

East and West -- The Destinies of Nations by Annie Besant

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In this "**East and West**" , and in another lecture entitled "**The Destinies of Nations**" which follows hereafter, I propose to deal with the making of history in a way that seems to me to give much deeper interest than one can find in studying it in the ordinary historical textbooks. Here we shall take a more general view, while, in the succeeding lecture, we shall specialise. We shall consider the premises which underlie the present conflict in the Far East, and the broad results which flow from the triumphs in arms of Japan. For we have before our eyes a great object-lesson, and in this twentieth century, as H.P.Blavatsky told us, some of the outstanding accounts between eastern and western nations are to be settled. Because of this, I wish to bring some thoughtful minds towards a deeper view of the actions of the men who play great parts in the world-drama we call history, so that instead of looking at the events of ordinary life among the nations as though they were really guided by rulers and statesmen, we may learn to understand that the drama of the nations has an Author who writes it, and that the actors play the parts for which they have prepared themselves in the past; the players are actors in, and not creators of, the world's history.

Now, in order to set forth this view of life, and to render intelligible part of the argument that I desire to submit, I must define what I mean here by " ideals". I mean the dominant ideas expressed in civilisations, being shaped and moulded according to the dominant ideas or ideals, the views as to life-values, that rule in the minds of the nation concerned. And I say "eastern" and " western " ideals, because the differences between these, and their utility in the evolution of humanity at large, must be understood if we would rightly follow the acts of the world-drama. And we need to understand that in the present condition of affairs there is a distinct weighing down of a balance that had grown too light and was threatening to kick the beam, so that humanity was menaced by a loss of ideals vital for its full development. It is not that I want to put the ideals of the East and West in antithesis. .Rather I want to show that both are necessary in the great evolution of humanity, and that there was a danger of late years that the eastern ideals might perish. That humanity might not thus be deprived of part of its ideal wealth, it became necessary to redress the balance between East and West, between Europe and Asia. That redressal could only take place by checking the conquering march of Europe, and giving back to Asia some of its ancient independence. So that looking at the present struggle, whether our sympathies go with the one nation or with the other, it is wise that we should understand the deeper issues concerned, and read with eyes of wisdom rather than with eyes of passion the pages of history now being unrolled before us.

I have said I do not want to put these two ideals in conflict. None the less, to some extent, that conflict has been inevitable; and it is, I think, the part of a student of the Divine Wisdom to try to feel peace amid combats, and to fix his eyes steadily on the goal to be arrived at, so that he may not be whirled off his feet by the turmoil of the moment. If we look back over the nineteenth century we shall notice that more and more the West has been dominating the East — by conquest primarily, but to an immense extent by the spread of western thought and civilisation following in the wake of conquest. We have seen in eastern lands that the old ideals tended to disappear. That they did not make their way largely in Europe would have been of small import; but that they should be menaced with death on the soil of their birth

was a true peril to humanity. As western arms and commerce spread, western thought among eastern nations began to claim predominance, the more readily and the more dangerously that it was associated with the conquering sword, with the growth of military power. Some of the conquests in the East were very definite in their nature, as that of India, by Britain ; others less above board, but none the less effective. And Europe grew more and more to regard Asia as her natural inheritance, so that Asian policy was to be directed, Asian interests were to be controlled, not for the benefit of Asian peoples but for the enrichment of Europe. This was done largely under the guise of commercial interests; but the commercial interests were the commercial interests of the West, seeking to discover for itself new markets and further expansion. No one asked, when questions of the open port, and so on, were discussed, whether the eastern nation concerned would benefit in its commerce by the intrusion of western rivalry; no one asked whether eastern industries could meet without peril of destruction the rough shock of western competition; no one ever dreamed of considering, in the many debates that have taken place in the parliaments of Europe in connection with Asian affairs, whether these nations of the East would be the better, the happier, the wealthier, for the forcing upon them of goods for which they did not ask. All that was considered was the question of the market for Europe, and the European countries quarreled among themselves for advantages among eastern peoples. The commercial contest was not between Europe and Asia, but between European nations planted on Eastern soil without the consent of the natural owners of the land. Wars even were begun in order to force the open market on Asian nations, wars often started by peoples who closed their own markets against the goods of the foreigner. All the considerations that here are regarded as binding were entirely disregarded in dealing with the eastern peoples, and China, for instance, was to be compelled to admit into her land foreign goods she did not require, and even detested, while, on the other hand most of the western nations guarded themselves by protective duties and legislation against the competition of Chinese goods and of Chinese labour. The whole current of affairs meant the complete subordination of the East to the West, and that carried with it the perishing of the eastern, and the substitution for them of western, ideals.

Now this substitution of ideals has made but small way at the present time. Of course, in India, to some extent you find a substitution of western ideals among a certain class of the population. A number of English-educated youths among the Indians have accepted enthusiastically the ideals that are current in the West, but the vast masses of the Indian people are thereby unaffected. Not only the agricultural and artisan population, but the population rich with the culture of eastern thought and literature, remain unaffected. But then we must remember that the affected classes are the most energetic, those with the most power of influencing the activity of the country, if not its thought. So that they weigh heavier than they count. The numbers are comparatively small, but the weight behind those numbers of power of thought, quick intelligence, keen enthusiasm, these weigh heavily in the scale.

In China and Japan things have been somewhat different. Japan has the advantage England also has, of being an island empire. That enabled her to keep within her own borders, at the same time that she might bring into them anything she chose from western lands. The westernising of Japan at one time appeared almost complete, and it was this triumph of western ideals that made the redressal of the balance absolutely necessary. For with the complete westernising of Japan would have come a great reaction upon other eastern nations, and Japan, drawing as she did — as was well pointed out by one of her leading writers — all her ideals of life from India, would have been a powerful factor in the westernising of Asia, had she abandoned completely those ideals.

China, affected on her seaboards, was not at all affected in her inland parts. There she preserved her old

teachings and her old morality, but there was a question, in the descent of an armed empire on her coasts, whether it would be possible for her to retain that isolation when Europe was practically bordering her country with colonies under European rule. The time was critical. Those who guide human destinies saw that the eastern ideals were in danger of being trampled out, and that the West would only listen to lessons enforced by the mailed hand. It was necessary to change the balance, and it is changing under our eyes.

Now what are these Eastern ideals regarded as so important by the great Intelligences that guide the destinies of nations? One leading eastern ideal is that the world is under a divine governance, that the destinies of nations are guided from the invisible world. In eastern lands the unseen worlds always play an immense part in the drama of human life, whether in the form of ancestor-worship so largely prevailing in Japan, or in that same form, one of the great ruling creeds of China; whether in a modified form of that same idea in the daily sacrifices to the Pitrs in India, or in the form of the recognition of non-human Intelligences, such as in the West are spoken of as Angels or Archangels. There is thus acknowledged to be a most powerful, constant, and directive action playing on the world of men from superhuman Intelligences that do not belong to the human evolution.

That belief is universal in the West. It is not a mere lip belief; it is an active, working belief recognised in ordinary life. If over in the West some public men, discussing some question of public policy, talked about the influences of Angels as one of the things with which politicians had to reckon, you can imagine the kind of comments that would be passed in the journals on the following morning; but in the East that is natural; the work of the Devas, as Indians call the Angels, is part of the recognised work of the world, and every nation has its ruler in the unseen world, guiding the rulers on the physical plane. How utterly different is the attitude to life among peoples who thus regard superhuman Intelligences as constantly intermingling in human affairs. We find the belief very much, of course, among the Jews of old, where they speak of the Angels of the nations. We find allusions to them in the canonical Scriptures, sometimes veiled under the name of Jehovah, or Elohim — translated into the singular form God, though plural in the Hebrew — the Hebrew not meaning by that at all the supreme God of the universe, but the tribal national Deity, such a one as we should call an Archangel at the present time. And that this is so is obvious when we find that in the battle fought by Israel against opposing forces, he was able to drive out the inhabitants of the hills but not the inhabitants of the plains, because they had chariots of iron, and the one who was able to conquer the hill-men but not the plain-men was the "Lord"; yet surely it was not the universal Deity who was thwarted in His attempts by the mere possession by His opponents of chariots of iron. And so among the early Christian Fathers, especially in Origen, you will find many allusions to the national Angels that belong to particular peoples and not to the universe at large. It is true that in modern days in the western world the name of God is very often invoked in national strifes, and each nation claims that help as belonging specially to itself. But I heard the other day of a little boy making a remark that seemed to me to show a truer insight into the relation of God to man than many of the statements made by rulers and by statesmen, when they claim the success of their arms as proofs of the divine favour of the Lord of all. For, hearing his elders discussing the war now going on, and hearing a difference of opinion as to whether God was on the side of the Japanese or Russians, he struck in with his young voice and said: "I do not think God fights either for the Japanese or Russians; nor do I think He would fight for us if we went to war, although of course we should ask Him to do it; for God is against no nation, but He is for every one." That the divine government is carried on by these various subordinate agencies, who often struggle among themselves as men on the physical plane also struggle, is a view interwoven into the very fibre of eastern thought, although it has vanished from the West. And that ideal of the invisible worlds mingling in the affairs of men was one that had to be saved.

This view of a divine governance moulds the eastern idea of human government; it is always thought to be drawn from above and not from below. The idea that a King rules by the voice of the people rather than by divine authority is only just making its way into eastern thought among nations influenced by western ideas. The result of the view that he who sits upon the throne rules by divine appointment and not by human suffrage has been that all through the East the responsibility of the higher for the welfare of the lower has been a definite, established thought. You find it through all the literature, although it is perishing now. Confucius, asked by a King why thieves were so prevalent in his land, remarked : "If you, O King, lived honestly and justly, there would be no thieves within your realm". So again, through all the old laws of India, you find the King, the governor, the ruler, right down to the petty village official, held responsible for the happiness, health, prosperity, of the people whom they ruled. Hence the difficulty very often in the elder days of finding any one who would take office as governor of a district, of a town, or of a village. Strictly held accountable, by the ruling hierarchy right up to the King himself, for the happiness of the ruled, the place was not a bed of roses, and there was less satisfaction to pride than demand on time and industry. For, great as was the power of the King in eastern lands, there was one thing that ever stood behind his throne, administered by invisible rulers. That something is denoted by the word Danda, and it is translated "punishment" by Max Müller in his translation of the Institutes of Manu. But I believe the true translation would be the word "Justice," or "Law", rather than "punishment" — Justice regarded as a Deva ruling Kings more sternly than peoples, so that where the King went against Justice, Justice cut him off. So you have the famous warning, that you may read, coming from the lips of a Hindu statesman to a young monarch, where he is warned to dread above all else the cries of the weak. "Weakness", says the dying statesman, " is the worst foe of Kings. The curse of the weak, the tears of the weak, destroy the throne of the oppressor." And that thought goes through all the old theories of government in the East; so that even to-day, in India, if there be famine, plague, pestilence, it is the government that is blamed for it by the masses of the people. The old idea there is , that every national misfortune is the fault of the rulers who have neglected their duty, and not the fault of the ruled. Such an idea is utterly outside the range of thought of a western thinker or statesman; and yet, for the safety of the Indian Empire, it is necessary to understand the thought of the Indian people, and not merely the thought of the West, and to deal with that thought as it spreads through the minds of the vast masses of the uninstructed population, uninstructed in western ways, but not uninstructed in their own traditions.

Let us pass from that view to the next great ideal that we find in the East, growing naturally out of this ideal of the responsibility of the rulers for the ruled: the idea of Duty. The word "duty" does not carry with it the force of the Samskrt word "Dharma" which means far more than that. It means the law of all his past, whereby the man is incarnated into the place for which his evolution fits him; the law which, placing him there, surrounds him with all the necessary duties, by the discharge of which his next stage in evolution will be made. All that is contained in the Indian word "Dharma". Coming into the world, then, with the past behind us, we are guided into improper environments. In the duties imposed upon a man by that environment lies his best path of evolution. If he follow them well for the progress of the soul; if he disregard them, progress for him becomes impossible. Hence the social and political ideal of eastern nations is built on duty, to take the narrower word. The ideal here, of course, is "rights". A man has certain rights with which he is born; that idea made the American Revolution, and later the French, and still later became the basic thought of the political and economical writers of the early days of the nineteenth century; but that idea of rights has no existence in the East. It has its place in evolution, but it is an ideal of combat, of competition, absolutely necessary, with all its undesirable accompaniments, as a stage in the progress of humanity; but it is the very antithesis of the eastern ideal, which sees a man surrounded by duties and is practically blind to his rights. No man following an eastern ideal says: "It is my right to have so and so". Duty, yes, duty to all around, to inferiors, to equals, and to superiors, but always duty, and no excuse for broken duty because another has broken his duty to oneself. Hence arises an entirely

different attitude towards life; hence the ease of ruling eastern peoples. Now I am not arguing for the one or the other ideal, but only trying to make us all realise the profound difference between the two, and the value to the world of that ideal of duty, that it should not wholly pass away from the minds of men. What it can do embodied in a nation, we have seen in the triumphs of Japan.

Out of that ideal, again, grows another thought: the relative character of all morality. A man born into a certain environment of duty finds his proper morality in the discharge of the duties imposed upon him by his environment. Hence his morality will vary with his position, with his stage in evolution. No eastern sage or thinker dreams of laying down one common moral ideal for all; that is a purely western fancy, and does not on the whole work very well. In the East the fighting caste will have its own set of duties and its own morality; the caste of teachers will have its own, duties and its morality, very different from the humility of the fighter; the merchant caste will have its own duties and its own morality; and the peasant and the artisan will have - their own moral code and duties. The servant has his special code, with comparatively few duties to be found within it — obedience, honesty, and good service — but those to be thoroughly discharged. Outside that, what would be willed wrong is not regarded as wrong for him. The other parts of moral codes will find their accomplishment in lives yet to be lived. There is no hurry. We need not try to compass universal perfection in a single life — the most impossible of all impossible tasks. If we learn the duties belonging to our stage and do them well, our progress is secure. Hence the moral code will vary with every stage. I will take a common example. A man out in India surrenders everything, has become what in the West would be called a monk of the most extreme type of poverty. He owns nothing; he has given his life for service of the world, and those who guide the world will direct that life. His only to give. He has no further care for his own life. With that view of absolute surrender goes also the duty of absolute harmlessness. He must not touch a life sharing the world with him. The venomous snake must go unslain, the tiger go unharmed. He must not use any power of the surrendered life to defend it against the attack of any other creature ; for if the serpent or the tiger come to him and slay, it comes as a messenger from behind the veil to tell him that his service in that body is over. But the same rule does not apply to the householder, to the man who has children to guard, servants to protect, animals who are part of his household. He, being the guardian of the younger, more helpless lives, must stand between them and peril, and it is as much his duty to slay the intruding serpent, if it menaces them, as it is the duty of the Sannyāsīn to let it pass unharmed. Hence arises much confusion in the western mind in reading eastern books, because they read, as binding upon all, ideals which in the East are related to their proper stage of evolution — a doctrine that in the West finds small acceptance. And naturally so, among modern Christian people, because the Sermon on the Mount is thrown broadcast as the moral ideal, but that ideal of non-resistance applied to the ordinary man of the world is impossible, and therefore disregarded. When a man like Tolstoy applies it all round, people say that he is a "crank". Certainly he is very unwise. No State could live on such a foundation, false alike for the citizen and the thief, true only for the Saint. The late Archbishop of Peterborough said that, a nation founded on the Sermon on the Mount would very soon go to pieces. But then is it not a pity to put the Sermon on the Mount as binding on all Christian men ? For the result is that, inasmuch as they know it to be impossible for them, it leads them to profess a belief with the lips which does not guide the life. The view of the relativity of morality, is another of the valuable eastern ideals which then, may have something to do and to say in the West.

