John Smith's Sacred anatomy / by Sir Humphry Rolleston.

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183 Euston Road
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JOHN SMITH'S SACRED ANATOMY.

*(Delivered before the Medical Society of the Middlesex Hospital on March 26th, 1920.)**

By Sir Humphry Rolleston, K.C.B., M.D., F.R.C.P.

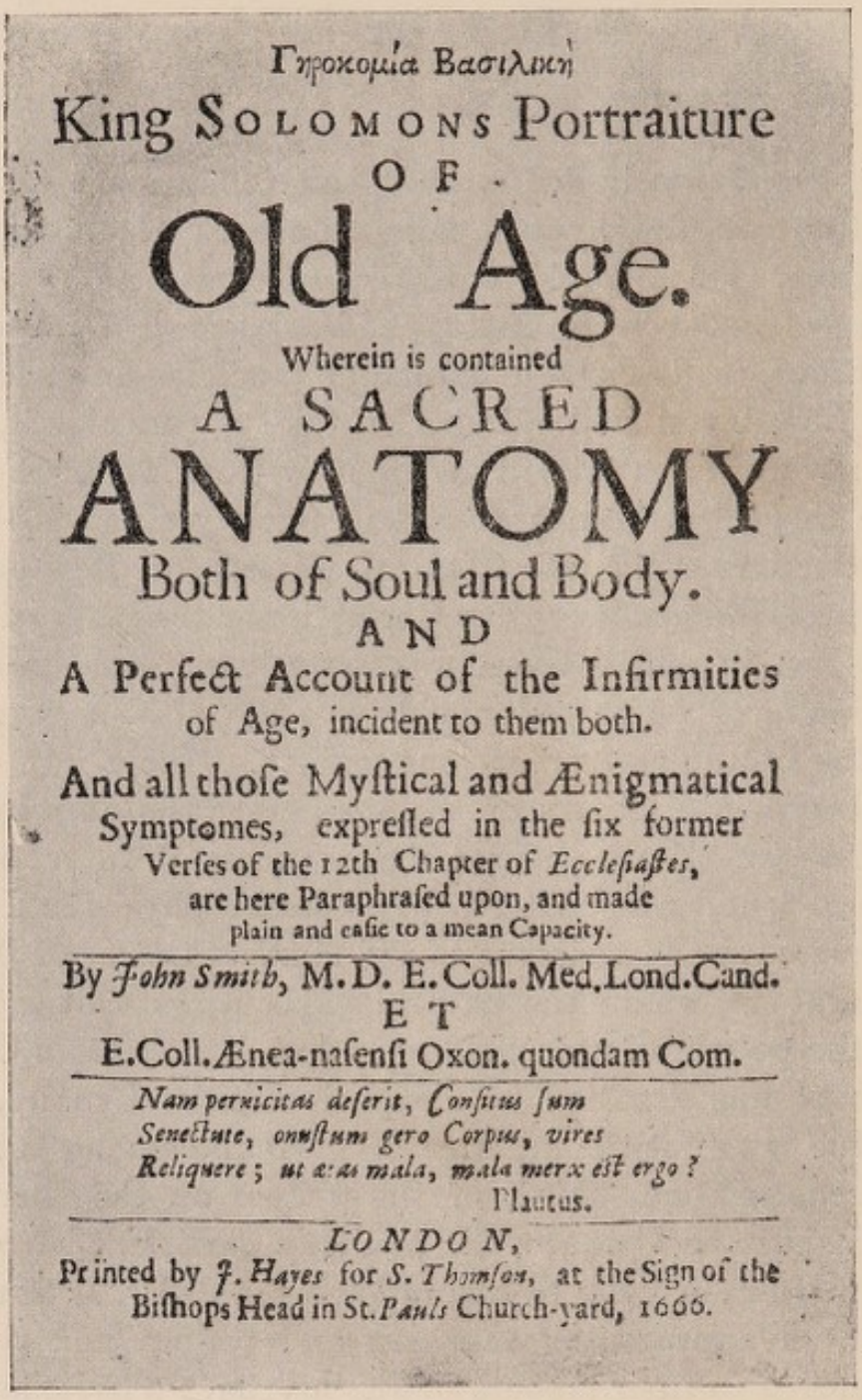
Soon after I received Dr. Campbell's Thomson's flattering invitation to address you, I came on a book of 527 pages on Geriatrics† (γῆρας = old age, ἰατρική = medicine), a word obviously formed on the analogy of Pediatrics by Dr. Nascher, the author, to describe a branch of medicine in which it is to be hoped you will all live to take a personal interest. This new word has taken root in New York, its birth place, where there has been a Geriatric Society since 1914, and since January 1917 the Medical Review of Reviews has had a special department for Geriatrics or the study of senile conditions, in which there was recently an article‡ on an ascitic man of 55 years, possibly to some of us a somewhat startling example of precocious senility. The study of the pathology and disorders of the aged lacks the attraction of children's affections, and yet it has points of interest, as I long ago found when after being a house physician I acted for some weeks as assistant to the Medical Officer of the Old Charterhouse, where the natural expectation that each and all of the poor brethren would reproduce Thackeray's Colonel Newcome was destined to disappointment. Usually, however, the taste for the practice of medicine among the aged is an acquired one. Most of the writers on the diseases of old age, such as Cornaro, Sir Anthony Carlisle, Charcot, Sir George Humphry, Sir Hermann Weber, and Dr. R. Saundby, have been approaching the sere and yellow, and perhaps were moved to their labours by the maxim, "Physician, heal thyself." The writer of the old book which forms the text for occupying a few minutes of your time to-night—Dr. John Smith (1630—1679)—was only 3½ years old when in 166½,

