



1920

PEKKA ERVAST,

a Theosophist of the North.

It is spring, 1923. I have returned to Finland, my native country, from abroad, where I became acquainted with various theosophical tendencies (in which I venture to include The Anthroposophical Society). They greatly appealed to my seeking mind. I attended lectures and read books, I conversed with many different persons, — the great truths about karma, re-incarnation, the Masters, the composition of man, all these satisfy the hunger of

my soul. In all these tendencies I see much good, but there is still something lacking which prevents me from taking the decisive step and from becoming a member of some society.

What that «something» is, is revealed to me as an overwhelming truth when I attended a lecture that spring in Helsinki, the capital of our remote northern country.

A rather short, massive figure, with a fine nobly cut face stands on the platform. His face radiates brilliance and majestic power. His voice is both manly and mild, rich and mellow. His words move and stir the innermost being of a hungry searcher for the truth.

And what does the orator speak about? About Gandhi. He gives an account of Gandhi's historical growth as the champion of liberty in India. He speaks of a man who strives for the realisation of the commandment: «do not kill», the *ahimsa* both in state and society. There is a deeper truth than living for one's native country, that is the brotherhood of all humanity.

This is the essential point that is so moving to the seeker of the eternal verities. Out in the great world the searcher longed for the message of real peace among the adherents of the theosophical movement. She longed to see the simple commandment of love, the *ahimsa*, united with the great theosophical doctrines. He who loves, does not war. Did the theosophists look upon matters in absolutely the same way? Nay, that they did not: this the searcher had experienced when conversing with various groups of people.

And there was standing a man — a grave, impressive man, with dauntless courage proclaiming the message of peace, the message of brotherhood, the message of the Masters and true theosophy.

Who then was this man? It was the writer, Pekka Ervast, the leader of the Finnish «Rosy Cross», the founder of the theosophical movement in Finland and the General Secretary of the Finnish section of the Theo-

sophical Society for many years, and well known to old theosophists at the international congresses. However, as the later phases of his life are probably unknown to many a few lines about him and his work may be appropriate.

On St. Stephen's day, the 26th of December, 1875, when the mystical sun is at its highest, an old, far-advanced soul entered the small body that was given the name of Peter Elias in baptism, a soul, whose destiny it was to become the guide, friend and helper of hundreds of earnest seekers after the truth. Thus, in the very year when the Theosophical Society was founded at the will of the Masters.

The parents of little Peter Elias belonged to the Swedish upper classes of Finland and gave the best possible education to their son, who was an extraordinarily clever child. At an early age he had remarkable experiences in the spiritual world, and a clear conception of man's duty upon earth not only to be good but to educate himself in the spirit of goodness. Languages were of special interest to him from the very beginning. He learned to read French before his own mothertongue, which was Swedish. Already at the age of twelve he began to write, in nine languages, a comparative grammar of these nine languages. Even before he became familiar with Volapük and Esperanto he had formed a language of his own. Besides, he was already writing much — stories, fables, novels. At school he made good progress, but school did not appeal to his lively mind, — it seemed to him that time was wasted. Nor did the university, which he had fancied to be the seat of wisdom, fulfill his expectations — threefourths of its endeavours seemed to him futile. He was foretold the brilliant career of a scientist, but the questions of life and death and the mystery of man soon dominated him to such a degree that, at the risk of being sent away from home, — as in fact his father had decided for a short

period, — he had to settle the way of his future. — «Should he go thither where there was quaranteed position and worldly honour and glory or thither where, at the risk of poverty and shame, he could help, love and serve man?» he wrestled with himself as did Jacob.

He now had to go through a severe crisis, when light and darkness fought fiercely for his soul. In 1894 he had become acquainted with Sinnett's «The Occult World» and had profoundly realized the truth of the message of the Masters. In 1895 he had become a member of T. S., but the knowledge he possessed of the great truths of life were after all more or less theoretical. His spirit craved for living contact with the eternal God, «If God does not reveal himself», he cried in despair. «I shall end my days.» — But God did reveal himself. The fervent aspirant experienced the birth of the mystical Christ, where the boundlessness of the Heavenly Father was revealed to him.

The period of peace, beatitude and service which followed made him acquainted with the doctrines of Leo Tolstoy, which inspired him for some time to dedicate himself to simple manual work, the trade of a carpenter. But before long he realized that greater field of service would open up to him, if he would only be able to open the minds of men to the eternal truths. After coming into living contact with the Masters, he went through many experiences concerning the mysteries of heavens and hells, acquiring empiristic knowledge through his Master of the realities of re-incarnation. And thus began the work of light of this mystic, which he has carried on with unfaltering faithfulness as a bright beacon lighting the way for our northern countries.

His work was directed on literary lines, an uninterrupted production being carried on for years and comprising approximately 70 greater or lesser works. Being of Swedish parentage, it may easily be understood how very difficult it was for him to write in Finnish (only a

few books were written in Swedish). Thus he is a good example how high a conscious spirit stands above national and linguistic limitations. Therefore, his occult experiences have led him to the national deva, Väinämöinen, who is the mediator of inspirations for his country, Väinämöinen, the great sage of the Finnish national, epic, Kalevala. On this ground was born his extensive occult work «The Key to Kalevala», and his later books, «Is Kalevala a Holy Book?» and «Finland Reborn».

In 1899 —1903 Pekka Ervast travelled in Sweden, where he could have settled under very favourable circumstances. But he refused the liberal offer, wishing to dedicate himself entirely to the work for his ill-fated country. And brilliantly has he kept his promise. Since 1903 he has edited independently a theosophical magazine, first called «Conscience», then «The Sage», and since 1921 bearing the name «The Rosy Cross». In 1903 his series of Sunday lectures began, lasting for a period of nine months during thirty years.

