiplied manifold, and the World War has followed. Pleasure must be, and is, balanced by pain, and other world catastrophes will follow until we quit inventing new pleasures and learn to work for what we want, and stop trying to get something for nothing.

In this equation of human experiences the profiteer and the bolshevist are equally outlawed. Consider first the profiteer: If a man has taken an unfair advantage of another, if he has profited at the other man's expense, if he has grown rich through compelling others to suffer, he has not thereby increased his own happiness. He has gratified his own vanity no doubt, but he has piled up a debt which sooner or later he must pay. The time will come when, in precisely the same way, an equally unfair advantage will be taken of him, and he will be made to suffer in proportion as he had made others suffer.

The case of the bolshevist while easily understood is not quite so simple: We are at all times suffering, or enjoying, a continuous reaction from what has gone before. We tend constantly to reverse all our previous experiences. The position we occupy in life is the net result, the unexpended balance, the algebraic sum of, not only all we have done and felt and thought in this life, but in all the many lives we have lived in the past. Our present status is a reaction from the past. We reverse our past; we must in order to make it balance. We are now getting what we then gave, and we are now giving what we then received. The plutocrat of to-day was the laborer of yesterday, and he who was the coolie of yesterday is the mandarin of to-day. "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." It has been said that, "Great wit to madness is surely allied": it is equally true that the king and the beggar are closely related, the one condition is a direct reaction from the other.

This thing of what is coming to us, what is ours by right, has been called our "Karma." It amounts to this: Add together all the pleasures we ever have enjoyed and subtract therefrom all the pains we have suffered; add together all the good we ever have done and subtract the evil; add together all the comforts and subtract the discomforts, and so on until our entire experience has been covered. Then, unless these opposite phases exactly balance each other, we shall have something of good or evil coming to us. This something

which is due us we call our karma. It is good or evil, desirable or undesirable, accordingly as the account balances the one way or the other.

What is rightfully ours is not simply what we earn to-day, but all we ever have earned in all the ages of the past, *minus* all we have received in that time. In this account it may be that the balance is immensely in our favor. If it is we find ourselves occupying a position of fame and fortune. Perhaps the balance shows nothing in our favor, possibly we are in debt to the world. If so we find ourselves occupying an inferior position, working that someone else may profit, and usually chafing because we think we are not getting a square deal, we are paying our debt. Taking into account all of our past experiences we are getting just what we deserve. What we are receiving in either case is in fact just that which has over-balanced our account. If we have had beauty in excess, we are now paying for it by being ugly; if we have been rich, we are now poor; if we have been a "boss" we are now balancing the account by playing the menial.

The bolshevist system must fail because it attempts to legislate a man's position in life. A man's entire past determines his present position in the world. A man is literally the architect of his own future. What he is now is absolutely the result of his own previous experience. However, no matter what a man's previous history may have been, the bolshevists say to him, "*This* is the position you are entitled to occupy, and we will see that you hold it." It cannot be done. So soon as they are off guard he will slump back to the place where he belongs, or rise again to the position to which he is entitled, as the case may be. From the foregoing it will be seen that we assume a previous existence, and so we must, because this system cannot stand unless we admit reincarnation.

If the principle of the conservation of energy applies to thought, then reincarnation is inevitable, because death cannot cancel the unbalanced experiences of life. Pleasures, pains, griefs, joys, must each be equalled by its opposite. But a man usually continues to make new debits or credits in his personal experiences right up to the time of his death, and there are usually a large number of unbalanced experiences and unsatisfied desires left over. These bring him back inevitably into another incarnation, which naturally must be largely the converse of the last and in which he suffers or enjoys a reaction, in kind, from the unexpended balances left over. These unexpended balances, or unbalanced experiences, which it brings with it from a previous life determine the disposition, tendencies

and "luck" of a little child. Of course in this new life the law of action and reaction continues to operate. He may again incur new debits or credits which may not all be balanced before he dies again, which will necessitate another rebirth, and so on *ad infinitum*. This really is what most people do, and will continue to do until they conquer desire, or acquire sufficient intelligence to realize that it is all only an illusion, a dream.

Spiritual intelligence and animal desires are opposites: as one comes up the other goes down. When we shall have acquired sufficient intelligence to see all this as it really is, then no further karma, debits and credits, will be created, because desire will have ceased. Then, when all outstanding accounts shall have been balanced, the intelligent principle—the real man—will be in a condition which is known as Heaven or Nirvana, a condition, not a place.