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Essence

(DIARY LEAVES)

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HE essential nature of people is fundamentally good. The first time this realization was fortified in me was during an experiment long ago with the extrusion of the subtle body.

My friend, a physician, had put to sleep a certain G., and, drawing out his subtle body, ordered him to send it into a house where he had never been before. By means of following his subtle body, the sleeper pointed out a series of characteristic details. Then he was directed to rise up to a certain floor of the house and to enter a certain door. The sleeping man outlined the details of the hallway, saying that there was before him a door. Again he was directed to go further and to tell what he saw. He described the room and said that a man was seated at a table reading. Then he was directed :

"Approach and frighten him."

Silence followed.

"I direct you to go near him and frighten him."

Again silence, and then, in a timid voice—

"I cannot."

"Explain why you cannot."

"Impossible, he has a weak heart."

"Then do not frighten him, but as much as you can without harm, make your influence felt. What do you see?"

"He has turned and lit a second lamp."

"If it is not dangerous, increase your influence. What do you see?"

"He jumped up and went into the adjoining room where a woman is sitting."

At the conclusion of the experiment, we telephoned our acquaintance, and without telling him about the matter, indirectly led him to relate his sensations. He said :

"Today I had a strange experience. A little while ago I was seated with a book, and suddenly I felt some inexplicable presence. I am ashamed to tell you that this sensation was so sharp in its effect, that I had a desire for more light. Nevertheless the feeling became so strong that I went to tell my wife about it and to sit with her."

Apart from the experiment itself, which so clearly demonstrates the causes of many of our sensations, one detail had in it for me personally an unforgettable significance. In earthly circumstances the man would not take account of whether some one had a weak heart. He would frighten, abuse, cause him evil, without considering any such thing. But the subtle body, that about which the Apostle Paul speaks so clearly, in its essence is inclined towards good. As you see, before carrying out the order to frighten there was manifested the consideration of sensing the condition of the heart. The essence of good whispered here that it would be dangerous to do harm to an already weak heart.

One such experiment, in the most ordinary everyday circumstances, already leads one beyond the boundaries of the bodily-limited. There resulted not only the extrusion of the subtle body, but a remarkable testing of the good of the essential nature. How much dark burden must

weight down the luminous subtle essence, for people to reach such misanthropy as they do. Again, as St. Anthony has said: "Hell is ignorance." Of course the whole dark burden is primarily from ignorance. In such a situation, how needful are good thoughts, which with their unseen wings touch the oppressed beclouded forehead.

When, in their ignorance, people say: "Why these concentrations of thought, why these hermits withdrawing from the world? Why, they are egoists and they think only of their own salvation"; there is a great mistake in such a judgement. If even in the most ordinary experiment we could convince ourselves of the good and noble essence of the subtle body, if we saw that a thought of good transcended all commands, usually so unquestioned in such cases, then so needful are these thoughts of good. What simple yet touching solicitude is told in the simple reply about the weak heart. And right now there are not a few weak hearts, and who has the right to overburden them? Right now there are many mortally smitten hearts which could no longer hold up under a careless impact. And this will be murder just as precisely as killing with a dagger, bullet, or poison. Does not poison penetrate into the heart through an attack of malice? What an enormous number of murders, actual, intentional, malicious in their prolongation, takes places outside the reach of any courts or penalties! To poison a man is inadmissible, to strangle a man is inadmissible; this is right. But then why is it possible to gnaw and tear the heart of a man? Surely if people would even sometimes, though briefly, reflect in the morning hours about something good, apart from their own selfish interests, this would be a great offering to the world.

Of course ignorant cynics will probably sneer, considering that in any case this thought is nothing more than a blade of grass in the wind. Any cynicism about thought, about the spirit, about intangible possibilities, will be a clear example of the grossest ignorance. When these ignorant ones, grinning maliciously, say: "Whither should we, of small culture, plunge into an ocean of thoughts",—

this will be said not at all in humility or timidity, but will be the expression of the ugliest arrogance.

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Often people dream in secret of encountering something, as they say in popular language, supernatural. Precisely as if in the greatness of nature there can be the natural, and as an antithesis, the supernatural. Of course, this ordinary expression, found in popular usage, does not lead to a true cognition. But the root of the matter is this, that as soon as people have chanced to come in contact with even the beginning of such an unusual manifestation, they have fallen into such unrestrained heart palpitation, that the manifestation stopped short. It was suspended for the very same reason as in the case of the experiment related above. It has been clearly established that the uncultivated heart and the inexperienced consciousness cannot endure anything loftier than their trivial routine.

Very often certain inexplicable heart palpitations are spoken about. People attribute them to the category of sex, or to inordinate work, or to some other excesses. But among these manifestations not a few cases would be found, when some beautiful wings have already touched someone expectant or unexpectant, yet he at the first proximity to them suffered a mortal trembling. This too will so often be from the incompatible distinction between earthly language and the Heavenly tongue.

So much good and compassion is contained in the simple consideration about the weak heart. If people, even in their everyday life would admit to themselves more often this humane thought about a neighbour's pain, about over-fatigue and weakness of his heart; then surely in this way they would become in many cases more humane.

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Manifestations of the dead have been recounted in all sorts of narratives. They are entirely beyond question. Among them it is undoubtedly true that many times, though with a highly needful goal in view, departed relatives and friends could not tell them their good news solely because

of that same animal terror on the part of those to whom they appeared. Cases are known, when, desiring to save a person from peril, departed ones have had to undertake a whole series of gradual approaches in order to free the person first of all from fear. Precisely fear so often prevents receiving the best news.

These manifestations, such good news and wishes to help have been written about so much, that it is impossible to go into an enumeration of the individual episodes. Beginning with theological and on through many philosophical, historical, and poetic narratives, it is everywhere affirmed that there is no death as such, and that the proximity of the worlds can be sensed even amid everyday life. All this is past doubting. But malice and hatred, which have so taken possession of humanity in our time, make it imperative to recall once more that the essential nature of man is good, and that everything evil and hideously harmful will be first of all an additional effect of ignorance.

The very dark ones, those creatures which have fallen very low, exert their influence first of all on the ignorant. Their favourite expedient is intimidation in many ways. They try so hard to obscure and to lower the consciousness of their victim, that he feels himself isolated, alone, and finally, he can see his fortune only in communion with the dark ones. And these likewise try to deprive the victim of all true joys, imposing upon him all the shameful surrogates of self-indulgence.

Man wishes to forget himself. Instead of wishing it possible to reflect more clearly and to take up arms in the spiritual battle, he is compelled to forget himself. In the delirious desire of forgetfulness, it is easier to take possession of him and make him an obedient instrument, cajoling him into ignorance. Whereas, only the thought of good which lies in the foundation can impel one to a thirst for knowledge. And then man does not lose a day or hour in order to learn, to make better, and to make beautiful everything possible. In this process, thought of good will be also a thought of beauty.
