
TO THE AUTHOR OF "LIGHT ON THE PATH."

THERE is a sentence in your "Comments" which has haunted me with a sense of irritation: "To obtain knowledge by experiment is too tedious a method for those who aspire to do real work," &c. Have we any knowledge, of whatever sort, that has been of use in the world, which has been obtained otherwise than experimentally? By patient and persistent toil of sifting and testing, we have obtained the little knowledge that is of service to us. Is there such a

thing as "certain intuition"? Has intuitive knowledge, if such there be, been accepted as positive knowledge until it has been submitted to the test of experiment? Would it be right that it should be? Your illustration of the "determined workman" brings the question down (as I think the question should be brought) to the plane of practice. Is there any workman who can know his tools until he has tried them? Is not the history of knowledge the history of intuitions put to the test of practice? Intuitions, or what we call such, seem to me quite as apt and likely to deceive us as anything in the world; we only know them for good when we have tried them.

INTERROGATOR.

It seems to me there is some confusion in this letter between obtaining knowledge by experiment, and testing it by experiment. Edison knew that his discoveries were only things to look for, and he tested his knowledge by experiment. The actual work of great inventors is the bringing of intuitive knowledge on to the plane of practice by applying the test of experiment. But all inventors are seers; and some of them having died without being able to put into practice the powers which they knew existed in Nature were considered madmen. Later on, other men are more fortunate, and re-discover the laughed-at knowledge. This is an old and familiar story, but we need constantly to be reminded of it. How often have great musicians or great artists been regarded as "infant prodigies" in their childhood? They have intuitive knowledge of that power of which they are chosen interpreters, and experiment is only necessary in order to find out how to give that which they know to others.

Intuitive knowledge in reference to the subjects with which I have been dealing must indeed be tested by experiment; and it is the whole purpose of "Light on the Path" itself, and the "Comments" to urge men to test their knowledge in this way. But the vital difference between this and material forms of knowledge is that for all occult purposes a man must obtain his own knowledge before he can use it. There are many subjects of time content to linger on through æons of slow development, and pass the threshold of eternity at last by sheer force of the great wheel of life with which they move; possibly during their interminable noviciate, they may obtain knowledge by experiment and with well-tested tools. Not so the pioneer, the one who claims his divine inheritance now. He must work as the great artists, the great inventors have done; obtain knowledge by intuition, and have such sublime faith in his own knowledge that his life is readily devoted to testing it.

But for this purpose the testing has to be actually done in the astral life. In a new world, where the use of the senses is a pain, how can the workman stay to test his tools? The old proverb about the good workman who never quarrels with them, however bad they are, though of course had he the choice he would use the best, applies here.

As to whether intuitive knowledge exists or no, I can only ask how came philosophies, metaphysics, mathematics into existence? All these represent a portion of abstract truth.

Before I received this letter the "Comments" for this month were written, in which, as it happens, I have spoken a great deal about intuitive knowledge.

Therefore, I will now only quote the definition of a philosopher from Plato, which is given near the end of Book V.,—

“I mean by philosopher, the man who is devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, real knowledge, and not merely inquisitive. The more our citizens approach this temperament, the better the state will be. True knowledge in its perfection and its entirety, man cannot attain. But he can attain to a kind of knowledge of realities, if he has any knowledge at all, because he cannot know nonentities. Hence his knowledge is half-way between real knowledge and ignorance, and we must call it opinion.”

NOTE.—Several questions which have been received are held over to be answered next month.

Correspondence.

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR OF "LIGHT ON THE PATH."

I.

WHAT are the senses called astral, in reality? Are they not really spiritual, seizing on the inner essence of things and interpreting it. The ordinary psychic or clairvoyant surely does not use the astral senses? Yet he sees things which we do not see. It would be well to explain this." B. K.

