

[Translated from the Italian original.]

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE
IONIAN THEOSOPHICAL BRANCH
AT CORFU.

UPON PRESENTING THE CHARTER OF CONSTITUTION TO
THE FELLOWS.

BY SIGNOR PASQUALE MENELAO, D.L., PRESIDENT OF THE BRANCH.

DEAR BROTHERS: Of the many and different meetings in which I have presided in my life, this one is for me the most agreeable of all, because it has not for its object any worldly interest, or any political scheme. Nor is it for literary discussions that we have this day assembled together, but to see ourselves confirmed in the sacred and sublime office of confessors of progress, I dare not say of Truth, because it being located in an elevated site, it is not easily accessible, more especially to myself, who am powerless and void of merits.

Nevertheless, I see, my dear Brothers, that in spite of the barriers and thorns by which we are surrounded in these places, we have progressed a step further towards our object, for we are here united in the same faith with the same determination of progressing, and, therefore, I trust that our object may be prosperous.

To crown our wishes to satisfy our desires, the worthy Central Society has sent us the Charter, which I present to you that it may be deposited in our archives.

If until now our Society had been vacillating and uncertain, let us trust that from this moment we may be fixed and settled and our duties be more assiduous, more positive and sincere.

It is true that the belief in One First Cause, in the individuality and immortality of the human soul, in its eternal progress, in the firm desire to ameliorate our own moral condition, in loving our neighbours as ourselves, in rendering ourselves useful to all humanity, in endowing our intellect, our faith and our belief, faith and belief which we feel as if born in us or brought with us from a previous existence, all this is true, I see it, I hear it at every moment repeated by you, I rejoice and heartily rejoice and feel happy for it; but this is not enough, great ideas must not only be felt, not only be loved, but we must exercise and develop them, we must make them evident, own them and teach them by word and in deed.

What are we, therefore, to do, in order to render ourselves worthy of the trust placed in us by our Central Society? How are we to act in order to be gradually initiated into the sublime knowledge of the Aryan Philosophy? How shall we hope to be allowed to penetrate the secrets of nature, which are in the power of those supreme beings called Adepts? How shall we be able to procure for ourselves the heavenly pleasure, as also the satisfaction of being useful to our fellow-creatures, not only with our moral, but also, with our natural means, availing ourselves of that power in Nature which lies at our disposal.

Several of you, Brothers, have tasted and will taste the divine pleasure of healing or mitigating the infirmities of your suffering brothers by mesmerism. I, too, without attributing it to my knowledge or to other merits (which I do not possess) have been and am happy whenever, by the simple laying of my hands, and imploring the help of the Author of the power of creation have cured and do cure several, nay many cases of dangerous fevers, wounds, hemorrhages and even some of cholera. But this is not the only power attainable by man; more occult, greater and deeper mysteries, are yet to be unveiled, and the knowledge of these is likewise a favour which is not granted to the first comer. To dispose more or less of the force of nature, it is not given to all, because every one would not make good use of it. The heart of man is for the greater part prone to evil, clinging to the things of the earth, more than to the heavenly treasures, or in better

words, to terrestrial life rather than to spiritual things. What would happen if the occult sciences were in the hands of rogues? They would not use them to advantage, honor, and progress, but as instruments of vengeance, corruption, and iniquity.

If we will with a determined mind advance, if we wish to render ourselves useful to ourselves and our brothers, morally, intellectually and physically, we must propose to guide our actions, our thoughts, our will in all and for all, and follow the precepts which our honorable Society prescribes to us. This obedience, however, must not be blind nor mechanic, but rational and dignified. We must obey so far as the orders, injunctions and counsels agree with our reason and are proportionate to our moral and intellectual means. And no more is asked of us.

That in order to approach the sublime and magnificent temple of Truth, it is necessary to consent to sacrifices, privations and efforts, every one will admit. In order to embellish the soul with truth, and enrich it with knowledge, zeal, diligence and firm will are necessary.

Allow me, my dear Brothers, to make to myself an observation which I do not consider useless, which is, that however trifling a thing may be, yet it cannot be obtained here below without an effort.

