

What Theosophy and its Society Should Be

by Camille Lemaître

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THE letter from which the following pages are translated — and which was never meant for publication — was recently addressed to one of the Editors by Madame Camille Lemaître, the friend of our late and regretted brother Louis Dramard, and a most worthy member of the T. S. in France. The tone and spirit of the writer's remarks are so eminently noble, theosophical, and altruistic, and the suggestions made so desirable, that permission has been obtained from the lady for their translation and publication. It is hoped that the seed thus sown will bear fruit in the minds of our readers. — H. P. B.

As regards the theosophical movement in France, about which you ask my opinion, Dramard and myself shared precisely the same ideas. In our view the T. S. is too fine and delicate a plant to live and thrive in the surroundings among which it was first planted. Flourishing in all its glory and bearing fruit in its strength upon the highest tablelands of the earth, its birth-place, it neither can nor ever could take root in the strong soil of plains fattened and watered with the sweat of the poor, or on those sterile tufa rocks called respectively the *bourgeoisie*, or middle-class, and an aristocracy more or less learned or ignorant, lazy or active; just as it could only fade and wither in the hot-house drawing-rooms and boudoirs, where women of the world, gay, foolish, capricious, see in it only an exotic novelty of a special kind.

This plant of life needs pure air, blazing sunshine and fresh dews. It is only in the heart of a man purified by suffering, by the daily battle for life; it is in the heart of him who has begun to pay his debt to Karma by the unheard-of sufferings which our civilization of steel and iron, with its sham airs of equality and philanthropy, imposes on the disinherited of life; it is in the heart of him who, in spite of the difficulties of all kinds amidst which he struggles, thinks more of others than of himself, forgetting self in the thought of those who suffer more than he does — it is in such hearts, I say, that the divine plant can find the elements needed for its first development.

That plant can indeed never take root among us, nor doubtless elsewhere, unless it finds congenial soil where men desire to know and to learn from pure love of the truth and not of the honour, the glory, the riches which its truths can bring them. And however astonishing it may seem to many at first sight, that soil exists in the people and in the [Page 4] French people — I answer for it! I do not speak thus in a narrow national spirit; by temperament I have no country, no family, and I strive daily to have no "self." Father, mother, husband, all disappear before the great questions of general welfare. An integral part of the great whole, my centre, like its centre, is everywhere in the thought of my future harmonious unity. For the moment, I must act in one small special corner of the earth, whither in the course of my evolution my previous affinities have brought me. I speak of this little corner, simply because I know it best.

"The French nation is frivolous", say of it the other nations. Well, yes, it is frivolous! It forgets from one

day to the next its injuries and insults. Under the influence of one kind word it puts itself back entirely into the hands of its most terrible enemy, and allows itself to be deceived like a baby. Yes, it is frivolous, for to obtain for its dear ones, for its neighbours, for all, the smallest liberty of action and thought, it goes to meet death — singing.

The proof of what I thus assert is to be found in its love for the *revolution bourgeoise* of 1789. For what has that revolution done for the proletariat, for the penniless, for the daily labourer who possesses nothing whatsoever on the face of this our planet? Nothing, but to increase, by a violent transformation of social conditions, the intensity of his sufferings, of his physical and moral anxieties. The middle class ousted the aristocracy and took its place in the possession of honours, of fortune, in the guidance of the classes it exploits, with no other thought of the poor than, to batten on their misery.

And yet the French masses actually worship "their revolution", and those who have defended its spirit. The poor owe nothing, absolutely nothing, to one or to the others on the plane of material gratification, for they are still more inexorably shorn and put to ransom than before; but they revere the one and the others because they know that they have given freedom to the spirit; and to a certain extent, liberty to thought. The revolution certainly did more in this direction than Luther's Reformation, which with us left the people mostly indifferent, as the Catholic Church, which is seldom mistaken in judging an enemy, well knows; and it considers the French Revolution as one of the hardest blows which have struck it since its establishment. It is right, for it is thanks to the breach opened in its ramparts by the light artillery of '89, that the T. S. can to-day penetrate to the very heart of the stronghold, and the Church feels that it is by the hand of that doctrine that it will irrevocably perish.

A people which thus raises itself unconsciously from off the material [Page 5] plane, which it considers as nothing, to attach itself to the spirit, is it not ploughed and ready to receive the divine seed?

Moreover, to accomplish anything lasting in Theosophy, one must leave the dead and dying, and those who slumber in the comfort of the flesh, gorged with material and intellectual riches, and who neither see, nor hear, nor understand, nor desire, nor do anything. We must address those who live, who think, who suffer, who aspire, who desire, who hunger physically, intellectually, morally, and even spiritually. We must go to the true (the poor) people.

But how is the true to be distinguished from the false, the good man from him who hides under a simple exterior the same gross needs, the same selfish desires, the same longings, the same brutality and cruelty as the satisfied, the possessors, those in power, and who, if tomorrow they held the place of these, would be the same oppressors of the feeble, as those they seek to overthrow today?

In this difficulty we have only to imitate Nature; to cast myriads of seeds on the wind to obtain one plant. According to the ancient parable of esoteric wisdom, re-edited like so many other things by our relatively modern evangelists: "one-third will be trodden under foot, one-third will be eaten by the birds, and the third part will sprout and bear fruit a hundredfold". [This is just the policy of the T. S. from its beginning. Its visible leaders are unable to always distinguish the good from the bad, to see still dormant evil in the hearts of those who apply to join our Society, and the *real* Founders — those behind the screen — will denounce or accuse no living man. *All are given a chance*. Gladly would our Society abolish even the

small entrance fee, had it any funds, however small, to carry on the work which increases daily, and many branches have already done so. For several years no initiation fees were paid; but our scanty and even joint means were found insufficient to maintain the Headquarters, pay the stationery, and the ever-increasing postage, and feed and lodge all those who volunteered to work *gratis* for theosophy. Thus the fees were re-established. Other Societies beg for, and are given, large sums of money, but the T. S. never does. Nevertheless, the taunt that the Founders *sell Theosophy*, creating Theosophists for £1, or twenty shillings, a head, is being repeatedly thrust into our faces! And yet the poor are never made to pay anything at all. And if those who have the means will refuse to help to do good to the disinherited and the suffering, what are those who have given all they had, and have nothing now to give but their services, to do? — H. P. B.]

The Protestants imitated this example; they have cast the seed of their foolish ideas to the four corners of the earth, and have made the weeds of their folly and ineptness to spring up everywhere. You will say that the soil for such a harvest is not scarce. True; but it is also true that, in their hunger, many souls have thrown themselves upon this poor and insipid food, hoping it would give them strength, moral health, and spiritual life.

If to such are given true bread and a fish, instead of a serpent, to use the language of their New Testament, they will surely know how to [Page 6] distinguish between them. If a real doctor, an expert in the healing art, is brought to them instead of a charlatan who adds to their sufferings, they will know how to leave one for the other.

Beauty is always beauty, justice always justice, truth will be ever truth. Every soul to which is shown the pure gold of truth will of itself turn away from the base imitation, from the false in religion: and the hollowness of many of our scientific data will be perceived by one who, in the eyes of the world, is the simplest and most ignorant of men.

Thus, in order to *naturalise* in France, and even anywhere, in Europe as in America, the divine plant of Theosophy, *we should sow broadcast the seed* of the Eastern esoteric teachings.

But how shall we sow the seed? How shall we bring within reach of the many, who have neither the means nor the leisure, these precious teachings? How? How? It is of the solution of this question only that I have been thinking, since I have had the happiness to find food to renew my life by their reception and assimilation.

The following was Dramard's idea: Form a closed nucleus of attraction, however small, of tried Theosophists, and accept *anyone* who, whether from idleness, from curiosity, or any other vain feeling, comes to ask anything. That which is of importance in this open group is to bring together the largest possible number of adherents, in view of their clubbing together as means for propagandising in the way we desire. [We are glad, however, to hear on the testimony of our correspondent, and old and trusted friend of M. Louis Dramard, the late President of our T. S. in Paris, that such were his ideas, as we had been assured of the contrary. We may have something to say of this at some future time.—H. P. B.]

This propaganda should not have for its objects to make Theosophists *à la lettre*, as, for instance, the Catholics seek to make Catholics, or people ready to declare themselves as such, but to spread effectively the Theosophical teachings, and to make their meaning reach those hearts which are ready to welcome it, and which it cannot reach from want of an inlet.

Dig canals through which a large part of what has for years past been filtering into the world from a sacred fountain can reach the fertile soil which is ready for it, a soil which is only waiting for such an irrigation to produce abundant harvests.

We must thus select among all that has been written since the foundation of the T.S., and without commentary or explanation of the why and wherefore, sow pamphlets broadcast, like the Biblical fanatics who thrust everywhere their little tracts, in which they beseech us to save our souls from Hell, to come to Jesus, to believe in Jesus, to fear a personal [Page 7] devil cunning and wise, and a god no less personal, but more foolish and more ignorant than his devil.

And to think that for centuries past it is with such "rubbish" that men feed souls, and seek to edify human beings! Can one wonder at the moral and physical weakness of poor humanity?

Blessings be upon the beings who have worked for their own divinity, and praise be to those through whom they have sent to us their work; it is not the materials for edification that are wanting, but the means of turning them to account. At one with Dramard, my husband and I would have considered ourselves the greatest wretches and egoists on earth had we remained quietly contemplating the splendid treasure we held in our hands, without thinking of spreading it abroad and sharing it with others.

How then! Such a fortune in the hands of some thousands of Theosophists, and of these three-fourths are indifferent to the blessing granted to them, or think only how to profit by themselves. What! Of these only a few have air, light and food, while the masses beside them agonize in the shadow, and die of starvation on the spiritual plane! The matter is a grave one and must have, for all of us, the most terrible consequences!

With our present social organizations, a man — ten men, die of hunger. That is a trifle, for which the law of retribution will exact payment from the organizers and leaders of men and society; but that does not prevent the globe rolling on. But what is of real serious importance and a hindrance to the march of evolution is that, through the faults of men calling themselves friends of humanity, *souls* should wither, from want, and die of inanition.

Is it surprising that our world should advance so slowly? What numbers of motive powers are unused, what numbers of beneficent forces are left inactive from want of a fulcrum, from want of one true datum which could serve as the starting-point for a whole series of actions, which would strengthen the great movement of regeneration.

I repeatedly begged the "Isis Branch" to work in this direction to, print, for instance, the Abbé Roca's

articles and your luminous and crushing replies. Nothing is better calculated to strike the mind of the French people, and to assist it to find its orientation, than the work you have there done. [Reference here is made to the late *Isis*, the Branch of the T. S. in Paris, and a controversy in the *Lotus* between the Abbé Roca and one of the Editors of LUCIFER. — H.P.B.]

The same remark applies to the letter published in LUCIFER to the [Page 8] Primate of England; I should like to see it translated into all languages and distributed in millions in all Catholic and Protestant countries. The same, again, for *Theosophy or Jesuitism*, which I translated for the Lotus. How much good might already have been done. So little has "Isis" concerned itself with propaganda, that twice have the subscriptions sent by my husband and myself been returned to us (after Dramard's death?). Thus, though the "Isis" cannot be accused of having done nothing and kept the money, yet the last thing its staff cared to do, was to spread Theosophy broadcast.

What numbers of things might be used for the masses! And always on our system of spreading on all sides the glad tidings, how much might be taken from *Esoteric Buddhism, Magic: White and Black*, etc., but the most fruitful source of all to draw from will be the Secret Doctrine; yet for its spread, when translated, it is to be regretted that *Esoteric Buddhism* has not been published. For France, its translation would have aided the spread of the Theosophical movements far more than that of the *Occult World*. Such was Dramard's opinion.

Esoteric Buddhism, its completeness notwithstanding, gives a far better general idea of the Doctrine. All are of the same opinion. It is absolutely necessary for our country to prepare the way for the *Secret Doctrine*, which throws light on just those points which are left in the shadow by *Esoteric Buddhism*, and amplifies its explanations by the way in which it states the truth.

But to return to our idea of propaganda, which I want to explain to you thoroughly. For I feel disgusted when I see that the "Salvation Army" manages, penny by penny, to draw millions into its coffers, millions which it uses to distribute bad tea, rancid cakes, and poisonous doctrines, while sincere Theosophists cannot manage to quit their own narrow circle and spread far and wide the flood of saving truths, which they have received for some time past.

To accomplish anything, we must understand each other (and should that be so impossible among co-thinkers who preach only, UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD?), and each should give financially, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, according to his means. An annual subscription is a good thing, apart from the donations which those who are favoured by fortune can give; always on condition, however, that for their few pounds the latter do not imagine that they have the right to hamper everything by their narrow views, their timid spirit, and their pusillanimous character.

The poor man's farthing even is not to be disdained; on the contrary, a great step will be made when "the widow" will have understood that [Page 9] she can do no more useful work for Humanity than to give her mite towards relieving the great burden of ignorance under which that poor humanity is dying, whether clad in silken vesture or in rags, marching under the banners of Religion, of Science, Politics, or Society

I say all this to you, and you know it better than anyone since you are the mouth-piece of the Teachers who keep on repeating it in their letters and writings. And I only speak to you thus at length of this mode of organization, which belongs to the entirely practical domain, because such an organization tends to beget consequences on the "spiritual plane".

One word more on this subject. François de Sallès, terrified at the progress of the Reformation, was seeking every means to combat it. In his letters to the ecclesiastics and bishops among his friends, he used to say: "Let us write Catholic novels", and they wrote Catholic novels, and these novels were in everybody's hands. They never ceased appearing except during the First Republic. And after that had been crushed by Napoleon I, a revival of this kind of literature occurred, which became a regular avalanche after Napoleon III, had crushed, in his turn, the Second Republic. These books are everywhere today; in the libraries for children and women, they form the basis of the communal libraries, and are still given as prizes in the *Lycées* and other schools. Thus in spite of Voltaire and the freethinkers, or those who think themselves so, "François" always wins the battle and Catholicism still possesses, as in the past, the heart of the woman; through her it holds the child, and is master of the man, however emancipated he may fancy himself.

