

My dear friends,

First of all I must wish you the happiest Xmas and New Year. I still have not answered all the letters I received last Xmas, but you must forgive me. I have been so occupied with my new book, "The Way of the Disciple," which is now in the hands of the printers in Adyar.

I must tell you about that Summer School in Switzerland, because it was the most wonderful Summer School I ever attended. There were 22 different nationalities, and the programs were printed in French and German. The meetings were held in the Round Hall of a large hotel right up in the mountains, opposite the famous Dent du Midi. We had lovely sunny weather whilst England, I heard, had rain all the time. But we rarely see the sun in my native land.

The important lectures were given at 9 a.m. which I thought was rather an early hour. Mr. Slater, the English General Secretary, and I, were translated sentence by sentence. Mr. Slater talked about "Fire and Atomic Energy", whilst my subject was "The Secret of Sin and Suffering." There were talks in many different languages, Spanish, Italian, etc. It was a tremendous success. I hear that the President of the European Federation, Mr. John Coats, is organising an international congress for 1966. Three times we were all presented with a little gift. The first time we all received a little bag of sweets; the second time a pretty colored handkerchief with the name Leysin printed on it. That was for the ladies, the gentlemen had pure white. The third time we were all given a pretty little notebook and pencil.

I seem nowadays being always asked questions. At the Leysin Summer School someone asked me to write about Spiritualism. Now I know that can be quite entrancing and I am bound to say that Bishop Leadbeater was more tolerant of Spiritualism than Dr. Besant was. He came to Theosophy through Spiritualism. So did I. When I was in my teens I became utterly disgusted with what the Christian Church seemed to teach. So I called myself an Agnostic. But I still continued to search, and one day, in a second-hand book shop in the little country town where we lived, I came across a little paper-backed book called "The Risen Dead." It was full of photographs of materializations, etc. I bought it for sixpence and took it home. I gloated over it. "At least we live after death," I said to myself. I think these happenings are meant, for just then a friend of my music master, a daughter of the piano maker, Collard, came to stay with him. She invited me to stay with her in London, where she took me round to many seances and meetings, for she was an ardent Spiritualist. But it did not entirely satisfy me. I felt that the messages that came through were rather banal. The people on the other side did not seem to be very intelligent. Very soon after that my Father died, and we all went to live in Switzerland. There I came across the Spiritualists again and attended a meeting given by a famous English medium who gave me quite irrelevant and unlikely messages from my Father. Many years later I was invited to a Direct Voice seance in Rhodesia. Again I was not convinced. The voice that claimed to be my Mother's was not hers. Nor did she call me by the name that the family has always called me.

Very soon after that seance in Geneva I heard Colonel Olcott and joined the Theosophical Society. I never now attend any seance, for I feel that to do so is to invite certain queer influences which are always near the physical plane.

I do not wish to depreciate the Spiritualist Movement. It has brought light and comfort to thousands. Today it has a philosophy very like our own. And the most experienced and learned of its leaders are aware of what one of them called in a little book "The Dangers of Spiritualism." A medium has a very plastic and easily drawn apart etheric nature. This etheric matter is called ectoplasm, and is used as the basis of materializations and table taps, etc. Professor Crawford held that whilst 95% of the ectoplasm came from the medium, 5% was contributed by everyone else present. Hence the feeling of exhaustion that sometimes follows a seance. The withdrawal of the ectoplasm causes the medium to fall into trance. If too much were drawn apart he would die, but the "guides" watch this.

He thus becomes very passive, and here is one danger that may follow. Near the earth's atmosphere stay very materialised souls, often those of depraved or sensual men. They cannot gratify these material yearnings on that other side, and so if they can obsess a medium they can vicariously gratify them through him. Another danger comes from tricky nature spirits. If they can obtain power over a medium they will make him do all sorts of silly things. I will give two instances of this. I knew a cook who was used by her employers as a medium. When she became thoroughly obsessed they grew frightened and pensioned her off. The spirits would make her rush through the streets, hold her hands above her head, etc., etc. We used to play tennis with an Irish family. One afternoon, when it started to rain, we went indoors and someone suggested that we try table-turning, never expecting anything to really happen. Soon thundering raps came on the round dining table we were all sitting at, and the dog began to howl. When asked who was the medium the table replied the eldest daughter of the house. Afterwards she and her mother regularly sat, until one day the daughter found that she was no longer in control of her own body. This frightened her so much that she never again tried to practice any form of mediumship.

Years later, I was asked to help one of our members who had been doing automatic writing. Myself, I think that this is often done by the subconscious self of the writer. In this case the "spirits" would not let her sleep and made her do all sorts of silly things. I cured her by reciting over her the words of exorcism which is part of the Liberal Catholic Baptismal service. In Australia I met a poor woman who was scared to death. She had joined an occult society and becoming frightened had wished to leave them. But they threatened her with all sorts of horrors if she left. This was clearly a case where the bluffers must be out-bluffed, so I told her that I was much stronger than they were and that I would take care of her when she resigned. Some time later I was there again and found a woman happy and free again.

The Voice of the Silence calls the astral plane the Hall of Learning, and this is what H.P. Blavatsky says about it in a foot-note: "The astral region, the psychic world of super-sensuous perceptions and of deceptive sights -- the world of mediums. It is the great 'astral serpent' of Eliphas Levi. No blossom plucked in those regions has ever yet been brought down to earth without its serpent coiled round the stem. It is the world of the great illusion." The disciple is urged to press on to the third Hall, the region of full spiritual consciousness, beyond which there is no longer danger for him who has reached it.

Nowadays hundreds of "guides" take the names of our Masters, and give teaching and messages through mediums all over the world. But our Masters have told us that they never speak through a medium. In the early days of the Society, the Master K.H. warned Mr. Sinnett that already mediums were giving statements in His name. It is possible to assume even the appearance of one of the Masters and to talk as if they were Him. But it never is. One lady I knew received messages in a very pontifical tone. She would not believe me when I told her that Adepts never talked like that. Her end was removal to a mental home. Always mistrust anything which flatters you. The little book I mentioned warns its readers that the other side will pose as an angel of light until complete control is established and then the true nature of the control will manifest itself. It is better for the unilluminated seer to leave such dealings alone.

Now by all this I do not wish to seem to depreciate the work of our friends the Spiritualists. One of the happiest meetings I ever remember, took place many years ago in Liverpool in England. The Socialists, the Spiritualists and the Theosophists all combined for a joint meeting and party. It was highly successful and one little Socialist working-man said to me with tears in his eyes: "Do you know, Miss, what I think Theosophy is? I think it is the spiritual side of Socialism. I really think he was right.

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd.