

CHAPTER III

BEGINNINGS OF MYSTICISM.

THE BIRTH OF FRATER QV MH.

Oscar Eckenstein, on his arrival in Mexico, where he was to climb mountains with the subject of our essay, found him in a rather despondent mood. He had attained the most satisfactory results. He was able to communicate with the divine forces, and operations such as those of invisibility and evocation had been mastered. Yet with all this there was a certain dissatisfaction. Success had not given him all that he had hoped for. He placed the situation before his companion, rather to clear his own mind than hoping for any help, for he supposed him to be entirely ignorant of all these subjects, ^{which he habitually treated with dislike and contempt.} Judge of his surprise, then, when he found in this unpromising quarter a messenger ^{from} of the Great White Brotherhood! His companion told him to abandon all magick. *Eckenstein*

"The task", said he, "involves the control of the mind. Yours is a wandering mind." The proposition was

indignantly denied.

"Test it", said ~~Oskar Ekenstein~~ *the Master*.

A short experiment was conclusive. It was impossible for ^{the boy} ~~him~~ to keep his mind fixed upon a single object for even a few seconds at a time. The mind, though perfectly stable in motion, was unable to rest, just as a gyroscope falls when the flywheel slows down. An entirely new course of experiments was consequently undertaken. Half-an-hour every morning and half-an-hour every evening were devoted to attempts to control the mind, by the simple process of imagining a familiar object, and endeavouring to keep concentrated upon it.¹

He soon became sufficiently expert in this initial practice to proceed to concentration on regularly moving objects such as a pendulum, and, ultimately, on living objects. A further series of experiments dealt with the other senses. ^{He} ~~The student~~ tried to imagine and retain the taste of chocolate or of quinine, the smell of various familiar perfumes, the sound of bells, waterfalls, and so on,

1. See Part I of ~~this~~ Book 4 for a description of this, and an explanation of the difficulty of the task, even in the case of one whose powers of concentrated attention in the ordinary sense of the phrase, are highly developed.

or the feeling excited by such objects as velvet, silk, fur, sand and steel.

In the spring of 1901, he left Mexico, went to San Francisco, Honolulu, Japan, China and Ceylon, always continuing these experiments. His Master had not told him to what they would ultimately lead. In Ceylon he found Frater I.A. (Allan Bennett), with whom he went to Kandy, where they took a bungalow named Marlborough, overlooking the lake.

I.A. had himself been developing on similar lines under P. Ramanathan, the Solicitor-General of Ceylon, known to occultists under the name of Shri Parananda.¹ I.A. told him that in order to concentrate he must first see that no interruptions reached him from the body, and counselled the adoption of Asana, a settled position in which all bodily movement was to be suppressed. Further, he was to practice Pranayama, or control of the breathing, which has a similar effect in reducing to the lowest possible point the inter-

1. He is the author of commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and John, which he explains as containing many of the aphorisms of Yoga.

nal movements of the body.

During the months of this stay at Kandy, he practised these, obtained success in Asana, the intense pain of the practices being overcome, and changed into an indescribable sense of physical well being and comfort.

While in Pranayama he passed through the first stage, which is marked by profuse perspiration of a peculiar kind; the second, which is accompanied by rigidity of the body; and the third, in which the body unconsciously hops about the floor, without in any way disturbing the Asana.

During the latter part of August and the whole of September, his practices became continuous by day and night, in order to create a rhythm in the mind similar to that which Pranayama produces in the body. He adopted a Mantra, or sacred sentence, by the constant repetition of which it became automatic in his brain, so that it would continue through sleep, and he would wake up actually repeating the words. Sleep itself, too, was broken up into short periods of very light sleep of a peculiar kind, in which consciousness is hardly lost, although the body ob-

1. See Part I of ^{Book} ~~this Book~~ 4 for full descriptions, and Equinox Vol. I No. 4 for some of FRATER PERDURABO'S records of these practices.

ains perfect rest. These practices continued into October, at the beginning of which he reached the state of Dhyana, a tremendous spiritual experience, in which the subject and object of meditation unite with excessive violence in blinding brilliance and music of a kind which earthly harmony affords no parallel.

The result of this however was to cause so intense a satisfaction with his progress, that he gave up work. He then visited Anuradhapura and others of the buried cities of Ceylon. In November he went to India, and in January visited I.A. at Akyab in Burma, where ^{Shah Adepts} he was living in a monastery, with the intention of preparing himself to take the Yellow Robe of the Buddhist Sangha. The whole of the summer of 1902 was spent in an expedition to Chogo Ri (K-2) in the Himalayas.² During the whole of this period he did very little occult work.

November, 1902, found him in Paris, where he stayed off and on till the spring of 1903, when he returned to

1. See Part I of ~~this~~ Book 4, and Equinox Vol. I, No. IV.

2. An account of this journey is given by Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod: "Six mois dans l'Himalaya." His own story is in "The Spirit of Solitude" (The Confessions of Aleister Crowley) Vol II

his house in Scotland.

We must now go backwards in time, to take up a thread which had run through his whole work, so important as to demand a chapter to itself.