A. The senses called astral in the comments on "Light on the Path" are the senses which perceive the inner essence, certainly; which are cognisant of the life underlying every form of matter. The ordinary psychic or clairvoyant only perceives other forms of matter than those we ordinarily see, and perceives them as a child perceives the forms in this world at first, without understanding their meaning. The astral senses carry beyond matter, and enlighten man with regard to any form of life which especially interests him. They show the poet painter, and composer the things they express to other men, who regard these great ones as beings of another order—beings with the gift of genius. So they are, and the vigour of that genius carries them on into the inner life where meaning, and harmony, and the indefinable all-desired are to be perceived. Wordsworth saw it in nature, he recognised the "spirit in the woods"—not the wood-nymphs but the divine spirit of peace which teaches a lesson in life. Richard Jeffries saw it in nature, too, as perhaps no other man ever has seen it; through the finite visible world he perceived the infinite invisible one, and before he died he had begun to know that the visible world does not exist. Turner, perhaps, is the only parallel. By the invisible world I must repeat again that I do not mean what the spiritualists call by that name—a new world of other forms. I mean the formless world. It is the farthest limit man's *consciousness* can reach to; and only the pure and star-like soul can become even aware of its existence. It is not man's divine nature, but the man who enters it with any reverence for the great miracle of life can only do so by the aid of his divine nature, whether as a poet, a painter, or an occultist. The soul which enters it without reverence is unable to endure its extreme rarity of atmosphere and turns to the psychic-astral in which to live; such men become madmen and suicides, more or less pronounced, as men do who refuse to dwell in any form of physical life but the grossest and simplest. There is some law of life which impels men onward—call it evolution or developement or what you will; and a man can no more go downwards without suffering than a tree can be placed with its branches in the ground, instead of its roots, without discomfort, and in the end, death.

I propose to use two phrases which have been suggested to me; the psychic-astral and the divine-astral. This seems the only way to make my meaning clear,

for the word astral has two meanings, its own proper derivative one, from the Sanskrit *stri* to strew light, and that given it by the use of all occultists. Paracelsus appropriated the word for all things sidereal, subject to the moon and stars, part and parcel of this material universe, even though formed as Dryden says of "purest atoms of the air." In this sense the spiritualists and psychics have the right of custom to use it as they do, to describe their world of finer forms. In this meaning an astral shape is the form of the human soul, still in possession of the passions which make it human; and the astral senses perceive not the subtle and supreme glory which Shelley seized on in Prometheus, but a region full of shapes and forms differing but little from those we now wear, and still distinctly material.

The "astral man" in the "Comments on Light on the Path" should have been written the divine-astral man, according to this evident difference of meaning between the present writer and all other writers on occultism.

II.

"Are not the *astral* senses used by every great poet or inventor though he does not see clairvoyantly at all? *i.e.* does not see elementals, astral pictures, forms, &c."

FAUST.

The answer to the former question seems to contain the answer to this, which is clearly prompted by a conception of the word "astral" in its divine sense.

III.

1. "There is a law of nature which insists that a man shall read these mysteries for himself. Will all men seeking the occult path read these mysteries alike, or will each man find the interpretation peculiarly adapted to his own phrase of development. No two men read the mysteries contained in the Bhagavat Gita quite alike, each gains the glimpses of light which he is able to assimilate and no more."

A. This seems to be rather a statement of a truth than a question which can be answered in any way other than putting it into different words, perhaps not so good.

2. "Is the outer world the reflection of the world within? like a shadowed reproduction in clumsy form, the inner being reality?"

A. This is what should be. But materialists have brought their sense of reality into the shadowed life.

3. "How is the intuition to be developed which enables one to grasp swift knowledge?"

A. To me no way is known but that of living the life of a disciple.

4. "Can the laws in super-nature only act on their own plane, or can their reflection be brought down intact in their own purity to govern physical life?"

A. Surely this must be so; yet rarely, for when it is accomplished the man would be divine, a Buddha!

5. "To be incapable of tears"—does not that mean that the physical emotions, being merged into the inner physical, that tears are impossible as being an outward phase of the physical nature—whereas the psychical emotions, to use a physical term are vibratory.

