

LETTER 49.

Johannesburg, South Africa
August-September, 1953

My dear Friends:

As I look at the number of this Letter, 49, which means that I have been writing them now for more than 8 years, I am filled with a certain awe, and also a great gratitude to my three Secretaries for their unfailing steadfastness and loyalty. I always hope that it does not place too great a burden on them, both in time and energy, and also in expense. I hope I can keep on being in touch with you thus until I die. And the bond we have woven will endure throughout the ages, even if some of you have made deeper and higher ones. Always I am hoping that I shall be able to get round to writing a personal letter to everyone of you. Some day it will come.

At present I have no home, but one is coming by Christmas time. Meanwhile, I am again touring this Section, starting with Pretoria where there is the prettiest Lodge building imaginable. Johannesburg now has its own home. So has Cape Town, and Durban hopes soon to achieve the same. Soon I shall be off to Durban which is warm in the winter. Here the winters are sometimes very cold, and do not forget that we are in the Southern hemisphere, so that Christmas comes in our summer. After Durban, I shall go for a month to Rhodesia, where a strong and rapidly growing band is heading towards becoming a separate Section. Our President and Vice-President, Mr. and Mrs. Stakesby Lewis, have now gone there to live. After Rhodesia Cape Town and George; then back to Johannesburg just before Christmas. Then I intend to remain "put" for a year. One thing here in Pretoria has been giving me a great joy, that is the number of young men and women now coming into the Lodge. I remember once looking down over a Convention we had many years ago in the Queen's Hall in London, and noting with dismay the great preponderance of grey heads in the audience. Of course it is not quite natural for many young people to want to study Theosophy. The world is still their oyster and they naturally wish to see what is in it. Indeed, H. P. B. once said that most people did not come into Theosophy until they had suffered. But that is not always true. I came into it when I was 25. I knew it was true. I could hardly believe my own ears, such a sense of joy and awe seized me.

Now I am coming to the end of a long life, and the happiest thing to remember is that Karma let me work for the greatest Cause in the world nearly all my life. I meet young people who want to do the same. Well, take a plunge. You will enter upon a road which gives no guarantees of security, but if you have faith, Life will look after you as it has looked after me. But before you begin, think out what you want to do and why. Do not allow a selfish motive or you will fail. Do not look for glory or renown, for that is of no account in our work. One of the primal needs in our work is for true teachers and leaders. Also it often asks of a man sacrifices, but, as a Master of the Wisdom put it, "our cause needs missionaries, devotees, agents, even perhaps martyrs. But it cannot demand of any man to make himself either."

We should fit ourselves by all means in our power to help and teach others. This means study, not only of facts, but of great underlying Principles. It also means steady meditation that our natures may become refined and purified and thus increasingly open to spiritual illumination and understanding. It also means beautiful living that we may be a continual inspiration to all men. These are the necessary preliminaries to be sought after; otherwise, be we ever so eloquent, our words will carry no conviction, but become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

This makes teachers, but not everyone is a born teacher. Some are born leaders. I wish I could remember here the wise and true words of the late King George VI to one of his boys' camps. He described what a true leader was like. I remember one thing he said: all leaders must be idealists. I can think of other things. Once they are sure that a thing is right and to be done, they must be impervious to threats, to criticisms or risks. Criticisms can help correct us if we think them over, but they must not be allowed to deflect us from the goal. A leader must be just and impersonal, quick in judgment and decided in action. He must be able to see ahead of his followers. With them he must always be firm but kindly. In fact he should be a noble and strong man. I am not a shining example of strength myself, but I have seen enough of life to know that a wicked man is easier to deal with than a weak one. No wonder Annie Besant when a girl chose as her life's motto: "Be strong." The leader must be understanding and strong; the teacher, understanding and wise. I have always loved the prayer of old King Solomon: "Therefore give Thy servant an understanding heart." And we must all try to be big and impersonal. Let me quote the words of H. I. B.: "The key to all our successes is in our recognition of the fact of the Higher Self - colorless, cosmopolitan, unsectarian, sexless, unworldly, altruistic - and the doing of our work on that basis." And she also writes in an editorial in Lucifer: "It is not in polemical pamphlets or sensational newspaper articles that the Theosophical movement's permanent record will be made, but in the visible realization of its original scheme of making a nucleus of universal brotherhood, reviving Oriental literature and philosophies, and aiding in the study of occult problems in physical and psychological science."

Other words of hers say: "The eyes of wisdom are like the ocean depths; there is neither joy nor sorrow in them; therefore, the soul of the occultist must become stronger than joy and greater than sorrow." In the words of Light on the Path our eyes must be incapable of tears, for ourselves, but our hearts as soft as the ripe mango fruit for the woes of others, to quote the Voice of the Silence.

We cannot too often remember and realize that Life is the great teacher, and Life is God. Let us get more and more into touch with life, more and more sensitive to the delicate nuances of life, more and more aware of the "soul of things" so that the body of things pass us by untouched, except by sympathy and understanding. Let me close with three lovely aphorisms from Olive Schreiner's Story of an African Farm:

"Holiness is an infinite compassion for others.

"Greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them.

"Happiness is a great love and much serving."

In the next Letters I would like to take certain passages from our two great Scriptures, the Voice of the Silence, and Light on the Path, to talk about.

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd

CC/mp