The last great ideal of wide spreading importance that I can deal with here is the ideal of what is now called the " simple life," and of voluntary poverty. There must be in a nation some standard of social position. Among most of the western nations, coining down from feudal times, the standard of social position has been a standard of birth. Of late years that has become largely mingled with a standard of

money, partly because great wealth often received the title which placed its owner among those whose titles came to them by long descent, and partly because, with the growing luxury of the time, wealth weighed more and more heavily as a social distinction. The result of that is widely to be seen in the vulgarising of society, in the loss of noble manners, stately and dignified. A man making a vast fortune has not, as a rule, time, leisure, or taste for the culture of the more delicate mental faculties, and those graces that go with a culture that has come down through centuries. And so gradually, in the western world, a new standard asserts itself against the standard of birth : the standard of great wealth. Society is adapting itself to the new conditions; no future Tennyson will write about :

that repose
That stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

The manners of the great lady of the past are indeed past, and loud voice, noisy laughter, familiar gestures, have taken the place of the soft tone, the low musical laugh, the courteous but stately bearing of the leaders of society, when a golden key did not open all doors. And the change means much, for

Manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature and of noble mind

An aristocracy should be the custodian of stately manners, dignified bearing, artistic culture, simple or splendid living, according to the seemliness of the occasion, the ever-present example of " good taste ". It is now only too well symbolised by the motorcar, rushing headlong, careless of life and limb, screaming its right of way discordantly, rattling noisily and panting furiously, regardless of all comfort but its own, scattering dust and evil smell on all behind it.

Now in the East, wealth has never been regarded as the standard of social consideration ; on the contrary, the gathering of wealth was the work of the third caste, not of the second nor of the highest. The warrior and the teaching castes had not the duty of gathering and holding wealth. The warrior had to be generous and splendid. You may still find in India an immense display of wealth in rulers and princes on State occasions; but go into their houses when no great ceremony is going on, mingle with them in their domestic life, and you will find there a simple life — splendour for the ceremony of the rank, simplicity for the service in the home. And when from the warrior caste with its public splendour you pass on to the class of learning, then wealth is marked as a disgrace, not as reason for pride. "The wealth of a teacher is his learning", it is written. And social consideration you must remember, has gone to the teacher, not to the millionaire, so that the millionaire and the prince alike bow down at the feet of the half naked but learned man. That gives an entirely different standard of social life, and it works effectively even now, with all the changes that have come over Indian life. The ordinary round of living, so much alike in the different classes, draws these different classes together in a way that is never dreamed of in the West. You send for a man in India to sell you a shawl. He comes into your room and sits down on a carpet near you. He plays with your children ; he talks with you as friend with friend, until the coolie comes along with the shawls for you to choose from. He would never dream of taking what is here called a liberty; he is too well-mannered. To meet you in that way is not taking a liberty, but the recognition of a common human life. And so right through; and inasmuch as the clothing and the food are very much alike in the different classes, save where western influence has spread, there is not the same bitterness and jealousy as you find in the West, where the life of the poor is compulsorily simple, and the life of the rich luxurious and complicated. Both alike in their home will wear but a single cloth — finer in one case than in the other, but

still the simple common garment worn in similar fashion; both sit down to their meals in similar ways, and the difference of the meals is not so great as you might think. These forces it is which make the general refinement of the people to be noticed in India. You may meet a man who is but a labourer, but his manners will be the manners of a gentleman. A gentleman gives a play in his house, and any one may walk in from the street and share the amusement; part of the hall is kept for the invited guests; the uninvited crowd outside this, perfectly well-mannered and content. You find refinement there, because the standard for all is so much alike in those outward things. To live luxuriously means to live in the western way, and among the bulk of the people it is rather a reproach than a praise, although there is a growing desire to imitate, which is threatening largely to corrupt the old simplicity of the Indian life.

Now that simplicity of material life which lays stress on knowledge, character, service, instead of on wealth, how well it would be for western nations if that also made its way to some extent among them ! The frightful competition, the multiplication of endless articles of luxury, the crowding of houses with useless furniture, and the heaping on that furniture of still more useless knickknacks, so that when you go into a room it is more like a bazaar than a room — all these things you see on every side do not tend to beauty but only to ostentation. It is the vulgarising of the whole of the peoples, and the dragging them down to a lower plane of life. It means increasing competition, increasing struggle. It means the growing poorer of the poor, while the wealthy become wealthier; for it means the turning of labour into useless channels, the multiplication of new wants and the devisal of new objects to meet those wants, until all life grows complex and overburdened. And while I would not ask that every life should be as simple as the best Indian life, I do say that it would be well for England, and well for all the western nations, if those who alone can do it — the wealthy and the highly placed, especially the highly placed, even more than the wealthy — followed a noble simplicity and a dignified beauty of life, which would encourage true art but discourage idle show, and replace ostentation by beauty, and undue luxury by simplicity.

Now, to come back to my starting-point. Those ideals of the East were in danger of perishing. Humanity cannot afford to let them die. Western energy, western initiative, western willingness to bear responsibility, are all good for eastern life ; but the West has also much to learn from the East as well as much to teach, and the danger was lest the growing power of the West in the East should kill out those great ideals which change men's attitude to the world and to life as a whole. And if the balance is being redressed today, if on land and sea an eastern nation is conquering a western, it is because the West will only learn to respect where armed force can hold its own against the West, and eastern ideals have no chance of anything save contempt and despoliation until they are lifted on high in a hand that can wield the sword, and show itself as strong on the field of battle as it is in the realm of mind.

THE DESTINIES OF NATIONS

IN the last lecture I pointed out that certain great ideas, necessary for the evolution of the race, may be said to belong especially to the civilisations of the East, and that those ideas were in danger of being trampled out by the advancing western civilisations. We saw that that was a danger to humanity at large, the ideals of both eastern and western civilisations being necessary in the future of the world ; and that it became necessary for some definite interference to take place to re-establish the balance of thought. I now want to draw attention to the nature of that interference, to show what lies behind the destinies of nations and what forces guide the current of affairs, so that we may see through the veil of events to the forces that guide them. The great world-drama is not written by the pen of chance, but by the thought of the Logos, guiding His world along the road of evolution. In the course of that evolution many beings are

concerned. We have to look on this world as part of a chain of worlds all closely interlinked, all the inhabitants of these different worlds having something to say in those parts of the drama which are being worked out in each. We are all living in three different worlds, and not only in one; and whether in the physical world, or in the next world, the astral, or in the third, the heaven world, the inhabitants are busy with the general conduct of affairs which affect all three. Life becomes enormously more interesting when we recognise that it is shaped not only in the physical world but in other worlds as well, and that when we trace the destinies of nations we find that those destinies stretch backward, and that the working out in the present is largely conditioned by the energies of the past.

Let us look for a moment on the rough plan of the whole. Let me put it as though it were a great drama written by a divine pen. The story of the world, and the various parts of the actors on the stage, are all therein written. What is not laid down is who the actors shall be, and with regard to this a large amount of what is called choice comes in. This drama is the manifestation of certain great ideas in the Divine Mind, ideas written, as it were, in the heavens; for it is suggested in very ancient thought that what we call the signs of the Zodiac have a definite connection with the course of human affairs. Of that, in the broad outline, there is no doubt in the minds of any who have penetrated somewhat behind the veil. The importance of those starry influences cannot be over-estimated; for inasmuch as human beings are related in the composition of their physical and other subtler bodies to the worlds among which they move in space, there must be magnetic relations existing between them and the system of which they form a part, and at certain epochs in the history of evolution there will be one or another dominating influence present in the atmosphere in which men think and act, and they can no more escape that influence than their bodies can escape the influence of the far-off sun. The great drama, then, is the grand plan of human evolution. It is full of parts which are to be played by the nations, but not necessarily by this or that nation; for the nation qualifies itself to play a certain part which may be offered to more than one nation, and one or another may rise to the height of its great opportunity.

Leaving that for a moment, let us ask a question as to the forces which help to adapt players to parts. Is there to be found, in what seems the great chaos of human wills, any guiding force which brings the actor and the part together? You cannot well have a drama vast as the world-process, as evolution, and then a great gap between the Author of so vast a plan and individual players who make up the nations and choose the parts.

How is the right player to be brought into touch with his part in the history of the nation, in the history of individual successive births and deaths? That is the next point to grasp.

Now the vast machinery for bringing together the parts and players is found in the hierarchies of superhuman Intelligences recognised in all the religions of the world, and in the occult teaching on which they are founded. Not one great religion of the past or of the present does not see surrounding the world and mingling in its affairs the vast hierarchies of spiritual Intelligences into whose hands is put the work of bringing together the players and the parts. You will see if you turn to the religions of the nations of the past, how they have recognised these workings as playing a great part in the practical shaping of the destinies of nations. Not one great people of antiquity that did not have its own national "Gods".

The word "Gods", however, as used in the English tongue, is very confusing, for it is applied not only to those great hosts of Intelligences, but also to the Supreme, the Logos, the Author of the drama. Now in

the nations that have other religions than the Christian, this confusion does not arise. It is when the Christian is contemplating those whom he calls the "heathen" that the greatest confusion arises, for over the whole of their vast theology he uses the one name "God". And yet he might easily escape that by remembering that his own cosmogony is only a reproduction of the older thoughts of these more ancient peoples. In the East there is one name which is used for these Intelligences — the name "Devas", from the root "div", to "shine" or to "play"; the "shining ones", or the "playing ones", would be the English translation. When Bunyan so often used the term "shining ones", he was using a quite eastern phrase, for it is by that name that the East knows this great hierarchy of Intelligence. Among the Christians and Musalmâns, whose religions are drawn largely from the Jewish, the name "Angel" is used, the terms "Angel", "Archangel", "Cherubim", "Seraphim", and so on, being represented in the older faiths either by the word "Deva" or by a word derived there from. "God", in the Christian sense, is known by other names, and no confusion arises.

In all the old religions these Devas played an enormous part, and each nation had its own particular set of Devas. The Egyptians regarded certain superhuman Intelligences as their earliest lawgivers, and the connection between the human lawgiver, the Divine King, and the Deva is always clearly marked. Every civilisation takes its rise in a little group, partly human, partly superhuman, to which it looks back and from which it draws its laws. The Greek had his Demigods or Heroes, and his Gods or Devas. So among the Chinese, the Persians, the Indians, the same idea is found of the nation being founded by the group which contained the human lawgiver and the Deva who worked with him in the building of the nation. Celsus hints that the Beings "to whom was allotted the office of superintending the country which was being legislated for, enacted the laws of each land in co-operation with its legislators. He appears then to indicate that both the country of the Jews, and the nation which inhabits it, are superintended by one or more beings, who co-operated with Moses, and enacted the laws of the Jews" (Origen, *Con. Cel.* V, xxv).

Now the Divine Kings, the Heroes, passed, but the Deva remains still at the head of each nation, a real existence in the astral and heavenly worlds, with a crowd of less developed intelligences under his guiding hand. And when you come to the Jews, you find that idea very clearly laid down in their scriptures. I pause for a moment upon it, because the sentence I am going to take from the Old Testament, from *Deuteronomy*, gives exactly the idea which I want to take in considering the working out of a nation's destinies: "When the Most High divided the nations, when He dispersed the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the angels of God; and the Lord's portion was his people Jacob (Deut., xxxii, 8, 9, Septuagint). To many modern readers the latter part of that sentence, "the Lord", may sound surprising, for they are accustomed to connect that word with the Supreme God; but we can see from the whole of the sentence that it is the name "Most High" which indicates the Logos, the manifested God, and He 'divides all the nations of the world according to the number of the angels, and to one great angel, "the Lord", He gives Jacob, Israel, as his peculiar portion. Origen, in dealing with this, alludes to the "reasons relating to the arrangement of terrestrial affairs," and points out that in Grecian history "certain of those considered to be Gods are introduced as having contended with each other about the possession of Attica; while in the writings of the Greek poets also some who are called Gods are represented as acknowledging that certain places here are preferred by them before others" (Cau.Cel. V, xxix). And so he points out that after what lie regards as the symbolical dispersion, at the building of the Tower of Babel, the different nations were given to these groups of celestial beings (Ibid., xxxiv). This idea of "the ministry of angels" is very general among the early Christians; thus we have in Hermas the vision of the building of a tower :

" And I answering said unto her, These things are very admirable; but, lady, who are those six young men that build ?

"They are, said she, the angels of God, which were first appointed, and to whom the Lord has delivered all his creatures, to frame and build them up, and to rule over them. For by these the building of the tower shall be finished.

" And who are the rest who bring them stones

"They also are the holy angels of the Lord; but the other are more excellent than these. Wherefore when the whole building of the tower shall be finished, they shall all feast together beside the tower, and shall glorify God, because the structure of the tower is finished" (1st Book of Hermas, Vision iii, 43 - 46).

Clement (1st Epistle, xiii, 7) quotes the text above referred to. Also the following remark about Jesus, made by Satan to the Prince of Hell, is noteworthy : "As for me, I tempted him, and stirred up my old people the Jews with zeal and anger against him" (Gospel of Nicodemus, xv, 9). The Jews were under Saturn, or Jehovah, according to Origen. The same idea, is taught among the Musalmâns. They regard the angels as taking a very active part in the affairs of men. And it is hardly necessary to remind you that in the great epic poems of India, the Mahābhārata and the Ramāyāna, you find the Devas mingling with the affairs of men, so that when great quarrels are to be decided they manifestly take part in the strife, each struggling for the particular tribe or nation placed in his hands for its evolution. A correspondent, Mr. Tudor Pole, of Bristol, tells me that there is an old Teutonic legend that on New Year's Eve all the "Inner Rulers", the Angels of the nations assemble before the Council of the Gods to receive their orders for the coming year; each has his request to make as to the destiny of his nation during the coming year; the Council arranges the part that each nation shall play during the ensuing year, and the great Lords are consulted. Finally, the Rulers disperse, some with music and joy, some weeping, some in great agony.

In Greece there is much mingling of " Gods" and men, and the Greeks, despite their philosophy, took the matter as real, not as fairy-tale, although the philosophers in Greece, as among the Hindus and Buddhists, did not worship these "Gods". In the 7th Book of the Odyssey we read how "Minerva meets Ulysses, in the likeness of a young maiden bearing a pitcher", and she guides him to the place of Alcinous, a place guarded, in Atlantean fashion, by immortal gold and silver dogs, made by the mind of Vulcan. And so again in many another tale, written when men's minds were less blinded than they are today.

Of course, in modern times this idea has disappeared, and it must seem like a fairy-tale to modern readers when one brings such thoughts into touch with what may seem to them things, so much more real — the strifes of Kings, and the politics of the modern world. And yet behind all these the coordinating forces are still continually at work ; and when the time comes for a nation to play a triumphant part in the current history of the world, then, many years before the time of the triumph, there are guided into that nation by the Deva souls which are fitted for its building up and guidance in the coming struggle. And when the time comes for a nation to sink low in the current history of the world, there are guided to incarnation there souls that are weak, undeveloped, cruel, tyrannical, having fitted themselves to fill such actors' parts in the great national drama. Let us keep, then, that theory in mind : the drama on the one

side, this great coordinating agency on the other, guiding the self-chosen actors to their appointed parts.

