

THE LION IN THE PATH.

At a certain era of theosophical study and practice, we reach a point of pause, of silence. The mind appears saturated with the new and wonderful teaching; insensible to fresh impressions, it can take in no more. The heart that once bounded so elately in all the vigor of renewed life and stimulus has resumed its normal beat under the pressure of daily trial, to be met, as it was not heretofore met, with self forgetfulness and altruistic endeavor. Slowly we seem to fall into a deadness, a lethargy of all the nature. We act, we plan, we fill the groove of circumstance, but we do it as though we walked in sleep. A blank wall rises before us seeming to bar further progress, and a pall falls over the inner life.

When this point of pause is reached, students say in their hearts that their progress is stopped, that they can advance no more. They have met a lion in the path, and fall back before its grim aspect. What causes this stop, this silence? First; we have learned more, intellectually, than we can use up in practical daily life. Head and heart have not kept pace. We know, in large part, what we should be in all relations of life, and why we should be it, but we have not attained the power of acting always and at once upon the lines of altruistic endeavor. And by a law of nature the brain cannot assimilate and digest the mass of knowledge received until it has been used up, to some extent at least, in the experience, any more than the stomach can receive and digest fresh food before the assimilative processes have been undergone with respect to food previously taken in. All the teachings we receive on the line of natural law (or spiritual law; the terms are one) are based upon the fact that motive determines energy and the value of energy, in a way touched upon by an adept in *The Occult World*. There is "good and evil in every point of the universe", and the motive for which force is evolved, and in which it is used, must then qualify it. "Kundalini" may make or may kill. Apply the same rule to concentration. The *passive* fixation of the empty mind produces a passive magnetic condition of the physical body, well indicated by the sign —, and facilitates the entrance of adverse lower astral influences and entities; these are helped also by the quickened activity of the inner body under the said concentration. The *positive* fixation of the mind upon some worthy object, such as a high Ideal, the Higher Self, the image of an Elder Brother if one is known, renders the outer body positive, or magnetically +, and reduces the activity of the inner body by casting it into the mould of the mind occupied with this image. The doors are barred to all lower influences; a vibration far above their own effectually excludes them. In the one case we have lowered our spiritual vitality; in the other, we have raised it. To

the aphorism, "A medium is an open door", might be added this,— "The positive idealist is a closed temple." "The image of the Master is the best protection against lower influences; think of the Master as a living man within you", says an M. S. S. This refers to the mental image of that master, who may be either an adept or the Higher Self. Patanjali says that the mind flows out and moulds itself upon the object seen; mind makes form.

In these brief hints may be found some explanation of our clogged mental processes. Those who participate so actively in theosophical work as to have little, if any, time for study, do, to my personal knowledge, make greater progress than other more learned F. T. S. Unconsciously (sub-consciously is a better term) they draw upon the Source for whose greater diffusion they work; they empty themselves and are filled, through the unfailing regularity of natural processes. Their motive predetermines the quality of the fresh energetic supply received. I do not pretend to constitute myself a judge of progress, but that must be advance which sweetens, regulates, and clarifies the nature; absence of these and presence of harshness and disturbance must imply some degree of retardation.

Even such workers do not escape the point of pause. The Lion confronts them; upon his forehead is branded the grim name of Doubt. Despair is the lair to which he conveys his victim.

In using the word Doubt, I do not restrict it to its conventional meaning, but apply it to all phases of mind that are in opposition to a wholesome and calm confidence in the reign of Law, to a full assurance that all is as well, with us and with the world, as it can possibly be at this moment. The evolutionary wheels never stop; we all progress as particles of air are said to do, through advance and recoil; and as sound is propagated along their line by just that motion, so the life wave, with its currents of progress, runs through individuals and through worlds in the same rise and fall. Progress is *always* being made at some point of our greater and of our individual being, so long as we try at all, so long as we do not deliberately retard the methods of nature.

Why, then, should we yield to this despondency? If I have anything to say upon the subject at all, it is because I have passed along that road; I have reached the point of pause and confronted the Lion. At first there seems no escape. We can only close the mind, throw ourselves into a vortex of practical altruistic work, and hold on, with stern determination, to the ideal now behind the clouds. We cannot lift our hearts to it; we are too dead-tired for that; but we can insist that it still shines behind the darkness and will reappear. Habit is the parent of Doubt. We have some special failing, some specific trial, some rock closing our path. That is what we think, laboring desperately to remove it, squandering all our

strength upon the one obstacle. We mistake. No one thing has power to bar advance in all our being, on all its many planes. There are other causes, operative as obstacles, of which we are unconscious. Let us, then, accept ourselves just as we are, and work on, trusting to work for others and to the influx of light which that brings for better comprehension of the lower self. To use up all our thoughts and most of our strength upon some personal failing is a fatal mistake. We do not kill our faults. We outgrow them. This growth can only be had by a study of spiritual law through the inner nature of things, and by its application to all the issues of life, above all, to the tendencies of the lower self. A clearer idea of philosophy and more theosophical work are what we most need.

It is not to be supposed that our faults are to be wholly ignored. But they are to be viewed without emotion, calmly, as an excrescence upon a tree, a blight in the midst of nature. No student should ever forget to look at things in that aspect which they wear on the plane of force. Anxiety, there, is an explosive; fear contracts, hope expands. The affection which trembles for its object, however legitimately to the outward sense, acts there as a disintegrating force. The thinker may increase the list for himself. Consequently, the agonizing repentance of the sinner is a deterrent if it continues longer than is necessary to the first stirring up of the inner nature. What we should do is more scientific. We should practice the substitution of mental images. Make deliberately in the mind an image opposed to the habit, or the desire, or the too influential person, whenever the idea which you desire to expel shall arise. You do not even need to *feel* this new form at first; just bring it up and consider it; hold it as long as you can. You will come to feel it. You will react to it.

In the very hour of defeat is the germ of victory. All things go on to a climax; then reaction sets in. We are generally exhausted when this natural impulse arises; we fail to grasp it, to encourage and increase it. We can bring it about more speedily by increasing the momentum of any given feeling or course, so that the climax shall be more speedily reached, but such is not often the action of the wise. They await the proper hour. A caterpillar's nest caused ravages in my garden. The wind was high, the vermin active and spread abroad. I could do nothing then. I cultivated other parts of my garden. When night came, and the wind fell, and the vermin collected in the nest, I burned it. He who waits quietly, patiently, studiously, working for others where he can and substituting higher mental images for low ones in every idle hour, consciously making these etheric forms and clothing them with ever increasing energy; he who calmly waits the crisis and then vigorously, promptly takes the reactionary current,—he will know what is meant when the Voice of the Silence enjoins us:

“Chase all your foes away * * even when you have failed.”

Create your own reactions. It is done by thought. "If thou wouldst not be slain by them, then must thou harmless make thy own creations, the children of thy thoughts, unseen, impalpable, that swarm around human-kind, the progeny and heirs to man and his terrestrial spoils." You have stamped those thoughts upon energetic centres in the astral light until they have become your habits ; they inform, propel, and nourish the Lion in the path. Efface the old impressions ; bathe the sensitized centres in the biting acid of Will ; create new thoughts daily, automatically if you cannot do it with love at first ; love will follow ; all things follow Will. Ruskin says : "Do justice to your brother—you can do that whether you love him or not—and you will come to love him. But do injustice to him—because you don't love him, and you will come to hate him." Justice primarily demands that we cease to poison the *milieu* in which men live, which souls exhale and respire, with our personal fears, desires, and all the haunting shapes of self. Man legislates against poisoning of the air, but nature prohibits the infection of the soul atmosphere, the ether. "Doubt is Self," she cries. "Thou art the Lion in thy brother's path ; destroy it, and it will not bar thine own."

JASPER NIEMAND.

THE SENTIENT DAGGER.¹

In the boudoir of a charming woman of the world, this tale was told to me. If you do not believe it, I shan't blame you. Even now, I can hardly believe it myself.

The boudoir was a strange one for a woman. With Nina Grandville the unusual was always to be found. She was like, and unlike, other women. On the surface, *grande dame de par le monde*. Beneath that polished surface, which afforded no hold to the cynic claws of her own sex, who shall say what swift dilation of the nostril, what smouldering fire of the eye, what scorn in her walk amid the crass, material crowd might not confound the observer? Distinguished by a quiet elegance, the surface woman was accepted by all save the philosopher and the fool. I have always been a little of both. As I looked at the tiger skins, the panoplies of weapons, the savagely grotesque bronzes of her boudoir, refusing to blend with crown Derby and plush *poufs à la mode*, I wondered, for the thousandth time, more or less, over that hidden nature to which this admixture must be the key. The late Grandville, remarkable only for *fadeur* and a keen taste in sauces, was never responsible for it, I was sure.

Waiting there for the lady, my eye wandered down a sunbeam, its quivering point touching an object hitherto unnoticed by me. It was a small dagger, sheathed in bronze, with a figure of Mephistopheles holding up a

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