

DEPRESSION

THE CAUSE OF SORROW

from Robert Crosbie's *Universal Theosophy*

We are never free from pain, sorrow, and suffering in the world. Pleasures come and go very lightly, but always the sorrow and suffering of life itself abides with us. If we could see and understand the cause of the sorrow existing in the world in every direction—not only the sorrows of the ordinary life but those brought about by collective action, as wars are—we should cease to make that cause. We have assumed that all these sorrows are due to external causes—to some higher being or beings, or to some outside laws of the universe; never to ourselves. And because we have never brought it home to ourselves that we are in any way connected with the causes of sorrow which come our way, we go on looking for something external to relieve us of those sorrows. Not all the religions that ever have existed on the face of the earth, not all that the sciences have so far achieved or may achieve will ever give us that knowledge, because the cause of sorrow does not lie outside; it lies within each one. Each one contains within himself the power to cause sorrow; he also has the power to cause its cessation.

The wisdom of the ages explains the cause of sorrow. It teaches that each being is spirit; that the power of spirit is illimitable, although we limit it because we assume that it is limited; that the changeless spirit in the heart of every being is behind every form, the cause and sustainer of all forms; that spirit is the force behind evolution, and also the force that rules and relates all things of whatever grade; that every being is the result of an unfoldment from within outwards—of a desire for greater and greater expression. But we who have reached this stage of self-consciousness, unlike the lower kingdoms, now have the power of choice and can draw upon that illimitable source of our being and realize it while we live in a mortal and ever-changing body.

Desire, in a limited way, with regard to the personality, is the cause of all sin, sorrow, and suffering. Such desire is based on selfish thought; it is not what others desire; it heeds not any other urge than its own. The unfulfilled desires, it is, that hurt us; yet do the fulfilled desires give us happiness? Never, for so soon as they are achieved, there begins a further desire for something more, something greater. With many conflicting desires, then, we live upon each other, we prey upon each other, we devour each other, we injure each other—in every way. There is no necessity for all this. It never was the original plan—the original nature of the development of man. There is never any need to desire. All our woes are self-inflicted; the very inherent power of spirit has plunged us into them and maintains us in them.

Yet misery, sorrow and suffering have a mission. It is usually only the misery we bring upon ourselves that makes us stop doing wrong, to look around and ask and see what is right. It is by our mistakes we learn to see the difference between right and wrong, and in seeing that difference is the whole story of progress. We have to be able to tell the difference. It is only through 'opposites'—the perception of them and the employment of them—that any being can grow at all. There has always to be duality in nature. All human beings are One in spirit, dual in expression. Always there is the actor and something to act upon. Always there are the two—Purusha, the spirit, and Prakriti, matter—not two separate things, but two aspects of one and the same thing. No perception is possible unless we have that duality. We have to experience darkness first in order to see light, and so with the opposites of pleasure and pain. Without pain we could not understand pleasure; without pleasure we could not understand pain. What lies

behind all advance in intelligence, from the lowest to the highest, is perception gained by that which acts, from that which is acted upon.

Law rules everywhere in nature in accord with the basis of duality. We call it the law of periodicity, but it is simply a statement of Karma, or action and reaction. What we call the laws of the elements are in reality but perceptions of the actions and reactions of various grades of intelligences. ‘What we call our seasons, and all the cycles of time or of individuals, are covered by that law—reaction from action previously sent forth. The people who form a nation are people who were together in other times; their collective actions have brought them the same collective reactions. Every thought we have has its return of impression; every feeling we have has its return. All react upon us, coming back either impoverished or enriched. Thus, with the power to produce any kind of effect resident in us, we can understand the power of false, mistaken ideas. We can sustain these ideas interminably by the law of return of impression, and continually suffer reactions from them. The whole power of spirit used in a wrong direction, in ignorance of our own nature and the nature of beings in general, creates sorrow of every kind.

No one can stop us in our mistaken course so long as we foolishly entertain false ideas. Our evolution has been brought about by us under the laws of our own operation—action and reaction within ourselves—and in no other way. It is a mistake to think that good comes to us from outside quarters. It never does. Whatever good or whatever evil comes is the reaping of what we have sown, in every way and in every circumstance. There are no exceptions. We look for “justice.” We are getting it, according to our own thought and action. For let us remember that the plane of action is thought itself, that is to say—ideas. Action is merely the sequence of the concretion of thought. So there is every necessity for us to clear out the rubbish which we hold as ideas. Our “minds,” as a rule, are found to be made of a bundle of ideas that somebody has handed on to us. We accept the ideas of the race, of the people about us, of this “ism” or that “ology,” and call it our mind, when, in reality, we have no mind of our own at all. The mind is the power to receive and to reject. What we receive and what we reject depends upon ourselves—on our ignorance or on our wisdom. There is nothing outside we have to learn, but every thing inside. The task we have at hand is to understand our own natures.

If any great number of beings in this world should reach the understanding of their own natures, and so exercise their inherent spiritual powers for the benefit of their fellow-men, in no long time we should find the misery of the world most wonderfully abated. As was said of old, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. And one of our Teachers said, “Give me five hundred good, earnest, sincere, devoted men and women and I will move the world.” Our success does not depend upon any form of physical evolution, nor upon any form of scientific advancement. These are but means and not ends in themselves, though did we but know our own real powers, they could be carried to a pitch not yet dreamed of. We must and eventually will carry the civilization of the world to a higher stage than has ever before existed, but that will never be until men realize their own natures and act from that basis. We can go on indefinitely repeating the present thinking and acting, but so long as we do, just so long will there be sin and sorrow and suffering. Never will they cease, nor wars, diseases, pestilences, tornadoes, cyclones, nor earthquakes—for all these come from man’s errors.

We shall never find a vicarious atonement. We must take the results of what we sow. Recognizing that we are responsible for our own conditions, we must do our best to adjust them. Readjustment can come only through assuming our own spiritual birth right, instead of assuming that we are these unfortunate bodies that are born, live for a while and die; through the fulfillment of our duties in every direction as the opportunities are offered us. For we cannot work out our salvation alone. We cannot live alone. We cannot progress alone. We cannot raise ourselves

beyond the rest, but must help all the rest to whatever stage we occupy, going further and further ourselves that we may be the better able to help and teach the others. Jesus was what he was because he became so. Buddha was what he was because he became so. There was a time when they were sinning and erring mortals like ourselves. But they saw the true path and turned and followed it, as in all time to come must every being.

Just so long as we think that we are physical beings and follow after this or that desire, just so long do we put off the day of readjustment and suffer from the causes we have set in motion. But when in place of false ideas we commence to base our thought and action on correct ideas, the brain begins to be clarified and to be permeable to the immense knowledge of the inner man—a knowledge which is not now recorded because of the wrong way in which we have trained it. The brain has to be made a good conductor for spiritual knowledge. If true knowledge were ours, would we have desires? Would we seek after this or that thing in physical life and expend our best energies upon them? No. Further, we would know that no matter what there is in the universe anywhere, nothing can stop the progress laid down for ourselves in a spiritual direction. We would also know that nothing can harm us; nothing can be wilder us. We would trust the law of our own spiritual nature, seeking only to do what good we can; seeking nothing for our selves, but to do service in every possible way for every other being. Then we should be in accord with the nature of the whole, and the natures and forces of all beings would carry us along on the stream that brooks no obstacle whatever. Would we be sorrowful? Never; because we would be fulfilling the real purpose of spirit and soul in helping all other souls on the path, so far as the opportunity lay before us. In this course there is no need to strain and struggle; we have only to take those opportunities which our reactions bring us. The evil that comes to us—well, it is something for us to adjust, to balance. The good that comes to us—that too is the result of our own actions. So we may take the good and enjoy it, and meet the evil without fear or trembling or resistance of any kind in an attempt to avoid it.

The only sorrow of the great Teachers, or Masters of Wisdom, is to see men perpetually engulfing themselves in sin and sorrow and suffering which They cannot prevent. One of Them was asked at one time, “Why is it with your great knowledge and power that you do not make men think as they should?” He said, “The human soul is not so constituted. It has to see and act for itself.” For the action is from within outward, and the power goes with the action. No one can save us but ourselves.