

## THE HARMONY OF THE SPHERES.

BY THE EDITOR.

WHILE pondering over the problem of man's moral aspirations and the various forms which they assume in different religions, I was deeply impressed with the similarity of sentiment in the utterances of the several religious leaders who had attained the loftiest heights of moral truth, and if they have reached their conclusions (as we must assume) in perfect independence, we cannot deny that their agreement indicates a remarkable harmony in the spiritual spheres, and the dominant keynote of this celestial music may be characterized in Christ's noble word:

"But I say unto you, love your enemies." Matt. v. 44.

Nor is this word without resonance in the sacred writings of other countries. The venerable Lao-Tze proclaimed the same great maxim in these sentences:

"Requite hatred with goodness."—Lao-Tze, ch. 63.

And

"The good I meet with goodness.

The bad I also meet with goodness.

Thus I actualize goodness.

The faithful I meet with faith.

The faithless I also meet with faith.

Thus I actualize faith."—Lao-Tze, ch. 49.

The Buddhist distinguishes as clearly as St. Paul between "love" and "lovingkindness." The former in the sense of sexual love is *kāmo* (in both Pali and Sanskrit), corresponding exactly to the Greek *ἔρως*, but there are two words for "lovingkindness"; first there is the natural affection and friendliness, such as exists between brother and sister, or parents and children, which is called *pemam*, and then the highest ideal of "lovingkindness" in the sublimest religious sense, called *mettā*. The Dhammapada warns the disciples

not to be entranced by the snares of *kâmo*. The word occurs for instance in the following passage:

“Be not yoked unto carelessness  
To love’s delight and intimacy.”

The word *pemam* applies to all human affections as for instance in the following passage quoted from the Middling collection:

“All those who have merely faith and affection towards me are sure of paradise hereafter.”<sup>1</sup>

*Mettâ*, or lovingkindness in the religious sense, is made an object of meditation, enjoined on the disciple who devotes his life to religion. It is higher than *pemam*, “affection,” and is chief in the long list of Buddhist meditations. The meditation of this lovingkindness embraces all living beings, and its praise is extolled in the following passage,<sup>2</sup> which we quote in Mr. Edmunds’ translation, as follows:

“Eleven benefits, O monks, are due from the heart-emancipating practice of lovingkindness—from its cultivation and its increase, from making it active and practical, from pursuing, accumulating and striving to the height thereof. What are the eleven?

“One sleeps in peace and wakes in peace; he dreams no evil dreams; he is dear unto mortals and immortals; the angels watch over him; fire, poison, sword can harm him not; quickly his heart is calmed; the aspect of his countenance is serene; he meets death undismayed; and should he fail of the Highest, he is sure to go to the world of God.”

By “the Highest” is meant Nirvana; the world of God is heaven. Mr. Edmunds adds the following comment:

“God is here Brahmâ, the Supreme Finite Being who, though not the Creator, enjoys otherwise all the Christian titles of the Deity. In Buddhism the Godhead is not a person, but an office, and Buddha himself once earned that office in a bygone universe by the systematic practice of love.”

The story how Buddha in his former incarnations had reached the office of Godhead, how he was exalted as a Brahma, the omniscient, omnipotent governor of the universe, is told in the Logia-Book (*Itivuttaka*), Chapter 22; and we quote the passage in full again in Mr. Edmunds’ translation:

“This was spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arahât, and heard by me:

<sup>1</sup> Majjhima Nikâyo Sutta 22. Cf. *Open Court*, Feb., 1900, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Numerical Collection (*Anguttara Nikâyo*), Book of Elevens, section 16.

"O monks, be not afraid of good works: such is the name for happiness, for what is wished, desired, dear, and delightful,—namely good works.

"And for a long time have I known, monks, the wished-for, desired, dear, delightful, and severally enjoyed results of good works done for a long time.

"Having practised benevolence for seven years, I did not return to this world during the revolution and evolution of an æon. Yea, monks, for the revolution of an æon I was an angel of splendor, and during the evolution I rose again in the empty palace of the Brahmâs. Yea, then, O monks, I was a Brahmâ, the great Brahmâ, conquering, unconquered, all-seeing, controlling. And thirty-six times, O monks, was I Sakko, the lord of the angels; many hundreds of times I was a king, a righteous emperor, a king of righteousness,<sup>3</sup> victorious in the four quarters, securely established in my country, and possessed of the seven treasures.

"Now what was the doctrine of that region and kingdom? This is what I thought of it, O monks: What deed of mine is this the fruit of? Of what deed is this the result, whereby now I am thus magical and mighty? This is what I thought of it, O monks: This is the fruit of three deeds of mine, the result of three deeds, whereby I am thus magical and mighty, to wit: alms, self-control, and abstinence."

We will now quote from the Buddhist canon some of the best known passages on lovingkindness.

Buddha teaches<sup>4</sup> (Dhammapada 5):

"Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule."

In the world of sense everything bad is so loud and asserts itself with such pretentious noise, that the evil seems indeed to take possession of the actual world and to crowd out everything good and true and noble. How different is the domain of ideal aspirations as taught in the Dhammapada (verse 223):

"Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth!"

And again Buddha says (Sutta Nipata VIII, 147-150):

"Let no one deceive or despise another in any place, let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another.

"As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child,

<sup>3</sup> Or "King by right," the epic title of a Hindu suzerain.

<sup>4</sup> This and the following translations are quoted from the *Sacred Books of the East*, Vols. X and XI.

her only child, so also let every one cultivate a boundless goodwill towards all beings.

"And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless goodwill, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity.

"Standing, walking or sitting or lying, as long as he be awake, let him devote himself to this mind; this (way of) living is the best in this world."

And one of the disciples of the Buddha burst forth in admiration in these lines (Tevigga Sutta, III, 1-2):

"And he [the Enlightened One] lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of love, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure.

"Just, *Vâsettha*, as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard—and that without difficulty—in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, and deep-felt love."

Plato records a speech redounding to the glorification of love. It was uttered by the Greek prophetess Diotima, upon whom the spirit of Socrates rested. She protested that the sentiment of lovers enraptured with beauty, pointed to higher ideals far above the pleasures of sense. She depicted a love that is absolutely pure; a love of the divine, a love of the true, the beautiful and the good. The passage is quoted in condensed form by Mr. Frederic W. H. Myers in his interesting and voluminous work, *Human Personality* (Vol. I, pp. 113 ff.), and it will be convenient to reproduce it here from that source as follows<sup>5</sup>:

"Plato begins by recognizing, as fully as pessimist or cynic could do, the absolute inadequacy of what is called on earth the satisfaction of this profound desire. Lovers who love aright will feel that no physical nearness can content them, but what *will* content them they cannot say. 'Their soul,' says Plato, 'is manifestly desiring something else; and what it is she cannot tell, only she darkly prophesies thereof and guesses it from afar. But if Hephæstus with his forging fire were to stand beside that pair and say: 'Is this what ye desire—to be wholly one? to be together by night

<sup>5</sup> The passage appears in Plato's *Symposium* (pp. 192-212) and Mr. Myers' version is based upon Jowett's translation. Jowett translates the word *ἔρως* by "love" and *τὰ ἐρωτικά* by "things of love" or "mysteries of love."

and day?—for I am ready to melt you together and make you grow in one, so that from two ye shall become one only, and in this life shall be undivided, and dying shall die together, and in the underworld shall be a single soul;”—there is no lover who would not eagerly accept the offer and acknowledge it as the expression of the unknown yearning and the fulfilment of the ancient need.’ And through the mouth of Diotima, Plato insists that it is an unfailing sign of true love that its desires are *for ever*; nay, that love may be even defined as the desire of the *everlasting* possession of the good. And in all love’s acts he finds the impress of man’s craving for immortality,—for immortality whose only visible image for us on earth is the birth of children to us as we ourselves decay,—so that when the slow self-renewal of our own everchanging bodies has worn out and ceased, we may be renewed in brighter, younger bodies which we desire to be born to us from whomsoever we find most fair. ‘And then,’ says Plato, rising, as ever, from visible to invisible things, ‘if active *bodies* have so strong a yearning that an endless series of lovely images of themselves may constitute, as it were, an earthly immortality for them when they have worn away, how greatly must creative *souls* desire that partnership and close communion with other souls as fair as they may bring to birth a brood of lofty thoughts, poems, statutes, institutions, laws,—the fitting progeny of the soul?’

“And he who in his youth hath the need of these things in him, and grows to be a godlike man, wanders about in search of a noble and well-nurtured soul; and finding it, and in presence of that beauty which he forgets not night or day, brings forth the beautiful which he conceived long ago; and the twain together tend that which he hath brought forth, and are bound by a far closer bond than that of earthly children, since the children which are born to them are fairer and more immortal far. Who would not choose to have Homer’s offspring rather than any sons or daughters of men? Who would not choose the offspring which Lyncurgus left behind him, to be the very salvation of Lacedæmon and of Greece? or the children of Solon, whom we call Father of our laws? or of other men like these, whether Greeks or barbarians, who by great deeds that they have done have become the begetters of every kind of virtue?—ay, and to these men’s children have temples been set up, and never to any other progeny of man. . . .’

“He, then, who to this end would strive aright, must begin in youth to seek fair forms, and should learn first to love one fair form only, and therein to engender noble thoughts. And then he

will perceive that the beauty of one fair form is to the beauty of another near akin; and that if the Beauty's self he seek, it were madness not to account the beauty of all forms as one same thing: and considering this, he will be the lover of all lovely shapes, and will abate his passion for one shape alone, despising and deeming it but a little thing. And this will lead him on to see that the beauty of the soul is far more precious than any beauty of outward form, so that if he find a fair soul, though it be in a body which hath but little charm, he will be constant thereunto, and bring to birth such thoughts as teach and strengthen, till he lead that soul on to see the beauty of actions and of laws, and how all beauty is in truth akin, and the body's beauty is but a little matter; and from actions he will lead him on to sciences, that he may see how sciences are fair; and looking on the abundance of beauty may no longer be as the slave or bondman of one beauty or of one law; but setting sail into the ocean of beauty, and creating and beholding many fair and glorious thoughts and images in a philosophy without stint or stay, he may thus at last wax strong and grow, and may perceive that there is one science only, the science of infinite beauty.

“For he who hath thus far had intelligence of love, and hath beheld all fair things in order and aright,—he drawing near to the end of things lovable shall behold a BEING marvelously fair; for whose sake in truth it is that the previous labors have been undergone: One who is from everlasting, and neither is born nor perisheth, nor can wax nor wane, nor hath change or turning or alteration of foul and fair; nor can that beauty be imagined after the fashion of face or hands or bodily parts and members, nor in any form of speech or knowledge, nor as dwelling in aught but in itself; neither in beast nor man nor earth nor heaven nor any other creature; but Beauty only and alone and separate and eternal, which, albeit all other fair things partake thereof and grow and perish, itself without change or increase or diminution endures for everlasting. And whoso being led on and upward by human loves begins to see that Beauty, he is not far, I say, from reaching the end of all. And surely then, O Socrates (said that guest from Mantinea), man's life is worth the living, when he beholds that Primal Fair; which when thou seest it shall not seem to thee to be made after the fashion of gold or raiment or those forms of earth,—whom now beholding thou art stricken dumb, and fain, if it were possible, without thought of meat or drink, wouldst look and love for ever. What would it be then, were it granted to any man to see Very Beauty clear;—incorruptible and undefiled, not mingled with color

or flesh of man, or with aught that can consume away, but single and divine? Could man's life, in that vision and beatitude, be poor or low? or deemest thou not (said he), that then alone it will be possible for this man, discerning spiritual beauty with those eyes by which it is spiritually discerned, to beget no shadows of virtue, since that is no shadow to which he clings, but virtue in very truth, since he hath the very Truth in his embrace? and begetting and rearing Virtue as his child, he must needs become the friend of God; and if there be any man who is immortal, that man is he.' "

Plato is a true son of Hellas when he reaches the highest aim of the aspiring soul by a love of beauty, but in the end his ideal coincides closely with that of Buddha and with that of Christ. It is peculiar that even the words are similar. When Buddhists describe Nirvana as that state where there is neither birth nor death, Plato says of the highest Being that it "is neither born nor perishes, nor can it wax nor wane, nor hath it change or turning or alteration," etc.

Agathon, a tragic poet of Athens, who expressed his views on love at the same convivial feast in which Socrates took part, treats the same subject as follows:

"Do we artists not know that he only whom love inspires has the light of fame? He whom love touches not, walks in darkness. Love has set in order the empire of the Gods. Therefore Phædrus I say of Love that he is the fairest and best in himself and the cause of what is fairest and best in all other things.

"And I have a mind to say of him in verse that he is the god who

"Gives peace on earth, and  
calms the stormy deep,  
Who stills the waves, and  
bids the sufferer sleep.

"He makes men to be of one mind at a banquet such as this, filling them with affection and emptying them of disaffection. In sacrifices, banquets, dances, he is our lord, supplying kindness and banishing unkindness, giving friendship and forgiving enmity, the joy of the good, the wonder of the wise, the amazement of the gods; desired by those who have no part in him and precious to those who have the better part in him, parent of delicacy, luxury, desire, fondness, softness, grace, careful of the good, uncared of the evil.

"In every word, work, wish, fear he is pilot, helper, defender, saviour, glory of gods and men, leader best and brightest in whose footsteps let every man follow."

And Agathon was echoed by Paul when he said :

“But now abideth faith, hope and love (*ἀγάπη*), these three, but the greatest of these is love (*ἀγάπη*).”

All these notes and voices merge into one grand harmony, the harmony of the spheres of the spiritual life that pervades the entire creation of whirling universes.