This granted, is it ever possible for us to attain the notion of wisdom and truth without doing all that lies in our power to ascend to the summit of that mountain where they reside? Can ever the sun of justice and progress impart his benignant rays to humanity if we do not destroy vice, if we do not popularize virtue, if we do not disperse the gloom of ignorance, prejudice and superstition? Do we not see how many difficulties are conjured up against us in the official religion, in that science which immovable will stand still on its platform of matter, decked with rottenness, with doubt in its soul and with the hypocritical mask of bold certainty? Shall we be disheartened? Shall we be terrified or stopped by threats, by mockery, by scorn, or by sarcasm? No; a hundred times over I say, no. Though our number is not now great, though our intellectual faculties be limited, though the part of action be restrained, we shall well make up this deficiency by being firm, immovable, compact, and united as the Romans were; and thus we shall render ourselves strong.

Let us bind ourselves, together therefore, morally, and if we wish to be something, let us have faith in the future of Humanity and in the necessary progress of it, and thus we shall render ourselves more worthy of the happy idea to which we have consecrated ourselves. Let us not be terrified at the sight of the fatigue, difficulty, hardship, privation and sacrifice. Let us call to mind the words of Dante in his chapter xxiv. of the Inferno:—

“Disse il Maestro, che seggendo in pintoa
“In fama non si vien, ne sotto coltro:”

Let us mirror ourselves in the example of the lovers of humanity. Let us imitate them. Let us follow their footsteps in their firmness, in their bravery, in their constancy in despising persecution, mockery, calumny, and torture.

It is true that we, and specially myself, are so insignificant that we are not worthy of the chance of being like those clever masters of progress, but, if we will, we may still do good. Let us make ourselves useful by spreading that light which is communicated to us. Let us not limit ourselves to words. Let us add to them the powerful teaching of facts, and if we cannot be exemplary, let us not, at least, give cause for scandal. Let us begin by correcting our defects, by extirpating our evil tendencies from our hearts. Let us adapt ourselves to a life of temperance and activity.

Offended, let us forgive; offenders, let us ask pardon.

Let us love justice for ourselves as well as for others. Let us hate and combat every undeserved privilege in our own favour or of others.

Let us promote popular education and make it obligatory, and particularly *so* among women, that we may emancipate them from the thralldom of priestcraft.

Let us protect the orphans: let us defend the interest of the weak and of the widow.

Let us shake off pride. Let us exclaim with a generous cry against prostitution, debauchery, ill-conduct—the consequences of materialism and superstition.

Let us fight against the death penalty and let us detest the infamy of war, and more so the right of the strongest. Let us join in defending those who protect us, controlling nevertheless the immoderate exigencies of the demagogues and the revolutionists who behave in the way in which they do with bad motives.

Let us acknowledge the expansive and universal love, not only for humanity, but also for all creation, because all either by silent or expressed love (be what it may) tends to the unity of the Supreme Love. Let us place the brotherhood of nations as the first of our wishes (desires) and let us hasten that holy (blessed) moment when the whole of mankind will be gathered in one fold and will have but one shepherd.

Let us part with and forsake vanity, crime, and passions; may our views be serious, wise, humble, modest and dignified. Acting in this way we may hope to live with a free conscience, confident (as we shall be) of having neglected nothing in our power to render ourselves useful.

Courage, brothers, let us push on. Let us begin by trying to purify our souls by restraining our passions. Let us subject brute to man, sense to reason, and interest to duty. Let us lay aside all hatred or rancours if there be any among us, or against any one of our other brothers in humanity, and if we have done wrong voluntarily or involuntarily, let us compensate. Let us become the men of duty, and let us keep ourselves always on the right side of our rights. Let the sacred fire of Love be always burning in our hearts. Let us be worthy of it, and the Supreme Architect will recompense us according to the efforts we have made in trying to progress.

I conclude, my dear Brothers, by begging your kind forgiveness for the trouble I may have caused you with these few and poor expressions; supply my deficiencies with your intellect. Correct me freely on those points on which I may have gone astray, and I shall feel thankful to you.

