

Chapter 8

Minor Aids to Spiritual Advancement

BREADTH of life, length of life and elevation of life are the chief interests of the cosmic alchemist. Not merely for himself, but also for humanity, or for so large a section of it as it is possible to reach. As for himself, perhaps he is so skilled in transmutation that he can make large gains no matter what ores of experience life has to offer. But for others, and in the interest of the progress of the cosmic whole, he finds it expedient to throw the weight of his utmost in energy toward furnishing people with as many facilities as possible by which these three things may be gained.

Life, he finds, is divided into alternate periods of effort and relaxation, of work and play. Those work best who also play most completely. Days of activity are separated by nights of sleep, mental strain is relieved by physical exertion, and the tensions of both mind and muscle are soothed by pleasant emotional expression.

Some there are, he knows, who drudge so persistently in the groove of a chosen occupation that any real meaning of life escapes them. They are mere machines performing work. And while perhaps they add something material to the wealth of the world through their activities, because of lack of variety in thought and emotion they nevertheless impoverish the race by so much as otherwise they might have attained. The life of the world in its breadth and height is the total of the experiences of its numerous individual lives; and every individual who fails to reach high and noble emotional experiences, whose life is barren of diversity and mental interests, detracts from the value of total human existence.

And others there are, mostly those with ample and unearned incomes, who seek variety at the expense of responsibility. They do no work, because they have money, and instead of finding in this leisure the opportunity to perform some worth while and needed labor through which society in some measure may be benefited, they flit hither and yon, seeking this pleasure and that. Contributing nothing of value to mankind, they really are parasites. Some of them are men who have inherited money. Others, in large number, are women who have been freed from productive activity through the incomes of their husbands.

But real wealth of life can neither be inherited nor vicariously attained through the efforts of the marriage partner. No more so than can learning, and no more so than can character. To have richness of life one must gain it through individual effort; and no life can be considered truly rich that shirks

productive labor. However varied and diverse his interests and emotions, he who fails to make some contribution of productive effort has lost what otherwise would have been his most precious possession. Instead of pulling his share of the load, he has weakened himself through becoming a retarding brake on the revolving wheel of human progress.

Those whose eyes are so fixed on their toil that they fail to note the beautiful things of life and who fail to partake in its wholesome joys, alike with the so-called fashionable set that wastes its time in artificiality, each get less than half the blessings life has to offer. Some constructive work upon which enthusiastically to enter is a prime essential to acquiring those spiritual values that make life worth while. And as alternating from this work, and making for fitness in its performance, as well as refining the mind and feelings, certain intellectual and emotional work becomes only less imperative.

But pity the wasters! Pity those whose chief interest in life is selfish gratification! Pity those who take from society and make to it no adequate return! Pity the parasitic women who marry into idleness, and do nothing more constructive than give parties and dinners to other equally idle women and men. Pity the man about town who has nothing more serious to occupy his mind than to seek perpetual entertainment! Pity those who waste their time, who in reality are loafers and parasites on industrious people! Pity them more even than those who do something constructive and at the same time, through dissipation, waste both health and money!

Graciousness and Tastiness

But we must not conclude that graciousness of manner and beauty of surface, upon which the idle moneyed folk so dote, are without their value. They may be, and often are, but a thin veneer by which licentiousness and unscruple are hidden; but at least we must recognize that even a pleasant artificial covering makes more endurable the daily contacts of life. It contributes little that is sterling, perhaps, to the character beneath; but it does detract from the harshness and the discords of social communion.

A character of great worth may express itself in a raw and brutal manner. Yet such form of expression gives something of pain to others, and adds nothing of value to the character. Gentility of manner and politeness of speech may be the cloak of a wanton woman or of a rascally man, and such outward appearances should not be taken for inward reality; but they do impart a sense of refinement that gives pleasure and detracts from the possession of no one.

Then again, we all must live somewhere and all must use certain implements and utensils. Primarily, perhaps, the home should be a place of shelter from the inclemencies of the out-of-doors. But increasingly important as a secondary function is its power to enrich the life with finer emotional values.

If a home provides shelter only, it has failed in its own almost equally important function. That function is to educate the sense of beauty. As a shelter it tends to prolong life, but by its artistic effects it should add richness. If so situated that there can be a summer lawn of growing grass the eye is rested, the mind is refreshed, and emotions of peace and contentment are engendered that have a real value. If there can be a little hedge of shrubbery, and a little plot of flowers, whose blooms one cannot help but love, something else, something fine and high and good for the soul is added to existence. The tender care of growing things softens hate and jealousy, and even the sight of flowers, to the appreciative, is enough to dissolve incipient thoughts of strife and turn the mind into the soft, warm channels of their adoration. A beautiful

home is no insurance of increased spirituality, but it does afford the facilities that encourage it.

The morning meal, no doubt, sustains the effort of the day as well when partaken from thick and coarse-grained plate, when the table-cloth is frayed and dirty, when the silver is battered, and when the chair on which one sits is rickety and without comfort. But apart from physical food, we are also absorbing emotional impressions; impressions that tend to the coarse and brutal, or impressions that refine and elevate. Length of life is assisted by the food partaken, but the richness of life is added to, or subtracted from, somewhat by the surroundings in which we eat. Clean linen, flowers on the table, china that appeals to the touch and that presents some attractive design, silverware, not necessarily costly, but that gives pleasure by its form; all these things, while not essential to length of life, do add to its richness.

What this really means is that there is greater enjoyment in the presence—the sight, sound, smell, taste and feel—of certain things than in the presence of others. Such enjoyment, however, is not static; it is progressive. That is, by gradual steps we educate ourselves to more intense enjoyments, enjoyments of a more refined quality. And because life moves toward that which it enjoys, and away from that which causes pain, it is quite proper and essential for human advancement that refined things, as contrasted with those vulgar and brutal, shall increasingly be enjoyed.

About the first indication that man had ceased to be merely a brute, and had become human, is to be found in the primitive paintings on the walls of his caves, carvings on the ivory tusks of mammoths, and in the pains he took to make his stone implements not only more useful but more attractive to the eye and to the touch by a better grade of workmanship. Coincident with the emergence of the caveman from stark bestiality we find the development of artistic tastes, the development of an appreciation of symmetry, harmony and beauty. And from that ancient day to the present we are wont to judge the advancement of a people more by their artistic attainments than by any other measure; more by the quality of their emotional appreciation than by those industries which contribute solely to the length of life.

It would, of course, here be out of place for me to go into a discussion of how artistic effects can be obtained, either about the home or elsewhere. But it is not apart from my function as a cosmic alchemist to indicate that there is no virtue in ugliness. Ugliness begets pain, and pain is both repellent and destructive. The road of progress for the human race is along the cultivation of habit-systems that lift it from that which is sordid, brutal, selfish or gross. And habit-systems are built on enjoyments. Man, therefore, should learn to enjoy, to the utmost, those things which are refined and beneficial.

If we take joy in having the tools we use of symmetrical design, the utensils about the house graceful in outline and otherwise attractive, in having the rooms properly planned and tastefully decorated, in possessing a lawn of growing green bordered by thrifty shrubbery and bejeweled by little plots of smiling flowers; we are lifting our emotional experiences from the muck of gross passions, and our lives from the plane of sordid materialism. Such joys displace the thought and tendency to crime; while filth, harshness and confusion in the environment suggest and engender similar mental and emotional conditions. It is easier to think sunshiny thoughts on a sunshiny day; and easier to feel the noble and more spiritual impulses of kindness and aspiration when surrounded by objects which by their nature tend to divert the energies into lofty channels.

Architecture

Let us take a ride through the tenement house district, or go to the region where some factory or mine has erected row on row of houses of a dingy sameness for its employees. Or let us take a trip through the gas-house region, where smoke and dirt and squalor are rampant. Do the distressing sights, the abominable rackets and the vicious smells here encountered give us the feel of well being? Soot and grime all over, and ugliness staring at us from every visible contour, make us neither happy nor turn our thoughts to anything except misery and distress. To be sure, the spiritual alchemist who long has trained himself, can shut out the sight and sound of external conditions and live companion to the beautiful thoughts within himself. But the people living here are not spiritual alchemists, and the impact of such misery-creating stimuli is so strong that when endured for years, day after day, even the spiritual alchemist would find it difficult to live above its degrading power.

The mind of man unconsciously is influenced by the suggestions offered by the things he contacts. A decent suit of clothes thus gives self-esteem to a man who in rags is a cringing bum. A run in her stocking, if she knows it, gives almost any woman on a shopping expedition a decided feeling of inferiority. And those square cubes of steel and concrete, rising sheer from the sidewalk without bend or break, except for window-glass, one story above another, reaching their ugly backs to the sky, make those who pass them, and those who work in their unattractive cells, feel that utility is the all of life, and that existence is but a machine-like routine grind.

But this old-style and repellent office-building type of structure is now being replaced by something else. The box-like effect is giving way to a pleasant tapering and an effect of height. There is something of the pyramid in the broader outline. Yet the tapering is pleasantly presented through repeated steps from the massive base, each sudden recession being followed by a renewed rise, thus holding back the eye, yet after each pause directing it more strongly upward; up and up, to a final substantial tower that pierces the blue of heaven, and lifts the soul to a meditation on ineffable things.

Those to whom we entrust our savings have long been aware of the power of suggestion in architecture. The bank is built of massive stone, with small windows to increase the impression of solidity; and huge granite pillars in front, as if the earth itself might crumble and still the bank remain firm. The interior is spacious, the floors beautifully tiled, and the furniture rich, solid and strong. And so thoroughly is this suggestion absorbed unconsciously by the public that it deposits its money with almost no knowledge whatever of the character and ability of the bankers, which are the real factors of safety and risk, in full confidence that there can be no doubt about the reliability of so firm a looking bank.

So also, this same power of suggestion is offered by the outline of our homes, by the form of our stores, and by the tremendous upreaching of the better designed office buildings. The towers of these edifices point heavenward in sheer beauty and cannot fail to lift the mind in aspiration. They suggest clean living, lofty ideals, independence, freedom and the power of the human soul to accomplish. The squat and ugly boxes by which they still often are surrounded bind the soul to earth; but the smooth pinnacle of a better architecture points the way to a higher destiny.

Personal Appearance

There is a legend, inherited from Puritan ancestry and the Orient, that it is extravagant and even wicked to spend good money for that which, instead of being merely useful to prolong life, is only beautiful. Coming to our class-

room in Los Angeles are visiting occult students who deem themselves the very essence of spirituality. A certain type of these, both men and women, make great virtue of wearing the plainest, most inexpensive, and most unbecoming clothes. These clothes, together with the seriousness of their demeanor, the circumstance that they never go to any but educational movies, and that they deny themselves everything but the barest necessities of life, are the tokens by which they impress others with the idea that they are now so spiritual that nothing on earth longer is of interest to them. The things of the flesh they have completely put behind them.

But why cause others pain in the effort to be spiritual? People recoil from that which is ugly; and these individuals by their dress and manners repel those who come in contact with them. We are always glad to have people attend our classes and our Sunday sermons; and even if they are dressed dowdily they are quite welcome. Yet it seems inappropriate that they should make a virtue of that which causes their associates so much discomfort.

One cannot help but feel that if the region toward which they are moving is characterized by ugliness and disorder, if their heaven is a confused and slatternly heaven, if the spiritual state in which they hope to dwell hereafter is as drab and dreary as their appearance suggests; one would prefer to find some other land in which to dwell. Yet if the spiritual state which they ultimately seek is bright and happy, instead of dull and morose, why should they not seek to establish something similar here? Man does not come into one state of consciousness by cultivating its opposite; and if spirituality is a joyous state, we do not reach it by being sullen.

I am not unaware that too many material possessions, however beautiful they may be, may so absorb the energies in taking care of them, or in acquiring them, that no time is left for real living. But usually the same amount of effort required to build a town whose unattractive houses are scattered about in confusion, whose streets are shabby, and whose stores are box-like affairs, if there were proper planning could be made to produce a town of neatness and beauty, whose general appearance would give an atmosphere of well trained tastes. And the people living in such a place, where hovels and slums were non-existent, unconsciously would be impressed by this atmosphere to such an extent that much that is sordid in thought and action would disappear; and it would be easier for everyone living in the place to turn his mind to kindly deeds and noble aims.

Man's environments may shove him about, as when a tornado comes along or a flood sweeps him away. But their more customary influence over him is exerted through their power to make him feel. When there is a blizzard he feels, and consequently acts, in one way. When the sun beats down upon him with unaccustomed vigor he feels, and consequently acts, in quite a different way. When a progressed aspect from Mars adds energy to his thought-cells he feels aggressive and combative, and is apt to plunge into strife. When a progressed aspect from Saturn adds energy to his thought-cells he feels cautious and thoughtful, and is likely to be more deliberate and less rash than usual in what he does. Nor is it necessary for him to know why he feels as he does in order for him to act in accordance with these feelings.

He may not know what causes him to be ill; but if he feels ill, he will act in a manner quite other than if he were well. He may not be conscious that the disorder and grime in the room where he works is what makes him feel uncomfortable; but the uncomfortable feeling, nevertheless, will cause him to

People Feel Two Environments

think thoughts that otherwise he would not have. The suggestions of environment, quite as much as its obvious contacts, strongly influence man's thinking, and consequently his life.

The events and conditions that come into the life are chiefly due to the activity of the thought-cells. They are not directly due to planetary influence, nor are they chiefly due to the physical environment. Progressed aspects may give the thought-cells harmonious or discordant desires, and they give them more energy with which to work, but the events are chiefly due to the pressure exerted on environment and behavior by the thought-cells.

An approximately correct picture may be obtained if we think of our physical body, our inner-plane form as mapped by the birth-chart, and our thoughts as different phases of ourselves. We then exist in, and are influenced by, two different environments. The physical world, including the behavior of the people we meet and the various material things we contact, embraces the outer world environment. Astrological energies, other peoples' thoughts, the astral radiations of objects both of the outer and the inner-plane, and the influence of the spirits of the dead and the denizens of the astral world constitute the inner world environment.

On an average the inner world environment has as much influence over the individual and what happens to him as does the outer world environment. He is aware that the physical things he contacts and the people he meets influence the trend of his thinking. But usually he is unaware how powerful are the suggestions he receives from such sources, or that the energies of progressed aspects, the thoughts of other people, and various inner-plane forces and entities also influence his thoughts and behavior. Yet on an average the inner-plane environment has as great an influence over his thoughts, feelings and actions as does the whole of his outer-plane environment.

But whether his thoughts and emotions are stimulated by the conditions of his outer-plane environment or by those of his inner-plane environment, they influence the desires of his thought-cells and thus powerfully affect the events that come into his life. His thought-cells bring events into his life such as they desire through influencing his behavior, and through bringing extra-physical pressure (which university scientists now call the psychokinetic effect) directly to bear upon the physical environment. From our studies of the manner in which progressed aspects coincide with characteristic events, we are warranted in concluding that on an average the events which come into the individual's life are about equally due to his physical behavior and to the pressure which, unknown to him, his thought-cells, working from the inner-plane, bringing to bear upon his environment.

Unfortunate events arrive unheralded, even as typhoid fever once arrived with no intimation of its cause. But just as surely as typhoid can be escaped if its bacteria are not contacted, so can the individual escape certain other unfortunate events when he recognizes the conditions of the inner world environment which make them probable. and avoids them.

He cannot, of course, avoid a certain discordant progressed aspect forming in his chart. But he can avoid the type of thinking which it commonly stimulates. And even as were he in a physical environment in which the water was apt to be polluted with typhoid bacilli he would boil the water before drinking it, so with the knowledge that his thought-cells are receiving energy of a kind that will tend to cause them to work for a certain type of unfortunate event, he can deliberately cultivate thoughts and feelings designed to give them other and more beneficial desires.

And as what the thought-cells are able to accomplish depends not only on the energy at their disposal, but upon the facilities of the physical environment for the type of event they seek, he can select physical conditions that will offer great resistance to them.

Other than offering resistance to certain events and facilities for others, everything man contacts in the external world has some influence on the way he feels, and hence on the way he thinks and acts. This makes it possible not merely to select conditions which assist him to give his thought-cells more beneficial desires, but also to select interests and enjoyments that, instead of making him feel degraded, coarse and mean, make him feel joyous kindly, refined and filled with noble aspirations. And because such stimuli tend to elevate mankind and assist in its progress, he encourages them wherever he can.

Such things the individual desirous of spiritual progress will find of much aid. But in making selections it should be recognized that, due to temperament and previous conditioning, something that causes one person to feel one way may cause other persons to feel quite differently. It is well, therefore, that we possess a yard-stick with which to measure spiritual values. Length of life is measured in years. Breadth of life is measured by the variety and intensity of its experiences. Both offer opportunity for gaining spirituality. But the measure of spirituality itself is the height to which these experiences raise the dominant vibratory rate of the individual.

The effect on raising the dominant vibratory rate, or lowering it, depends upon both the type and the strength of the emotional response. The grade of feeling induced determines the direction in which the dominant rate is influenced; but the strength of the emotional energy determines whether or not the customary vibratory rate of the individual is more than fleetingly moved from its previous level.

The spiritual help to be derived from anything depends on the individual. A beautiful painting in the nude, for instance, may cause the soul of one man to soar aloft to a contemplation of deific beneficence, and kindle in him the utmost in feelings of tenderness, kindness and well wishing. It may bring an upwelling aspiration to be noble and fine. Yet to another the same painting may stimulate only licentious thoughts and the desire for animal gratification. Due to difference in unfoldment the picture is an aid to the spirituality of the one, and a detriment to the spirituality of the other.

What is beneficial for an individual, it will thus be seen, depends upon his conditioning. But the cosmic alchemist being primarily concerned with the progress of mankind as a whole cannot permit himself to be too greatly restricted by the special requirements of some one individual. Instead, he desires to throw the weight of his influence toward causing society to become familiar with those things which, through awakening finer and loftier feelings, usually tend to increase the spirituality. Consequently, he studies the common effect of various things on man's emotions, and encourages familiarity with those which usually elevate, and discourages familiarity with those which usually lower, the level of man's desires.

It is not at all clear how much some things, such as the popular comic strips and the animated movie cartoons, elevate or lower the spirituality. Through their appeal to fantasy thinking, often forsaking everything that is even near the plausible, they may tend to break down the power of discrimination, and through the crudeness of the action portrayed they may tend somewhat to

Comic Strips

The Measure of Any Art

cultivate a tolerance of rough behavior and even violence. But on the other hand, through accentuating and bringing to notice certain human frailties that otherwise might go unobserved, and through poking fun at the crudities of life as it is commonly lived, they may engender thoughts that lead to desire for something better. Probably it is as well not to pass a blanket judgment on such things, but to advise each to observe the emotional effect upon himself.

I shall not attempt any definition of art; for on this those who have made life studies of it do not agree. But in any art, whether that art be the making of cartoons, dancing, architecture, music, literature, painting or the drama, as it seems to me, the artist has some idea or feeling which he is trying to express. This emotion or conception may be noble or ignoble, trivial or sublime; but whatever it is, in expressing his art he endeavors to communicate this something he perceives in a manner that will cause others to think or feel as he does. To the extent he is able to convey, through the medium of his art, his conceptions and feelings to others, I think we are warranted in considering him a skilled artist.

However, we can hardly consider him a great artist unless the thing he tries to express is great. A man might very well be able to express trivial thoughts in adequate poetry; but unless he also has noble ideas, or at least those that in some manner contribute to the wealth of the race, he could hardly be called a great poet. To be a great artist in any line, one must have something really worth while to express, and then be able to convey, through the medium of his art, this worth while something to the minds of others. This distinction will enable us to gauge and measure the real value of any art or artist.

Names and Dancing

As stimulating more refined emotions, it does seem that the rather romantic names given to many of our hotels are a step in the right direction. The Ambassador or the Biltmore has a pleasant suggestion that is missing in Union Hotel or The Commercial House. In business, I am sure that Realtor is better than Real Estate Agent, and that Mortician is better than Undertaker. Even a name may thus subtly suggest dignity, or importance, rather than cunning, or the fact that the body will be placed below the surface of the ground.

Turning from these less powerful agents to affect the emotions to one of the most powerful, it is generally recognized that music quickly engenders a sympathetic response. People are incited to take up arms by martial music, and are led to seek salvation through the influence of revival hymns. Even the first and most primitive element of music, the rhythm, quite apart from the other two elements, melody and harmony, has a power of its own. The movements of the body tend sympathetically to follow the tempo of any musical instrument, or under emotional stimulus to create a tempo that permits the emotion to find expression.

In primitive lands the beating of the tom-tom is the signal for the swaying of bodies and the stamping of feet in unison with their throbbing. In more civilized lands others are moved to rhythmical gliding steps by the sweet, measures strains of the waltz. Then, also, without music, but making their own rhythm, some perform, mostly before audiences, intricate and beautiful movements to express, and to convey to others, a variety of emotions.

Now if we turn to experimental psychology, we find that every mental state is accompanied by an appropriate physical movement. Every thought is at least coincident with the relaxing or contracting of certain muscles in the

human body. And furthermore, if a set of muscles that habitually move in a certain way as accompaniment to a given feeling or thought, are made to move in that way, there is a strong tendency for the feeling or thought to be stimulated by such movement.

Thus it is that certain movements of the human body, or parts of it, become powerful factors in stimulating thoughts and emotions of a given type. As a consequence, dancing, when the dance is chosen for its power to stimulate emotions of a desirable character, may be used as an agent for the proper development of feelings and aspirations.

Dancing not only affects the person experiencing the physical movements, but may, and often does, affect those who witness it. It is not merely something in which a great many people participate on social occasions; but as performed by artists, it enters conspicuously both on the stage and in some private gatherings, as a feature of entertainment. But whether witnessed or engaged in, through its stimulation of the emotions, it has a power either to elevate or lower the spirituality.

How are we, then, to gauge whether or not a certain type of dance should be encouraged? Should the waltz be encouraged and the black bottom ostracized? What about the acrobatic dances that one now so frequently sees on the stage? What is the spiritual effect of buck-dancing and clogs? When, as related in 2 Sam. 6:14, "David danced before the Lord with all his might," did he do a wise thing?

The answers to such questions must be based upon the emotional effect in each specific instance. The hula dance of the Hawaiians is a religious dance, and it is said that the natives who participate in it and the natives who witness it feel only devotion, thanksgiving, and a prayerfulness that blessings may come to them and their people. If this is the emotional effect upon them, to them the dance is elevating and a means of attaining spiritual values.

This same dance, to an outsider who is unsympathetic to their religion, and who sees little in beauty of movement other than a means to appease carnal desire, may arouse only selfish passion. To him, because it stimulates degrading desires, this dance is spiritually a detriment.

Does the waltz, in which there is graceful and pleasing unison of movement as an embracing couple move rhythmically over a waxed floor, stimulate tender compassion, or does it excite ungovernable lust? This depends upon the individual. Some, no doubt, have been led to gross conduct through its sweet harmonies; but others have been lifted to emotional levels far above anything carnal or sordid in life. The individual must solve the problem of its effect upon him; and the cosmic alchemist must solve the problem by studying its average effect upon the race.

That something may be beneficial to one and a detriment to another leads us to a further important consideration in reference to art. It is that through being unable to grasp the artist's thought one may experience a feeling of degradation which the artist never had. The nude figures of classical statuary excite nothing more than a feeling of shame and disgust in certain provincial folk, who see in them only a sinful representation of a naked human body. Yet one who has cultivated his emotional reactions—or as experimental psychology puts it, has trained his conditioned responses properly—gains a glow of illuminating ecstasy from the same figures. Hence the great value to the spirituality of the race of educating itself to as high an appreciation of artistic values as possible.

But to return to our dances: We have the seguidilla and the fandango from

Spain, the tarantella of Italy, the Bacchanalia and sacred dances of olden times, the waltz which originated with the French peasants, the polonaise and mazurka of Poland, the tango of the Argentine, and the charleston and black bottom of America. And as synthesizing all of these, selecting what it needed from each and expressing all with a superb technique, we have the New Russian Ballet.

Each and every one of these, either from the standpoint of participant, of spectator, or as influencing society as a whole, must stand or fall by the quality of emotional response it arouses. We must not be too hasty in discarding the newer and more bizarre forms. I am willing to admit that the black bottom seems to outrage decency and that the collegiate seems but an expression of, and a stimulation to, the wild tendencies of the crowd devoted to hip-flasks and "necking." However, even the best of artistic things are seldom accepted at first when presented in some new form. The conditioned responses have not been established that give an appreciation of them. It takes considerable time to determine whether something new, in the long run, will stimulate high or low desires.

All the new dances are at least expressions of inventive ability. Someone had imagination and initiative enough to get out of the old rut and try something different. The names of some of the dances here mentioned will not be recognized by those who read these lines because they will have been outmoded and replaced by something newer. Ninety-nine of the inventions, no doubt, will ultimately prove worthless and go into the discard. But the one out of the hundred that is retained because of its worth will add something of value to human possessions that could never have existed if the too conservative people had their way. By all means we must discourage the gross and ugly; but we must not jump to the conclusion a thing is repulsive just because we are used to something different. Most people have an early distaste for both olives and caviar; which may be considered great delicacies by them after further gustatory education. We should never discourage the trial of something new, even though a thousand new things fail; because the human race makes progress only through new discoveries.

As markedly in contrast one with another, and seemingly equally popular at this time, we have the acrobatic dances and the classical dances. In the latter, through rhythm grace of movement and beauty of form, the myths and legends of Greece and Rome and the Orient are given interpretation. In the acrobatic dances it would seem that the speed of movement, the bendings, twistings, and sometimes even angularities, strive to give expression to the present mechanical age. The contortions often are far from beautiful, but they do express mechanical skill and accomplishment.

Because the dance affords an avenue for the expression and the arousing of the emotions, it is an encouraging sign that, more and more, instructions in it are finding their way into our public schools. The cosmic alchemist uses his influence to encourage such of these forms as develop refinement of body and more lofty sentiments.

Painting and Sculpture

To those forms of art known as painting and sculpture we must bring the same measure and the same elements of discrimination.

Some of man's most vivid sensations are received through the eye. What he sees has the power to make him feel and make him act, due to long and constant habit. He sees a car swiftly approaching, and even before he thinks he has moved from the path of danger. He sees an apple of cheerful red, and

it gives him hunger and a desire to eat it. Or he sees the pleasing face and figure of one of the opposite sex, and is beset with impulses for possession. What he sees customarily stimulates him to such thoughts as he is capable of, arouses emotions, and moves him to action.

But what he sees, if he is discerning, is not merely concrete physicality. Behind many of the combinations observed he perceives universal principles, philosophical significances, and subtle shades of meaning that are difficult to define. Turning his attention to these he finds his consciousness undergoing a sudden and happy expansion in which he is able to grasp more completely the verities of existence.

These more significant things, the things that appeal to the unconscious mind and illumine its vision, are often overlooked, however, by most of us. Then again, things that in the world of affairs are widely separated, that singly have little significance, if they can be brought together in certain combinations, stimulate thoughts and feelings, and open up the channels of the psychic senses sufficiently to enable us to apprehend stupendous facts and gain ecstatic feelings that otherwise would not enter our lives. But we have neither the time nor the ability to search out these single things, nor to bring them into the combinations that most fully expand the consciousness and make us more keenly alive to the joy and significance of living. We look to the artist to do this for us.

Lights and shadows, color and form, appeal to the eye, and through the eye may reach the soul. The artist must have the ability not merely to present something attractive as it appears in life, so that it looks natural, as does a photograph, nor is it enough that his picture tells a story. He must also be able to grasp the underlying essence, and communicate the very feel of the thing he is trying to present.

His picture of a woman is not merely a representation of some particular woman; but it conveys the impression of character that is common to all women of a certain type; or it enables the beholder intuitively to grasp the majestic glory of the essential principle of womanhood. If it is the picture of a dog, it is not just a canine likeness; it is the presentation of the principle of fidelity that pervades both dogs and certain men. Or it conveys, perhaps, the very spirit of sport if it is a sporting dog picture, so that the universal meaning of sport is borne home to the onlooker as it never had been before.

As one looks at Rodin's Thinker one sees a powerful man engrossed in deep cogitation. But the sculptor, in this figure, has grasped the power, the method, and the significance of thought, so that one's consciousness is tuned in its vibratory rates to just that level where it contacts the whole, deep thought of the race.

The limitations that are imposed by objective consciousness, in the presence of a masterpiece of sculpture or painting are thrust aside, and the unconscious mind enters into rapport with the idea embodied by the artist. And in this rapport, this opening of the avenues to the astral plane, the faculties of the observer need not remain within the boundary of the idea of the artist; for the artist, presenting the essence of something, places the mind in communion with a sphere of thought and feeling that has its existence in the astral world, and if the observer has the capacity of comprehending more than the artist, his psychic senses reaching out in the astral world may bring him conceptions and feelings relative to this plane of thought far transcending those possible to the artist.

