

THE ASCENDING CYCLE

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THE ASCENDING CYCLE



G. W. RUSSELL

Blessed is the austerity of those who live in concord.

BUDDHA

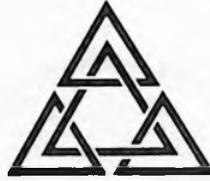


SANGAM TEXTS

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Sangam Texts are aids to contemplation and action, the creative fusion of *theoria (sankhya)* and *praxis (yoga)*. In the ancient world, before the proliferation of print, emphasis was given to exemplification. Remarkable individuals emerged from time to time to bear witness to the authentic transcendence of social roles and codes and traditional structures. The supreme ideal of the *Jivanmukta*, the truly free man or woman, was emulated even by householders through the practice of renunciation (*sannyasa*). Furthermore, the *ashrama* ideal was kept alive, in diverse ways, by aspirants who assumed monastic modes of life and adopted self-binding vows. In the Aquarian Age, the shared ideal of secular monasticism is pertinent to all those who wish to explore fresh and feasible ways of achieving self-regeneration in the service of *Lokasangraha*, the welfare of the whole of humanity. The thoughtful writings in this series span the mystical and the practical, the timeless and the timely, giving a basis for lifelong reflection and self-transcendence.



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THE ASCENDING CYCLE

The Ascending Cycle contains twenty-two essays and stories by George William Russell, whose pen name was "A.E." Russell was a prime mover of the Irish renaissance in literature and a lasting influence on writers like W.B. Yeats. A man of profound conviction and spiritual insight, Russell discerned invisible dimensions in every facet of life. He intimated his own mystical experiences and showed that each individual could lift the veil of preconception and inattention that hides a deeper awareness of the significance of suggestive patterns in nature and everyday events. "The Hero in Man" is a classic statement on the well-springs of human nature. Evocative stories, such as "The Midnight Blossom", "The Secret of Power" and "A Tragedy in the Temple", indicate the trials, dangers and potentials in the seeker's odyssey. A number of thoughtful essays, including "Jagrata, Svapna and Sushupti" and "Concentration", explore higher states of consciousness. Russell's mystical writings shed light on his artistic and humanitarian endeavours and also testify to his timeless relevance as a seminal thinker and visionary.



THE ASCENDING CYCLE

GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL
(A. E.)

Mystical experience is essentially noetic, rooted in the cognitive capacity for enlarged comprehension of noumenal truths.

HERMES



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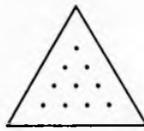
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In the first place revere the Immortal Gods, as they are established and ordained by the Law.

Reverence the Oath. In the next place revere the Heroes who are full of goodness and light.

Honour likewise the Terrestrial Daimons by rendering them the worship lawfully due to them.

PYTHAGORAS

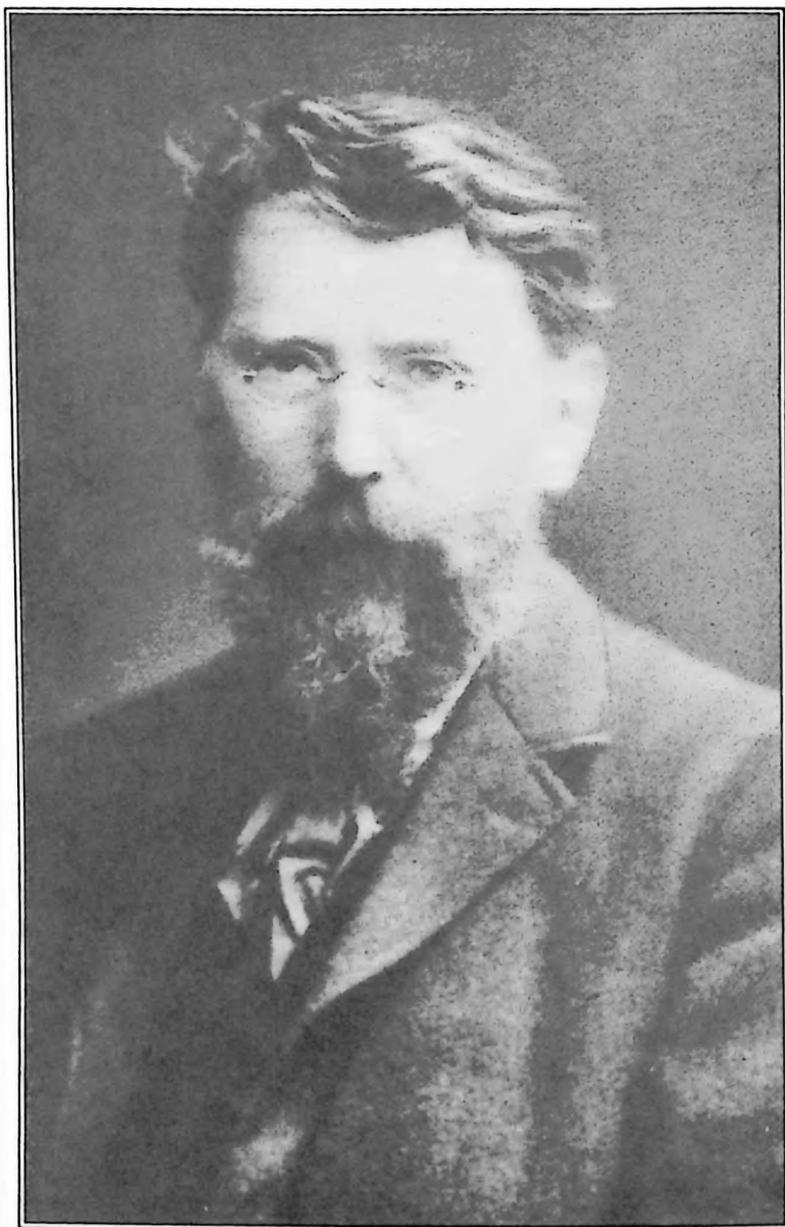


Let us respect and follow the true. Let us practise the sterling virtue of keeping company with our truest state of consciousness; that state that was discovered to us for a brief space, by the Fire in the Heart, when we threw in our lot with the Theosophical Movement. At that time we were determined to *stand* and *serve*. By the magic of the living Love let us retain that heroic determination.

The sorrow of battle is in complete victory. Not ours yet that passing sorrow, but the joy of the fight. Sound, then, the bugle-note of effort ever renewed. Voice the Leaders' call to follow. Heed the simple regulations of the army.

We will be unselfish; unselfish enough to be loyal.

A.E.



GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL
(April 10, 1867 – July 17, 1935)



THE HERO IN MAN

There sometimes comes on us a mood of strange reverence for people and things which in less contemplative hours we hold to be unworthy; and in such moments we may set side by side the head of Christ and the head of an outcast, and there is an equal radiance around each, which makes of the darker face a shadow and is itself a shadow around the head of light. We feel a fundamental unity of purpose in their presence here, and would as willingly pay homage to the one who has fallen as to him who has become a master of life. I know that immemorial order decrees that the laurel and the crown be given only to the victor, but in those moments I speak of a profound intuition changes the decree and sets the aureole on both alike.

We feel such deep pity for the fallen that there must needs be a justice in it, for these diviner feelings are wise in themselves and do not vaguely arise. They are lights from the Father. A justice lies in uttermost pity and forgiveness, even when we seem to ourselves to be most deeply wronged; or why is it that the awakening of resentment or hate brings such swift contrition?

We are ever self-condemned; and the dark thought which went forth in us brooding revenge, when suddenly smitten by the light, withdraws and hides within itself in awful penitence. In asking myself why it is that the meanest are safe from our condemnation when we sit on the true seat of judgement in the heart, it seemed to me that their shield was the sense we have of a nobility hidden in them under the cover of ignoble things; that their present darkness was the result of some too weighty heroic labour undertaken long ago by the human spirit; that it was the consecration of past purpose which played with such a tender light about their ruined lives, and it was more pathetic because this nobleness was all unknown to the fallen and the heroic cause of so much pain was forgotten in life's prison-house.

While feeling the service to us of the great ethical ideals which have been formulated by men, I think that the idea of justice intellectually conceived tends to beget a certain hardness of the heart. It is true that men have done wrong — hence their pain: but

back of all this there is something infinitely soothing, a light which does not wound, which says no harsh thing, even although the darkest of spirits turns to it in its agony, for the darkest of human spirits has still around him this first glory which shines from a deeper being within, whose history may be told as the legend of the Hero in Man.

Among the many immortals with whom ancient myth peopled the spiritual sphere of humanity are some figures which draw to themselves a more profound tenderness than the rest. Not Aphrodite rising in beauty from the faery foam of the first seas, not Apollo with sweetest singing, laughter, and youth, not the wielder of the lightning, could exact the reverence accorded to the lonely Titan chained on the mountain, or to that bowed figure heavy with the burden of the sins of the world; for the brighter divinities had no part in the labour of man, no such intimate relation with the wherefore of his own existence so full of struggle. The more radiant figures are prophecies to him of his destiny, but the Titan and the Christ are a revelation of his more immediate state; their giant sorrows companion his own, and in contemplating them he awakens what is noblest in his own nature; or, in other words, in understanding their divine heroism he understands himself. For this in truth it seems to me to mean: all knowledge is a revelation of the self to the self, and our deepest comprehension of the seemingly apart divine is also our furthest inroad to self-knowledge; Prometheus, Christ are in every heart; the story of one is the story of all; the Titan and the Crucified are humanity.

If, then, we consider them as representing the human spirit and disentangle from the myths their meaning, we shall find that whatever reverence is due to that heroic love which descended from heaven for the redeeming of a lower nature, must be paid to every human being. Christ is incarnate in all humanity. Prometheus is bound for ever within us. They are the same. They are a host, and the divine incarnation was not spoken of one, but of all those who descending into the lower world tried to change it into the divine image and to wrest out of chaos a kingdom for the empire of light. The angels saw below them in chaos a senseless rout blind with elemental passion for ever warring with discordant cries which broke in upon the world of divine beauty; and that the pain might depart, they grew rebellious in the Master's peace, and

descending to earth the angelic lights were crucified in men; leaving so radiant worlds, such a light of beauty, for earth's grey twilight filled with tears, that through this elemental life might breathe the starry music brought from Him. If the "Foreseer" be a true name for the Titan, it follows that in the host which he represents was a light which well foreknew all the dark paths of its journey; foreseeing the bitter struggle with a hostile nature, but foreseeing perhaps a gain, a distant glory o'er the hills of sorrow, and that chaos, divine and transformed, with only gentle breathing, lit up by the Christ-soul of the universe. There is a transforming power in the thought itself: we can no longer condemn the fallen, they who laid aside their thrones of ancient power, their spirit ecstasy and beauty, on such a mission. Perhaps those who sank lowest did so to raise a greater burden, and of these most fallen it may in the hour of their resurrection be said, "The last shall be first."

So, placing side by side the head of the outcast with the head of Christ, it has this equal beauty — with as bright a glory it sped from the Father in ages past on its redeeming labour. Of his present darkness what shall we say? "He is altogether dead in sin"? Nay, rather with tenderness forbear, and think that the foreseeing spirit has taken its own dread path to mastery; that that which foresaw the sorrow foresaw also beyond it a greater joy and a mightier existence, when it would rise again in a new robe, woven out of the treasure hidden in the deep of its submergence, and shine at last like the stars of the morning triumphant among the sons of God.

II

Our deepest life is when we are alone. We think most truly, love best, when isolated from the outer world in that mystic abyss we call soul. Nothing external can equal the fullness of these moments. We may sit in the blue twilight with a friend, or bend together by the hearth, half whispering, or in a silence populous with loving thoughts mutually understood; then we may feel happy and at peace, but it is only because we are lulled by a semblance to deeper intimacies. When we think of a friend, and the loved one draws nigh, we sometimes feel half-pained, for we touched something in our solitude which the living presence shut out; we

seem more apart, and would fain wave them away and cry, "Call me not forth from this; I am no more a spirit if I leave my throne." But these moods, though lit up by intuitions of the true, are too partial, they belong too much to the twilight of the heart, they have too dreamy a temper to serve us well in life. We should wish rather for our thoughts a directness such as belongs to the messengers of the gods, swift, beautiful, flashing presences bent on purposes well understood.

What we need is that interior tenderness shall be elevated into seership, that what in most is only yearning or blind love shall see clearly its way and hope. To this end we have to observe more intently the nature of the interior life. We find, indeed, that it is not a solitude at all, but dense with multitudinous being: instead of being alone we are in the thronged highways of existence. For our guidance when entering here many words of warning have been uttered, laws have been outlined, and beings full of wonder, terror, and beauty described. Yet there is a spirit in us deeper than our intellectual being which I think of as the Hero in man, who feels the nobility of its place in the midst of all this, and who would fain equal the greatness of perception with deeds as great. The weariness and sense of futility which often falls upon the mystic after much thought is due to this, that he has not recognised that he must be worker as well as seer, that here he has duties demanding a more sustained endurance just as the inner life is so much vaster and more intense than the life he has left behind.

Now the duties which can be taken up by the soul are exactly those which it feels most inadequate to perform when acting as an embodied being. What shall be done to quiet the heart-cry of the world: how answer the dumb appeal for help we so often divine below eyes that laugh? It is the saddest of all sorrows to think that pity with no hands to heal, that love without a voice to speak, should helplessly heap their pain upon pain while earth shall endure. But there is a truth about sorrow which I think may make it seem not so hopeless. There are fewer barriers than we think: there is, in truth, an inner alliance between the soul who would fain give and the soul who is in need. Nature has well provided that not one golden ray of all our thoughts is sped ineffective through the dark; not one drop of the magical elixirs love distils is wasted. Let us consider how this may be. There is a habit we

nearly all have indulged in. We weave little stories in our minds, expending love and pity upon the imaginary beings we have created, and I have been led to think that many of these are not imaginary, that somewhere in the world beings are living just in that way, and we merely reform and live over again in our life the story of another life. Sometimes these faraway intimates assume so vivid a shape, they come so near with their appeal for sympathy that the pictures are unforgettable; and the more I ponder over them the more it seems to me that they often convey the actual need of some soul whose cry for comfort has gone out into the vast, perhaps to meet with an answer, perhaps to hear only silence. I will supply an instance. I see a child, a curious, delicate little thing, seated on the doorstep of a house. It is an alley in some great city, and there is a gloom of evening and vapour over the sky. I see the child is bending over the path; he is picking cinders and arranging them, and as I ponder, I become aware that he is laying down in gritty lines the walls of a house, the mansion of his dream. Here spread along the pavement are large rooms, these for his friends, and a tiny room in the centre, that is his own. So his thought plays. Just then I catch a glimpse of the corduroy trousers of a passing workman, and a heavy boot crushes through the cinders. I feel the pain in the child's heart as he shrinks back, his little lovelit house of dreams all rudely shattered. Ah, poor child, building the City Beautiful out of a few cinders, yet nigher, truer in intent than many a stately, gold-rich palace reared by princes, thou wert not forgotten by that mighty spirit who lives through the falling of empires, whose home has been in many a ruined heart. Surely it was to bring comfort to hearts like thine that that most noble of all meditations was ordained by the Buddha.

He 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.

That love, though the very fairy breath of life, should by itself and so imparted have a sustaining power some may question, not those who have felt the sunlight fall from distant friends who think of them; but, to make clearer how it seems to me to act, I

say that love, Eros, is a being. It is more than a power of the soul, though it is that also; it has universal life of its own, and just as the dark heaving waters do not know what jewel lights they reflect with blinding radiance, so the soul, partially absorbing and feeling the ray of Eros within it, does not know that often a part of its nature nearer to the sun of love shines with a brilliant light to other eyes than its own. Many people move unconscious of their own charm, unknowing of the beauty and power they seem to others to impart. It is some past attainment of the soul, a jewel won in some old battle which it may have forgotten, but none the less this gleams on its tiara and the star-flame inspires others to hope and victory.

If it is true here that many exert a spiritual influence they are unconscious of, it is still truer of the spheres within. Once the soul has attained to any possession like love, or persistent will, or faith, or a power of thought, it comes into spiritual contact with others who are struggling for these very powers. The attainment of any of these means that the soul is able to absorb and radiate some of the diviner elements of being. The soul may or may not be aware of the position it is placed in or its new duties, but yet that Living Light, having found a way into the being of any one person, does not rest there, but sends its rays and extends its influence on and on to illumine the darkness of another nature. So it comes that there are ties which bind us to people other than those whom we meet in our everyday life. I think they are most real ties, most important to understand, for if we let our lamp go out, some far away who had reached out in the dark and felt a steady will, a persistent hope, a compassionate love, may reach out once again in an hour of need, and finding no support may give way and fold the hands in despair. Often we allow gloom to overcome us and so hinder the bright rays in their passage; but would we do it so often if we thought that perhaps a sadness which besets us, we do not know why, was caused by someone drawing nigh to us for comfort, whom our lethargy might make feel still more his helplessness, while our courage, our faith, might cause "our light to shine in some other heart which as yet has no light of its own"?

III

The night was wet: and, as I was moving down the streets, my

mind was also journeying on a way of its own, and the things which were bodily present before me were no less with me in my unseen travelling. Every now and then a transfer would take place, and some of the moving shadows in the street would begin walking about in the clear interior light. The children of the city, crouched in the doorways, or racing through the hurrying multitude and flashing lights, began their elfin play again in my heart; and that was because I had heard these tiny outcasts shouting with glee. I wondered if the glitter and shadow of such sordid things were thronged with magnificence and mystery for those who were unaware of a greater light and deeper shade which made up the romance and fascination of my own life. In imagination I narrowed myself to their ignorance, littleness and youth, and seemed for a moment to flit amid great uncomprehended beings and a dim wonderful city of palaces.

Then another transfer took place and I was pondering anew, for a face I had seen flickering through the warm wet mist haunted me; it entered into the realm of the interpreter, and I was made aware by the pale cheeks, and by the close-shut lips of pain, and by some inward knowledge, that there the Tree of Life was beginning to grow, and I wondered why it is that it always springs up through a heart in ashes: I wondered also if that which springs up, which in itself is an immortal joy, has knowledge that its shoots are piercing through such anguish; or again, if it was the piercing of the shoots which caused the pain, and if every throb of the beautiful flame darting upward to blossom meant the perishing of some more earthly growth which had kept the heart in shadow.