In 1907 Pekka Ervast's pioneer work bore fruit. The people of Finland, brusque by nature but deep-thinking in their innermost being, were not unfamiliar with «the magic words». Great numbers, above all the so called lower classes, but also distinguished persons of culture, received his theosophical message with deep appreciation. The Finnish Section of the Theosophical Society was founded, Pekka Ervast being unanimously elected General Secretary, which position he held uninterruptedly for ten years and again in 1918—1919.

In 1913 Pekka Ervast was at the height of his success. In the vicinity of Helsinki he with his friends and admirers established beautiful headquarters, which at the same time were meant to be a home for himself and his nearest collaborators. Simultaneously The Theosophical Publishing House was put on a firm basis, after Pekka Ervast had taken its management into his own hands. From all parts of Finland appreciation and acknowledge-

ment came to him who had given so much of his spiritual gifts to those, who longed to find their innermost self.

But Pekka Ervast had a foreboding of the way of Gol-gatha hidden within these Hosianna praises, and he was right.

The Krishnamurti movement had been started in 1911, whose message it was that Christ or the World Teacher was to descend into the body of this noble young Hindu and in this shape begin his work of salvation. But as Pekka Ervast's conviction and occult visions differed from this, agreeing with H. P. B.'s knowledge in these matters, a schism arose. Some of his nearest collaborators began to support «The Star of the East».

Hereupon followed the most crucial trials brought about by the World War. The theosophists, the very individuals who ought to have loved one another in spite of national limitations began to fight against each other with weapons in their hands. The message of Truth became blurred by the confusions of practical life, the theosophical leaders were silent or even urged their brothers to take up arms. In the World War the battle between white and black magic was being fought on national grounds. Deep despair took hold of Pekka Ervast. He travelled among the theosophical lodges, emphasizing the message of brotherhood. But the red wave of war rolled up to the very shores of Finland — almost worse then elsewhere, for civil war broke out and the theosophical brethren of his beloved country began to shed each others blood, social justice being placed above the brotherhood of humanity, justice that is based upon human law and human law upon violence.

Finland was exhausted after her internal strife and — how natural to the human mind during a time of suffering — socialist tendencies became predominant in T.S., with a desire that the society as a whole dedicate itself to social reforms. The spiritual message of Pekka Ervast was forgotten: «The liberation of humanity must start from individuals, not from society». Only a handful of the faithful rallied round him, till matters were brought to a head and

he was obliged to go his own way, — he, the founder of the society and the father of the children he so deeply loved.

Times of heart breaking struggle followed. The work of over two decades seemed to have gone for naught. But Pekka Ervast did not leave unfinished the mission that was entrusted to him. His devotion to the original message of H.P. B. was unconquerable, and with faithful friends around him, the Finnish «Rosy Cross» was founded on the 14th of November, 1920.

What then is this gleaming light that shines far off in the darkness of the North? What is its program? What is its relation to the theosophical movement as a whole?

An answer in all its clearness is given in two of Pekka Ervast's most beautiful books: «H.P.B.» and «The Sermon on the Mounts, the former showing P. E.'s great affection for and appreciation of the message and personality of the founder of T. S., the latter giving the kernel of the ideal of the «Rosy Cross». The Rosy Cross regards Jesus Christ as the highest of the Masters, and His ethics at their simplest and most beautiful in the five commandments of The Sermon on the Mount as the shortest and safest esoteric path, leading to the White Brotherhood, — Jesus Christ, in whose person most perfectly heaven and earth, God and man are united, in whose life and death and resurrection, the logos, the light of the Universe, the thought of perfection of the Father, is joined with the aura of the globe, so that He can say as none other: «I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. Who trusts upon me, need not perish, but shall inherit eternal life.» The unique significance of Jesus Christ in the evolution of the globe, — this is the basis upon which he has poured out the rich wine of his spirit to the thirsting seekers for the truth. Besides the above-mentioned works he has written, «The Secret School of Jesus», «St. Paul and his Christianity», «Christosophia», «The Magic Words of the Rosy Cross in Finland», «The Unfathomable Treasure of Christ», etc.

On this basis in 1925, i.e. in the middle of the emanation of light sent down in the latter part of each century, he entered upon the path of a pioneer, boldly reforming the Comasonry he had joined for his spiritual training of the Rosy Cross. The result was that even here he had to walk along paths of his own, looking to the future. — On this basis too The Rosy Cross has grown great and powerful, pushing its roots deep into the Finnish soil.

Personal modesty and majesty of spirit, — here are two of the most essential features of this Finnish occultist who has fought such tremendous battles. And it is just these innate characteristics that have made him so greatly loved and honoured. Therefore, his friends are tempted to repeat what Madame Blavatsky a couple of times said in effect to Countess Wachtmeister during private conversation: «When a schism will arise in the theosophical world, look to the North. Light is coming from Finland».

Pekka Ervast dearly loves the Finnish people, but all the seekers after the truth throughout the world are dear to him, and though he deeply deploras the split that has occurred within the theosophical movement, already in 1921 he wrote a pamphlet suggesting that all theosophical societies everywhere unite in a single federation; with a central bureau, magazines, and annual congresses,— a federation, in which all the societies would join equally for the brotherhood of mankind. This pamphlet was sent to every theosophical society and those akin to them throughout the world. However, he did not win the support anticipated, though the idea of such a union has become widespread in consequence of H. P. B.'s centenary. He who lives will certainly see what fruit will grow out of it all. Let us believe in this fruit — a brighter and more brotherly future and let us work for it, each in his own field.

Helsinki, Finland. Christmas 1932.