

August-September, 1948
50, Gloucester Place, London, W.1.

My dear Friends:

I left the United States in April last, and am now touring once again my native land. I had a wonderful voyage on the "Queen Elizabeth." We had a farewell dinner before we landed at Southampton, and a farewell concert afterwards when anyone who could sing or play or tell stories contributed. There was a splendid feeling of good fellowship on board, and dozens of different nationalities were represented. At Cherbourg and in England I saw evidences of the destructive bombing France and England had gone through. London looks game, but shabby. I found there was enough to eat though strict rationing is in force.

Very soon after landing the Convention of the T. S. came on. I spent a few days previously at Camberley where I saw again my old friend, Bishop Wedgwood. The Convention was very friendly and joyous. Lovely Rukmini Devi gave a most inspiring lecture on Art and Yoga. She said in fact, that true Art was a form of Yoga. She is giving a dance recital in the St. Pancras Town Hall in aid of the Indian Relief Fund, and the wife of the last Viceroy of India, Lady Mountbatten, is presiding. I gave two of the Convention lectures and the delightful duty fell to me of giving the greetings of the American and South African Sections to the English Convention. The Secretary of the European Federation, Colonel van Dissel, was there, as also the Scotch, Irish and Welsh General Secretaries. After the English Convention I went on tour and had the honor of presiding at the Irish Convention. It is nearly twenty years since I was last in Ireland, and everywhere smiling faces greeted me. Old friends I had not seen for so many years came along. Some had passed on, and I missed these. This tour closed with a visit to Bristol, near Bath, where lives the first English Lodge I belonged to, and some of my old contemporaries came to see me. I felt as if I were attending an Old Girl's reunion at some big school. It was a very heart-warming experience.

And now, this time, I would like to talk about the "Grace of God," and I will quote you some sayings of St. Dionysius. Sometimes, I feel, we think that heavenly warmth and response will come if we work away at procuring it. Indeed, it sometimes looks as if we almost "appropriated" God. We also make the mistake of thinking that if such bliss and warmth does not come that there must be something wrong with us and our methods of spiritual approach. Let us always remember that our personal feelings are no index of our spiritual growth. The Master K. H. once wrote to Mr. Sinnett: "Your spiritual progress is far greater than you know or can realize, and you do well to believe that such development is in itself more important than its realization by your physical plane consciousness." Dr. Besant also told us that it does not really matter what we feel, only what we do. We must learn to sit loose about our personal feelings, to be willing to go without, if necessary. Bliss and heavenly responses are so lovely, so wonderful when they come, but we cannot claim or expect them. They are truly the "Grace of God." There may be many reasons why we do not feel them. Sometimes it is merely the state of the physical nerves. But we would be greedy, unprofitable servants if we depended too much upon such blessings. They are in the hands of God, in the hands of the Master. Never ask for them; only wait in humble hope. If they come we must share them by shedding around us on others the radiance of their presence. If they do not come, we have the opportunity of cultivating spiritual unselfishness, strength, endurance, impersonality. "There are some," said the Master K. H., "who forsake earthly aims in order to gain heaven... but remember that all selfish desire binds, however high may be its object."

I have just been reading a little treatise on the Theologia Mystica of St. Dionysius by Alan Watts. He writes: "Our first knowledge of God is through earthly and creaturely things that are something like Him, but those who are called to the mystical

life are never content with this kind of knowledge. They want God, Himself, not some creature like God. At first, therefore, they try to capture Him in some form; such a form may be an idea about God, for we find that we are assured of His presence by thinking of the various doctrines of the Church concerning His nature. For a time, this satisfies, but after a while, we find that we are using the doctrine to catch hold of God and make Him as it were, our own property...He slips from our grasp. Or again, the form in which we try to possess Him may be some state of mind or feeling. We may have some minor order of mystical experience and try to work ourselves up into the same experience again and again, imagining that we can possess a sense of God by pressing the right psychological button. But as we persevere in these attempts to hold God in some form, whether a sensible image or state of mind, we learn that in truth we cannot possess God at all. 'What,' asks von Hugel, 'is a sense of God worth which would be at your disposal, capable of being elicited when and where you please? It is far, far more God who must hold us than we who must hold Him.' It is He that must hold us, bearing us up in His Spirit like leaves upon the wind.

"All men seek God, even though they may not know it. They seek Him blindly as wealth, power or material happiness; going higher than this, they seek Him in the strict performance of the moral law, in some feeling of spiritual elation, or some sensation of a mighty Presence. But all these things Dionysius shows to be creatures of God and not God, Himself. Those called to the higher stages of the spiritual life must pass beyond them... He understands that the Presence of God does not depend on his willing, knowing or feeling it. That Presence is given quite apart from any effort he may make to feel it. To try to feel this given Presence is to ignore the truth that God is here and now in all His fullness... It is through rejoicing in His possession of us, and not in trying to possess Him that we come to a true knowledge of God."

So I feel that the attitude of our souls consists in a loving, unasking, simple "waiting" upon God and the Master. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me." Surely He will incline, but in His own good time, and when the hour is ripe within our own souls. There are some lovely lines of Robert Browning in which he says: "He guides me and the bird. In His good time..."

I have never ceased to wonder at the beauty of the Ancient Wisdom. But so often we try to confine that Eternal Beauty within the narrow confines of our own outlook upon life, our own little prejudices and ideas. We would possess the Eternal Wisdom, make it an appanage of our personal selves, instead of surrendering ourselves completely to its never-ending and glorious wonder: the Wisdom that is as wide as the sky, as deep as the Everlasting Arms, as tender and considerate of the smallest living thing as of the highest Archangel. It shall possess us, but we can never appropriate it. So lovely it is, so tender, so fine and wonderful that we can only call it by the old name of "Grace of God." It descends upon a man, like the gentle dew from heaven, when he most needs it, and when his heart is pure, simple, loving, humble and kind. In my own life I have found it come when somehow I arrived at the right conditions, though I could not tell you how those conditions arrived. Life made them possible, life which is God in action.

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD

P. S.: So many of you have written me such kind little notes. Some day surely I will reply. Please do not mind if it should be some little time yet.