Seeing too how many thoughts spring up from such a simple thing, I questioned whether that which started the impulse had any share in the outcome, and if these musings of mine in any way affected their subject. I then began thinking about those secret ties of which I have speculated before, and in the darkness my heart grew suddenly warm and glowing, for I had chanced upon one of those shining imaginations which are the wealth of those who travel upon the hidden ways. In describing that which comes to us all at once, there is a difficulty in choosing between what is first and what is last to say: but, interpreting as best I can, I seemed to behold the onward movement of a Light, one among many Lights, all living, throbbing, now dim with perturbations, and now again

clear, and all subtly woven together, outwardly in some more shadowy shining, and inwardly in a greater fire, which, though it was invisible, I knew to be the Lamp of the World. This Light which I beheld I felt to be a human soul, and these perturbations which dimmed it were its struggles and passionate longing for something, and that was for a more brilliant shining of the light within itself. It was in love with its own beauty, enraptured by its own lucidity; and I saw that as these things were more beloved they grew paler, for this light is the love which the Mighty Mother has in her heart for her children, and she means that it shall go through each one unto all, and whoever restrains it in himself is himself shut out; not that the great heart has ceased in its love for that soul, but that the soul has shut itself off from influx, for every imagination of man is the opening or the closing of a door to the divine world: now he is solitary, cut off, and, seemingly to himself, on the desert and distant verge of things: and then his thought throws open the swift portals; he hears the chant of the seraphs in his heart, and he is made luminous by the lighting of a sudden aureole. This soul which I watched seemed to have learned at last the secret love: for, in the anguish begotten by its loss, it followed the departing glory in penitence to the inmost shrine where it ceased altogether; and because it seemed utterly lost and hopeless of attainment and capriciously denied to the seeker, a profound pity arose in the soul for those who, like it were seeking, but still in hope, for they had not come to the vain end of their endeavours. I understood that such pity is the last of the precious essences which make up the elixir of immortality, and when it is poured into the cup it is ready for drinking. And so it was with this soul which grew brilliant with the passage of the eternal light through its new purity of self-oblivion and joyful in the comprehension of the mystery of the secret love, which, though it has been declared many times by the greatest of teachers among men, is yet never known truly unless the Mighty Mother has herself breathed it in the heart.

And now that the soul had divined this secret, the shadowy shining which was woven in bonds of union between it and its fellow-lights grew clearer; and a multitude of these strands were, so it seemed, strengthened and placed in its keeping: along these it was to send the message of the wisdom and the love which were

the secret sweetness of its own being. Then a spiritual tragedy began, infinitely more pathetic than the old desolation, because it was brought about by the very nobility of the spirit. This soul, shedding its love like rays of glory, seemed itself the centre of a ring of wounding spears: it sent forth love and the arrowy response came hate-impelled: it whispered peace and was answered by the clash of rebellion: and to all this for defence it could only bare more openly its heart that a profounder love from the Mother Nature might pass through upon the rest. I knew this was what a teacher, who wrote long ago, meant when he said: "Put on the whole armour of God", which is love and endurance, for the truly divine children of the Flame are not armed otherwise: and of those protests, sent up in ignorance or rebellion against the whisper of the wisdom, I saw that some melted in the fierce and tender heat of the heart, and there came in their stead a golden response which made closer the ties, and drew these souls upward to an understanding and to share in the overshadowing nature. And this is part of the plan of the Great Alchemist, whereby the red ruby of the heart is transmuted into the tendered light of the opal; for the beholding of love made bare acts like the flame of the furnace: and the dissolving passions, through an anguish of remorse, the lightnings of pain, and through an adoring pity, are changed into the image they contemplate, and melt in the ecstasy of self-forgetful love, the spirit which lit the thorn-crowned brows, which perceived only in its last agony the retribution due to its tormentors, and cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now although the love of the few may alleviate the hurt due to the ignorance of the mass, it is not in the power of anyone to withstand for ever this warfare; for by the perpetual wounding of the inner nature it is so wearied that the spirit must withdraw from a tabernacle grown too frail to support the increase of light within and the jarring of the demoniac nature without; and at length comes the call which means, for a while, release, and a deep rest in regions beyond the paradise of lesser souls. So, withdrawn into the Divine Darkness, vanished the Light of my dream. And now it seemed as if this wonderful weft of souls intertwining as one being must come to naught; and all those who through the gloom had nourished a longing for the light would stretch out

hands in vain for guidance: but that I did not understand the love of the Mother, and that although few, there is no decaying of her heroic brood; for, as the seer of old caught at the mantle of him who went up in the fiery chariot, so another took up the burden and gathered the shining strands together: and to this sequence of spiritual guides there is no ending.

Here I may say that the love of the Mother, which, acting through the burnished will of the hero, is wrought to highest uses, is in reality everywhere, and pervades with profoundest tenderness the homeliest circumstance of daily life; and there is not lacking, even among the humblest, an understanding of the spiritual tragedy which follows upon every effort of the divine nature bowing itself down in pity to our shadowy sphere; an understanding in which the nature of the love is gauged through the extent of the sacrifice and the pain which is overcome. I recall the instance of an old Irish peasant, who, as he lay in hospital wakeful from a grinding pain in his leg, forgot himself in making drawings, rude yet reverently done, of incidents in the life of the Galilean teacher. One of these which he showed me was a crucifixion, where, amidst much grotesque symbolism, were some tracings which indicated a purely beautiful intuition; the heart of this crucified figure, no less than the brow, was wreathed about with thorns and radiant with light: "For that", said he, "was where he really suffered." When I think of this old man, bringing forgetfulness of his own bodily pain through contemplation of the spiritual suffering of his Master, my memory of him shines with something of the transcendent light he himself perceived; for I feel that some suffering of his own, nobly undergone, had given him understanding, and he had laid his heart in love against the Heart of Many Sorrows, seeing it wounded by unnumbered spears yet burning with undying love.

Though much may be learned by observance of the superficial life and actions of a spiritual teacher, it is only in the deeper life of meditation and imagination that it can be truly realised; for the soul is a midnight blossom which opens its leaves in dream, and its perfect bloom is unfolded only where another sun shines in another heaven: there it feels what celestial dew descends on it, and what influences draw it up to its divine archetype: here in the shadow of earth root intercoils with root and the finer distinctions of the blossom are not perceived. If we knew also who they really

are, who sometimes in silence, and sometimes with the eyes of the world at gaze, take upon them the mantle of teacher, an unutterable awe would prevail: for underneath a bodily presence not in any sense beautiful may burn the glory of some ancient divinity, some hero who has laid aside his sceptre in the enchanted land to rescue old-time comrades fallen into oblivion: or again, if we had the insight of the simple old peasant into the nature of this enduring love, out of the exquisite and poignant emotions kindled would arise the flame of a passionate love which would endure long aeons of anguish that it might shield, though but for a little, the kingly hearts who may not shield themselves.

But I too, who write, have launched the rebellious spear, or in lethargy have oftentimes gone down the great drift numbering myself among those who not being with must needs be against: therefore I make no appeal; they only may call who stand upon the lofty mountains; but I reveal the thought which arose like a star in my soul with such bright and pathetic meaning, leaving it to you who read to approve and apply it.

The Irish Theosophist, March & July 1897





WORKS AND DAYS

When we were boys with what anxiety we watched for the rare smile on the master's face ere we preferred a request for some favour, a holiday or early release. There was wisdom in that. As we grow up we act more or less consciously upon intuitions as to time and place. My companion, I shall not invite you to a merrymaking when a bitter moment befalls you and the flame of life sinks into ashes in your heart; nor yet, however true and trusted, will I confide to you what inward revelations of the mysteries I may have while I sense in you a momentary outwardness. The gifts of the heart are too sacred to be laid before a closed door. Your mood, I know, will pass, and to-morrow we shall have this bond between us. I wait, for it can be said but once: I cannot commune magically twice on the same theme with you. I do not propose we should be opportunists, nor lay down a formula; but to be skilful in action we must work with and comprehend the ebb and flow of power. Mystery and gloom, dark blue and starshine, doubt and feebleness alternate with the clear and shining, opal skies and sunglow, heroic ardour and the exultation of power. Ever varying, prismatic and fleeting, the days go by and the secret of change eludes us here. I bend the bow of thought at a mark and it is already gone. I lay the shaft aside and while unprepared the quarry again fleets by. We have to seek elsewhere for the source of that power which momentarily overflows into our world and transforms it with its enchantment.

On the motions of an inner sphere, we are told, all things here depend; on spheres of the less evanescent which, in their turn, are enclosed in spheres of the real, whose solemn chariot movements again are guided by the inflexible will of Fire. In all of these we have part. This dim consciousness which burns in my brain is not all of myself. Behind me it widens out and upward into God. I feel in some other world it shines with purer light: in some sphere more divine than this it has a larger day and a deeper rest. That day of the inner self illuminates many of our mortal days; its night leaves many of them dark. And so the One Ray expanding lives in many vestures. It is last of all the King-Self who wakes at the dawn

of ages, whose day is the day of Brahma, whose rest is his rest. Here is the clue to cyclic change, to the individual feebleness and power, the gloom of one epoch and the glory of another. The Bright Fortnight, the Northern Sun, Light and Flame name the days of other spheres, and wandering on from day to day man may at last reach the end of his journey. You would pass from rapidly revolving day and night to where the mystical sunlight streams. The way lies through yourself and the portals open as the inner day expands. Who is there who has not felt in some way or other the rhythmic recurrence of light within? We were weary of life, baffled, ready to forswear endeavour, when half insensibly a change comes over us; we doubt no more but do joyfully our work; we renew the sweet magical affinities with nature: out of a heart more laden with love we think and act; our meditations prolong themselves into the shining wonderful life of soul; we tremble on the verge of the vast halls of the gods where their mighty speech may be heard, their message of radiant will be seen. They speak a universal language not for themselves only but for all. What is poetry but a mingling of some tone of theirs with the sounds that below we utter? What is love but a breath of their very being? Their every mood has colours beyond the rainbow; every thought rings in far-heard melody. So the gods speak to each other across the expanses of ethereal light, breaking the divine silences with words which are deeds. So, too, they speak to the soul. Mystics of all time have tried to express it, likening it to peals of faery bells, the singing of enchanted birds, the clanging of silver cymbals, the organ voices of wind and water blent together — but in vain, in vain. Perhaps in this there is a danger, for the true is realised in being and not in perception. The gods are ourselves beyond the changes of time which harass and vex us here. They do not demand adoration but an equal will to bind us consciously in unity with themselves. The heresy of separateness cuts us asunder in these enraptured moments; but when thrilled by the deepest breath, when the silent, unseen, uncomprehended takes possession of thee, think "Thou art That", and something of thee will abide for ever in It. All thought not based on this is a weaving of new bonds, of illusions more difficult to break; it begets only more passionate longing and pain.

Still we must learn to know the hidden ways, to use the

luminous rivers for the commerce of thought. Our Druid forefathers began their magical operations on the sixth day of the new moon, taking the Bright Fortnight at its flood-time. In these hours of expansion what we think has more force, more freedom, more electric and penetrating power. We find too, if we have co-workers, that we draw from a common fountain, the same impulse visits us and them. What one possesses all become possessed of; and something of the same unity and harmony arises between us here as exists for all time between us in the worlds above. While the currents circulate we are to see to it that they part from us no less pure than they came. To this dawn of an inner day may in some measure be traced the sudden inspirations of movements, such as we lately feel, not all due to the abrupt descent into our midst of a new messenger, for the Elder Brothers work with law and foresee when nature, time, and the awakening souls of men will aid them. Much may now be done. On whosoever accepts, acknowledges and does the will of the Light in these awakenings the die and image of divinity is more firmly set, his thought grows more consciously into the being of the presiding god. Yet not while seeking for ourselves can we lay hold of final truths, for then what we perceive we retain but in thought and memory. The Highest is a motion, a breath. We become it only in the imparting. It is in all, for all and goes out to all. It will not be restrained in a narrow basin, but through the free-giver it freely flows. There are throngs innumerable who await this gift. Can we let this most ancient light which again returns to us be felt by them only as a vague emotion, a little peace of uncertain duration, a passing sweetness of the heart? Can we not do something to allay the sorrow of the world? My brothers, the time of opportunity has come. One day in the long-marshalled line of endless days has dawned for our race, and the buried treasure-houses in the bosom of the deep have been opened to endow it with more light, to fill it with more power. The divine ascetics stand with torches lit before the temple of wisdom. Those who are nigh them have caught the fire and offer to us in turn to light the torch, the blazing torch of soul. Let us accept the gift and pass it on, pointing out the prime givers. We shall see in time the eager races of men starting on their pilgrimage of return and facing the light. So in the mystical past the call of light was seen on the sacred hills; the rays were spread and

gathered; and returning with them the initiate-children were buried in the Father-Flame.

The Irish Theosophist, June 1896





THE ASCENDING CYCLE

The teaching of *The Secret Doctrine* divides the period during which human evolution proceeds upon this globe into seven periods. During the first three-and-a-half of these, the ethereal humanity who appeared in the First Race gradually become material in form, and the psychic spirituality of the inner man is transformed into intellectuality. During the remaining three-and-a-half periods, there is a gradual dematerialization of form; the inner man by slow degrees rises from mere brain intellection to a more perfected spiritual consciousness. We are told that there are correspondences between the early and later periods of evolution; the old conditions are repeated, but upon higher planes; we re-achieve the old spirituality with added wisdom and intellectual power. Looked at in this way we shall find that the Seventh Race corresponds to the First; the Sixth to the Second; and the Fifth Race (which is ours) corresponds with the Third. "We are now approaching a time", says *The Secret Doctrine*, "when the pendulum of evolution will direct its swing decidedly upward, bringing humanity back on a parallel line with the primitive Third Root Race in spirituality." That is, there will be existing on the earth, about the close of the Fifth Race, conditions in some way corresponding with those prevailing when the Third Race men began their evolution. Though this period may be yet distant hundreds of thousands of years, still it is of interest to forecast that future as far as may be, for the future is concealed in the present, and is the outcome of forces working to-day. We may find out from this enquiry the true nature of movements like the Theosophical Society.

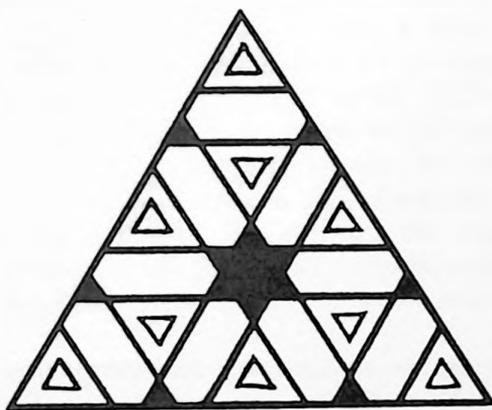
One of the most interesting passages in *The Secret Doctrine* is that which describes the early Third Race. "It was not a Race, this progeny. It was at first a wondrous Being, called the 'Initiator', and after him a group of semi-divine and semi-human beings." Without at all attempting to explain the real nature of this mysterious Being or Race, we may assume that one of the things hinted at is the consciousness of united being possessed by these ancient Adepts. Walking abroad over the earth as instructors of a

less progressed humanity, their wisdom and power had a common root. They taught truth from a heart-perception of life, ever fresh and eternal, everywhere pervading nature and welling up in themselves. This heart-perception is the consciousness of unity of inner beings. The pendulum of evolution which in its upward swing will bring humanity backwards on a parallel line with the primitive Third Root Race, should bring back something corresponding to this primeval hierarchy of divine sages. We should see at the end of the Kaliyuga a new brotherhood formed from those who have risen out of material life and aims, who have conquered self, who have been purified by suffering, who have acquired strength and wisdom, and who have wakened up to the old magical perception of their unity in true Being. "At the end of the Kali, our present age, Vishnu, or the 'Everlasting King', will appear as Kalki, and establish righteousness upon earth. The minds of those who live at that time shall be awakened and become pellucid as crystal." — (*The Secret Doctrine*, ii 483)

Passing beyond the turning point of evolution, where the delusion of separateness is complete, and moving on to that future awaiting us in infinite distances, when the Great Breath shall cease its outward motion and we shall merge into the One — on this uphill journey in groups and clusters men will first draw closer together, entering in spirit their own parent rays before being united in the source of all light and life. Such a brotherhood of men and women we may expect will arise, conscious in unity, thinking from one mind and acting from one soul. All such great achievements of the race are heralded long before by signs which those who study the lives of men may know. There is a gestation in the darkness of the womb before the living being appears. Ideals first exist in thought, and from thought they are outrealised into objective existence. The Theosophical Society was started to form the nucleus of a universal brotherhood of humanity, and its trend is towards this ideal. May we not justifiably suppose that we are witnessing to-day in this movement the birth of a new race corresponding to the divine Initiators of the Third, a race which shall in its inner life be truly a "Wondrous Being". I think we will perform our truest service to the Society by regarding it in this way as an actual entity whose baby years and mystical childhood we should foster. There are many people who know that it is possible by certain

methods to participate in the soul-life of a co-worker, and if it is possible to do this even momentarily with one comrade, it is possible so to participate in the vaster life of great movements. There will come a time to all who have devoted themselves to this ideal, as H.P. Blavatsky and some others have done, when they will enter into the inner life of this great Being, and share the hopes, the aspirations, the heroism, and the failures which must be brought about when so many men and women are working together. To achieve this we should continually keep in mind this sense of unity; striving also to rise in meditation until we sense in the vastness the beating of these innumerable hearts glowing with heroic purpose: we should try to humanize our mysticism; "We can only reach the Universal Mind through the minds of humanity", and we can penetrate into their minds by continual concentration, endeavouring to realise their thoughts and feelings, until we carry always about with us in imagination, as Walt Whitman, "those delicious burdens, men and women".

The Irish Theosophist, November 1893





THE RENEWAL OF YOUTH

I

*I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world . . .
. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.*

ULYSSES

Humanity is no longer the child it was at the beginning of the world. The spirit which, prompted by some divine intent, flung itself long ago into a vague, nebulous, drifting nature, though it has endured through many periods of youth, maturity, and age, has yet had its own transformations. Its gay, wonderful childhood gave way, as cycle after cycle coiled itself into slumber, to more definite purposes, and now it is old and burdened with experiences. It is not an age that quenches its fire, but it will not renew again the activities which gave it wisdom. And so it comes that men pause with a feeling which they translate into weariness of life before the accustomed joys and purposes of their race. They wonder at the spell which induced their fathers to plot and execute deeds which seem to them to have no more meaning than a whirl of dust. But their fathers had this weariness also and concealed it from each other in fear, for it meant the laying aside of the sceptre, the toppling over of empires, the chilling of the household warmth, and all for a voice whose inner significance revealed itself but to one or two among myriads.

The spirit has hardly emerged from the childhood with which nature clothes it afresh at every new birth, when the disparity between the garment and the wearer becomes manifest: the little tissue of joys and dreams woven about it is found inadequate for shelter: it trembles exposed to the winds blowing out of the unknown. We linger at twilight with some companion, still glad, contented, and in tune with the nature which fills the orchards with blossom and sprays the hedges with dewy blooms. The

laughing lips give utterance to wishes — ours until that moment. Then the spirit, without warning, suddenly falls into immeasurable age: a sphinx-like face looks at us: our lips answer, but far from the region of elemental being we inhabit, they syllable in shadowy sound, out of old usage, the response, speaking of a love and a hope which we know have vanished from us for evermore. So hour by hour the scourge of the infinite drives us out of every nook and corner of life we find pleasant. And this always takes place when all is fashioned to our liking: then into our dream strides the wielder of the lightning: we get glimpses of a world beyond us thronged with mighty, exultant beings: our own deeds become infinitesimal to us: the colours of our imagination, once so shining, grow pale as the living lights of God glow upon them. We find a little honey in the heart which we make sweeter for some one, and then another lover, whose forms are legion, sighs to us out of its multitudinous being: we know that the old love is gone. There is a sweetness in song or in the cunning re-imaging of the beauty we see; but the Magician of the Beautiful whispers to us of his art, how we were with him when he laid the foundations of the world, and the song is unfinished, the fingers grow listless. As we receive these intimations of age our very sins become negative: we are still pleased if a voice praises us, but we grow lethargic in enterprises where the spur to activity is fame or the acclamation of men. At some point in the past we may have struggled mightily for the sweet incense which men offer to a towering personality; but the infinite is for ever within man: we sighed for other worlds and found that to be saluted as victor by men did not mean acceptance by the gods.

But the placing of an invisible finger upon our lips when we would speak, the heart-throb of warning where we would love, that we grow contemptuous of the prizes of life, does not mean that the spirit has ceased from its labours, that the high-built beauty of the spheres is to topple mistily into chaos, as a mighty temple in the desert sinks into the sand, watched only by a few barbarians too feeble to renew its ancient pomp and the ritual of its once shining congregations. Before we, who were the bright children of the dawn, may return as the twilight race into the silence, our purpose must be achieved, we have to assume mastery over that nature which now overwhelms us, driving into the

Fire-fold the flocks of stars and wandering fires. Does it seem very vast and far away? Do you sigh at the long, long time? Or does it appear hopeless to you who perhaps return with trembling feet evening after evening from a little labour? But it is behind all these things that the renewal takes place, when love and grief are dead; when they loosen their hold on the spirit and it sinks back into itself, looking out on the pitiful plight of those who, like it, are the weary inheritors of so great destinies: then a tenderness which is the most profound quality of its being springs up like the outraying of the dawn, and if in that mood it would plan or execute it knows no weariness, for it is nourished from the First Fountain. As for these feeble children of the once glorious spirits of the dawn, only a vast hope can arouse them from so vast a despair, for the fire will not invigorate them for the repetition of petty deeds but only for the eternal enterprise, the war in heaven, that conflict between Titan and Zeus which is part of the never-ending struggle of the human spirit to assert its supremacy over nature. We, who lie, crushed by this mountain nature piled above us, must arise again, unite to storm the heavens and sit on the seats of the mighty.

II

We speak out of too petty a spirit to each other; the true poems, said Whitman:

Bring none to his or to her terminus or to be content and full,
 Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of
 stars, to learn one of the meanings,
 To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the
 ceaseless rings and never be quiet again.

Here is inspiration — the voice of the soul. Every word which really inspires is spoken as if the Golden Age had never passed. The great teachers ignore the personal identity and speak to the eternal pilgrim. Too often the form or surface far removed from beauty makes us falter, and we speak to that form and the soul is not stirred. But an equal temper arouses it. To whoever hails in it the lover, the hero, the magician, it will respond, but not to him who accosts it in the name and style of its outer self. How often

do we not long to break through the veils which divide us from some one, but custom, convention, or a fear of being misunderstood prevent us, and so the moment passes whose heat might have burned through every barrier. Out with it — out with it, the hidden heart, the love that is voiceless, the secret tender germ of an infinite forgiveness. That speaks to the heart. That pierces through many a vesture of the Soul. Our companion struggles in some labyrinth of passion. We help him, we think, with ethic and moralities. Ah, very well they are; well to know and to keep, but wherefore? For their own sake? No, but that the King may arise in his beauty. We write that in letters, in books, but to the face of the fallen who brings back remembrance? Who calls him by his secret name? Let a man but feel for what high cause is his battle, for what is his cyclic labour, and a warrior who is invincible fights for him and he draws upon divine powers. Our attitude to man and to nature, expressed or not, has something of the effect of ritual, of evocation. As our aspiration so is our inspiration. We believe in life universal, in a brotherhood which links the elements to man, and makes the glow-worm feel far off something of the rapture of the seraph hosts. Then we go out into the living world, and what influences pour through us! We are “at league with the stones of the field”. The winds of the world blow radiantly upon us as in the early time. We feel wrapt about with love, with an infinite tenderness that caresses us. Alone in our rooms as we ponder, what sudden abysses of light open within us! The Gods are so much nearer than we dreamed. We rise up intoxicated with the thought, and reel out seeking an equal companionship under the great night and the stars.

Let us get near to realities. We read too much. We think of that which is “the goal, the Comforter, the Lord, the Witness, the resting-place, the asylum, and the Friend”. Is it by any of these dear and familiar names? The soul of the modern mystic is becoming a mere hoarding-place for uncomely theories. He creates an uncouth symbolism, and blinds his soul within with names drawn from the Kabala or ancient Sanskrit, and makes alien to himself the intimate powers of his spirit, things which in truth are more his than the beatings of his heart. Could we not speak of them in our own tongue, and the language of to-day will be as sacred as any of the past. From the Golden One, the child of the

divine, comes a voice to its shadow. It is stranger to our world, aloof from our ambitions, with a destiny not here to be fulfilled. It says: "You are of dust while I am robed in opalescent airs. You dwell in houses of clay, I in a temple not made by hands. I will not go with thee, but thou must come with me." And not alone is the form of the divine aloof but the spirit behind the form. It is called the Goal truly, but it has no ending. It is the Comforter, but it waves away our joys and hopes like the angel with the flaming sword. Though it is the Resting-place, it stirs to all heroic strife, to outgoing, to conquest. It is the Friend indeed, but it will not yield to our desires. Is it this strange, unfathomable self we think to know, to awaken to, by what is written, or by study of it as so many planes of consciousness? But in vain we store the upper chambers of the mind with such quaint furniture of thought. No archangel makes his abode therein. They abide only in the shining. No wonder that the Gods do not incarnate. We cannot say we do pay reverence to these awful powers. We repulse the living truth by our doubts and reasonings. We would compel the Gods to fall in with our petty philosophy rather than trust in the heavenly guidance. Ah, to think of it, those dread deities, the divine Fires, to be so enslaved! We have not comprehended the meaning of the voice which cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord", or this, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates. Be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Nothing that we read is useful unless it calls up living things in the soul. To read a mystic book truly is to invoke the powers. If they do not rise up plumed and radiant, the apparitions of spiritual things, then is our labour barren. We only encumber the mind with useless symbols. They knew better ways long ago. "Master of the Green-waving Planisphere, . . . Lord of the Azure Expanse, . . . it is thus we invoke", cried the magicians of old.

And us, let us invoke them with joy, let us call upon them with love, the Light we hail, or the Divine Darkness we worship with silent breath. That silence cries aloud to the Gods. Then they will approach us. Then we may learn that speech of many colours, for they will not speak in our mortal tongue; they will not answer to the names of men. Their names are rainbow glories. Yet these are mysteries, and they cannot be reasoned out or argued over. We cannot speak truly of them from report, or description, or from

what another has written. A relation to the thing in itself alone is our warrant, and this means we must set aside our intellectual self-sufficiency and await guidance. It will surely come to those who wait in trust, a glow, a heat in the heart announcing the awakening of the Fire. And, as it blows with its mystic breath into the brain, there is a hurtling of visions, a brilliance of lights, a sound as of great waters vibrant and musical in their flowing, and murmurs from a single yet multitudinous being. In such a mood, when the far becomes near, the strange familiar, and the infinite possible, he wrote from whose words we get the inspiration:

To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the
ceaseless rings and never be quiet again.

Such a faith and such an unrest be ours: faith which is mistrust of the visible; unrest which is full of a hidden surety and reliance. We, when we fall into pleasant places, rest and dream our strength away. Before every enterprise and adventure of the soul we calculate in fear our power to do. But remember, "Oh, disciple, in thy work for thy brother thou hast many allies; in the winds, in the air, in all the voices of the silent shore." These are the far-wandered powers of our own nature, and they turn again home at our need. We came out of the Great Mother-Life for the purposes of soul. Are her darlings forgotten where they darkly wander and strive? Never. Are not the lives of all her heroes proof? Though they seem to stand alone the eternal Mother keeps watch on them, and voices far away and unknown to them before arise in passionate defence, and hearts beat warm to help them. Aye, if we could look within we would see vast nature stirred on their behalf, and institutions shaken, until the truth they fight for triumphs, and they pass, and a wake of glory ever widening behind them trails down the ocean of the years.

Thus the warrior within us works, or, if we choose to phrase it so, it is the action of the spiritual will. Shall we not, then, trust in it and face the unknown, defiant and fearless of its dangers. Though we seem to go alone to the high, the lonely, the pure, we need not despair. Let no one bring to this task the mood of the martyr or of one who thinks he sacrifices something. Yet let all who will come. Let them enter the path, facing all things in life and death with a mood at once gay and reverent, as beseems those

who are immortal — who are children to-day, but whose hands to-morrow may grasp the sceptre, sitting down with the Gods as equals and companions. "What a man thinks, that he is: that is the old secret." In this self-conception lies the secret of life, the way of escape and return. We have imagined ourselves into littleness, darkness, and feebleness. We must imagine ourselves into greatness. "If thou wilt not equal thyself to God, thou canst not understand God. The like is only intelligible by the like." In some moment of more complete imagination the thought-born may go forth and look on the ancient Beauty. So it was in the mysteries long ago, and may well be to-day. The poor dead shadow was laid to sleep, forgotten in its darkness, as the fiery power, mounting from heart to head, went forth in radiance. Not then did it rest, nor ought we. The dim worlds dropped behind it, the lights of earth disappeared as it neared the heights of the immortals. There was One seated on a throne, One dark and bright with ethereal glory. It arose in greeting. The radiant figure laid its head against the breast which grew suddenly golden, and Father and Son vanished in that which has no place or name.

III

Who are exiles? as for me
 Where beneath the diamond dome
 Lies the light on hills or tree
 There my palace is and home.

We are outcasts from Deity, therefore we defame the place of our exile. But who is there may set apart his destiny from the earth which bore him? I am one of those who would bring back the old reverence for the Mother, the magic, the love. I think, metaphysician, you have gone astray. You would seek within yourself for the fountain of life. Yes, there is the true, the only light. But do not dream it will lead you farther away from the earth, but rather deeper into its heart. By it you are nourished with those living waters you would drink. You are yet in the womb and unborn, and the Mother breathes for you the diviner airs. Dart out your farthest ray of thought to the original, and yet you have not found a new path of your own. Your ray is still enclosed in the parent ray, and only on the sidereal streams are you borne to the

freedom of the deep, to the sacred stars whose distance maddens, and to the lonely Light of Lights.

Let us, therefore, accept the conditions and address ourselves with wonder, with awe, with love, as we well may, to that being in whom we move. I abate no jot of those vaster hopes, yet I would pursue that ardent aspiration, content as to here and to-day. I do not believe in a nature red with tooth and claw. If indeed she appears so terrible to any it is because they themselves have armed her. Again, behind the anger of the Gods there is a love. Are the rocks barren? Lay your brow against them and learn what memories they keep. Is the brown earth unbeautiful? Yet lie on the breast of the Mother and you shall be aureoled with the dews of faery. The earth is the entrance to the Halls of Twilight. What emanations are those that make radiant the dark woods of pine! Round every leaf and tree and over all the mountains wave the fiery tresses of that hidden sun which is the soul of the earth and parent of your soul. But we think of these things no longer. Like the prodigal we have wandered far from our home, but no more return. We idly pass or wait as strangers in the halls our spirit built.

Sad or fain no more to live?
I have pressed the lips of pain:
With the kisses lovers give
Ransomed ancient powers again.

I would raise this shrinking soul to a more universal acceptance. What! does it aspire to the All, and yet deny by its revolt and inner protest the justice of Law? From sorrow we shall take no less and no more than from our joys. For if the one reveals to the soul the mode by which the power overflows and fills it here, the other indicates to it the unalterable will which checks excess and leads it on to true proportion and its own ancestral ideal. Yet men seem for ever to fly from their destiny of inevitable beauty; because of delay the power invites and lures no longer but goes out into the highways with a hand of iron. We look back cheerfully enough upon those old trials out of which we have passed; but we have gleaned only an aftermath of wisdom, and missed the full harvest if the will has not risen royally at the moment in unison with the will of the Immortal, even though it comes rolled round with terror and suffering and strikes at the heart of clay.

Through all these things, in doubt, despair, poverty, sick, feeble, or baffled, we have yet to learn reliance. "*I will not leave thee or forsake thee*" are the words of the most ancient spirit to the spark wandering in the immensity of its own being. This high courage brings with it a vision. It sees the true intent in all circumstance out of which its own emerges to meet it. Before it the blackness melts into forms of beauty, and back of all illusions is seen the old enchanter tenderly smiling, the dark, hidden Father enveloping his children.

All things have their compensations. For what is absent here there is always, if we seek, a nobler presence about us.

Captive, see what stars give light
 In the hidden heart of clay:
 At their radiance dark and bright
 Fades the dreamy King of Day.

We complain of conditions, but this very imperfection it is which urges us to arise and seek for the Isles of the Immortals. What we lack recalls the fullness. The soul has seen a brighter day than this and a sun which never sets. Hence the retrospect: "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the sapphire, emerald. . . . Thou was upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire." We would point out these radiant avenues of return; but sometimes we feel in our hearts that we sound but cockney voices, as guides amid the ancient temples, the cyclopean crypts sanctified by the mysteries. To be intelligible we replace the opalescent shining by the terms of the scientist, and we prate of occult physiology in the same breath with the Most High. Yet when the soul has the vision divine it knows not it has a body. Let it remember, and the breath of glory kindles it no more; it is once again a captive. After all it does not make the mysteries clearer to speak in physical terms and do violence to our intuitions. If we ever use these centres, as fires we shall see them, or they shall well up within us as fountains of potent sound. We may satisfy people's minds with a sense correspondence, and their souls may yet hold aloof. We shall only inspire by the magic of a superior beauty. Yet this too has its dangers. "Thou hast corrupted

thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness", continues the seer. If we follow too much the elusive beauty of form we will miss the spirit. The last secrets are for those who translate vision into being. Does the glory fade away before you? Say truly in your heart, "I care not. I will wear the robes I am endowed with to-day." You are already become beautiful, being beyond desire and free.

Night and day no more eclipse
 Friendly eyes that on us shine,
 Speech from old familiar lips,
 Playmates of a youth divine.

To childhood once again. We must regain the lost state. But it is to the giant and spiritual childhood of the young immortals we must return, when into their clear and translucent souls first fell the rays of the father-beings. The men of old were intimates of wind and wave and playmates of many a brightness long since forgotten. The rapture of the fire was their rest; their outgoing was still consciously through universal being. By darkened images we may figure something vaguely akin, as when in rare moments under the stars the big dreamy heart of childhood is pervaded with quiet and brimmed full with love. Dear children of the world, so tired to-day — so weary seeking after the light. Would you recover strength and immortal vigour? Not one star alone, your star, shall shed its happy light upon you, but the All you must adore. Something intimate, secret, unspeakable, akin to thee, will emerge silently, insensibly, and ally itself with thee as thou gatherest thyself from the four quarters of the earth. We shall go back to the world of the dawn, but to a brighter light than that which opened up this wondrous story of the cycles. The forms of elder years will reappear in our vision, the father-beings once again. So we shall grow at home amid these grandeurs, and with that All-Presence about us may cry in our hearts, "At last is our meeting, Immortal. O starry one, now is our rest!"

Come away, oh, come away;
 We will quench the heart's desire
 Past the gateways of the day
 In the rapture of the fire.

The Irish Theosophist, August-October 1895,
 June 1897





TRANSFORMATIONS

It was said by one who is accounted a spiritual king among men that the shining world was only for those who could return to youth again. But what miracle could give to age and weariness the faery heart of childhood if youth be not an eternal thing, a spirit which flashes indeed with lightness and laughter through lips that are young, but is none the less present under the disguise of age — more, I think, to be loved, more evidently to be known as an immortal when it laughs behind wisdom and a mortality whose transience is clear. It was not childhood the king meant, but that which we feel to be for ever young within us, and childhood is no nearer than age to that. We know, we know what it means when the world which had been still for a while, suddenly on some morning trembles and flings aside its mask of chill indifference: the winds flow on us with ethereal tenderness: the mountains make nothing of their size, but nod and call to us beyond the city's roofs and spires: we cannot pluck a flower, it is all too living, its life is too much a part of our joy, and all life appears but a game of hide and seek we play with ourselves. We concealed ourselves of old in the great as well as the little things: we smile up at the blue sky and the suddenly softening majesty of eternal things shows that we have pierced another disguise. I have always loved those stories where children move without fear, familiarly, in enchanted castles amid dread beings, wizards and dragons, who seem somehow forced to companionship with them by the spell of youth, for it is one of the three master spells in life — the names of the others are beauty and love.