And now let us look at some of the nations themselves, and see how far the destinies that they are working out - fit in with this view of a guiding hand behind the veil. Let us take for one instance the building up of a mighty western empire, so that the great Fifth Race, with its evolution of the concrete mind, might play its part in the drama for the benefit of humanity at large. And let us see, if we can, whether certain definite currents may not be traced which show a plan definitely worked out, and not the mere mingling of the chaotic wills, ambitions, and selfishnesses of nations.

Slowly was prepared this part of a nation to stand high above the nations of the world. The first nation to whom that part was offered was Spain, who had been preparing for it by a very marked and extraordinary evolution. Into her was poured the great flood of learning which linked itself with the dying philosophy of Greece, and drew its rich stores from the Neo-platonic schools; into Southern Spain came the great incursion from Arabia, rich with all the knowledge brought from the mighty schools of Baghdad, which spread over Southern Spain and thence over Europe. To her was sent Columbus, who made it possible for her to spread her conquering troops across, the Atlantic and subject the new world to her imperial sceptre. How did Spain meet that wondrous, opportunity ? In the wake of Columbus came the army, subjecting Mexico and Peru to her sway, and destroying their ancient civilisations, outworn and ready for destruction. She had laid upon her shoulders the task of building up in that new world a civilisation based on the solid foundation left there by Atlantis, capable of supporting the structure of the new thought and knowledge. All know how she missed her opportunity; how she drove out from her own country the Moors and Jews, the inheritors of the knowledge, the philosophy, and the science; and how, in the new world, with her greed of gold, she cared nothing for the peoples placed in her hands, but trampled them into the dust. So her part in the drama was taken away and offered to another people.

Another nation became a candidate — a nation which, with many faults, had also many great virtues. England, spreading abroad her race, more and more subjected to her sway land after land. She gained the offer of a world-empire by an act of national righteousness—the liberation of the slaves from bondage, accompanied by the great act of national justice which sacrificed no one class, but placed the burden of the liberation on the whole nation. For that, those who guided her destinies were offered the possibility of world dominion. All the nations that tried to establish themselves in that great land of the East, India, one after another failed, until the English race placed its feet therein. The story of the placing is not good to read, and many crimes were wrought; yet on the whole the nation tried to do its best and correct the oppressions wrought in India — then so out of reach — as witness her action towards her great proconsul, Warren Hastings, when for his evil deeds she brought him to trial in the face of the world. So, despite many faults, she was allowed to climb higher and higher in the eastern world, partly also because she offered, with her growing colonies and language, the most effective world-instrument for spreading the thought of the East over the civilisations of the West. All know how far that has gone, how all over Northern America, in far-off Australasia, as well as in her own land, eastern thought and philosophy have everywhere penetrated, so that the treasures of Samskrt learning kept so jealously until the time was ripe for their dispersion, are being spread over the surface of the globe.

Continually, by lessons ever repeated, those Higher Ones, who guide the nation, are striving to impress upon England the lesson that by righteousness alone can a nation be exalted in the long run. And in a critical moment, when luxury was growing too enervating, too selfish, the terrible lesson of South Africa branded on the English conscience the lessons that duty and right must go before luxury. Through the

fires of disaster a lesson was taught to England which, may God grant, she has learned for her future guidance.

And then there came the question of what nation should be chosen for the work of lifting up those ideals of the East. India, at this stage of the world's history, could not do the necessary service; she was learning her lessons under a conqueror; but there was a nation in the Far East which had within it the possibility of learning the lesson, and the Devas of the nation began to concern themselves with the attempt to train up in that far-off island a people who should be fit for the mighty task of uplifting eastern thought, of showing that conquest might go on hand in hand with gentleness and self-control, and that a nation might spring into a mighty power without losing its sense of duty. The work began by a change in the education of the people; which might make the nation conscious of itself, and then into the soil thus prepared a group of heroic souls was born. The Mikado of Japan, a mighty soul, fit to incarnate for that nation its own greatness, fit to use such power that in brief space of years he might transform the nation, put it into new shape, evolve in it unknown forces, and at the same time show out a personality so wonderful that all that nation look to him as Ruler by Divine Right, from whose sacred person flow the powers which in the nation are shown forth, every triumph reflecting new glory on his personality. And round him gathers one great one after another, for the labour of raising up the nation, until at every point of importance you see a statesman, a general, an admiral, fit to lead people from triumph to triumph. A group of strong souls is guided to incarnate there, in order that the nation may fulfil its destiny; for no nation can be great unless at the centre there be an ideal, and a perfect loyalty and self-devotion. It is no mere lip phrase, but voices a feeling deep in the heart of the soldier and of the general, when they thank their Ruler for the victory in the field, and with the eastern devotion say that he is the representative of God amongst them.

