

The Tidal Wave

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Reprinted from the magazine "Lucifer" Volume V

Published in 1921

Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai [Madras] India
The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras. India

The tidal wave of deeper souls,
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares,
Out of all meaner cares.
-- Longfellow

The great psychic and spiritual change now taking place in the realm of human Soul, is quite remarkable. It began towards the very commencement of the now slowly vanishing last quarter of our century, and will end -- so says a mystic prophecy -- either for the weal or the woe of civilized humanity, with the present cycle which will close in 1897. But the great change is not effected in solemn silence, nor is it perceived only by the few. On the contrary, it asserts itself amid a loud din of busy, boisterous tongues, a clash of public opinion, in comparison to which the incessant, ever-increasing roar even of the noisiest political agitation seems like the rustling of the young forest foliage, on a warm spring day.

Verily the Spirit in man, so long hidden out of public sight, so carefully concealed and so far exiled from the arena of modern learning, has at last awakened. It now asserts itself and is loudly re-demanding its unrecognized yet ever legitimate rights. It refuses to be any longer trampled under the brutal foot of Materialism, speculated upon by the Churches, and made a fathomless source of income by those who have self-constituted themselves its universal custodians. The former would deny the Divine Presence any right of existence; the latter would accentuate and prove it through their Sidesmen and Church Wardens armed with moneybags and collection boxes. But the spirit in man -- the direct, though now but broken ray and emanation of the Universal Spirit -- has at last awakened. Hitherto, while so often reviled, persecuted and abased through ignorance, ambition and greed; while so frequently turned by insane *Pride* "into a blind wanderer, like unto a buffoon mocked by a host of buffoons," in the realm of Delusion, it remained unheard and unheeded. Today, the Spirit in man has returned like King Lear, from seeming insanity to its senses; and, raising its voice, it now speaks in those authoritative tones to which the men of old have listened in reverential silence through incalculable ages, until, deafened by the din and roar of civilization and culture, they could bear it no longer . . .

Look around you and behold: think of what you see and hear, and draw therefrom your conclusions. The age of crass materialism, of Soul-insanity and blindness, is swiftly passing away. A death struggle between Mysticism and Materialism is no longer at hand, but is already raging. And the party which will win the day at this supreme hour will become the master of the situation and of the future; *i.e.*, it will become the autocrat and sole disposer of the *millions* of men already born and to be born, up to the latter end of the twentieth century. If the signs of the times can be trusted, it is not the *Animalists* who will

remain conquerors. This is warranted by us by the many brave and prolific authors and writers who have arisen of late to defend the rights of Spirit to reign over matter. Many are the honest, aspiring Souls now raising themselves like a dead wall against the torrent of the muddy waters of Materialism. And facing the hitherto domineering flood which is still steadily carrying off into unknown abysses the fragments from the wreck of dethroned, cast-down Human Spirit, they now command: "So far hast thou come; but thou shalt go no further."

Amid all this external discord and disorganization of social harmony; amid confusion and the weak and cowardly hesitations of the masses, tied down to the narrow frames of routine, propriety and cant; amid the late dead calm of public thought that had exiled from literature every reference to Soul and Spirit and their divine working during the whole of the middle period of our century -- we hear a sound arising. Like a clear, definite, far-reaching note of promise, the voice of the great human Soul proclaims, in no longer timid tones, the rise and almost the resurrection of the human Spirit in the masses. It is now awakening in the foremost representatives of thought and learning. It speaks in the lowest as in the highest, and stimulates them all to action. The renovated, life-giving Spirit in man is boldly freeing itself from the dark fetters of the hitherto all-capturing animal life and matter. Behold it, saith the poet, as ascending on its broad, white wings it soars into the regions of real life and light, whence, calm and godlike, it contemplates with unfeigned pity those golden idols of the modern material cult with their feet of clay, which have hitherto screened from the purblind masses their true and living gods . . .

Literature -- once wrote a critic -- is the confession of social life, reflecting all its sins, and all its acts of baseness as of heroism. In this sense a book is of a far greater importance than any man. Books do not represent one man, but they are the mirror of a host of men. Hence the great English poet-philosopher said of books, that he knew that they were as hard to kill and as prolific as the teeth of the fabulous dragon; sow them hither and thither, and armed warriors will grow out of them. To kill a good book is equal to killing a man.

The "poet-philosopher" is right.

A new era has begun in literature, this is certain. New thoughts and new interests have created new intellectual needs; hence a new race of authors is springing up. And this new species will gradually and imperceptibly shut out the old one, those fogies of yore who, though they still reign nominally, are allowed to do so rather by force of habit than predilection. It is not he who repeats obstinately and parrot-like the old literary formulas and holds desperately to publishers' traditions, who will find himself answering to the new needs; not the man who prefers his narrow party discipline to the search for the long-exiled Spirit of man and the now lost TRUTHS; not these, but verily he who, parting company with his beloved "authority," lifts boldly and carries on unflinchingly the standard of the *Future Man*. It is finally those who, amidst the present wholesale dominion of the worship of matter, material interests and SELFISHNESS, will have bravely fought for human rights and *man's divine nature*, who will become, if they only win, the teachers of the masses in the coming century, and so their benefactors.

But woe to the twentieth century, if the now reigning school of thought prevails, for Spirit would once more be made captive and silenced till the end of the coming age. It is not the fanatics of the dead letter in general, nor the iconoclasts and Vandals who fight the new Spirit of thought, nor yet the modern Roundheads, supporters of the old Puritan religious and social traditions, who will ever become the

protectors and Saviours of the now resurrecting human thought and Spirit. It is not these too willing supporters of the old cult and the mediaeval heresies of those who guard like a relic every error of their sect or party, who jealously watch over their own thought lest it should, growing out of its teens, assimilate some fresher and more beneficent idea -- not these who are the wise men of the future. It is not for them that the hour of the new historical era will have struck, but for those who will have learnt to express and put into practice the aspirations as well as the physical needs of the rising generations and of the now trampled-down masses. In order that one should fully comprehend *individual life* with its physiological, psychic and spiritual mysteries, he has to devote himself, with all the fervour of unselfish philanthropy and love for his brother man, to studying and knowing *collective* life, or Mankind. Without preconceptions or prejudice, as also without the least fear of possible results in one or another direction, he has to decipher, understand and *remember* the deep and innermost feelings and aspirations of the poor people's great and suffering heart. To do this he has first "to attune his soul with that of Humanity," as the old philosophy teaches; to thoroughly master the correct meaning of every line and word in the rapidly turning pages of the Book of Life of MANKIND, and to be thoroughly saturated with the truism that the latter is a whole inseparable from his own SELF.

How many of such profound readers of life may be found in our boasted age of science and culture? Of course we do not mean authors alone, but rather the practical and still unrecognized, though well known, philanthropists and altruists of our age; the people's friends, the unselfish lovers of man, and the defenders of human right to the freedom of Spirit. Few indeed are such; for they are the rare blossoms of the age, and generally the martyrs to prejudiced mobs and timeservers. Like those wonderful "Snow flowers" of Northern Siberia, which, in order to shoot forth from the cold frozen soil, have to pierce through a thick layer of hard, icy snow, so these rare characters have to fight their battles all their life with cold indifference and human harshness, and with the selfish ever-mocking world of wealth. Yet, it is only they who can carry out the task of perseverance. To them alone is given the mission of turning the "Upper Ten" of social circles from the broad and easy highway of wealth, vanity and empty pleasures into the arduous and thorny path of higher moral problems, and the perception of loftier moral duties than they are now pursuing. It is also those who, already themselves awakened to a higher Soul activity, are being endowed at the same time with literary talent, whose duty it is to undertake the part of awakening the sleeping Beauty and the Beast, in their enchanted Castle of Frivolity, to real life and light. Let all those who can, proceed fearlessly with this idea uppermost in their mind, and they will succeed. It is the rich who have first to be regenerated, if we would do good to the poor; for it is in the former that lies the root of evil of which the "disinherited" classes are but the too luxuriant growth. This may seem at first sight paradoxical, yet it is true, as may be shown.

In the face of the present degradation of every ideal, as also of the noblest aspirations of the human heart, becoming each day more prominent in the higher classes, what can be expected from the "great unwashed"? It is the head that has to guide the feet, and the latter are to be hardly held responsible for their actions. Work, therefore, to bring about the moral regeneration of the cultured but far more immoral classes, before you attempt to do the same for our ignorant younger Brethren. The latter was undertaken years ago, and is carried on to this day, yet with no perceptible good results. Is it not evident that the reason for this lies in the fact that but for a few earnest, sincere, and all-sacrificing workers in that field, the great majority of the volunteers consists of those same frivolous, *ultra*-selfish classes, who "play at charity" and whose ideas of the amelioration of the physical and moral status of the poor are confined to the hobby that money and the Bible alone can do it? We say that neither of these can accomplish any good; for dead-letter preaching and forced Bible-reading develop irritation and later atheism, and money as a temporary help finds its way into the tills of the public-houses rather than serves to buy bread with.

The root of the evil lies, therefore, in a moral, not in a physical cause.

If asked, what is it then that will help, we answer boldly: Theosophical literature; hastening to add that under this term, neither books concerning Adepts and phenomena, nor the Theosophical Society publications, are meant.

Take advantage of, and profit by, the “tidal wave” which is now happily overpowering half of Humanity. Speak to the awakening Spirit of Humanity, to the human Spirit and the Spirit in man, these three in One and the One in All. Dickens and Thackeray, both born a century too late -- or a century too early -- came between two tidal waves of human spiritual thought, and though they have done yeoman service individually and induced certain partial reforms, yet they failed to touch Society and the masses at large. What the European world now needs is a dozen writers such as Dostoevsky, the Russian author, whose works, through *terra incognita* for most, are still well known on the Continent, as also in England and America, among the cultured classes. And what the Russian novelist has done is this: he spoke boldly and fearlessly the most unwelcome truths to the higher and *even to the official classes* -- the latter a far more dangerous proceeding than the former. And yet, behold, most of the administrative reforms during the last twenty years are due to the silent and *unwelcome* influence of his pen. As one of his critics remarks, the great truths uttered by him were felt by all classes so vividly and so strongly that people whose views were most diametrically opposed to his own could not but feel the warmest sympathy for this bold writer, and even expressed it to him.

“ ‘In the eyes of all, friends or foes, he became the mouthpiece of the irrepressible, no-longer-to-be-delayed need felt by society, to look with absolute sincerity into the innermost depths of its own soul, to become the impartial judge of its own actions and its own aspirations.’

“Every new current of thought, every new tendency of the age, had, and ever will have, its rivals, as its enemies, some counteracting it boldly but unsuccessfully, others with great ability. But such are always made of the same paste, so to say, common to all. They are goaded to resistance and objections by the same external, selfish and worldly objects, the same material ends and calculations as those that guided their opponents. While pointing out other problems and advocating other methods, in truth, they cease not for one moment to live with their foes in the world of the same and common interests, as also to continue in the same fundamental identical views on life.

“That which then became necessary was a man, who, standing outside of any partisanship or struggle for supremacy, would bring his past life as a guarantee of the sincerity and honesty of his views and purposes; one whose personal suffering would be an *imprimatur* to the firmness of his convictions, a writer, finally, of undeniable literary genius -- for such a man alone could pronounce words capable of awakening the true spirit in a society which had drifted away in a wrong direction.

“Just such a man was Dostoevsky -- the patriot-convict, the galley-slave, returned from Siberia; that writer, far-famed in Europe and Russia, the pauper buried by voluntary subscription, the soul-stirring bard of everything poor, insulted, injured, humiliated; he who unveiled with such merciless cruelty the plagues and sores of this age. . .”

It is writers of this kind that are needed in our day of reawakening; not authors writing for wealth or fame, but fearless apostles of the living Word of Truth, moral healers of the pustulous sores of our century. France has her Zola who points out -- brutally enough, yet still true to life -- the degradation and moral leprosy of his people. But Zola, while castigating the vices of the lower classes, has never dared to lash higher with his pen than the *petite bourgeoisie*, the immortality of the higher classes being ignored by him. Result: The peasants who do not read novels have not been in the least affected by his writings, and the *bourgeoisie*, caring little for the *plebs*, took such notice of *Pot bouille* as to make the French realist lose all desire of burning his fingers again at their family pots. From the first then, Zola has pursued a path which, though bringing him to fame and fortune, has led him nowhere in so far as salutary effects are concerned.

Whether Theosophists, in the present or future, will ever work out a practical application of the suggestion is doubtful. To write novels with a moral sense in them deep enough to stir society, requires a great literary talent and a *born* theosophist as was Dostoevsky -- Zola standing outside of any comparison with him. But such talents are rare in all countries. Yet, even in the absence of such great gifts, one may do good in a smaller and humbler way by taking note and exposing in impersonal narratives the crying vices and evils of the day, by word and deed, by publications and practical example. Let the force of that example impress others to follow it; and then, instead of deriding our doctrines and aspirations, the men of the twentieth, if not of the nineteenth century, will see clearer, and judge with knowledge and according to facts instead of prejudging agreeably to rooted misconceptions. Then and not till then will the world find itself forced to acknowledge that it was wrong, and that Theosophy alone can gradually create a mankind as harmonious and as simple-souled as Kosmos itself; but to effect this Theosophists have to act as such. Having helped to awaken the spirit in many a man -- we say this boldly challenging contradiction -- shall we now stop instead of swimming with the TIDAL WAVE?