

THE
MAKING
OF A
MYSTIC

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AELFRIDA TILLYARD

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The making of a mystic



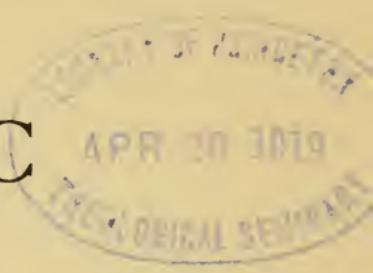
THE MAKING OF A MYSTIC



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OF A
MYSTIC



AELFRIDA TILLYARD

(Mrs. Constantine Granam)

CAMBRIDGE
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1917

To
MY MOTHER
AND
MY FATHER.

PREFACE

In the Lent terms of the years 1915, 1916, and 1917, I delivered courses of Lectures at Cambridge, on "Spiritual Exercises and their Psychological Results"; "The Development of the Religious Consciousness in East and West"; and "The Practice of Mysticism." These lectures, which were given in the Psychological lecture room,¹ were purely academic. They brought me into contact, however, with a number of people whose interest in mysticism, and in the spiritual experience and methods of meditation of saints of all religions, was not merely that of the scholar. I found myself being constantly asked for advice by men and women who wished to become pilgrims on the mystic way, and who felt the need for intense religious experience, without having any opportunity for practising the austerities of the contemplative life. I myself, as I had better confess quite frankly, am a mystic, in so far as I find the world of spiritual experience more real than the material world, and look on our union with God as the aim of humanity. And though I agree with Dr. Rendel Harris that, "those people who talk of undertaking the guidance of souls are both dangerous and impertinent," I could not avoid giving these seekers after truth such help as was within my power, which was little enough, of course.

¹ Afterwards in the Physiological lecture room.

The conversations which I had with earnest-minded men and women of many lands and creeds, and the letters which I received from them, were to me most wonderfully illuminating, and taught me something of the different ways in which God leads His children.

This book, then, is the outcome of real experience. It is written chiefly for the benefit of those whose unanswered questions lie heavy on my conscience. It will be of use, I think, to any one who looks for guidance in mysticism, for the advice given is not of my own invention. It is drawn from the great mystical tradition, which is no secret, but which may be had for the searching, from many books, both old and new. But he who reads these letters in the spirit of cold criticism will find absurdities on every page. I have no doubt they are there.

The book contains the following things. Firstly, the story of the quest, and of the religious experiences, and something of the external life, of a college girl such as you may meet a dozen times a day in the lecture rooms at Cambridge ; secondly, the advice and rules for meditation, given by an older woman whom the world might thoughtlessly call "disillusioned," but who would prefer to call herself "detached" ; and thirdly, a possible solution of some of the political and economic troubles of this beloved land of ours, which the mystic may solve where the militarist and merchant fail ; and other things too numerous to mention.

The book is a practical one. I am no dreamer, but one who believes ardently in the power of the spiritual world to re-make the earth in its own likeness, so that we may begin, even here and now, our everlasting life.

PREFACE

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As for the style of these letters, the colloquial and familiar English of "Audrey Talbot" may seem to accord very badly with the subjects of which she treats. My excuse for employing it, must be that it is true to life.

A. T.

CAMBRIDGE,
November, 1917.

THE MAKING OF A MYSTIC

I. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,
CAMFORD,
February 17, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

May I come and ask you questions about your lectures on Mysticism? Would Monday at 4.30 suit you? I expect I shall feel an awful fool, coming and asking you solemn questions, because you are my cousin, and knew me when I was in my cradle. But then I remember you in short skirts, with a pigtail, so we are quits, aren't we?

Four of us from college have started coming to your lectures, and we argue *hard* all the way home. You may have noticed us, sitting in a row. The one on my left, who took copious notes, was Janet Mackenzie. She is only a Fresher, but she was at a Scotch University, and so she rather gives herself airs. She is taking Moral Stinks, and "making a study of English Nonconformity" between whiles. Both studies give her an opportunity of pointing out to me that the English are quite fifty years behind the Scotch in philosophy and religion, and all that sort of thing. She isn't really a bit detestable,

and *very* clever. The other two are second years, like me. Teresa Randall, the handsome one, is half Spanish, and a Roman Catholic. She says the way you set up as a teacher, when you ought humbly to be sitting at the feet of authority is—*awful* (only she doesn't put it like that). Mercy Allen is a Quakeress, and never says anything. I don't know why she comes along with us, except that we all love her; and when three people are arguing for all they are worth, it is rather convenient to have one silent one, isn't it!

Please forgive all this jaw, and let me come on Monday. After your lecture yesterday on Buddhist Mysticism I felt that Buddhism was frightfully attractive.

Your loving cousin,

AUDREY.

2. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

SOUTH ROAD,

CAMFORD.

February 18, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

Do come on Monday at 4.30. Please do not become a Buddhist until you have heard my lecture on Moham-medan Mysticism. You might find that Fate had intended you for a Sufi after all!

Yours affectionately,

CATHARINE SUTHERLAND.

3. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,
February 20, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

Isn't it too hateful for anything! Here we are in quarantine for Hunpox *and* mumps! I think if it had been only one I wouldn't have cared, and would have come to tea all the same, but I couldn't risk giving your kiddies *both*, and I am sure if I did come I should be feeling behind my ears for swellings, and looking at my wrists for spots, all the time I was trying to collect my wits and ask you questions about Mysticism. So may I write it all instead? As a matter of fact, I think I can write it better than say it. In spite of your jibe about Buddhism, which made me laugh, I am going to be very serious, and tell you all my troubles. May I?

Your definition of a mystic as a person to whom the spiritual world ("that is the world of religious experience") is more real than the material world, set me thinking tremendously. I am sure one *ought* to feel like that about religion and God—either it is the most real thing there is, and the only thing that matters, or it is a dream, and no one ought to bother about it. My difficulty is this—I look round me, and see people whom I have to call "Christians," satisfying themselves with what doesn't seem to me to be religion at all. And other people going on quite comfortably without God. Now *I* can't satisfy myself with these other things, *nor* can I go on comfortably without God. And yet I have not had any religious experience which makes me able to

point to it and say, "There! Look at that! There's the real thing."

Take the Christians I know (and I ought to know them well, being a parson's daughter). There's father. Of course he is beautiful to look at it, and a Talbot, and so suave and serene, and all that. I don't believe he has ever even *peeped* outside the Church of England. He is tolerant, in a way—and yet so narrow! He looks on the Roman Catholic Church as a small collection of wilful heretics. He regards Nonconformists with gentle contempt, and can't understand why our Church with its noble cathedrals, its stately liturgy, etc., etc., which is good enough for him, should not be good enough for every one else too. As for Buddhists and Mohammedans and Hindus, I don't suppose he ever thinks seriously about them at all, for he takes his missionary sermons ready-made out of a book called "Hope for the Heathen," and doesn't have to think at all. Mother's Christianity is of the "just trust" type. It makes her a perfect darling to live with, but as soon as one ventures any criticism of the Established Order in religion, she looks so pained, that one has to leave off. Then "father's two curates," as we call them, Elizabeth and Mr. Johns. *She* does no end of charitable work on church lines, and *he* is always trying to work in another candle or a new vestment without father noticing. I admire him in a way: he has deep-set, hot-looking eyes, and I am sure he goes in for vigils and fasting, but somehow or other he makes me laugh. He is so awfully solemn, and I don't believe he ever forgets he is a priest, even in his dreams. I wish he would marry Elizabeth, but I fear he is a celibate. However——

Well, the point of all these remarks, Catharine, is that I want a religion which includes the Church of England and "just trusting," and parish work and ritual and Nonconformity, and all sorts of other things, and which transcends them all. I kind of *feel* that there must *be* such a religion—some of those saints and people you talked about in your lectures had it. Teresa says I ought to join the True Church and submit to Authority. Janet says I shall find happiness in the unfettered exercise of my own intellect, adding, by the way, that I don't know how to think, which is not very encouraging, is it? As for Mercy, she says nothing. I never met such a silent creature. Only, after an argument we had had last night, when Janet had been particularly brilliant, she said, "The Lord does not lead all His children by the same way." At the time it sounded wonderful, and silenced Janet, but it is nothing but a platitude, is it? Can't you suggest a system of religious belief for me?

With love,

AUDREY.

4. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

February 21, 1916.

Thank you, Audrey dear, for your letter. I am honoured in having your confidence. I had better warn you, however, that I am a dangerous person to confide in, for I am by way of being a spiritual director, or as I prefer to put it, a Straightener, or Soul Doctor, and I may claim you as a patient and offer you medicine which you may be disinclined to take. (The term Straightener, by the way, comes from Samuel Butler's book "Erewhon." In the land of Erewhon, illness was punished by imprisonment, and Straighteners called in to treat the sinners. I am not considering you as a sinner, but I believe that many people are the better for a little soul-doctoring. Hence my profession—and the title.)

Will you ask yourself the following questions? "Why do I want a system of religious belief? Is it that I may have one to display and talk about when my friends produce and explain theirs? Or do I wish to have settled convictions in order that I may feel orderly and comfortable in my soul? Do I seem to myself in my questionings a little superior to my friends, who are contented with the form of religion which was bequeathed to them by their parents? Am I in my searchings indulging in 'intellectual dissipation,' the strong wine which is served at the table of my friends' minds? Or do I love God for His own sake and wish to come to the knowledge of Him?"

With love,

CATHARINE.

5. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,
February 23, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

When I read your letter through the first time I thought you a Perfect Beast to write to me like that. How could you be so harsh and unsympathetic? Isn't it the prerogative of everyone with religious difficulties, to be petted and fussed over, and met half way by the people who have "got there"? I was never treated like that before. I am sure our Curate wouldn't—though I'd *die* before ever I told him I had any troubles. I'd rather he thought I jeered at the whole show. Then I read your letter over again, and I felt a Pig and a Worm—a pig for selfishness and a worm for abasement.

Yes—yes—yes—yes—to all your questions but the last. You have certainly held a mirror up to me! *But*, O Straightener, I do believe that deep down in me somewhere there *is* a sort of wish to love God for His own sake. Can't you dig down into the depths of me and drag it out?

I'm in a worse muddle than ever. It is father's fault, for being made a dean. (You perhaps saw in the "Times" that he has accepted the deanery of Althchester.) Well, there is an "orthodox" church party at coll., and they are always fussing about what is loyal to the Church and disloyal to the Church. Just lately they have decided, after a lot of jaw, that being friends with Dissenters is disloyal to the Church. Last night three of them came in state to me, and told me that as my father had just become so important (horrid little snobs!)

I ought to be more careful about loyalty to the Church, and that my being friends with Janet and Teresa and the rest, wasn't. First of all I drew a large herring across the trail by saying, "What is the Church?"—but they closed in on me at the end. I said I loved the Church, but I loved freedom more. And they accused me of being a hotbed of Protestant feeling, or Freethought or something, and I said they were only fit for the Middle Ages, and they said—at least one of them did—that I ought not to go to Holy Communion, holding the views I did. I cried, "Views! I wish I had any!" and Teresa, who had just come in, pointed out that once you got rid of Infallibility there was nothing between you and Intellectual Anarchy. I was thoroughly worked up, and I said, "Sometimes I don't believe there is a God at all. I am sure a lot of people get on very well without Him. If He wanted us to *believe* in Him, why didn't He speak so that we could hear? Why did He leave us all in the dark? Look at the war too——" Then they began to talk about the war, and I was glad, because otherwise I should have begun to cry—not because I don't think the war awful, but because it wasn't so personal as the rest.

When they had all gone, Mercy came in to kiss me good-night. I told her what I had said about God speaking so that we could all hear, and how frightfully convenient it would be. She smiled a very quiet smile and said, "Would you have Him shout so that His voice was louder than theirs?" What *did* she mean?

Straightener! If you've got any medicine for me, I'll take it. This kind of thing is rotting up my work. How can I be interested in the foreign policy of George

the Third when I don't know whether I'm going to Heaven or Hell!

Lovingly,

AUDREY.

P.S.—Of course, no one believes in Hell nowadays, but I do feel that one has lost something, the best—if one isn't "lost" oneself—if one can't "get religion."

P.P.S.—You *must* help me, you simply must.

6. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

February 25, 1916.

Of course, dear child, I will do my best to help you, if you wish me to. It is little enough, however, that one human being can do for another.

But if, as you say, all this ferment of thought is "rotting up your work," would you not be better advised to banish religious speculation from your mind just now, and concentrate your energies on the foreign policy of George the Third? The eternal truths will not run away, and if you work well and honestly for your tripos, say your prayers and go to church, you may find that, at the end of your third year, most of your difficulties have vanished.

You are imagining, I gather, that you would like to be a pilgrim on the Mystic Way. The visions and the

delights of the saints and seers of whom I spoke, have fired your heart. That is good. But what of the dangers of the journey, of the dark nights of the soul? I shrink from seeing anyone voluntarily face those sufferings, those trials—in spite of what I know of the glories of the way.

A mystic, by the bye, is not a glum and gloomy being. Something of your vitality and your brilliance is a very good endowment for a mystic. You might do very well—if God pleases. I could but show you the very first steps of the way. The guide, oddly enough, always fails the pilgrim just where his help seems to be most essential.

Well, think the matter over, dear child, for a week or ten days, and write to me again. You will perhaps think me unnecessarily solemn. I am grave because I think that you will not easily be satisfied. I could wish you a better teacher!

With love,

CATHARINE.

7. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

March 5, 1916.

Yes—yes! The Mystic Way—*tout ou rien!* That's it—that's just it. I *have* thought—I *have* considered—and rotted up my work worse than ever in the process. However, I don't care, at least not much.

You *are* solemn, awful solemn. Please don't make me take a vow of obedience and then order me to walk blindfold over a precipice. I don't want to wake up one day and find myself a Buddhist or a Mohammedan! I don't know exactly what I believe about Christ, but I feel that all I know of God has come to me through Him, and I couldn't feel the same about Buddha or Mahomet could I?

I want, Catharine, to *see God*. Of course, I know there is a special blessing for those who have *not* seen God and yet believed, but that blessing is not for me. I don't want to get my religion from a Church or a Book, but straight from God. You said the mystics did—saw God, I mean—and that remark was the string round which my fluid aspirations crystallised. Comprenny?

I'll tell you what I have been doing. I said to myself, "Janet and Teresa and Mercy are satisfied—and I'm not. Suppose I go round to their schism-shops and see what kind of bread of heaven is sold there—see if I think it would satisfy *me*." So on Thursday evening I went with Janet to a week-night service at her Presbyterian Chapel. There weren't many people there, but we had a jolly good sermon on "Christianity and the War," really able, you know, and well-delivered. Janet

says that the intellectual level of Presbyterian ministers is much higher than that of Anglican clergymen. I dare say she's right. But I found an Intellectual Level not exactly the kind of meal I was after. I'm not Scotch.

Friday I went with Teresa to Benediction. There is always a kind of thrill, isn't there, in a Roman Church that one gets nowhere else? One bows instinctively before the brooding Presence on the altar. The singing was glorious, and the church so dim and holy and sweet-smelling.

“Mater purissima

Turris eburnea

Ora pro nobis.”

I love that—it sends little shivers down my back. I feel it voices the eternal cry of our souls, that some beauty, some purity, not our own, should take our place before the judgment throne of God. But are those little shivers down my back, true religion? I guess not.

And on Sunday I actually went to Meeting with Mercy. We sat—and sat—and sat—in the ugliest little room on God's earth—sat for a whole mortal half hour before any one said anything. First my feet felt as though they were in buckets of cold water, they were so icy. Then I felt spiders crawling down my back. Then I wanted to sneeze and wriggle and wriggle! Mercy sat like a statue, and looked rapt. And all the time I kept wondering when they were going to begin. At last a lady got up and talked for five minutes; and then there was silence again; and then an Aged Friend prayed; and then it was over. Mercy said afterwards, “It was a good meeting.” I didn't dare to ask her what she meant.

I was glad to go to Evensong. It felt kind of homey and comfy to be saying the familiar words. But words—words—words—I want something more than that now.

In the dark,

AUDREY.

P.S.—Perhaps in my account of “Christians I have known” I ought to include my two brothers. Sebastian has never quite forgiven father for giving him such an awful name; and father has never *quite* forgiven Sebastian for going into business. He can’t have been three years old when he declared that he didn’t believe in the Noah story, because he was quite sure all those animals could not have got into one ark. Since then he doesn’t seem to have had any use for religion. What baffles me is the way he gets on so happily without it. His wife is exactly the same. And the baby has got an expression just like its parents, kind of rich and contented and replete, you know. Why can’t I look like that—be plump and sleek, and take things as they come? Suppose I’m yearning over the non-existent—stretching out pleading hands to just Nothing at all.

Gus believes in an Upward Tendency. He says he sees It working Its way through history. I wonder how much Upward Tendency he finds in the trenches! Precious little, I should think.

You can’t say your prayers to a tendency, can you? When I am all in the dark like this, I seem to see Bessie (we call Sebastian Bessie) and Gus standing by me and looking so superior, and asking why I bother my head about God. You do understand, don’t you, Catharine?

It isn't *I* who am bothering my *head*, but something deeper in me that is bothering *me*. Do write soon.

A. T.

8. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,
March 6, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

Very well. You are to be my pupil—or, if you prefer the other title, my patient. I do not expect obedience of you, and I would have you clearly understand that I am not in possession of any secret which I can whisper in your ear, and which will immediately show you the way to God. Such a secret does not exist. There are no “back-stairs” to Heaven.

First of all, will you try and calm down a little? I do know—I do understand. I would understand you a great deal better, however, if your mind would sit still for a few minutes, and let me have a look at it. I do not consider it at all extraordinary that you should want to see God. Frankly, I do not know what there is to make such a fuss about. Every single human being wants to see God, though it is only here and there that an individual is aware of the exact nature of his desire.

I wish you to dedicate, from now henceforward, the whole of your life to this one purpose—that of seeing God. Whether you will in this world attain your object, is as He wills. The first *condition*, however, of

attainment is "one-pointedness." My own teacher taught me this, and it is an axiom universally accepted by people who know. Your own common-sense will confirm it.

If you think it will help you, bind yourself by a vow for a year's time. Vow that everything you do shall be to the glory of God, and with the sole object of coming to know Him. I do not mean that this consecrated life is to be planned on lines different from your ordinary life. If things are to change, let them change of themselves. You must eat and drink, work and talk, to the glory of God—that is all. Do not tell anyone. Four things are needful—to know, to will, to dare, and to keep silence. The last is hardest of the four.

I would rather, if you can manage it, that you did not argue on religious matters, for a little while at any rate.

Please attend such services, and read such books, as will help to inflame your love of God, but do not devote too much time to religion just yet. I do not want you to emphasize the difference between the secular and the sacred.

Could you keep about ten minutes every day, preferably in the early morning, for meditation? Just read a few sentences of a book, and think about them. The following books might be of use to you.

"The Interior Castle." St. Teresa.

"Sadhana." Rabindranath Tagore.

"Quests, Old and New." G. R. S. Mead.

"The Spiritual Guide." Miguel de Molinos.

"The Adventures of the Christian Soul." K. S. Saunders.

“The Meaning and Value of Mysticism.” E. Herman.

“Studies in Mystical Religion” (Introduction only.) Rufus Jones. And particularly, “The Spiral Way,” by John Cordelier’s. Madame Guyon’s “Moyen Court,” and Juliana of Norwich, “Revelations of Divine Love.”

Your little Quaker friend might lend you Caroline Stephen’s “Light Arising” and “Quaker Strongholds,” and the very wonderful Journal of Stephen Grellet, if she has them. But don’t read too much. I should avoid Miss Underhill, I think, because she is intellectually too stimulating. She is wonderfully interesting, and knows a great deal, but it is just the “interesting” that you must be careful about. I do not wish you to starve your mind, but anything that adds to the restless inquisitiveness of your intellect will hinder and not help you. Rabin-dranath Tagore and Mr. Mead should rather arouse and develop your sense of wonder.

Please keep a short record of the result of your meditations. This is important.

My blessing go with you. Don’t be too self-conscious !

Lovingly,

CATHARINE.

P.S.—I expect I shall always, as soon as my letters are done, think of more advice to give you. I feel that it is rather futile to recommend books to you, because what has helped me will very likely merely confuse or bore you. Do not, however, expect to understand everything that you read, if you are learning your way about in the writings of the mystics. It is enough if

you feel a stirring of love and wonder, and a wish to know what they know.

I must copy for you a little bit from "The Spiral Way" (p. 60) about the beginner who believes in a "secret" that can be told. "In something *known*, in some secret wisdom imparted, some occult revelation given perhaps to the insistent neophyte, but guarded from the crowd by those who keep its shrine, in some inward mysterious meaning, evoked from a moribund tradition—here, many imagine that they see their first chance of transcendence, forgetting that the one essential secret is revealed, not to intelligent scholars, but to growing babes. They dream of an Initiation, some magical "Open Sesame" of the spiritual world; a ready-made solution that will relieve them from the dreadful obligation of growing into the truth. This solution, they think, once they have found it, will lift the cloud from off the mountain; rend the sanctuary veil; that veil which shall only be parted when the soul dies upon the Cross 'resisting interior temptation even to despair.'" . . . A hard saying, my dear, but true. Meditate on that.

By the way, if in your childhood you ever had any religious experience, and felt you could tell me about it, an account of it would be very helpful to me in giving you advice.

9. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

March 8, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

The vow is taken, the new life begun! I did it at midnight, because I wanted to feel as Solemn as Possible. So I did. So I do now. When I came down to breakfast I felt as though it must be written on my face, but no one seemed to notice anything.

I do think it is awfully good of you, Catharine, to understand how desperately in earnest I am, in spite of my flippant style. I can't write prim English, at least not in letters, but that doesn't prevent my feeling that this is a life or death business.

All right. I'll try and meditate, and I will write down what happens. Do you expect me to have visions and things? Please not levitations! Suppose I floated about in the hall, with everyone looking on, just because you had made me so holy!!

I'll answer your last question first, about religion when I was a little girl.

I was quite good and pi when I was *very* small, and believed quite ardently in God and angels, and all that, but it did not amount to much. I forgot all about it when I was nine years old, and started going to school and trying to be exactly like all the other little girls. I always quite liked Sunday, but that may have been because I always had such pretty best clothes.

When I was about eleven I got diphtheria, and was awfully bad. One day—I don't know whether it was day or night—the doctor and mother had gone out of the

room for a moment, and I was left alone with the nurse, who seemed miles and miles away. I think the doctor was telling mother that I was frightfully ill, or something. Anyhow, I felt all round me a horrid beastly choking black darkness. I wanted to call mother, but I was too weak. And I was just slipping back and down into the darkness, and it was shutting my eyes and my mouth. I remember I tried to say my prayers—"Our Father," I think. And then I felt somewhere in the darkness something tender and great and good, caring for me. I said to myself, "Underneath are the everlasting arms—underneath are the everlasting arms"—over and over, I don't know why. Anyhow, the darkness ceased to be horrible, and I went fast off to sleep. A kind of feeling of strangeness, sort of "other-worldness" remained with me a few days, until I started getting better very fast.

After that I got keen on hockey. When I was fourteen I was confirmed, and had a fit of emotional religion, you know, thrills down my back and wanting to fast, and all that. I *despise* myself for it now. Then I fell in love with a curate, who afterwards married a fat woman. Then I went to Roehampton for a couple of years, and, as you know, piety isn't the fashion there any more than curates are. And now, here I am! And groping about, as you see.

There are two things I want to ask you. The first is, what about asceticism? I think I should feel a fool if I wore a hair shirt, quite apart from its making me wriggle. Elizabeth is always very cross in Lent. And yet I daresay I am an idle self-indulgent young pig, and ought to give up all sorts of things. Second. You

are so tiresomely serene and "detached" that sometimes I feel you can't understand my troubles. Did *you* ever suffer anything in the religious line ?

Your humble pupil and patient,

AUDREY.

10. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,
March 11, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

Did I ever "suffer anything in the religious line" ? Yes, dear child, eight years of the extremest mental anguish. I never thought that I should find the Light.

I do not think that any one who had not been through a good many troubles would dare to offer advice to other people. Perhaps Mercy Allen has told you that the Friends prefer "deeply baptized ministers" to others. That is, they recognize that suffering gives one the right to try and help others.

Do I seem "detached" ? I do not think I am less interested in life than you, or get less out of it. Indeed, since I have learned to see the real and the eternal, shining through this transient, shifting world, people and nature have acquired for me a beauty which they never had before. Only one cares about different things. For instance, when I love a man or a woman, I do not love their beauty or their charm, or even their "personality," in themselves. What I love is their "soul," the spark

of the divine life which has incarnated itself in them, and I care for their "personality" as the particular vehicle which the divine life within has chosen for its manifestation.

Of course you are right about "detachment," if you mean that I am not ambitious, and do not care about social position, or wealth, or things like that. Not that I have "renounced" them, but that they have ceased to interest me.

But, dear child, do not ask me about myself. Questions about myself are painful to me, and not helpful, I think, to you.

The question you raise about asceticism is as difficult as it is important. I have not fully made up my own mind on the matter. Two things seem perfectly clear. (1) That practically all the great saints and mystics practised asceticism, though very many of them believed themselves to have received a divine command to discontinue their austerities after a certain time. (2) The idea that one can acquire merit by bearing self-inflicted pain, is a mistaken and barbarous one.

It is also perfectly clear that we must rule our bodies, and not allow our bodies to rule us, remembering, however, that we are very rightly punished by ill-health and impaired usefulness if we treat these good servants badly.

I do not think, though, that you need an academic discussion of the whole question of asceticism. What you want is some practical advice, is it not?

Fasting, of course, is the most usual ascetic practice. It is still quite fashionable, I believe, to play about with fasting in Lent, but though to give up meat and chocolates, or even afternoon tea, may help as a reminder that one

is trying to be particularly good, these little restrictions should be looked on rather as quaint and old-fashioned customs than as a serious part of one's religious life. As you are not greedy, I should think it will make very little difference to you whether you fast or not. If, however, you suspect yourself of being so much attached to any article of food or drink that you would be cross if you were deprived of it, you should give it up at once, anyhow for a time. I am sure you will find, though, that if you take your "consecration" seriously, a new standard of simplicity will quite naturally arise, by which you will regulate the whole of your life. You will not so much *deprive* yourself of this or that, but you will find yourself unable to employ it. You will turn away instinctively from all "superfluities," whether in food, or dress, or amusements. One thing I have noticed, by the way, in my own case, and I shall be much interested to hear whether the same occurs to you, and that is, when I am engaged on a particularly absorbing course of meditation, I *cannot* eat any meat. It just appears to become something that one would not dream of eating—like candles or grass, which may be delicious to beasts other than ourselves.

I have heard it urged that fasting is of inestimable value in training the will. There are plenty of other little opportunities of doing that—such as getting up at seven and going to bed at ten, *to the moment*, if one has determined to do so; or keeping promises of letter-writing, church-going, and the like, vaguely made to one's self.

There is another aspect of asceticism which I cannot do more than touch on here, and that is the bearing of pain in order to share in the sufferings of Christ, and in

those of the travailing world. Here I feel that it is impertinence on our part to play Providence to ourselves. As the Sufis say (Kashf al-Mahjub p. 379), "God's choice for His servant with His knowledge of His servant is better than His servant's choice for himself with his ignorance of his Lord." If we are willing, even eager, to take our share of redemptive pain, God will in His good time send us what is fitted for us. And, after all, the *physical* agony of Christ was but a small part of what He had to endure. His tears over Jerusalem, His cry to God from the Cross, hurt Him more than the nails which pierced His hands and feet. That suffering, that pain, is the birthright of all who care to take it, of all who look with love and compassion on the sorrows of the world, or who feel their own alienation from God. Look at the world now—the world of war! If you have set yourself the task of finding God, and then of redeeming the world, as far as in you lies—that is to say, if you aspire to the birth of Christ in your soul, doesn't the question of going without sugar in your tea seem trivial and faintly absurd?

I believe, too, that asceticism was supposed to produce humility. Now humility is an excellent thing, and a little "mortification" in the way of not trying to justify all your acts and opinions to yourself and others, would do you no harm. We all spend an amazing amount of time in trying to convince ourselves and other people that if only we were "understood" we should somehow appear as more interesting, more admirable, better intentioned, and more disinterested than had before been assumed. Track down your pride too, and let it not masquerade as a false humility. I shall be

interested to hear of your discoveries—for discoveries await you.

Lovingly,

CATHARINE.

II. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

115, BUCKINGHAM TERRACE,
YORK GATE, W.,

March 20, 1916

DEAR CATHARINE,

I think it is jolly mean of you to pump me about my experiences, and then to snub me when I ask vaguely about yours. I suppose you might retort, that when I consult a doctor about a headache, he is quite at liberty to ask me whether it is a corkscrew pain or a hot-plate pain, without my expecting him to confide *his* headache in me. Well, well!

I am home again now, May we move to Althchester soon! I always detested a fashionable town parish—and who could meditate in London?

I must tell you how I have been getting on. Part is bad, and part is good. Hear the bad part first.

I *can't* read a book and meditate on it—you must find me another method of meditation. Madame Guyon's is not for the likes of me. When I read a holy book, I either get terrifically interested and go on and on until my head and heart all burn, or else I get bored and begin wondering how I'll begin my next essay, or whether I want a new bootlace.

As for reading, I've already read Miss Underhill. She is too much what Mr. Wells would call "Mixed Pickles," Religion and Psychology muddled up. She isn't "satisfying," either, and I hate her superior and sniffy manner, but she is frightfully interesting. She wakes one's intellect, though, more than the "senses of the soul." Please give me your opinion on the place of the intellect in the mystic's make-up. Mine seems so all-pervading—just like a canary that will sing just when one wants to be quiet.

I read Mr. Mead, too—but he's rather like an elderly collector, *very* gentlemanly, you know, tip-toeing politely about a Hall of Wisdom, and showing the uninitiated visitor round. No! I've gone in for St. John of the Cross. I don't understand him, but I feel *he knows*. There's a kind of sombre fire about him which makes me feel I'd do anything and dare anything to follow in his steps.

I won't read Tagore. I suspect him of mincing the Wisdom of the East up small and making pap of it for European consumption. I may be unjust—

I could go on talking like this for hours about what I have read and haven't read, but I might try and make clever remarks just for the fun of it. That makes me feel I shall never be a mystic—my love of halfpenny squibs. And I'm so "modern," too. Were mystics *ever* modern?

Now for the "good part." I do feel that in having taken that vow I did better than I knew. Deep down under all my fuss and noise there's a quiet feeling of having made a final decision. I've got an Object in Life, and, as far as I can see, the best object possible. I know now what I want—to experience God—and everything I

do or see has a meaning. I remember hearing you say that your teacher taught you, when you saw a slug, to remark, "What message does this slug bring me from God?" (I like your teacher's quaint paradoxes.) That is just how I feel. Getting up in the morning is sort of touched with wonder, because I am getting ready to find God. Eating is quite significant, too, because it is meals on the pilgrim way. Going to bed is quite thrilling, because I may meet God first in a dream. Some times I feel round me a kind of ring of quiet, as though a solitude had made itself, and put me a little distance away from people—perhaps you know what I mean. In such a quiet, if there were more of it, surely I might, after years and years, hear God speak.

Oh, I must confess. We had a huge argument, the last evening of term, about Authority. Another girl, called Hildegarde, the leader of the Anglican orthodox party in coll., started it. She and Teresa upheld Authority, and Janet went for them finely, and would have no absolute Authority, not even the Bible, not even one's own past convictions. She was all for what she called the Evolutionary Theory of Truth. I liked listening to them, it was quite thrilling, but it gave me a horrid uneasy feeling. I believe that one day I shall meet just that question lying like a snake across my path, and shall have either to kill it or run away. What do you say, Catharine?

Now tell me—(1) What the mystic ought to do with his mind? (2) How I ought to do my meditations?

With love, and impatiently waiting for an answer.

AUDREY.

12. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,
March 23, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

If you are willing to receive messages from slugs, why are you not humble enough to learn of Miss Underhill, Mr. Mead, and Rabindranath Tagore? Have you so far surpassed them in mystical experience that you can afford to despise what they have to tell you?

You are asking me the most difficult questions possible. What is the mystic to do with his mind? I can give you my "pious opinion" on the matter. Please remember, though, that I may be entirely mistaken.

It seems to me that the mystic's intellect may be likened to the grind-stones in a mill. The spiritual experience is like the wheat, which is not given in a form readily assimilated by the soul. The business of the intellect is to prepare the experience, and to present it to the mystic in such a guise that he can incorporate it into his life. Is that clear? My point is, you must have your experience first, and let your religious theories come afterwards. People of your type let the stones of their mind grind against each other, and then wonder that no food for their souls is produced.

I am appalled when I think of the light-hearted way in which I used to discuss such questions as the Divinity of Christ, when I had had no religious experience which might have taught me a little of the significance of those majestic and mysterious words, Divinity and Christ. I was so much in earnest, and at the same time so trivial.

I daresay my intellect would have been satisfied if I could have classified Jesus like a specimen in a museum. But would that satisfaction of my intellect, which something in me so imperiously demanded, have brought me any nearer to God? I most earnestly believe that we are bidden to understand as well as to see, but we must see first, and afterwards humbly chronicle what and how we have seen.

Spiritual curiosity is not the same thing as hungering and thirsting after God. Will you remember that, please.

You ask for a new method of meditation. You certainly have not given the old one a fair trial. However, try this very simple method. Reserve for yourself ten quiet minutes morning and evening. Select a word, let us say Consecration, which suggests an idea that you think will be fruitful. Let your mind dwell on it peacefully and lovingly, and let it bring with it what thoughts it will. You must repel distractions, of course, but follow easily and calmly the train of religious ideas. Let all be done in the presence of God. *Do not forget to keep a record of your meditations.*

Yes, London is a very bad place for meditation. When I am in a great city, I feel the uncurbed desires and unaccepted griefs of the people go through me like swords of pain. I say to myself, "They do not know, they do not know!" And I feel I must go out into the streets and stop the men and women, and say, "It is *God* you want—don't you know—can't you see?"

It seems to me, however, that you are making wonderful progress. Indeed I know that feeling of being surrounded by quietness — but I only

attained to it after months and years of effort. My "detachment," to which you took exception, has its roots in that very quietness. Let me tell you, though, that being encircled by solitude may be painful as well as joyful. Are you still looking for "roses, roses all the way"?

I do not think you will find this letter too impersonal and professional.

My blessing go with you,

CATHARINE.

13. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

115, BUCKINGHAM TERRACE,

April 2, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

I am awfully grateful to you, really. You are a pearl among Straighteners, and your last letter was topping.

I've been waiting a bit before writing, not because I'd nothing to say, but because I wanted to give the new meditation a chance. It is jolly of you to be so encouraging—fancy **my** beginning to get on! I was getting frightfully depressed about **myself**.

There is such an awful lot of coming and going here, and Easter makes it worse. The "distractions" aren't worldly, but their being of a mildly pious kind doesn't make them any the less distractions. Mother, in her quiet way, gets through a huge amount of work. I do

think the "just trust" attitude leaves you beautifully free to fuss over war charities and church charities, and suitable things like that. I'm a bit worried about father—he looks ill and tired. I wish we could buck up and go to Altchester at once. I believe I could meditate rippingly in the cathedral there, don't you?

Straightener! I'm not satisfied with your remark about the intellect. Surely one has got to have definite ideas about religion before one can have any experience at all. Suppose my mind had no ideas on the subject of God, how could I even *want* to know Him? No, madam! There is something wrong, somewhere. Kindly explain.

My records are just like notes for a Sunday School address. I feel a perfect idiot letting you see them. However, here is *just one* page. Isn't it awful?

But you know, Catharine, in your lectures you talked about different kinds of consciousness, and hinted that for religious experience of some sorts, anyhow, one needed a different kind of consciousness. Well, I don't think the sort of meditation you set me is going to help there. Besides, isn't it going to keep my intellect kind of stirred up? Isn't it "discursive meditation"? I don't see how my own little ideas, even on a subject like consecration, are going to get me much forrarder, do you? I fear I am a very bad patient! Well, I'll go on, for a little while, anyhow. I'm still looking out for messages from everything, and making everything I do holy. I'm awfully keen and happy, you know. It is fine to have something to live for!

Heaps of love, wise one,

AUDREY.

P.S.—I can listen to slugs because they have no pretensions! Boo!

Record of Audrey's Meditations (1st page)

March 25. 7—7.10 a.m. Lying in bed (not at all sleepy). Crossed hands on breast—(you said I was to adopt the same posture always when I meditated). Thought of *Consecration*. Making holy. Reflected that that was my business in life, the making of all my thoughts, words and deeds holy. Feel that I have two natures, one loves holiness, and can only *grow* in it, the other likes ease and admiration, and social position and having a good time. Wondered whether the best nature *is* holy, or only *loves* holiness.

10—10.15 p.m.—Same position. *Consecration*. Thought of Jesus as consecrated to the redemption of the world. Of the *contagion* of virtue (of Thomas à Kempis, who said something about one not being able to stand near a great fire without acquiring some heat). Wished I could have caught some of Christ's consecration. marvelled at its perfection. Had a kind of sudden shock, feeling the awful difference between His life and mine. Room feels very dark and cold, and I very small and sad. Leave off meditation in disgust.

March 26. 7.15—7.30—(Began late, didn't wake up!) Had a dream, which I could not quite remember, about consecration. Vaguely recall Jesus standing before me and making a sign on my forehead. Feel very quiet and peaceful, and think of one of

Beethoven's piano sonatas (op. 90—last movement). Reflect how happy I should be if I were so consecrated to God's service that I didn't really care if I were happy or not (if you understand!) Find myself repeating a poem of Whittier's which begins :

“ Dear Lord and Father of mankind—”

especially the lines :

“ Take from our souls the storm and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The blessings of Thy peace.”

Feel a kind of light-heartedness about the future—because the consecrated don't have to worry.

9.45—9.55.—Very tired. Come up to bed early. Very cross, having had to entertain three dull parsons all the afternoon. Consecration. Not to be like them, anyhow! Remember my morning meditation and try to catch its spirit. Fail. Wonder whether the devil is looking on. Can't think any good thoughts. Won't try.

March 27. 6.45—7.—Slept beautifully. Feel angelic. Why was I so cross last night? Perhaps because the parsons talked while I played. Think of consecrating my music to God. Remember what Catharine said about Mohammedans believing that earthly music reflects some heavenly archetype, or maybe the music of the spheres. Think of Beauty and Harmony. Feel that all Beauty is divine. What damned beasts we must be to misuse it! Wish all art were consecrated. Hate Vorticists and—— oh dear, I'm sure this isn't

a profitable meditation, though there *is* something in that music-harmony notion, if I could work it out. Ought I to think more about Ethics? Will try to-night.

10.30—10.45.—Had rather an interesting Bishop to dinner. Trying now to meditate on Ethics. Why is being good sometimes so dull? No romance about it. I detest the Puritan spirit. Catharine said true mystics were generally gay—kind of knight-errants of the soul. Being good ought to come easy, kind of grow up like flowers from the root of Consecration. (Rather a good idea, that.) Look after your *will*, and your acts will look after themselves. Consecrate your life, and your deeds will naturally turn out good. I wonder—will they? An effort to be nice to an odious Mrs. Jones every time you meet her, is dull and boring. To be so consecrated that you kind of radiantly love everyone, even Mrs. Jones, is ripping. See?

P.S.—*Notice to Catharine.* Please read all this rot very carefully. Most of it is—what do you call it?—*Pregnant.* I love keeping records. Do you want to see the rest? Nothing has really *happened* yet.

Remember—(1) To go on explaining about the intellect. (2) And about asceticism. I wasn't quite satisfied with that either. (3) About different kinds of consciousness. (4) And aren't I getting frightfully self-centred? Can't I have an extra meditation to keep me from thinking too much about my own soul? Or am I quite wrong? Ought I to be self-centred?

14. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

April 5, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

Your records are very good, very good indeed, though I object to so many colloquialisms, and sometimes your remarks are extremely funny. I do not think I would use them as notes for Sunday School addresses!

Your intuitions seem to be wonderfully correct. My chief fear is that everything may come too easily to you, so that you will not appreciate the full value of your own experiences. However, your progress is in God's hands.

I am particularly interested in what you say about Music and Harmony. I have often thought that English people do not get all that they might out of music. It is just sounds, or sounds making pictures, or sounds arousing emotions, or sounds to theorize about. I am sure the connection between mysticism and music has never been properly worked out. I cannot do it—perhaps you can! I enclose, however, a quotation from al-Ghazzali, which you may find stimulating, if you do not object to it on the grounds of its being "too Eastern." Here too, is a wonderful "vision" of Frances Ridley Havergal. I have never come across anything just like it in mystical literature, though I have had similar experiences myself. It may throw some light on your future researches about music and God.

Now I must answer your questions. (1) You rather wilfully, I think, misunderstand what I said about the

intellect. Of course the mystic must have some general ideas on the subject of God and of the nature of reality. What is not necessary, is that he should be perpetually tormenting himself over theological problems and thinking that no religious experience is possible unless he has discovered whether God is One or Three, and what was the exact nature of Our Lord, and who or what may be for us a Supreme Authority. God is for him the highest and best, the most *real*, that he can imagine—Jesus the way by which he has learned to know something of that reality. His business is to yield himself to this highest and best, and to let it work its will in him. Whenever he meets it he must worship it : and it must dominate the whole of his life. Theories, if theories are needed, will come in time.

(2) And about asceticism. I have been thinking much on this difficult question, and I have come to the conclusion that our best kind of ascetic discipline is *resignation*—or rather, joyful acceptance of the will of God, and of all the pain He sends us. I will enclose a quotation from the Ven. Augustine Baker, which shows this resignation in rather an extreme form, but which I think is very wise. You need not be afraid, my child. If you ardently desire to share in the sufferings of Christ, and are not looking for “sweetness” and consolations, God will not deny you such pain as may be yours by right. Only don’t ask for discipline too soon, or you may rebel when it comes.

(3) As for “different kinds of consciousness,” it is *most* unwise to try and produce them by your own efforts. You may, like so many other people, have certain psychic tendencies, and to have a psychic experience

and to mistake it for a religious one, would hinder your progress more than anything else. Read "St. John of the Cross" on the subject. He is almost morbidly afraid of extraordinary happenings, even if God and not "the devil" has been the author of them. In good time a transition from meditation to contemplation should come about quite naturally, probably by way of what is called "the prayer of simplicity" or the "prayer of simple regard." Do not be so impatient or so restless.

(4) I think the mystic, in the early stages of the way, is inevitably self-centred. If, however, you are uneasy on the subject, it will do you no harm to practise the "meditation of universal benevolence." The Buddhists call it *Metta* or *Maitri*—*Bhawana*. In this particular form I call it the "Points of the Compass Meditation." Thus. Stand, or sit, and face the north. Think with love and tenderness of all those whom you know who live to northward of you. Enter into their joys and sorrows, as far as you are able, and let the hand of your affection and blessing rest upon their heads. Then think of all the many people unknown to you who live in the north, and exercise love and compassion towards them. So turn to the east, to the south, and to the west, and let the individuals and the nations call up in your mind just that kind of pity and of tenderness which they most need. In the end pray God ardently that He will bless them all, and you through your sympathy with them.

Good-bye, dear child. Term will soon begin, and I shall see you before long.

CATHARINE.

Here are my three quotations :

- I.—*Al-Ghazzali*.—"The seventh excellent listening is the listening of him who loves God, and has a passion for Him and longs to meet Him, so that he cannot look upon a thing but he sees it in Him, and no sound strikes upon his ear but he hears it from Him and in Him. So listening to music and singing in his case is an arouser of his longing, and a strengthener of his passion, and an inflamer of the tinderbox of his heart, and brings forth from it States consisting of revelations and caressings, descriptions of which cannot be comprehended—he who has tasted them knows them, and he rejects them whose sense is blunt so that he cannot taste them. These States are called in the tongue of the Sufi *wajd*, Rapture or Ecstasy, from *wujud* (finding), and *musadafa* (encountering), that is to say, he encounters in himself States which he had not encountered before he listened to the music. Then these States are causes of things which follow them, things which burn up the heart with their fires and purify it from taints of dinginess. Then the purity that befalls the heart brings after it Visions and Revelations, and they are the utmost limit of the things wrought by the lovers of God Most High, and the ultimate fruit of all pious work." And again : "To God belongs a secret, consisting in the *relationship of measured airs to the souls of men*, so that the airs work upon them with a wonderful working." (From "Emotional Religion

in Islam as affected by Music and Singing." Al-Ghazzali. Duncan B. Macdonald, J.R.A.S., 1901.)

- 2.—*Frances Ridley Havergal*.—"In the train I had one of those curious musical visions which only very rarely visit me. I hear strange and beautiful chords, generally full, slow, and grand, succeeding each other in most interesting sequences. I do not invent them, I could not; they pass before my mind, and I only listen. Now and then my will seems roused, when I see ahead how some fine resolution might follow, and I seem to will that certain chords should come, and then they do come, but then my will seems suspended again, and they go on quite independently. It is so interesting, the chords seem to *fold over each other*, and die away down into music of infinite softness, and then they *unfold* and open out, as if great curtains were being withdrawn one after another, widening the view, till with a gathering power and intensity and fulness it seems as if the very skies were being opened before one, and a sort of great blaze and glory of music, such as my outward ears never heard, gradually swells out in perfectly sublime splendour. This time there was an added feature. I seemed to hear depths and heights of sound beyond the scale which human ears can receive, keen, far-up octaves, like vividly tinkling *starlight* of music, and mighty, slow vibrations of gigantic strings going down into grand thunders of depths, octaves below anything otherwise appre-

ciable as musical notes. Then, all at once, it seemed as if my soul had got a new sense, and I could *see* this inner music as well as hear it ; and then it was like gazing into marvellous abysses of sound, and up into dazzling regions of what, to the eye, would have been light and colour, but to this new sense was sound. Wasn't it odd ? It lasted perhaps half-an-hour, but I don't know exactly, and it is very difficult to describe in words." ("Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal." By her sister M.V.G.H., p.151.)

[*Note.*—I wonder why "in the train." Now the first time I heard heavenly music, yes, and saw it too, was crossing the Channel. I was lying in my berth, during a very rough passage, when the music came, making me forget myself and my pains most completely.—
CATHARINE.

3. *The Ven. Augustine Baker* (who will, I am afraid, seem to you very cold and "detached" after the other two).—"For the love of God, and in conformity with His will I resign myself To suffer weakness, sickness, pains, deformity, and horror in the sight of others. To be deprived of any of the clothes that I have or may have, be they never so necessary, or of books, or of convenient lodging. To be forced to wear such clothes as will make me appear ridiculous. To endure that my friends should neglect, yea, hate and persecute me. To be indifferent in what place, company, etc., I shall live. To suffer all manner of disgraces, contempts, affronts, infamies, or slanders. To

be affrighted with horrible and hideous sights of devils, etc. To die without senses or memory, to be distracted or mad. After death to be evil thought and evil spoken of by others, yea, not to have any that will vouchsafe to pray for me. To———”

But I spare you the rest. There is, of course, something morbid in meditating on all these horrible contingencies, but I am *quite sure* that in spite of the modern emphasis on joy, and the modern determination to secure joy at all costs, it is *God* who sometimes sends us trials, and we must accept them joyfully as at His hand. I know of two things equally hard to get, and equally beautiful in the getting: holy joy in the midst of earthly pleasure, and holy joy in the midst of earthly pain.

CATHARINE.

15. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

April 12, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

I am back at coll. you see—and want to come and talk to you as soon as may be. I'll drop in to tea on Sunday.

The rest of the vac. was quite quiet and ordinary. I got quite a lot of reading done. The ignorant public complains that the vacs. at Camford are too long, not knowing that they are the only time we have for work!

