

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

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All have doubtless made New Year's resolutions, and all, no doubt, have failed to keep them. There must be a reason for our failures, as well as for the fact that there comes a certain season in the year when we have the inclination to make resolutions. These reasons lie hidden in the depths of our own being. Unconsciously to ourselves, it may be, we have a natural perception of occult law in our observance of this particular period of the year. The ancients celebrated and understood what was called by them "the birth of the Sun," or the return of the Sun on its northern course, beginning the 21st of December. They knew that all the occult forces in nature have an upward and increasing tendency at the return of the Sun. When the Sun's rays become warmer and stronger, all the other forces behind the Sun itself, and behind ourselves, become stronger within us. In the rising wave of spiritual and psychic renewal, all that we desire to do has a greater impulsion than at some other time of the year.

The reason for our failures is that we do not understand our own natures. Consequently, we are not able to use the force and influence that lie within us, so far as we are physically concerned, and we have difficulty in endeavoring to carry out resolutions of any kind. Our first mistake is to make *negative* resolutions. We say, I will *not* drink; I will *not* lie; I will *not* do this; I will *not* do that. Whereas the proper resolve to make is that – I *will* do this, the opposite of what we are now doing. In this case, we make a direct affirmation of *will*, while the other form of resolution puts us in a purely negative position. Perhaps we have thought with regard to others or ourselves, that because we do not *do* a number of questionable things, therefore we are "good." On the contrary, we are merely *not bad* – again a negative position. True goodness is a positive position.

To effect our resolutions we have to call on the *will* of man, for that will is not restrained by any form of obstacle whatever. By will, however, is not meant what is ordinarily called will. We are prone to think that a person who is very determined on gaining his ends has "a strong will," and is very positive in his character; but such a person exhibits only a kind of will. He has very, very strong *desires*, rather than Will itself, and will follow them out.

There are many exhibitions of the will itself, some phases being quite unrecognized. The very will to live is a recondite aspect of Will. If the will to live were not present, we would not live. It is not the body which holds us here but the *desire* to live. Always behind Will stands Desire. Again, every one of man's bodily organs and processes was at one time evolved by conscious effort. Even the process of digestion, of assimilation, the heart beat, the various qualities and functions of all the organs were consciously evolved. Now we have bodies which will proceed automatically, while we use our consciousness, perceptions and attention in other directions. Our will, then, operates in reality in every part of our physical life though we may not be able to perceive it and understand it. There is also a mental phase of the will which can be cultivated by practice: the fixed attention, or concentration in certain directions capable of effecting desired results.

But the real and true Will is known as the Spiritual Will, which flies like light and cuts all obstacles like a sharp sword. It is that Will proceeding from the highest spiritual part of our natures which causes man to be an evolution from within outwards, through all the forms of substance that have been, and to continue evolving instruments in this state of matter. All the powers that exist or can exist are latent, however ill expressed, in the spiritual nature. We draw from it in degree, but in small degree because most of us, having our ideas so fixed on physical existence, have come to the conclusion that life means nothing more than physical existence.

We were once conscious of our spiritual nature, but as we came down through the planes of matter to this plane, we made a growth in intellectuality at the expense of spiritual perception. With our intellect we always reason from premises to conclusions, whereas the spiritual nature has the power of direct cognition of the nature of anything regarded. So our intellectual gain was at the loss of spiritual insight, and it is useless for theology, science, and psychology to proceed from the personal and physical perceptions in order to get an understanding of what man really is: their psychological causes are but *reflections* of the physical ideas. If we are going to realize our own natures, we must begin at the highest point of our nature – by assuming that It is, and by holding to the power of that assumption. We begin to see light by the very affirmation of the spiritual nature.

As we stand, we are always using our will along the line of our desires and of our likes and dislikes, imagining these to be a proper basis for thought and action. What is most necessary for us is a proper basis for thinking. We need to eject the false idea of our being weak, sinful creatures, with all the faults of our parents and their parents before them, because we were born that way. We need to eject the mental idol of an outside creator. We need to understand the purpose of life, to see that we are the product of many of our own prior lives, and to recognize an evolution under law – a law both true and merciful – which operates everywhere. It is because that law operates in a round of impression that we have the tendency each year to make New Year's resolutions. We could by an understanding and using of this law of recurrence bring into effect those resolutions.

Often, however, resolutions are made because it is "proper" to make them – with no real expectation of keeping them. We remember them for a few days – they choke us off for a little while – and then gradually the old desires assert themselves and we find ourselves traveling along the old way. Resolutions will never do us any good if we do not sustain them. A desire is not a condition. The mere desire will never get us anywhere. We have to maintain the desire; we have to *stick* to the resolution; we have to exert our will, and cleave to the object of that will throughout. We can't get rid of the evil in us by thinking of it, nor can we get rid of any unpleasant thing by thinking about it; for it is truly said that we are attached to anything by thinking about it. The harder we *don't* think about the evil things in us, the better; think about their opposites, and the evil will not have the chance to return. Attachment is by thought, first of all. Desire exists in thought, first of all. Then follows the action. We have to have a firm basis for our thinking if we are ever going to express ourselves as we should, as spiritual beings.

Why do we all have our pet theories of life, our pet religions or philosophies? Because they conform to our own *desires*; not because they conform to truth or that they provide an explanation of all the mysteries we see about us. This is why after so many thousands of years of what we call civilization, we have become none the wiser, still moving in the same old tread-mill of life and death and sorrow and suffering and pain. Yet we are not bound to it, save as we bind ourselves by our own thoughts and action. We are not under the necessity of following along on those planes of error as we are now doing.

There is a chance for us if we understand our own natures. Then, let us resolve one great thing: resolve to know; resolve to think right, and do right; resolve to acquire some of the knowledge that always has existed – the knowledge of man as a spiritual being through all his fluctuations in the realm of matter. As we rely more and more upon the Self within, we begin to express and use the power which we already have – and that is far more than we imagine. We have to help ourselves by taking the suggestions already given in the teachings of Theosophy – which are Masters' suggestions. And then, as the sustaining power of the will is held along the line in which we desire to do, more direct help comes from those Elder Brothers, who at every hour of each day "are willing and anxious to meet those clear-eyed enough to see their true destiny and noble-hearted enough to work for 'the great orphan, Humanity'."