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"Way's End", Beech Ave., Camberley, Surrey, England.

My dear friends,

Christmas is a lovely time, but from one point of view I am always glad when it is over and one can get along with one's ordinary duties again. I tried this Christmas to be sure from whom I received little presents and cards. If by any chance I have omitted thanking anyone please take it from me that I was very touched and grateful for such happy remembrances. I see that many people have spoken of the wonderful Summer School at Leysin last year. Such meetings seem to be more and more in vogue, and that must be a good thing as one meets and gets to know so many members from other parts of the world.

Again I have been asked to write about a special subject, this time about life after death, and my correspondent asks me to give a definition of elementals, elementaries and the elemental essence. Elementals are nature spirits, elementaries are the souls of very evil men who linger near the earth's surface, trying to regain the satisfaction of their evil passions by obsessing, if they can, the bodies of inexperienced psychics and mediums. They are often the cause of possessions. Demonical possession is a fact in nature, not only a story in the Bible. I have known it cured by exorcism.

The elemental essence is the first forms of matter descending into physical plane manifestation, the lowest and densest forms they can reach before slowly ascending the arc of life upwards again. C.W.L. used to talk to us about the elemental essence. He would tell us how our mental and astral bodies are formed of this elemental essence pressing downwards into materialization. We want to press upwards, and so we find this contrary pressure in the matter of our subtler forms. To put it in the familiar words of St. Paul: "For that which I do I follow not, for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.... For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.... I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. O wretched man that I am!"

We are all familiar with this. It is described in "At the Feet of the Master": "The astral body has its desires - dozens of them; it wants you to be angry, to say sharp words, to feel jealous, to be greedy for money, to envy other people their possessions, to yield yourself to depression. All these things it wants, and many more, not because it wishes to harm you but because it likes violent vibrations, and likes to change them constantly." It is progress for the elemental essence in our bodies to press downwards into matter and therefore to get into more and more violent and unhelpful moods. And the more we let it do so the more it will. It will become a habit. When we refuse to co-operate with it and do not yield, we shake out by degrees that form of matter in our bodies and call into its formation a finer and a gentler form of astral matter. This is the eternal "war in our members" that we all suffer from and mostly do not understand.

As to the subject of what exactly happens to our consciousness after death, there seem to be many and different accounts. H.P.B. says in the S.D. that the Immortal Man in us withdraws, and dropping all his lower tendencies goes back to his own realm in Devachan, the Heaven world, where he has the faculty of putting on the glorified resemblance of his last personality. The last conscious thought of the personality, may cause his appearance at the point where his thought lay. I know many examples of that. I remember once, when I was in Ireland, my hostess telling me that when her husband was at the great war and died there, that one day her little girl came running upstairs saying: "Oh! Mummy, come quick. Daddy is in the dining room." It was the "wraith" of her husband who had just that moment died in France. His dying thought must have been with his loved ones and so he appeared there.

The thoughts of the dying are very important for they determine the direction which the next incarnation will take. There is much truth in the story of the dying

thief on the cross. As the Lord Sri Krishna says: even if the most sinful man turns his thought towards Him, speedily will he accomplish the change, for "he hath rightly resolved." Intention more than fact governs life. Incidentally, the last thought before that minor death, sleep, is also very important.

More and more knowledge is now coming into the world on these subjects. I think there is a period of unconsciousness after death, but H.P.B. says in "The Key to Theosophy" that after that the soul awakens to great joy. I think it is something like this: the Master says that we all people our current in space with the hosts of our thought creations. That is our subjective world which after death becomes objective and since we have created it ourselves it is entirely to our satisfaction. H.P.B. says: "Nothing can happen to a spirit in the heaven world, the keynote of which has not been struck during life. The conditions of a subjective life are such, that the importation of quite external impulses and alien thoughts is impossible. But the seed of thought once sown, the current of thought once set going, then its development in Devachan may be infinite, for the sixth sense and the sixth principle (the spiritual nature, C.C.) are our instructors, and in such society there can be no isolation as physical humanity understands the term."

All this is obscure and difficult to understand in our brain minds. Talking to the public I often say that love is the root of after death experiences as love is the Immortal Principle of the universe. So in the compensating life after death we are surrounded by all that which we have ever loved; people, ideals, arts, the truths of life. And from their happy absorption our own immortal egos grow and when the process is complete and again the hunger for sentient existence once more arises, we will come back to earth's experiences a little more "grown up." But the personality will never return. The Master calls him the "shadow." I remember C.W.L. telling us that people alter so little that successive personalities are quite recognizable. But, he said, we should have altered much more. That is because we do not realise what life is all about. It is the school of the soul. Aspirations towards the Master and the Divine Life are not lost. The Master K.H. writes to Mr. Sinnett: "Though not a chela, you have stepped within the circle of our work, and whether we become later on, in your sight, still more living entities or vanish out of your mind like so many dream fictions, you are virtually ours..... You cannot avoid meeting us in REAL EXISTENCE. This, everyone does who approaches us with any earnestness of desire to become our co-worker."

My correspondent asks me to give another word for "gestation" which cannot be translated into her language. Gestation means pregnancy, which means carrying the young in the womb before birth. I cannot think of another word for it, but I can see its implication. In the womb of Nature we slowly grow and develop. Then one day we are born into the spiritual consciousness and so wonderful is the change that the East calls such an one the "twice-born." Let me close with the beautiful words of H.P.B.: Happiness is not to be gained on earth. Here we have the dark entrance hall alone, and only on opening the door into the real living place shall we see the light..... Let us wait patiently for the day of our real, our best birth."

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd