

## FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

THE year 1924 saw the Jubilee of Dr. Annie Besant's fifty years of public service. A remarkable meeting was held in Queen's Hall, London, at which representatives of over one hundred organizations in which she had worked came forward, to show their admiration and appreciation of her splendid record of work for humanity. After the addresses by speakers from representative organisations, Dr. Besant addressed the audience in the following terms:

It is very difficult for me to speak after I have stood—or rather sat—here listening to all the generous and loving words that have been spoken to me to-night. And as one old friend was spoken of after another, with whom it had been my privilege and my happiness to work, as allusions were made to Charles Bradlaugh, to Herbert Burrows, and to so many with whose friendship I have been blessed, and who have passed out of the physical side but still remain the living souls I know, the Hall has almost seemed to be more full of the invisible than of the visible, crowding to give one word of cheer to an Old Comrade whom they have left behind. And then my thoughts ran back to the days when I was still a child, and when—for I was a child fond of reading heroic stories, stories of great fights for truth, for justice and for freedom—my heart used to sink within me as I thought: “The heroic days are over, and there is nothing left to look forward to,

of struggle, of heroism, of noble work"—for so the children dream! And I would say to those of you who are young to-day: Look forward to a future full of nobler tasks that you may do, that we have left undone: full of greater causes that you may serve, that we have not been able to find: for humanity is ever young, though men and women may grow old, and humanity is ever rising higher and higher when her children serve her generation after generation: for the world renews her youth and the age that is behind gives birth to the age that is to come. And some have said that I am young. Yes! Because there is no age for those who strive to live in the Eternal.

Some have spoken to-night about work, about sacrifice; but I wonder whether all of you know, as I know, now that my body is old, that there is no joy like the joy of sacrifice for a great Cause, that there is no sorrow in it, but the bliss which comes from the privilege of working for that which is greater than one's self. And I remember—in those days when I had lost the faith of my childhood and had not yet reached onward to the greater faith that I embraced one-and-thirty years ago, and that grows for ever brighter and brighter, more certain and more certain as the years go on—I remember when Herbert Burrows and myself were walking in London streets, going back from a meeting of omnibus-men who had no time to join and work and plan for shorter hours, and we could only find them about mid-night, and as we tramped through the snow and the mud I turned to him and said: "Herbert, I wonder why on earth we go on doing this," and his answer was: "We can't help it!" And in that there is a great truth, for the God who unfolds within us pushes us onwards

even when our eyes are blinded to His Glory, and it is He who is the only Worker, He who is the only Sacrifice, He who living in our hearts is the only Inspiration to Service. And just as we come to know that that is true, then it is that we know that nothing that our bodies and our brains and our hearts can do is our work at all, for all work is His alone and there is none other. And we realise that we work in His power and He is never weak: in His strength, and He is never feeble; in His youth, the strong immortal Youth who never grows old. And I would say to every one of you that that power dwells within you, and that Strength is the strength of the Divine Spirit and the body is only the temple of the living God; and then you will realise that it is not you who work, but it is He, it is not you who plan, but He who plans, and that all you have to do is to make yourselves a channel for that mighty Life in which the universe is living. And who shall dare to say that anyone in whom that Life abides—and He abides in every one of you—that you cannot make a new Heaven and a new Earth by the Christ and the God within you, from whom alone you can ever be strong, by whom alone you can ever conquer the obstacles in the way.

And that would be my word to the young and the old among you: Trust the Divine Life within you and the Divine Life within your fellow men, realise that it is in you and you will see it is in every one around you. Then you will doubt no longer.

And—if I may finish with words which I believe to be intensely true, and which are so often left only half said—when Kipling spoke about the East and the West

and "never the twain shall meet," he went on to say :

But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed,  
nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face, though they  
come from the ends of the earth!

And that is true, whether they be from Britain or from India. Whether it be from one side of the world or the other, there is only One Life, and we are one in Him, and we shall bring the outer lands together because the Inner Life is ever one.

A Bibliography of the works of Dr. Besant, prepared by Theodore Besterman, was issued at this Jubilee year of service. The first publication of Dr. Besant was in 1873, a pamphlet of twenty pages. From this first pamphlet to the date of issue of the Bibliography, 326 works are enumerated of which she is the author, and 24 more of which she is joint-author. A pamphlet which shows Dr. Besant's early interest in the welfare of Indians was written in 1879, and bears the title: "The Story of Afghanistan: or Why the Tory Government gags the Indian Press. A Plea for the Weak against the Strong."

It was in this year 1925, that the Theosophical Society organized a new movement among young Theosophists. At the President's initiative, the General Council voted to make special arrangements to facilitate the work of minors as T.S. members, and they now form special Youth Lodges within each National Society. These Youth Lodges, consisting of minors and of adults up to the age of twenty-five, have organised themselves into an international Federation of Young Theosophists, to develop lines of Theosophical work suited to their age and temperament.