Last night, such thrills! Forgive my telling you about it at once instead of talking about your quotations. I thought the musical one topping. I am very doubtful about *resignation* though. I think it is much better to go and help oneself to dinner than to resign oneself to being hungry. But *you* talk as though somehow the complete mystic does both! Don't laugh! *Do* you mean that one can be resigned and yet work as hard and as well as if one were not? I doubt it.

Well, to change the subject. After hall, Hildegarde Mason, you know, the leader of the Anglican Orthodox party at coll., invited me and Janet and Mercy and Teresa, and about half-a-dozen others, to her room, so solemnly that I thought she must have got new wallpaper or three new hats, and wanted to know whether she ought to in war time. But no! She announced to us that she had made her submission to Rome, and was going, after some awful rows with her people, to be received into the Church. Then she pleaded with all of us, except, naturally, Teresa, to follow her example.

Janet, of course, began to argue. She said that the Church of Rome, by declaring its infallibility, had signed its own death warrant, and that unless a Church could grow as the race grew, it must go away in *die Ewigkeit* with the Lager Beer, and Paganism, and all that. And that in 500 years' time we should have developed new powers of apprehension and of reasoning, and no more be able to believe the Church's dicta than we can now believe in the gods of Olympus. Then she said that the Church of Rome was obscurantist, that it hated Science and Socialism and Progress, and that, even if it *did* know more of the Almighty's secrets than the other Churches did—which she, of course, didn't admit—it had less of the spirit of Christ; that the jewels and vestments of St. Peter's and the Vatican were a long way from the poverty of Jesus. And so on, and so on! Hildegarde went on talking about Authority and Submission, and Teresa wondered how Janet could set herself up against all the martyrs and confessors and saints, and think she knew more than they did. And Janet said, "Pooh! they lived such a long time ago. I could teach them a lot better now!" To which Teresa retorted "That is not the spirit of Christ."

Mercy said nothing, though I looked at her several times, and I felt *miserable*. Hildegarde looked kind of proud and radiant and peaceful, don't you know,—just as I should like to look, Catharine, and can't! Do you think it would be a short cut to Heaven for *me* to join the Roman Church? Then I should get a *real* director, shouldn't I, not an amateur, like you. Is it really only my pride and hardness of heart that makes me stand aside?

When I was in bed, but not asleep, because I was too much excited, Teresa came stealing into my room looking frightfully romantic in an orange dressing gown, with her hair down her back. She knelt by my bed and whispered to me that she had been getting engaged to a soldier, and had made *him* turn Catholic. I thought to myself: "How mean!" but she was putting her arm round me and said, "Darling," (it's awfully rare to be called "darling" at coll.) "I can see you are not happy. Do join the true Church and be at rest! Why are you so wilful? Now Hildegarde has made the great choice, doesn't it make it easier for you?"

I didn't know what to say. She was so coaxing and wonderful, with the moonlight all about her, and I felt quite cross I was so unhappy. Of course, if I could find God by opening my mouth and shutting my eyes and swallowing what the Church would send me, I would. And, as you say, all this asking myself about one thing and then bothering about another (which is too long to tell you about) does hinder me so, and make me so blind. Why, the Church might even make up my mind for me about the war!

Well, I asked Teresa questions about her sweetheart, and then I told her I was sleepy and sent her away—and then I cried. Are you quite sure I was meant to be a mystic? Shall I buy six new hats and not bother about God any more? Only He might do the Hound of Heaven touch. Oh dear!

à Dimanche,

AUDREY.

16. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

April 13, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

Though I believe Janet's criticism to be just, I yet love the Church of Rome. Should your way to God lie through her gates, I should never try to turn you aside from your appointed path. But, my dear child, *caelum non animum mutant*; and were you to take your restless disposition with you into the Church, you would not find peace there, any more than outside her bounds. Nor can I see that it is right for you to submit yourself to authority. Some people's religious life is best *imposed on them from without*, so to speak. Yours must come from within. And the humility which you feel you need, must not be the humility of the devotee, who wishes a Church or a cause to be everything and himself nothing, but rather the humility of a guardian of a holy thing, of a mother—how shall I explain? I mean, when you have, like St. Augustine, found God in your own heart, you will be at the same time exalted and humbled, and *then* you will find peace. I do not see how a reckless casting of yourselves into the arms of Rome is going to help you, though I do not deny that it seems the right thing for some people.

I wish above all that you could learn to let God make your decisions for you, instead of being so anxious and troubled about yourself.

You envy your friend Hildegarde the peace which comes from having made a great decision. I thought that you too had made a decision, and taken a

vow. Have you so soon forgotten? Besides, you do not know that God wishes you to find peace just yet. Have a little patience!

I look forward to seeing you to-morrow.

CATHARINE.

17. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

April 16, 1916.

DEAR STRAIGHTENER,

I felt much less crooked and criss-cross after your letter and our talk. There's something about your quiet aloofness which is awfully soothing at times—though it irritates me at others. (I'd give a good deal to know what your ambitions in life really are. You are very odd—and yet you look quite ordinary, with a husband at the front, and three jolly kiddies left behind.)

I meant to tell you and I forgot. On Saturday evening Mercy asked me to come and stroll with her round the grounds. She made a few remarks about the stars, but I felt she was thinking about me and my messes. Suddenly I said to her, "What do you think about Hildegard? Have *you* ever thought of turning Roman Catholic?" She answered very gently, "We Friends believe in the guiding hand of God. We try to feel Him leading us." The remark didn't seem to have

much connection, but I saw what she was driving at—just what you say about God deciding. (“Great minds,” etc.!) I said, “Yes, but how does one see the guiding hand?” “Oh, by practice,” said Mercy. I wanted to get some more out of her, but when she had quoted, with a kind of *glow*, “The path of the righteous shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” she shut up like an oyster.

Well, I’m not going to bother. If all roads lead to Rome, let ’em. And if God likes me muddled, muddled let me be. How’s that for Christian resignation?

I stick to the meditations. Only remember, madam, I’ve got to see God!

Your resigned

AUDREY.

P.S.—There’s a kind of coldness between me and Teresa. Only I’m working jolly hard, and can’t notice. Why do mystics have exams?

18. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

May 21, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

This is just to tell you that the trip is over, and now I can just go ahead hard with meditation, and all that. The papers were gorgeous—if I could have set them for myself I could not have done better!

It's been jolly seeing so much of you, and less trouble for you, I suppose, to talk to me than to write to me. I'm glad you don't try and "influence" me and make me be just like you. That is what I always have objected to in good people who are interested in making other people good—they want it to happen just in *their* way. What puzzles me a little is, that you are so frightfully broad-minded. You don't think, do you, that it doesn't *matter* which road one takes to God?

I've still been worrying about the Authority question. You see, my intellect demands food—well, I have not the wits, or something, to grow and cook the right kind of food at home, but if I go to the Roman Catholic shop I can buy it already prepared, see? and that would give me energy to go ahead with something else.

I had an odd experience the Sunday before my trip. Mercy asked me to come to Meeting with her again, and so we bicycled in from coll. I found my practising meditation had at least taught me to sit still, and I didn't want to wriggle a bit, and I didn't wonder when they were going to begin. I just started right off on the "Points of the Compass" meditation, and found the "atmosphere" simply splendid for it. Only then somehow

I got worrying over my sins. It's a funny thing, I never *could* get a good view of my sins. When we used to say the General Confession, I used to sort of crane my neck to get a look at them, and couldn't discover a decent-sized sin anywhere. Only as I sat there in the Meeting, they came simply tumbling in, dozens of them, until I felt so mean and small and vain and conceited and selfish, and in every way odious, that I felt I ought to crawl under a seat and hide. All at once Mercy got up and began to pray. She seemed kind of uplifted, even when she began, but she prayed quite ordinarily, mostly in Bible words. And then I felt she had taken hold of my soul, and was holding it up before God. I peeped at her, though of course I ought not to have done. Her face was *shining*, and she had lifted one hand pleadingly. I felt she was right in the Presence of God, and I was *terrified* lest I should feel that Presence too. That God's perfection should come near my wickedness, I felt would simply scorch me up. I wanted to pull Mercy's skirt and say, "Stop! stop! oh you *must* stop"—and then she did, just as I was thinking *stop*. The Aged Friend, who prayed last time, said "Amen," because Mercy had forgotten. And then several of them prayed, one after the other, and I felt it all applied to me, though of course it couldn't. I couldn't say anything to Mercy about it, and we rode all the way home in silence.

As I said, I'm going ahead with meditations—but what's to become of me if I am going to be afraid of God? I want to see Him, but I'm not *fit*. Wouldn't a Church help me there?—be something to hide behind, as it were, or something to give me credentials? Have you ever felt like that?

AUDREY.

19. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

May 25, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

I am sorry you find me "frightfully broad-minded." I admit that I am inclined to classify people as formalists and ritualists, lovers of God, religious philosophers, and the like, rather than as Protestants and Catholics, or even Christians, Hindus, or Buddhists. If, however, I did not look on the Christian way as the best way to God, I should not remain a Christian. I think it presumption, though, to claim that God has taught none but Christians, and has left all others in ignorance. I would even go further than that, and say that an equal amount of direct experience of God is possible to the disinterested seekers in all religions. To deny the validity of the spiritual experience of the Sufi, or of the Hindu or Jewish mystic, seems to me very wrong indeed. I believe, too, that the Buddhist who thinks his raptures are purely subjective is, in his "jhanas" and "aruppas" brought nearer and nearer to God, and it is his explanation of his experience that is at fault, not the experience itself. As for orthodoxies, they do not appeal to me very much. You will find the upholders of Authority in nearly all the great religions making identical claims for their sacred books and their inspired traditions and their God-given organisations, upholding their pretensions by similar arguments, and threatening you with the same penalties for disbelief. They cannot possibly all be right, but it is highly probable that they may all be wrong. I can see the use of orthodoxy and Authority

in human evolution, but they do not appeal to me personally.

It seems to me, all things considered, that the mystic had better remain in the Church in which he finds himself. You, for instance, will not deny that many members of your own Church have found God, even as you wish to find Him. And if you can attain your object in your own home and land, as it were, why should you seek further afield?

Let us now speak of the fear of God. The feeling of awe, almost of terror, inspired by the contrast between our sin and His perfection, is, I think, as inevitable as it is good. It is a fairly frequent experience of my own. It must, not, however, be allowed to become morbid. You may counteract it by meditations on the Atonement; or on the love of God our Father.

I think, however, that you will be more helped by considering the *dual nature* of your own personality, which you so soon discovered in your meditations. One part of you is worldly. That part is very rightly afraid of God, for His Presence, if fully felt, would cause it to die—nay, it *must* die, and to bring it into God's Presence is the surest way to accomplish this end. The other part of you, which is eternal and divine, and which some mystics have believed to be of the very nature and essence of God Himself, can only live its fullest life in His Presence. I should advise you, therefore, to adopt, as your most usual exercise, the *practice of the Presence of God*. You may do this in any way you please. Probably the easiest to begin with is the "Familiar Colloquies" of St. Ignatius. That is to say imagine Jesus near you. Speak to Him, listen to Him,

feel His gracious influence surrounding you by day and by night. Then, when this has become customary with you, try and feel, as intensely as you may, and as quietly and as trustfully as possible, the Presence of God the Father. It is a wonderful thing, but this exercise, the simplest which it is possible to imagine, is so full of possibilities and of wonder, that a whole life of meditation will not exhaust its riches.

Good-bye, dear child, I am so glad the exam. went well. With love.

CATHARINE.

20. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

June 1, 1916.

It's come, Catharine, it's come! Without any practising of special meditations or exercises, but just by itself, the gift of God—His Presence! I must try and tell you about it. The queer thing is that I thought I should be so tremendously pleased if ever I had a real experience to tell you about, and now I feel quite shy, don't you know, almost as though I *couldn't*. Still, after all you've done for me I am sure you have a right to know.

Well, Mercy asked me the other day to come with her for a picnic in Durwich Woods, just the two of us. She has got a medical exam. coming on, and so she said she would take her books and do some work, and I should just rot about and pick flowers if I could find any. So we did. On the way she invited me to come and stay with her people at Oakridge Manor and help with fruit-picking after the Long. Won't it be fun? Apparently her people make Oakridge a sort of model village, and encourage the villagers to keep bees, and all that, and grow fruit. And they do it, too, pour encourager les autres. Mr. and Mrs. Allen have got awfully keen on fruit, and grow a lot. Oh dear! I'm putting off telling you because I'm shy. Aren't I a fool?

Well, as I was saying, when we got to the woods, Mercy stayed in a little grass path by the edge, and opened a very dull-looking book, and I went into the wood alone. At first it was awfully thick and tangled, and all alive with little

winged and feathered things that darted off quickly or rose with a whirr. I love that, don't you—all the stirring of bunnies and dicky birds in a wood? Then I got to a little clearing and sat down on a fallen tree in the sunshine. The sky was blue, blue, the kind of blue that goes on for ever, and the little shadow of leaves all lacy on the grass. It was just Beauty, and nothing else—almost better than music! Then, as I looked at the intense blue of the sky, I changed, from knowing Beauty, to knowing Love. Of course, I can't begin to tell you, but I felt I was in the presence of God. He was around me like light, like showers of light, and like love. I wanted to kneel, but I could not move. I could not think at all for a minute—"a minute?"—I don't know, it might have been a second or an hour, for all I know. Then my mind said, "This is Life. Now I *know*." I wasn't a bit frightened. I remembered that experience I told you of when I was ill, and I said to myself, "Then I found God in the darkness. Now I have found Him in the light." The impression gradually grew less vivid, and I sat still for a while, just revelling in the memory of it. Presently I went back to Mercy. She looked at me in her quiet way and said, "Isn't it lovely to be in a wood alone?" I said, "Groves really *are* sacred, aren't they? Who dares to say this wood is not holy?" And she smiled at me as though she understood.

Oh Catharine, it happened to *me*, to *me*—poor silly little me! Isn't it wonderful? Isn't God good? Is everything going to be easy now? I'm going about in a kind of golden dream, I'm so happy. Straightener! sedate being, do you know in the least what I feel like?

My heart has got wings, Catharine ; wings ! I want to dance for joy !

With joy and love,

AUDREY.

P.S.—I am going to stay with the Randalls for Teresa's wedding? Isn't it jolly getting such a lot of invitations? I'm awfully cut up, though, that Teresa won't come back to coll.

Extract from the Diary of Mrs. Sutherland.

June 2, 1916.—I have had an ecstatic letter from Audrey, telling me how she experienced the presence of God, in Durwich woods. I am very glad indeed, especially as I hope that she will now be able to leave her problems alone for a little while, and make real progress.

In answer to her letter, I just told her that I was glad, and rejoiced with her. I wondered whether I ought to offer any criticism or advice, but the experience was so simple and natural that no criticism appeared to be called for ; and to tell her that everything was *not* going to be easy from now henceforward, would have been merely unkind. The feeling that *she* had been specially singled out by God to receive a message or gift from Him, which is often so marked in early religious experience, did not seem to be particularly strong in her case, and there was perhaps no need to warn her against spiritual pride.

The question of definite messages from God is

a difficult one. It *looks* as though God did occasionally single out particular individuals to receive particular messages or spiritual experiences, but I am inclined to think that the majority even of visions, auditions, and the like come from the seer becoming suddenly aware of some reality which was, so to speak, there all the time. It is when we reach a certain level of development that we are capable of hearing God speak. With some people this new awareness comes in a dramatic way, with others the power develops slowly, and the mystic becomes gradually more and more at home in the spiritual world. The popular imagination has always preferred the "voie de lumières," but the other road is less beset with dangers.

This raises the question of the reality of the visions of the saints. I feel sure that in every case the seers came into contact with reality, and that the image-making power of their minds translated the impression for them as light, spoken words, visions of angels, and the like. Our poverty of apprehension is appalling when we approach God—and yet how even the little we can understand may irradiate our whole lives.

I loved reading of Audrey's golden dream. The "fervor novitiorum" is a very beautiful and very real thing.

Audrey thinks me very old and staid, but it seems to me just the other day that, having gone down into the garden on the morning after my first vision, I found myself dancing and singing for

joy, and had to restrain myself lest the gardener should see!

[Here are omitted some half-dozen letters from Miss Audrey Talbot, containing accounts of Teresa's wedding; descriptions of the various members of the Randall family, and of her enjoyment of a Catholic "atmosphere." One extract only is given.]

21.

ROTHERFIELD COURT,

June 20, 1916.

If ever I have a house of my own, Catharine, a decent-sized house, that is, I shall have a private chapel. I will, even if I don't have a drawing-room! I think it is so lovely to have a place just for prayer, and all that, and nothing else. I've been doing my meditations in the chapel here, morning and evening, and I must say there's a sort of perfume of prayers, kind of like incense, which helps very much to make one "recollected." I don't believe you will approve—I know you like out of doors best, for meditation, and if one can't be outside, then one's own room. Anyhow, meditation in the chapel has been a joy—I've been simply bubbling over with all kinds of good thoughts, and all that.

I want to tell you about a book I found in the chapel, which has, by the way, almost cured me of my leaning towards Catholicism. It is called "The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius"—perhaps you know it. At first I thought it was something mediæval, you know, and as much out of date as the Inquisition, but it has got quite a modern preface, and people seem to use it *now*. The preface says it is "precious in its smallest details." The general plan is not so bad. You make a retreat—oh Catharine, how I should *love* to make a retreat! For the first week you make yourself as miserable and abased as possible. You shut yourself up in a dark cell, abjure laughter and daylight, and think about your sins, and all that. Then you meditate on Hell—the torment of the imagination, memory, understanding and will, the torment of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. "The groans of so many millions of the damned, the howls of their despair—their blasphemies against God and the saints—their imprecations on themselves—their cries of rage as they invoke death or annihilation—the noise of the flames devouring so many victims"—then the fire, "a fire so penetrating that it in a manner so identifies itself with its victim, that it boils in the veins and in the marrow—that it makes of the damned a burning coal in the midst of the furnaces of hell—a fire which unites in itself every torment and every pain. . ." And then, the *torment of eternity*.

And think, Catharine, these decorous, devout, elegant people who live in this lovely house, and are so kind to me, believe in *that*. In the early morning, after a cup of tea out of a Dresden china cup, they go into

their aristocratic little chapel, rustling silk skirts and putting a real lace scarf over their hair, and perhaps they meditate on *that*. Then they eat fried sole and bacon and eggs as though nothing had happened. I give them up. It beats me.

Of course St. Ignatius afterwards tells you to meditate on Christ, and being saved, and so forth, and when he has cast you down into Hell he pulls you out again, and sees you safe to Heaven, but still he leaves *some* people burning.

Catharine, what do you think about Eternal Punishment? Some of the saints and people, like Saint Teresa, whom I respect very much, had visions of Hell. Was it all a mistake? When I stood in the presence of God, that day in Durwich woods, I *felt* that *all* was good. But I don't *think* everything is good, and all people certainly are not. And I don't believe in *pretending* like the Christian Science people, who want to make out that it is all an illusion. Or pacifists, who make out that the Germans are not evil after all. I want to face things squarely. I sort of feel that if you are going to make a mystic out of me, I shall have to *accept everything*, do you see, and love everyone. At present I'm always fussing and criticising, and detesting. And yet I don't want anyone punished eternally. I feel I have been very muddled. You'll tell me that these things don't matter to my individual development—but they *do*. Have I made the matter at all clear?

Oh yes, I know what's the matter with Catholicism. The Church ought merely to have been a means, and the priests and people have made it an end—*exactly*

like Germany and the State. (What price a striking historical parallel!)

With love,

AUDREY.

22. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE.

July 1, 1916.

DEAR STRAIGHTENER,

It is very annoying of you not to have answered my last letter, and still more annoying of you to be away this Long. I've *heaps* to say to you. Here are some more records. Everything is so unbelievably lovely and thrilling. I feel as though there were angels round me all the time. But, Catharine, is it going to *last*? Suppose I wake up one morning and find my golden dream gone, and just greyness and blackness there where there has been light!

One thing is wonderful—meditation, or something, makes one see more into people's minds, and to recognise other people who know about the Presence of God, almost as if they wore a badge. *Isn't* it queer? Coming up to town in the train there was a Salvation Army lassie opposite me—one of the saintly kind, you know. She

began to talk to me quite naturally, about her work among fallen women. She spoke of them like pearls sort of fallen in the mud. I didn't *quite* understand, about their being pearls I mean. And she finished up her conversation with, "I see you know dear Jesus." I'd have guessed *she* did, without looking at her uniform. It *is* thrilling, you know! I feel I've kind of entered into a secret society whose pass-words are written in their eyes. You did not tell me I should go on from wonder to wonder. But oh, Catharine, is it going to *last*? Suppose that feeling of the "overwhelming reality of God" (a phrase from your lectures) just faded out, what *should* I do?

Blissful for the present,

AUDREY.

From the records of Miss Audrey Talbot.

June 25. 6.50 a.m.—Meditation on *life*. "I came that they might have *life*." Posture as before, only with arms extended to suggest holding out hands to the coming of more abundant life. Feel very still and peaceful. In the presence of God, but not, somehow, near enough to feel any fear, only reverence and quiet. (Not, of course, that I believe God to be in Heaven any more than He is on earth, or that one can be "nearer" or "further away." It is only a *façon de parler*—but you know what I mean.) What is the reason for *life*?—that we may know God. All nature is holding out hands to Him. How silly of people

to care about power, and motor cars, and what other people think. Nothing matters but God—we only live in Him. I can feel life, from the passive earth, right up through men to angels and archangels, sweeping on towards God. (Am I going to believe in Idealistic Monism? It would perhaps be a natural philosophy for a mystic. A thought. *Beware of Pantheism.* I will.)

10.15 p.m.—Slip into the meditation mood very easily. Queer thing, but the ceiling over me appears to have vanished, and there is all the starry vault of heaven above. I feel as though I were all alone on a mountain-top—alone with God. There's a sort of feeling of the infinity of space, and space not empty, but alive with God. What is God? "Spirit is God"—isn't that a more correct translation than "God is a Spirit"? and much less banal? I can feel the breath of God go through me. (No! it got a little creepy, so I left off there.)

June 26. 7.30.—I ought to get up, but I am bothered about evil. Is evil real, or only comparative? I mean—cold is, I believe, merely a very small degree of heat. Is evil merely a very small degree of good? But would such a theory be consoling if one were freezing to death, or being bayoneted by a Hun? They both *seem* positive, anyhow. Are there any people *really* bad, definitely walking in the wrong direction? I think if there is an ounce of good in them, that ounce is valuable, and ought to be saved up to all eternity. I think it must. After all, it would be

silly to save people if they were fifty per cent. good, and destroy them if they were forty-nine—or however a scheme of salvation might work. I am sure eternal principles don't work out in such a crude way! The Atonement, you said? Yes—but even if you save John Jones who had beastly ways, you don't want to keep the little meannesses and selfishnesses which apparently remain after he has been saved. How very puzzling it all is! I am glad no one is going to ask *my* opinion. But I am still haunted by the feeling that if I am a mystic I ought to love everyone. And I don't want to love bad people's badness. I hate sentimental mysticism (if there is such a thing!).

10.30.—Try to bother about evil some more, but find I can't. I can almost *see* things working together for good, and light arising out of dark. Some day I *shall* love everyone. Shall I ever accept everything—the world as it is? Straightener, ought I to? Answer me that!

June 27. 7.15 a.m.—I find my mind full of Emily Brontë's "Last Lines," especially this verse:

" Though earth and man were gone,
 And suns and universes cease to be,
 And Thou wert left alone,
 Every existence would exist in Thee."

I cannot tell you how passionately I feel and believe that! (I wish I had written it myself!) I don't in the least understand it, but I know that it is just right. Instead of thinking, I just repeated it over and over, and let it sort of sink

into my mind. I kind of feel that I already "exist in God," and if I could know exactly *how*, then I should have made a great discovery about the life after death.

9.45 p.m.—The whole day has been a kind of blissful dance to angels' music. I wonder exactly what *is* happening to me. It can't possibly go on all my life in a kind of crescendo of joy. I don't want to think about anything in particular, except to affirm to myself that *God is*, and that I am happy. Janet would say I ought to be able to give some coherent account of the causes and origin of my happiness, but the odd thing is that I can't exactly. I feel vaguely that I am doing what I was born to do—marching towards God. Anyway, I'm happy. Why bother about reasons?

23. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

ALDERWOOD FARM,
near LITTLE DUNSTAN.

July 5, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

I am sorry not to have written to you sooner, but preparations for the family holiday kept me busy. I was—and am—anxious too, about Charlie, who must be in all this fighting. Your records interested me intensely. You seem to me to have a tendency towards trance and ecstasy, which you may resist or not, as you please. Gotama said that the truly virtuous man was one who did not resist ecstasy, but modern feeling is somewhat against any abnormal experience. Will the joy last? Probably not. Why spoil it, however, by asking? Resign yourself to the will of God, and do not trouble.

You ask me about punishment for sin. It seems to me that there is one kind of punishment from which no vicarious Atonement can save us, and from which I, for one, do not wish to be saved, and that is the anguish of mind which we must one day experience when we see the hatefulness and horror of our sin as it must appear to God, and when we view the evil consequences to others which have arisen out of our wicked deeds. I cannot imagine that even God's infinite tenderness, nor our clear vision of everything working together for good, will be able to prevent our feeling the most agonising remorse. St. Teresa's vision—if not pure imagination, stimulated by the teachings of the Church—was probably a symbolic mind-picture of just that remorse. *Fire* appears

to be the most suitable symbol of mental suffering. The twisting and writhing of material things in flame, or their melting and flowing away, seem to portray the feelings of a man experiencing torture of mind. (Often and often in this way I have thought of what the German militarists will suffer when the true hideousness of their own actions is made plain to them, and I cannot but cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" God forbid that we should play Providence and add to their intolerable pains.) There seems no reason, however, for imagining that such remorse should be eternal. When the consequences of sin have burnt themselves out, the fire will be slaked—and is not the ocean of God's love great enough to put out the very fires of Hell?

As for "loving everyone," there is one mystical experience which makes *that* an absolute necessity. I expect it will come to you. I do not believe, though, in "accepting everything." Some people claim that the higher type of mystic acquiesces in the misery and sin of the world, nay, rejoices in it. I cannot understand or sympathise with such an attitude. Frankly, it does not seem to me sane. Evil may only be a minimum of good, but it needs fighting as though it were the devil himself! It is particularly important that a mystic should be clear on this point. He has no right to joy unless he can face the evil in the world and recognize that it *is* evil.

Good-bye. The children call me to go and see the little pigs fed!

With love,

CATHARINE.

24. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

OAKRIDGE MANOR.

August 12, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

I am sorry you are worried about your husband. We are worried about Gus—everybody is worried about someone!

At least, no! no one here seems to be worried. Mr. Allen is so taken up with the estate and the fruit-growing experiment, and Mrs. Allen with mothering the loveliest and cleanest and most prosperous village I ever saw, that they have no time to worry about anything. Mercy is the only child, and all the servants seem old and staid, and wouldn't fight, of course, being Quakers. Oh, Catharine, they *are* rich, the Allens! And in a solid, quiet sort of way; a little stuffy, you know, and frightfully kind and benevolent. Mercy never let drop a hint that I was coming to such a vast place, with a park and ten gardeners, and all that. I don't believe she approves of it. She wanted to be a medical missionary, but they would'nt let her go, and so she is going to be a country doctor instead. *She* says just an ordinary country doctor, and live on what she earns.

We don't begin fruit-picking until the day after to-morrow, so I've plenty of time to see things, and talk to Mercy. The village is perfectly heavenly, as sanitary as it is picturesque! (Don't laugh—surely a village ought to be both.) Only Mercy says that there is one woman in the village who *will* drink, in spite of her husband getting good wages and the inn_u being a Public House Trust

thing, and Mrs. Allen fussing over her all the time and urging her to repent.

Catharine ! It does last—the joy, I mean. And I can't see now why it shouldn't go on for ever. After all, I used not to know what anything meant, or what I ought to be at, but now I know that a consecrated life is a happy life, and that I am here to sort of catch reflections of God in all the beautiful things I see, and to help polish up all the dull ugly mirrors which won't reflect Him ; why shouldn't I go on being joyful ? I just *love* my morning and evening meditations. My thoughts rise up like a lark, singing with joy at the gates of Heaven. Can't we start a Meditation Society, irrespective of sect or creed ? I am sure if everyone meditated, no one would want to fight. I suppose it will come, one day !

Still happy !

AUDREY.

25. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

OAKRIDGE MANOR.

August 20, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

I have found out what you mean about loving everyone. It was a rather horrible experience that brought it about. Yesterday we were coming through the village up the hill and home to tea, when Mercy said, "Do you mind if we go back?" I said, "What have you forgotten?—to buy a ha'penny stick of liquorice at the 'department store'?" But she answered very gravely, "No, I feel a stop in my mind against going on," and back we went into the village, as far as "The Cap and Feathers," but before we reached the inn, a woman came out very quickly, muttering to herself angrily. "Oh," cried Mercy, "it's Jane—and she's angry because they won't serve her. I must —." She sprang forward with a shout of warning, but I hardly know how it happened, the woman was down on the road under the wheels of a motor car driven by a couple of young officers, which had come swinging round the corner from the Wickham road. Mercy had her hand on the woman's arm, and was nearly thrown down too; as for Jane, they had to stop the car and get her out. I could not look, but Mercy helped the men carry her to her cottage, just across the way. I followed to help if I could. The room we went into was just *filthy*. They put Jane on a sofa. Mercy sent me in the car with the officers to fetch the doctor, while she tore her white petticoat into strips for bandages. We were nearly an hour away. The doctor was ten miles off, both he and the district nurse at a

critical confinement case, which he refused to leave. We could only get him to promise he would come as soon as he could. The soldiers were in an awful way about it, so I made them drive round by the Manor and ask Mrs. Allen's advice, while I got some brandy and a few things and walked down to the cottage. I rather agreed with the doctor, though, who showed pretty clearly that he thought Jane was better dead. She has got a hideous bloated sly depraved face, and she's been just the one black spot on that lovely village. She's no children either, and her husband in Mesopotamia.

When I got to the cottage door I stood still a minute in wonder. Mercy was sitting on the sofa with her arms round Jane, and the woman's filthy head on her shoulder. She was kissing her forehead and talking to her most tenderly. The woman seemed to be gasping for breath. I could hear her just moan. "Oh, it's all dark, dark. Am I going to 'ell? I've been a bad'un, that I 'ave. Don't you leave me; don't you leave me," and Mercy, "Dear, dear Jane, you must not be afraid of the dark. You are just a tired child going home to your Father. Jesus will be near you—can't you feel Him near?" No! I can't write it, Catharine, but there she sat, with her cheek against that bad woman's cheek. All of a sudden there was a blaze of light in the room. I saw, what I never expected to see, and I can't describe it to you, the hidden jewel of the human soul, the *real* part in that wicked woman, the spark of God hidden under so much sin and coarseness, but unextinguished and unspoil'd all the same. I knew that Mercy saw it, and that is why she could put her arms around the corrupt human vessel, the poor body which imprisoned that wonderful,

that glorious, soul. I stepped forward, through the cloud of light, to kneel—but just then blood gushed from the woman's lips, over her soiled clothes and Mercy's white dress, and the light rose and spread and faded. Mercy sat still a minute, and then perhaps feeling the weight heavier, looked at me and said, "Oh, Audrey, if I had but gone down the road sooner!" and laid the woman's body gently down. Just then Mrs. Allen and the housekeeper came in, and I could hear the two young soldiers talking in low tones outside—but, of course, there was nothing anyone could do, except the things that have to be done when there is an accident and will be an inquest. Mercy sobbed like anything when we got home, and seems to think it is somehow *her* fault, though *I* saw that Jane simply walked under the car. The hooter made row enough before they came careering round the corner, but she never heard. We've been trying to persuade Mercy that Jane will have a better chance in the next life, or somewhere, but she is awfully sad about it.

Anyhow, I understand now about loving everyone. When one has seen the unquenchable divine light and spirit which must be in even the worst of mankind, one simply could not help loving them. And where there is something to love, the soul cannot, I know, be lost everlastingly.

Catharine, I think I am a selfish pig, and too much taken up with myself. Mercy is worth ten of me, isn't she?

AUDREY.

26. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

ALDERWOOD FARM.

August 22, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

Yes, as in the days of Adam, so now, man is made of clay and of the breath of God, and he who has seen the divine element in man cannot fail to love everyone. It has troubled and perplexed me very much to notice that most people do not discover the divine in themselves, and rarely suspect that it exists both in the ordinary man and in the poorest and most wretched types of humanity. But clay is a dense material, and perhaps we must not be blamed over much if we fail to see through it to the greater reality behind.

What a terrible experience, though, for you, dear child! I hope Jane has already made a better start somewhere else. *There* is another puzzle—why men and women are sent into this world apparently without the capacity to profit by their experience. To say that the blame rests with society, or with their ancestors, does but put the problem a stage further back.

Forgive your Straightener for suggesting further problems!

With much love,

CATHARINE.

[Here are omitted some eight or nine letters from Audrey, telling of her new home at Altchester; of the little town clustering round the cathedral; of the deep-cut country lanes, banked with ferns and trees; of the gentle, slow-speaking people; and Catharine's replies. Audrey, it seems, loves Altchester already, and finds the

cathedral "A1 for meditation!" but she is afraid that the soft damp air of the county will be bad for her mother's bronchitis, and notes with concern that her father is much tried by the move. The sister Elizabeth, declaring that there are already too many good ladies at work at Altchester, has returned to London and entered a V.A.D. hospital.]

27. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

October 10, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

It is always lovely to come back to coll., and I am used to feeling very happy on the first day of term. I was in particularly good spirits coming up this time. I thought of how I had really got on a bit since this time last year—sort of laid hold of life, you might say. I was feeling awfully keen to meet Janet and Hildegarde, because, you see, I know that even if I can't answer all their arguments, I have got some *real* experience of my own in the background to sort of fall back upon. And then if the older one grows, the more one gets to know God, and to be able to distinguish His guidance, of course the happier one is. Coming up in the train I was just finishing the last few pages of a jolly little book Mercy gave me, called "The Guiding Hand of God," by Dr. Rendel Harris. I like the way it shows you the *ripening* of experience. I do like things to *move*, you know, and to improve, and all that.

And now I'm just *miserable*. I'll tell you why. I wrote in my last letter that I hadn't heard from Teresa for ages, and wondered what was up. I kind of felt something must be wrong, and wrote to ask, but she didn't answer. And there she was in hall last night! *Teresa*, in widow's dress, and looking as white as a ghost and frightfully sad. She just touched my hand, and said, "I'll tell you afterwards," and then she asked me all about my vac. and fruit-picking, and Altchester, and all that. Afterwards she came up to my room, and sat down in the basket chair and began to cry. I cried too—and then she told me about it. It seems that at the end of August her husband was reported wounded and missing. For ten days they heard no more. Then a brother officer wrote and said his body had been found. She says those ten days were so awful, it was a relief to hear he was dead. She was practically off her head, though, for a bit, I should think, from what she said. And then she said she *must* go up to college and go on with her work and see all of us, and if she didn't she should drown herself. So after a bit of fuss, they fixed it up. And here she is. When she had told me, she said, "I suppose I loved Godfrey too much, and that is why God took him away from me. I am not a bit resigned. I loved him more than God—I do now." And she cried again. I tried to point out to her that her loving Godfrey had nothing to do with his being killed. It was because he happened to be in a certain place when a certain shell came along, and that if John Jones, whom nobody loved, had been there then, he would have been killed in just the same way. I said, too, that I didn't think it could be wrong for her to love her husband

—but as I said it I stopped, remembering Thomas à Kempis and all the others on “human consolations.”

I lay awake for hours, worrying. Part of the time I just sympathised with Teresa, for I’m frightfully fond of her, you know, and part of the time I kept wondering whether I don’t depend far *far* too much on “human consolations.” I simply don’t know what I should do without my people and my friends. They are like the ground under my feet, and I feel they are absolutely necessary to me if I am to get anywhere. Is that horribly wrong? I kept thinking of all the saints who did without human affections, and were “detached,” and lived for God alone. Catharine, I simply *couldn’t*. I like being alone sometimes, especially out of doors, and I would rather be alone indoors than with someone I don’t like, but I couldn’t face “heart-loneliness.” Is that one of the dreadful things that will have to happen to me, if I am to be a real mystic? I know that the Ven. Augustine Baker resigned himself to that, too. Well, I simply *couldn’t*—not even in imagination.

Catharine, what am I to do? It *was* very cruel of God, wasn’t it, to take away Teresa’s husband, who was young and splendid, and so fond of her? And it is cruel of Him, too, if the way to Him lies along such a hard road. Besides, it is horrid to our friends, if we have to give them up. Suppose Gus wrote to me and said, “My dear sister, I am going to cultivate the higher life, and must therefore decline the honour of your further acquaintance.” Don’t laugh. I’m frightfully serious and very unhappy. Please write at once. When may I come and see you? Oh, *poor* Teresa!

AUDREY.

28. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

October 12, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

I am indeed grieved to hear that Teresa has lost her husband. Her first cry of pain, however, must not be taken as her reasoned judgment on the situation. She will not always, I think, call God cruel. Surely if God has given us that greatest of all gifts, freewill, we must be prepared to accept sad as well as joyful consequences of our power. The quality in freewill which makes good possible, also makes evil possible, and it is unimaginable that it should be otherwise. As Rabindranath Tagore says, that in the water which enables us to sail on the stream is also that which drowns us. To cry out against God because of the drowning is futile and unjust. Of course, you may urge, that in war it is the innocent individual who is killed. From the sight of the innocent suffering for the guilty, we might know that there is one life flowing through the veins of all humanity, that "we are everyone members one of another," and that if one man, or group of men, or nation, is sick, or in sin, all the other men and groups and nations must suffer too. I suppose nothing but the individual's developing a "cosmic consciousness"—that strange and sublime feeling, which is as different from the ordinary ego-consciousness as the self-consciousness of man is from the instinct-feeling of the animal, and which all the highest men of the race have had in a greater or less degree—will teach them this.

Poor Teresa, though! All these abstract considera-

tions would not help her in the least. You must be very tender to her. Human affection is what she most needs just now. When she has found the sufficiency and the insufficiency of that, she will hold out hands again to God.

You ask me about "detachment" and "human consolations." There is one test, and one test only, which is valid in this matter. If your love for a man or woman brings you nearer to God, it is good; if not, it is bad. St. John of the Cross states this clearly, and I am quite sure that he is right. The rule, however, will bear a wider interpretation than that which he gave to it. I unhesitatingly condemn many of the saints in their morbid fear of human love. The blessed Angela of Foligno, rejoicing because God had removed her dear ones who were but obstacles on her way to Heaven, seems to me extraordinarily perverse; and St. Louis Gonzaga walking past his mother with averted eyes, lest he should lust after her, a fool and a prig. There were extenuating circumstances, I grant. In those days, perhaps, the line between the holy life and the worldly life was more clearly drawn, and renunciation had to be complete, external as well as internal, or it could not be made at all. I can see much beauty and rightness, even now, in the life of the cloister. There are many ways to God. I do very strongly believe, however, that for the mystic as for the ordinary Christian, the best way to God lies along the path of human affection. To lavish unselfish devotion on parents and children, wives and husbands and friends, *must* be good, and must quite naturally teach what no amount of artificial self-culture can. Certain safeguards are of course necessary. We must not love

people in order that they may love us in return, nor for any satisfaction that we hope from them. We must not love them so slavishly that their approval or disapproval would turn us from a course of conduct which we believe to be right. We must value their highest good above their liking of us. We must not love them with sensuality or with vanity, or with self-seeking, but purely and ardently adore the divine in them, and the particular manifestation of God—their “personality”—which they show forth. If the evil in them allures and flatters and condones the evil in ourselves, we must break with them. If we depend on them rather than on God, we must check ourselves and be stern with our own hearts. But if what we desire is to serve them, to give them of our best, to show them in our friendship something of the intercourse which awaits the unfettered souls of the blest—

“Spend in pure converse our eternal day ;
Think each in each, immediately wise ;
Learn all we lacked before ; hear, know and say
What this tumultuous body now denies ;
And feel, who have laid our groping hands away ;
And see, no longer blinded by our eyes ”—

then our love partakes of the nature of the divine love, and no false asceticism must be allowed to deprive us of it. Nor should we love only good people. I believe in the redeeming power of love. If we are strong enough, we should love all the sinners we meet, and bravely face the pain which comes from seeing a loved one do wrong. Mercy was certainly right in kissing poor Jane's forehead. If such a kiss came from a sense of duty it would be

worthless, but arising out of love, I believe it to partake of the redemptive power of Christ.

I hate the mean spirit of the bond-slave in spiritual matters. " May I eat this? May I love that? Must I get up early to go to church? What will the priest say? " " Love, and do what thou likest! " Love does not contradict, but *fulfils* the law.

Good-bye, Audrey dear. Come and see me soon.

CATHARINE.

29. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

November 10, 1916.

DEAR AUDREY,

It is just a month since you wrote to me. Since then you have been to see me once, and once only. You came on a Sunday afternoon, when the presence of other visitors and of the children made it impossible that we should have any conversation together. Is anything wrong? I wish you would write and tell me.

Yours lovingly,

CATHARINE.

30. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

NEWTON COLLEGE,

November 11, 1916.

DEAR CATHARINE,

Everything is wrong. God has vanished—ceased to exist. And the worst of it is I don't feel sad as much as I feel bored. I feel I've lost the one thing I was living for, but instead of trying harder than ever to find God again, the thought of God and the spiritual life just bores me. I can't make any effort. It has taken the whole colour out of everything too. Whichever way I look, I see people being sad, and everything turning out all wrong, and silly little ants fighting each other and swarming in a beastly quarrelsome way over a dull and worthless earth. I can't get up any interest in the spiritual world either. The devil says there is none. I retort, All right, then you're not real either—but that doesn't get me any forrarder. I didn't want to tell you anything about it, I was so ashamed. You'll tell me it is wicked and ungrateful of me, after all the favours and "consolations" I've had, but one can no more live on past graces than one can feed oneself on yesterday's dinner. "*New every morning*" and "*new mercies each returning day,*" said the hymn writer, and that's what one must have, you know. The stupid thing is, I *feel* it is all my fault, only I can't see where. I don't think I've been sinning more than usual. Of course God must be there somewhere, and the fault all mine—I don't know.

Is it the weather? And everything's wrong. Teresa is getting resigned, which makes me cross—resigned and

pathetic, and a little sullen—because the Church tells her to. And mother has bronchitis, and father has influenza, and Gus has trench-fever (not badly), and Elizabeth is engaged to a rich old doctor with a bald head, whom she met at the V.A.D. home.

Write and scold me—or console me. If you could only point out to me *where* it's my own fault, it would be such a relief. I suppose it must be.

Your despondent

AUDREY.

31. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,

November 12, 1916.

MY DEAR AUDREY,

I am very sorry you have so many troubles. Your chief one is very familiar. Have you never heard of "dryness" and "aridity"; It is usually looked on as the greatest of the trials of the saints, and it often torments those who are only saints in the making. Far from "everything being wrong," it is quite natural that you should have this very familiar experience. Do not be so tragic, my dear? Let me see what can be done.

I have always thought that a good deal of the aridity of the mystics came from mere mental fatigue, from having occupied the attention too exclusively with one

set of ideas. As we are at present constituted, the perpetual bliss of Heaven would fatigue us exceedingly. Change and contrast are necessary to us. Without them we cannot even see or apprehend.

You have perhaps been trying to think too much about holy things, and to narrow your attention to an excessively small field. Try what a change will do. Except for your ordinary prayers and church-going, lay spiritual matters aside for a while. Read some good novels, go to some concerts, see your friends, enjoy yourself. Write to me again after a week or two.

Give my love to your mother and father. I hope you will soon have better news of them and of Augustine. Thanks, yes, I had heard of Elizabeth's engagement.

With love,

CATHARINE.

32. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

THE DEANERY,

ALTCHESTER,

December 15, 1916.

DEAR STRAIGHTENER,

You certainly aren't conventional in your advice! How annoyed many of the saints would have been if you had told them that their much-yearned over "aridity" was nothing but a sort of spiritual indigestion caused by over-eating of holy food? And how insulting it sounds to put it like that? But I'm not a saint, and try to be very sensible and practical, so I thought your advice good, and took it. I frivelled and intellectualized quite happily for about a month, and I think the holiday did me good. Any how, I got a lot of work done—for I mustn't forget that there's a second part of the trip waiting for me next year.

But, you know, Cathatine, there is more the matter with me than that. Something is wrong, quite badly wrong. I know that there is something that I have got to do, or not to do, to learn, or unlearn, before I can go ahead again. I'm so lonely without God and so much in the dark! I stretch out my hands to Him and cry, "O God? O God?" and then a kind of inner feeling tells me that I am setting up barriers between myself and Him, and that He is calling me just as I am calling Him. (Observe that the thought of God does not bore me any more?)

Externally, things are better. Mother and father are both about again, and Gus is better, and probably coming home on leave in a few days. And Bessie and

Maisie and the baby will be here at Christmas, and possibly Elizabeth, and certainly *not* the bald-headed swain, so we ought to have quite a jolly time in spite of the weather, which is beastly, and the war, which is beastlier still.

I've taken to meditation again. I suppose I'd better confess, Straightener, You've warned me not to meditate too long at a time, but I'm not going to be prudent or reasonable now. I'm going to force the gates of Heaven. I'm going to do the importunate widow touch, and get listened to for my much asking. I've plenty of time, either in my room or in the cathedral. Mother and father sit together quite happily over the library fire, and there are not many people I have to see, or things to do. So I'll pretend I'm working, and have a jolly little fire in my room, and just meditate for all I'm worth.

I told you we can go straight from the Deanery into the cathedral, through a romantic little dark cloistered way, so I often just stroll in, and as often as not there isn't a soul there (at least not a soul clothed in flesh),—there are plenty of disembodied ones floating about). This afternoon I spent an hour there, praying that God would show me what stood between me and Him. Outside the rain was falling on the towers and roofs and trees, and making odd little rushing and gurgling and spouting and droning noises as it flowed down the roof over the stones and through the gargoyles' mouths, and to the ground below. My prayers didn't flow as the rain flowed. They kept stopping and behaving in the oddest way. I found myself just *still*, with only one idea in my mind, generally a painful one of sin, or incompleteness or darkness, or distance from God, or of His might and His majesty ;

and then just once, radiant, like a kind of flash, of *His promises which never fail*.

I wish you would tell me, Straightner, because I am sure you know, what it is that I have put between God and my soul. Do help me! I feel so small and blind and poor! It is odd; sometimes I feel kind of tremendously confident, and sure I can get just what I need out of life and arrange everything as I like, as well for the body as the soul—and now I feel like a little slave-child, dependent on the bounty of God, yes, and as though I didn't even know the way to my master. Oh dear!

Good-bye, Straightener! A happy Christmas to you! It's a relief, anyhow, to be *wanting* God again. "Seek and ye shall find"—after all, one *does* believe that. A raft of His promises in the raging sea of the world! And the mist shall lift and the shore be close at hand.

Dear me, Altchester is making me quite poetical!

With love,

AUDREY.

Here's some poetry that fits me and the cathedral:
 "Dim pillars stood like steadfast souls at prayer,
 And never a light lit up the altar stair.
 Then I was glad that I was there alone,
 To learn what meant the church that man had made.
 And I took strength from stall and arch and stone,
 To face the world's deep anguish unafraid."

It's called "Architecture." What would Mercy say?

33. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE,
December 17, 1916.

MY DEAR AUDREY,

There is nothing for your Straightener to say. She can only stand by in awe and watch the wonderful way in which God is leading you.

Have patience, dear child! Think of the eight years I spent wandering in the dark.

