

Box 863, Johannesburg
 South Africa
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My dear Friends:

I have been lecturing in Pretoria, but the winter in the Transvaal is very cold, so I contracted flu and had to come home. Four of our S. African members are going to the great Convention at Adyar. None of them have ever seen Adyar before, so it will be a wonderful experience for them. I have seen the International Convention both at Adyar and at Banaras. There is nothing like it on earth. The most sacred spot in Adyar is the little Shrine Room where the two large pictures of our Masters, painted by Herr Schmiechen, hang. Recently our President took them to England with him to have them cleaned. I have just come across a letter from the Master M. in which He says that it was He who inspired the mind and hand of Herr Schmiechen when he was painting the picture of the Master K. H. When I was at Adyar a very long time ago we were allowed half an hour to ourselves in the Shrine Room every day. I used to sit opposite the pictures and it seemed to me that the influence coming from them came in opposite ways. That from the Master M.'s portrait seemed to come from without inwards, whilst the influence coming from the Master K. H.'s picture seemed to well up within one and then to radiate outwards.

This Letter I would like to talk about "spiritual growth," and much that I shall say comes from an article by H. P. B. She begins with quoting those well-known lines of Christina Rossetti:

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Does the journey take the whole long day?

From morn till night, my friend."

She says that is an epitome of the life of those who are truly treading the path which leads to higher things. Whatever presentations of the Esoteric Doctrine are to be found, they will all agree upon one point, that the only inflexible rule, as binding now as it has ever been down through the centuries, is that the complete subjection of the lower nature by the higher is necessary. However hard, painful, or troublesome, that is the only way by which man can gain true spiritual insight. These principles were imparted to men at the beginning of the cycle by the Planetary Spirit. The true Adept, the developed man, must, we are told, become--he cannot be made. The process is therefore one of growth through evolution, and must necessarily involve a certain amount of suffering. I will go on quoting her: "The main cause of pain lies in our perpetually seeking the permanent, and not only seeking, but acting as if we had already found the unchangeable in a world of which the one certain quality we can predicate is constant change... Again, the idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption: the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell and this must also be accompanied by pain, not physical, but mental. And this is how the trouble that comes to us is always just the one we feel to be the hardest to bear. We are trying to burst through our shell at its one vulnerable point; and our growth, to be real and not the collective result of a series of excrescences, must proceed evenly throughout, just as the body of a child grows, regularly and imperceptibly. Man's tendency is to cultivate each part separately, neglecting the others. Every crushing pain is the expansion of some neglected part.

"Evil is often, too, the result of over-anxiety. Men are always trying to do too much. They are not content to leave well alone; they exaggerate every action and so produce karma to be worked out in the future. One of the subtlest

forms of this evil is the hope and desire of reward... opening the door to anxiety, doubt, fear, despondency, failure. The goal of the aspirant for spiritual wisdom is entrance upon a higher plane of existence...and if he succeeds his capabilities and faculties will receive a corresponding increase of range and power... Many persons seem to think that Adeptship is not so much the result of radical development as of additional construction... that a man acquires first one power and then another and when he has attained a certain number is forthwith dubbed an Adept... The Society was founded to teach no new and easy path to the acquisition of 'powers'. Its only mission is to re-kindle the torch of truth... The Theosophical Society does indeed desire to promote the spiritual growth of every individual who comes within its influence; but its methods are those of the ancient Rishis, its tenets those of the oldest esotericism... As Hermes Trismegistus says: 'For this only, O Son, is the way to Truth. It is a venerable way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body.'

All this reminds one of the words of the Christ: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" All growth proceeds from within out. Nothing is added to us from without. We do not gain anything; we can only grow. And growth is always slow and steady, and largely consists in discarding that which we have outgrown. Light on the Path tells us to "grow as the flower grows." The flower is continually unfolding from within, and as it unfolds it discards the stages it has outgrown. How many of us cling to habits and outlooks which we have really outgrown. And true growth does not consist in "taking thought" about it. It is a matter of continual, steady and expanding aspiration. A flower grows "unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the Eternal. But it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire for growth."

We come round again to the same old enemy, self. The soul that has not abandoned self can never dwell with God. All wisdom comes from Him, especially spiritual wisdom, but the price that every man must pay for that pearl of great price is literally "all that he hath." And by the brave acceptance of, and learning from, every experience. Wrote the poet and mystic, William Blake:

"With what shall a man buy experience?

Shall he buy it for a song or a dance in the street?

Nay, it is bought with all that which a man hath."

Let us all love, aspire, dream, serve, and forget entirely whether we are growing or "getting somewhere." As we press ever forward towards the Eternal Beauty, forgetting self for all others, so will He come to meet us, endowing us with spiritual wisdom, the vision of the Spirit.

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD

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