

My dear Friends,

I am a little late with this letter, but that is because I have been making short trips lecturing. Also I have just finished my new book. All I have to do now is to go over and correct it, and then I can send it to Mr. Krishnamurti, the Manager of the Press at Adyar, and I hope it will be out by Christmas time. I was in Folkestone last Sunday, and it is going to be my last trip. I am nearly 87, and that is a little old for careering about the country. I have not yet rivalled Mr. Gardner who is 94, nor Mr. Rogers and Miss Poutz, who went lecturing when they were over 90, I believe.

Last night I was talking here about "The Romance of Reincarnation." It is a romantic theme in many ways. Do you remember a play by James Barrie called "Dear Brutus"? It was about a house-party of people who all had a second chance and they all made just the same mistake again! Of course they did. Many people say if only I could have life all over again I would do differently. I doubt that they would. What stands in the way with many of us is fundamental defects of character. Well, we need not be upset about that. No one is perfect or they would no longer be here in the School of Life. They would have graduated, that is, entered the superhuman kingdom.

How do we learn? By experience and by the reaction of the universe to the forces of thought, desire and action that we continually send out. H. P. Blavatsky says that the first thing to do in occultism is to realise that we are not this body. We should look upon it as the house in which we temporarily dwell. This "house of the body" as Lord Tennyson called it. Arnold Bennett called it the "human machine" which we, the engineer drove. St. Francis called it "brother ass." The Master called it "the horse on which you ride." My particular definition is the "school uniform." I call it that because life is a school for the growth and development of the Immortal Soul in us.

Sometimes people write to the papers asking if life is worth living? It depends upon how one looks at it. If we think that the chief thing in life is to make money, or to become a V.I.P. somewhere, we have certainly missed the point. We are in this school of life for the growth and development of our souls. It is a very hard school for many. In fact, H.P.B. says that there is no "hell" anywhere in this universe other than a man-bearing planet. And most of the "hell" we create by human ignorance, fear and greed.

But the world will come out of it as we all grow in grace. That "second chance" will come in the next life. By that time we shall probably be a little wiser and more intelligent. Let us hope we shall do better. But never mind if we do not. I often think there is more to be learned from failure than success. With the fundamental courage of human nature, most people can stand up to failure better than they can manage success.

I have just read a very interesting book written by a great doctor who is also a psychologist. He says that human nature is fundamentally good and not wicked, and that most maladjustments come from early circumstances and wrong feeding. I once heard Bishop Leadbeater say that if we could have perfect fathers and mothers the race would advance hand over fist. But of course there are no perfect fathers and mothers, so we must just do the best we can. There is a story that I am very devoted to. I can read it again and again. "Sorrel and Son" by Warwick Deeping. There is a picture of the perfect father. But, you see, he is only in a book. I do not think I ever saw such a one in real life.

And there are no perfect husbands and wives either. Perhaps the nearest approach to Darby and Joan that I ever met was a dear old American Senator and his German wife with whom I stayed long years ago. They used to sit by the fire and hold each other's hands, and quite forget my existence. But I must say that such ideal

couples are very rare. I am rather glad that I am a woman for this reason. If I had been a man I am sure I would have gone off when I was young and inexperienced and proposed to the wrong woman, as so many young men do. They are too young and ardent to follow the advice of the "Vicar of Wakefield" who "chose his wife as she did her wedding gown, for qualities that will wear well." I always feel sorry for the men who have wives who "nag." In ancient times women who nagged were dipped in the village pond.

And I am sorry for the children whose fathers and mothers are always scolding them for not doing well at school. I wonder if the parents realise that quite a number of the world's great men were either truants or complete duds at school. I remember, in America, being asked to speak to a big school for truant boys. It was called the Thomas Edison School because Edison was a truant from school when he was a boy. I arrived on Abraham Lincoln's birthday, and one of the boys had drawn quite a good likeness of the great President and put it out in the hall with the notice that I was to speak, being a great authority on Lincoln, which of course I was not! However, I told the boys that we now had a statue in London, given us by America, and that he was such a great man that he now belonged to the whole world.

Well, life is a school, and it has two teachers in it, joy and sorrow. Or, to use another simile, the soul of man grows like a flower. The gardener cannot make a flower grow. It grows by its own idealism and desire to open out. But there are two forces which aid, the sunshine and the rain. And our souls grow like flowers with the sunshine of happiness and the rain of tears. The sun makes the flower want to expand, and the rain softens the hard earth and nourishes the plant. The lives of some people seem to be raining all the time. But that will be followed by a life of sunshine.

What does sorrow do for us? H.P.B. calls it "Pain the Teacher, the Awakener of Consciousness." Imagine what we would be like if we never had any sorrow or pain, and always had exactly what we wanted with no trouble. We would not grow into strong self-reliant Sons of God, but just become selfish robots. I once read the confessions of a drug addict who got cured. He said in it that nearly everyone tried to avoid sorrow, but that only a very few had discovered that it was the gift of God. The poet Keats was a man who suffered all his life and he wrote to a friend: "Do you not see how necessary a world of pain and trouble is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?"

We often say that this is a sad world. So it is, but it has a very beautiful and heavenly meaning behind it all. I saw such a lovely little verse on a Christmas card last Christmas:

I heard a bird sing / In the dark of December,
A magical thing / And sweet to remember.

"We are nearer to spring / Than we were in September."

I heard a bird sing / In the dark of December.

Isn't it a dear little poem?

The romance of living means too the forming of unbreakable links. Long years ago when I was in Adyar, I used to help dear Don Ruspoli copy out the big charts of the Alcyone Lives. I noticed a father and daughter who were never separated in a single life. And another couple who were husband and wife eighteen times out of the thirty-three lives recorded. So we all meet again over and over for ever. And life is a very great adventure. Let me close with some splendid words of Mrs. Besant's: "Never forget that Life can only be nobly inspired and rightly lived if you take it bravely and gallantly as a splendid adventure, in which you are setting out into an unknown country, to face many a danger, to meet many a joy, to find many a comrade, to win and lose many a battle."

Sometimes I wonder whether to lose teaches one more than to win.

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd

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