

View from Grabbist, May '26

Dear all,

In the late 1800s, an obscure Frenchman, Henri de Tourville, suffered burn-out after 8 intense years as a priest and was forced into retirement. This was not an end, but a beginning: he became a very wise spiritual guide. Evelyn Underhill said of him:

In a day when all the emphasis falls on the busy saints, and on social action rather than spiritual depth, we need to hear that valiant voice saying from his bed of sickness: *'Le tout est d'être dans le vrais'* and again *'Du large! du large! au dedans, et le plus que les choses le permettant, au dehors!'*

(Roughly: *In everything, truth' ...! From the sea! From the sea! Within, and where possible, without!*).

Henri wanted people to rediscover the deeper reality of things, even in the face of calamity, finding the expansive ocean within our heart and attitudes, reflecting it in all our doings as much as is in our power. Two of my favourite quotes from his letters are:

It is not right to groan over the state of the world as if it were lost. What is actually happening is a clash between the old spirit and the new, a clash which is specially noticeable because the old spirit is realising how old it is and how nothing is looked at any longer from its point of view. It is a great struggle of which the issue is never in doubt, a struggle in which that which is coming triumphs over that which has been.

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The absorbing interest of the present day is that the world is growing itself a new skin. While it is true that these solemn periods of transition are trying ... we realise that the heavy mantle of the past, of all those things which no longer have any meaning for our minds, is slipping irrevocably away and leaving our souls free. I want this to be your attitude. I find that it brings peace and serenity ... the horizon broadens and lights up instead of closing down upon itself...

How pertinent for us today! It is crippling to continually bemoan "the state of the world" (been there, done that, got the smelly T-shirt!). Henri urges us to lift our eyes and see, beyond the very real crises of our times, a deeper emerging reality. We are to recall that the most beautiful breakthroughs in history usually came after much disruption.

Yes, there is darkness. But that's precisely because a butterfly is in the making....!

