

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

In a letter recently received, a friend asks: *Why is it better to have the body cremated after death instead of having it buried?*

There are many reasons advanced in favor of cremation. Among them one that cremation is cleaner, more sanitary, requires less room, and breeds no diseases, such as often come from cemeteries, among the living. But the most important is that advanced by Theosophists, namely, that death is the passing out of the higher principles, and means leaving the body an empty house. After the human soul has disconnected itself from the remains, there is left the astral body, which gave and kept the physical in form, and the body of desire. The astral or form body lingers around, and lasts as long as, the physical, fading away as the physical decomposes. The desire body, however, is an active force capable of doing damage in proportion as the desires were vicious or inimical during life. This desire body may last for hundreds of years if the desires of which it is composed be strong enough, whereas the physical body lasts comparatively few years. This desire body is a vampire which draws its strength, first from the remains and secondly from any living body who will give it audience, or admits its presence. The desire body draws sustenance from the dead form and astral body, but if the physical body is cremated that avoids all of the foregoing. That destroys the forces of the physical body, dissipates its astral body, resolves these into the elements from which they were drawn before birth and while living in the world, and enables the mind to disentangle itself more easily from the desire body and pass into the rest which religionists call heaven. We cannot do a greater service to those whom we love and who have passed out of this life than to have their bodies cremated and thus relieve them of the necessity of shaking off the mortal coil and the terrors of the grave.

Is there any truth in the stories that we read or hear about, concerning vampires and vampirism?

We live in an age altogether too scientific to allow of there being any truth in such mediaeval nursery tales as those of vampires. But, nevertheless, the truth still exists, and many scientific men, who

have outlived the years of superstition, have become more superstitious than the most credulous when they have had experience with a vampire; then it was their turn to experience the taunts and jibes of their fellow scientists. One advantage of the prevalent materialistic incredulity concerning sub-mundane and super-mundane existences, is that it takes the popular thought away from the tales of goblins, ghouls, and vampires, by ridiculing such things. Therefore there is less vampirism than in the Middle Ages when everyone believed in sorcery and witchcraft. Vampires still exist and will continue to be formed and kept alive as long as human beings live fiendish lives, in which they do *in thought and desire* murder their enemies, defraud the poor and helpless, ruin the lives of their friends, and sacrifice others to their selfish and bestial desires. When a human being having strong desires and intellectual power with a dwarfed or throttled conscience, lives the life of selfishness, has no compassion for others when his desires are concerned, takes every possible advantage in business, ignores the moral sense, and subjects others to his desires in every way that his intellect can discover: then when the time of death for such a man has come there is formed after death what is called a desire body, of strength and fiendish power. This is quite distinct from the astral form which hovers around the physical remains. Such a desire body is stronger than that of the average person and is more powerful, because the thoughts while in life were concentrated in the desires. This desire body is then a vampire in that it preys on all persons who will open a door by the life, thoughts, and desires, and who are sufficiently weak in will to allow the vampire to overcome their moral sense. Horrible tales could be told of the experiences of many who were the prey of a vampire. The body of those of such as have lived the life of a vampire will often be found fresh, intact, and the flesh will even be warm years after it has been in the grave. This simply means that the desire body is sometimes strong enough to keep in touch with the physical through the astral body, and to keep intact the physical form, through life supplied it with the life drawn from the bodies of living human beings by the vampire or desire body. The burning of the body by cremation does away with the possibility of a human vampire preserving its physical body with the life drawn from the living. The human body, in as much as it is the reservoir or storage house, has been destroyed and the desire body is unable either to immediately take the life of those living and is prevented from coming so nearly in contact with them.

What is the reason of the sudden death of people whether young or in the prime of life, when it would appear that many years of usefulness and growth, mental and physical, are before them?

When the soul comes into life, it has a definite lesson to learn, at the learning of which it may pass out if desired. The period in which the lesson of a particular life is to be learned, may be a few years or be extended over a hundred, or the lesson may not be learned at all; and the soul returns to school again and again until it learns that lesson. One may learn more in twenty-five years than another may learn in one hundred. Life in the world is for the purpose of gaining intimate knowledge of eternal verities. Each life should promote the soul one degree nearer to self-knowledge. What are usually called accidents are simply the carrying out in detail of a general law. The accident or happening is only one small arch of a cycle of action. The accident known or seen, is only the continuation and completion of the invisible cause of action. Strange as it may seem, accidents are almost always caused by the thoughts which one generates. Thought, action, and accident form the complete cycle of cause and effect. That part of the cycle of cause and effect which connects cause with the effect is action, which may be visible or invisible; and that part of the cycle of cause and effect which is the effect and the result of the cause, is the accident or happening. Every accident might be traced to its cause. If we find the immediate cause of any accident it simply means that the cause has been recently generated, which means that it is only the small cycle of thought, action, and effect, which is recent; but when the accident or effect stands isolated and one is not able to at once see it preceded by a cause, this simply means that the cycle of thought is not a small cycle, and therefore recent, but is extended into a larger cycle, the thought and action of which may be found in the prior or any preceding life.

If the astral arm, leg, or other member of the body is not severed when the physical member is amputated, why is the astral body not able to reproduce another physical arm or leg?

This question would appear to be asked on the assumption that the astral body does not exist, as if it existed it could reproduce any physical member when lost, especially as it is claimed by all Theosophists that the physical matter is built into the human body according to the design of the inner or astral body. But the explanation is very simple. There must be a physical medium through

which physical matter is transformed into other physical matter and there must also be a body for each of the planes on which it is to function. The physical medium is the blood, through which food is transformed into the body. The *linga sharira* is molecular in structure, whereas the physical body is composed of cellular tissue. Now although the astral arm is not usually severed when the physical member is amputated, there is no physical medium by which physical matter can be linked to and built on physical matter. Therefore, although the astral arm exists, it is not able to convey the physical matter into itself because there is no longer a physical medium to transfer the physical matter. So the molecular astral counterpart of the cellular physical arm which has been amputated has no means of building physical matter into itself. The best that can be done is to build new tissue at the extremity of the stump and thus close up the wound. This will also explain how wounds are healed, and why deep scars remain if the flesh has not been brought together close enough for tissue to knit with tissue.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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