If I phrase lightly or fancifully the terms of this new intimacy, it is because I cannot find words endearing enough in academic philosophy. I cannot speak in scientific language. Who would describe the descent of a god as a psychical researcher the apparition of an ordinary respectable citizen, or say when thrilled by intensest compassion, "My consciousness is on such-and-such a plane of being"? What meets us in these flashes is the Spirit looking out of its universal home. I believe the poet to be nearer the truth than the scientist. His observation is subjective: and in a living universe

everything said of nature is false which does not convey its opulent vitality even in barren wilds and the seeming vacuity of space. This gay spirit of youth in man makes him a poet, for its vision is of the life behind the veil. It sees the hills as stars and sees truly, and infinite elfin forms in the woodland, and every sorrow throbs with a hidden heart of joy; and, ah, what tender revelations about men and women! They must needs be pathetic, but they are inspired with such hope:

*This mood hath known all beauty, for it sees
O'erwhelmed majesties
In these pale forms, and kingly crowns of gold
On brows no longer bold,
And through the shadowy terrors of their hell
The love for which they fell,
And how desire which cast them in the deep
Called God too from his sleep.
O pity, only seer, who looking through
A heart melted like dew,
Sees the long-perished in the present thus
All-seeing eye in us,
Whatever time thy golden eyelids ope
They travel to a hope,
Not only backward from these low degrees
To starry dynasties,
But looking far where now the silence owns
And rules from empty thrones,
Thou seest the enchanted halls of heaven burn
When we in might return.
Thy tender kiss hath memory, we are kings
For all our wanderings:
Thy shining eyes already see the after
In hidden light and laughter.*

It is years ago since I first heard of the Divine Eye, and I marvelled what the fire-gaze might hold within it — suns, stars, and all the fiery populace of space in one manifold vision flashing suddenly upon the spirit. I think now we might look with the Divine Eye in every hour. Is not love another name for the spirit, and whoever with pure love beholds anything sees in that glance as the spirit sees. There are, I know, other mighty things which the first morning glances of love cannot perceive, but it is none the

less the Eye of the Lord which looks through its eyes, and that soul travels most swiftly to infinite vision who is most readily compassionate. With it these transformations happen daily, placing crowns upon uncrowned brows, and in hitherto ignored beings it beholds the kingly spirit moulding with infinite patience and tenderness the heavy unwilling clay. It knows lastly, then, that nothing exists without the support of the Mighty, and it cannot choose but be at league with its fellows. To have this knowledge in the heart, however simply it phrases its wisdom to itself, is better than to have all the story of human thought and its philosophies in the brain. The mind overweighted with a cumbrous metaphysic grows cold and chill and grey, but listening to the voice in the heart we feel lifted on light wings. O Golden Bird, I am only thy shadow and dwell in a shadowy world. Give me thy star-touching pinions. Give me thy wider vision,

*That I may see beneath the common things of day
Eternal Beauty wandering on her way.*

The Internationalist, February 1889







THE FOUNTAINS OF YOUTH

I heard that a strange woman, dwelling on the western coast, who had the repute of healing by faery power, said a little before she died, "There's a cure for all things in the well at Ballykeele": and I know not why at first, but her words lingered with me and repeated themselves again and again, and by degrees to keep fellowship with the thought they enshrined came more antique memories, all I had heard or dreamed of the Fountains of Youth; for I could not doubt, having heard these fountains spoken of by people like herself, that her idea had a druid ancestry. Perhaps she had bent over the pool until its darkness grew wan and bright and troubled with the movements of a world within and the agitations of a tempestuous joy; or she had heard, as many still hear, the wild call to "Come away" from entreating lips and flame-encircled faces, or was touched by the star-tipped fingers, and her heart from the faery world came never back again to dwell as before at ease in this isle of grey mists and misty sunlight. These things are not fable only, for Ireland is still a land of the gods, and in out of the way places we often happen on wonderlands of romance and mystic beauty. I have spoken to people who have half parted from their love for the world in a longing for the pagan paradise of Tir-na-nog, and many who are outwardly obeisant to another religion are altogether pagan in their hearts, and Meave the Queen of the Western Host is more to them than Mary Queen of Heaven. I was told of this Meave that lately she was seen in vision by a peasant, who made a poem on her, calling her "The Beauty of all Beauty": and the man who told me this of his friend had himself seen the jetted fountains of fire-mist winding up in spiral whirls to the sky, and he too had heard of the Fountains of Youth.

The natural longing in every heart that its youth shall not perish makes one ponder and sigh over this magical past when youth, ecstasy, and beauty welled from a bountiful nature at the sung appeal of her druid children holding hand in hand around the sacred cairn. Our hearts remember:

*A wind blows by us fleeting
Along the reedy strand:*

*And sudden our hearts are beating
Again in the druid-land.*

*All silver-pale, enchanted,
The air-world lies on the hills,
And the fields of light are planted
With the dawn-frail daffodils.*

*The yellow leaves are blowing
The hour when the wind-god weaves,
And hides the stars and their glowing
In a mist of daffodil leaves.*

*We stand in glimmering whiteness,
Each face like the day-star fair,
And rayed about in its brightness
With a dawn of daffodil air.*

*And through each white robe gleaming,
And under each snow-white breast,
Is a golden dream-light streaming
Like eve through an opal west.*

*One hand to the heart, another
We raise to the dawn on high;
For the sun in the heart is brother
To the sun-heart of the sky.*

*A light comes rising and falling,
As ringed in the druid choir
We sing to the sun-god, calling
By his name of yellow fire.*

*The touch of the dew-wet grasses,
The breath of the dawn-cool wind,
With the dawn of the god-light passes
And the world is left behind.*

*We drink of a fountain giving
The joy of the gods, and then —
The Land of the Ever-living
Has passed from us again.*

*Passed far beyond all saying,
For memory only weaves
On a silver dawn outraying
A cloud of daffodil leaves.*

And not indirectly through remembrance only, but when touched from within by the living beauty, the soul, the ancient druid in man, renews its league with the elements; and sometimes as the twilight vanishes and night lays on the earth her tender brow, the woods, the mountains, the clouds that tinted like seraphim float in the vast, and the murmur of water, wind, and trees melt from the gaze and depart from the outward ear and become internal reveries and contemplations of the spirit, and are no more separate but are part of us. Yet these vanishings from us and movements in worlds not realized leave us only more thirsty to drink of a deeper nature where all things are dissolved in ecstasy, and heaven and earth are lost in God. So we turn seeking for the traces of that earlier wisdom which guided man into the Land of Immortal Youth, and assuaged his thirst at a more brimming flood at the Feast of Age, the banquet which Manannan the Danann king instituted in the haunt of the Fire-god, and whoever partook knew thereafter neither weariness, decay, nor death.

These mysteries, all that they led to, all that they promised for the spirit of man, are opening to-day for us in clear light, their fabulous distance lessens, and we hail these kingly ideals with as intense a trust and with more joy, perhaps, than they did who were born in those purple hours, because we are emerging from centuries indescribably meagre and squalid in their thought, and every new revelation has for us the sweetness of sunlight to one after the tears and sorrow of a prison-house. The well at Ballykeele is, perhaps, a humble starting-point for the contemplation of such mighty mysteries; but here where the enchanted world lies so close it is never safe to say what narrow path may not lead through a visionary door into Moy Argatnel, the Silver Cloudland of Manannan, where

Feet of white bronze
Glitter through beautiful ages.

The Danann king with a quaint particularity tells Bran in the poem from which these lines are quoted, that

There is a wood of beautiful fruit
Under the prow of thy little skiff.

What to Bran was a space of pale light was to the eye of the god a land of pure glory, Ildathach the Many-coloured Land, rolling with rivers of golden light and dropping with dews of silver flame. In another poem, the Brugh by the Boyne, outwardly a little hillock, is thus described:

Look, and you will see it is the palace of a god.

Perhaps the mystic warriors of the Red Branch saw supernatural pillars blazoned like the sunset, and entered through great doors and walked in lofty halls with sunset-tinted beings speaking a more beautiful wisdom than earth's. And they there may have seen those famous gods who had withdrawn generations before from visible Eire: Manannan the dark blue king, Lu Lamfada with the sunrise on his brow and his sling, a wreath of rainbow flame, coiled around him, the Goddess Dana in ruby brilliance, Nuada silver-handed, the Dagda with floating locks of light shaking from him radiance and song, Angus Oge, around whose head the everwinging birds made music, and others in whose company these antique heroes must have felt the deep joy of old companionship renewed, for were not the Danann hosts men of more primeval cycles become divine and movers in a divine world. In the Brugh too was a fountain, to what uses applied the mystical imagination working on other legends may make clearer.

The Well of Conula, the parent fountain of many streams visible and invisible, was the most sacred well known in ancient Ireland. It lay itself below deep waters at the source of the Shannon, and these waters which hid it were also mystical, for they lay between earth and the Land of the Gods. Here, when stricken suddenly by an internal fire, the sacred hazels of wisdom and inspiration unfolded at once their leaves and blossoms and their scarlet fruit, which falling upon the waters dyed them of a royal purple; the nuts were then devoured by Fintann the Salmon of Knowledge, and the wisest of the druids partook also. This was perhaps the greatest of the mysteries known to the ancient Gael, and in the bright phantasmagoria conjured up there is a wild beauty which

belongs to all their tales. The suddenly arising forests of golden fire, trees whose roots drew honey sweetness from the dreams of a remote divinity, the scarlet nuts tossing on the purple flood, the bright immortals glancing hither and thither, are pictures left of some mystery we may not now uncover, though to-morrow may reveal it, for the dawn-lights are glittering everywhere in Ireland. Perhaps the strange woman who spoke of the well at Ballykeele, and others like her, may know more about these fountains than the legend-seekers who so learnedly annotate their tales. They may have drunken in dreams of the waters at Connla's well, for many go to the Tir-na-nog in sleep, and some are said to have remained there, and only a vacant form is left behind without the light in the eyes which marks the presence of a soul. I make no pretence of knowledge concerning the things which underlie their simple speech, but to me there seems to be for ever escaping from legend and folk-tale, from word and custom, some breath of a world of beauty I sigh for but am not nigh to as these are. I think if that strange woman could have found a voice for what was in her heart she would have completed her vague oracle somewhat as I have done:

*There's a cure for all things in the well at Ballykeele,
Where the scarlet cressets o'erhang from the rowan trees;
There's a joy-breath blowing from the Land of Youth I feel,
And earth with its heart at ease.*

*Many and many a sun-bright maiden saw the enchanted land
With star-faces glimmer up from the druid wave:
Many and many a pain of love was soothed by a faery hand
Or lost in the love it gave.*

*When the quiet with a ring of pearl shall wed the earth
And the scarlet berries burn dark by the stars in the pool
Oh, it's lost and deep I'll be in the joy-breath and the mirth,
My heart in the star-heart cool.*

The Irish Theosophist, September 1897





SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE

Many are the voices that entreat and warn those who would live the life of the Magi. It is well they should speak. They are voices of the wise. But after having listened and pondered, oh, that someone would arise and shout into our souls how much more fatal it is to refrain. For we miss to hear the faery tale of time, the aeonian chant radiant with light and colour which the spirit prolongs. The warnings are not for those who stay at home, but for those who adventure abroad. They constitute an invitation to enter the mysteries. We study and think these things were well in the happy prime and will be again in the years to come. But not yesterday only or to-morrow – to-day, to-day burns in the heart the fire which made mighty the heroes of old. And in what future will be born the powers which are not quick in the present? It will never be a matter of greater ease to enter the path, though we may well have the stimulus of greater despair. For this and that there are times and seasons, but for the highest it is always the hour. The eternal beauty does not pale because its shadow trails over slime and corruption. It is always present beneath the faded mould whereon our lives are spent. Still the old mysterious glimmer from mountain and cave allures, and the golden gleams divide and descend on us from the haunts of the Gods.

The dark age is our darkness and not the darkness of life. It is not well for us who in the beginning came forth with the wonder-light about us, that it should have turned in us to darkness, the song of life be dumb. We close our eyes from the many-coloured mirage of day, and are alone soundless and sightless in the unilluminated cell of the brain. But there are thoughts that shine, impulses born of fire. Still there are moments when the prison-world reels away a distant shadow, and the inner chamber of clay fills full with fiery visions. We choose from the traditions of the past some symbol of our greatness, and seem again the Titans or Morning Stars of the prime. In this self-conception lies the secret of life, the way of escape and return. We have imagined ourselves into forgetfulness, into darkness, into feebleness. From this strange

and pitiful dream of life, oh, that we may awaken and know ourselves once again.

But the student too often turns to books, to the words sent back to him, forgetful that the best of scriptures do no more than stand as symbols. We hear too much of study, as if the wisdom of life and ethics could be learned like a ritual, and of their application to this and that ephemeral pursuit. But from the Golden One, the child of the divine, comes a voice to its shadow. It is stranger to our world, aloof from our ambitions, with a destiny not here to be fulfilled. It says: "You are of dust while I am robed in opalescent airs. You dwell in houses of clay, I in a temple not made by hands. I will not go with thee, but thou must come with me." And not alone is the form of the divine aloof but the spirit behind the form. It is called the Goal truly, but it has no ending. It is the Comforter, but it waves away our joys and hopes like the angel with the flaming sword. Though it is the Resting-place, it stirs to all heroic strife, to outgoing, to conquest. It is the Friend indeed, but it will not yield to our desires. Is it this strange, unfathomable self we think to know, and awaken to, by what is written, or by study of it as so many planes of consciousness. But in vain we store the upper chambers of the mind with such quaint furniture of thought. No archangel makes his abode therein. They abide only in the shining. How different from academic psychology of the past, with its dry enumeration of faculties, reason, cognition, and so forth, is the burning thing we know. We revolted from that, but we must take care lest we teach in another way a catalogue of things equally unliving to us.

The plain truth is, that after having learned what is taught about the hierarchies and various spheres, many of us are still in this world exactly where we were before. If we speak our laboriously-acquired information we are listened to in amazement. It sounds so learned, so intellectual, there must needs be applause. But by-and-by someone comes with quiet voice, who without pretence speaks of the "soul" and uses familiar words, and the listeners drink deep, and pay the applause of silence and long remembrance and sustained after-endeavour. Our failure lies in this, we would use the powers of soul and we have not yet become the soul. None but the wise one himself could bend the bow of Ulysses. We cannot communicate more of the true than we ourselves

know. It is better to have a little knowledge and know that little than to have only hearsay of myriads of Gods. So I say, lay down your books for a while and try the magic of thought. "What a man thinks, that he is; that is the old secret." I utter, I know, but a partial voice of the soul with many needs. But I say, forget for a while that you are student, forget your name and time. Think of yourself within as the Titan, the Demi-god, the flaming hero with the form of beauty, the heart of love. And of those divine spheres forget the nomenclature; think rather of them as the places of a great childhood you now return to, these homes no longer ours. In some moment of more complete imagination the thought-born may go forth and look on the olden Beauty. So it was in the mysteries long ago and may well be to-day. The poor dead shadow was laid to sleep in forgotten darkness, as the fiery power, mounting from heart to head, went forth in radiance. Not then did it rest, nor ought we. The dim worlds dropped behind it, the lights of earth disappeared as it neared the heights of the Immortals. There was One seated on a throne, One dark and bright with ethereal glory. It arose in greeting. The radiant figure laid its head against the breast which grew suddenly golden, and father and son vanished in that which has no place nor name.

The Irish Theosophist, January 1896





A PRIESTESS OF THE WOODS

Here is a legend whispered to me, the land or time I cannot tell, it may have been in the old Atlantean days. There were vast woods and a young priestess ruled them; she presided at the festivals and sacrificed at the altar for the people, interceding with the spirits of fire, water, air and earth, that the harvest might not be burned up, nor drenched with the floods, nor torn by storms and that the blight might not fall upon it, which things the elemental spirits sometimes brought about. This woodland sovereignty was her heritage from her father, who was a mighty magician before her. Around her young days floated the faery presences; she knew them as other children know the flowers, having neither fear nor wonder for them. She saw deeper things also; as a little child, wrapped up in her bearskin, she watched with awe her father engaged in mystic rites; when around him the airy legions gathered from the populous elements, the spirits he ruled and the spirits he bowed down before; fleeting nebulous things white as foam coming forth from the great deep who fled away at the waving of his hand; and rarer the great sons of fire, bright and transparent as glass, who though near seemed yet far away and were still and swift as the figures that glance in a crystal. So the child grew up full of mystery; her thoughts were not the thoughts of the people about her, nor their affections her affections. It seemed as if the elf-things or beings carved by the thought of the magician, pushed aside by his strong will and falling away from him, entering into the child became part of her, linking her to the elemental beings who live in the star-soul that glows within the earth. Her father told her such things as she asked, but he died while she was yet young and she knew not his aim, what man is, or what is his destiny; but she knew the ways of every order of spirit that goes about clad in a form, how some were to be dreaded and some to be loved. By reason of this knowledge she succeeded as priestess to the shrine, and held the sway of beauty and youth, of wisdom and mystery, over the people dwelling in the woods.

It was the evening of the autumn festival; the open grassy space before the altar was crowded with figures: hunters with their

feathered heads, shepherds, those who toil in the fields, the old and hoary were gathered around.

The young priestess stood up before them; she was pale from vigil, and the sunlight coming through the misty evening air fell upon her swaying arms and her dress with its curious embroidery of peacock's feathers. The dark hollows of her eyes were alight and as she spoke inspiration came to her; her voice rose and fell, commanding, warning, whispering, beseeching; its strange rich music flooded the woods and pierced through and through with awe the hearts of those who listened. She spoke of the mysteries of that unseen nature: how man is watched and ringed round with hosts who war upon him, who wither up his joys by their breath. She spoke of the gnomes who rise up in the woodland paths with damp arms grasping from their earthy bed.

"Dreadful", she said, "are the elementals who live in the hidden waters: they rule the dreaming heart; their curse is forgetfulness; they lull man to fatal rest, with drowsy fingers feeling to put out his fire of life. But most of all, dread the powers that move in air; their nature is desire unquenchable; their destiny is — never to be fulfilled — never to be at peace: they roam hither and thither like the winds they guide; they usurp dominion over the passionate and tender soul, but they love not in our way; where they dwell the heart is a madness and the feet are filled with a hurrying fever, and night has no sleep and day holds no joy in its sunlit cup. Listen not to their whisper; they wither and burn up the body with their fire; the beauty they offer is smitten through and through with unappeasable anguish." She paused for a moment; her terrible breath had hardly ceased to thrill them, when another voice was heard singing; its note was gay and triumphant, it broke the spell of fear upon the people,

I never heed by waste or wood
The cry of fay or faery thing
Who tell of their own solitude;
Above them all my soul is king.

The royal robe as king I wear
Trails all along the fields of light;
Its silent blue and silver bear
For gems the starry dust of night.

The breath of joy unceasingly
 Waves to and fro its folds star-lit,
 And far beyond earth's misery
 I live and breathe the joy of it.

