

August-September, 1952  
Box 863 Johannesburg, South Africa

My dear Friends:

This time I have some news for you. On Sept. 2nd, next, I shall sail from Durban for India. I am going to Adyar for nearly six months. I cannot tell you how happy this makes me personally, for it is more than 20 years since I saw it last. The next letter will probably be posted from there. Then I will tell you what it now looks like and if I observe any great changes. I hope to be back again just in time for our next Convention which will be held this time in Pretoria. All the four great towns of S. Africa have now their own beautiful buildings, with the exception of Durban which hopes to acquire its very soon now. Sri Ram has promised to come back to us, and the Durban members hope that he will be able to dedicate their new home.

Yesterday I saw the film, "The River." It was filmed in India, and the River is the great and sacred Ganges, which is really melted glacier coming from the Himalaya Mountains. The city analyst in Benares told me that it is the purest water in the world, in spite of all that gets thrown into it. The picture is in colour and shows many phases of Indian life. There are three girls in the film, two European and one half-Indian. This last is played by the daughter of Sri Ram, Radha, and in the course of it she gives one of the sacred dances of India. I could not help noticing how like she is to her father, having just the same mannerisms and tones of voice. And such beautiful eyes! No wonder one critic said that she "stole the whole picture." You must all go to see it if it comes to your home town.

One of our members here wishes me to write about the lecture I gave to our last convention here. It was on the Prayer of Socrates. Plato tells us: "By the banks of the Illyssus Socrates had sat and told young Phaedrus of the chariots of the soul, and when his tale was done had prayed: 'Beloved Pan, and all ye deities who haunt this place, give me inward beauty of soul, and may the outward and the inward man be at one.'"

Perhaps, with the exception of ancient Indian thought, the Greeks have influenced human thinking more than any other race. They were conquered by the Romans, but their thought triumphed over all and not only colored Roman thinking, but, through the great Neo-Platonist Schools, largely formed and conditioned Christian thought. The debt we owe them is enormous. And the Greeks loved three things: they loved Nature, they loved beauty, they loved life.

Never was there a civilization so beautiful and so near to nature as that of the ancient Greeks. We modern men have very largely lost our intimate touch with nature. Herded into towns we have lost the capacity to respond to the natural world around us. Hence we have lost touch with the Soul of Nature, the angelic or deva kingdom. And that deva world always brings joy, peace, refinement.

And all natural forms are epiphanies of Beauty which is their essence. That which is God-made is always beautiful. That which is man-made is not always so. No race ever knew what beauty is as did the Greeks. Today, that which remains of their wonderful art moves us almost to tears by its sheer perfection. Never will I forget my sight of the Venus de Milo. Not the awful plaster copies, but the real alabaster form, placed by the French, who are largely reincarnated Greeks, in a circular room, surrounded by black velvet curtains, all by herself.

Plato and the later Neo-Platonist, Plotinus, are the great apostles of the beautiful. Plotinus tells us that there are three stages in the appreciation of the beautiful: sensuous, idealistic, spiritual. Says he: "Let us, therefore, ascend to the Good itself, which every soul desires, and in which alone it can find perfect



repose. Those who penetrate into the Holy Retreat of these Sacred mysteries, having dismissed everything foreign from God, by himself alone, beholds the Solitary Principle of the universe, sincere, simple, pure, from which all things depend, and to whose transcendent perfections the eyes of all intelligent natures are directed, as the proper cause of being, life and intelligence."

And the priestess, Diotima, said to Socrates: "But what if a man had eyes to see the True Beauty--the Divine Beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed--thither looking and holding converse with the True Beauty simple and direct? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, to become the friend of God, and be immortal, if mortal man may?"

And the Way to that Vision of the King in His Beauty is by purity and love. Plotinus again tells us that the pristine beauty of our eternal selves has become clouded and defiled by its contact with matter, and that in order to become able to perceive true beauty we must learn to divest ourselves by degrees of this impurity, since "it is here necessary that the true vision exists. Everyone, therefore, must become divine, and of god-like beauty, before he can gaze upon a god, and the Beautiful itself."

"With what ardent love, with what strong desire," writes he, "will he who enjoys this transporting vision be inflamed, whilst vehemently affecting to become one with this supreme beauty. What must be the condition of that being who beholds the Beautiful itself?" "A beauty," says the priestess Diotima, "if you once beheld, all other beauty fades."

Such realization makes also for beauty of soul and body as well. Says Plotinus: "For such beauty, since it is supreme in dignity and excellence, cannot fail of rendering its votaries lovely and fair."

Beauty is born of love. They are two sides of the same thing. He who truly loves is beautiful of soul. And beauty of soul, the real thing, is not too common. To quote Dr. Alexis Carrel: "Moral beauty is a very rare phenomenon. He who has once seen it never forgets it."

Beauty, love, joy, peace, they are all one thing, and they are all selfless. Nothing can hinder us learning to soar into the empyrean but the crippling narrowness of our own little selves. The other belongs to our true and immortal selves, life, love and beauty incarnate. To discern the Beautiful is also to find the Good and the True. Let me close with some words from Light on the Path. "Listen to the Song of Life. Look for it, and listen to it, first in your own heart. At first you may say: 'It is not there; when I search I find only discord.' Look deeper. If again you are disappointed, pause and look deeper again. There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced, but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love... Find them and you will perceive that none, not the most wretched of creatures, but is a part of it... Life itself has speech and is never silent. And its utterance is not as you that are deaf may suppose, a cry; it is a song."

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD