

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BRETHREN,

I give you welcome to our Fortieth Anniversary, and I invoke on our gathering the blessing of our Leaders, the Guardians of Humanity, to whom we turn our eyes amid the storm-clouds that obscure our human sky. May They, in the future as in the past, preserve and protect the Society they founded through Their faithful servants Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steele Olcott; may They guard it by Their Power, guide it by Their wisdom, inspire it by Their activity.

Peace and harmony have reigned throughout the year in almost every part of the Society which we can reach; but we are cut off from our brethren in Central Europe, and we know not if we shall clasp hands with them again in outward greeting, so deeply flow between us the rivers of blood which have been shed in the tremendous War which is shaking the very foundations of civilisation in the West. Were the War an ordinary one, it would not rend us apart, but in this War are in conflict not men, but principles, Principles of Good and Evil, in which a spiritual Society cannot remain in the safe and pleasant fields of neutrality, without being false to its fundamental verities.

THE WORLD-STRUGGLE

As in the great myths of ancient days, myths which embody eternal truths, we see before us the recurring conflict which marks the parting points on the road of evolution, where a civilisation must choose between Good and Evil, and survive or perish by its choice. Hindūism speaks of Rāma and Rāvaṇa; Zoroastrianism of Ahura Mazdāh and Ahriman; Hebraism and Christianity of God and Satan; Muhammadanism of Allah and Eblis. These names are symbols whereby, in every age, man has recognised the great evolutionary force of Life, or Spirit, ever unfolding its powers, and the retarding resistance of Form, or Matter, obstructing the further growth of the embodied life, when the limit of expansion and adaptability of the form had been reached. Then is the outworn garment struck away, and the Spirit takes to himself a garment which is new. In its earlier days the form subserved evolution and for the time was good; when it has served its purpose and obstructs evolution it becomes evil. So even militarism and autocracy were useful and therefore good in their day; the savage needed sharp discipline that he might evolve, and militarism gave it: the ignorant needed

knowledge to guide them, and autocracy gave it; western civilisation had to be built up out of barbarism, and the work was done by the sceptre of iron and the sword of steel. State and Church were alike hard and unrelenting, and they built up the foundations of modern Europe.

Then came the wind of the Spirit, which is Freedom, sweeping over the countries of Europe, and the garments of mediævalism became too small for the growing Life, and cramped the development of the Nations, the resistance of the forms threatening the dwarfing and distortion of the Life, and a great breaking up of the Old was needed for the expanding of the New.

Occultism, which is the study of the Divine Mind in Nature, teaches that behind all force there is Will, and that while Nature, which is Divine Matter, provides all the mechanism for activity, it is Life, which is Divine Spirit, that sets going and directs the mechanism. The Life may be embodied in animal, man, deva, angel, the Lord of Universe—it is all the same, save in degree of manifestation, but that Life causes activity by Will, and wherever there is activity there is Will behind it. So in evolution there is the Will to Progress, and in resistance to evolution there is the Will to Inertia, and these Wills are embodied both in men and in super-men, who strive against each other for the mastery at the critical stages of evolution, when a civilisation is to choose between the downward grade that ends in disappearance, and the upward grade which begins a New Era. The men fight desperately, visible on the earth; the super-men fight in the world invisible to mortal eyes. There is ever War in Heaven as well as on earth in these struggles that decide the fate of the world for thousands of years.

We call the super-men who fight for the victory of the Divine Will in evolution and are Themselves the embodiment of a portion of that Will—the Occult Hierarchy, the Guardians of our world. And we call the super-men who fight against it, who would preserve the old outworn ways that have become poisonous, the Dark Forces, in the poetical eastern nomenclature, the "Lords of the Dark Face". Both sides work through men, and through men their triumphs and defeats are wrought out, the shadow here on earth of the events above. For it is the fate of Humanity which is in the balance; it is the Judgment Day of a race.

It is because the present War is the shadow of such a struggle in the higher worlds, that no Occultist can remain neutral, but must throw every power that he possesses on one side or the other. To be a neutral is to be a traitor. Now the Central Powers, in this great struggle, are the pawns played by the super-men who follow the Lords of the Dark

Face. They embody autocracy, militarism, the anachronistic forms which are ready to perish, for which there is no place in the coming New Age. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Not by the isolated acts of a few soldiers, mad with blood-lust and sex-lust; but by their official policy of "frightfulness," deliberately adopted and ruthlessly carried out, by a style of warfare renounced by all civilised Nations, belonging to a far-off past, a revival of cruelties long ago outgrown. By these we know them as the tools of the super-men of the Night, and the Occultists of the Darkness are fighting on their side. They have raised Hate into a National Virtue, and the Lords of Hate are with them.

We, who are servants of the White Brotherhood, who regard Love as the supreme Virtue, and who seek to enter into the Coming Age of Brotherhood and Co-operation, we can but follow the Guardians of Humanity, and work for the triumph of the Allied Powers who represent Right as against Might, and Humanity as against Savagery. The Theosophical Society, the Society of the Divine Wisdom, founded by Members of the White Brotherhood and their Messenger in the world, must throw itself on the side which embodies the Divine Will for evolution, the side on which are fighting the super-men of the Day.

If by this we lose the members we had in the Central Empires, after the War is over and the madness of it is over-past, it must be so. Better to lose our members than to lose the blessing of the Brotherhood; better to perish, faithful to the Right, than to become a fellowship of Evil.

THE GROWTH OF THE SOCIETY

Let us now turn to the work within the Society. Thirty-one new Lodges only have been chartered; it has not been a year of large increase.

REVISED LIST OF CHARTERS ISSUED TO THE CLOSE OF 1915

1878	1	1891	271	1904	800
1879	2	1892	298	1905	860
1880	11	1893	344	1906	900
1881	19	1894	382	1907	958
1882	42	1895	401	1908	1,032
1883	88	1896	425	1909	1,125
1884	99	1897	487	1910	1,223
1885	117	1898	526	1911	1,329
1886	128	1899	558	1912	1,405
1887	156	1900	595	1913	1,483
1888	169	1901	647	1914	1,547
1889	199	1902	704	1915	1,578
1890	234	1903	750		

We have no reports from Germany, Hungary, Finland, Russia, Bohemia, Belgium and Austria. We have left the number of Lodges and of members as they were, but the membership is problematical.

National Society	No. of Lodges	No. of Active Members	No. of New Members admitted during the year	Remarks
T.S. in America ...	157	5,332 ¹	919	
" England and Wales ...	88	2,636	311	
" India ...	348	5,936	617	
" Australia ...	24	1,474	206	
" Scandinavia ...	29	787	79	
" New Zealand ...	18	1,024	101	
" The Netherlands ...	21	1,304	165	
" France ...	43	1,100	74	Total number could not be ascertained
" Italy ...	22	300	24	
" Germany ...	25	380		No report
" Cuba ...	42	867	150	
" Hungary ...	11	204		No report
" Finland ...	22	523		No report
" Russia ...	6 ²	357		
" Bohemia ...	7	152		No report
" South Africa ...	10	254	47	
" Scotland ...	15	452	36	
" Switzerland ...	12	285	56	
" Belgium ...	10	183		No report
" Nether Indies ...	10	782	162	
" Burma ...	10	239	41	
" Austria ...	8	160		No report
" Norway ...	12	274	29	
Non-Sectionalised Countries ...	41	711	82	
Grand Total ...	991	25,696	3,099	

NATIONAL SOCIETIES

In all the countries in the War-Zone, most of our ordinary Theosophical activities have been almost submerged under those connected with the War. Our people, naturally and rightly, threw themselves into the work needed to supply comforts to the soldiers, nursing to the sick, shelter to refugees, to say nothing of the numbers who volunteered and after

¹ Of these 755 had not paid their fees for the current year, so are classed as "inactive," but some have since paid.

² Russia, this year, reckons all groups in one town as one Lodge, so the decrease is only apparent.

passing through the necessary training have gone to the front. Dr. Haden Guest, the English General Secretary, distinguished himself by his great services in organising hospitals; Miss Green worked with remarkable zeal and success in Southampton, and others, all over the country, laboured nobly, Folkestone Lodge distinguishing itself in welcoming Belgian refugees, and Brighton Lodge in caring for wounded Indian soldiers. Dr. Haden Guest finally resigned to give himself wholly to his military and philanthropic work, after a deputy, Mr. Baillie-Weaver, had taken most of the work on his shoulders, and finally Mr. G. S. Arundale was elected, a most happy selection. The Society, despite all other work, maintained its propagandist activity, the Leeds Lodge especially distinguishing itself, bringing to the town as lecturers such distinguished writers and speakers as Miss Marie Corelli and Mr. Edward Carpenter.

Some Sunday morning meetings have been held at Headquarters, consisting of a reading, an address, an invocation and music, the latter directed by Mrs. Maud Mann.

The Headquarters Building has gone on slowly and steadily, being carried out by direct labour, as arranged. The roof is being put on the North Wing, and the building should be opened towards the end of next year.

A subsidiary activity is the Letchworth Theosophical School, an educational adventure of great importance, and full of promise. Dr. Armstrong Smith is enthusiastic in his work, and believes in its future.

In India, we regret to notice a decrease in the number of Lodges, though there is an increase in the number of members. Some of the weaker Lodges have dropped out. An interesting addition is one at Basra, Persian Gulf; the Secretary sends the following:

At a meeting of the members of the "Dar-El-Salam" Theosophical Lodge, Basra, (Persian Gulf), it was unanimously resolved to convey the best wishes of the Lodge for the success of the Theosophical Convention to be held at Bombay.

The Lodge regrets its inability to send a delegate to attend such an auspicious occasion.

Australia has had a good year of work, in which Mr. Leadbeater's inspiring presence has given help gratefully acknowledged. The Society is building a large Headquarters, eight stories high, with residential flats, a large hall and offices, and it is expected to be ready by Easter, 1916.

Scandinavia had a heavy loss in the passing away of Mr. Arvid Knos, the faithful and untiring worker, who was its main pillar of strength. Things have gone on quietly with few changes.

New Zealand also has made a little quiet progress, its most marked feature being the growth of young people's movements. It seems as though there would be about ten or fifteen years hence an immense expansion of Theosophy in Australasia.

The Netherlands have been quietly busy, and the new Quarters at The Hague are rising. The Section Library is one of the great means of propaganda in Holland, and some 400 people from different parts of the country make use of it. No better and sounder method of propaganda exists than reading, and it is peculiarly suitable to the steady and thoughtful Dutch character.

France, despite all her sufferings, and the need that her children should serve her by providing for her desperate needs, has made her Theosophical possessions useful, by putting the Headquarters at the disposal of French and Belgian refugees.

Italy has managed to do some translation work, despite the War preoccupations; and Cuba suffers much from the devastating Mexican War and financial difficulties due to that in Europe, but our members never bate a jot of heart or courage, remaining ever brave, loyal and trustworthy.

In South Africa, naturally, little has been done, but a new Lodge has been started in Port Elizabeth. Scotland has given her much loved Secretary to the War, and the Headquarters suffered a grievous loss in the passing away of Mrs. Brown, the Warden. Switzerland has tried to work to help refugees, its position in the middle of the War-Zone giving it many opportunities in this direction; it is one of the two countries in which there have been little ripples of discord, of no great importance, and chiefly due to the War atmosphere and the over-tension of nerves.

The Netherlands-Indies has been busy building, as well as spreading Theosophical ideas. Burma is working well, and the tour of Brother C. Jinarajadasa proved most helpful and inspiring. The Burma Educational Trust, under the presidency of Mr. Cowasji, is doing good work.

Norway is very quiet, but the General Secretary made a useful tour in Iceland. South America reports but little activity.

It will be seen that the War has practically absorbed most of the energy of our members, and we can but be grateful that they are allowed to serve so usefully the countries of their birth.

SUBSIDIARY ACTIVITIES

These, as usual, are largely educational. The Theosophical Educational Trust has eighteen educational institutions under its care, and is doing admirable work. It is happy in its untiring and devoted Secretary, Mr. Ernest Wood. Mr. Kirk is distinguishing himself as a most efficient collector of revenue.

The Buddhist Theosophical Society has 237 schools and 2 Colleges, and has managed to pull through the terrible difficulties of the martial law period. Mr. Mirando, our old and faithful friend, was shot by the police by accident when he was trying to check a riot. The Ananda College is doing admirably under Mr. Fritz Kunz, and that at Kandy flourishes under Mr. Bilimoria. The Galle College, under Mr. Woodward, has not sent in its Report.

The Musæus Girls' School continues its splendid work under Mrs. Higgins, and has just celebrated its 24th anniversary.

The Olcott Pañchama Free Schools, under their devoted Superintendent, Miss Kofel, show the usual record of first-rate work; a girl pupil, helped on to the Teachers Training School, has come out 2nd in a class of 25 students.

The Round Table in Australia sends in an exceptionally interesting report, which we commend to our members as an example of what young people can do.

The Order of the Star in the East has spread far and wide, and has many thousands of members, scattered all over the world. In India alone it has between 5,000 and 6,000 members.

The Sons and Daughters of India are working in many places, and in Adyar have a Lodge of varied activities, educational, temperance, hospital visiting, etc. It is a good training ground for public life, the close contact with the poor giving a sound foundation of knowledge for the future.

An Arts League has just been founded at Adyar, and hopes gradually to be of some use in helping in the revival of indigenous industries, and to come into relations with the important Brotherhood of Arts in England, under the Presidency of Mrs. Maud Mann.

LECTURERS AND WORKERS

The only changes in the General Secretaries are in Sweden and England. Mr. Arvid Knos, who has passed away, has been replaced by Erik Crouvall, and Dr. Haden Guest by Mr. George S. Arundale. We have temporarily lost the valuable services as lecturer of Mr. Sidney Ransom, who has enlisted in England. Miss Codd is doing excellent work there, and is very popular. Our Vice-President, Mr. A. P. Sinnett, has been constantly at work, lecturing and teaching, and two valuable articles of his have appeared in the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Mr. C. W. Leadbeater has been working all the year in Australia and New Zealand, and has brought the whole Society there to a higher level of public usefulness and respect.

HEADQUARTERS

At Headquarters all goes very well, and the staff of workers has only lost Mr. and Mrs. Kirk who have returned to England. The rest work on well and steadily, giving their invaluable services with cheerful devotion. There are no additions to the building this year, save a shop and storehouse for the Co-operative Stores. A Bank has also been opened, and is housed in the T. P. H.

THE LIBRARY

Mr. Van Manen has continued his valuable services as Assistant Director, and Mr. Cates is a most efficient helper. Naturally, the loss of Dr. Schrader is keenly felt, but he is working on at his standard edition of the Minor Upanishats, and we trust he may be allowed to see the next volume through the press, during the coming spring.

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

The publishing business has suffered to some extent during the War, but some useful publications have been issued. Mr. C. Jinarajadasa has published his valuable Convention Lectures, and a charming series of talks to young people, *I Promise*. My own chief book is the story of the Congress, *How India Wrought for Freedom*. The Vasanṭa Press continues its admirable work.

CONCLUSION

As a Society, we find ourselves viewed from a better "angle of vision," and we are being recognised as a body of useful workers in the many countries over which our activities

extend. The definite recognition of Mysticism as the scientific side of religion, on one side, and the advance of science into the Borderland on the other, have changed our position in the religious and intellectual worlds ; with this added power comes a heavy increase of responsibility, to equip ourselves more efficiently—religiously, morally and intellectually—for our work. Superficial and slovenly work becomes criminal when put out by members of the T. S., and they must remember, as public judgment becomes less harsh, that they must themselves become more severe judges of themselves. Pledged to Service, as is every true Theosophist, let him take care of what sort is the offering he places upon the altar, for “the fire shall try every man’s work,” and only the pure gold can come out unchanged from the burning.

Brethren, great is your privilege, to have been the heralds of the coming Age, ere the world had perceived its coming, for you proclaimed it in the night, ere yet the first faint light of the Dawning touched the eastern horizon. Many of you believe in the coming of the World-Teacher, who alone can bring to us the New Age, and outline the fashion of its growth. Sore and bitter is the travail of the Nations ere that New Age can be born ; the earth shivers and writhes in the agony of her birth-pangs, but the fair Man-Child of the coming time shall ere long cause her to forget the anguish of her throes. Not without great agony may any high work be wrought, and we are in the ante-chamber, preparing for the birth of a new and nobler Age. As part of the earth, as part of humanity, we must share in the agony, but sure is the joy that cometh in the morning, sure the coming of the Lord of Love, with the Babe of the Future in his arms. Fear not then, nor be troubled, for none may stay His Coming, nor frustrate His great work of Love and Peace. Storms may rage, tempests may roar, the very foundations of the earth may rock ; but the storm will pass, and clear skies again will arch over an earth at peace. Have you ever watched in the darkness of the night, when storm-clouds veiled the heavens, and the distant thunder rolled around through the heavy air ; and as you watched, seeing no sky, no stars, suddenly the clouds were rent asunder, and in the violet depths there shone out the Star of Love, shining undimmed and lustrous beyond the earth-born veil which had hidden it from earth’s sad peoples ? So, to those who know, shines in mid-heaven the Star which is the sign of the ever-presence of the King, and tells the earth that it is lying safely in the bosom of His Power, cradled in His Love. Lift up your eyes, Brothers, now when clouds hang thick, and see His Star.
