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AND THE
WOMAN'S
MOVEMENT



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THE RIDDLE OF LIFE SERIES—No. IV.

THEOSOPHY
AND
THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT.

By C. DESPARD

PRESIDENT OF THE
WOMEN'S FREEDOM
LEAGUE



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FOREWORD.

"The only live movement in the world to-day is the woman's movement." This has been said many times lately and those who spoke were men.

Possibly it is an exaggerated statement, yet there can be little doubt that there is something behind it. When we see other movements slack—even those which make for urgently needed social reforms; when, while men find it hard to get ardent work or quickening enthusiasm from men, women are proving themselves ready, not only for strenuous self-abnegating service, but for suffering and death, if so their cause may be served, we cannot help asking what it means.

There is certainly, we feel, something new in all this. Women, indeed, in twos and threes, here and there, have always shown heroism, pluck and endurance; but, for the most part it has been for men and with them. Now—they stand by themselves. They make their own demands. They seek such recognition as shall establish their right to true, effective motherhood of nations and races.

How has it all come about and why is the movement so strong?

Because it is in the direct line of spiritual evolution. That seems to some, who have been thinking out this strange problem, the only possible reason.

Before, however, this can be made clear; before the close connection between the woman's movement and the spiritual awakening that marked the closing decades of last century can be understood, it will be necessary to show what the woman's movement means and how it has arisen. In order to do this the present relations between man and woman, with the effect of those relations

FOREWORD.

upon society and the world of to-morrow will have to be observed ; and we may find that, before any real progress can be made, these will have to be radically changed. This, indeed, lies at the root of the woman's movement. That there have been serious mistakes and that these mistakes, with the stress laid upon them by those who, seeking to render the old bad order permanent, try to throw discredit on the whole movement, have caused many and grievous misunderstandings, no one can deny. Nevertheless, as an outstanding fact, we have the great international ever-widening-out drama of woman's newly-awakened consciousness, making for itself fresh modes of manifestation in the world of life.

The object of this book will be to show that the woman's movement, isolated and phenomenal as it may seem to be, does not stand alone, but with the other movements of the time is preparing for that "one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

CHAPTER I.

PRESENT RELATIONS.

No one who, with any sort of insight, looks out into the world to-day can fail to see that, so far as society is concerned, there is something radically wrong. Here, on the one hand, we have all the material for a great and splendid civilization: there, on the other, we have, for by far the greater number of our people, a manner of living in comparison with which the forest-life of our barbaric ancestors must have been little short of Paradise.

The divergence is so great, the contrasts are so appalling, that many are moved to ask, how has it come about? What is the reason of all this misery? Why has not Humanity, with its mighty resources, its cleverness and its wisdom, been able to build up a better House of Life for itself?

Many answers may be given. What, I believe, comes nearest to the truth is that we are living under false and unnatural conditions. Man with woman; man with man; men and women with children; human beings with the dumb animal world—we are living wrongly. Initial mistakes, accepted as truths, have formed a basis for conduct: non-understanding has governed our intercourse and the result has been confusion. All this is aggravated by the indubitable fact that we are not living up to our own professed convictions. Most of those who are called respectable—and from these the governing classes are drawn—follow some form of religion. As professing church members they praise and cherish high ideals.

For instance! There is no great religion which has ever dominated large masses of the people that has not had as one of its fundamental principles The Brotherhood of Man. Every one of the Messengers from the Eternal who, from time to time, have taught Humanity, has proclaimed the Unity of all life in the Divine. And these truths have been preached by followers of the Masters, and have been professed by innumerable disciples. But in action they have been contradicted.

I was once told by a man of large experience in national and mercantile business, that to follow out practically the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount would mean turning Society upside down. I answered, naturally, "So much the better for Society," and then I remembered what was said by John Ruskin when someone complained to him about backsliders from Church-membership. "Upon the way on which most of us are going," he said, "the sooner we slide back the better!" and he added this significant word, "Slide back to the cradle if going on is to the grave."

That is an admirable piece of advice. Trying to apply it we may perhaps find that we shall never really advance—we shall never lay the first stone of a truly-balanced social life, until conquering our twentieth-century pride, we make up our minds to retrace our steps.

Our relations, one with the other, are wrong and unnatural. Having fully realized this, we shall be ready, with the consciousness of past failure behind us, to return to those which are natural and right.

Other writers, showing the effect of the spiritual revival which is going on amongst us, have dealt, in this series, with individual development and social reconstruction. My object is to show the place of the woman's movement in this great upheaval.

As regards present relations between man and woman, it must be evident to all those who

observe and think, that they are, in the highest degree, anti-social. Long ago that peculiarly clear reasoner, John Stuart Mill, pointed this out.

The family is the unit of the State and the source of its wealth. That which poisons or degrades the family must weaken and impoverish the State. While, therefore, woman is used and not respected, while she is deprived of the joy of motherhood and the royal gift of human independence, while Public Opinion permits her work to be unrewarded and her life and honour to be recklessly sacrificed, the family will suffer. It cannot escape. "A nation never rises permanently above the level of its women." We shall not have a strong, wise and noble race, capable of self-government, on the one hand, and of reverence for beauty and greatness on the other—a nation able to receive and to follow practically the teaching of the Wise Ones, until we have a true, strong, well-developed and finely educated generation of women.

That constitutes the tremendous importance of the woman's movement.

Changed relations! It may seem a trite saying, but it needs to be said that the very first step in our return to natural relations will be a full recognition of the common humanity of man and woman—that they are not, that is to say, different, and on the whole, alien races, whom nature, for purposes of her own, brings together at certain parts of their lives; but that, in nature, in essence and in aim, albeit unconsciously, they are one.

Some, no doubt, would indignantly deny that this recognition is necessary; but, in all sorts of ways, we find that it is.

Up to a recent date in our later history—for it was not altogether so in the middle ages—woman was not considered at all save in her relations to man, as his wife, his mother, his sister. The stupid law of *coverture* exists still. A woman

does not inherit with her brother. A man of means may leave his life-long servant, the mother of his children, destitute. Up to a very recent date, a married woman had no property, even in her own labour and practically no civil rights. To-day, she must leave her husband's home, with his and her children, before she can force him to give her a fair share of his inherited wealth or of his earnings for the maintenance of the children and as a return for the services which she is daily rendering him.

Not only so, but in the late controversies, ideal pictures of the sexes have been drawn, setting them one against the other. I remember one, by an eloquent lady. She spoke of man as strong, courageous, wise, full of initiative, cold and clear in intellect, trustworthy in judgment; of woman as loving, tender, devoted, self-sacrificing; and from this she argued that woman should stay at home submissively, giving obedience to her liege-lord, and that man should go out into the world, subdue it, mould it and make the laws by which it is to be governed.

Nothing could be more untrue to Human Nature. For Humanity, in common with every other known form of life, is dual. "In the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them."

So spake the seer to the ancient world and it was only later, when the mystery of evil began to work, that the parable of the Fall, which has its own significance, was given, presumably as an explanation of what had then taken place—of a change that had wrought disastrously for the human family. Let it never be forgotten that the subjection of woman to man came in with a curse.

All this is comparatively easy to understand by those who have studied the truths of the ancient wisdom which it is the mission of Theosophy to bring into the world. Long ago, in dim antiquity, those who, heaven-taught, brought of

their light to the people, proclaimed that they were pilgrims of Eternity. From other lives proceeding towards other lives advancing they move forward on their divine quest. Every kind of Experience has to be gained by the Soul before it can consciously return to its Eternal Source. Every kind of quality has to be evolved. The body which is merely the temporary form of the indwelling spirit, functions here through sex. In spiritual qualities there is no sex. The traveller, bringing his sheaves with him, as he passes from life to life, may come to-day as a man and in the distant to-morrow as a woman.

In the spiritual world, which the Masters taught is our true home, there is no such distinction. "There," said a Master, "shall be neither marrying, nor giving in marriage; but they shall be as the angels of God in heaven."

Those who join the Theosophical Society are required to take one pledge—and one only. It is the acceptance of the truth of Brotherhood—not theoretically alone, but practically. Our first object is "to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour."

In the light of the ancient wisdom that pledge can be understood. It can also be seen clearly how great a change would take place in Society if it could be generally accepted and practically followed out.

Be it noticed that the word used is "distinction," not difference. And this is where the confusion has arisen. Nature, we are told, is not equal. She gives to one and she withholds from another. That, from the superficial point of view, can be easily proved. Where the difficulty comes in is with the use that is made of the differences. It is when these are interpreted into superiorities and include a right to domination that wrong relations begin.

And so again we come back to the fact that to

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get rightly placed—to begin our lives again as spiritual children of the Father of Lights—we must retrace our steps; we must return to the old simple relations of the family—mutual love, mutual service, mutual help and a common reverence for that in which “we live and move and have our being”—“God who is our Home.”

CHAPTER II.

THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT.

There are moments in the world's history when ideas that have been moving in the world of thought, realized by a few and dreaded by many, enter into manifestation. This is such a moment. When, in the future, the record of the twentieth century comes to be written, it will be known as an era of unrest on the one hand and of great movements on the other. Both of these had their beginning in the thought of last century, notably the two which are playing so large a part in the political and economic life of the last few years, the labour movement and the woman's movement, which have grown out of the common unrest.

That the natural kinship between these two upheavals is beginning not only to be felt theoretically, but to enter into practical action constitutes one of the signs of the times. Both women and labour are necessary to the world; both are dissatisfied; both have dimly felt their power; both, half-consciously, are touched with the spiritual forces that are being poured out; both are constructive.

In dealing with the woman's movement, we deal, unavoidably, with labour, for woman is within—she forms a part of all the labour that is done under the sun. Without her great primal industry, that of child-bearing and child-rearing, there would be no industry at all. It is idle, then, to argue, as so many do, that the woman's movement is a strange and unnatural thing, arising out of the general want of balance of the times.

Linked with labour, it is linked also with the two other great movements; that which has forced

politicians and statesmen to legislate for the child and scientists to consider it, and the modern tendency, for it is still little more, that draws different nations together in mutual understanding and friendship.

Before we go any further, however, it may be well to ask what the woman's movement really means and how it is to develop. Is it, as some say, an evanescent thing, born of the general turbulence of the times, which, when wise, and, if necessary, drastic measures are used to repress it, will presently pass away, leaving the coast clear for these beneficent measures of social reform which politicians of both parties are preparing; or is it real?—Does it mark a distinct phase in that struggle for social righteousness which, though for the most part unrecognised, has been in progress through the ages.

At the outset of our enquiry we are faced with one remarkable fact. In common with the other movements that are agitating our country to-day, the woman's movement is world-wide. Possibly, as our enquiry proceeds, we may find that the same great forces lie behind it. Setting aside, for a moment, this larger aspect, let us see whence it has arisen and how it has developed here in Great Britain.

The first strong impetus was given to it, no doubt, by the masculinity and the consequent materialism of the last century. It is true that, in the nineteenth century, many great souls were born. Percy Shelley, Joseph Mazzini, Robert Owen and William Morris amongst the men, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler amongst the women—representatives these of many other great thinkers and practical workers—set light to the torch which is flaming now.

Looking back into the political, social and intellectual history of the last century, we can see more clearly, it may be, than in any other era, two opposing forces at work. The one was

material, the other spiritual. As I consider the first of these I am often reminded of the Scriptural parable, the Tower of Babel. Earth was to be so arranged as to defy Fate. Indefatigable research into the hidden ways of life, brilliant invention, discovery of the latent powers possessed by earth's products, when human industry and skill, working in combination, are brought to bear upon them, marked the latter half of the 19th century. In all this, man was the initiator. He created the new machine, which, in its awful progress, has crushed so many men, women and children under its wheels. As was said lately by a writer in the *New Age*, Industry belongs to man. He has created it for himself and he dominates it.

Woman, compelled by hunger, goes out into the labour-market. Because industry belongs to man, because, in an earlier age, he removed it from the home to the factory, he is jealous of her presence there. Man rules industry; man also dominates the legislation. This was wrought out through the unisexual tendency of the last century and therefore woman, forced into the labour-market, finds herself there on sufferance. Generally, throughout the social, economic and political life of last century, man has been the dominant partner. Woman herself he has moulded to his will. The soft, delicate, fragile girl of the mid-Victorian era, who faded into the pale and submissive housewife, was his creation. She made a fine foil to his strength and she ministered to his glory.

Never, except perhaps in the latter days of the Roman Empire, was there a more materialistic period than that through which we have just been passing. The very religion of those days was tinged with this spirit. "Save your own soul," was the cry of the pious. "Come apart from this corrupt generation." Young men and women were taught how to make the best of both worlds. Comfort here and safety hereafter, were the

aspirations of the respectable citizen—family-prayers, the family-pew, setting a good example to those beneath you in social degree by going to church once in the Sunday, kindness to your wife, discipline to the children; this, with doing the best you could in business, constituted the ideal of citizenship to the respectable Briton, who formed a very large part of the only sort of Society that was thought much of in those days. The religious, in common with the industrial ideal, was male, and woman accepted it from man. There were, indeed, rebels even then. But a woman who rebelled stood alone: her women-friends were against her, and in many cases, as in that of Mary Wolstonecraft, she had to seek friendships with men to appease the hunger of the heart.

There is that in a materialistic atmosphere which is peculiarly hurtful to woman. Either she withers and pines when subjected to its influence, or she takes on qualities which are not her own. The latter half of the eighteenth century and the greater part of the nineteenth, was not a happy period for women and the lack of political and spiritual imagination in so many of the men of our day may have partly arisen from this cause. They are the sons of women whose lives have been led under cramped conditions. To rear a strong, intelligent and successful race of men, as well as of women, we need a generation of independent, vigorous and well-developed women.

Could it have been this—disappointment with her achievement—a reaching out after something better, which, rather as a divine instinct than as a distinct conception, gave rise to what is known now as the woman's movement? We know, in any case, that the modern phase of this movement began with the demand for education. Women, in those days, were not educated at all. Such technical and business-training as the boys received was not thought necessary for them. The derisive nick-name "blue-stocking," applied



MME. BLAVATSKY.

to those who studied literature or philosophy, marked the sort of estimate formed by Society of the learned woman. Art, music, dancing, all these were accomplishments acquired by a girl to make herself attractive and not for any beauty or gladness in themselves. Everything attempted by the so-called educated woman of that day was done as an amateur. Exactitude, logic, concentration, found no place in the education of those who, during the greater part of their lives, were to be either butterflies or drudges.

And all this, arising naturally out of the general social ideals, formed a necessary part of the masculinity of the period with which I am dealing. While man was occupied in his great industrial enterprises—building ships and factories—inventing and making machines—strengthening his national defences—finding markets for the natural and manufactured products of his labour all over the world, woman, it was expected, should be fulfilling what he called her proper functions,—bearing and rearing the children—ministering to his necessities at home (long ago he had taken the superintendence of production out of her hands), healing him, under male direction, when he was wounded and nursing him when he was ill. Surely, he maintained, this was a large enough sphere of activity!

Woman, to his astonishment, found that it was not. She asked to have her share of the universities and colleges, of the art schools and gymnasia. She grew ashamed of her prettiness, her dainty sweetness and subjection. She demanded to carve out a career for herself like her brother.

Long and bitter was the struggle, for if she had her instinct, so also had the man. When woman won her place in the higher education, when she gained triumphs over his head, he began to see the beginning of the end. The world he loved and the woman he adored (while she was

young and pretty) were passing away. Hence the difficulty experienced by the pioneers in their first great struggle.

In the end, as we know, woman won a partial victory. She was admitted into the universities, not yet "on the same terms as man," who indeed very soon began to feel the effect of her new enthusiasm: the gates of certain careers were opened to her; and this made it impossible for man to shield her, as would then have been said, from knowledge of many things that she was told could not possibly add to her happiness.

Boards of guardians, school boards, public offices were opened to women. The elder pioneers who had fought for their place in a world which needed reconstruction, were followed by younger women, instinct with the new-born spirit of independence. These, in their turn, made discoveries. Brought within the charmed circle of a society which men had dominated they found their reason and their moral sense outraged. Where the elder women had fought abuses in detail these, in their audacity, looked behind the abuses. They said virtually "This state of things cannot have arisen of itself. It is unnatural, and therefore evil. We will seek out the cause of the mischief."

So the note was struck. Sheltered woman came out of her cave and dared to look at the world with her own eyes. That those eyes should see dimly at first need be no matter for wonder: nor need any true-hearted man or woman be surprised or discouraged over the mistakes that were made.

The men in authority made far more grievous mistakes than the women. They too saw dimly; only comparatively few of them perceived that they were face to face with a revolt, such as the world had never seen before. Man had, in the highest service, separated himself from woman. He said "Yours is the service of the family, under my supreme direction: mine is the

service of the State, with which you must not meddle." Suddenly, to his amazement, he discovered that woman was separating herself from him, that she was declining, even in the State, seriously to obey him: that independently of him, she was building up visions of a world in which masculinity should be set in its proper place, in which the voice of the woman, mother and worker, should be heard.

And this is not the only land where the revolt has arisen, and from which the demand has gone forth; but, in consequence of two local peculiarities—the dogged obstinacy of British politicians, and the fictitious influence of leading Society women, there can be no doubt that here, in Great Britain, the battle has been more fiercely waged than anywhere else. Women abroad have often spoken of our country as the Storm-centre of the woman's movement.

Superiority in physical force was the first weapon which was used by the opponent of Woman's Suffrage. He has in his hands the soldiery, the police-force, the courts of law. He used them all. Women, for slight infringements of police regulations, were arrested, tried, and in spite of conflicting evidence, condemned to terms of imprisonment, varying in length and severity according to the malice of their accusers, or the caprice of the magistrates who tried them.

I remember how one old magistrate, in his curious simplicity, explained the situation. Shaking his head after the infliction of a ridiculously severe sentence he said: "It shall come to an end. It must come to an end. I will bring it to an end."

In those words spoke impotent and bewildered masculinity. He spoke in vain, for every woman who suffered in the cause in those early militant days held her suffering as a sacrament, which hallowed and purified her.

In addition to all this, glimpses of the under-

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world of sorrow and humiliation which has been and is the portion of so many, came to our women. Literally they saw. Seeing they went out into the world again, armed with a new force, quickened by a fresh inspiration.

That force is at work now, and it will never cease to work until men as well as women realize practically that there is no parting of the ways where men and women are concerned: that what hurts one hurts the other: that the dual humanity to which, by the divine fiat, authority over the visible universe was given, must work as one, if that universe of matter is to be redeemed and sanctified.

CHAPTER III.

THE FORCE BEHIND.

I have spoken of one of the trends of tendency in the Nineteenth Century, and I found its symbol in the Tower of Babel—a one-sided building-up of the House of Life, whose result was confusion.

There was another and it moved in an entirely opposite direction. It began to show itself in what is known as the mid-Victorian era. At that time masculinity had achieved some of its highest triumphs, science, with its marvellous discoveries was lauded to the skies: there were powerful individuals dominating, there were humble workers and patient women obeying. Into this came startling emotional upheavals. Religious revivals swept the country. Old-fashioned orthodoxy was shaken out of its complacent slumber. The Gospel of Salvation or damnation for an entity, which man called his soul, was preached everywhere; and thousands were moved. For a time it may almost be said that religion became fashionable. Dogma and doctrine—what it was safe to believe and dangerous to doubt—possessed an absorbing interest. The soul and its condition was a constant topic of conversation. In the churches and outside of them great preachers were lionized, and man-worship went hand in hand with spiritual adoration. Many believed that the day of salvation for the world had dawned.

For the most part, however, it was only the point of view that had changed. Leigh Hunt wittily characterized the attitude of many in his day as "otherworldliness." The body had dominated in the past. Then it was the turn of the

soul for consideration: but it was still the self of form. Heaven and Hell were material.

Nevertheless the Evangelical movement of the fifties and sixties, with the Tractarian controversy and the revival of Ritual which followed it, had a distinct and even powerful effect on these later developments which are perplexing many to-day.

One feature stands out prominently in this strange and fascinating history: a recognition by Humanity of its divine heritage of liberty—mental and spiritual, no less than physical—with a determined effort to achieve it. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," said one of the greatest of the Masters. Patiently, if sometimes blindly the search for Truth was set on foot.

A strong band of men and women, inheriting from the philosophers of the eighteenth century, shook off the fetters of ecclesiasticism. They were neither Epicureans nor Atheists. It was not because the fetters held them back from sensual enjoyment or closed the door to licence that they discarded them, for many were pure and noble human beings; and they did not dogmatize. They called themselves modestly Agnostics. What they said practically was: "Of heaven, of hell, of any hereafter for the human soul we know nothing. These may be: they may not be. We have no plummet with which to sound the invisible. Of one thing alone we are certain. We are here in a world of living, toiling, suffering human beings. If we can live so as to help these we shall have lived well. Concerning what may lie beyond, we will not trouble ourselves or them."

Here we see the strong striking out for freedom. Another band of searchers was at work. These were students. Not satisfied with the records which their own church could supply, they delved deeply into the ancient literatures of other nations and races. Egypt, Greece, Persia, India were visited by these indefatigable scholars.

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Stones, pillars of temples, mummy cases, papyri—everything they could find that might throw light upon religion and mythology was examined and, with extraordinary patience, deciphered, and the result was a discovery which, for the time, shook the religious world to its foundations, but which actually forms the basis of what, we believe, will be the uniting of diverging creeds and jarring sects into one religion, universal as air and light.

These students, when they set out upon their quest, looked upon their own religion as unique—believed that the truths which it revealed had come into the world with the Divine founder of their faith. To their surprise they found records of the faith of ancient peoples in these truths dating from a time in the world's history long before their Founder came upon the Earth.

In these researches two great truths came out clearly, in different forms, but with always the same distinctness and power—that God, the eternal Source of All Life IS—that Life is God and that Death is the rending of the veil—the form—through which, for a fleeting moment, the Divine manifests. That therefore all Life being one in its Divine Source, is in itself one, and that human brotherhood is a Reality in Nature.

The discovery alarmed some. If their own religion did not, as they had been taught, stand by itself as a unique revelation, in what were they to trust?

But there was no drawing back. The discovery had been made. The bolt had fallen out of the blue. Thought had to be shaped to meet the new requirements.

There were other strange occurrences in those days. Again, in what happened there was nothing new. As it had been before, so it was then. Right through the history of the world had run stories of persons with strange and unusual powers—magicians, seers, prophets, wizards and those who could divine; but now,

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what had been hidden seemed suddenly to come to the surface.

No doubt it was all necessary. The revolt: the discovery: the momentary rending of the veil that hides the living from the dead, prepared the way for a new outpouring of the divine ancient wisdom.

The world had to be roused from its apathy, to be shocked out of its self-sufficiency, before the voice of the Masters could be heard; and the agnostic, the scholar, the spiritualist, with the noble men and women who were fighting slavery and humanizing the penal code and reforming prisons and demanding education for the children of the workers and factory-laws to protect them, were all making ready for the spiritual uprising that marked the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the effect of which has been to broaden and deepen the religious consciousness of the world.

In 1875 the Theosophical Society was born. Small, poor, unnoticed, save by a very few, it came into the modern world. That it was to be an instrument in the hands of the Masters for the formation of a new order: that it was to move as an impelling force behind the mighty problems by which the generation that gave it birth was being stirred: that, finally, it was to solve them, only one or two, even of its founders, imagined. Yet now, to hundreds of thoughtful minds, this is the fact that has been realized, this is the expectation that has come. We ask, naturally, whence has it arisen? How have the expectation and the hope been born?

In seeking to answer these questions let us see what it is that Theosophy has brought to us.

As we analyse its teaching two points stand out clearly. First, that through the return to the world of long-hidden wisdom, men and women are coming to a truer knowledge of themselves. In the maze of ignorance, convention and prejudice through which they have been blindly wandering:

in the glamour of material conquest: in the passion for ease and luxury and splendour, human beings have put themselves in bonds. They have given up their inheritance for a mess of pottage. While they have been striving for ignoble ends, the old gift of royal independence has slipped out of their hands.

With the call of the ancient wisdom they are regaining their heritage—independence—and with it responsibility. That life to-day and to-morrow and throughout the ages is, in the highest and truest sense, moulded by ourselves and that, as we mould our own lives, we deeply affect the life of the world, this is the message of Theosophy “Stand up on thy feet like a man, for I will demand of thee and answer thou me.” “As a man soweth, so shall he also reap.” “No vicarious atonement will satisfy the instincts of the true lover of Reality. He desires life with all its mistakes and accidents, the high, heroic life of the chivalry of God.”

With this individual responsibility we have another point insisted upon, that life itself is one and that the human spirit, manifesting in the physical universe through its veil of flesh, is actually a ray of the Divine, passing on from life to life and carrying with it the sum of experience gained, to be wrought into qualities in the spiritual worlds.

Consciously and sub-consciously these truths are working, and the mysterious unrest which troubles so many minds to-day is one of the results. Out of this unrest the great movements of the world have sprung. It would be easy indeed to show that each one of them is driven forward by the same forces—economic, on the one side, spiritual on the other. Dealing with the woman's movement it is impossible to look back upon its history without feeling that, at the back of it, there is this secret force and that it belongs to the very nature of things. Knowledge, power,

fervour, courage and endurance, these, which have characterized the woman's campaign in Great Britain, do not and cannot arise spontaneously. There has been no specially new form of oppression to goad our women into revolt. As a fact, their position is better than it was fifty years ago. Yet then, save in a few, the fire slumbered. What has made it now break into flame? Surely it is in the spiritual world as in its natural counterpart. The sleeping element has been touched by a living spark and the result has been fire—unquenchable until its work is done. It is probable that only a few of those whom the fire of enthusiasm has touched understand the nature of the force that has gripped them. They will say that the sorrow of the world has moved them: that love and pity will not let them rest: that they feel in themselves, pain, embittered by remorse, as they hear the cry of their sisters: that in these—sold, degraded, humiliated—womanhood, that womanhood which pulses in their own veins, is outraged—and that, therefore, they cannot be silent: they must agitate, work, give—body, mind, reputation, even to individual liberty—hoping that through them the great sorrow may be healed.

Against such a spirit, as our rulers have found out, there is no possibility of fighting.

But what does it mean? Nothing short of this—that the spiritual voices which are going out into the world to-day have found their most ardent response in the heart of woman. Over and over again worldly-wise people have questioned the warrior-women, have asked, "Why do you do these things? Would it not be better to be quiet and wait?" The answer is always the same. "We don't know why. We cannot help ourselves. We must go on until we die and then others will come to take our place, for our cause cannot die." They know, because of the spiritual force that is behind them—because of the new light that has shone upon their path.

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It is not unnatural that this should have come to pass, for distress and perplexity are abroad. The nineteenth century boasted of its culture, its science, its far-reaching civilization. The twentieth century is taking stock of these things. What, after all, has modern civilization done? It has not brought peace; it has not brought happiness. To some, for a brief time, a pale satisfaction; to the vast multitudes of the human race, toil, monotonous, ill-paid drudgery or sheer misery. Right through the heart of Society there is pulsing a desire for such reconstruction as may bring about peace and just relations; and before this gigantic demand statesmen and politicians, even the best of them, stand baffled. They lack imagination. They cannot so much as conceive a state of society radically different from that in which they have been brought up. They see that things are wrong and they try to alter them: here a little and there a little they will make concessions; aged workers shall have a small pension; destitute children shall be fed; by elaborate Insurance Acts, hard workers shall be taught the virtue of thrift and those who profit from the fruits of their labour shall be compelled to pay part of the toll: land taxes shall be imposed: labour bureaux shall be instituted. But nothing seems to bring satisfaction. For outside the restless world of politics, in the soul of the mystic, in the spiritual awakening, that like the spring's wind of prophecy is sweeping over the world, and in the intuitive heart of woman, the City Beautiful of the day that is to be is taking form.

Therefore the woman's movement is strong, therefore it is bound to be triumphant and it is here, in the vision which grows out of the honest recognition of human brotherhood, without distinction of sex and class, that the woman's movement and Theosophy touch and meet.

CHAPTER IV.

READJUSTMENTS.

I have now made an effort to show that the falsity of the present relations between man and woman lies at the base of many of the worst evils with which Humanity has to struggle. From the recognition of this as a fact in nature, blind and uninformed though it still may be, the woman's movement, with all its far-reaching possibilities, has sprung. The meaning and scope of that movement and the forces that lie behind it have also been touched upon; and here we have found the kinship between the revolt of the modern woman and that spiritual uprising which is known as Theosophy.

It is worthy of note that the Masters of Wisdom, in their latest message to Humanity, have found some of their best interpreters in women—chiefly those two who are venerated now, not within the Theosophical Society alone, but everywhere throughout the world—Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, through whose hand the Secret Doctrine was given; and the beloved President of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant, who, because of her intellectual honesty and readiness to go withersoever the wisdom-voice might call her, was chosen to follow along the difficult and dangerous Path that leads to world-redemption.

We cannot but feel that this, which may seem to some to be merely a coincidence, is a real indication of what may be expected when women have achieved their freedom.

In the meantime, pursuing our enquiry, let us try to find out, in greater detail, what is needed, how these unnatural relations between the sexes can be changed and the social readjustments

that must take place before the ideals set before us by the Masters of Wisdom can enter into manifestation.

A word about Theosophy. Those who are most fully imbued with its spirit know that one of the first tasks set before the learner is the formation of character. He has to form such qualities: he has to develop such powers as will enable him, not only himself to climb the ladder of life, but to help forward the spiritual evolution of the world. Humanity's Ascent is the watch-word that he is taught to have constantly before him. In considering the progress of the divinely-taught pilgrim, I seem to see, sometimes, a mountain, whose base is upon the Earth, whose summit is lost in impenetrable clouds—on it, a climber mounting painfully. One hand is above his head to grasp and make sure of the next step; the other is reaching down so that the brother or sister who has not mounted so far may have help: and sometimes I see the one below passing his helper swiftly, moving, it may be, out of his ken altogether. But the helper divinely-taught will not murmur, rather he will rejoice as to the help which may be given, for he knows that has been for Humanity.

Nothing has been more certainly proved than the effect of environment, not only upon the body, but upon the mind. That which lowers the vitality of a human being makes resistance of vice and evil harder. That which degrades the individual checks high and noble impulses. Fear is the parent of contempt on the one hand and of subtlety on the other. If we would grow up into the vision of perfect humanity, which the great ones of the past have set before us, we must create a spiritual atmosphere in which that vision can move freely. While mutual contempt, fear and enforced servility are daily generated in the family, in the workshop and in the state, there can be no fine spiritual discrimination. Hence a

change in the relations between man and woman is the first requisite for a changed order.

This means (a) the recognition of an equal moral standard, (b) not uniformity, which is a foolish perversion of our demand, but unity, (c) that in the rebuilding of national and international life, women shall stand side by side with their brothers and (d) that Public Opinion, which is beginning to be roused by some of these questions, be kept alive, instructed and active, until it takes the place in the community of conscience in the individual.

Equal moral standard! Here certainly the ancient wisdom will help us. For on every ego it makes the same demand. "Thou art; and in that being of thine thou art responsible. Do the best that is in thee, if thou desire not to fall back from the path."

Each—man, woman—must stand alone for self-judgment. "The law of man can be broken," says Mrs. Besant in one of her books of instruction, "but no law of nature can be broken—the law remains the same whatever you may do. You may break yourself to pieces against it, but the Law will remain unchanged." That law has no punishments: it has only results, and these are the same for all.

For instance! Man, in obedience to what physiologists, who are ignorant of the higher law, would call his imperative impulses or his overmastering passion, has broken and is perpetually breaking the law of righteousness. For his health, even, it may be, for his mental sanity, certain indulgences, which cannot be obtained legitimately, must, he believes, be had. He takes them, regardless of consequences. He deliberately sacrifices other lives to his own; and Public Opinion, trained in opportunism, does not blame him, because he is a man and must not be asked to hold his passions in check. Man-made law holds him scatheless. Society receives him. No

human power compels him to lead the separate life of one who has transgressed against an immutable law. But, as sure as fate, the result follows. In the horror and misery and piteous despair of to-day, in the sudden awakening of men and women to a knowledge of that which is going on perpetually in the dark underworld of our great cities, in the helplessness of those who govern the country to find a way out of the imbroglio, except in the worn-out method of physical degradation and temporary imprisonment of those who supply what men everywhere are demanding, we have the answer of nature to the law-breaker. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

To keep the family pure—futile dream under such conditions—the transgression of woman is, by law and custom, dealt with differently from the transgression of men. The law, which pretends to be no respecter of persons, is not equal. Permitting the young man to "sow his wild oats," custom and convention demand that the young woman, unless she chooses to segregate herself altogether from her own world, shall lead a life outwardly of perfect virtue. What passion she may have must be kept in strict subjection. Even the natural yearning for motherhood must be held in check, until marriage, often contracted in absolute ignorance, either brings her heart's desire or thrusts her into a living tomb.

It is across these false and cruel conventions that woman, awakened to society's danger, is striking in her movement towards unity and freedom. Her very first demand is for an equal moral standard.

Look at this side of the movement from another point of view.

Nothing has ever been more clearly laid down by true spiritual teachers than the importance, not only to the individual, but to the whole human

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race, of high and noble character. "Be ye perfect," said the Master, Christ, "even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect."

How is character to be sought? Every human being must, sooner or later, work out that problem. The same Master said, "strive" which means literally, "agonize, to enter the straight path." Were society rightly placed—were the relations between human beings clear, simple and natural, every sort of help would be given to the striving soul.

It is one of the laws of spiritual, and indeed, to some small degree, of physical life, that it is powerfully affected by admiration and desire. So much is this the case that human beings tend to become like that to which they aspire, tend also to sink to the level of low estimates, entertained by themselves or by those who influence them. Especially is this the case with the young. Set before them a high moral standard; let boys as well as girls understand that, whatever their difficulties may be, goodness is possible to everyone of them, and generally, they will respond. Allow them facility to accept the code which makes certain sins venial in a man and unpardonable in a woman and the moral sense of both is confused and weakened.

It would be impossible to measure the evil that has resulted to society from this one cause—an unequal moral code. If society is to be redeemed, if life is to be made sweet and pure, this readjustment must come about.

For, without the general recognition of an equal moral standard, the *unity* we seek is an impossible dream.

That is the next readjustment. Let it be clearly understood! There is no question here of uniformity. This is the mistake which lies at the root of many of our present difficulties. Diversity in unity—the one in the many—the many in the one—is the principle behind everything that is

beautiful and strong. The many, seeking blindly, independent one of the other and often in antagonism, makes for chaos. The one, dominating, superior, forcing the others to serve, makes for tyranny. This is made clear by the ancient wisdom. It is one of the immutable laws. The Master Christ, in his parable-teaching, set it frequently before His followers. "I and my Father are one." You in me and I in you, that we may be all made perfect together. "I am the vine: ye are the branches."

All this is familiar to the western world. From every church in Christendom the note of human unity is being sounded continually; yet these churches bless national armies and send them out to fight, and offer praise and thanks to the god of battles, when victory crowns their efforts. This, which has gone on throughout the ages, may seem mysterious in its inconsistency; but an explanation may be found. We, in the woman's movement, have begun to see that, until it is recognised that humanity is dual, and that therefore, in high quality and noble aspiration, in education, opportunity, labour-reward and human dignity, there can be no sex-distinction, the truth of the human and divine unity will never be brought into practical action—will never deeply influence the life of the world. What that influence will be and how it will affect society, I hope to bring forward later. In the meantime, let it be clearly understood that recognition of unity in diversity between man and woman is another of the readjustments through which the perplexing riddle of life may be solved.

So far, I have spoken of readjustments of relations as they affect family and individual life.

The woman's movement, more particularly in this country, goes further; and there is where the crux comes in. If there is to be readjustment in the family and in social relations, there must also

be readjustment in the state. In the rebuilding of our national and international life, we are demanding to stand side by side with our brothers. And here again we shall find that the teaching given to the world through Theosophy, will help us.

The state dominated by men, and, principally, men of a certain rank and station, has been and is, governed by expediency. The statesman, who has risen to a commanding position, partly through ability and partly through allegiance to his party in all its vicissitudes, with skilful pilotship at difficult moments, would lose his own chances and imperil his party if he did not act warily. He has to set his sail to favourable winds, in order to continue in power. Big interests have to be conciliated. Large measures of reform demanded by the people may be promised, but cannot be given in a hurry: as a general rule, can only be given piecemeal. High ideals, as possible of fulfilment, have very little place in the modern party-statesman's calculations. This cutting and trimming may succeed for a time; but the moment arrives when the people tire of it, and this comes to pass because, ignorant and inert as they may seem, they are actually nearer to realities, and therefore to the perception of truth, than their rulers. So it is certainly with woman, who, through her life-giving and administrative service, forms an integral and deeply important part of the life of the people.

Since hand-workers, in large numbers, have been given representation in the state, their uneasiness has found a vent—the only one that seemed possible—in thrusting one political party out of power and in giving the reins of government to the other. A part of the present political unrest arises from the circumstance that they are beginning to see the futility of this proceeding and then comes the deadlock. What is to be done? Democracy, much belauded — “the will of the people

shall prevail," was one of our late election-cries—finds itself baffled.

The formation of a third party was conceived and, even, to some extent, accomplished—a people's party that should truly represent those who live by the sweat of their brow. Small in number and lacking in resources, that party has only been able, so far, to play a waiting game, pressing for such legislation as the two dominant parties, that are, at any moment, ready to combine when the interests of their own class and order seem in jeopardy, will permit. In the meantime, they make no real contribution towards solving the problems with which the country is faced—phenomenal growth of expenditure on armaments, increasing wealth and increasing poverty, dangerous monopolies, unequal taxation, uneven justice, infant mortality, rise in the price of provisions without a corresponding rise in wages and, with these—inevitable sequence—physical deterioration of the workers.

It may be said that such evils as these cannot be cured by legislation. This, indeed, is the answer given, again and again, to women when they have urged their right to representation in the councils of the nation; and to a certain extent, this is true; but those who have studied the economic history of the country, know that much of the confusion, which has resulted in this great national misery, does actually arise from bad and one-sided legislation. Sex and class have sat in the "seats of the mighty"; and we have had masculinity on the one hand and materialism on the other. The laws have been restrictive, not creative. They have punished: they have not released.

Further, on the part of those who have held the reins of government during these last hundred years, there has been a wasteful haphazard in dealing with the nation's resources, that were it not for their ignorance of social and political

economy, might be denounced as criminal, with no attempt at forecast; a fatal inability to gauge the effect upon the country generally of economic changes which were passing under their eyes.

Take, as an example, the great industrial revolution of last century, through which, for skilled hand-work machinery was substituted. Many of the poor operatives of that day felt instinctively how the change would work out for themselves and their class; but they had no political power: they had no economic knowledge. They could only hit out blindly against the thing that threatened them, hurting themselves.

What about those in power? They had knowledge, of a sort. Heavy responsibility was upon them. Ought they not to have recognised this? Ought they not to have seen that to leave this great power in the hands of private individuals, who, to build up fortunes would not hesitate to play with the lives of the people, was to commit a sin, for which posterity would call them to account.

Alas! the moment has not yet come. Society is still too blind to see to what a dangerous pass it has been brought.

We know what happened. Britain became the workshop of the world. Agriculture languished, home-industries well-nigh disappeared, women and children were used up recklessly, Britain's mercantile resources grew; she threw out colonies: she added province to province, she had markets for her manufactures all over the world. But at home—what have we had?

The growing up of that which baffles the most energetic of our reformers—big unmanageable cities, pallid and joyless men and women, wasted fields, heaped high with rubbish, from which the pure beauty of Earth's green and gold mantle has departed, slum conditions for the workers and their children. We ask is that a natural growth? And we contend that it is not.

But—and here the difficulty comes in—how are we to return?

We must build up character, for that only will be effective in any honest effort that may be made to deal with these gigantic abuses—the character which regards the self of form as but a unit in the Great Self and as bound to the service of the world. It was said by one of the ancient teachers, “Give up thy life, if thou wouldst live.” Those who are ready to make the surrender will be pioneers in the crusade which the century will initiate. It is not extraordinary therefore that woman, who has felt the two forces, spiritual and material—that are driving us forward—felt them, it may be, more keenly than her brother—woman with the whip of hunger for her little ones and spiritual destitution for herself behind her, should demand to take her place beside him in the coming struggle.

On this account, we are asking as a necessary readjustment, that in the rebuilding of national and international life—that great task to which this generation is called—women shall stand side by side with their brothers. The birth of the new era is a love-birth: man and woman must stand beside the cradle of the young world.

It is said sometimes that it is ridiculous to lay so much stress on Parliament and representation, for law-making, on however perfect a scale, will not regenerate the world. That is true in a sense. But it is also profoundly true that we shall not have good laws, or a just and healthy administration of the resources of the State until the community demands them. Our legislature unconsciously, but none the less truly, reflects the character of the nation over which it rules. This is particularly true where democratic principles are professed. Therefore another, and an essential readjustment must be a face-round in Public Opinion. It is good to know that this has already begun. Through the woman's agitation, through the labour struggles, through the spiritual awakening of the last ten or

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twenty years, the eyes of men and women have been opened; they have seen deep down into the underworld of sorrow and misery, much of it preventible, and there has come to them the passionate desire to help and heal; Public Opinion has been aroused. It must not be allowed to sleep again until a remedy has been sought and found.

To sum up. Present relations between man woman and between class and class, being wrong and unnatural, certain readjustments are necessary.

A readjustment of character, which can only come to pass when Society allots an equal standard of morals to man and woman.

A readjustment of our law of action: not the interests of the individual self, but the interest of the all-self must be sought, the principles of unity must be brought into practical working.

A readjustment of the relations between man and woman, not only in the family, but in the State, woman being given the opportunity of larger and more effective service to the community.

A readjustment of that congeries of judgments, desires and other incentives to action, which is known generally as Public Opinion.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATION.

So far I have dealt generally with my subject, endeavouring to show how the woman's movement is affected by Theosophy. Entering into the question more deeply, it will be my object now to enquire into the reason for the seeming coincidence of this double revival: the spiritual sense, which had seemed to sleep in humanity, aroused into activity, and the new, and, to some, startling developments in the attitude of women towards themselves and the world.

Here it may be well to notice that although recognition of common citizen rights with men is one of the first planks in the woman's programme in Great Britain, and although, on that account, many of our activities have been moving in that direction, there are other demands.

Women are seeking economic independence. What is the meaning of that? Is it for themselves only, or does any large hope lie behind it?

Women are trying, here and there, to understand, and to set before others and themselves to obey the laws of nature, that have been so constantly and so grievously outraged. To what intent?

Women, for the first time, in large numbers and as regards important issues, are standing out independently. This is a phenomenon which has puzzled many even of their friends. Has it any special significance for the world?

Economic independence. When we set to work carefully to consider the position of woman, we shall find that in certain ways it is unique. Throughout the animal-world—save amongst birds,

during the time of incubation, when the male feeds and, sometimes by his song encourages the female, neither sex is dependent upon the other, either for food or for defence. It is the business of the male to attract the female. The peacock-plumes, the flowing mane, the voice of thrilling sweetness belongs to him. To her the royalty of independent choice—the dignity of motherhood. It is thought by some who have deeply studied sex-psychology that to the primitive woman these attributes belonged, the joy of motherhood—the royalty of independence.

Civilization has altered these relations. Not at once, for, as we look back even upon our own economic history, we shall find that in the middle ages and in a still earlier period woman was far more independent and therefore more honoured than she is now.

Sir Walter Scott's novels give us fine pictures of Anglo-Saxon households, where woman not only presided, but ruled—households that were, in the true sense of the word, workshops. In the middle ages, while there were serf-men and serf-women, there were free women in their own right, no less than there were free men. As abbesses, and as property-holders, women in those days had not only right to representation, but to a place in the Council of the Kings. If, when summoned, they could not attend these councils, they were able to send a representative to speak for them. A free woman who married an unfree man could, by marriage, give him liberty under the law. Hence the status of women was better, on the whole. Her natural independence was at least acknowledged.

There can be little doubt that the growth of what some might describe as the higher civilization did make a serious change in the position and status of women.

Men, in individuals and companies, learned how, by using cunning inventions and co-operating labour, they might accumulate wealth. With the

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accumulation of wealth, the power of wealth grew. Property was more considered than life; and the possession of property came to mean indulgence of the individual, who had made or inherited it, in every desire, even whim.

It need not be considered wonderful that this economic change should have had a disastrous result upon women. Imperceptibly, but none the less surely, her status declined. She grew into the mould assigned to her by the makers and wielders of wealth. The poor woman had even heavier burdens imposed upon her. The rich woman, rich not in her own, but in her husband's or father's right, was trained up in the belief that her one duty in life was to be pleasant and attractive: the young girl had to win a husband: the married woman had, by making his house pleasant, and, so far as possible warding off from him all annoyance, to retain his allegiance. The girl brought up softly who, through loss of parents or fortune, fell upon evil times, had either to get married or to submit to a life of hardship and nameless humiliation.

It is true that some of this has passed away—that to women of resource, education and determined will, honourable careers are open now. But those who can honourably protect and defend themselves are still in a minority. Meanwhile, in hand-industry of every kind, women are at a terrible disadvantage.

To be economically independent, not to be forced into marriage as a necessity of living; when married to be the mate and partner not the unpaid and, too often, the unhonoured servant; when unmarried to receive an equal reward with men for their work—these are the demands which women are making.

It has been frequently asserted, by opponents of the woman's movement that it is wrongly based, that there is not and cannot be any spiritual force behind it, because that which it sets forth is a selfish and, therefore, morally an impossible de-

mand. If this could be proved it would take the heart out of our efforts.

Independence, so these objectors argue, is not for woman. Heaven has ordained that she should be the child-bearer—the home-keeper. If the spirit of false independence is allowed full sway, women will refuse marriage, will give up home-administration, will forsake the joys and sorrows of motherhood.

Vain fears! Behind woman, as behind man, moves the mother-heart of the universe. It is because of her own motherhood that she demands freedom.

Once, in the ages, a woman who has typified to thousands upon thousands of women the joy and exultation of womanhood, poured out rapturously her hymn of gratitude. "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

The independence through which blessedness for the world is to come must be gained by women. Neither pretty, attractive, painted and beplumed dolls on the one hand nor patient drudges on the other, will achieve this purpose. Therefore woman must conquer economic freedom. Work—paid or voluntary—open doors for service—love that sweetens toil and conscious responsibility—these are the tools through which woman is to fulfil her task, through which she is to raise and redeem the world. And this can only be done by means of enlightened perception.

Deliberately as it seems to some of us, those who fear change have kept girls and women in ignorance of the things which are most important to their life. The laws of nature, we have seen, cannot be broken; but they can be understood—they can be accepted. When they are: when we work with them instead of striving futilely to work against them, they cease to menace us: they become our servants.

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A significant sign of the present movement is that women, finding themselves in touch with living realities, are beginning to see with their own eyes, and before their awakened vision the law, stern but beautiful, unfolds itself. Nature's imperative "musts" in eating, drinking, sleeping, playing and working, rejoicing and sorrowing are faced; the laws that govern health and disease are studied; responsibility, gained through self-mastery is bravely shouldered.

So the new woman, feared by devotees of an old and outworn order, will be. And her truer perception of Reality will make another step on the path of Preparation.

What the effect of this new attitude will be, we may, to some extent, imagine. For none, who have gone deeply into the terrible story of human degradation, can fail to see that the greater part of the miseries that appal us have grown out of ignorant or perverse opposition to natural law. The return which women, in their newly gained knowledge, will initiate can have but one result: a saner mode of life, and, with it, health and healing, not only for the few, but for the great body of the people.

The further step is that, in large numbers and on important issues, women are standing out independently. It is not pretended that this is new. We should not stand where we do, there would not indeed be any movement at all, had it not been for independent women-thinkers in the past. To-day their thought is bearing fruit. Women at home, women in sheltered positions, women in the mill and in the factory, women at the desk and in the studio, looking at the world with open eyes, are claiming their right of independent judgment.

It is difficult to express how deep and far-reaching will be the results of this growth of independence in women, which is already making itself felt. If, as many believe, the world is entering upon an era of great changes, if a new order, far

in advance of the present, both spiritually and physically, is in process of formation, a race strong enough to take up the mighty task of preparation must arise. And where can a better instrument for this work be found than in the mothers? The crudest of observers cannot fail to see that women, morally, mentally and physically strong, will have a distinct and powerful influence on that human development which all of us, men and women, desire.

Independence of thought, for instance in the mother, will generate and stimulate independent thought in the child. For true independence, respecting itself, will respect that which is outside of itself. It is where slavery has set its stamp that tyranny, the weapon of the oppressor, is used. The men or women who have smarted from the slave-driver's whip make, generally, the worst masters.

Self-mastery and self-control, free-play being given to natural activities, are urgently needed in education. But above all the spirit of independence should be fostered ; and it is worthy of note that a woman, Mme. Montessori, has thrown these new educational ideas into a system, which is being worked with great success.

That, in the future, women, thinking for themselves, forming sound judgments and, by their inspiration, helping to mould public opinion, will, through the part they will play in politics, remodel our own educational system, and so powerfully affect the life of the nation is one of the important results that will follow from her emancipation. Independence for the woman: freedom and harmonious development for the child.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST PRINCIPLES.

