

August-September, 1951

My dear Friends:

I am still on a lecturing tour, and am at present in the famous seaside town of Durban. Many South Africans come here for the winter, for Durban is much warmer than most parts of South Africa. One famous sight here is the rich-shaw boys, Zulus, who wear the most magnificent costumes, especially on their heads which carry tall erections of many colored beads and great cattle horns, something like those of an ancient Viking. Once a year a competition is held and a prize given for the best. Durban seems a land of hotels. I never saw so many in my life. It has a long beach of golden sands covered with bathers, and nearby a long, low wood full of little monkeys who come out to get bananas from the visitors.

I said I would talk this time about love. This was inspired in me by an article which I feel sure most of you have seen, in the April number of the "Reader's Digest," entitled "Science discovers real love." You will remember it quoted a number of doctors as well as psychologists and social workers, all of whom have discovered that the best cure of delinquency, prostitution and crime, as well as psychological ills like supposedly incurable insanity, is true love. But, they all point out, this is not love as depicted in the movies. It is something higher, greater, but infinitely wonderful in its effects. As one doctor puts it, if a man says he loves his wife because she is so smart, goodlooking and efficient, this is not love, it is only admiration. Nor is it love if we cannot do without someone's constant attention and service. This is merely self-love projected upon another. In fact, say they all, it is popularly supposed that everyone loves by nature, whereas the true facts of the case are that love has to be learned and developed. And if it is so learned, one doctor says, there is no power so potent to heal and save.

I sometimes think that there is only one lesson to learn in life, how to love. And perhaps so many of the sorrows of life are framed with that end in view, failure, the loss of loved ones. Mrs. Besant once said to me: "When you can be just as happy when the one you love best is not here, you have learned how to love." Love is giving, not taking. How many people demand this or that of those they claim to love. I remember a woman's complaining to me that she was no longer friends with another because she "did not come up to her ideals." "My dear lady," I replied, "why ever should anyone come up to your ideals? It is enough if they come up to their own."

Many a "fond" mother or father keeps a daughter dancing attendance upon them until she grows old and unloved. They call it love, but it is really gross selfishness. Many a wife or husband claims all sorts of rules and attentions from their partner, because they love them so, but it is only tremendous self-love. Jealousy is popularly supposed to be a sign of love, but it is nothing more than a sign of great self-love. It is very common, because human nature is nearly all involved in self-love not yet conquered or transcended. Are we jealous of our friend's success or possessions? Then we do not truly love him. The best description of a friend I ever came across is the one given by Sir Francis Bacon. "A friend," wrote he, "is one with whom our sorrows are halved, and our joys doubled." Someone else has described a friend as one who knows all about us and loves us all the same. That is similar to Shakespeare's definition: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." I once knew a very sweet and stately Spaniard. His wife treated him abominably, but he was flawlessly faithful to her. I asked him how he stood it, and looking at me with a grave, sweet look,



he replied: "When one loves, one loves forever."

When one loves, one desires the good and happiness of the loved one, a long way beyond his own. And there is no desire to dominate, to grab, to impose conditions. Wrote William Blake: "He who catches a joy as it flies, Doth the winged life destroy." As soon as we make love a prisoner he flies out of the window. A Tibetan scripture says that the greatest form of love is to "desire only the loved one's highest good, and in his own terms." That love is immortal and deathless, for the souls of such lovers are grappled to each other "with hooks of steel." Once a very loving wife came to see the Lord Buddha, to ask Him what she should do so as to be sure that she would be with her beloved husband in other lives. The Blessed One told her that if she could be flawlessly faithful to him and forgive him everything, she would bind him to her soul forever. Yes, love is serving. Olive Schreiner wrote "Happiness is a great love and much serving." No one who truly loves is unhappy.

Before I close this letter I must tell you of two famous doctors I knew, both psychiatrists, who cured many incurable insane patients by love, and sympathy alone. The founder of Homeopathy, Hahnemann, did just the same. One doctor did it by love and patience and prayer. He told me that an insane person had lost any sense of the meaning of life and his place therein, and that must be restored to him. The other cured a great number of insane people, many of whom had been supposedly incurable for years, by patient love and sympathy. He would lie for hours beside patients who were so withdrawn from life that they apparently noticed nothing. By slow degrees he drew their attention and finally their trust. Insanity, sexual problems, are often the result of lack of love. Both Krishnamurti and Carl Jung say that the sexual problem can only be cured by love. Delinquent boys are often criminal because of the lack of any real love and interest in their surroundings. I know a man who called his wife back from the very gates of death. He knelt by her bedside all night when the doctors told him she could not last till morning, praying and calling her softly all night.

What a wonderful thing is love, the great creative, healing force of the universe. No wonder it is the great attribute of divinity. "Beloved," wrote St. John, "let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loveth knoweth God and is born of Him."

The doctors I mentioned said one other thing. That if one truly loves it flows over to all living things. If, say they, to love one does not cause us to love better the many, then we may doubt whether we have really experienced love. Perhaps I can close with a lovely quotation from The Imitation of Christ:

"Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not. When frightened it is not disturbed, when straightened it is not constrained, but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth ever upwards and securely passeth through all. Whosoever loveth knoweth the cry of this voice."

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD