

Dec.-Jan. 1947

Wheaton, Ill.

My dear Ones:

I shall soon now be on ~~trav~~, having had a lovely time and a nice rest in the beautiful Headquarters of the American Section. I wish you could all see this most beautiful building, and the hive of activity that it is. I would like you to see the lovely hall decorated with wall paintings by a famous artist, and the noble-looking library, so high that a gallery runs round it. There are also many offices where workers seem to work with tremendous energy and enthusiasm.

This letter I want to think about "Sacrifice." We hear a great deal about it in books on the inner life. There is a lovely chapter on it in Dr. Besant's Ancient Wisdom. Taking may be the law of growth in the brute creation, but the law of sacrifice is the law of evolution for developing man, for therein he shares the great primeval act of sacrifice, by which the worlds were formed by the Logos and by which they are ever nourished and sustained. Said the great Avatar, Sri Krishna: "I established this universe with a portion of myself; and I remain." This is the dual aspect of God Transcendant and God Immanent. In the past the thought of God Transcendant has been paramount. Now the world is turning ever more and more to the idea of God immanent in His universe, suffering, evolving, acting with and through all life, and most of all in that, which can know Him directly being a spark of His Life, pure and undefiled, Man.

He sacrifices Himself unceasingly and eternally, and that sacrifice is not pain, but eternal joy, the joy of creation; "When the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy." The East calls creation "Lila" or the sport of God. When first we begin to tread the Return Path, we feel considerable pain at having so often to give up things to which our desire nature clings. It is so natural to our ordinary human nature to cling, to grasp, to feel that we are lost without many things. Like children we need surroundings, outside things which give us a feeling of security, a feeling of "counting" in the scheme of things. Our sheaths of consciousness have grown like that. But now we must replace all supports coming from the outside by the Eternal Support within, the Christ in us, the inner God. He grows by giving, shining, pouring forth; "Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth." As he gives, he grows. As he sacrifices, he shares the eternal sacrifice of the universe.

At first it is comparatively easy to renounce all clinging to material possessions and joys. For the things of the spirit are so infinitely more beautiful. But even there we must not cling. As the Master K. H. says: "There are some who forsake the pursuit of earthly aims only in order to gain heaven, but remember that all selfish desire binds, however high may be its object." "Sometimes," says Light on the Path, "the pure artist who works for the love of his work, is more firmly planted on the right road than the occultist, who fancies he has removed his interest from self, but who has in reality only enlarged the limits of experience and desire, and transferred his interest to the things which concern his larger span of life." This surrender, this sacrifice, is described in the Sermon on the Mount as being "poor in Spirit." The occultist may be a wealthy man, yet having no sense of possession, holding all as a trust for the benefit of his fellowmen, may be truly "poor in spirit." It is the same with all our beauties and happinesses, inner and outer. They are for others too, not just for ourselves.

And there is a wonderful thing about the Law of Sacrifice which the saints discovered, and which is true also for us. They rejoiced in sacrifice, sorrow and suffering, because they offered every act of sacrifice as an offering on behalf of the world, thus to lessen by their own voluntary giving and enduring, the pain and loss of others. Life will become so much more lovely and blessed when we no longer



hold and grasp anything, but joyfully surrender it to God and our fellowmen. Epictetus taught that in a very lovely way. When anyone lost anything he would say: "you have given it back." When one of his dearest friends became grief-stricken because he had lost a beloved daughter, Epictetus said: "Ah! my friend, say to yourself, 'I have given her back to the beloved gods.'"

Little Therese of Lisieux brought the faculty of sacrifice to such a wonderful sufficiency that she grew to say in her last days full of intense darkness and suffering: "Long since has suffering become my heaven here below." She tells us that "from neither heaven nor earth did I receive any consolation; and yet in the midst of the waters of tribulation I was the happiest of beings." During her last days when every step she took caused her intense pain a little novice found her painfully trying to follow the advice of the infirmarian to take a little walk in the garden. "Oh! you are too weak," cried the novice, "surely you should not try to walk." Little Therese gave her a very sweet smile. "You see," she said, "every step which costs me so much pain I offer as a sacrifice so that the pain and weariness of some poor missionary far away in wild parts may thus be a little lessened."

Could we do something like that too? Offer our shyness when we have to lecture as a sacrifice to mitigate the shyness of others? Offer our sense of being or having so little as a joyful acceptance that others having still less may feel more cheer and power to achieve? If others misunderstand us, speak sharply and unjustly to us, let us offer a sweet lack of resentment of it for the thousands of others who suffer much more. Do we lose that which we value most? We can offer that sacrifice too, for all those, who in comparison to ourselves, have so little, perhaps nothing at all. Once the Master K. H. said in a letter to some young people that if we can do things however high and lovely on behalf of ignorant and undeveloped men, the answer from heaven will go to them and not ourselves. "The Appeal of the Initiate is made on behalf of humanity."

If we really knew and saw how these votive offerings of ours went to our fellowmen, how we would love to do it, how we would seek to find such occasions of loving help, even to those unknown to ourselves! But we can do it all day long. Always we can make suffering humanity these lovely gifts of ourselves. Says Light on the Path: "Try to lift a little the heavy karma of the world, give your aid to the few strong hands that hold back the powers of darkness from obtaining complete victory. Then do you enter into a partnership of joy, which brings indeed terrible toil and profound sadness, but also a great and ever-increasing delight." "Since I have renounced all self-seeking," wrote little Therese, "I lead the happiest life possible." If only we can understand its reality and beauty, we shall enter into its joy and peace and its illimitable power to help others. Indeed, we may say that our power to help others is in direct ratio to our forgetfulness of and disinterest in self. It is the Via Crucis, the Way of the Cross. "The Cross is the symbol of Life Eternal, and the Way of the Cross is the path of the Spirit triumphant. It is the sign of the Sacrifice which is Joy, of the Surrender which is Peace, of the Service which is Freedom." (A.B.)

Your affectionate friend,