

*Madame Blavatsky on
The New Year's Morrow*



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The veil which covers the face of futurity
is woven by the hand of Mercy.

— BULWER-LYTTON

a HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL! This seems easy enough to say, and everyone expects some such greeting. Yet, whether the wish, though it may proceed from a sincere heart, is likely to be realized even in the case of the few — is more difficult to decide. According to our theosophical tenets, every man or woman is endowed, more or less, with a magnetic potentiality, which when helped by a sincere, and especially by an intense and indomitable *will* — is the most effective of magic levers placed by Nature in human hands — for woe as for weal. Let us then, Theosophists, use that will to send a sincere greeting and a wish of good luck for the New Year to every living creature under the sun — enemies and relentless traducers included. Let us try and feel especially kindly and forgiving to our foes and persecutors, honest or dishonest, lest some of us should send unconsciously an “evil eye” greeting instead of a blessing. Such an effect is but too easily produced even without the help of the occult combination of the two numbers, the 8 and the 9, of the late departed, and of the newly-born year. But with these two numbers staring us in the face, an evil wish, just now, would be simply disastrous!

“Halloo!” we hear some casual readers exclaiming. Here’s a *new* superstition of the theosophic cranks: let us hear it . . . ”

You shall, dearly beloved critics, though it is not a *new* but a very *old* superstition. It is one shared, once upon a time, and firmly believed in, by all the Caesars and World-potentates. These dreaded the number 8, because it postulates the *equality of all men*. Out of eternal *unity* and the mysterious number *seven*, out of Heaven and the seven planets and the sphere of the fixed stars, in the philosophy of arithmetic, was born the *ogdoad*. It was *the first cube of the even numbers*, and hence held sacred.¹ In the Eastern philosophy number eight symbolizes equality of units, order and symmetry in heaven, transformed into inequality and confusion on earth, by selfishness, the great rebel against Nature’s decrees.

¹ As shown by Ragon, the Mason-Occultist, the gnostic ogdoad had eight stars representing the 8 Kabeiroi of Samothrace, the 8 *principles* of the Egyptians and Phœnicians, the 8 gods of Xenocrates the 8 angles of the cubic stone. [*Maçonnerie occulte*, p. 435 *fn.*]

“The figure 8 or ∞ indicates the perpetual and regular motion of the Universe,” says Ragon. But if perfect as a cosmic number it is likewise the symbol of the lower *Self*, the animal nature of man. Thus, we augur ill for the *unselfish* portion of humanity from the present combination of the year-numbers. For the central figures 89 in the year 1890, are but a repetition of the two figures in the tail-end of 1889. And *nine* was a digit terribly dreaded by the ancients. With them it was a symbol of great changes, cosmic and social, and of versatility, in general; the sad emblem of the fragility of human things. Figure 9 represents the earth under the influence of an *evil principle*; the Kabbalists holding, moreover, that it also symbolizes the act of reproduction and generation. That is to say that the year 1890 is preparing to reproduce all the evils of its parent 1889, and to generate plenty of its own. *Three times three* is the great symbol of *corporisation*, or the materialisation of spirit according to Pythagoras — hence of gross matter.¹

Every material extension, every circular line was represented by number 9, for the ancient philosophers had observed that, which the philosophicules of our age either fail to see, or else attribute to it no importance whatever. Nevertheless, the natural depravity of this digit and number is awful. Being sacred to the spheres it stands as the sign of circumference, since its value in degrees is equal to 9 — *i.e.*, to 3 + 6 + 0. Hence it is also the symbol of the human head — especially of the modern average head, ever ready to be parading as 9 when it is hardly a 3. Moreover, this blessed 9 is possessed of the curious power of reproducing itself in its entirety in every multiplication and whether wanted or not; that is to say, when multiplied by itself or any other number this cheeky and pernicious figure will always result in a sum of 9 — a vicious trick of material nature, also, which reproduces itself on the slightest provocation. Therefore it becomes comprehensible why the ancients made of 9 the symbol of Matter, and we, the modern Occultists, make of it that of the *materialism* of our age — the fatal *nine*teenth century, now happily on its decline.

If this antediluvian wisdom of the ages fails to penetrate the “circumference” of the cephaloid “spheres” of our modern Scientists and Mathematicians — then we do not know what will do so. The occult future of 1890 is concealed in the exoteric past of 1889 and its preceding patronymic eight years.

Unhappily — or shall we say, happily — man in this dark cycle is denied, as a collective whole, the faculty of foresight. Whether we take into our mystic consideration the average business man, the profligate, the materialist, or the bigot, it is always the same. Compelled to confine his attention to the day’s concern, the businessman but imitates the provident ant by laying by a provision against the winter of old age; while the elect of fortune and Karmic illusions tries his best to emulate the grasshopper in his perpetual buzz and summer-song. The selfish care of the one and the utter recklessness of the other make both disregard and often remain entirely igno-

¹ The reason for this is because according to the Pythagoreans each of the three elements that constitute our bodies is a *ternary*: water containing earth and fire; earth containing aqueous and igneous particles; and fire being tempered by aqueous globules and terrestrial corpuscles serving it as food. Hence the name given to matter, the “nonagous envelope.”

rant of any serious duty towards Human kind. As to the latter two, namely the materialist and the bigot, their duty to their neighbours and charity to all begin and end at home. Most men love but those who share their respective ways of thinking, and care nothing for the future of the races or the world; nor will they give a thought, if they can help it, to *post-mortem* life. Owing to their respective psychical temperaments each man expects death will usher him either through golden porches into a conventional heaven, or through sulphurous caverns into an asbestos hell, or else to the verge of an abyss of non-existence. And lo, how all of them — save the materialist — do fear death to be sure! May not this fear lie at the bottom of the aversion of certain people to Theosophy and Metaphysics? But no man in this century — itself whirling madly towards its gaping tomb — has the time or desire to give more than a casual thought either to the grim visitor who will not miss one of us, or to Futurity.

They are, perhaps, right as to the latter. The future lies in the present and both include the Past. With a rare occult insight Rahel made quite an *esoterically* true remark, in saying that “the future does not come from before to meet us, but comes streaming up from behind over our heads.”¹ For the Occultist and average Theosophist the Future and the Past are both included in each moment of their lives, hence in the eternal PRESENT. The Past is a torrent madly rushing by, that we face incessantly, without one second of interval; every wave of it, and every drop of it, being an event, whether great or small. Yet, no sooner have we faced it, and whether it brings joy or sorrow, whether it elevates us or knocks us off our feet, than it is carried away and disappears behind us, to be lost sooner or later in the great Sea of Oblivion. It depends on us to make every such event non-existent to ourselves by obliterating it from our memory; or else to create of our past sorrows Promethean Vultures — those “dark-winged birds, the embodied memories of the Past,” which, in Sala’s graphic fancy “wheel and shriek over the Lethean lake.” In the first case, we are real philosophers; in the second — but timid and even cowardly soldiers of the army called mankind, and commanded in the great battle of Life by “King Karma.” Happy those of its warriors by whom Death is regarded as a tender and merciful mother. She rocks her sick children into sweet sleep on her cold, soft bosom but to awake them a moment after, healed of all ailing, happy, and with a tenfold reward for every bitter sigh or tear. *Post-mortem* oblivion of every evil — to the smallest — is the most blissful characteristic of the “paradise” we believe in. Yes: oblivion of pain and sorrow and the vivid recollection only, nay once more the living over of every happy moment of our terrestrial drama; and, if no such moment ever occurred in one’s sad life, then, the glorious realization of every legitimate, well-earned, yet unsatisfied desire we ever had, as true as life itself and intensified seventy-seven times sevenfold . . .

Christians — the Continental especially — celebrate their New Year days with special pomp. That day is the *Devachan* of children and servants, and everyone is supposed to be happy, from Kings and Queens down to the porters and kitchen-malkins.² The

¹ [Here is another quotation from mediaeval Christian chronicler Ibn Rahel: “The less tenderness a man has in his nature, the more he requires from others.”]

² [untidy women]

festival is, of course, purely pagan, as with very few exceptions are all our *holy days*. The dear old pagan customs have not died out, not even in Protestant England, though here the New Year is no longer a sacred day — more's the pity. The presents, which used to be called in old Rome *strenæ* (now, the French *étrennes*), are still mutually exchanged. People greet each other with the words: — *Annum novum faustum felicemque tibi*,¹ as of yore; the magistrates, it is true, sacrifice no longer a white steer to Janus. But magistrates, priests and all devour still in commemoration of swan and steer, big fat oxen and turkeys at their Christmas and New Year's dinners. The gilt dates, the dried and gilt plums and figs have now passed from the hands of the tribunes on their way to the Capitol onto the Christmas trees for children. Yet, if the modern Caligula receives no longer piles of copper coins with the head of Janus on one side of them, it is because his own effigy replaces that of the god on every coin, and that coppers are no longer touched by royal hands. Nor has the custom of presenting one's Sovereigns with *strenæ* been abolished in England so very long. Disraeli tells us in his *Curiosities of Literature* of 3,000 gowns found in Queen Bess's wardrobe after her death, the fruits of her New Year' tax on her faithful subjects, from Dukes down to dustmen. As the success of any affair on that day was considered a good omen for the whole year in ancient Rome, so the belief exists to this day in many a Christian country, in Russia pre-eminently so. It is because instead of the New Year, the mistletoe and the holly are now used on Christmas day, that the symbol has become Christian? The cutting of the mistletoe off the sacred oak on New Year's day is a relic of the old Druids of pagan Britain. Christian Britain is as pagan in her ways as she ever was.

But there are more reasons than one why England is bound to include the New Year as a sacred day among Christian festivals. The 1st of January being the 8th day after Christmas is, according to both profane and ecclesiastical histories, the festival of Christ's circumcision, as six days later in the Epiphany. And it is as undeniable and as world-known a fact as any, that long before the advent of the three Zoroastrian Magi, of Christ's circumcision, or his birth either, the 1st of January was the first day of the civil year of the Romans, and celebrated 2,000 years ago as it is now. It is hard to see the reason, since Christendom has helped itself to the Jewish Scriptures, and along with them their curious chronology, why it should have found it unfit to adopt also the Jewish *Rosh ha-Shanah* (the head of the year), instead of the pagan New Year. Once that the 1st Chapter of *Genesis* is left headed in every country with the words, "Before Christ, 4004," consistency alone should have suggested the propriety of giving preference to the Talmudic calendar over the Pagan Roman. Everything seemed to invite the Church to do so. On the undeniable authority of revelation Rabbinical tradition assures us that it was on the 1st day of the month of *Tishri*, that the Lord God of Israel created the world — just 5,848 years ago. Then there's that other historical fact, namely that our father Adam was likewise created on the first anniversary of that same day of *Tishri* — a year after. All this is very important, pre-eminently suggestive, and underlines most emphatically our proverbial western ingratitude. Moreover, if we are permitted to say so, it is dangerous. For that identical first day of *Tishri* is also called "Yom ha-Din," the Day of Judgment. The Jewish *El*

¹ [Happy and prosperous new year to you.]

Shaddai, the Almighty, is more active than the “Father” of the Christians. The latter will judge us only after the destruction of the Universe, on the Great Day when the Goats and the Sheep will stand, each on their allotted side, awaiting eternal bliss or damnation. But El Shaddai, we are informed by the Rabbis, sits in judgment on every anniversary of the world’s creation — *i.e.*, on every New Year’s Day. Surrounded by His archangels, the God of Mercy has the astro-sidereal minute books opened, and the name of every man, woman and child is read to Him aloud from these Records, wherein the minutest thoughts and deeds of every human (or is it only Jewish?) being are entered. If the good deeds outnumber the wicked actions, the mortal whose name is read lives through that year. The Lord plagues for him some Christian Pharaoh or two, and hands him over to him to shear. But if the bad deeds outweigh the good — then woe to the culprit; he is forthwith condemned to suffer the penalty of death during that year, and is sent to Sheol.

This would imply that the Jews regard the gift of life as something very precious indeed. Christians are as fond of their lives as Jews, and both are generally scared out of their wits at the approach of Death. Why it should be so has never been made clear. Indeed, this seems but a poor compliment to pay the Creator, as suggesting the idea that none of the Christians care particularly to meet the Unspeakable Glory of the “Father” face to face. Dear, loving children!

A pious Roman Catholic assured us one day that it was not so, and attributed the scare to *reverential awe*. Moreover, he tried to persuade his listeners that the Holy Inquisition burnt her “heretics” out of pure Christian kindness. They were put out of the way of terrestrial mischief in this way, he said, for Mother Church knew well that Father God would take better care of the roasted victims than any mortal authority could, while they were raw and living. This may be a mistaken view of the situation, nevertheless, it was meant in all Christian charity.

We have heard a less charitable version of the real reason for burning heretics and all whom the Church was determined to get rid of; and by comparison this reason colours the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal bliss or damnation with quite a roseate hue. It is said to be stated in the secret records of the Vatican archives, that burning to the last atom of flesh, after breaking all the bones into small fragments, was done with a predetermined object. It was that of preventing the “enemy of the Church” from taking his part and share even in the last act of the drama of the world — as theologically conceived — namely in “the Resurrection of the Dead” or of all flesh, on the great Judgment Day. As cremation is to this hour opposed by the Church on the same principle — to wit, that a cremated “Sleeper” will upon awakening at the blast of the angel’s trumpet, find it impossible to gather up in time his scattered limbs — reason given for the *auto-da-fé* seems reasonable enough and quite likely. The sea will give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell will deliver up their dead;¹ but terrestrial fire is not to be credited with a like generosity, nor supposed to share in the asbestosian characteristics of the orthodox hellfire.² Once the body is cremated it is as good as annihilated with regard to the last rising of the

¹ Vide *Revelation* xx, 13

² [Cf. *Mark* ix, 43: *πῦρ τὸ ἀσβεστον*, fire inextinguishable.]

dead. If the occult reason of the inquisitorial *auto-da-fé* rests on fact — and personally we do not entertain the slightest doubt of it, considering the authority it was received from — then the Holy Inquisition and Popes would have very little to say against the Protestant doctrine of Predestination. The latter, as warranted in *Revelation*, allows some chance, at least, to the “Damned” whom hell delivers at the last hour, and who may thus yet be pardoned. While if things took place in nature as the theology of Rome decreed that they should, the poor “Heretics” would find themselves worse off than any of the “damned.” Natural query: which of the two, the God of the Calvinists or the Jesuit of God, he who first invented burning, beats the other in refined and diabolical cruelty? Shall the question remain in 1890, *sub judice*, as it did in 1790?

But the Inquisition, with its stake and rack and diabolical tortures, is happily abolished now, even in Spain. Otherwise these lines would never have been written; nor would our Society have such zealous and good theosophists in the land of Torquemada and the ancient paradise of man-roasting festivals, as it has now. Happy NEW YEAR to them, too, as to all the Brethren scattered all over the wide globe. Only we, theosophists, so kindly nicknamed the “sevening lunatics,” would prefer another day for *our* New Year. Like the apostate Emperor, many of us have still a strong lingering love for the poetical, bright gods of Olympus and would willingly repudiate the double-faced Thessalonian. The first of Januarius was ever more sacred to Janus than Juno; and *janua*, meaning “the gate that openeth the year,” holds as good for any day in January. January 3rd, for instance, was consecrated to Minerva-*Athēna*, the goddess of wisdom and to *Isis*, “she who generates life,” the ancient lady patroness of the good city of Lutetia. Since then, mother *Isis* has fallen a victim to the faith of Rome and civilization and Lutetia along with her. Both were converted in the *Julian* calendar (the heirloom of pagan Julius Caesar used by Christendom till the XIIIth century). *Isis* was baptized Geneviève, became a beatified saint and martyr, and Lutetia was called Paris for a change, preserving the same old patroness but with the addition of a false nose.¹ Life itself is a gloomy masquerade wherein the ghastly *danse macabre* is every instant performed; why should not calendars and even religion in such case be allowed to partake in the travesty?

To be brief, it is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists — the Esotericists especially — as their New Year. January is under the sign of Capricornus, the mysterious *Makara* of the Hindu mystics — the “Kumaras,” it being stated, having incarnated in mankind under the 10th sign of the Zodiac. For ages the 4th of January has been sacred to Mercury-Budha,² or Thoth-Hermes. Thus everything combines to make of it a festival to be held by those who study ancient Wisdom. Whether called Budh or *Budhi* by its Āryan name, *Mercurios*, the son of *Cælus* and

¹ This festival remains thus unchanged as that of the lady Patroness of Lutetia-Paris, and to this day *Isis* is offered religious honours in every Parisian and Latin church.

² The 4th of January being sacred to Mercury, of whom the Greeks made *Hermes*, the R. Catholics have included St. Hermes in their Calendar. Just in the same way, the 9th of that month having been always celebrated by the pagans as the day of the “conquering sun” the R. Catholics have transformed the noun into a proper name, making of it St. Nicanor (from the Greek *nikao*, to conquer), whom they honour on the 10th of January.

Hecātē truly, or of the *divine* (white) and infernal (black) magic by its Hellenic, or again Hermes or Thoth, its Greco-Egyptian name, the day seems in every way more appropriate for us than January 1st, the day of Janus, the double-faced “god of the time”-*servers*. Yet it is well named, and as well chosen to be celebrated by all the political opportunists the world over.

Poor old Janus! How his two faces must have looked perplexed at the last stroke of midnight on December 31st! We think we see these ancient faces. One of them is turned regretfully toward the Past, in the rapidly gathering mists of which the dead body of 1889 is disappearing. The mournful eye of the God follows wistfully the chief events impressed on the departed *Annus*: the crumbling Eiffel tower; the collapse of the “monotonous” — as Mark Twain’s “tenth mule” — Parnell-Pigot alliteration; the sundry abdications, depositions and suicides of royalty; the *Hegira* of aristocratic Mohammedans, and such like freaks and *fiascos* of civilization. This is the Janus face of the Past. The other, the face of the Future, is enquiringly turned the other way, and stares into the very depths of the womb of Futurity; the hopeless vacancy in the widely open eye bespeaks the ignorance of the God. No; not the two faces, nor even the occasional four heads of Janus and their eight eyes can penetrate the thickness of the veils that enshroud the karmic mysteries with which the New Year is pregnant from the instant of its birth. What shalt thou endow the world with, O fatal Year 1890, with thy figures between a unit and a cipher, or symbolically between living man *erect*, the embodiment of wicked mischief-making, and the universe of matter.¹ The “influenza” thou hast already in thy pocket, for people see it peeping out. Of people daily killed in the streets of London by tumbling over the electric wires of the new “lighting craze,” we have already a premonition through news from America. Dost thou see, O Janus, perched like “sister Anne” upon the parapet dividing the two years, a wee David slaying the giant Goliath, little Portugal slaying great Britain, or her *prestige*, at any rate, on the horizons of the torrid zones of Africa? Or is it a Hindu Śūdra helped by a Buddhist Bonze from the Empire of the Celestials who make thee frown so? Do they not come to convert the two-thirds of the Anglican *divines* to the worship of the azure coloured Krishna and of the Buddha of the elephant-like pendant ears, who sits cross-legged and smiles so blandly on a cabbage-like lotus? For these are the theosophical *ideals* — nay, Theosophy itself, the divine Wisdom — as distorted in the grossly materialistic, all-anthropomorphizing mind of the average British Philistine. What unspeakable new horrors shalt thou, O year 1890, unveil before the eyes of the world? Shall it, though ironclad and laughing at every tragedy of life, sneer too, when Janus, surnamed on account of the key in his right hand, *Janitor*, the doorkeeper to Heaven — a function with which he was entrusted ages before he became St. Peter — uses that key? It is only when he has unlocked one after the other the door of every one of the 365 days (true “Blue Beard’s secret chambers”) which are to become thy future progeny, O mysterious stranger, that the nations will be able to decide whether thou wert a “Happy” or a *Nefast* Year.

Meanwhile, let every nation, as every reader, fly for inquiry to their respective gods if they would learn the secrets of Futurity. Thus the American, Nicodemus-like, may go

¹ It is only when the cipher or nought stands by itself and without being preceded by any digit that it becomes the symbol of the infinite Kosmos and of absolute — Deity.

to one of his three living and actually reincarnated Christs, each calling himself Jesus, now flourishing under the star-spangled Banner of Liberty. The Spiritualist is at liberty to consult his favourite medium, who may raise Saul or evoke the Spirit of Deborah for the benefit and information of his client. The gentleman-sportsman can bend his steps to the mysterious abode of his rival's jockey, and the average politician consult the secret police, a professional chiromancer, or an astrologer, *etc.*, *etc.* As regards ourselves we have faith in numbers and only in that face of Janus which is called the Past. For — doth Janus himself know the future? — or

“ . . . perchance himself he does not know.”