The priestess advanced from the altar, her eyes sought for the singer; when she came to the centre of the opening she paused and waited silently. Almost immediately a young man carrying a small lyre stepped out of the crowd and stood before her; he did not seem older than the priestess; he stood unconcerned though her dark eyes blazed at the intrusion; he met her gaze fearlessly; his eyes looked into hers — in this way all proud spirits do battle. Her eyes were black with almost a purple tinge, eyes that had looked into the dark ways of nature; his were bronze, and a golden tinge, a mystic opulence of vitality, seemed to dance in their depths; they dazzled the young priestess with the secrecy of joy; her eyes fell for a moment. He turned round and cried out, "Your priestess speaks but half truths, her eyes have seen but her heart does not know. Life is not terrible but is full of joy. Listen to me. I passed by while she spake, and I saw that a fear lay upon every man, and you shivered thinking of your homeward path, fearful as rabbits of the unseen things, and forgetful how you have laughed at death facing the monsters who crush down the forests. Do you not know that you are greater than all these spirits before whom you bow in dread? Your life springs from a deeper source. Answer me, priestess, where go the fire-spirits when winter seizes the world?"

"Into the Fire-King they go, they dream in his heart." She half chanted, the passion of her speech not yet fallen away from her. "And where go the fires of men when they depart?" She was silent; then he continued half in scorn, "Your priestess is the priestess of ghouls and fays rather than a priestess of men; her wisdom is not for you; the spirits that haunt the elements are hostile because they see you full of fear; do not dread them and their hatred will vanish. The great heart of the earth is full of laughter; do not put yourselves apart from its joy, for its soul is your soul and its joy is your true being."

He turned and passed through the crowd; the priestess made a motion as if she would have stayed him, then she drew herself up proudly and refrained. They heard his voice again singing as he passed into the darkening woods,

The spirits to the fire-king throng
 Each in the winter of his day:
 And all who listen to their song
 Follow them after in that way.

They seek the heart-hold of the king,
 They build within his halls of fire,
 Their dreams flash like the peacock's wing,
 They glow with sun-hues of desire.

I follow in no faery ways;
 I heed no voice of fay or elf;
 I in the winter of my days
 Rest in the high ancestral self.

The rites interrupted by the stranger did not continue much longer; the priestess concluded her words of warning; she did not try to remove the impression created by the poet's song. She only said, "His wisdom may be truer; it is more beautiful than the knowledge we inherit."

The days passed on; autumn died into winter, spring came again and summer, and the seasons which brought change to the earth brought change to the young priestess. She sought no longer to hold sway over the elemental tribes, and her empire over them departed: the song of the poet rang for ever in her ears; its proud assertion of kingship and joy in the radiance of a deeper life haunted her like truth; but such a life seemed unattainable by her and a deep sadness rested in her heart. The wood-people often saw her sitting in the evening where the sunlight fell along the pool, waving slowly its azure and amethyst, sparkling and flashing in crystal and gold, melting as if a phantom Bird of Paradise were fading away; her dark head was bowed in melancholy and all that great beauty flamed and died away unheeded. After a time she rose up and moved about. She spoke more frequently to the people who had not dared to question her; she grew into a more human softness; they feared her less and loved her more; but she ceased not from her passionate vigils and her step faltered and her cheek paled, and her eager spirit took flight when the diamond glow of winter broke out over the world. The poet came again in the summer; they told him of the change they could not understand,

but he fathomed the depths of this wild nature, and half in gladness, half in sorrow, he carved an epitaph over her tomb near the altar,

Where is the priestess of this shrine,
And by what place does she adore?
The woodland haunt below the pine
Now hears her whisper nevermore.

Ah, wrapped in her own beauty now
She dreams a dream that shall not cease;
Priestess, to her own soul to bow
Is hers in everlasting peace.

The Irish Theosophist, July 1893





A TRAGEDY IN THE TEMPLE

I have often thought with sadness over the fate of that comrade. That so ardent and heroic a spirit, so much chivalry and generosity should meet such a horrible fate, has often made me wonder if there is any purpose in this tangled being of ours; I have hated life and the gods as I thought of it. What brought him out of those great deserts where his youth was spent, where his soul grew vast knowing only of two changes, the blaze of day and night the purifier, blue, mysterious, ecstatic with starry being? Were not these enough for him? Could the fire of the altar inspire more? Could he be initiated deeper in the chambers of the temple than in those great and lonely places where God and man are alone together? This was my doing; resting in his tent when I crossed the desert, I had spoken to him of that old wisdom which the priests of the inner temple keep and hand down from one to the other; I blew to flame the mystic fire which already smouldered within him, and filled with the vast ambition of God, he left his tribe and entered the priesthood as neophyte in the Temple of Ishtar, below Niniveh.

I had sometimes to journey thither bearing messages from our high priest, and so as time passed my friendship with Asur grew deep. That last evening when I sat with him on the terrace that roofed the temple, he was more silent than I had known him before to be; we had generally so many things to speak of; for he told me all his dreams, such vague titanic impulses as the soul has in the fresh first years of its awakening, when no experience hinders with memory its flights of aspiration, and no anguish has made it wise. But that evening there was, I thought, something missing, a curious feverishness seemed to have replaced the cool and hardy purity of manner which was natural to him; his eyes had a strange glow, fitful and eager; I saw by the starlight how restless his fingers were, they intertwined, twisted, and writhed in and out.

We sat long in the rich night together; then he drew nearer to me and leaned his head near my shoulder; he began to whisper incoherently a wild and passionate tale; the man's soul was being

tempted.

"Brother," he said, "I am haunted by a vision, by a child of the stars as lovely as Ishtar's self; she visits my dreaming hours, she dazzles me with strange graces, she bewilders with unspeakable longing. Sometime, I know, I must go to her, though I perish. When I see her I forget all else and I have will to resist no longer. The vast and lonely inspiration of the desert departs from my thought, she and the jewel-light she lives in blot it out. The thought of her thrills me like fire. Brother, give me help, ere I go mad or die; she draws me away from earth and I shall end my days amid strange things, a starry destiny amid starry races."

I was not then wise in these things, I did not know the terrible dangers that lurk in the hidden ways in which the soul travels. "This", I said, "is some delusion. You have brooded over a fancy until it has become living; you have filled your creation with your own passion and it lingers and tempts you; even if it were real, it is folly to think of it; we must close our hearts to passion if we would attain the power and wisdom of Gods."

He shook his head; I could not realize or understand him. Perhaps if I had known all and could have warned him, it would have been in vain; perhaps the soul must work out its own purification in experience and learn truth and wisdom through being. Once more he became silent and restless. I had to bid him farewell as I was to depart on the morrow, but he was present in my thoughts and I could not sleep because of him; I felt oppressed with the weight of some doom about to fall. To escape from this feeling I rose in adoration to Hea; I tried to enter into the light of that Wisdom; a sudden heart-throb of warning drew me back; I thought of Asur instinctively, and thinking of him his image flashed on me. He moved as if in trance through the glassy waves of those cosmic waters which everywhere lave and permeate the worlds, and in which our earth is but a subaqueous mound. His head was bowed, his form dilated to heroic stature, as if he conceived of himself as some great thing or as moving to some high destiny, and this shadow which was the house of his dreaming soul grew brilliant with the passionate hues of his thought; some power beyond him drew him forth. I felt the fever and heat of this inner sphere like a delirious breath blow fiercely about me; there was a phosphorescence of hot and lurid colours. The form of Asur

moved towards a light streaming from a grotto; I could see within it burning gigantic flowers. On one, as on a throne, a figure of weird and wonderful beauty was seated. I was thrilled with a dreadful horror, I thought of the race of Liliths, and some long forgotten and tragic legends rose up in my memory of these beings whose soul is but a single and terrible passion; whose love too fierce for feebler lives to endure, brings death or madness to men. I tried to warn, to awaken him from the spell; my will-call aroused him; he turned, recognised me and hesitated; then this figure that lured him rose to her full height; I saw her in all her terrible beauty. From her head a radiance of feathered flame spread out like the plume of a peacock, it was spotted with gold and green and citron dyes, she raised her arms upwards, her robe, semi-transparent, purple and starred over with a jewel lustre, fell in vaporous folds to her feet like the drift over a waterfall. She turned her head with a sudden bird-like movement, her strange eyes looked into mine with a prolonged and snaky glance; I saw her move her arms hither and thither, and the waves of this inner ocean began to darken and gather about me, to ripple through me with feverish motion. I fell into a swoon and remembered nothing more.

I was awakened before dawn; those with whom I was to cross the desert were about to start and I could remain no longer. I wrote hurriedly to Asur a message full of warning and entreaty and set out on my return journey full of evil forebodings. Some months after I had again to visit this temple; it was evening when I arrived; after I had delivered the message with which I was charged, I asked for Asur. The priest to whom I spoke did not answer me. He led me in silence up to the terrace that overlooked the desolate eastern desert. The moon was looming white upon the verge, the world was trembling with heat, the winged bulls along the walls shone with a dull glow through the sultry air. The priest pointed to the far end of the terrace. A figure was seated looking out over the desert, his robes were motionless as if their wrinkles were carved of stone, his hands lay on his knees, I walked up to him; I called his name; he did not stir. I came nearer and put my face close to his, it was as white as the moon, his eyes only reflected the light. I turned away from him sick to the very heart.

The Irish Theosophist, September 1893





THE CAVE OF LILITH

Out of her cave came the ancient Lilith; Lilith the wise; Lilith the enchantress. There ran a little path outside her dwelling; it wound away among the mountains and glittering peaks, and before the door one of the Wise Ones walked to and fro. Out of her cave came Lilith, scornful of his solitude, exultant in her wisdom, flaunting her shining and magical beauty.

“Still alone, star gazer! Is thy wisdom of no avail? Thou hast yet to learn that I am more powerful, knowing the ways of error, than you who know the ways of truth.”

The Wise One heeded her not, but walked to and fro. His eyes were turned to the distant peaks, the abode of his brothers. The starlight fell about him; a sweet air came down the mountain path, fluttering his white robe; he did not cease from his steady musing. Lilith wavered in her cave like a mist rising between rocks. Her raiment was violet, with silvery gleams. Her face was dim, and over her head rayed a shadowy diadem, like that which a man imagines over the head of his beloved: and one looking closer at her face would have seen that this was the crown he reached out to; that the eyes burnt with his own longing; that the lips were parted to yield to the secret wishes of his heart.

“Tell me, for I would know, why do you wait so long? I, here in my cave between the valley and the height, blind the eyes of all who would pass. Those who by chance go forth to you, come back to me again, and but one in ten thousand passes on. My illusions are sweeter to them than truth. I offer every soul its own shadow. I pay them their own price. I have grown rich, though the simple shepherds of old gave me birth. Men have made me; the mortals have made me immortal. I rose up like a vapour from their first dreams, and every sigh since then and every laugh remains with me. I am made up of hopes and fears. The subtle princes lay out their plans of conquest in my cave, and there the hero dreams, and there the lovers of all time write in flame their history. I am wise, holding all experience, to tempt, to blind, to terrify. None shall pass by. Why, therefore, dost thou wait?”

The Wise One looked at her, and she shrank back a little, and a

little her silver and violet faded, but out of her cave her voice still sounded:

“The stars and the starry crown are not yours alone to offer, and every promise you make I make also. I offer the good and the bad indifferently. The lover, the poet, the mystic, and all who would drink of the first fountain, I delude with my mirage. I was the Beatrice who led Dante upwards: the gloom was in me, and the glory was mine also, and he went not out of my cave. The stars and the shining of heaven were illusions of the infinite I wove about him. I captured his soul with the shadow of space; a nutshell would have contained the film. I smote on the dim heart-chords the manifold music of being. God is sweeter in the human than the human in God. Therefore he rested in me.”

She paused a little, and then went on: “There is that fantastic fellow who slipped by me. Could your wisdom not retain him? He returned to me full of anguish, and I wound my arms round him like a fair melancholy; and now his sadness is as sweet to him as hope was before his fall. Listen to his song!” She paused again. A voice came up from the depths chanting a sad knowledge:

What of all the will to do?
It has vanished long ago,
For a dream-shaft pierced it through
From the Unknown Archer's bow.

What of all the soul to think?
Some one offered it a cup
Filled with a diviner drink,
And the flame has burned it up.

What of all the hope to climb?
Only in the self we grope
To the misty end of time,
Truth has put an end to hope.

What of all the heart to love?
Sadder than for will or soul,
No light lured it on above:
Love has found itself the whole.

“Is it not pitiful? I pity only those who pity themselves. Yet he

is mine more surely than ever. This is the end of human wisdom. How shall he now escape? What shall draw him up?"

"His will shall awaken", said the Wise One. "I do not sorrow over him, for long is the darkness before the spirit is born. He learns in your caves not to see, not to hear, not to think, for very anguish flying your illusions."

"Sorrow is a great bond", Lilith said.

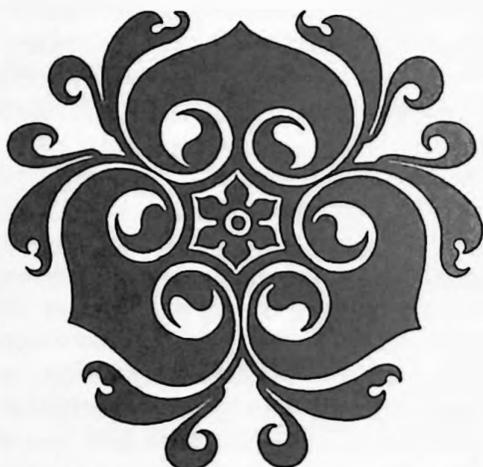
"It is a bond to the object of sorrow. He weeps what thou canst never give him, a life never breathed in thee. He shall come forth, and thou shalt not see him at the time of passing. When desire dies the swift and invisible will awakens. He shall go forth; and one by one the dwellers in your caves will awaken and pass onward. This small old path will be trodden by generation after generation. Thou, too, O shining Lilith, shalt follow, not as mistress, but as handmaiden."

"I will weave spells", Lilith cried. "They shall never pass me. I will drug them with the sweetest poison. They shall rest drowsily and content as of old. Were they not giants long ago, mighty men and heroes? I overcame them with young enchantment. Shall they pass by feeble and longing for bygone joys, for the sins of their proud exultant youth, while I have grown into a myriad wisdom?"

The Wise One walked to and fro as before, and there was silence; and I saw that with steady will he pierced the tumultuous gloom of the cave, and a spirit awoke here and there from its dream. And I thought I saw that Sad Singer become filled with a new longing for true being, and that the illusions of good and evil fell from him, and that he came at last to the knees of the Wise One to learn the supreme truth. In the misty midnight I heard these three voices – the Sad Singer, the Enchantress Lilith, and the Wise One. From the Sad Singer I learned that thought of itself leads nowhere, but blows the perfume from every flower, and cuts the flower from every tree, and hews down every tree from the valley, and in the end goes to and fro in waste places – gnawing itself in a last hunger. I learned from Lilith that we weave our own enchantment, and bind ourselves with our own imagination. To think of the true as beyond us or to love the symbol of being is to darken the path to wisdom, and to debar us from eternal beauty. From the Wise One I learned that the truest wisdom is to wait, to work, and to will in secret. Those who are voiceless to-day,

to-morrow shall be eloquent, and the earth shall hear them and her children salute them. Of these three truths the hardest to learn is the silent will. Let us seek for the highest truth.

The Irish Theosophist, February 1894





THE MIDNIGHT BLOSSOM

Arhans are born at midnight hour, together with the holy flower that opes and blooms in darkness.

From an Eastern Scripture

We stood together at the door of our hut. We could see through the gathering gloom where our sheep and goats were cropping the sweet grass on the side of the hill. We were full of drowsy content as they were. We had naught to mar our happiness, neither memory nor unrest for the future. We lingered on while the vast twilight encircled us; we were one with its dewy stillness. The lustre of the early stars first broke in upon our dreaming: we looked up and around. The yellow constellations began to sing their choral hymn together. As the night deepened they came out swiftly from their hiding-places in depths of still and unfathomable blue – they hung in burning clusters, they advanced in multitudes that dazzled. The shadowy shining of night was strewn all over with nebulous dust of silver, with long mists of gold, with jewels of glittering green. We felt how fit a place the earth was to live on, with these nightly glories over us, with silence and coolness upon our lawns and lakes after the consuming day. Valmika, Kedar, Ananda, and I watched together. Through the rich gloom we could see far distant forests and lights, the lights of village and city in King Suddhodana's realm.

“Brothers,” said Valmika, “how good it is to be here and not yonder in the city, where they know not peace, even in sleep.”

“Yonder and yonder,” said Kedar, “I saw the inner air full of a red glow where they were busy in toiling and strife. It seemed to reach up to me. I could not breathe. I climbed the hill at dawn to laugh where the snows were, and the sun is as white as they are white.”

“But, brothers, if we went down among them and told them how happy we were, and how the flowers grow on the hillside, they would surely come up and leave all sorrow. They cannot know or they would come.” Ananda was a mere child, though so

tall for his years.

"They would not come", said Kedar; "all their joy is to haggle and hoard. When Siva blows upon them with angry breath they will lament, or when the demons in fierce hunger devour them."

"It is good to be here," repeated Valmika, drowsily, "to mind the flocks and be at rest, and to hear the wise Varunna speak when he comes among us."

I was silent. I knew better than they that busy city which glowed beyond the dark forests. I had lived there until, grown sick and weary, I had gone back to my brothers on the hillside. I wondered, would life, indeed, go on ceaselessly until it ended in the pain of the world. I said within myself: "O mighty Brahma, on the outermost verges of thy dream are our lives. Thou old invisible, how faintly through our hearts comes the sound of thy song, the light of thy glory!" Full of yearning to rise and return, I strove to hear in my heart the music Anahata, spoken of in our sacred scrolls. There was silence, and then I thought I heard sounds, not glad, a myriad murmur. As I listened they deepened; they grew into passionate prayer and appeal and tears, as if the cry of the long-forgotten souls of men went echoing through empty chambers. My eyes filled with tears, for it seemed world-wide and to sigh from out many ages, long ago, to be and yet to be.

"Ananda! Ananda! Where is the boy running to?" cried Valmika. Ananda had vanished in the gloom. We heard his glad laugh below, and then another voice speaking. The tall figure of Varunna loomed up presently. Ananda held his hand, and danced beside him. We knew the Yogi, and bowed reverently before him. We could see by the starlight his simple robe of white. I could trace clearly every feature of the grave and beautiful face and radiant eyes. I saw not by the starlight, but by a silvery radiance which rayed a little way into the blackness around the dark hair and face. Valmika, as elder, first spoke:

"Holy sir, be welcome. Will you come in and rest?"

"I cannot stay now. I must pass over the mountains ere dawn; but you may come a little way with me — such of you as will."

We assented gladly, Kedar and I. Valmika remained. Then Ananda prayed to go. We bade him stay, fearing for him the labour of climbing and the chill of the snows. But Varunna said: "Let the child come. He is hardy, and will not tire if he holds my

hand.”

So we set out together, and faced the highlands that rose and rose above us. We knew the way well, even at night. We waited in silence for Varunna to speak; but for nigh an hour we mounted without words, save for Ananda's shouts of delight and wonder at the heavens spread above and the valleys that lay behind us. Then I grew hungry for an answer to my thoughts, and I spake:

“Master, Valmika was saying, ere you came, how good it was to be here rather than in the city, where they are full of strife. And Kedar thought their lives would flow on into fiery pain, and no speech would avail. Ananda, speaking as a child, indeed, said if one went down among them they would listen to his story of the happy life. But, Master, do not many speak and interpret the sacred writings, and how few are they who lay to heart the word of the gods! They seem, indeed, to go on through desire into pain, and even here upon the hills we are not free, for Kedar felt the hot glow of their passion, and I heard in my heart their sobs of despair. Master, it was terrible, for they seemed to come from the wide earth over, and out of ages far away.”

“In the child's words is the truth,” said Varunna, “for it is better to aid even in sorrow than to withdraw from pain to a happy solitude. Yet only the knowers of Brahma can interpret the sacred writings truly, and it is well to be free ere we speak of freedom. Then we have power and many hearken.”

“But who would leave joy for sorrow? And who, being one with Brahma, would return to give counsel?”

“Brother,” said Varunna, “here is the hope of the world. Though many seek only for the eternal joy, yet the cry you heard has been heard by great ones who have turned backwards, called by these beseeching voices. The small old path stretching far away leads through many wonderful beings to the place of Brahma. There is the first fountain, the world of beautiful silence, the light which has been undimmed since the beginning of time. But turning backwards from the gate the small old path winds away into the world of men, and it enters every sorrowful heart. This is the way the great ones go. They turn with the path from the door of Brahma. They move along its myriad ways, and overcome pain with compassion. After many conquered worlds, after many races of purified and uplifted men, they go to a greater than Brahma. In

these, though few, is the hope of the world. These are the heroes for whose returning the earth puts forth her signal fires, and the Devas sing their hymns of welcome."

We paused where the plateau widened out. There was scarce a ripple in the chill air. In quietness the snows glistened, a light reflected from the crores of stars that swung with glittering motion above us. We could hear the immense heart-beat of the world in the stillness. We had thoughts that went ranging through the heavens, not sad, but full of solemn hope.

"Brothers! Master! look! The wonderful thing! And another, and yet another!" we heard Ananda calling. We looked and saw the holy blossom, the midnight flower. Oh, may the earth again put forth such beauty. It grew up from the snows with leaves of delicate crystal. A nimbus encircled each radiant bloom, a halo pale yet lustrous. I bowed over it in awe; and I heard Varunna say, "The earth indeed puts forth her signal fires, and the Devas sing their hymn. Listen!" We heard a music as of beautiful thoughts moving along the high places of the earth, full of infinite love and hope and yearning.

"Be glad now, for one is born who has chosen the greater way. Kedar, Narayan, Ananda, farewell! Nay, no farther. It is a long way to return, and the child will tire."

He went on and passed from our sight. But we did not return. We remained long, long in silence, looking at the sacred flower.

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Vow, taken long ago, be strong in our hearts to-day. Here, where the pain is fiercer, to rest is more sweet. Here, where beauty dies away, it is more joy to be lulled in dream. Here, the good, the true, our hope seem but a madness born of ancient pain. Out of rest, dream, or despair may we arise, and go the way the great ones go.

The Irish Theosophist, July 1894





A TALK BY THE EUPHRATES

Priest Merodach walked with me at evening along the banks of the great river.

“You feel despondent now,” he said, “but this was inevitable. You looked for a result equal to your inspiration. You must learn to be content with that alone. Finally an inspiration will come for every moment, and in every action a divine fire reveal itself.”

“I feel hopeless now. Why is this? Wish and will are not less strong than before.”

“Because you looked for a result beyond yourself, and, attached to external things, your mind drew to itself subtle essences of earth which clouded it. But there is more in it than that. Nature has a rhythm, and that part of us which is compounded of her elements shares in it. You were taught that nature is for ever becoming: the first emanation in the great deep is wisdom: wisdom changes into desire, and an unutterable yearning to go outward darkens the primeval beauty. Lastly, the elements arise, blind, dark, troubled. Nature in them imagines herself into forgetfulness. This rhythm repeats itself in man: a moment of inspiration – wise and clear, we determine; then we are seized with a great desire which impels us to action; the hero, the poet, the lover, all alike listen to the music of life, and then endeavour to express its meaning in word or deed; coming in contact with nature, its lethal influence drowns them; so baffled and forgetful, they wonder where the God is. To these in some moment the old inspiration returns, the universe is as magical and sweet as ever, a new impulse is given, and so they revolve, perverting and using, each one in his own way, the cosmic rhythm.”

“Merodach, what you say seems truth, and leaving aside the cosmic rhythm, which I do not comprehend, define again for me the three states.”

“You cannot really understand the little apart from the great; but, applying this to your own case, you remember you had a strange experience, a God seemed to awaken within you. This passed away; you halted a little while, full of strange longing, eager

for the great; yet you looked without on the hither side of that first moment, and in this second period, which is interchange and transition, your longing drew to you those subtle material essences I spoke of, which, like vapour surrounding, dull and bewilder the mind with strange phantasies of form and sensation. Every time we think with longing of any object, these essences flow to us out of the invisible spheres and steep us with the dew of matter: then we forget the great, we sleep, we are dead or despondent as you are despondent."

I sighed as I listened. A watchfulness over momentary desires was the first step; I had thought of the tasks of the hero as leading upwards to the Gods, but this sleepless intensity of will working within itself demanded a still greater endurance. I neared my destination; I paused and looked round; a sudden temptation assailed me; the world was fair enough to live in. Why should I toil after the far-off glory? Babylon seemed full of mystery, its temples and palaces steeped in the jewel glow and gloom of evening. In far-up heights of misty magnificence the plates of gold on the temples rayed back the dying light: in the deepening vault a starry sparkle began: an immense hum arose from leagues of populous streets: the scents of many gardens by the river came over me: I was lulled by the splash of fountains. Closer I heard voices and a voice I loved: I listened as a song came:

Tell me, youthful lover, whether
Love is joy or woe?
Are they gay or sad together
On that way who go?

A voice answered back

Radiant as a sunlit feather,
Pure and proud they go;
With the lion look together
Glad their faces show.

My sadness departed; I would be among them shortly, and would walk and whisper amid those rich gardens where beautiful idleness was always dreaming. Merodach looked at me.

"You will find these thoughts will hinder you much", he said.

“You mean — ” I hesitated, half-bewildered, half-amazed. “I say that a thought such as that which flamed about you just now, driving your sadness away, will recur again when next you are despondent, and so you will accustom yourself to find relief on the great quest by returning to an old habit of the heart, renewing what should be laid aside. This desire of men and women for each other is the strongest tie among the many which bind us: it is the most difficult of all to overcome. The great ones of the earth have passed that way themselves with tears.”

“But surely, Merodach, you cannot condemn what I may say is so much a part of our nature — of all nature.”

“I did not condemn it, when I said it is the strongest tie that binds us here: it is sin only for those who seek for freedom.”

“Merodach, must we then give up love?”

“There are two kinds of love men know of. There is one which begins with a sudden sharp delight — it dies away into infinite tones of sorrow. There is a love which wakes up amid dead things: it is chill at first, but it takes root, it warms, it expands, it lays hold of universal joys. So the man loves: so the God loves. Those who know this divine love are wise indeed. They love not one or another: they are love itself. Think well over this: power alone is not the attribute of the Gods; there are no such fearful spectres in that great companionship. And now, farewell, we shall meet again.”

I watched his departing figure, and then I went on my own way. I longed for that wisdom, which they only acquire who toil, and strive, and suffer; but I was full of a rich life which longed for excitement and fulfilment, and in that great Babylon sin did not declare itself in its true nature, but was still clouded over by the mantle of primeval beauty.

The Irish Theosophist, December 1893





THE MEDITATION OF ANANDA

Ananda rose from his seat under the banyan tree. He passed his hand unsteadily over his brow. Throughout the day the young ascetic had been plunged in profound meditation; and now, returning from heaven to earth, he was bewildered like one who awakens in darkness and knows not where he is. All day long before his inner eye burned the light of the *Lokas*, until he was wearied and exhausted with their splendours; space glowed like a diamond with intolerable lustre, and there was no end to the dazzling procession of figures. He had seen the fiery dreams of the dead in heaven. He had been tormented by the music of celestial singers, whose choral song reflected in its ripples the rhythmic pulse of being. He saw how these orbs were held within luminous orbs of wider circuit; and vaster and vaster grew the vistas, until at last, a mere speck of life, he bore the burden of innumerable worlds. Seeking for Brahma, he found only the great illusion as infinite as Brahma's being.

If these things were shadows, the earth and the forests he returned to, viewed at evening, seemed still more unreal, the mere dusky flutter of a moth's wings in space, so filmy and evanescent that if he had sunk as through transparent aether into the void, it would not have been wonderful.

Ananda, still half entranced, turned homeward. As he treaded the dim alleys he noticed not the flaming eyes which regarded him from the gloom; the serpents rustling amid the undergrowth; the lizards, fireflies, insects, and the innumerable lives of which the Indian forest was rumorously; they also were but shadows. He paused near the village, hearing the sound of human voices, of children at play. He felt a pity for these tiny beings, who struggled and shouted, rolling over each other in ecstasies of joy. The great illusion had indeed devoured them, before whose spirits the Devas themselves once were worshippers. Then, close beside him, he heard a voice, whose low tone of reverence soothed him; it was akin to his own nature, and it awakened him fully. A little crowd of five or six people were listening silently to an old man who read from a palm-leaf manuscript. Ananda knew by the orange-coloured

robes of the old man that here was a brother of the new faith, and he paused with the others. What was his illusion? The old man lifted his head for a moment as the ascetic came closer, and then continued as before. He was reading "The Legend of the Great King of Glory", and Ananda listened while the story was told of the Wonderful Wheel, the Elephant Treasure, the Lake and Palace of Righteousness, and of the meditation, how *the Great King of Glory entered the golden chamber, and set himself down on the silver couch, and he let his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love; and so the second quarter, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, did he continue to pervade with heart of Love, far reaching, grown great, and beyond measure.*

When the old man had ended Ananda went back into the forest. He had found the secret of the true, how the Vision could be left behind and the Being entered. Another legend rose in his mind, a faery legend of righteousness expanding and filling the universe, a vision beautiful and full of old enchantment, and his heart sang within him. He seated himself again under the banyan tree. He rose up in soul. He saw before him images long forgotten of those who suffer in the sorrowful earth. He saw the desolation and loneliness of old age, the insults of the captive, the misery of the leper and outcast, the chill horror and darkness of life in a dungeon. He drank in all their sorrow. From his heart he went out to them. Love, a fierce and tender flame, arose; pity, a breath from the vast; sympathy, born of unity. This triple fire sent forth its rays; they surrounded those dark souls; they pervaded them; they beat down oppression.

* * *

While Ananda, with spiritual magic, sent forth the healing powers through the four quarters of the world, far away at that moment a king sat enthroned in his hall. A captive was bound before him — bound, but proud, defiant, unconquerable of soul. There was silence in the hall until the king spake the doom and torture for this ancient enemy.

The king spake: "I had thought to do some fierce thing to thee and so end thy days, my enemy. But I remember now, with

sorrow, the great wrongs we have done to each other, and the hearts made sore by our hatred. I shall do no more wrong to thee; thou art free to depart. Do what thou wilt. I will make restitution to thee as far as may be for thy ruined state."

Then the soul which no might could conquer was conquered utterly — the knees of the captive were bowed and his pride was overcome. "My brother", he said, and could say no more.

* * *

To watch for years a little narrow slit high up in a dark cell, so high that he could not reach up and look out, and there to see daily the change from blue to dark in the sky, had withered a prisoner's soul. The bitter tears came no more, hardly even sorrow, only a dull, dead feeling. But that day a great groan burst from him. He heard outside the laugh of a child who was playing and gathering flowers under the high, grey walls. Then it all came over him — the divine things missed, the light, the glory, and the beauty that the earth puts forth for her children. The narrow slit was darkened, and half of a little bronze face appeared.

"Who are you down there in the darkness who sigh so? Are you all alone there? For so many years! Ah, poor man! I would come down to you if I could, but I will sit here and talk to you for a while. Here are flowers for you", and a little arm showered them in by handfuls until the room was full of the intoxicating fragrance of summer. Day after day the child came, and the dull heart entered once more into the great human love.

* * *

At twilight, by a deep and wide river, an old woman sat alone, dreamy and full of memories. The lights of the swift passing boats and the light of the stars were just as in childhood and the old love-time. Old, feeble, it was time for her to hurry away from the place which changed not with her sorrow.

"Do you see our old neighbour there?" said Ayesha to her lover. "They say she was once as beautiful as you would make me think I now am. How lonely she must be! Let us come near and speak to her", and the lover went gladly. Though they spoke to

each other rather than to her, yet something of the past, which never dies when love, the immortal, has pervaded it, rose up again as she heard their voices. She smiled, thinking of years of burning beauty.

* * *

A teacher, accompanied by his disciples, was passing by the wayside where a leper sat.

The teacher said: "Here is our brother, whom we may not touch, but he need not be shut out from truth. We may sit down where he can listen."

He sat on the wayside near the leper, and his disciples stood around him. He spoke words full of love, kindness, and pity — the eternal truths which make the soul grow full of sweetness and youth. A small, old spot began to glow in the heart of the leper, and the tears ran down his blighted face.

* * *

All these were the deeds of Ananda the ascetic, and the Watcher who was over him from all eternity made a great stride towards that soul.

Imagination and Reveries, 161-166





THE MASK OF APOLLO

A tradition rises within me of quiet, unrumoured years, ages before the demigods and heroes toiled at the making of Greece, long ages before the building of the temples and sparkling palaces of her day of glory. The land was pastoral, and over all the woods hung a stillness as of dawn and of unawakened beauty deep breathing in rest. Here and there little villages sent up their smoke and a dreamy people moved about. They grew up, toiled a little at their fields, followed their sheep and goats, wedded, and grey age overtook them, but they never ceased to be children. They worshipped the gods in little wooden temples, with ancient rites forgotten in later years.

Near one of these shrines lived a priest — an old man — who was held in reverence by all for his simple and kindly nature. To him, sitting one summer evening before his hut, came a stranger whom he invited to share his meal. The stranger seated himself and began to tell the priest many wonderful things — stories of the magic of the sun and of the bright beings who move at the gateways of the day. The old man grew drowsy in the warm sunlight and fell asleep. Then the stranger, who was Apollo, arose, and in the guise of the priest entered the little temple, and the people came in unto him one after the other.

First came Agathon, the husbandman, who said: "Father, as I bend over the fields or fasten up the vines I sometimes remember that you said the gods can be worshipped by doing these things as by sacrifice. How is it, father, that the pouring of cold water over roots or training up the vines can nourish Zeus? How can the sacrifice appear before his throne when it is not carried up in the fire and vapour?"

To him Apollo, in the guise of the old man, replied: "Agathon, the father omnipotent does not live only in the aether. He runs invisibly within the sun and stars, and as they whirl round and round they break out into streams and woods and flowers, and the clouds are shaken away from them as the leaves from off the roses. Great, strange, and bright, he busies himself within, and at the end of time his light shall shine through, and men shall see it moving in

a world of flame. Think then, as you bend over your fields, of what you nourish and what rises up within them. Know that every flower as it droops in the quiet of the woodland feels within and far away the approach of an unutterable life and is glad. They reflect that life as the little pools the light of the stars. Agathon, Agathon, Zeus is no greater in the aether than he is in the leaf of grass, and the hymns of men are no sweeter to him than a little water poured over one of his flowers."

Agathon, the husbandman, went away, and he bent tenderly in dreams over his fruits and his vines, and he loved them more than before; and he grew wise as he watched them and was happy working for the gods.

Then spake Damon, the shepherd: "Father, while the flocks are browsing dreams rise up within me. They make the heart sick with longing. The forests vanish, and I hear no more the lambs' bleat or the rustling of the fleeces. Voices from a thousand depths call me; they whisper, they beseech me. Shadows more lovely than earth's children utter music, not for me though I faint while I listen. Father, why do I hear the things others hear not — voices calling to unknown hunters of wide fields, or to herdsmen, shepherds of the starry flocks?"

Apollo answered the shepherd: "Damon, a song stole from the silence while the gods were not yet, and a thousand ages passed ere they came, called forth by the music; and a thousand ages they listened, and then joined in the song. Then began the worlds to glimmer shadowy about them, and bright beings to bow before them. These, their children, began in their turn to sing the song that calls forth and awakens life. He is master of all things who has learned their music. Damon, heed not the shadows, but the voices. The voices have a message to thee from beyond the gods. Learn their song and sing it over again to the people until their hearts, too, grow sick with longing, and they can hear the song within themselves. Oh, my son, I see far off how the nations shall join in it as in a chorus, and, hearing it, the rushing planets shall cease from their speed and be steadfast. Men shall hold starry sway."

The face of the god shone through the face of the old man, and it was so full of secretness that, filled with awe, Damon, the herdsman, passed from the presence, and a strange fire was kindled in his heart. The songs that he sang thereafter caused childhood

and peace to pass from the dwellers in the woods.

Then the two lovers, Dion and Neaera, came in and stood before Apollo, and Dion spake: "Father, you who are so wise can tell us what love is, so that we shall never miss it. Old Tithonus nods his grey head at us as we pass. He says only with the changeless gods has love endurance, and for men the loving time is short, and its sweetness is soon over."

Neaera added: "But it is not true, father, for his drowsy eyes light when he remembers the old days, when he was happy and proud in love as we are."

Apollo answered: "My children, I will tell you the legend how love came into the world, and how it may endure. On high Olympus the gods held council at the making of man, and each had brought a gift, and each gave to man something of their own nature. Aphrodite, the loveliest and sweetest, paused, and was about to add a new grace to his person; but Eros cried: 'Let them not be so lovely without; let them be lovelier within. Put your own soul in, O mother.' The mighty mother smiled, and so it was. And now, whenever love is like hers, which asks not return, but shines on all because it must, within that love Aphrodite dwells, and it becomes immortal by her presence."

Then Dion and Neaera went out, and as they walked home through the forest, purple and vaporous in the evening light, they drew closer together. Dion, looking into the eyes of Neaera, saw there a new gleam, violet, magical, shining — there was the presence of Aphrodite; there was her shrine.

After came in unto Apollo the two grandchildren of old Tithonus, and they cried: "See the flowers we have brought you! We gathered them for you in the valley where they grow best!" Apollo said: "What wisdom shall we give to children that they may remember? Our most beautiful for them!" And as he stood and looked at them the mask of age and secretness vanished. He appeared radiant in light. They laughed in joy at his beauty. Bending down he kissed each upon the forehead, then faded away into the light which is his home.

As the sun sank down amid the blue hills, the old priest awoke with a sigh, and cried out: "Oh, that we could talk wisely as we do in our dreams!"

The Irish Theosophist, April 1893





THE STORY OF A STAR

The emotions that haunted me in that little cathedral town would be most difficult to describe. After the hurry, rattle, and fever of the city, the rare weeks spent here were infinitely peaceful. They were full of a quaint sense of childhood, with sometimes a deeper chord touched — the giant and spiritual things childhood has dreams of. The little room I slept in had opposite its window the great grey cathedral wall; it was only in the evening that the sunlight crept round it and appeared in the room strained through the faded green blind. It must have been this silvery quietness of colour which in some subtle way affected me with the feeling of a continual Sabbath; and this was strengthened by the bells chiming hour after hour. The pathos, penitence, and hope expressed by the flying notes coloured the intervals with faint and delicate memories. They haunted my dreams, and I heard with unutterable longing the dreamy chimes pealing from some dim and vast cathedral of the cosmic memory, until the peace they tolled became almost a nightmare, and I longed for utter oblivion or forgetfulness of their reverberations.

More remarkable were the strange lapses into other worlds and times. Almost as frequent as the changing of the bells were the changes from state to state. I realised what is meant by the Indian philosophy of Maya. Truly my days were full of Mayas, and my work-a-day city life was no more real to me than one of those bright, brief glimpses of things long past. I talk of the past, and yet these moments taught me how false our ideas of time are. In the Ever-living, yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow are words of no meaning. I know I fell into what we call the past, and the things I counted as dead for ever were the things I had yet to endure. Out of the old age of earth I stepped into its childhood, and received once more the primal blessing of youth, ecstasy, and beauty. But these things are too vast and vague to speak of, the words we use to-day cannot tell their story. Nearer to our time is the legend that follows.

I was, I thought, one of the Magi of old Persia, inheritor of its

unforgotten lore, and using some of its powers. I tried to pierce through the great veil of nature, and feel the life that quickened it within. I tried to comprehend the birth and growth of planets, and to do this I rose spiritually, and passed beyond earth's confines into that seeming void which is the matrix where they germinate. On one of these journeys I was struck by the phantasm, so it seemed, of a planet I had not observed before. I could not then observe closer, and coming again on another occasion it had disappeared. After the lapse of many months I saw it once more, brilliant with fiery beauty. Its motion was slow, revolving around some invisible centre. I pondered over it, and seemed to know that the invisible centre was its primordial spiritual state, from which it emerged a little while and into which it then withdrew. Short was its day; its shining faded into a glimmer, and then into darkness in a few months. I learned its time and cycles; I made preparations and determined to await its coming.

THE BIRTH OF A PLANET

At first silence and then an inner music, and then the sounds of song throughout the vastness of its orbit grew as many in number as there were stars at gaze. Avenues and vistas of sound! They reeled to and fro. They poured from a universal stillness quick with unheard things. They rushed forth and broke into a myriad voices gay with childhood. From age and the eternal they rushed forth into youth. They filled the void with revelling and exultation. In rebellion they then returned and entered the dreadful Fountain. Again they came forth, and the sounds faded into whispers; they rejoiced once again, and again died into silence.

And now all around glowed a vast twilight; it filled the cradle of the planet with colourless fire. I felt a rippling motion which impelled me away from the centre to the circumference. At that centre a still flame began to lighten; a new change took place, and space began to curdle, a milky and nebulous substance rocked to and fro. At every motion the pulsation of its rhythm carried it farther and farther away from the centre; it grew darker, and a great purple shadow covered it so that I could see it no longer. I was now on the outer verge, where the twilight still continued to encircle the planet with zones of clear transparent light.

As night after night I rose up to visit it they grew many-coloured

and brighter. I saw the imagination of nature visibly at work. I wandered through shadowy immaterial forests, a titanic vegetation built up of light and colour; I saw it growing denser, hung with festoons and trailers of fire, and spotted with the light of myriad flowers such as earth never knew. Coincident with the appearance of these things I felt within myself, as if in harmonious movement, a sense of joyousness, an increase of self-consciousness: I felt full of gladness, youth, and the mystery of the new. I felt that greater powers were about to appear, those who had thrown outwards this world and erected it as a palace in space.

I could not tell half the wonder of this strange race. I could not myself comprehend more than a little of the mystery of their being. They recognised my presence there, and communicated with me in such a way that I can only describe it by saying that they seemed to enter into my soul, breathing a fiery life; yet I knew that the highest I could reach to was but the outer verge of their spiritual nature, and to tell you but a little I have many times to translate it; for in the first unity with their thought I touched on an almost universal sphere of life, I peered into the ancient heart that beats throughout time; and this knowledge became changed in me, first into a vast and nebulous symbology, and so down through many degrees of human thought into words which hold not at all the pristine and magical beauty.

I stood before one of this race, and I thought, "What is the meaning and end of life here?" Within me I felt the answering ecstasy that illuminated with vistas of dawn and rest. It seemed to say:

"Our spring and our summer are an unfolding into light and form, and our autumn and winter are a fading into the infinite soul."

I questioned in my heart, "To what end is this life poured forth and withdrawn?"

He came nearer and touched me; once more I felt the thrill of being that changed itself into vision.

"The end is creation, and creation is joy. The One awakens out of quiescence as we come forth, and knows itself in us; as we return we enter it in gladness, knowing ourselves. After long cycles the world you live in will become like ours; it will be poured forth and withdrawn; a mystic breath, a mirror to glass your being."

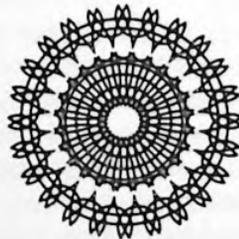
He disappeared, while I wondered what cyclic changes would transmute our ball of mud into the subtle substance of thought.

In that world I dared not stay during its period of withdrawal; having entered a little into its life, I became subject to its laws; the Powers on its return would have dissolved my being utterly. I felt with a wild terror its clutch upon me, and I withdrew from the departing glory, from the greatness that was my destiny – but not yet.

From such dreams I would be aroused, perhaps, by a gentle knock at my door, and my little cousin Margaret's quaint face would peep in with a "Cousin Robert, are you not coming down to supper?"

Of these visions in the light of after thought I would speak a little. All this was but symbol, requiring to be thrice sublimed in interpretation ere its true meaning can be grasped. I do not know whether worlds are heralded by such glad songs, or whether any have such a fleeting existence, for the mind that reflects truth is deluded with strange phantasies of time and place in which seconds are rolled out into centuries and long cycles are reflected in an instant of time. There is within us a little space through which all the threads of the universe are drawn; and, surrounding that incomprehensible centre, the mind of man sometimes catches glimpses of things which are true only in those glimpses; when we record them the true has vanished, and a shadowy story – such as this – alone remains. Yet, perhaps, the time is not altogether wasted in considering legends like these, for they reveal, though but in phantasy and symbol, a greatness we are heirs to, a destiny which is ours though it be yet far away.

The Irish Theosophist, August 1894





THE SECRET OF POWER

It is not merely because it is extraordinary that I wish to tell you this story. I think mere weirdness, grotesque or unusual character, are not sufficient reasons for making public incidents in which there is an element of the superhuman. The world, in spite of its desire to understand the nature of the occult, is sick of and refuses to listen to stories of apparitions which betray no spiritual character or reveal no spiritual law. The incident here related is burned into my mind and life, not because of its dramatic intensity or personal character, but because it was a revelation of the *secret of power*, a secret which the wise in good and the wise in evil alike have knowledge of.

My friend Felix was strangely disturbed; not only were his material affairs unsettled, but he was also passing through a crisis in his spiritual life. Two paths were open before him: on one side lay the dazzling mystery of passion; on the other "the small old path" held out its secret and spiritual allurements. I had hope that he would choose the latter, and as I was keenly interested in his decision, I invested the struggle going on in his mind with something of universal significance, seeing in it a symbol of the strife between "light and darkness which are the world's eternal ways". He came in late one evening. I saw at once by the dim light that there was something strange in his manner. I spoke to him in enquiry; he answered me in a harsh dry voice quite foreign to his usual manner. "Oh, I am not going to trouble myself any more, I will let things take their course." This seemed the one idea in his mind; the one thing he understood clearly was that things were to take their own course; he failed to grasp the significance of any other idea or its relative importance. He answered "Aye, indeed", with every appearance of interest and eagerness to some trivial remark about the weather, and was quite unconcerned about another and most important matter which should have interested him deeply. I soon saw what had happened: his mind, in which forces so evenly balanced had fought so strenuously, had become utterly wearied out and could work no longer. A flash of old intuition illumined it at last, — it was not wise to strive with such bitterness over

life, — therefore he said to me in memory of this intuition, “I am going to let things take their course.” A larger tribunal would decide; he had appealed unto Caesar. I sent him up to his room and tried to quiet his fever by magnetisation with some success. He fell asleep, and as I was rather weary myself I retired soon after.

This was the vision of the night. It was surely in the room I was lying and on my bed, and yet space opened on every side with pale, clear light. A slight wavering figure caught my eye, a figure that swayed to and fro; I was struck with its utter feebleness, yet I understood it was its own will or some quality of its nature which determined that palpitating movement towards the poles between which it swung. What were they? I became silent as night and thought no more.

Two figures awful in their power opposed each other; the frail being wavering between them could by putting out its arms have touched them both. It alone wavered, for they were silent, resolute and knit in the conflict of will; they stirred not a hand nor a foot; there was only a still quivering now and then as of intense effort, but they made no other movement. Their heads were bent forward slightly, their arms folded, their bodies straight, rigid and inclined slightly backwards from each other like two spokes of a gigantic wheel. What were they, these figures? I knew not, and yet gazing upon them, thought which took no words to clothe itself mutely read their meaning. Here were the culminations of the human, towering images of the good and evil man may aspire to. I looked at the face of the evil adept. His bright red-brown eyes burned with a strange radiance of power; I felt an answering emotion of pride, of personal intoxication, of psychic richness rise up within me gazing upon him. His face was archetypal; the abstract passion which eluded me in the features of many people I knew was here declared, exultant, defiant, gigantesque; it seemed to leap like fire, to be free. In this face I was close to the legendary past, to the hopeless worlds where men were martyred by stony kings, where prayer was hopeless, where pity was none. I traced a resemblance to many of the great Destroyers in history whose features have been preserved, Napoleon, Ramases, and a hundred others, named and nameless, the long line of those who were crowned and sceptered in cruelty. His strength was in human weakness, I saw

this, for space and the hearts of men were bare before me. Out of space there flowed to him a stream half invisible of red; it nourished that rich radiant energy of passion; it flowed from men as they walked and brooded in loneliness, or as they tossed in sleep. I withdrew my gaze from this face which awoke in me a lurid sense accompaniment, and turned it on the other. An aura of pale soft blue was around this figure through which gleamed an underlight as of universal gold. The vision was already dim and departing, but I caught a glimpse of a face godlike in its calm, terrible in the beauty of a life we know only in dreams, with strength which is the end of the hero's toil, which belongs to the many times martyred soul; yet not far away nor in the past was its power, it was the might of life which exists eternally. I understood how easy it would have been for this one to have ended the conflict, to have gained a material victory by its power, but this would not have touched on or furthered its spiritual ends. Only its real being had force to attract that real being which was shrouded in the wavering figure. This truth the adept of darkness knew also and therefore he intensified within the sense of pride and passionate personality. Therefore they stirred not a hand nor a foot while under the stimulus of their presence culminated the good and evil in the life which had appealed to a higher tribunal to decide. Then this figure wavering between the two moved forward and touched with Its hand the Son of Light. All at once the scene and actors vanished, and the eye that saw them was closed. I was alone with darkness and a hurricane of thoughts.

Strange and powerful figures! I knew your secret of strength, it is only *to be*; nature quickened by your presence leaps up in response. I knew no less the freedom of that human soul, for your power only revealed its unmanifest nature, it but precipitated experience. I knew that although the gods and cosmic powers may war over us for ever, it is we alone declare them victors or vanquished.

For the rest the vision of that night was prophetic, and the feet of my friend are now set on that way which was the innermost impulse of his soul.

The Irish Theosophist, May 1893





THE HOUR OF TWILIGHT

I

For the future we intend that at this hour the Mystic shall be at home, less metaphysical and scientific than is his wont, but more really himself. It is customary at this hour, before the lamps are brought in, to give way a little and dream, letting all the tender fancies day suppresses rise up in our minds. Wherever it is spent, whether in the dusky room or walking home through the blue evening, all things grow strangely softened and united; the magic of the old world reappears. The commonplace streets take on something of the grandeur and solemnity of starlit avenues of Egyptian temples; the public squares in the mingled glow and gloom grow beautiful as the Indian grove where Sakuntala wandered with her maidens; the children chase each other through the dusky shrubberies; as they flee past they look at us with long remembered glances: lulled by the silence, we forget a little while the hard edges of the material and remember that we are *spirits*.

Now is the hour for memory, the time to call in and make more securely our own all stray and beautiful ideas that visited us during the day, and which might otherwise be forgotten. We should draw them in from the region of things felt to the region of things understood; in a focus burning with beauty and pure with truth we should bind them, for from the thoughts thus gathered in something accrues to the consciousness; on the morrow a change impalpable but real has taken place in our being, we see beauty and truth through everything.

It is in like manner in Devachan, between the darkness of earth and the light of spiritual self-consciousness, that the Master in each of us draws in and absorbs the rarest and best of experiences, love, self-forgetfulness, aspiration, and out of these distils the subtle essence of wisdom, so that he who struggles in pain for his fellows, when he awakens again on earth is endowed with the tradition of that which we call self sacrifice, but which is in reality the proclamation of our own universal nature. There are yet vaster correspondences, for so also we are told, when the seven worlds are withdrawn, the great calm Shepherd of the Ages draws his

misty hordes together in the glimmering twilights of eternity, and as they are penned within the awful Fold, the rays long separate are bound into one, and life, and joy, and beauty disappear, to emerge again after rest unspeakable on the morning of a New Day.

Now if the aim of the mystic be to fuse into one all moods made separate by time, would not the daily harvesting of wisdom render unnecessary the long Devachanic years? No second harvest could be reaped from fields where the sheaves are already garnered. Thus disregarding the fruits of action, we could work like those who have made the Great Sacrifice, for whom even Nirvana is no resting place. Worlds may awaken in nebulous glory, pass through their phases of self-conscious existence and sink again to sleep, but these tireless workers continue their age-long task of help. Their motive we do not know, but in some secret depth of our being we feel that there could be nothing nobler, and thinking this we have devoted the twilight hour to the understanding of their nature.

The Irish Theosophist, February-March 1893





THE HOUR OF TWILIGHT

II

There are dreams which may be history or may be allegory. There is in them nothing grotesque, nothing which could mar the feeling of authenticity, the sense of the actual occurrence of the dream incident. The faces and figures perceived have the light shade and expression which seems quite proper to the wonderworld in which the eye of the inner man has vision; and yet the story may be read as a parable of spiritual truth like some myth of ancient scripture. Long ago I had many such dreams, and having lately become a student of such things, I have felt an interest in recalling the more curious and memorable of these early visions.

The nebulous mid-region between waking and unconsciousness was the haunt of many strange figures, reflections perhaps from that true life led during sleep by the immortal man. Among these figures two awoke the strangest feelings of interest. One was an old man with long grey hair and beard, whose grey-blue eyes had an expression of secret and inscrutable wisdom; I felt an instinctive reverence for this figure, so expressive of spiritual nobility, and it became associated in my mind with all aspiration and mystical thought. The other figure was that of a young girl. These two appeared again and again in my visions; the old man always as instructor, the girl always as companion. I have here written down one of these adventures, leaving it to the reader to judge whether it is purely symbolical, or whether the incidents related actually took place, and were out-realized from latency by the power of the Master within.

With the girl as my companion I left an inland valley and walked towards the sea. It was evening when we reached it and the tide was far out. The sands glimmered away for miles on each side of us; we walked outwards through the dim-coloured twilight. I was silent; a strange ecstasy slowly took possession of me, as if drop by drop an unutterable life was falling within; the fever grew intense, then unbearable as it communicated itself to the body; with a wild cry I began to spin about, whirling round and round in

ever-increasing delirium. Some secretness was in the air; I was called forth by the powers of invisible nature and in a swoon I fell. I rose again with sudden memory, but my body was lying upon the sands; with a curious indifference I saw that the tide was on the turn and the child was unable to remove the insensible form beyond its reach; I saw her sit down beside it and place the head upon her lap; she sat there quietly waiting, while all about her little by little the wave of the Indian sea began to ripple inwards, and overhead the early stars began softly to glow.

After this I forgot completely the child and the peril of the waters. I began to be conscious of the presence of a new world. All around me currents were flowing, in whose waves danced innumerable lives; diaphanous forms glided about, a nebulous sparkle was everywhere apparent; faces as of men in dreams glimmered on me, or unconsciously their forms drifted past, and now and then a face looked sternly upon me with a questioning glance. I was not to remain long in this misty region. Again I felt the internal impulse and internally I was translated into a sphere of more pervading beauty and light; and here with more majesty and clearness than I had observed before was the old man of my dreams.

I had thought of him as old but there was an indescribable youth pervading the face with its ancient beauty, and then I knew it was neither age nor youth, it was *eternalness*. The calm light of thought played over features clear cut as a statue's, and an inner luminousness shone through the rose of his face and his silver hair.

There were others about, but of them I had no distinct vision.

He said, "You who have lived and wandered through our own peculiar valleys, look backwards now and learn the alchemy of thought." He touched me with his hand and I became aware of the power of these strange beings. I felt how they had waited in patience, how they had worked and willed in silence; from them as from a fountain went forth peace; to them as to the stars rose up unconsciously the aspirations of men, the dumb animal cravings, the tendrils of the flowers. I saw how in the valley where I lived, where naught had hindered, their presence had drawn forth in luxuriance all dim and hidden beauty, a rarer and purer atmosphere recalled the radiant life of men in the golden dawn of the earth.

With wider vision I saw how far withdrawn from strife they had

stilled the tumults of nations; I saw how hearing far within the voices, spiritual, remote, which called, the mighty princes of the earth descended from their thrones becoming greater than princes; under this silent influence the terrible chieftains flung open the doors of their dungeons that they themselves might become free, and all these joined in that hymn which the quietude of earth makes to sound in the ears of the gods. — Overpowered I turned round, the eyes of light were fixed upon me.

“Do you now understand?”

“I do not understand”, I replied. “I see that the light and the beauty and the power that enters the darkness of the world comes from these high regions; but I do not know how the light enters, nor how beauty is born. I do not know the secret of power.”

“You must become as one of us”, he answered.

I bowed my head until it touched his breast; I felt my life was being drawn from me, but before consciousness utterly departed and was swallowed up in that larger life, I learned something of the secret of their being; I lived within the minds of men, but their thoughts were not my thoughts; I hung like a crown over everything, yet age was no nearer than childhood to the grasp of my sceptre, and sorrow was far away when it wept for my going, and very far was joy when it woke at my light; yet I was the lure that led them on; I was at the end of all ways, and I was also in the sweet voice that cried “return”; and I had learned how spiritual life is *one* in all things, when infinite vistas and greater depths received me, and I went into that darkness out of which no memory can ever return.

The Irish Theosophist, March 1893





JAGRATA, SVAPNA AND SUSHUPTI

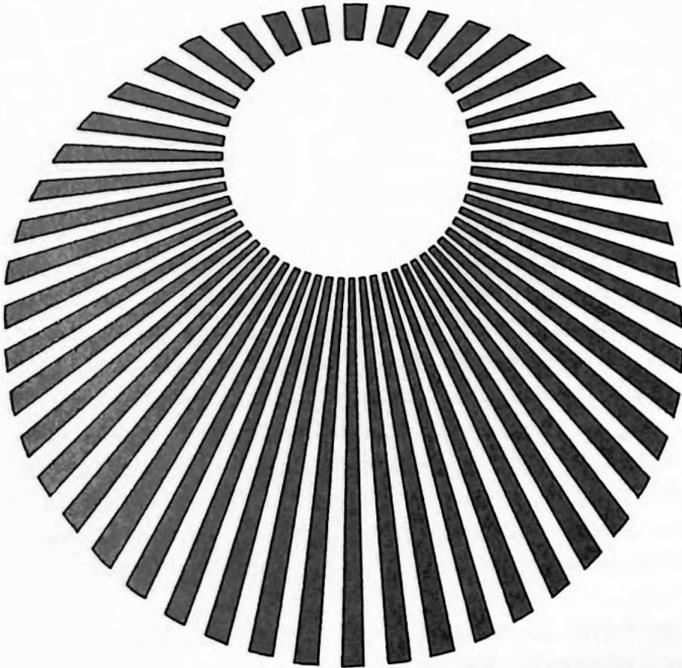
While the philosophical concepts of ancient India, concerning religion and cosmogony, are to some extent familiar and appreciated in these countries, its psychology, intimately related with its religion and metaphysics, is comparatively unknown. In Europe the greatest intellects have been occupied by speculations upon the laws and aspects of physical nature, while the more spiritual Hindus were absorbed in investigations as to the nature of life itself; by continual aspiration, devotion, introspection, and self-analysis, they had acquired vast knowledge of the states of consciousness possible for man to enter upon; they had laid bare the anatomy of the mind, and described the many states that lay between the normal waking condition of man, and that final state of spiritual freedom and unity with BRAHMA, which it was the aim alike of religion and science to bring about. Most interesting among their ideas, was their analysis of the states of consciousness upon which we enter during sleep. Roughly speaking, they may be divided into two, which together with the waking state, make a trinity of states through which every person passes, whether he be aware of it or not. These states are known as: — *Jagrata*, waking; *Svapna*, dreaming; and *Sushupti*, deep sleep. The English equivalents of these words give no idea of the states. Passing out of *Jagrata*, the Indians held that, beyond the chaotic borderland, we entered, in *Svapna* and *Sushupti*, upon real states of being. *Sushupti*, the highest, was accounted a spiritual state; here the soul touches vaster centres in the great life and has communion with celestial intelligences. The unification of these three states into one is one of the results of *Raj-Yoga*: in this state the chela keeps memory of what occurred while his consciousness was in the planes of *Svapna* and *Sushupti*. Entrance upon these states should not, I think, be understood as meaning that the mind has deserted its fleshly tabernacle in search of such experience. Departure from the physical form is no more necessary for this than for clairvoyance, but a transfer of the consciousness in us from one plane to another is necessary.

Now as we generate Karma in the dreaming and deep sleep

states which may either help or hinder the soul in its evolution, it is a matter of importance that we should take steps to promote the unification of these states, so that the knowledge and wisdom of any one state may be used to perfect the others. Our thoughts and actions in the waking state react upon the dreaming and deep sleep, and our experiences in the latter influence us in the waking state by suggestion and other means. The reason we do not remember what occurs in *Svapna* and *Sushupti* is because the astral matter which normally surrounds the thinking principle is not subtle enough to register in its fullness the experience of any one upon the more spiritual planes of consciousness. To increase the responsiveness of this subtle matter we have to practise concentration, and so heighten the vibrations, or in other words to evolve or perfect the astral principle. Modern science is rapidly coming to the conclusion that the differences perceived in objects around us are not differences in substance, but differences of vibration in one substance. Take a copper wire; pass electrical currents through it, gradually increasing their intensity, and phenomena of sound, heat, and light will be manifest, the prismatic colours appearing one after the other. Similarly by an increased intensity in the performance of every action, the consciousness is gradually transferred from the lower to the higher planes. In order to give a point, or to direct the evolving faculties into their proper channel, continual aspiration is necessary. Take some idea — the spiritual unity of all things, for example — something which can only be realised by our complete absorption in spiritual nature; let every action be performed in the light of this idea, let it be the subject of reverent thought. If this is persisted in, we will gradually begin to become conscious upon the higher planes, the force of concentration carrying the mind beyond the waking into *Svapna* and *Sushupti*. The period between retiring to rest and awakening, formerly a blank, will begin to be spotted with bright lights of consciousness, or, as we walk about during the day such knowledge will visit us. "He who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself", says Krishna. Patanjali recommends dwelling on the knowledge that presents itself in dreams; if we think over any such experience, many things connected with it will be revealed, and so gradually the whole shadowy region will become familiar and attractive, and we will

gain a knowledge of our own nature which will be invaluable and which cannot otherwise be acquired.

The Irish Theosophist, January 1893





CONCENTRATION

Beyond waking, dreaming, and deep sleep is *Turiya*. Here there is a complete change of condition; the knowledge formerly sought in the external world is now present *within* the consciousness; the ideations of universal mind are manifest in spiritual intuitions. The entrance to this state is through *Jagrata*, *Svapna*, and *Sushupti*, and here that spiritual unity is realised, the longing for which draws the soul upwards through the shadowy worlds of dreaming and deep sleep. I have thought it necessary to supplement the brief statement made in the previous number by some further remarks upon concentration, for the term applied without reference to the *Turiya* state is liable to be misunderstood and a false impression might arise that the spiritual is something to be sought for outside ourselves. The waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states correspond to objective worlds, while *Turiya* is subjective, including in itself all ideals. If this is so, we can never seek for the true beyond ourselves; the things we suppose we shall some time realise in spiritual consciousness must be present in it now, for to spirit all things are eternally present. Advance to this state is measured by the realisation of moods; we are on the path when there surges up in the innermost recesses of our being the cry of the long imprisoned souls of men; we are then on our way to unity.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, which is a treatise on *Raj-Yoga*, gives prominence to three aspects of concentration. Liberation is attained by means of action, by devotion, by spiritual discernment: these aspects correspond respectively to three qualities in man and nature, known as *Tamas*, *Rajas*, and *Satva*. The *Tamas* is the gross, material, or dark quality; *Rajas* is active and passional; the attributes of *Satva* are light, peace, happiness, wisdom. No one while in the body can escape from the action of the three qualities, for they are brought about by nature which is compounded of them. We have to recognise this, and to continue action, aspiration, and thought, impersonally or with some universal motive, in the manner nature accomplishes these things. Not one of these methods can be laid aside or ignored, for the Spirit moveth within all, these are its works, and we have to learn to

identify ourselves with the moving forces of nature.

Having always this idea of brotherhood or unity in mind, by action – which we may interpret as service in some humanitarian movement – we purify the *Tamas*. By a pure motive, which is the Philosopher's Stone, a potent force in the alchemy of nature, we change the gross into the subtle, we initiate that evolution which shall finally make the vesture of the soul of the rare, long-sought-for, primordial substance. Devotion is the highest possibility for the *Rajas*: that quality which is ever attracted and seduced by the beautiful *mayas* of fame, wealth, and power, should be directed to that which it really seeks for, the eternal universal life; the channels through which it must flow outwards are the souls of other men; it reaches the One Life through the many. Spiritual discernment should be the aim of the *Satva*; "there is not anything, whether animate or inanimate which is without me", says Krishna, and we should seek for the traces of THAT in all things, looking upon it as the cause of the alchemical changes in the *Tamas*, as that which widens the outflowing love of the *Rajas*. By a continued persistence of this subtle analytic faculty, we begin gradually to perceive that those things which we formerly thought were causes are in reality not causes at all; that there is but one cause for everything, "The *Atma* by which this universe is pervaded. By reason of its proximity alone the body, the organs, *Manas*, and *Buddhi* apply themselves to their proper objects as if applied (by some one else)." (*The Crest Jewel of Wisdom*) By uniting these three moods, action, devotion, and spiritual discernment, into one mood, and keeping it continuously alight, we are accompanying the movements of spirit to some extent. This harmonious action of all the qualities of our nature, for universal purposes without personal motive, is in *synchronous vibration* with that higher state spoken of at the beginning of the paper; therefore we are at one with it.

When the wise man perceiveth that the only agents of action are these qualities, and comprehends that which is superior to the qualities, he attains to my state. And when the embodied self surpasseth these three qualities of goodness, action, and indifference – which are co-existent with the body – it is released from rebirth and death, old age and pain, and drinketh of the water of immortality.

The Irish Theosophist, February 1893





COMFORT

We are continually called upon to give comfort, and it is a problem to many what to say. For there are people who can see no outlet from their pain other than this, that they shall obtain that which they desire. The lover longs for the one who is absent or cold; the poor demand wealth; the tortured cry out for relief from suffering; and so on through all phases of human life we continually meet such people. We, perhaps free from such afflictions, have schooled ourselves into a heroic mood. These are not things to sorrow over, we think; therefore, we are in a dilemma. We cannot aid them, for their ideals often seem ignoble to us — their wish accomplished would only bring on the renewal of old pain, and bind them closer to the weary wheel. Yet we cannot be cold, we who would identify ourselves with all life, for the soul must “lend its ear to every cry of pain, like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun”. In the many cases where the suffering is unavoidable, and cannot be otherwise received, what are we to do? Some, a little above the ignoble view that the only relief is in the satisfaction of desire, say reverently to those in pain: “It is God’s will”, and some accept it as such with dull resignation. But with some the iron has entered the soul — the words are empty. “What have I to do with God, or He with me?” they demand in their hearts. They join in the immemorial appeal and fierce revolt which at all times the soul of man makes against any external restraint. We who are disciples of old wisdom may touch some chord in them which may awaken eternal endurance.

It is not, we say, a pain imposed upon us by any eternal power; but the path we tread is one which we ourselves very long ago determined. To the question, “What have we to do with God?” we make answer that we are the children of Deity — bright sparks born in that Divine flame, the spirit in its primal ecstasy reflected in itself the multitudinous powers that throng in space. It was nourished by Divine love, and all that great beauty thrilled through it and quickened it. But from this vision which the spirit had, it passed to climb to still greater heights — it was spiritual, it might attain divinity. The change from the original transcendental state

of vision to that other state of *being*, of all-pervading consciousness, could only be accomplished by what is known as the descent into matter where spirit identifies itself with every form of life, and assimilates their essences. This cyclic pilgrimage it undertook, foreseeing pain, but "preferring free will to passive slavery, intellectual, self-conscious pain, and even torture, 'while myriad time shall flow', to inane, imbecile, instinctual beatitude"; foreseeing pain, but knowing that out of it all would come a nobler state of life, a divinity capable of rule, a power to assist in the general evolution of nature. It is true in the experience of many that going deep within themselves, an elemental consciousness whispers comfort; it says all will be well with us; it is our primal will which so orders. And so we justify the pain and hearts that break; and that old appeal and fierce revolt we make dies out in the inner light which shines from "the Goal, the Comforter, the Lord, the Witness, the resting-place, the Asylum, the Friend". We can then once more go forth with the old, heroic, Titan will for mastery, seeking not to escape, but rather to meet, endure, and assimilate sorrow and joy alike; for so we can permeate all life — life which is in its essence one. This is the true centre on which all endurance must rest; this is the comfort the soul may take to itself; and beyond and after this we may say we struggle in a chaos indeed, but in a chaos whose very disorder is the result of law. That law is justice that cannot err. Out of confidence in this justice may spring up immortal hopes; our motives, our faith shall save us. We may dare more, give ourselves away more completely, for is not the root of this law declared to be beauty, harmony, compassion. We may trust that our acts shall have full fruition, and remain careless of the manner, nor seek for such results. We may look upon it if we will as the sweetest of the sweetest, the tenderest of the tenderest; and this is true, though still it is master of the fiery pain. Above all it is the law of our own being; it is at one with our ancestral self. In all this lies, I think, such consolation as we may take and offer for pain. Those who comprehend, in their resignation, shall become one with themselves; and out of this resignation shall arise will to go forth and fulfil our lofty destiny.

The Irish Theosophist, May 1894





SELF-RELIANCE

Perhaps it is now while we are in a state of transition, when old leaders have gone out of sight and the new ones have not yet taken their place in the van, that we ought to consider what we are in ourselves. Some questions we ought to ask ourselves about this movement: where its foundations were laid? what the links are? where is the fountain of force? what are the doors? You answer the first and you say "America", or you say "India". But if that old doctrine of emanations be true, it was not on earth but in the heavenworld where our minds immortal are linked together. There it was born and well born, and grew downwards into earth, and all our hopes and efforts and achievements here but vaguely reflect what was true and perfect in intent above, a compact of many hearts to save the generations wandering to their doom. Wiser, stronger, mightier than we were those who shielded us in the first years; who went about among us renewing memory, whispering in our hearts the message of the meaning of life, recalling the immemorial endeavour of the spirit for freedom, knowledge, mastery. But it is our movement and not the movement of the Masters only. It is our own work we are carrying on; our own primal will we are trying to give effect to. Well may the kingly sages depart from bodies which were torment and pain to them. They took them on for our sakes, and we may wave them a grateful farewell below and think of the spheres invisible as so much richer by their presence, more to be longed for, more to be attained. I think indeed they are nearer heart and mind there than here. What is real in us can lose no brotherhood with such as they through death. Still flash the lights from soul to soul in ceaseless radiance, in endless begetting of energy, thought and will, in endless return of joy and love and hope. I would rather hear one word of theirs in my heart than a thousand in my ears. I would rather think of my guide and captain as embodied in the flame than in the clay. Although we may gaze on the grave, kindly face living no more, there can be no cessation of the magic influence, the breath of fire, which flowed aforesaid from the soul to us. We feel in our profoundest hearts that he whom they call

dead is living, is alive for evermore.

He has earned his rest, a deep rest, if indeed such as he cease from labour. As for us, we may go our ways assured that the links are unbroken. What did you think the links were? That you knew some one who knew the Master? Such a presence and such a Companion would indeed be an aid, a link. But I think wherever there is belief in our transcendent being, in justice, our spiritual unity and destiny, wherever there is brotherhood, there are unseen ties, links, shining cords, influx from and unbroken communication with the divine. So much we have in our own natures, not enough to perfect us in the mysteries, but always enough to light our path, to show us our next step, to give us strength for duty. We should not always look outside for aid, remembering that some time we must be able to stand alone. Let us not deny our own deeper being, our obscured glory. That we accepted these truths, even as intuitions which we were unable intellectually to justify, is proof that there is that within us which has been initiate in the past, which lives in and knows well what in the shadowy world is but a hope. There is part of ourselves whose progress we do not comprehend. There are deeds done in unremembered dream, and a deeper meditation in the further unrecorded silences of slumber. Downward from sphere to sphere the Immortal works its way into the flesh, and the soul has adventures in dream whose resultant wisdom is not lost because memory is lacking here. Yet enough has been said to give us the hint, the clue to trace backwards the streams of force to their fount. We wake in some dawn and there is morning also in our hearts, a love, a fiery vigour, a magnetic sweetness in the blood. Could we track to its source this invigorating power, we might perhaps find that as we fell asleep some olden memory had awakened in the soul, or the Master had called it forth, or it was transformed by the wizard power of Self and went forth to seek the Holy Place. Whether we have here a guide, or whether we have not, one thing is certain, that behind and within the "Father worketh hitherto." A warrior fights for us. Our thoughts tip the arrows of his quiver. He wings them with flame and impels them with the Holy Breath. They will not fail if we think clear. What matters it if in the mist we do not see where they strike. Still they are of avail. After a time the mists will arise and show a clear field; the shining powers will salute us as victors.

I have no doubt about our future; no doubt but that we will have a guide and an unbroken succession of guides. But I think their task would be easier, our way be less clouded with dejection and doubt, if we placed our trust in no hierarchy of beings, however august, but in the Law of which they are ministers. Their power, though mighty, ebbs and flows with contracting and expanding nature. They, like us, are but children in the dense infinitudes. Something like this, I think, the Wise Ones would wish each one of us to speak: "O Brotherhood of Light, though I long to be with you, though it sustains me to think you are behind me, though your aid made sure my path, still, if the Law does not permit you to act for me to-day, I trust in the One in whose love a fiery breath never ceases; I fall back on it with exultation; I rely upon it joyfully." Was it not to point to that greater life that the elder brothers sent forth their messengers, to tell us that it is on this we ought to rely, to point us to grander thrones than they are seated on? It is well to be prepared to face any chance with equal mind; to meet the darkness with gay and defiant thought as to salute the Light with reverence and love and joy. But I have it in my heart that we are not deserted. As the cycles wend their upward way the heroic figures of the dawn reappear. Some have passed before us; others in the same spirit and power will follow: for the new day a rearsen sun and morning stars to herald it. When it comes let it find us, not drowsy after our night in time, but awake, prepared and ready to go forth from the house of sleep, to stretch hands to the light, to live and labour in joy, having the Gods for our guides and friends.

The Irish Theosophist, May 1896





Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity are not to be abandoned, for they are proper to be performed, and are the purifiers of the wise. But even those works are to be performed after having renounced all selfish interest in them and in their fruits.

SHRI KRISHNA

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