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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

*Does the belonging to secret societies have the effect of retarding or advancing the mind in its evolution?*

Membership in a secret society will prevent the mind from or assist it in its development according to the nature and development of that particular mind and the kind of secret society of which that one is a member. All secret societies may be classed under two heads: those whose object is to train the mind and body for psychic and for spiritual purposes, and those whose object is physical and material benefit. People sometimes form themselves into what may be said to be a third class, which is made up of the societies which teach psychic development and claim communication with spiritual-beings. It is said that strange phenomena are produced in their circles and sittings. They also claim to have and to be able to confer on whom they see fit, physical advantages over others. All these should come under the second class, because their object will be found to be sensual and physical.

The secret societies of the first class are few as compared to the second class; of these few only a small percentage really help the mind in its spiritual development. Under this first class are included societies of religious bodies who try to assist their members in spiritual awakening and unfolding—who have no such objects as political training or military instruction or instruction in business methods—and also organizations of a philosophical and religious basis. Those who are of particular religious faiths may be benefited by belonging to a secret society within that faith if the objects of the society do not allow the mind to be kept in darkness and do not prevent it from acquiring knowledge. Before one of any faith joins a secret society of his faith he should inquire well into their objects and methods. There are many secret societies within each of the large religions. Some of these secret societies keep their members in ignorance concerning the knowledge of life, and they prejudice their members against other faiths. Such secret societies can do great harm to the minds of their individual members. Such prejudicial training and enforced ignorance may so warp, stultify and cloud the

mind that it will require many lives of pain and sorrow to rectify the wrongs which it may have been lead into committing. Those who have religious convictions of their own regarding a religion, may be benefited by belonging to a secret society of that religion if the objects and methods of that society meet with the approval of that mind, and as long as that particular mind belongs to or is being educated in that particular religion. The religions of the world represent the different schools in which some minds are trained or educated for spiritual development. When one feels that a religion satisfies the spiritual longings of his mind, he belongs in the class of spiritual life which that religion represents. When a religion no longer supplies what is generally called the spiritual food of the mind, or when one begins to question "the truths" of his religion, it is a sign that he no longer belongs to it or that he is being separated from it. If one doubts, if he is dissatisfied with and denounces the teachings of his religion without having other reasons than dumb and ignorant discontent, this is a sign that his mind is being closed to spiritual light and growth and that he is falling below his class in spiritual life. On the other hand, if the mind feels that his particular religion or the religion in which he was born is narrow and cramped and if it does not satisfy or answer the questions of life that his mind yearns to know, this is a sign that his mind is unfolding and growing out of that class which is represented by that particular religion and it shows that his mind demands something which will supply the mental or spiritual food which it needs for continued growth. All secret societies under the first class, which have as their object the development of psychic tendencies, will retard the mind because all things of the psychic nature have to do with the senses and bring the mind under the dominion of the senses.

The secret societies of the second class are made up of those organizations whose objects are the attainment of political, social, financial and mercenary advantages. Under this class come the fraternal and the benevolent societies, those who are secretly organized to overthrow a government, or those who band themselves together for purposes of blackmail, murder or sensual and vicious indulgences. One may easily tell whether or not any of these will assist or retard the development of his mind if he knows its aims and objects.

The idea of secrecy is the knowing or the having of something which others have not, or in sharing knowledge with a few. The desire of this knowledge is strong and is attractive to the

undeveloped, the youthful and the growing mind. This is shown by the desire which people have to belong to something which is exclusive and hard to enter and which will excite the admiration or envy or awe of those who do not belong. Even children like to have secrets. A little girl will wear a ribbon in her hair or on her waist to show that she has a secret. She is the object of envy and the admiration of all the other little girls until the secret is known, then the ribbon and secret loses its value. Then another little girl with another ribbon and a new secret is the center of attraction. Excepting the political, financial and the vicious or criminal societies, most of the secrets of the secret societies in the world, have as little worth or are of as little importance as the secrets of the little girl. Yet those who belong to them may be furnished with "play," which is as beneficial to them as the girl's secret is to her. As the mind matures it no longer wishes secrecy; it finds that those who wish secrecy are immature, or that their thoughts and deeds seek darkness to avoid the light. The maturing mind wishes to spread knowledge broadcast, though he knows that knowledge cannot be given alike to all. As the race advances in knowledge, the demand for secret societies for the development of the mind should decrease. Secret societies are not necessary for advancement of minds beyond the school girl age. From business and social and literary sides, ordinary life has all the secrets necessary for the mind to solve and by which the mind will be advanced through its youthful stages. No secret society can advance the mind beyond its natural development nor enable it to see through the secrets of nature and to solve the problems of life. A few secret organizations in the world may benefit the mind if the mind will not stop on the surface, but will penetrate the real meaning of their teachings. Such an organization is the Masonic Order. Comparatively few minds of this organization derive other than business or social benefit. The real worth of symbolism and the moral and spiritual teaching is almost entirely lost to them.

A truly secret organization which is of benefit to the mind in its development is not known as a secret society, nor is not known to the world. It must be as simple and plain as natural life. Entrance into such a secret society is not by ritual. It is by growth, through self effort of the mind. It must be grown into, not entered. No person can keep a mind out of such an organization if by self effort that mind continues to grow. When a mind grows into the knowledge of life that mind endeavors to dispel ignorance by removing the clouds, uncovering secrets and by throwing light on all problems of life and

to help other minds in their natural unfoldment and development. Belonging to a secret society will not help the mind who wills to grow into its own.

*Is it possible to get something for nothing? Why do people try to get something for nothing? How do people who appear to get something for nothing, have to pay for what they get?*

Everyone inherently feels that no one can get something for nothing and that the proposition is wrong and the attempt unworthy; yet, when he thinks of it in connection with some object of *his* desire, good judgment is ignored and he with willing ears listens to the suggestion and deludes himself into believing that it is possible and that *he* may get something for nothing. Life requires that a just return or account be made for everything received. This requirement is based on the law of necessity, which provides for the circulation of life, the maintenance of forms and the transformation of bodies. He who tries to get for nothing something which would not otherwise come to him, interferes with the circulation of life and the distribution of forms according to natural law, and he thereby makes of himself an obstruction in the body of nature. He pays the penalty, which nature as well as all law-governed bodies exacts and is made to return that which he took or else is he altogether suppressed or removed. If he objected to this by arguing that what he got was only what would have come to him anyway, his argument fails because if what he got for nothing, apparently, would have come to him without his effort, then he need not have made the effort which he did to get it. When things come to one without apparent effort, such as what is called accident and chance or by inheritance, they come because of and according to the natural working out of law, and in this way it is legitimate and according to law. In all other cases, such as receiving physical and sensual benefits by wishing only, or by thinking only, or by making demands according to phrases known as the law of abundance or the law of opulence, it is impossible to get something for nothing even though one does appear to get something for nothing. One of the reasons why people do try to get something for nothing, is because although they feel that this cannot inherently be true, they see that others have obtained what those others do not seem to have worked for, and because it is said by other people that they do get things by simply wishing for them or demanding them and claiming them until they have them. Another reason is because the one's mind is not

sufficiently matured and experienced enough to know that it cannot get something for nothing notwithstanding all allurements, inducements or pretences that it can. Another reason is because the one who thinks that he can get something for nothing is not truly honest. In ordinary business life the biggest rogues are those who believe they can outwit the law and can get something for nothing, but this is because they intend to make the people less crafty than themselves supply their wants. So they provide a get-rich-quick-scheme or some other scheme and induce others as dishonest but with less experience than themselves to come into it. Most of those who are taken into the scheme are often shown by the schemer how he is going to get the best of some other people and which explains how they also can get rich quick. If these were honest they would not be taken into the scheme but, by appealing to the avarice and covetousness in his dupes and through his own dishonest methods, the schemer gets what his victims provide. When one is truly honest he will know that he cannot get something for nothing and he will not try, though he may accept that which lawfully comes to him when it comes by natural means.

