

My dear Friends:

First let me wish you all the happiest Christmas and New Year. Some of you will be very cold, but I am in sunny California. I have recently been to see two sacred films: the Life of St. Francis, and the King of Kings, the life of the Christ, this time in color with the spoken words of scripture. I wonder if anyone could adequately make these films? The King of Kings did not, I felt, come up to the old silent film of Cecil de Mille where the Christ was beautifully represented by my favorite old actor, H. B. Warner. I saw that film five times but I would not like to see this one again. There was something about it that kept hurting me all the time, I could not tell you why. It was the same with the life of St. Francis, but I won't grumble, because I have no doubt they are both immense inspiration to very many people.

I love the King James Bible, not as a religious scripture, but as the finest poetry in the world. I think that poetry is not a statement of fact; it is the finest feeling, so fine that it can hardly be expressed, put into very beautiful words. It is a spiritual indicator. That is why the Bible is so magnificent.

I remember a well-known poet once telling me that a true poet had an unusual nature, with capacity to give it fine expression. There is poetry and there is verse which is a very different thing. To show you what I mean: there is a fine line in a poem by England's Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges: "Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding?" Isn't that a lovely line? That is poetry, but a versifier might have rendered it something like this: "Where are you going, O beautiful ship?"

There are two ancient forces which gave the English tongue the finest literature in the world: the King James Bible and the Plays of Shakespeare. And they are both of them, more or less, the work of that supreme genius, Sir Francis Bacon, who is now one of the Masters of the Wisdom. Germany gave us the greatest musicians, Italy the greatest painters, but England gave us the greatest poets. Sir Arthur Quiller Couche once told his young men at College that if they wished to write well they should study the English Bible, and he quoted as an example that famous and wonderful description of a war-horse in the Book of Job: "Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible, he paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." The very words put us in the middle of a battle right away. I could go on writing about this forever, but now I will only quote one more gem: the words of the alien Ruth to her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." What a lovely mother-in-law Naomi must have been!

There are two especially beautiful lives of St. Francis, one by Elizabeth Goudge, "My God and My All," and another, to be found in a paper-backed edition, called "The Perfect Joy of St. Francis" by a Flemish author, Felix Timmermans. I love the lives of saints. There is a purity and loveliness about them that just inspires me. In this last mentioned, exceptionally beautiful account, there is a passage where St. Francis, worn to a shadow, cries to God his astonishment that a worm like him should be the channel of Divine grace. That is just why. He was really humble, but humility does not consist in thinking little of ourselves. That is inverted conceit. It consists in having forgotten ourselves completely. Sometimes we talk about being occultists, but most of us are a long way off being that. H.P.B. once said: "You are none of you occultists yet, you are preparing to become one in another life." This reminds me of Light on the Path: "Be wary, lest too soon you fancy yourself a thing apart from the mass.... Great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner, it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity." Our Masters have a beautiful humility which is complete absence of self-importance. So often the Master K.H. writes to Mr. Sinnett, "Accept my poor blessing." One of the purest, most unselfconscious people I have ever met is Krishnaji. I once heard him in a great theatre in

Seattle many years ago. There was not a seat left in the whole building, so I sat in a box on the stage with Rajagopal. When Krishnaji came on to the stage I thought he looked for the moment quite horrified. He never seems to like to speak for long, so he asked for questions. After a pause they began to roll up. One young girl who evidently thought that all Easterners were fortune-tellers, asked, "Shall I marry the man I love?" The whole audience laughed when it was read out. But Krishnaji would not have it. "No! No!" he said, "don't laugh, because you all want to ask me questions like that." Then, putting his head a little on one side, he said, "I think you will, if you want to hard enough." Afterwards I saw him standing in the entrance hall, shaking hands with hundreds of young men lined up in a queue. I heard that he had to stay in bed for a day afterwards, which did not surprise me. Another time when someone wanted to pay him very great respect, he said, "Yes, but why don't you also respect the coolie in the street?"

I have an idea that simplicity, holiness and spirituality are all one and the same thing. I have noticed that all great people are simple and real. They are never sophisticated, they never have airs. They are dignified, but it is an unconscious dignity, the fruit of the simplicity and beauty of their lives. I remember the late Mrs. Ransom once saying something quite pithy. She said to us: "Do not want to be someone, and then perhaps you really will be someone." Adler, the great psychologist, said that that was the ruling motive in most people's lives. The three great psychologists held rather different views. Freud held that sex was the strongest force; Adler, the wish to "count"; Jung, the wish to be loved. I think they were all three right. The ordinary man must count for something, must be loved, must have a healthy and normal sex life. These three things tend to make the ordinary man happy. The unordinary man is different. Sex in him has finally become the divine creative power which it fundamentally is; the desire to count, to be someone, has become complete identification with that united spirit of life which is our only true life; and the desire to be loved, that ceaseless radiation of his own divine nature which is love. Let me quote one more gem from the Bible. Of all the psalms, the 23rd is the universal favorite. Do you remember the lovely lines: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." How often has that psalm taken a soul over the great divide. I knew in South Africa the great conductor, Albert Coates, and his family. His wife told me that when he was dying, stricken by paralysis, she held his hand and repeated the 23rd psalm. I could get enthusiastic about Shakespeare too. "Ripeness is all," he said in King Lear, which is a wonderful way of saying what Mrs. Besant once said to me, "When Karma is ripe, all the doors open." I heard Sybil Thorndyke in Melbourne, Australia, in the part of Lady Macbeth, and nearly every sentence seemed remarkably familiar to me. It reminded me of the old lady who was taken to see a Shakespeare play, and when asked if she enjoyed it, said: "Well, dear, it was very full of quotations!" Which shows how the Bible and Shakespeare have moulded the English tongue.

Dear me, I intended this time to write about the building of the Bridge to spiritual consciousness. I will do that next time. I will close with yet one more gem. When Mary Magdalene met the Christ just after his resurrection and knew him not, He said to her just one word, "Mary," and then she knew. Would we not all like to hear the Master pronounce our names in just that never to be forgotten tone of voice?

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd

A word about Miss Codd, in answer to numerous inquiries: She is very much her old self, lovely as ever, busy at writing her new book, "The Way of the Disciple", and helping on with the work of the T.S. as always. Needless to say, we at Krotona are delighted to have her here with us, and pleased with little signs that life here agrees with her.

And about the fund: that large "surplus", reported last April, has all melted away -- about half for living expenses and necessary purchases for her comfort; the rest for a hearing aid which she finds useful, plus some very necessary, and extensive, dental work which is still going on. She has the South African pension for her personal use, and this fund just about comes out even, on the living expenses -- as nearly as I can tell now. So many thanks to all of you who are helping!

---- Ruth Doak