To sum up! I have tried to show what the woman's movement is, and how it has arisen, and I have traced briefly some stages in its progress. Behind it, as is indeed the case with every movement worthy of the name, there is a driving force. I have found this in the spiritual awakening of the last forty or fifty years, initiated, as some of us profoundly believe, by the Divine Source of Life, manifesting through lofty human beings, the leaders and guardians of their race. The deep necessity for this out-pouring and its effect upon human life and thought, have been pointed out. Further, it has been shown that there is a remarkable coincidence between the uprising of women, not in our own country alone, but all over the world, and the use and growth of Theosophy. Both movements would seem to have for their object the Preparation of the World for a deeper revelation than has yet been given to men, and for a new race, possessing faculties higher than those enjoyed by any, save the most gifted human beings of to-day.

In order to effect this, Humanity must go back upon its steps. Hence the demand, specially amongst women who have suffered most from the materialised tendencies of the last two centuries, for such re-adjustments in human relations as will make possible the acceptance and practical working out of Brotherhood without distinctions.

It remains to show that these changes lie in the direct line of spiritual evolution, and that therefore they must come to pass.

In a recent illuminating sermon by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, the following words are found:—"Material Forces are only the Instruments of

THEOSOPHY AND THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT.

Spiritual Forces, and the higher the Spiritual aim, the more certain is the ultimate triumph over that which opposes it. The Woman's Cause is bound to triumph, because there is an irresistible force behind it. When we find individuals ready for sacrifice—ready to set their own interests aside—ready to suffer any extremity of gain or loss, then we know the result is certain. So with other movements."

Related with Theosophy, the Woman's Movement is related also with the other great movements of the world. Labour, conscious now of its power and beginning to be conscious of its responsibility. The discovery of the child, its importance, its beauty, its mystery, its profound significance which is one of the prominent features of our modern time. Politicians are bound to consider the child, however little they may wish to do so, because Public Opinion makes this claim upon them. This, of necessity must touch upon and emphasize woman's demand for her true place in the State.

The coming together of nations and races in a new recognition of common interests and aims is another significant sign of the times, prophetic of that long-desired world-peace, through which alone the social reconstruction that means so much to woman, will become possible.

The awakened instinct which feels the call of the sub-human, which says:—"I am the voice of the voiceless. Through me the dumb shall speak," is a modern phenomenon that cannot be denied. It works itself out as food reform on the one hand, and, on the other, in strong protest against the cruel methods of experimental research. Both of these are in close unison with the demands being made by woman.

Round these greater movements the lesser movements group themselves. Between them all there is a vital connection. And the reason for this is obvious: they are based on one Fundamental Principle. What that Principle is and how, when



MRS. ANNIE BESANT.

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it is definitely understood and universally accepted, it will affect Society I desire now to show.

Out of two instincts, which, seemingly antagonistic, are really parts of one plan, the Life of the World is built up. The instinct to grasp and hold—we call it selfishness; but it has borne and it still bears, many other names—self-respect, pride of family, of birth, of inherited faculties, of country and of race—comes first.

This is the instinct through which Personality is moulded, and its note is separateness. "Stand apart," it says, "Yield me homage, give me service. I am better, and stronger, and holier, and wiser than you."

There is another, really more potent than the first, and destined in the end to master and use it. This second instinct moves outwards, to wife or husband, to child, to friend, to fellow-citizen, to comrades in work or play. Moving, growing and becoming conscious this primeval instinct expresses itself as evolution advances in what we call Law. It binds us to certain modes of action. Because we love, because other forms are dear to us, it is no longer possible to grasp and hold for ourselves alone. We do not demand service, we are grateful when it is rendered to us, and we render it ourselves. We are now face to face with two Laws, stern and yet beautiful. The Law of Duty—service. It was said by a Master, "I am among you as one that serveth," and "The son of man," representative of all the human family, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."

The Law of Sacrifice—giving. For that, though, for the most part invisible and unrecognized, is continually at work. My own conviction is that the Great Law, ever widening its scope as it moves outwards, is the fundamental principle which the world, unconsciously, is seeking now, and that every one of the modern movements, their passions, their follies, their mistakes, their real successes and their

apparent failures, are really but manifestations in the material world of the spiritual quest.

This is why I think that the Woman's Movement, where, no doubt, the power of the love-principle is most clearly felt, and the reopening to the world of the book of the Ancient Wisdom, have come together. They form in truth, the instrument of that irresistible force, which giving, as it does, the hope of a wider revelation, a deeper knowledge and a happier and more highly evolved race, is beating at the heart of Humanity to-day.

"The whisper of a Prophecy, O Wind
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind."

Woman, it should ever be remembered, is an example in herself of what the law of Duty and the deeper law of Sacrifice mean. Giving, often in pain and weariness, sometimes in danger: surrendering, when the imperative summons calls, her life for the life of the coming world, which in her, as in a shrine, lives and moves! doing this generally as a natural thing, imposed upon her by her own mother—Nature—woman, in the natural order of things, comes nearer to the Great Law and its observance than man. He, also in ignorance and unconsciousness, has misread the teaching of nature. Because she has given blindly, he has taken blindly. He has done more. He has imagined in her a human inferiority, which save as a fetish in his own mind, does not exist, and upon this he has built up his domination. Man, the Master, the Lord of the Creator, made in the image of the Divine: Woman, his servant and his worshipper! Even in so great a poet as John Milton, this false conception is found, "God is thy law, Thou mine," says submissive Eve, the mother of countless generations. "To know no more, is woman's happiest knowledge and her pride."

We find the same conception in some of the early Christian teachers, notably St. Paul. Woman was to receive even her religion from the man, who was her head, as Christ is head of the Church.

FIRST PRINCIPLES.

It is no exaggeration to say that these false conceptions, travelling down through the ages, have had an effect that is little less than tragic on the development of society. Man has imposed upon woman the lower rôle, and she has accepted it. The law of sacrifice, revealed to her by nature, has been misunderstood, has even, in her consciousness, been degraded. The high and holy service which she owes by right has been given, not for the sacred purposes of life, but at the base call of pleasure, and humanity, her child, has suffered incalculably.

That which stamps the present era as momentous is that to woman knowledge of the true nature of the law which governs her being has come. Taught by the ancient wisdom, which is no new religion, but the reconciler of all the religions of the world, she is beginning to perceive that her allegiance is due, in its totality, to no individual human being, but to that life in which she moves. The voice has spoken: "This mighty world, past, present and to come, enfolds thee. This thou art, this thou upgatherest, and this thou, tiny creature, pourest forth where now thou standest from caverns dark within."

Sacrifice? Yes! more gladly than ever before she will render that, but it will be to the race that needs her, that cannot move forward without her help, and so in joyful obedience to law she rises out of the subjection of the curse into the blessed and glorious liberty of the sons of God.

To man, as to woman, the voice of the wisdom is crying out: "Take unto yourself your great power and reign, but let that dominion begin with yourself. Demand from none service or sacrifice as an individual. That way perdition lies. Be yourself a servant. Give daily the free will offering of your labour, your skill, your physical power, your intelligence for the life of the world."

There is abundant evidence to be met with in every section of society that the demand of the higher law is being heard. Wise and strong

men are responding, as indeed they have done in the past, only to-day in greater numbers and with a deeper understanding of the momentous nature of the issues involved. These have recognised that there must be a new departure. The bitter unrest, which, like a malignant fever, is eating into every department of the people's life, has, they are beginning to see, a cause. And they are out, not to charm away the discontent with soothing words nor to put it back by menace and punishment, but to discover the cause, and, at whatever cost to themselves, to work for its removal.

In this work man and woman have a common interest, for to both the life of the future belongs.

"The birth of the new era is a love birth. Man and woman will stand together beside the cradle of the young world."

For the great discovery has been made. We have been, in our futility, up against laws which cannot be broken, but will break that which opposes them.