* Reprinted from *The Middlesex Hospital Journal*, 1919-20, xxi., 115—123.

† Geriatrics. The Diseases of Old Age and their Treatment, by I. L. Nascher, M.D. 2nd edition 1919; 1st edition 1914. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., New York and London.

‡ *Medical Review of Reviews*, New York, 1920, xxvi., 37.

the year before the great fire, he brought out his "Γηροκομια "βασιλικη or King Solomon's Portraiture of Old Age wherein "is contained A Sacred Anatomy Both of Soul and Body



Γηροκομία Βασιλικὴ

King SOLOMONS Portraiture

OF

Old Age.

Wherein is contained

A SACRED

ANATOMY

Both of Soul and Body.

AND

A Perfect Account of the Infirmities of Age, incident to them both.

And all those Mystical and Ænigmatical Symptomes, expressed in the six former Verses of the 12th Chapter of *Ecclesiastes*, are here Paraphrased upon, and made plain and easie to a mean Capacity.

By *John Smith*, M. D. E. Coll. Med. Lond. Cand.

ET

E. Coll. Ænea-nasensi Oxon. quondam Com.

Nam pernicitas deserit, Consitus sum
Senectute, onustum gero Corpus, vires
Reliquere; ut æras mala, mala merx est ergo?
Plautus.

LONDON,

Printed by *J. Hayes* for *S. Thomson*, at the Sign of the Bishops Head in St. *Pauls* Church-yard, 1666.

TITLE PAGE OF JOHN SMITH'S SACRED ANATOMY.

"And a Perfect Account of the Infirmities of Age Incident to "them Both. Being a paraphrase upon the six former verses "of the 12th Chapter of Ecclesiastes." A second edition came out in 1666.

The higher criticism has shewn that the book of Eccle-

siastes (in Hebrew Koheleth, the preacher), though formerly ascribed to King Solomon (B.C. 977), dates only from the end of the third century B.C., and internal evidence, namely, familiarity with the functions of the brain, spinal cord, and so forth, though veiled under poetic imagery, justifies the view that its author was a medical man. In his charmingly written book "A Gentle Cynic," Professor Morris Jastrow* explains that the Book of Ecclesiastes, as it appears in the authorized version, consists of (*a*) the original cynical but good-natured *obiter dicta*, the result of the varied experience of the unknown dilettante who prefers to pass under the *nom de plume* of Koheleth—a fragment strangely out of place in a sacred collection—and (*b*) additions and alterations to this philosophy of life by various hands in order to render it both more acceptable to the orthodox and more in conformity with the tradition that it was written by Solomon; thus the words that many of us have heartily endorsed, "and further by these, my son be admonished: of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh," are probably interpolated as a warning not to take Koheleth's views too seriously. By a process of modified bowdlerization Jastrow has accordingly restored the Book of Ecclesiastes to what he believes was its original form, and compares it to the writings of Omar Khayyam and of Heine among the moderns.

