

The **L** *aw*

and the

W *ord*

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CHAPTER 1

Some Facts in Nature

IF I were asked what, in my opinion, distinguishes the thought of the present day from that of a previous generation, I should feel inclined to say, it is the fact that people are beginning to realize that Thought is a power in itself, one of the great forces of the Universe, and ultimately the greatest of forces, directing all the others. This idea seems to be, as the French say, “in the air,” and this very well expresses the state of the case—the idea is rapidly spreading through many countries and through all classes, but it is still very much “in the air.” It is to a great extent as yet only in a gaseous condition, vague and nebulous, and so not leading to the practical results, both individual and collective, which might be expected of it, if it were consolidated into a more workable form. We are like some amateurs who want to paint finished pictures before they have studied the elements of Art, and when they see an artist do without difficulty what they vainly attempt, they look upon him as a being specially favoured by Providence, instead of putting it down to their own want of knowledge. The idea is true. Thought *is* the great power of the Universe. But to make practically available we must

know something of the principles by which it works—that it is not a mere vaporous indefinable influence floating around and subject to no known laws, but that on the contrary, it follows laws as uncompromising as those of mathematics, while at the same time allowing unlimited freedom to the individual.

Now the purpose of the following pages, is to suggest to the reader the lines on which to find his way out of this nebulous sort of thought into something more solid and reliable. I do not profess, like a certain Negro preacher, to “unscrew the inscrutable,” for we can never reach a point where we shall not find the inscrutable still ahead of us; but if I can indicate the use of a screw-driver instead of a hatchet, and that the screws should be turned from left to right, instead of from right to left, it may enable us to unscrew some things which would otherwise remain screwed down tight. We are all beginners, and indeed the hopefulness of life is in realizing that there are such vistas of unending possibilities before us, that however far we may advance, we shall always be on the threshold of something greater. We must be like Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up—heaven defend me from ever feeling quite grown up, for then I should come to a standstill; so the reader must take what I have to say simply as the talk of one boy to another in the Great School, and not expect too much.

The first question then is, where to begin. Descartes commenced his book with the words “*Cogito, ergo sum.*” “I think, therefore I am,” and we cannot do better than follow his example. There are two things about which we cannot have any doubt—our own existence, and that of the world around us. But what is it in us that is aware of these two things, that hopes and fears and plans regarding them? Certainly not our flesh and bones. A man whose leg has been amputated is able to think just the same. Therefore it is obvious that there is something in us which receives impressions and forms ideas, that reasons upon facts and determines upon courses of action and carries them out, which is not the physical body. This is the real “I Myself.” This is the Person we are really concerned with; and it is the betterment of

this “I Myself” that makes it worthwhile to enquire what our Thought has to do in the matter.

Equally true it is on the other hand that the forces of Nature around us do not think. Steam, electricity, gravitation, and chemical affinity do not think. They follow certain fixed laws which we have no power to alter. Therefore we are confronted at the outset by a broad distinction between two modes of Motion—the Movement of Thought and the Movement of Cosmic Energy—the one based upon the exercise of Consciousness and Will, and the other based upon Mathematical Sequence. This is why that system of instruction known as Free Masonry starts by erecting the two symbolic pillars Jachin and Boaz—Jachin so called from the root “Yak” meaning “One,” indicating the Mathematical element of Law; and Boaz, from the root “Awáz” meaning “Voice” indicating the Personal element of Free Will. These names are taken from the description in 1Ki 7:21 and 2Ch 3:17 of the building of Solomon’s Temple, where these two pillars stood before the entrance, the meaning being that the Temple of Truth can only be entered by passing between them, that is, by giving each of these factors their due relation to the other, and by realizing that they are the two Pillars of the Universe, and that no real progress can be made except by finding the true balance between them. Law and Personality—these are the two great principles with which we have to deal, and the problem is to square the one with the other.

Let me start, then, by considering some well established facts in the physical world which show how the known Law acts under certain known conditions, and this will lead us on in an intelligible manner to see how the same Law is likely to work under as yet unknown conditions. If we had to deal with unknown laws as well as unknown conditions we should, indeed, be up a gum tree. Fancy a mathematician having to solve an equation, both sides of which were entirely made up of unknown quantities—where would he be? Happily this is not the case. The Law is ONE throughout, and the apparent variety of its working results from the infinite variety of the conditions under which it may work. Let us lay a foundation,

then, by seeing how it works in what we call the common course of Nature. A few examples will suffice.

Hardly more than a generation ago, it was supposed that the analysis of matter could not be carried further than its reduction to some seventy primary chemical elements, which in various combinations produced all material substances; but there was no explanation how all these different elements came into existence. Each appeared to be an original creation, and there was no accounting for them. But now-a-days, as the rustic physician says in Molière's play of the "*Médecin Malgré Lui*," "nous avons changé tout cela" [we have changed all that]. Modern science has shown conclusively that every kind of chemical atom is composed of particles of one original substance which appears to pervade all space, and to which the name of Ether has been given. Some of these particles carry a positive charge of electricity and some a negative, and the chemical atom is formed by the grouping of a certain number of negatively charged particles round a centre composed of positive electricity around which they revolve; and it is the number of these particles and the rate of their motion that determines the nature of the atom, whether, for instance, it will be an atom of iron or an atom of hydrogen, and thus we are brought back to Plato's old aphorism that the Universe consists of Number and Motion.

The size of these etheric particles is small beyond anything but abstract mathematical conception. Sir Oliver Lodge is reported to have made the following comparison in a lecture delivered at Birmingham. "The chemical atom," he said, "is as small in comparison to a drop of water as a cricket-ball is compared to the globe of the earth; and yet this atom is as large in comparison to one of its constituent particles as Birmingham town-hall is to a pin's head." Again, it has been said that in proportion to the size of the particles the distance at which they revolve round the centre of the atom is as great as the distance from the earth to the sun. I must leave the realization of such infinite minuteness to the reader's imagination—it is beyond mine.