

My dear Friends,

I hear that England has been having the coldest winter for 70 years. We have had pretty cold weather here in California, too. I am sorry for the birds in very cold spells. There are so many lovely kinds of birds here. The cheekiest is the beautiful Blue Jay who is very tameable. One of our members here has one who takes bits of cheese from her fingers. And there are myriads of tiny birds. I thought they might be chickadees, but I hear that there are no chickadees here. Loveliest of all are the tiny humming birds. One day I mistook one for a butterfly.

Now I have two books that I must enthuse about. One is by a Philippine Professor, Dr. Benito F. Reyes, who has taught in many famous Universities and won degrees in more than one. He lives in the Philippine Islands where he is the head of a psychological clinic. I hear that he has lectured over here and drawn big audiences; and that, too, he is, or was, a member of the Theosophical Society and the president of a big Lodge in the Philippines. This particular book is the only one I have as yet seen of his and I find it quite wonderful. It is published in a paper-backed edition by the Pillar Books. Do all of you get it and read and re-read it. It is called "Moments without Self," and it is the finest and clearest exposition of what Krishnaji talks to us about, that I have ever met. And read with it the long answer to a question about Meditation at the end of Krishnaji's talks in Ceylon in 1927. I have just had a letter from India describing Krishnaji as the greatest Theosophist we have. Of course some people would put it the other way round, I know. I put it quite simply to myself like this: he is the one truly God-conscious man that I know, it seems to me. And I leave it at that. I have always found him very difficult to understand with my conscious mind, but these two writings that I have mentioned illumined me immensely.

Perhaps I could put it something like this, though I am aware of the danger of trying to define or verbalise things. The old way of the ancient books, and the new way which Krishnaji discovered for himself, have the same objective; the transcension of the thinking mind, which The Voice of the Silence tells us is "the great slayer of the Real." Possibly the ancient way is by gradual elimination and control until, as Dr. Alexis Carrel writes, by some process that the great mystics have never been able to describe, they leave the mind behind. Krishnaji says that if we look at a thought quite dispassionately and understand it, it will disappear of itself, until the mind ceases to manufacture any thoughts at all. Then Reality, God, steps in.

I am sure of one thing. All thoughts are self-created. So we should never take them for reality, or be held prisoner by them. I remember a story Dr. Alexandra David-Neel tells, who was for many years a Buddhist nun in Tibet; where she developed her thought power and imagination to such a degree that she could produce even a physically apparent representation of her Guru. "Now," said her teacher, "you have created that, destroy it."

The Master K.H. tells us that the best way to begin meditation is to create a picture of the Master as a living man within us. That does not mean within our physical bodies, but in that world of "within-ness" which our imagination portrays. Then, he says, the Master or our Higher Self will "send His voice," which means that the picture will become alive. One can see something similar happening with a dearly-loved and much gazed-upon photograph. But it is a self-created picture, it is not He. Here is an answer to a question I am sometimes asked. How can I make a picture of the Master if I do not know what He looks like? Don't you see? It does not matter in the very least, for our self-created picture has become a channel through which blessing and encouragement flow.

But be careful of looking too much for what the Catholic Church calls "consolations." We do not serve God and the Master for what we can get out of Them. Little Thérèse of Lisieux went nearly the whole of her conventual life with hardly any -- only a long-lasting "dark night," and she wrote how beautiful it was to serve God for naught.

The new spirituality which is coming into the world now, and of which Krishnaji is the great fore-runner, recognises that the Goal is not merely a "religious" one. It is a natural one, the inalienable birthright of every man without exception. Light on the Path puts it so well: "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."

Believe you have it, and with divine simplicity and trust aspire to take the birthright which is yours, and which the Lord Christ and St. Paul said was ours "before ever the world was." H.P.B. tells us in the Secret Doctrine that even before man was truly man, the great Dhyani Chohans planted in him the seed of the imperishable knowledge. That "Divinity which doth shape our ends, rough hew them how we will" is the real source of all inspiration, truth or beauty, and the genius, whether artistic, scientific or religious, pierces, as Plato tells us, the plane of the Divine Ideation. If a genius does that, his works live forever. If he falls short of that, they fade as the years pass.

This is well brought out in another wonderful book I am reading, Arthur M. Abell's Talks with Great Composers. He knew well, and often talked with, Brahms, Joachim, Strauss, Max Bruch, Puccini and Grieg. He enquired of all of them if they could describe to him the source and process of their inspiration. They all gave him a similar answer, similar to the one Beethoven gave to a musician who complained that a certain passage was unplayable. Whereupon Beethoven shrieked at him, "When I composed that passage I was conscious of being inspired by Almighty God. Do you think I can consider your puny little fiddle when He speaks to me?" Like answers were given by Mozart and Handel. I can well believe it when I listen to The Messiah. There is a saying of Carlyle's which is often quoted: "Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains." The right words in his essay on Frederick the Great are: "the transcendent capacity for taking trouble." But that is an inadequate definition. As Brahms and Strauss both told Mr. Abell, the genius must have perfect technique, a perfect knowledge of his craft acquired by persevering hard work, but that alone is not sufficient. Without inspiration, the Divine Afflatus, their work is in the long run valueless.

Brahms, who was a very religious man in an unorthodox fashion, said that the Christ described genius in His words "the Father dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." Joachim the violinist had lived a long time in England and loved it. He knew the English poets, Tennyson and Browning, and could recite long passages from their works. They told him the same answer as to the source of their inspiration. Joachim quoted that line from Tennyson's "Enoch Arden": "Where God in man is one, with man in God." He also quoted Milton's invocation in Paradise Lost:

"But chiefly, thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples, the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me."

I remember an old clergyman in Devonshire long years ago who could recite poetry better than anyone I have ever heard, sometimes so movingly that he broke down himself and wept. Well, I am going to close this letter with one verse of shattering beauty from Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar":

"But such a tide as moving seems asleep, Too full for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep Turns again home."

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd