

The Old, Old Story

by Anonymous

Reprinted from "Theosophical Siftings" Volume 3

The Theosophical Publishing Society, England

[Page 10] THERE are few lives into which there has not at one time entered a ray of sunshine, or that have not at some time been illumined by the light of love. There may, indeed, be found barren and loveless lives, but even these may yet discern on the dim horizon of the past the light of one bright star; a morning star, whose orbit no longer coincides with the zodiac of the present. The star of memory or the star of hope can only be quenched by despair. Man lives on hope or on memory; a vision of the future or a shadow of the past continually cheat the soul and hide the everlasting reality from the eternal now.

Memory and hope, as compared with the light of Love, are as will-o'-the-wisps compared with the light of the sun; they delude and lead us astray; but so long as we are unable to bear the light of the sun these alone make human life possible in the darkness and gloom, and endurable in the face of continual disappointment. Love is a mystery which the philosopher strives in vain to explain, and those equally who accept or reject his explanation, who pretend to scorn, or who are enthusiastic followers of the God, are equally deluded and finally equally discouraged. Love is a frenzy, a subtle madness in the blood that brings out the best and the worst that is within its victim.

The theme of the poet and painter, the dream of youth, the solace of prime, and, too often, the disappointment of age, can this also be the theme of the Theosophist? This is, indeed, the theme of themes, as it is the riddle of riddles.

Where love is there can be no disappointment, no old age, no decay, no death. It is love alone that makes us immortal. Here lies the great secret. It is not love that disappoints us. Life disappoints us because it is without love, because we allow love to die in us; yet it is not love that dies, but we who die toward love. When we can no longer excite or experience love we are growing old; the freshness and bloom of spring has been replaced by the sere and yellow leaf.

Love is determined not by what we can get out of life, but by what we [Page 11] can put into it; not by desire, but by sacrifice. Desire is selfish and doomed to disappointment, Love is altruistic and blooms immortal. Disappointed love is the monument we build in pain and tears to our own selfishness. The sighs and groans of unrequited love differ in degree but not in kind from the faintness that accompanies hunger. It is the need of our animal nature for food, of our human nature for sympathy, rather than of our Divine nature to give, to help, and to bless other lives. Love overflows like a full fountain; desire consumes like a fierce fire. He who is no longer the victim of desire, but who is the master of love, can rule the forces of life. There is but one rival of love, and that is hate. We are equally carried out of ourselves by the one as by the other. Desire is earth-born, the victim of time, the servant of circumstance but both love and hate "enter within the veil" and marshal unseen forces of weal or woe. "*The Voice of*

the Silence" cries: "Kill out desire, kill out all sense of separateness"; but only the shrill voice of hate bids us kill Love, for love is the silent voice, the harbinger of every Golden Precept. The face of the black magician glows with the baneful fires of desire and hate; the face of the white magician beams with the pure light of love. The plume of the one is the red comb of the cock set in the feathers of the raven. The insignia of the other is the white wings of the dove touched with the azure blue of heaven.

For most of us, life is one continual round of disappointments. Disappointed love, disappointed ambition, disappointed greed. In seeking thus to draw all things into ourselves we at last become but Dead Sea apples, emptiness, blackness and despair. With no more, at best, than faint intuitions born of former lives, we allow selfishness to smother these, till the *ennui* and imbecility of age make us relinquish life itself, and then we talk of "some other clime", some fairer land, where love shall bloom immortal!

O ! know ye the land where the flowers of Love
Perpetually bloom near life's river ?
O ! know ye the heaven where the wings of the dove
Are shorn of their bright pinions never ?

Is the land far away in the mists of the past ?
Is it lost in the dim distant future ?
Are all of these visions too fickle to last ?
And is there no rest for earth's creature ?

Ah ! the land is just here; ye but journey in vain,
Who hunt through the realms of creation;
Ye are doomed to despair; ye are pilgrims of pain,
Whate'er be your lot or your station,

The god whom ye seek has oft passed you at morn,
His garment hath brushed you at even;
At noon in the broad glare of day he is born,
No Earth can confine him, no heaven.

His feet are unsandaled, his head it is bare,
And his face is concealed as tho' shrouded.
And ye never will know how exceedingly fair
Is the god till your soul is unclouded.

Seek him not here or there, for he scorneth approach
No building of man can contain him;
But when his own temple is void of reproach,
Thou wilt find that naught else can restrain him.

He will lead from this temple the bride of his soul,
A true virgin, whose lamp is still burning.
And thou wilt know then no part, and no whole,
When thy soul has once learned true discerning.

LOVE'S SACRIFICE.

A child-soul sweet as breath of Flowers
Fell softly on this world of ours;
To try its wings, and learn its powers.

A tiger seized it in his claws;
Beast! unrestrained by human laws,
With purring breath and cruel jaws.

O stricken heart! O wounded dove !
O starving soul for breath of love!
Black lowers the Karmic sky above.

O moaning seas of scalding tears!
O hearts awreck by hopes and fears !
Love shall redeem the vanished years.

LOVE'S ALTAR

Be true to Love, and not to me,
O Soul! adrift on Karmic Sea,
Spinning the threads of Destiny.

O Soul of Flame ! O subtle breath !
O Love ! more strong than life or death,
No wavering flame thine altar hath. [Page 13]

Feed well the flame through day and night
With oil of love, in garments white,
That wandering souls may see the light.

O Queen of Flame ! O white-robed priest
The god ye serve is not the Beast.
Your star shines brightly in the East.

Above love's altar's upper rim,
Spread wide the wings of Cherubim;
List to the sacred Marriage Hymn.

No sound of lute, no sensuous dance,
No weaving Nautch-girls' am'rous glance
Enters our altar's broad expanse.

No sinuous snake in human form,
No tiger's claw, no power can harm
Where love can light and love can warm.

Warmed by loves altar's steady glow,
Led by love's light through frost and snow.
Come stricken souls who hunger know.

We pile for you love's fuel higher,
We fan the flame by strong desire;
Come nearer, starving soul, come nigher.

The wedding feast, the marriage hymn,
The welcoming wings of Cherubin,
And Soma's cup filled to the brim —

'Tis thus love's ruined altars rise,
With beacon light from Eastern skies,
And Brotherhood the golden prize.

What inexpressible sorrow in the faces of the little loveless children, what hopeless despair in the bended form and wrinkled face of age, drooping toward the dust and ashes, instead of looking outward toward the light and upward toward the stars. The child faces his old Karma, the battle to be won, the Karma of the aged is at his back, the battle lost if only evil deeds drag him down to earth and the silence of the grave. And all of this for lack of love ! Only the middle or mature of age can make either of these conditions possible. These it is who beget the children in a moment of strong desire without love; these are they who, journeying on through disappointment to despair, become the stranded wrecks on the further shore of time, and these are they who talk [Page 14] of love ! The lesson is not so hard that it cannot be understood. These are all bewildered souls who have lost their way. There is little hope for the aged. We may minister to them, but

"The cup of life is drawn
And nought remains but lees."

Love may, indeed, minister to them, but it cannot be so kindled in them as to chase away the shadows of memory and rekindle the desire of unselfish deeds. It is too late for them to learn self-forgetfulness. "Their sorrows are many, their pleasures are few." A host of infirmities have need of many nurses, and the habits of a life-time cannot be changed in a moment. They are victims of desire, pilgrims of passion, aliens to peace, wanderers from heaven. Let them sleep ! "He giveth His beloved rest"; and again, as little children, will they be filled with fresh desire, and seek again the Immortal *Amrita*. Gathering intuitions from vague memories of pain, led gently by Infinite Love, they will at last enter the abodes of peace and hear the "Voice of the Silence".

To the young, to men and women in their prime, and through these to the little children is the message and the opportunity.