John Smith's work deals with a very minute aspect of the diseases of old age, namely, the interpretation of the metaphors of a rich oriental imagination applied to the clinical features of old age in the six famous verses ascribed to Solomon; but he does it thoroughly, for whereas there are 205 words in these six verses, his commentary on them, without the index which occupies six pages, runs to 266 pages, or more than a page a word. He describes his work as "A Sacred Anatomy of both Soul and Body." Anatomy, of course, was long the province of the priests, just as was the practice of medicine; and as a curious coincidence it may be noted in this connection that com-

* The Gentle Cynic, being a translation of the Book of Koheleth, commonly known as Ecclesiastes, stripped of later additions, also its origin, growth, and interpretation. By Morris Jastrow, junior, pp. 255. J. B. Lippincott Co., 1919.

paratively recently the Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge from 1817 to 1866, the Rev. W. Clark, M.D., called "Bone" Clark to distinguish him from "Stone" Clark (Professor of Mineralogy) and "Tone" Clark (Professor of Music), was in holy orders, though it appears that he took them so as to be able to hold a fellowship at Trinity.*

But to turn for a moment to the early days of anatomy and its sacred associations. For thousands of years a pious search was made for the seat of the soul, and for a long time it was thought to have its habitation in the liver; as the condition of the liver was believed to reflect the mind of the Gods, the practice of divination or omens from the appearance of the liver of the sacrificial animal arose, and, according to Jastrow, was practised among the Babylonians as far back as B.C. 3000. Later the soul was regarded as residing in the heart, then between the liver and the heart, namely, in the diaphragm—hence the word phrenzy; in the third century B.C. the meninges and the cerebral ventricles were suggested, and lastly, to skip over 1900 years, René Descartes in the first half of the seventeenth century assumed that the pineal body was the seat of the soul. Of his special form of sacred anatomy Smith was anticipated, as Sir D'Arcy Power points out, by Master Peter Lowe, who translated the same verses into anatomical language; some of his interpretations will be mentioned later for comparison with Smith's.

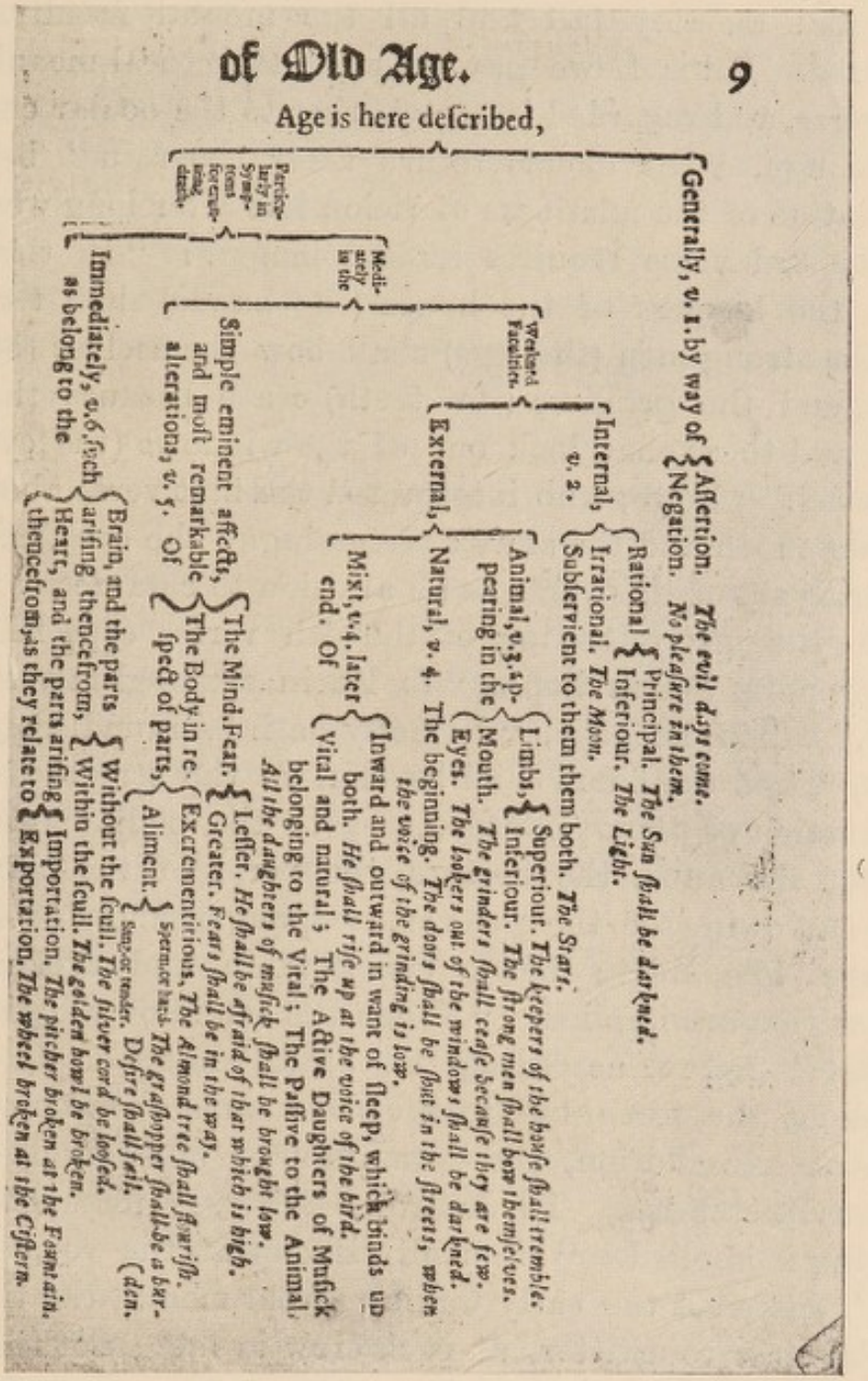
As everyone must have speculated over the anatomical explanation of the various metaphors in the chapter of Ecclesiastes beginning—