A. "The whole of 'Light on the Path,' is written in an astral cipher" is stated

at the outset of the "comments;" the word "tears" does not refer to physical tears in any way.

It is the only word which will convey any idea whatever of the moisture of life, that which bursts from the human soul in its experience of sensation and emotion, and in the passion of its hunger for them.

6. "How is one to take the snake of self in a steady grasp and conquer it?"

W.

A. This is the great mystery which each man must solve for himself.

IV.

WALLASEY, Oct. 1st.

Referring to the comments on "Light on the Path," in the first number of LUCIFER, may I ask whether the full paradox "Before the eyes can see they must be incapable of tears, and yet no eyes incapable of tears can see," *i.e.*, see good or God, is not truer and stronger than its part?

"Therefore the soul of the occultist must become stronger than joy and greater than sorrow" I presume means that he must not *seek* joy or *fear* sorrow, not that he may not enjoy nor sorrow?

The phrase by itself may read "Before the eyes can see they must be incapable of tears," tearless, dry, in fact dead! which is obviously not the author's intention in "Light on the Path."

Yours truly,

A. E. I.

A. Once more I must refer to the preliminary statement in the comments that "Light on the Path," is written in an astral cipher, and that tears do not mean the tears of the physical body, but the rain drops that come from the passion-life of the human soul. These being stayed for ever, the astral sight is no longer blinded or blurred. Divine love and charity then find room, when personal desire is gone. Joy and sorrow, *for oneself*, then drop naturally into another place than that which they filled before.

V.

(1.) I desire very strongly to obtain conquest over "self;" would my using the occult means for so doing, which apparently to me lie without the *ordinary* experience of Christians, necessitate my sacrificing any iota of my belief in the *power of Christ*?

(2.) If I submit myself to the occult conditions under which the four first rules in "Light on the Path" may be "engraved on my heart and life;" will these conditions permit me to *pray throughout* for the Divine help and strength of the Eternal Christ, who has passed the portal, opened the "way," and whom I believe to be the "Master of Masters," the "Lord of Angels"?

(3.) Do the words—"the disciple" . . . "must then so shut the gates of his soul that *no comforter* can enter there nor any enemy"—mean, that we are wilfully to exclude ourselves from any desire for the sympathy, strength, and support of the spirit of One who said "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," and who drank the cup of agony to the very dregs for love of the Brotherhood?

L. H. FF.

A. (1.) Not any iota of your belief in the power of the Christ-spirit would or should be sacrificed ; it would rather increase, for that spirit is the same Divine overshadowing which has inspired every Redeemer.

(2.) It matters very little by what name you call the Master of Masters, so that you do appeal to "*Its*" power throughout.

(3.) Man can find no comforter save in the Divine Spirit within himself. Does not the tale of the life of Jesus illustrate this, looking at it from one point of view? In what dread isolation he lived and died ; His disciples, even those who were most beloved by Him, could not reach His spirit in its sublime moments, or in the hours of its keenest suffering. So with every one who raises himself by effort above the common life of man, in however small a degree. Solitude becomes a familiar state, for nothing personal, not even a personal God, can comfort or cheer any longer.

VI.

"Is there any chance of self-deception? May one enter the path so gradually as to be conscious of no radical change, representing a change of life or stage of progression? How is it with one who has never experienced a great and lasting sorrow, or an all-absorbing joy, but who in the midst of both joy and sorrow strives to remember others, and to feel that he hardly deserves the joy, and that his sorrow is meagre in the presence of the great all-pain? How is such a one to enter through the gates? By what sign shall he know them?"

Y. H.

A. It is difficult for such a one to know anything of what lies beneath the surface of his nature until it has been probed by the fiercer experiences of life. But, of course, the theory of re-incarnation makes it possible that such experiences are left behind in the past. The entrance to the gates is marked by one immutable sign ; the sense that personal joy or sorrow no longer exist. The disciple lives for humanity, not for himself ; works for all creatures that suffer instead of knowing that he himself has pain.