Brothers, I shall not fail to be your interpreter before the Mother Society to express to her our gratitude, and in your name also I shall thank her for the high favour bestowed upon us and make the sincere vows for the prosperity of Humanity and for all the Branches of our Society.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

The inaugural addresses of the respective presiding officers of the Ionian and Bombay Branches of the Theosophical Society, which appear side by side in the present number, so well illustrate its policy of mutual tolerance and confraternity, that we bespeak for each a careful reading. Here we see the Italian thinker moved by the same lofty aspirations for individual perfection and the happiness and enlightenment of mankind, as the Parsi thinker of Bombay. And though the one conceives of the First Cause, or Deity, quite differently from the other, whose ancestors from time immemorial have worshipped the Sun as a visible type of Hormazd, yet a common religious feeling moves the heart of each, and a common instinct makes him see the way upward towards the truth brighter and clearer by the light of Theosophy. Ours is not an atheistical society, though it does contain atheists; nor is it a Christian one, even though our brother Dr. Wyld, President of the British Theosophical Society, would have us accept Jesus as the most divine personage that ever appeared among men. Our Fellows are of the most varied opinions and each has a right to claim respect for his ideas as he is bound to respect those of his brothers. We have presidents who are severally Christian, Deist, Bud-

dhist, Hindu and Atheist; none dogmatizers, none claiming to be wiser or more infallible than the other, yet each taking the other by the hand, calling him brother, and helping him and being helped in the divine quest after knowledge. Nor are all, or even a large minority, students of occult sciences, for rarely is the true mystic born. Few, alas! have they ever been who so yearned after the discovery of Nature's secrets as to be willing to pursue that hard and unselfish course of study; and our own century can show fewer than any of its predecessors. As to the secrets of the Theosophical Society, when we mention the masonic-like signs of recognition, and the privacy secured for the handful who do make their experiments in psychological science, all has been said. The Parent Society is, in one word, a Republic of Conscience, a brotherhood of men in search of the Absolute Truth. As was sufficiently explained in our opening October number, every one of us professes to be ready to help the other, whatever the branch of science or religion to which his personal predilections may lead him.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BEFORE THE BOMBAY THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

BY KHARSEDJI N. SEERVAI, VICE-PRESIDENT, PRESIDENT, *pro tem.*

At the first meeting under our new Charter when we enter upon our duties as members of the Bombay Theosophical Society, it seems necessary that we should begin with forming a clear idea, as far as possible, of what we are as Theosophists. All the members must have at some time or other set this question to themselves, and answered it more or less satisfactorily to themselves. In the first number of the THEOSOPHIST two elaborate and highly learned articles we devoted to the two questions, "What is Theosophy," and "What are the Theosophists." But the vastness of the questions and the great learning that is necessarily employed in answering them and above all their paramount importance to us, make it very desirable that we should have, at the outset of our course of studies, a free and patient discussion and criticism on the subject. I now lay before you what I understand. My views are of course not authoritative. I put them forward as I have them, to be discussed and criticized, so that in the end, each one of us may have a sufficiently clear and definite understanding as to what is Theosophy and what are the Theosophists.

From the subjects that Theosophy deals with and criticizes, as far as we have had the opportunity of observing, we see that it covers the whole ground occupied by Religion, Philosophy and Science. It has something to say by way of confirmation or correction to each of these. If it said nothing more than what Religion, Philosophy and Science teach us, Theosophy would be useless. But as we will see in the sequel, it says a good deal more than each one of these embodiments of truths, or all of them combined, tell us. Covering them all under its wings, it corrects the faults and errors of each one and leads them on far beyond their present position. We will, therefore, understand very clearly Theosophy as a whole, if we consider it separately in its relation with Religion, with Philosophy and with Science.

The question, therefore, that we have to begin with is—What is Religion? No word seems to be more familiarly used than the word religion, and I should think no word is more indefinitely understood than this. If we look at the different systems which are known under the name of religion, and see what functions they are intended to perform we find that at the base of all the huge accumulation of rituals, ceremonials and observances, there is one avowed object common to all religions—whether they are claimed to be revealed or natural religions—they have all one object, viz., to convey the will of God to man. They tell what man should believe and do; and the only reason advanced for what he is required to believe and do is