> "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them"

it may be of interest to draw attention to the longest and most painstaking commentary on this passage. Some years ago I picked up Dr. Smith's work in a catalogue, and, as I had never heard of it, flattered myself on a curious find. But when, after deciding to introduce it to you, I mentioned it to others, I found that almost the first person I questioned

* *Vide* John Willis Clark. By A. E. Shipley, p. 3, 1913. Smith, Elder and Co., London.

—Sir D'Arcy Power*—had written an account of it 25 years ago. This somehow reminds me of the aphorism, "If you



JOHN SMITH'S SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE 12TH CHAPTER OF ECCLESIASTES.

want to be original you must not read too much," with which you should be familiar, for it fell from the lips of Sir James Kingston Fowler in his farewell lecture at this Hospital.†

* D'Arcy Power. *British Medical Journal*, 1895, i., 106.
† J. Kingston Fowler. *Middlesex Hospital Journal*, 1912–13, xvi., 117.

The 2nd verse, "While the sun, or the light, or the moon or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain," Smith interprets before the understanding, imagination, and memory fail and all the mental faculties are impaired. Peter Lowe gave a more structural meaning to this verse, and regarded it as referring to the ocular changes in old age, "the clouds return after the rain" being a description of the mistiness of vision left after long weeping.

The 3rd verse requires little comment: "In the days when the keepers of the house (the hands) shall tremble, and the strong men (the legs) shall bow themselves (become bent), and the grinders (the teeth) cease because they are few; and those that look out of the windows (the eyes) be darkened." Lowe, who interpreted the first verse about the sun, the moon and the stars as referring to the eyes, explains the last part of this verse as an allusion to cataract.

To the understanding of the 4th verse, especially the earlier part, Smith hopes "to let in some glimmering of light," which, he says, "formerly hath lain undiscovered." Thus, "And the doors shall be shut in the streets" means obstruction of the various orifices of the body, namely the mouth, the anus, the urethra, the pores of the skin, and also narrowing of the pylorus, œsophagus and ducts, such as the bile duct; hence constipation and difficulty in micturition are implied. "When the sound of the grinding is low" refers according to Smith not to the gross action of the teeth, but to the various metabolic processes, such as assimilation, the formation of blood and of the various secretions. To Jastrow, however, impairment of hearing is implied. "He shall rise up at the voice of the bird" describes the early waking of old men at the time the birds begin to twitter, at cock crow in fact; not that they are waked thereby, for, as the next sentence says, they are deaf. "And all the daughters of music shall be brought low" is usually considered to mean "the voice becomes a childish treble"; but Smith elaborates this, and divides the daughters of music into the active producers of voice, namely, the larynx, tongue and lips, and the passive recipients of sound, namely, the auditory apparatus.

Verse 5—"Also when they shall be afraid of that which

is high, and fears shall be in the way"—points out that the principal aspect of the senile mind is one of fear for things both great and small, a bad head for height, and anxiety about molehills. But a more recent commentator suggests that "afraid of that which is high" refers to dyspnœa on climbing a hill. "And the almond tree shall flourish" signifies the white hair or "churchyard flowers" of old age. "And the grasshopper shall be a burden" is interpreted to mean that in old age the body shrinks, hardens, and becomes angular so as to resemble a locust; but other readings of this allegorical expression have been given. Peter Lowe says it means œdema of the legs; another is the obvious one that the least weight, even that of a grasshopper, becomes a nuisance, and Jastrow suggests that as, according to the Talmud, the grasshopper is a symbol of the male sexual organ, the line refers to loss of sexual vitality incident to old age. The words "and desire shall fail" seem clear, but Smith works on an alternative translation of the Hebrew, namely, "the capers shall shrink," and argues that it refers to a shrinking of the soft tissues of the body. Jastrow, however, points out that the caper berry was used as an aphrodisiac, and so the more obvious interpretation may stand.