I tell you what I will do for you, though. I will keep a vigil for you one night, and pray for you all the evening until midnight. I shall not tell you which day I shall choose, but perhaps you will be able to guess.

Always lovingly,

CATHARINE.

P.S.—I wonder whether you find the account of other people's experience helpful. Do you know this description of "Father Franklin's" prayer? I suppose it is really Father Hugh's manner of devotion. It is an extraordinarily vivid bit of writing, is it not? He, of course, was a Catholic of the Catholics, and yet you feel on reading this, that he had entered a region where no priest, no Church, could help him, and where he was alone with God. In the fire and darkness God dealt with him—as He is dealing with you, dear child.

(*From "Lord of the World"—R. H. Benson. Father Franklin's Mental Prayer.*)

"He began by a deliberate act of self-exclusion from the world of sense. Under the image of sinking beneath

a surface, he forced himself downwards and inwards till the peal of the organ, the shuffle of footsteps, the rigidity of the chair-back beneath his wrists—all seemed apart and external, and he was left a single person with a beating heart, an intellect that suggested image after image, and emotions that were too languid to stir themselves. Then he made his second descent, renounced all that he possessed, and was, and became conscious that even the body was left behind, and that his mind and heart, awed by the presence in which they found themselves, clung close and obedient to the Will which was their lord and protector. He drew another long breath or two, as he felt that presence surge about him. He repeated a few mechanical words, and sank to that peace which follows the relinquishment of thought. There he rested for a while. . . . He was . . . in that strange region where realities are evident, where perceptions go to and fro with the swiftness of light, where the swaying will catches now this, now that act, moulds it and speeds it, where all things meet, where truth is known and handled and tasted, where God Immanent is one with God Transcendent, where the meaning of the external world is evident through its inner side, and the Church and its mysteries are seen from within a haze of glory. Then he aroused himself to consciousness and began to speak. . . Then he drew another long breath, feeling the Presence tingle and shake around him. After a passion of expectation once more he relaxed himself, and the swift play of wordless acts began, which he knew to be the very heart of prayer. The eyes of the soul flew hither and thither, from Calvary to Heaven, and back again to the troubled earth.

“ Then he waited for communications, and they came, so soft and delicate, passing like shadows, that his will sweated blood and tears in the effort to catch and fix them and correspond. He saw the Body Mystical in its agony, strained over the world as on a cross, silent with pain ; he saw this and that nerve wrenched and twisted, till pain presented itself to him as under the guise of flashes of colour. . . . He saw, too, how no word would be spoken from Heaven . . . that inner world, to which by long effort he had learned the way, was all alight with agony ; it was of that pale luminosity that is the utmost product of pain. ‘ Lord, I cannot bear it,’ he moaned.”

A second extract.

“ He had travelled far in the mystical life since his agonies of effort. Now he used no deliberate descent into the spiritual world ; he threw as it were, his hands over his head and dropped into spacelessness. In the twilight realm of transcendence, God would deal with him—now by an articulate sentence, now by a sword of pain, now by an air like the vivifying breath of the sea.”

34. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

THE DEANERY,

ALTCHESTER.

December 31, 1916.

DEAR STRAIGHTENER

A happy New Year to you! I know which night you kept the vigil. Are you watching again to-night? I have much to tell you. You might have helped me more, I think. What is the good of backing out now? I think "Father Franklin" is more terrifying than helpful. I kind of half feel that *your* aloofness and quiet has its roots in that sort of experience. I hope I shan't be dealt with like that—it would only scorch me up. I want something simpler. However, a lot has happened, with you or without you. And you've been awfully kind. I've nothing to complain of. But do tell me next time you write, why my mind won't work when I meditate.

What happened was this. I kept on praying and thinking, and trying to find God and keep Him—I *did* work hard. The result was just nothing at all. Gus came home, and talked, when I questioned him, about religion in the trenches. He doesn't believe in it. He says it is just a form funk takes; and as for the angels at Mons, in a battle one might think one saw anything. When he was ill he saw salmon mayonnaise and ices floating about, to remind him of the May term! He says the only kind of religion worth bothering about is the religion of humanity. You sort of build yourself into the fabric of the nation, and live for posterity, and all that, and hope that the world will gradually turn out better in the end. I said that kind of thing would not

satis *y me*, and if that was so, what was the use of Christ having died? We could just as well have got on with Marcus Aurelius and Plato. Gus answered, "No use at all. Only a beastly shame," and I felt as though he'd hit me. Then we argued about resignation, and he said resignation was all rot, and most unethical and anti-social, and if we were all resigned, where would art be, and education and commerce? I tried to argue that one might be resigned for oneself, and not for the hateful uglinesses and ignorances of life, but he got the last word somehow. Of course I *knew* I was right. I found it all very difficult to understand. If one hasn't got God, and doesn't live for Him, what's the good of anything?

On Christmas Eve, at a quarter to twelve, I woke quite suddenly, and got up and dressed. I felt something calling me to go into the cathedral. I took my candlestick and went down the wide oak stairs (such lovely stairs, Catharine!) and through the hall, where mother will have a tiny little red lamp left burning all night, and through the cold little cloister-way and into the cathedral. It looked twice as big by night as it does by day, and it is always big enough to make one feel about the size of a chicken. I sat down in one of the benches, and put my candle on the seat by me, looking round to see why I could have been sent for like that. Then I saw a soft light radiating from the very centre of the cathedral. I stared and stared, and saw that it was made up of angels, all intermingled and glowing. They were gathered round a manger, adoring, and in the manger the light was so dazzling that I would not look. I knelt, too; there seemed nothing else to do. I knelt, and covered my face with my hands, and prayed that I might

be worthy to draw near. When I looked up again the light had grown to be cruciform, and I could no longer distinguish the angel-forms. The whole building seemed to be vibrating with song, but it was too fine for my mortal ears to catch. And at the foot of the cross stood One, even Jesus. He came towards me, robed and girt with light. I just knelt—and waited. I could not think, but only adore. He came nearer and nearer, until He stood just before me, and I could see the print of the nails in His hands. Instinctively I held out my hands to Him, and He looked at them as if in the very gentlest reproof, and I looked too, and was ashamed because they bore no mark of pain. Then He bent towards me, and touched my forehead. I remembered then a dream that I told you about long ago, just the dream of this. When He touched me I *knew*. Have I not been seeking God for my own sake, loving Him for my own sake—everything for *me*? I had closed my eyes for a moment, and when I looked up again He had gone. I knelt there for a while longer, praying for—you said it!—joyful acceptance of the will of God in all things. I felt the sorrow of the world all round me, and wondered at my own self-seeking in the midst of such pain. I called on God to use me as He would, to forge me in whatever fire might seem good to Him, to help me to suffer and to rejoice.

Then the thought of my nice warm bed obtruded itself, and I got up and hurried back to my own room. I slept to dream of angels, and woke to hear the choristers singing “Adeste Fideles” at the gate under my window. What a Christmas Day!

Now, don't psychologize to me about my experience! I don't want it explained. It was *true*, though how it

was true, and why it was true, I don't know and don't care. You know the motto of our branch of the family—"Dieu le veult." I've got that as my mantra now, and I say it to myself often, "Dieu le veult, Dieu le veult." I have abandoned myself to the stream of God's will. It must lead me to Him in time.

AUDREY.

P.S.—Do you find with your patients that they seem *really* to have grasped things, and then forget them, and *really* to have done with some stupidity, and then it pops up again? That is how I work. Isn't it odd?

P.P.S.—Of course your vigil was Christmas Eve!

35. *From Mrs. Sutherland.*

THE GRANGE.

January 2, 1917.

A Happy New Year to you, Audrey dear! May this year bring peace to the world, and joy to you.

Of course you are right. I watched all Christmas Eve. I had an impression that you must pass through deep waters, and prayed that I might be allowed to stand by you. I love you very much, my child. I cannot bear to think that you must suffer. Indeed, *I* find it very hard to resign *you* into God's hands, and not to fight to manage your life as I like. I am weak, and a fool. Forgive me, Audrey!

Your vision was very wonderful. Of course it was "true." I will not obtrude any unwanted theories about visions. You ask me about your meditation. Hence you must bear with a little psychology, for all the states of mind have been investigated and classified. They mark distinct stages of progress. I hope you will not think that such scientific treatment defiles them! It seems to me as natural and beautiful that the spiritual life should have well-recognised stages of growth as that the physical and the mental life should. When the mind has for some long period of time run hither and thither in search of religious truth and of God, it generally returns to itself, and considers some one idea in a more simple and quiet manner. This idea or "word" may seem to be, as it were, *living*, to radiate forth light and life to the soul. That it is at times painful, does not make it the less valuable for life. Such a fruitful con-

sideration of one thought is known as the "prayer of simplicity," or the "prayer of simple regard," according to Catholic psychologists.

Quite suddenly, often alarmingly so, may come the inability to formulate distinct "acts," or even to think at all when praying. This is known as the "ligature." The seeker is often much disquieted thereby, and cannot imagine what is happening to himself. At times he even suspects himself of incipient madness. If he will but wait, however, and not agitate himself, he will find that by means of this very stilling of the discursive intellect, his soul is free to taste the presence of God. This it does at first very obscurely and confusedly, but with intense love. The first attempt at pure contemplation has been made.

You should practise "introversion." Try and withdraw your attention from all external objects—even from the beauty and majesty of your beloved cathedral,—and plunge as it were into the unknown depths of your own soul. Seek God within rather than without. You must not consider your own imperfections, or your own sins, or your own virtues, at this prayer, any more than you are to notice the material objects around you, or the sounds that so insistently try to divert your attention. At first the task seems impossible, but you will find, with practice, that it can be done. Some men, on meeting with God by way of their own spirit, have cried, "I am God!" (So cried Mansur Hallaj, the cotton-carder, and was put to death for it.) You may, indeed, find the Divine in you; but you must not rest there; you must find the Divine Infinite lying, as it were, adjacent to you,

part, and yet not part; inexpressibly near, but yet divided from you by the gulf of Its Infinity.

I speak rashly of high things, and words fail me.

All my heart's love, Audrey!

CATHARINE.



36. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

THE DEANERY,

ALTCHESTER.

January 10, 1917.

DEAR CATHARINE,

It is awfully decent of you to be so fond of me! I am fond of you too, you know, you dear, and I daresay there *is* a kind of particularly close relationship between Straightener and patients. Only I say to myself, "Beware of priestcraft." I've got a free and independent nature you know, and I don't want to be too dependent on anyone.

But why so gloomy? The world isn't half a bad place. I've had a ripping vac. Everyone's been just splendid, even Maisie, who has not had a new dress for a year, and all on principle. And the Deanery is just *the* most adorable place for a home!

I *think* I am happy and getting a little more used, somehow, to the spiritual world. It is very odd, instead of being joyous and confident, I hold what I have with trembling, and just go a step at a time, and pray and

listen, and try and learn—instead of feeling that I knew it all already. Things that happen are too quiet and too intimate, and too *different* for me to be able to talk about them. Often I feel God very near.

I am longing to see you again, but I feel sad at leaving Altchester, somehow, even to come up to coll.

With love,

AUDREY.

P.S.—Mercy gave me such an odd present—"Unto this Last," by Ruskin. I thought Ruskin was rather a dull, out-of-date old boy, who talked about stones and theories of art, but this is quite different, and seems to have some sense in it. I've never thought about commerce, and all that, before—except as not being fit for a gentleman to notice.

37. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

12, SEAVIEW TERRACE,
EASTBEACH.

February 15, 1917.

DEAR CATHARINE,

Is this a bad dream? Oh wake me up, Catharine, and let me find myself back in my dear little room at coll! And only three days ago I was discussing St. Teresa with you over your study fire.

Father was taken ill, and the doctor said he was to come to a beastly nursing-home here called Breezia, for special treatment. They telegraphed for me, because Elizabeth is only just getting over flue and couldn't come, and I went home at once, and helped him and mother on the journey. This is a detestable place, all sleet and east wind, and the sea hisses and moans like snakes and devils, and the wind howls round the house like wolves and fiends—oh a vile, beastly, loathsome place. I'm sure mother has caught cold on the journey, and father looks kind of ill and dazed. I think the doctor was a *fool* to send him here. Oh Catharine, Catharine!

I want to meditate, and calm myself down, and make sure God is still there, but I feel too miserable, and the sea hisses and moans and won't let me.

February 16.—I didn't finish this yesterday, and now the news is worse than ever. The doctor at the nursing-home, who seems to be a great man, says father has cancer, and he wants to operate at once. He is one of those quiet sensible determined men, who look as though they spoke the truth. And when I asked him, he said

there was very little hope, only it was better for a patient to take a chance than to linger on for months with pain getting worse and worse. Mother was frightfully upset, and wanted to telegraph to London and have a consultation, but when we asked father he wouldn't hear of it. The operation is to be to-morrow. Father is dictating letters to mother now, and he will dictate some to me presently when she is tired. (She has a vile cold, and ought to be in bed.) He won't have anyone sent for, or any fuss, and says if he dies, he will be buried here.

Dies—dies! Catharine, the world is upside down! Oh Catharine, it can't be father there, ill and looking so quietly at death. He must be at Altchester—which just fitted him, and which he loved so.

I'll tell you to-morrow what happens. I feel all strange and unreal.

February 17. Evening.—I have just telegraphed for Elizabeth. Father is dead. He never recovered consciousness after the anæsthetic. He lies there, looking like a carved statue on a tomb, so still and so beautiful, with a look on his face as though he were listening to far-off music. Now he *knows*—and I don't know. The door is shut fast, and I am left outside.

Good-bye, Catharine, I can't write any more to-night.

With love,

AUDREY.

P.S.—I have made mother go to bed. I am sure she has bronchitis, and I want the doctor to look at her. She said when they told her, "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the Name of the

Lord." And to think I laughed at her for her "just trust" attitude. My God! if only I could trust! There is only pain—pain—pain, which ever way I turn.

P.P.S.—Write to me *at once*.

38, *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

12, SEAVIEW TERRACE,
EASTBEACH.

February 20, 1917.

Catharine, Catharine! Why *don't* you write? It isn't like you to neglect anyone who is in trouble, and your patient, too. I think you *might* write. Even if you were ill you could dictate a letter to someone, and you are never as busy as all that. It is too bad of you. You are the one person on earth who might say something to help, and you are just silent and cruel. Oh, *do* write to me!

It is Sunday evening, and half-past nine. I am sitting in mother's room. We are still in these beastly lodgings. Elizabeth has gone to bed, and in half-an-hour a nurse is coming to sit up with mother. She seems to me frightfully ill, and I know the doctor is anxious. I look at her now—I can't see very clearly, for we have to keep everything so dark in this beastly hole for fear of Zeppelins, and the fires won't burn decently because of the sleet—she is propped up high with pillows, and she

is just dozing a little, though she can't get her breath properly, and her face looks so drawn and old. She hasn't said anything since father died about getting black clothes, or wanting to see Gus, or going back to Altchester. She likes us to read the Bible to her, and sing hymns, and doesn't seem to notice much besides. Of course she is going to die. Elizabeth doesn't see it, but I do.

Death—Judgment—Heaven—Hell. You never told me, Catharine, to meditate on the four last things, or, indeed, to meditate on death at all. I know now that I never believed in it. People in books died, and people in history died—in fact the depressing thing about history is that all the people in it are dead—but I never thought that anyone belonging to me was going to die, still less that I should ever die myself. Catharine, I'm *afraid*, afraid to die, afraid to look as mother looks now, as father looked when his spirit had left him. I've heard of people committing suicide to escape the fear of death. I can quite understand that. Otherwise one's life is like that of the man who was imprisoned in a room where the walls got nearer and nearer every day, until at last he was crushed between them. And there is no escape. No one can come and rescue us.

(I wish the wind wouldn't howl so ! If you knew how it worried me !)

The thing must be faced. Most people dash about and forget. When their mothers and fathers and people die, they sit and mope for a bit, and then they get up and begin dashing about again, and never think that it will be *their* turn next. Gus says that no soldier ever really believes that *he* is going to be the one to be hit ; he

always thinks the bullet will get the man next him. And that is how everyone feels, I suppose. But Death is there, waiting for us all, and after Death, Judgment. Catharine, you should have told me all this before.—

You don't write to me, but if you did, I know what you would say. You would tell me that death is a bigger illusion than the material world, that what looks like a bottomless pit is just a dark gateway, and that you can see the light shining through the cracks. You would tell me that if we knew of the glories of the other side we should all commit suicide to reach them (I believe I have heard you make some such remark, or quote someone else, one of your favourite holy Brahmans or Sufis, or someone, who made it), and that if we could "stand where Moses stood," and see the "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood," as someone who was neither a Brahman nor a Sufi said, we should ignore death altogether. But you are so "detached" about life and its joys, that it comes quite easily to you to take death calmly. Besides, have you ever sat beside your mother, and watched her life slipping between your fingers and had no power to hold her back!

There's the nurse coming upstairs. Good-night, Catharine. Oh, it's a bad business. I'll keep this letter open till to-morrow, to tell you how mother is. I am going to bed, but I shan't sleep until I've thought myself into a better frame of mind. I'm sure God can't be pleased with me.

February 21.—I went to bed last night determined to think it out—Death, I mean. No religion, no mysticism, will do which cannot reconcile our ideas of life and God and goodness, and the fact of Death. I thought first of

all of what my friends would say. Janet, who wanted me to find happiness in the "unfettered exercise of my own intellect." Mercy, whose life and behaviour called me to follow the Inward Light. Teresa, who bows to Authority. Well, my unfettered intellect suggested that, from the point of view of biology and economics, it might be very useful to have the old people cleared out of the way—but I found little comfort there. When I consulted my inward light, I found nothing but inward darkness, though I admitted that was *my* fault, not the light's (when found). As for Teresa, her way of facing sorrow is romantic enough. She has made a kind of dream-hero of her dead husband, and comforts herself by imagining he is by her and still loving her, as he did before he was snatched away. Being imaginative, she can do that, and Authority does not mind. But *I* couldn't. It is too unsubstantial.

So I lay and thought—and then I listened for sounds from mother's room—and then I thought again, and again I listened. I do not know which hurt the most.

At last in disgust, I flung thought away, and held out my hands to God in the dark, and asked Him to accept me, with all my muddles and my pain and my rebellion and my stupidity—because I felt that if I spent all my time trying to get right notions and correct theories and comforts for this ache and for that sin, I should never be able to find God at all. I sort of felt I had come to the end of things—I couldn't think any more, or suffer any more. Then it felt, as it sometimes does, as though the ceiling wasn't there any more, but only the tranquil sky and the stars. I was conscious of the infinity of space, and the very majesty of infinity, so cold and

austere, seemed to quiet me, and to make me small and shamed. As I got stiller, I knew that there was God in all those mighty spaces, and that everything which was, only lived and had being through Him. From Him there could be no escape. He filled "the cold between the stars," as I felt Him fill me and inspire my life with His breath. There could be no room for Death! Where could the spirit of man go, that it should die? For wherever the soul of a man fled, there it would find God, and there finding, must live again. In longing at that moment passionately to unite myself to God, I felt that I had always, had I known it, been united to Him. Again I held out my hands to Him, and this time I felt, not the dizzy awe of an unconscious infinity, but a consciousness of the whole Universe full of a God as tender and as loving as He is infinite—and felt, too, that He knew me and held me and would never let me go. For a moment I saw Him as One, and saw and felt nothing but God, as though I myself ceased to be, and then I saw round Him as it were sparks of fire, the clustering souls of the blessed ones. I had an assurance of immortality, of nearness to Him, beginning now, here on earth. I looked for Death, and could not find it. The air was full of music and light, some eternal spring-song of the soul, like nothing but like a welling up, in music and light, of life perpetually renewed.

Someone knocked at the door. It was Elizabeth, who wanted me to come to mother at once. Mother was sitting up in bed, with a big pile of pillows behind her, and Dr. James, who had been injecting strychnine or something, stood by, with his hand on her pulse. I bent down to hear what mother said, for her lips kept moving.

"Abide—abide—" she whispered. I guessed what she wanted, and sang, "Abide with me." Yes, I *did*, Catharine, without a tremble in my voice. Once I said to myself, "What a very correct death-bed scene," to keep myself from crying. (That is rather a good way to prevent oneself breaking down—just pretend one isn't in the scene at all.) Then mother tried feebly to push her pillows away and to lie down. I said to the nurse, "She wants to lie down," but the nurse looked doubtful, so I just put my arm round mother and shoved all the pillows except one right off the bed on to the floor, and let her gently lie down. She gave one little sigh, and that was all.

And here's morning, Catharine, and it's snowing again, and I'm so tired, and so frightfully desolate and lonely. I know it is all right, and I'm not worrying or taking on, but only crying like a baby, because the human part of me insists on being sad, in spite of the other part knowing better. There, I can't see for tears.

Oh, *write* to me, Catharine. Or, better still, *come*. If you *could* come!

With love,

AUDREY.

Extract from the diary of Mrs. Sutherland.

February 25, 1917.—I returned home from France two days ago, leaving Charlie conscious again, and probably out of danger. His wound, considering that half his forehead is shot away, causes him surprisingly little pain. I found these letters from Audrey awaiting me, and, as the children were

well, and their kind auntie agreed to stay a couple of days more to look after them, I started at once for Eastcliff, feeling that Audrey needed me more than my home did. Eastcliff was bitterly cold, and the large unattractive room into which I was shown, felt chilly and uncomfortable. Audrey was sitting by just such a smoky fire as she had described; and in her hand she held an open telegram, which she held out to me, saying, "Gus, too, Catharine." It was a brief announcement from the War Office of her brother's death in action. When I had read it, we both burst out crying, and for a while held each other close and mingled our tears. I brought Audrey home with me by the next train, leaving her sister to say good-bye to the doctor and settle with the landlady, which I hope was not inconsiderate of me.

Wonderfully enough, this last blow, which might well have been considered a crushing one, seems to help Audrey to bear her other losses. She has spoken to me more than once of her joy that her mother and Augustine were each spared the pain of the other's death, and of how she likes to think of the meeting between them and her father. I notice, too, that the very completeness of the bereavement has given her, I will not say a sense of freedom, but the will to reconstruct her life, and the power to stand alone. Sebastian and Elizabeth though very good in many ways, have never been very near to her, and their kindness will not lessen her isolation. I feel as though I, too,

stood far back from the centre of her life. Sometimes it is intolerable to me to see her suffer, until I remember that it is better that God should be near to her and help her than that I should. She is touchingly grateful for the very little that I can do for her, but I am sure she is conscious of my helplessness, though not as acutely as I am myself.

Very wisely, as I think, she has determined to go back to college to-morrow. She is not wearing black, saying that she rather wishes to show forth *their* gladness than her own sorrow.

I wonder, by the way, what she will have to live on. The question of money does not seem to have occurred to her.

* * * *

39. *From Miss Audrey Talbot.*

OAKRIDGE MANOR.

June 20, 1917.

DEAR CATHARINE,

I am writing to tell you what I have decided about the work I'm to do in the world. Prepare for a jolly big surprise! Let me break it to you gently, or you'll think I'm having you on.

Well, when I said good-bye to you at the end of term, the one thing that seemed to me desirable was to go and be a hermit or something, and meditate until the spiritual air was all clear around me and I could see as many miles as I wanted. I even had serious thoughts of the Contemplative Life, but I shouldn't like vows I

couldn't keep, and I always have a kind of feeling that Anglican Sisterhoods aren't quite *quite* the real thing.

The Meditation Society, which Mercy and Teresa and I started, and which Janet joined rather under protest, was doing jolly well. We had got nearly fifty members in coll. I think the rule, just ten minutes' meditation a day, and no "I believe," and no subscription, rather appeals to people. I sometimes wondered whether *that* would blossom out into anything—a community or something—but it didn't seem to, and so when the Allens asked me to spend a few weeks here and look round, I rather jumped at it. Sebastian wants me to go and live with him and Maisie, and he also offers to allow me £200 a year, which is jolly decent of him, because he says I can't possibly live on £50—but a hermit ought to be able to, oughtn't she? (I'm half sorry the hermit-idea is done for, Catharine!) I declined.

The first few days I was all by myself here, with Mrs. Allen. Mercy was in town for her second M.B., and Mr. Allen away on business. Mrs. Allen was busy over the fruit, of which there is a tremendous lot this year, and wouldn't let me help because she said I looked so tired, so I had almost as much time alone as if I *had* been a hermit.

One morning, as I was sitting out under the big chestnut on the lawn, I had a most strange feeling. I can't even *begin* to describe it to you, and you will think it is all rot unless you have ever had it too. I think I've heard you talk about it, and call it "cosmic consciousness" or "universal consciousness." I left off feeling "I," "I," "I," and felt I was *everyone*. You see, all

my consciousness kind of expanded, until I shared in all the feelings of everyone in the whole world, and was part of them. Of course it sounds absolute nonsense, but it isn't, you know. It was just as real as feeling God, and being united to Him. It was the complement of that, the other half of the circle of infinity, don't you know. Anyhow, when it was over and gone, and I had come back into my own ordinary self-consciousness again, I said to myself, "Audrey, my dear, this won't do! I can't have you be such a selfish pig as to go off and do meditation by yourself. You jolly well do something for your fellow-creatures."

The question was, *what*. I didn't want to be in a hurry, so I thought I would wait and see if any Inward Light appeared to guide me. I prayed.

Then Mercy came back from London, and Mr. Allen from his business. Mr. Allen was quite excited. He'd been and bought a jam-making business, the very one to which he used to sell his fruit. He told us all about it at dinner. He says the buildings are rotten, just good enough to satisfy the inspector, and nothing is as it ought to be, and the women and girls who work there come out by train from the town, and are a frightfully rough lot. Of course he wants to make it model, and is just full of schemes. Mrs. Allen was awfully pleased, and as for Mercy, I never saw her so animated. She just bubbled over with ideas. She said that what would save England from degeneracy and wars, and all that sort of thing, would be for a new race of merchants to arise, who don't want to get rich, but to provide honest goods at fair prices, and who are keen on shortening hours of labour, and improving conditions, and all that; and on

really getting an understanding between masters and men. It is a kind of *knight-errantry* of commerce she is after, and I grasped the point at once. A real inspiration! Fancy Mercy being so practical! We talked it over afterwards, she and I, and she says you want the heights and depths of spiritual experience, but you want the other—an *obvious* ideal, like trading for your neighbours' benefit rather than your own—as well. We talked and talked, and got frightfully enthusiastic. She says she wants to doctor the people at the new works, and help to get to know them that way.

Next morning Mr. Allen sent for me to his study, and very gravely and in a most courtly manner, offered me a post as Welfare Superintendent at the factory, at a salary of £300 a year! It fairly took my breath away! I said I knew nothing about it, but his kind eyes twinkled and he said, "You clever young ladies who have been to college can turn your hand to anything." Then he explained that I was to make a study of the conditions at the works, and make suggestions to him for things for the employees—like cottages and recreation rooms and libraries, and all that. And specially to see how one can help them to be religious. He wants me first of all to look on as an outsider and suggest. Then to take my place in the factory and work at different jobs one after the other, and try and see things from the *inside*. Between the jobs, lest I should get tired, he wants me to study the *theory* of the thing, and to travel about a little, and see Bourneville, and places like that. And so on and so on. He says he is afraid he can't do much till after the war, but *then*—well, perhaps there will be

heaps of people wanting to do the same sort of thing, and then we can confer and co-operate, and all that. So I said *yes, I would*. And I thanked him, with tears in my eyes. I'm to live here with the Allens, and drive over every morning to the works.

Well, Catharine, what do you say? Is this a career for a mystic, for one who has honestly found it to be true, as she long believed, that the spiritual world is more real than the material one? Don't tell me that it isn't! I do feel that I had climbed up a mountain, and from it gazed to the Celestial City. But there on the mountain top I did not find, as I foolishly expected, a pair of golden wings all ready to carry me to Heaven. Instead, I found a little path at my feet, just a little ordinary path, which led down again into the city, and through the crowded haunts of men. So down I go, Catharine! Only there's God all round me now, God in my heart, God in all the people I see, God above me, away and away, beyond the stars! I shall never lose Him now.

With all my love,

AUDREY.

P.S.—I shall go on meditating, of course.

THE END.

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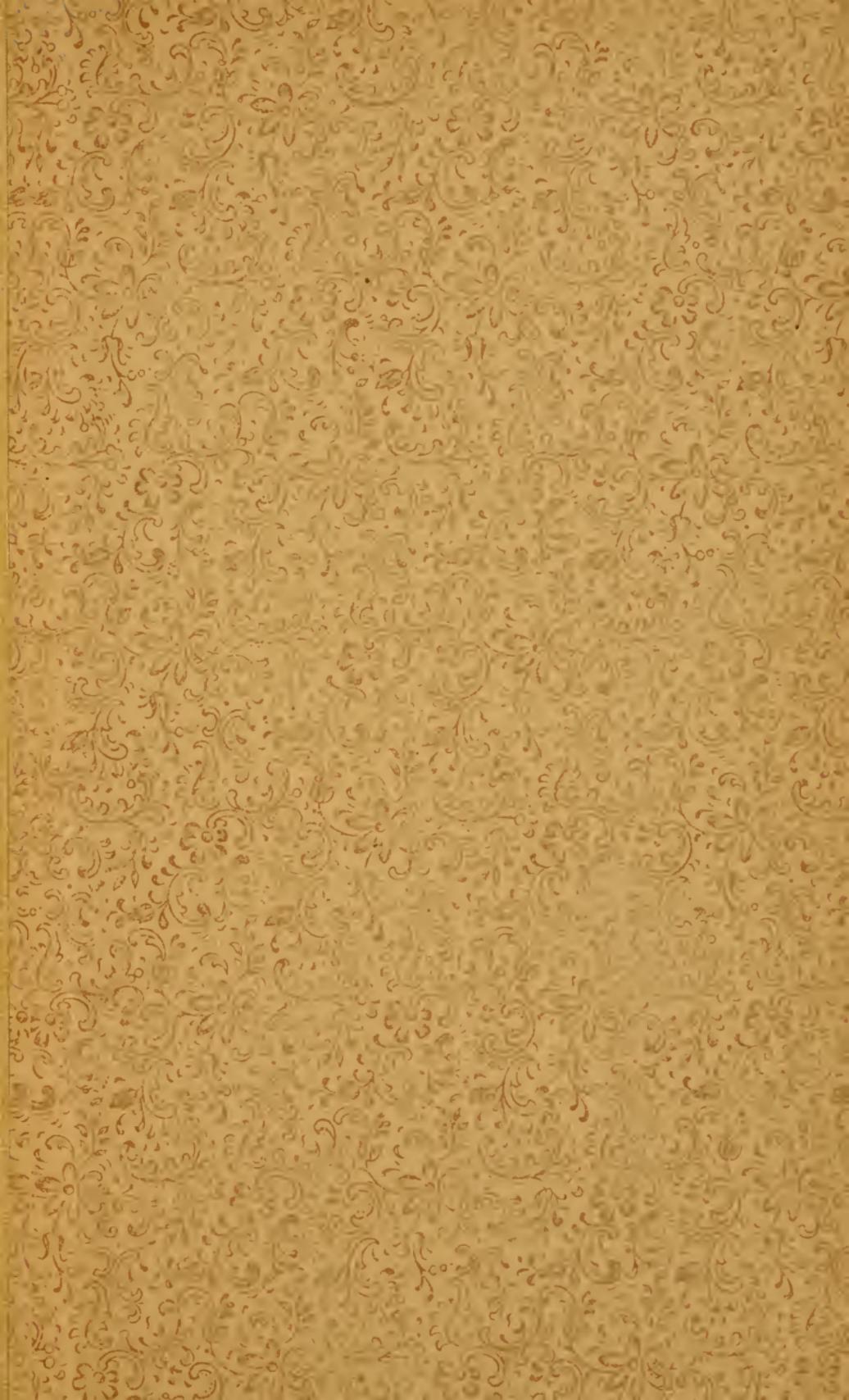


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