Glance at the other nation in the great duel which is being fought in Eastern Asia, and see how strangely Russia, a nation with a great future before her, is being guided through the frightful valley of humiliation. The preparation for that calamitous part in the drama lies in that which has gone before, even within the limits of our own lives. There was a moment, some twenty five or thirty years since, when a wondrous opportunity came in Russia's way. Although ill-judged, there was a noble impulse underneath the freeing of the serfs, and there was a possibility that that act might be turned to good purpose for the nation, and raise it higher, instead of leading it well-nigh to destruction as it has done. And then there came, out of many souls born just then among the nobles of Russia, one of the most wonderful things the world has seen — a flinging of themselves out of their own rank down amongst the poor, the ignorant and the downtrodden, a giving of themselves by the lads and the girls of the nobility to the lifting up of the people, not by a far-off charity, but by a wondrous impulse of uttermost self-sacrifice. And how was that met? The divine compassion of those youths and girls was met by the fortress of Peter and Paul, by the mines, and deserts, and snows of Siberia. Nothing more terrible has been wrought by a government of any people within modern times. And terrible the Nemesis. Driven by despair, their attempts to uplift in all gentleness met with the knout and the underground dungeon, with starvation for the men, with dishonour for the women, what wonder some of them went mad? What wonder that some of them at last, after years of patience, after cruellest sufferings, answered with the bomb to the knout? This state of affairs was created in the first place by the bureaucracy, and not by the victims. Thousands upon thousands of those who would have redeemed Russia died on the scaffolds, were slaughtered in those frightful mines, until at last the patience of the Gods grew exhausted, and the time came for the government to learn that governments exist for the helping and not for the crushing of their peoples.

So Russia chose by her past that terrible role which now she is playing on the stage of the world. Against her are all the forces that make for progress; against her from the astral world the myriads that she sent there before their time — all her martyrs, all her victims, are struggling against her. Hence the record of unexampled defeat. And at home, revolution, anarchy, assassination and mutiny are threatening her government fabric from every side, until for Russia at the moment, there is only that valley of the Shadow of Death to be trodden from end to end; and with pain at heart, but with steady hands, her angelic guardians guide her through the defeat and the disaster, willing that their charge should learn her lessons whatever the price she pays. For in those clear eyes the nation's agony for the moment matters little, beside the lessons that through that agony are learned; and until the tyranny itself is crushed, and the rulers of Russia learn their duties to the people, she must still tread the winepress of the divine wrath.

And see how Russia has been prepared for it. Among all her rulers not one strong man; weakness and uncertainty everywhere, changed policy at every moment. Mark the government of him who should be the father, but is the tyrant, of his people — perhaps not a bad man in himself, but utterly unfit for his post. It is part of the destiny of a nation that, when the hour of its doom strikes, nothing but weakness is born into its governing classes, so that those who would not rule aright may lose the power to rule. And on those terrible battle-fields of which we have read records in the daily press, is there anything more pathetic than the dauntless courage of the soldiers, and the hopeless incompetence of the officers? It is not that the soldiers do not fight, but that they are led by men who know not how to lead.

It is thus that nations are guided from above, and into the nation that has to go downwards those are guided who inevitably drag it downwards. The same was the case in Spain — a Child King, and not one able man among the Ministers who could guide it right in the struggle with Cuba and America.

And how are these leaders chosen? They are chosen by their own lives in the past. A man is found unselfish, brave, and noble, and such a one, in the countless choices of his daily life, is making the choice for the splendid part that hereafter in humanity he shall play. And so with those who are great outside, but have to play a sordid part. By countless selfishnesses and preferring of themselves, by taking ever the lower path instead of the higher, those men choose also their parts in history.

Thus it is that the Occultist looks on human history, and sees preparing around him on every side the men and women who are to be the players of the future in the more prominent parts of the world-drama. For none forces upon us any part, nor imposes upon us special place in the world-drama. We choose for ourselves. We build up ourselves for glory or for shame, and as we build so hereafter shall we inevitably be. Hence it follows that for a nation to be great its citizens must slowly build up greatness in themselves. Hence it is that the greatness that you see now in Japan is a greatness that you can recognise among her ordinary men and women, who are willing to sacrifice all that is dearest for the sake of their country and the glory of their Chief.

And so with England, if she would fill the mighty part which is before her in the near future. She must build up her sons and daughters on heroic models, by placing righteousness above luxury, thought above enjoyment; by choosing the strenuous, the heroic, the self-sacrificing in daily life, and not petty enjoyments, small luxuries, and miserable sensual gratifications, out of rotten bricks no great building can be built, and out of poor material no mighty nation may be shaped. The destinies of nations lie in the homes of which the nations are composed, and noble men, women, and children have in them the

promise of the future national greatness. And as we make our conditions better, higher and more evolved souls shall be born amongst us. While we have slums and miserable places we are making habitations for little-evolved souls, whom we draw into the nation. Under the ground the root grows, out of which the flower and the fruit will come, and poor the gardening science which places a rotten root in the ground and expects from it a perfect flower and a splendid fruit. If we would have England great among the nations, and make her destiny an imperial destiny as the servant of humanity at large, we must cultivate the soil of character, plant the sound roots of noble, righteous, simple living, and then the destiny is inevitable, and the nation will be cast for an imperial part in the drama of the world.