

THE TRUE THEOSOPHIC THEORY OF UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

[AN ADDRESS BY ALEXANDER FULLERTON, GEN. SEC'Y, BEFORE THE CONVENTION AMERICAN SECTION, 1898.]

THIS subject has special importance, not merely because the formation of a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood is one of the three objects for which the Theosophical Society exists, but because a belief in Universal Brotherhood is the only exaction from any candidate for admission. He may hold what creeds or other opinions he sees fit, but this one obligation is imperative. Hence every member may well be expected to have some rational idea of the nature of Universal Brotherhood, to understand its duties and their limitations.

In this as in every topic of investigation, analogy is our guide. The term "Universal Brotherhood" is obviously an extension to the whole human race of the Brotherhood existing in families, and if we wish to comprehend it we must first ascertain the nature of the latter, and then give this its appropriate expansion. Looking to the brotherhood in families, we see that it has three characteristics.

There is a *common origin*. The brothers are all born of the same parents. This would be true if the parents were of different genera, if, for instance, the father was of the human race and the mother of one distinct from it, say angelic; but in that case the inherited traits would be diverse, mixed, perhaps confused. As things are, both parents are of one genus, have alike its essential marks, transmit the form and habits and evolution belonging to it. Whatever belongs to humanity belongs therefore to those who received their humanity from the predecessors possessing it, and this legacy is equally shared.

And, second, there are *common interests*. All brothers are concerned in keeping the family name uninjured, the family honor pure, in protecting the family property from spoliation or attack, in neither doing nor suffering anything which would abase their standing. No doubt there are instances where selfishness, that curse of humanity, has led a brother to suppose that his interests are better served by violating the equal rights of his brothers and securing more than his share of the common possessions, but there well may be doubt whether more is not lost than gained. For apart from the family resentment, alienation, unwillingness to help in trouble or sorrow which follow, there is that healthful public sentiment which is very stern to fraternal treason and looks with angry distrust on those who sacrifice to themselves the claims of family ties.

And, *third*, there are *common duties*. Protection, care, sympathy, aid in times of difficulty, generosity, affection, strict respect to rights, forbearance, helpfulness,— these are the traits which Nature expects from members of the same household, and which Theosophy, because natural, expects no less. Great would be the mistake to imagine that Theosophy, the insistent on broadest usefulness and good-will, ignores the truth that certain relationships have larger claims than others, does not recognize the obvious facts of life,— the facts that the centre of human interests is the family, that its ties and obligations are exceptionally strong, that men do not owe to foreigners, or even to fellow-citizens, the full measure of care they owe to their own blood. In this, as in all other conditions evolved by humanity as it marches on its way, Theosophy gives full recognition to existing realities, and by no means substitutes a fancy for a fact.

Translating the three marks of family brotherhood over into the broad field of universal humanity, we see that they illuminate the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood. There is, no doubt, the element of degree. The old law of intension and extension, the one increasing as the other decreases, holds here. Sentiment and obligation are stronger as the field contracts; weaker, more diffused, as it expands. Yet the *principle* remains, justly operative as such. Take

the matter of *common origin*. All men, whatever their color or nationality or location or measure of advance or status in civilization, come from the same Supreme Source. In the beautiful words of the Greek poet Aratus, quoted by St. Paul, "We are also his offspring." St. Paul himself affirmed that "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of all the earth". All have the same form, lineaments, needs. In all there is intelligence, latent or evolved; in all there is the germ of moral sense, more or less alive; in all dwells that spark of the Eternal Flame, that Higher Self which is gradually to assert itself during the onward course of developing humanity till the Divine ideal is everywhere manifest and everywhere triumphant. And because each member of that humanity can trace back his inception and his growth and his evolution to the one Divine source, is it that Theosophy claims for him a Divine original.

And then all have *common interests*. Plain and demonstrable as this is, there is nothing to which men have been and are more blind. In individual life, in business, in society, widespread is the belief that one succeeds only as another fails, that one rises only as he mounts on the prostrate bodies of others less sagacious or less strong. Strange indeed would be a world where such was the inherent law. Nature repels it and denies it in every jealousy, every malignity, every disappointed ambition, unscrupulous trick, unworthy act, heart-sick failure, speculative collapse, social chagrin. No gain secured through fraud can be peacefully enjoyed, since there is always the consciousness of an embittered feeling in the injured which may lead to reprisals. Moreover, analogy is clear upon this subject. All members of a community, a State, a nation constitute a body corporate, the health of the whole and of each part depending upon the health of every other part. It is not possible for the lungs to truly flourish if their nutrition is robbed from the heart, nor can the foot be better because the hand is diseased. What is true of the human frame is true of a civic organization and of a nation, and for precisely the same reasons. Real prosperity does not come through the despoiling of one section by another.

This truth, so impressive and so forceful, is signally illustrated in that great brotherhood of nations which constitutes collective humanity. To understand the law which presses upward from the simplest of organisms to the grandest aggregate of the highest organizations, let us take a well known fact in Biology. The lowest form of animal life – say the amoeba – has no distinction of parts or functions. There is no separate stomach or lungs or excretory apparatus, but the work of these is performed by all sections of the body indiscriminately. As evolution proceeds, faint traces of differentiation appear; these develop into distinct organs; at last each function has its separate and evident apparatus. Now all through this evolutionary process two facts become ever more palpable, — each organ loses ability to do work of any other organ, but it does its own work incomparably better than before. It is in man, the apex of the creative scheme, that the process reaches its culmination. The brain is powerless to do the duty of the heart, the lungs can secrete no bile as does the liver, the eye can perform no function which appertains to the ear, not a muscle can exchange work with a nerve. Yet each is perfect in its own domain, each executes with marvellous precision that which has become its exclusive task. And all through the organism runs a double current which feeds and stimulates it,— the current of blood, carrying nutrition to each atom, and the current of nerve force, inciting to the performance of work. Thus in minutest subdivision of duty, and in universal, unobstructed pervasion of sustenance and stimulus, does the human organism flourish and endure.

It is astonishing that this palpable analogy has had so little suggestiveness to publicists and legislators. For observe how close the analogy is, and how evident its lesson. We need enter but few steps into the domain of Political Economy, and of course not at all into the domain of politics, in order to treat it. The aggregate of nationalities constitutes one grand body. Each nation, because of climate, physical conformation, maritime facilities, soil, mineral deposit, or

other peculiarity, has some special function in the great economy. No other nation can fulfil it so well; it can fulfil no other function so well. One has vast stores of coal and iron, and these possessions point to it as the supplier of the machinery of the world; the far-spreading arable or pasture lands of another indicate it as the great food-producer; a third has an indented coast which fits it especially for commerce; a fourth, like ancient Greece, enjoys a climate and a scenery that prompt to Art and make its productions the everlasting type of the beautiful; a fifth is so situated that its nature and its surroundings incite thought, and it becomes the source of a world's literature; a sixth has woods and plants and a semi-tropical coloring which find their fitting product in varied manufactures of singular value and beauty. And, as Nature designed, there flows among and through all these diverse nationalities a commerce which carries freely everywhere the food and the mechanisms and the art or literary riches and the comforts and multiform conveniences that each produces for the good of all; and a healthful ambition to produce the best ensures that the best shall always be produced, and no part fail in its duty to itself and to the whole. The absolute unrestrictedness in the flow of commerce prevents congestion or decay, and every part is sound, not only because it partakes of the universal life, but because it conforms to the universal law. Best of all, peace, blessed peace, is everywhere diffused, for there are no artificial systems to alienate, and no unnatural rivalries to antagonize.

What, in point of fact, has been the policy of statesmen and legislators? Usually it has been based upon the notion, perhaps the avowal, that the success of one nation is conditioned on the failure of another, that strength accrues only as it is drawn from depletion elsewhere. In our own time it has taken a somewhat different form, a form shaped by the fancy that every nation should be complete in itself, supplying all possible needs from internal resources, attempting to do in its own area what Nature intended to be done in the area of the world, discountenancing interchange and mutual help, putting obstacles in the way of commerce, framing tariffs and bounties, hindering the flow of the universal currents. It is really a reversion, internationally, to the lowest form of created life, to the type of the amoeba! And what has been the result? Exactly what might have been foreseen. Certain industries have been forced into diseased activity, others starved to death; bitterness, resentment, antipathy, jealousy have separated nations which should be mutually helpful and friendly; war perpetually threatens even where it does not break out, and vast armies and navies are maintained at the cost of industrious, peaceful citizens. Stupid defiance of Nature prevents the very blessings it is expected to secure.

An analogy from the human body makes the truth even plainer. If we clasp a tourniquet on the arm, shutting off the free flow of blood and nerve current, the arm loses strength and gradually withers. Only as any part enjoys unobstructed intercourse with all other parts can it flourish. So in the great international organism. Interception of commerce simply excludes elements of nutrition which every nation needs, and, though the effect may not be at once apparent, time discloses atrophy, disease, weakness, and fever. Political Economy has much to learn from Physiology, and international relations can never be healthy till they are based on the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood.

And, thirdly, the Universal Brotherhood, like the family brotherhood, has *common duties*. As there, so here, these are sympathy, helpfulness, respect for rights, generosity. It is a beautiful fact in human nature that they come instantly into recognition at the sight of suffering. When we see a person evidently hungry, cold, sick, or hurt, we do not stop to enquire his nationality or his color, but the great human instinct of fraternity flashes up, and the hand and the purse are prompt. "I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to me," were the words of Terence in his play, and often as the Roman audiences heard them, the theatre always burst into applause. So when the failure of the potato crop desolated Ireland, the civilized world sprang to its relief

and hurried ships over the ocean with cargoes of food. Famine and pestilence devastated India, and Europe and America poured forth their treasures in succor. Very touching is this spontaneous, this eager response of the great human heart to the note of suffering, and it shows how real is the oneness of humanity. Delusive interests may blind and selfishness may chill, but there is an instinct beneath which asserts itself in the presence of grief.