The law both of physical and spiritual life is sacrifice and that, in the higher spheres, manifests as love. In what we call the lower orders of life it works unconsciously, for "the silence and the darkness know." Inherited instinct draws together at the appointed season the male and female of a species, either of vegetable or animal life, and through their obedience to the call of nature, earth, the mother, is clothed with verdure and vibrates with the joy-song of creative activity. The love instinct of life gives strength to the tissues that protect nascent seeds of flower and vegetable from the rude elements that would destroy them, gives too the elasticity which yields to their cry for freedom and sends them out to push down into the earth and up into sunlight and air. It gives to female insect and bird their patience, to the male their swift wing and "unpremeditated song" and gay plumage. In these, her

young children, the great mother works through unconscious obedience. Even the predatory instincts of bird and beast of prey and the acquisitive instinct of plants, which push weaker vegetation out of the way, are subordinated to the life of the species. And so we see creation and destruction of life-forms going on side by side.

With humanity comes consciousness and the perception of a spiritual law. That these, in their inception, should have appeared to work towards disorder is natural. The long, tangled story of the past yields abundant evidence of the strength in man of the predatory instinct. Everywhere also as we look back we see, dimly moving, yet never wholly absent, the spirit through which, in the words of one of the prophets, he is to be delivered "from the bondage of corruption unto liberty," from the nascent instincts which have held him in captivity into joyful obedience to the great law.

Many of us believe that the spirit which makes for understanding and peace is working now with a force unparalleled in the history of the world.

There is, in our day, an urgency in the demands for restitution of ancient liberties, a rebellion against injustice, a determination to give everything—even the form-life itself—so that the great life may be served, and a drawing together of the weak to crush, by weight of numbers, the predatory instincts of the strong. These, which cannot be denied, point to the immanence of change.

There can be no doubt that woman, with her intuition, her love-instinct and her life-force, will play a large part in the reconstruction of society, which will inevitably follow the era of destruction that seems to lie in front of us. If it be indeed so, then the woman's movement assumes a tremendous significance. As it is, it cannot be ignored; men, in their lust for dominion, have placed their barriers before every avenue that leads to power—religion, science, philosophy,

business, commerce, politics, domestic and international—all have been his, and, as with indomitable courage she has broken, one after the other, the barriers down, the cry has ever been, "Hitherto, and no further."

But, in spite of all protest, this push goes on, and those who are wise—nay, even those who are shrewd—know that it must go on until true reconciliation is achieved.

The fundamental principle of life in human relations was given by one of the ancient seers when he said, "Thou shalt not separate thy being from Being and the rest; but merge the ocean in the drop—the drop within the ocean. So shalt thou be in full accord *with all that lives*; bear love to men as though they were brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother."

Thou shalt not—thou canst not.

In one of the most impressive of the pictures which Dante's vision of the Inferno has inspired, we see a man and a woman held together by a spear which pierces both their hearts. This is the torment of those who sinned against love—a torment not inflicted by love; but the natural and inevitable result of their blindness and folly in breaking the law of love.

Through sorrow, out of experience, wisdom is born. To-day the voice of wisdom is being heard. What will the result be for the world?

I will endeavour to show that in my concluding chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISION.

It remains to show what society might be were the law of love, working through duty and sacrifice, universally accepted and practised.

I am well aware there are many who will say that such a state of things is impossible. Strife and competition, they will assure us, are necessary to life's continuance, and therefore the instinct which drives individual units to grasp and hold whatever material may feed them, complicated in humanity by hatred of that which resists absorption, is ineradicable. Why, they argue, were the life-forms that constitute a society, at any time to cease to care for their own preservation, the life structure would fall to pieces!

Yet the loftiest types of humanity that have ever trod the earth—saints and martyrs and poets and prophets—imagining a society when love shall rule, have dreamed their dreams of peace. Were they fools and blind, or is there any way of reconciling principles that seem to be antagonistic?

I think there is. When, in obedience to the lower law—that which bids the individual unit draw to itself the material that is necessary for its life—is in strict subordination to the higher law; when the energy which it draws from the life-giving elements of the universe are used for the all-self in which it “lives and moves and has its being”; when the powers, qualities and gifts that it draws from nature's storehouse are held as a sacred trust for the world, then strife and competition must automatically pass away. In a social order so organized there will be no place for them.

In this world of stress and tumult, of skilfully veiled selfishness in those who rule, and idle, often

hopeless, submission in those who obey, it may be difficult even to conceive a society where the forces that make for righteousness can have free play. Yet the effort should be made. To acknowledge that what is to-day is inherent in the nature of things, to assert that there can be no real vision, to allow that the prophet and the seer have been victims of illusion would be nothing short of cowardice on the part of those who, however imperfectly, have beheld and worshipped the spirit of Truth.

Look forward then with me! Conceive a time when the Lord of life and love, whose return we have waited for so long, has indeed come and spoken the word that will bring peace.

Conceive a time when men and women, his followers, ardently worshipping truth, obeying the law of Duty and science, holding their own lives in fee for the life-purposes of the World, armed with that Power, which can only be safely entrusted to those who love Humanity, shall be able, through the two great forces, politics and public opinion, to turn social activities now wasted or suborned to evil, into channels of use and service, and to throw the shield of love and compassion round those weaker elements of the national life which now, on account of their weakness, are cynically neglected.

Conceive a time when public service, freed from intrigue and unmoved by personalities, shall be that which dreamers have imagined—the central hearth-fire of the nation's life, to which humble and toiling workers may look for help, from which they may draw inspiration.

Conceive a time when the material resources of the nations shall be so justly and wisely distributed, that none need lack what is necessary for the nurture of their bodily life. Said one of the ancients, in speaking of a great city, "And her hire and her merchandise shall be holiness unto the Lord. It shall not be treasure as laid up; but it

shall be for those who live before the Lord, that they may eat abundantly and have durable clothing." Such shall every city be when the higher Law has full sway!

Conceive a time when all who take from the bounteous provision of nature, and all who profit from the work of their brothers and sisters, shall feel the impelling need to pay their debt to the community by themselves working, by helping to feed the world, to clothe the world, to teach the world, to heal the world, to gladden the world with beauty in art, in literature, in music, dancing and song.

Conceive a time when international differences shall be adjusted, not by the barbarous and often illogical arbitrament of war, but by Councils comprising representatives of the nations in dispute; and remember that one of the seers of old time dreamed how men of the later day would "beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks."

Conceive the time when man and woman, forgetting their old mistakes, forgiving and understanding one another, shall guide and rule together in the State as they have done in thousands of homes throughout the ages.

Towards this, a new and well-ordered life in the family, in the schools, in the workshops, in the markets, in international commerce and relations, the great movements, dreaded by some and welcomed by others, are advancing. They are bound to go forward, no other conception is thinkable. Therefore, is it well that all should, in some degree, understand whence they have come and whither they are trending.

In reviewing the present situation, there are few who would deny that the Woman's Movement looms larger than any other on the social and political horizon. This can easily be explained. It requires but little penetration to see that before the other questions—those which concern

labour, the distribution of produce, the life of the child, the coming together of nations and races in a common life-interest—can be ever fairly dealt with, this must be settled. Are men alone to reconstruct Society or are men and women to work together? Presently all the forward movements will be recognized as one. Feminism will expand into humanism: national industries and arts will touch hands in fellowship. The dignity, honour, and importance of children everywhere will be felt and provided for; and labour, wisely and justly co-operated, will receive its due reward.

But meanwhile?

Let me put the position clearly. Revolt is in the air. Against dire poverty and its hideous humiliations the heart of humanity is rebelling. With the great mass of the people at present the revolt is of the body—blind, vague, threatening—but neither fully conscious nor clearly reasoned out. Women of all classes, on whom these tremendous forces have been playing, have seen further. To the revolt of the senses and of the will is added a spiritual demand. They claim independence that they may serve.

It may be said that legislation will not cure poverty or put an end to social evils. In a sense, as regards the past, this is true. The male legislator, with his traditional habit of mind, thinks in terms of coercion. People must be *made* to do this, that and the other; and making can only be achieved by the whip of punishment, threatened or inflicted.

The legislation of the future, directed by the best elements in the land will have a different aim: it will seek not to restrict but to release: the land from disuse: labour from chains: earth's products from greedy monopolists; education from class-limitations; women from economic dependence: childhood from hunger, cold, ignorance and dishonour; old age from neglect. It is this work

THE VISION.

of emancipation that women have foreseen; to help it forward they have taken up arms; and until their demand is granted, until they are able to work constitutionally for the ends they have at heart, they must be strangers to the peaceful paths of the days that have been.

I take comfort, in the midst of much that distresses and bewilders us, from the knowledge that, although far off, we have beheld the vision and that the spiritual forces which have ever made for its manifestation, are behind us.

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