In the 6th verse, "Or ever the silver cord be loosed" is taken to mean paralysis of the spinal cord or nerves, but Lowe and Jastrow both translate it as signifying bending of the back. "Or the golden bowl be broken" describes apoplexy due to brain disease; Lowe, however, interprets this as cardiac failure. "Or the pitcher (the veins) be broken at the fountain (the right ventricle) or the wheel (the arterial circulation) broken at the cistern (the left ventricle)" describes cardiac failure, and Smith therefore concludes that the circulation of the blood was perfectly known to Solomon, and adds: "Yet it pleased the Lord that this knowledge should, with the possessor of it, sink into dust and darkness, where it lay buried for the space of 2,500 years at least, till it was retrieved thencefrom by the wisdom and industry of that incomparable and for ever to be renowned Dr. William Harvey, the greatest honour of our nation . . . ." Jastrow suggests that the pitcher refers

to renal excretion and the wheel at the cistern to the intestines and liver which fail in their excretory functions. According to Lowe "the wheel broken at the cistern" means vesical trouble.

In conclusion, a few words may be devoted to Dr. John Smith. He was born in 1630 in Buckinghamshire; matriculated at Brasenose College on February 20th, 1648-9; proceeded to the degrees of B.A. on February 7th, 1650-1, M.A. June 27th, 1652, and D.M. April 2nd, 1659. He was admitted a candidate (at that time and for long after there was no membership) of the Royal College of Physicians of London on December 22nd, 1659, and a Fellow April 2nd, 1672. He died at his house in St. Helen's Place, London, in October or November 1679, and was buried in a vault of the parish church. According to the "Dictionary of National Biography" he has been thought to be identical with the author of "A Compleat Practice of Physick, wherein is plainly described the Nature, Causes, Differences and Signs of all Diseases in the Body of Man. With the Choicest Cures for the Same," London, 1656. The question of doubt may not unnaturally arise with such a name. In the "Dictionary of National Biography" there are lives of twenty-one John Smiths without any additional christian name, and of sixteen other John Smiths with a second name. Just as Oscar Wilde wrote a play, "The Importance of being Earnest," in which John Worthing, a country J.P., used to masquerade in London as his imaginary younger brother Ernest, and falls in love with a young woman whose ideal has fortunately been to love someone of the name of Ernest, so a thesis might appropriately be compiled on the morbid results and complications of being John Smith. If politely interrogated by the police or proctors as to your name, it is, I believe, futile and likely to be regarded as ill-placed humour to confess to the name of John Smith. To be called Smith is a serious handicap to advancement, and in these modern days the name, if not dying out, is comparatively often hyphened to or combined with some other name.

Extract from "The Portsmouth Times" November 14th, 1919.

Book of Ecclesiastes.

Its Purpose Revealed in the Septuagint.

In an address entitled "'Under the Sun': the Theosophy of Ecclesiastes," given at the local Theosophical Headquarters on Sunday evening, Mr. J. A. E. Wren, B.A., gave a conception of the Book of Ecclesiastes differing greatly from that commonly held. Basing his interpretation of the meaning and purpose of the book on the Septuagint translation, and reading symbolically, he found the book a sequential whole, in which it was easy to recognise a guide book to initiation into the mysteries of that Wisdom which claims to be the Christianity, of which St. Augustine said that it "existed among the ancients," before "Christ came in the flesh." It was a guide book to the perfecting of man. It was, acording to its own account, written by "a son of David" (i.e., translated, the Beloved, a name applied to the Higher Self, the fragment of Divinity overshadowing each soul), "King of Israel (a Prince with God), in Jerusalem (the vision, or possession, of peace)." The object of the writer was the finding of peace and the good of man's toil under the Sun. He gives in a few short verses in the first chapter the wide sweep of evolution; the going and coming of the races; the Sun rising and setting and "drawing to its place," and the rounds of the great Breath, or Spirit (Pneuma) circling its universe and collecting the results as streams flowing into a sea, from which they go forth again to take up their work where they left it. "The earth is established for the æon" (the world period), but, he tells us, there have been other æons before this one, in which what we perceive around us came into being, and "all is not new under the Sun." "All things [ARE] before their appearance," he says, and other passages make it abundantly clear that he speaks of evolution, of the "becoming" of things, and of the existence of their designs in "shadow," before they appear in matter cognisable by our senses. The repeated repetition of the words "under the Sun" was intended to arrest one's attention. And the Ancient Wisdom tells us that the Sun which we see is the physical organ, or body, of the great Being, whose sphere of activity is the Solar System, and who under still greater Beings and under the great God of all, is the Source whence come both the life and the forms of the Earth, and of all the other planets of this system. The writer tells us that he set himself to investigate carefully "all the things that are coming into being under heaven, because the God gave a circumtraction causing sorrow to the Sons of men to be circumtracted in it." He frequently spoke of this "circumtraction" and the "round causing sorrow." And at the end of the book it would be noticed that this round was finished by the "shrivelling up" of the "wheel"—a world-wide technical term commonly used to designate the round of births and deaths, or "reincarnation." A notable feature of the writer's investigation was that he did not merely take the immediate cause, or the immediate result of any action. "I saw the whole action together," he said, "for I gave the whole of this together into my heart, and my heart saw the whole of this together." "He (the God) gave the whole æon together into their heart," etc., and, taking this wide view of "the sum total of the things together that have been done under the Sun," he found that whilst "all things" (presumably the diverse, as opposed to the One) "are vanity" (unreal or delusive), they are yet "forechoosing of the Spirit," or the Breath (Pneuma), and that "he who adds knowledge will add sorrow"; by which the speaker understood the Ecclesiastes to mean that he would be bringing himself a stage nearer to the path of sorrow, the eternal way of the Cross.

The writer himself set out to drink the "wine" of the cup of sorrow in wisdom, to find out "what is the good for the sons of man under the Sun." In symbolical language he tells how he increased his activity (He built houses, planted vines, etc.), and endeavoured to arrive at "what is behind the design." He arrives at many conclusions, and enunciates many precepts which may be read to-day in other guides to the Narrow Way. He shows that a cause of sorrow may harm "during many returns," and he pictures the man who is concerned about earthly things returning again and again, whilst the wise one walks "face to face with life."

As the candidate grows in wisdom he finds still deeper depths to plumb, and increasing need for wisdom and discretion; and warnings of the dangers ahead are given, mostly in a symbology understandable by those who had a little intuition and knowledge of the subject. Absolute purity of body and mind was, the speaker said, a pre-requisite. There must be no "dead flies" to "make putrid" the anointing "oil of sweetening" for him, who was "digging a trench" (a channel for the Spirit) and offering himself to "the Breath of the Powerful One," and demolishing the "hedge" that shut out the consciousness of the heaven worlds. At this critical time uneradicated faults had a tendency to become aggravated and be thrown outwards from the subliminal self, and we sometimes had the catastrophe of the "slaves" (the desires and passions) "riding on horses" (controlling our bodies), whilst the "rulers" (our real selves) "go as slaves on the earth. The candidate was given some beautiful and practical advice to follow till the time of perfecting arrived. The end of the book, the speaker said, was a symbolical account both of the perfecting of man and the breaking of the "wheel," and also of the consummation of the æon. The candidate went through the black darkness before the coming of the Light: the soul rose towards the "voice of the bird" (of Heaven), and the "daughters of the Song" (the Divine melody) brought the harmony of the heavens down into the normal waking consciousness of the physical body; the love colour pervaded the regenerated life; the symbolical "fattened locust" had cleared off all the fruit of karmic debt and errors; the "silver cord" would not again connect the immortal Spirit with a new mortal, earthly personality, and the "golden bowl" would no longer carry its burden of causes and effects (the eternal storage atom from the heart) to a new "pitcher"; the great circumtraction causing sorrow was over; the wheel was broken, and man perfected had completed his course as man. The great At-one-ment was now made, and man returned at last to the "home of his æon." A sufficiently clear fragment of the doctrine of reincarnation was, the speaker said, discernible in the Book of Ecclesiastes, as given in our Bible; but in the Septuagint version reincarnation was of the very essence of the teaching of the book. In conclusion, the lecturer said that he left it to his hearers to decide whether the Septuagint version had taken liberties with a worthier book, or whether, perhaps, the book, as given in our Bible, had lost some of its original purity and beauty.