So sweet, so wholesome a doctrine as that of Universal Brotherhood can hardly escape the distortion of exaggerated sentimentality. One sometimes hears, even from Theosophists whose intelligence should keep them steady, a depiction of it which may well make moralists stare. It is asserted that because all men are brothers all men are to be treated so, no distinction being made between the worthy and the unworthy, and no check to be put upon outrage or wrong. This is absurd. There are good brothers and there are bad brothers, and it would be contrary to all reason, all justice, and all right to ignore the difference and to virtually pat iniquity on the back. If a member of a family invades the others' rights, tramples on their feelings, makes life a scene of turmoil and violence and disorder, the dictate of propriety, as also the protection of the family, require that he be expelled. No one has a claim to outrage, whereas everyone has a claim to peace. Nor can anyone claim the immunities of fraternity while violating its obligations. He can perform his duties and demand his rights, or he can forswear his duties and lose his rights, but he cannot forswear the duties and demand the rights. The common interests of a family exact that a troublesome member shall be banished. Nor does anyone think otherwise in the field adjacent to the family. If a burglar invades our household, we do not grasp him by the hand, light up the rooms, and place their contents at his disposal; we sound an alarm and hand him over to the police. If a pickpocket abstracts our purse, we do not assure him that he is welcome to it, but we put him in custody and recover it. Should either claim immunity on the ground that he was a member of the Universal Brotherhood, we would reply that then it was his duty to act accordingly, and that if he acted otherwise he must be treated otherwise. Civil society could not, in fact, endure for a week if it was once understood that men were at liberty to act as they pleased and no one be at liberty to restrain them. This would be virtually shutting up all the honest in jail, and letting all the rogues go free. And if Theosophy upheld any such folly, the community would justly treat it as either an insanity or a nuisance.

Sometimes this same strange notion is applied to the Theosophical Society. There is insistence that because it maintains the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood, it should exclude no evil-doer from its membership. On one occasion objection was made to the expulsion of a man who had fraudulently gained admission after release from one term of imprisonment for theft and before beginning a second for burglary. On another the candidanship of a murderess was defended on the ground that the Theosophical Society is the place for sinners. Possibly; but what kind of sinners? Sinners who are penitent for their sin, confess it, make amends, and abandon it? Yes. Sinners who are defiant or brazen, who refuse either penitence or reformation, and who will sin again as readily as before? No. So, too, it has been held by sentimentalists that while it is quite fraternal to deceive, mislead, and impose upon brothers, it is most unfraternal for the brothers to object to such treatment. But to all such strange perversions of a noble doctrine one has only to present a front of reason, common sense, moral perception, and their unreality is disclosed. Maudlin sentiment cannot long masquerade as manly sobriety.

Now what would be the state of things if the true Theosophic doctrine of Universal Brotherhood was everywhere carried out? Take your own city. Not a bolt or a bar or a lock would be anywhere needed, and bank-vaults would be as open as the public squares. Policemen, except to regulate street traffic and to assist in cases of accident, would be superfluous. Criminal courts would be closed, because there would be no criminals. Civil

courts, for other purposes than to amicably adjust uncertain claims through the skill of trained minds indifferent to mere precedent and intent only on justice, would have no functions. Jails would be turned into hospitals and asylums; courtesy and kindness and helpfulness would make every citizen the brother of every other. Take the State and the Nation. Legislators would have little to do, and that little be only in the line of matured and acceptable schemes for public good. Penitentiaries and the gallows, necessary, however unpleasant, under our present conditions, would then disappear. Take the Brotherhood of Nations. Tariffs and custom houses and the whole apparatus of international repulsion would vanish away. Rivalries, jealousies, suspicions, opposed interests, antagonisms, all would be dead. Armies would dissolve, navies decay or be turned into merchant ships. Peace, good-will, generous sympathy, emulation in mutual benefit would flood humanity with sunlight. Happiness and the comforts of life would penetrate to the remotest hamlets, strikes and lock-outs and embittered struggle between labor and capital would be unknown, partly because there would be no selfishness to engender strife, partly because unobstructed commerce would end unnatural conditions in production. All over the world would shine prosperity, joy, contentment, the placidity of mental and emotional satisfaction; and all through it would course healthful and happy thoughts, beneficent suggestions, new projects for human good.

You will say that this is an ideal state. Yes, but it is the one to which Nature points. You will say that it is impossible. No, for Nature's ideal is sure ultimately to be realized. You will say that ages must pass before that realization. Yes, for the forces of selfishness are still rampant, and ignorance and delusion will long becloud even advancing minds; but time is long, and human experience is unceasing, and its lessons are gradually disclosing themselves in clearness, and at last humanity will see and heed and change, and then Universal Brotherhood will be perceived as a fact and practiced as a Joy.