It is true that those who destroyed had nothing to put in its place; and the soul's aspirations are no empty word. "Give us our daily bread" is a prayer uttered with a constancy worthy of a better fate by these poor starving ones. "Give us our daily bread" cry in the desert of life those who know not that this bread cannot be given, but must be earned, and that it is in ourselves. "Give us our daily bread" is repeated on every note by poor humanity; some addressing themselves to the ministers of their religion, others to the leading lights of science; these to the philosophers, those to the politicians; these to the sociologists, who are no better off, those to any charlatan who claims to know.

And the wisdom of wisdoms, Theosophy, of whose existence all these needy ones are ignorant, answers to all desires and can fulfil all aspirations. It alone can restore strength, health, physical and moral peace to all these troubled, excited beings, exhausted by centuries of political, economic and religious despotisms. It alone can show to each man that he himself is the way, and that in himself alone are the truth and the life. **[Page 10]**

Let us then write Theosophical novels for the masses; *i.e.*, novels in which, leaving aside the transcendental part of Occultism, we seek only to express and to render intelligible by the action of the heroes, the lofty meaning of its saving morality, thus inculcating in men's hearts its all-embracing principles.

Let us write Theosophical novels, and if we know how, as Moleschott says, always to respect the law of cause and effect in the actions, the words, even the thoughts of the people we introduce, those novels will be interesting, as well as instructive. They will be read with pleasure by the men, whom they will please by their independent and manly tone; they will charm and move the women by the sentiments they express and by their healthy psychism; they will appeal to the children — by their simplicity, their straightforwardness, their truth.

What cannot be done in this direction with the help of the light which the esoteric doctrine throws upon

man, the worlds, life, evolution in general ? In the great humanitarian work, each has his lot. The task given to me, to my Highest Self, is to work thus — however difficult it may be. I throw my whole heart into it, knowing that all that a man wills that can he do.

A little will is my only possession; with this little I work ceaselessly to learn that I may be able to do. Able to do what ? Able to start as many Egos as possible upon the path of the final spiritual growth. By this reckoning, all healthy books, which quicken the good feelings in man, or which assist their development, are books written to this end, whether intentionally or not. Tolstoi's Socialistic novels, for instance, are thus Theosophical novels; the presence or absence of the word itself making no difference.

I see in the October number of *LUCIFER*, that some members of the T. S. are possessed with the desire to form "Lodges of Magic." Poor things! What are they thinking of ? they are but wasting their time. If they are tormented by the desire to progress on the spiritual plane, let them first work at rendering healthy the physical and moral atmosphere in which they live, so as to develop some spiritual faculties. To that end, let them enlighten the whole, let them employ their strength, their intelligence, their need of activity, *their money*, in pushing a propaganda such as I propose. They ought to have the means, these people whom the *devil tempts* by suggesting to them thus to throw themselves haphazard, without training, without preparation, into a path so dangerous, so little trodden; and surely the daily struggle for a livelihood must be unknown to them. If they have leisure, let them help to teach those who have none. It will be the first step on the road of Initiation. [Page 11]

Adeptship, *i.e.*, knowledge, and the power it gives, is what turns the heads of weak mortals and keeps them back from the goal for long; since, in their haste, full of covetousness and egoism, they completely lose their way.

For this reason, in such novels as I suggest, it is not the Adept in his power and glory whom I would see represented, but the Adept unconscious even of being so, in course of preparation, the Adept, who *will* be, in his toilsome, difficult, impossible, unceasing struggle against himself, against all the evil and opposing wills, against all the elements — in one word, against all the previous causes whose effects he has to destroy by labours of which those of Hercules are only a pale symbol, it is this Adept whom I would have shown in every phase of his arduous ascent, so as to fire men's souls and raise their courage.

What is true, is touching, and the Initiate, the Adept, is no myth. The Mahatma *is*. Edgard Quinet, in his splendid book, "Creation", wherein he thinks and has the intuition of so many truths about evolution, states the fact as a self-evident truth, when he says: — "A soul which holds straight on to the highest point of human nature is upon the plane of universal nature; it finds the truths upon which the world rests. Before experience has torn them from him, Nature confides her secrets to the great and good man."

Let the Theosophists who want to found a lodge of Magic meditate upon these words; let them make themselves able to *find* the truths upon which the world is based, and there will be no further danger for them in gratifying their desire.