People who get something have to pay for what they get. If people get things which seem to come out of the air and to fall in their laps as the result of a call on the law of abundance or the universal storehouse or on the law of opulence, or what not, they are like the short-sighted ones without means who make lavish purchases on credit, unthinking of the time of settlement. Like those without resources who buy on credit, these sanguine temperaments often get what they do not really need; like these thoughtless purchasers, the demanders of "the law of abundance" dream and fancy they will do much with what they get—but they find themselves near bankruptcy when the time of settlement comes. A debt may not be acknowledged, but the law exacts its payment nevertheless. One who asks physical health and physical wealth by claiming and demanding these from "the law of abundance," or from "the absolute," or from anything else, and who obtains something of what he demands, instead of getting it legitimately in the realm where it belongs, must return what he has obtained plus the interest demanded for the use.

One may correct nervous disorders and restore the body to health by an attitude of mind; but it will be found that nervous disorders are in most cases brought on and continued by a troubled mind. When the right attitude is taken by the mind the nervous

trouble is corrected and the body resumes its natural functions. This is a legitimate cure, or rather a removal of a cause of sickness, because the cure is effected by treating the trouble at its source. But not all diseases and poor health is due to a troubled mind. Ill health and disease is usually brought about by the eating of improper foods and the gratifying of morbid appetites and unlawful desires. Physical conditions and possessions are provided by seeing that they are necessary to one's work, and then by working for them according to the recognized legitimate physical means.

It is possible to cause diseases brought on by improper feeding to disappear, and it is possible to obtain money and other physical advantages by claiming and demanding these from whatever phrase the mind is pleased to invent or adopt. This is possible because the mind has power to act on other minds and cause them to bring about the conditions which it desires and because the mind has power and may be able to act on the state of matter of its own plane, and this matter in turn may act upon or bring about the conditions demanded by the mind; it is possible because the mind may exert its power over the body and cause a physical disease to disappear for a time. But in every case where the mind goes against natural law to bring about physical results the law demands a readjustment, and the reaction is often more severe than the original trouble. So when health is claimed and when the physical requirements for physical health are not provided, the mind may compel the disappearance of an unhealthy growth, such as a tumor. But for such apparent cure payment is demanded by nature for trying to prevent the exactment of her laws. By forcing the dispersion of the tumor the matter of the tumor may be—as when lawless people are compelled to leave their haunts by meddlesome and foolish reformers—driven to seek residence in another part of the community, where it will do more harm and be more difficult to locate and treat. When dispersed by mental compulsion the tumor may disappear from one part of the body as a tumor and reappear in another part of the body as a loathsome sore or a cancer.

When one insists on and is provided with physical possessions by demanding them from “the absolute” or “the storehouse of the absolute,” he will enjoy them for a time as a gambler enjoys his ill-gotten gains. But the law demands that not only shall he restore what he did not get honestly, but that he shall pay for the use of that which he had. This payment is called for when the demander has actually worked for a desired object—and which is lost when just

within his reach; or the payment may be made after he has earned certain possessions and loses them in some unforeseen way; or he may have them taken from him when he feels most sure of them. Nature requires payment in the coin or its equivalent of the debt contracted.

When a mind attempts to make itself a servant to the body by illegitimate means, and prostitutes its powers from its own plane to the physical, the laws of the mental world require that mind to be deprived of power. So the mind loses its power and one or many of its faculties are obscured. The payment required by law is made when the mind has suffered the deprivation of power, the suffering and trouble which it has caused others in obtaining the objects of its desires, and when it has struggled through the mental darkness in which it is, in its efforts to correct its wrongs and restore itself as a mind to its own plane of action. Most of the people who appear to get something for nothing do not have to wait for another life to be compelled to pay. Payment is usually called for and exacted in their present life. This will be found true if one will look into the history of people who have tried to get something for nothing and who have appeared to succeed. They are mental criminals who are self-imprisoned in jails of their own building.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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