Learn, then, the lesson well. Life is barren without love, and love is impossible without self-forgetfulness. Be undeceived, oh, eager Soul! Desire seeks, Love gives; desire leads inevitably to satiety; satiety to disgust; disgust to despair, despair to death, and death to oblivion ! So rapid runs the scale from birth to death. Now, listen to the scale from birth to Life. Love seeketh, opportunity, opportunity seeketh action, action begetteth zest, zest begets inspiration, and these aspire toward the light of life, the *Amrita* of the gods, and the springs of Immortal Life. These are the two poles of one being, and man is himself the arbiter of his own fate. This is no strained philosophy, no subtle mysticism, but the one law of action, the Perfect Law of Love. Between this and the law of hate are only walking shadows, Maya, delusions all. Here lies the secret of happy homes, of restful lives, of beautiful children, of a redeemed humanity.

That man or woman walks in a bewildering delusion that leads only to sorrow and repentance, who imagines that by scorning the common task, or neglecting the obligation already voluntarily assumed, a higher life can be attained. If one finds himself chained to a beast by a voluntary act, the price of his liberation is to lead the beast up toward humanity, not by brutish goads, or superior scorn, but by the light of love. When every task is accomplished, and every duty done, and discouragement rests upon that soul toiling patiently with heavy burden, lo! the dawn of humanity in the one is the birth of divinity in the other. This is, indeed, the Way and the truth of The Life. [Page 15]

Other religions and all other associations of men drive many beings more or less asunder, build high and hard walls, and beget pride, and cast and creed. The old Wisdom-religion draws men together like the living elements of one body. No true Theosophy ever rent asunder even an unhappy, because an inharmonious, home; but rather it everywhere and at all times commands that harmony be brought out of discord, love out of desire, life out of death. Those who keenly feel discord and find themselves in the midst of it, are there for the sake of opportunity, and if they, too, fall into discord, how shall they proceed to action, and from action to zest, and so on to the fountains of life. Only they who have proved faithful over a few things shall be rulers over many, Shall he who knows no discipline be captain of a company or general of an army ?

It is to the young, in whom desire is strong, and love an unknown realm, that the higher life promises most, no matter whether they seek the mystic realm to become lovers of mankind, or seek in quiet ways the common path as builders of happy homes and parents of healthful and happy children, and so help to redeem the world. The field of life lies virgin all before them, and the one bar to happiness, the one bar to love, is *Self*, just as it is also a bar to theosophical progress. In the common lot of man and woman in

married life, if each will demand nothing, and give all; if each will forget the desire of self before the good and the happiness of the other, they will find themselves drawing more closely together instead of wider and wider apart. Each will outdo the other in deeds of kindness and words of love. Having thus nourished the sacred flame of love to the mastery of themselves and the putting down of Self, their lives will broaden and their sympathies extend, till their influence embraces other lives, and inspires other homes, thus helping on the reign of Brotherhood. Love may thus illumine every spot and inspire every life. It is thus that Theosophy teaches the law of love and the reign of Universal Brotherhood. It is, indeed, the law of the heart rather than of the head, and yet none so sure to know and to understand as the unselfish. The lower *Manas*, mere intellectuality, anchored to sensation and to desire, is always blind to the higher truths; it grovels and is hemmed in by the narrow bounds of sense and time. Self is the partition wall by which man separates himself on the one hand from human kind, and on the other from his higher self. It is thus that man is at war with himself, as with all below and all above him. It is thus that man suffers and grows old and dies. The law of his life is at war with the conditions of his environment. This is indeed the old, old story. Disappointment follows desire as its shadow, till the shadow becomes the substance, and impotent desire now wasted to a shadow hangs upon the heels of despair, and life itself is vanquished!

What sufferings are endured in this primary school of life! and yet with what willing feet and beating hearts do men and women enter the lists [Page 16] un-willing to save their lives by burying self: longing for love like blind children wailing for the tender mother whom they cannot see; putting it aside when it is within their very grasp; seeking it through earth, and hell, and heaven, when they have closed its golden portals within their own souls.

Open, then, the golden gate!
And let the god of Love come in;
And the old story shall become the new song.