To get the most from a painting or sculpture one must endeavor to enter

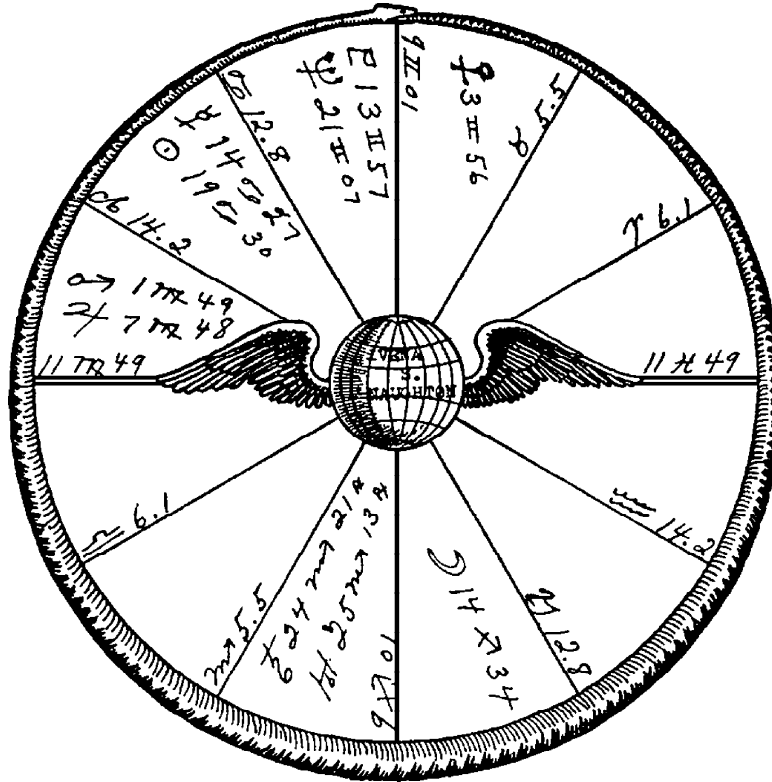
into the spirit of it. There must be not merely a critical and an intellectual comprehension of what the artist is trying to convey; but one must be able to feel its very essence and cosmic significance.

Artists are specialists who devote their lives to finding and revealing immutable principles and that which is most beautiful. Perhaps the presentation is even terrifying; but terror and stark fear also have their significance in the world in which we live. Artists enable others to enter into the consciousness of experiences that otherwise they would not have they direct the attention to the beautiful things and fine pleasures that commonly escape observation in the scrimmage of every-day living. Their sculptures and their pictures, therefore, afford an adequate stimulus for increasing the range of thought and intensifying and refining the emotions, and thus markedly enriching the life.

In the galleries of our cities are hung the paintings of the old masters. There are also the works of the impressionistic school of France, which are the outcome of a rebellion against the older technique. And through a still more recent revolution other and more bizarre forms are also to be seen. The Cubists, Vorticists, Futurists and others of the modernistic school of art intrude their works. These are not so easy, yet are worth trying to understand. Whether or not they endure, they at least are experiments in trying to find some better technique of expression. And we may be sure that whatever form becomes the more permanent it will be richer for their contributions.

Not all works of art are beneficial to the individual. He must measure their value by the kind and intensity of emotions he is able to develop from their contemplation. He may, or he may not, be able to get more from the abstract presentations of the modernistic schools, which call upon him for a vigorous use of his imagination. But his imagination must be active to get much benefit from any form of art. Nor will he be able, all at once, to gain the utmost from artistic productions. His appreciation, and therefore what he gains emotionally, depends in great measure upon a gradual education. A dog, a savage, and a cultured man do not see the same thing in a picture, nor is there much similarity in their emotional response to it.

Like everything else in life that is worth while, if he is to receive the high benefit to his spiritual nature that painting and sculpture open to him, to gain it he must put forth personal effort. As art does afford, to those who are willing to put forth some effort, unusual facilities for raising the vibratory rates and increasing the spirituality, the cosmic alchemist encourages people to take an increasing interest in it.



VENA S. NAUGHTON

July 11, 1897, 9:22 a.m. 93W. 39:47N.

Data given by her personally.

1907, mother died: Sun semi-square Pluto r.

1908, moved to another state: Venus opposition Moon r.

1933, husband died: Sun square Saturn r.

1934, went to business college: Mars sextile Uranus r.

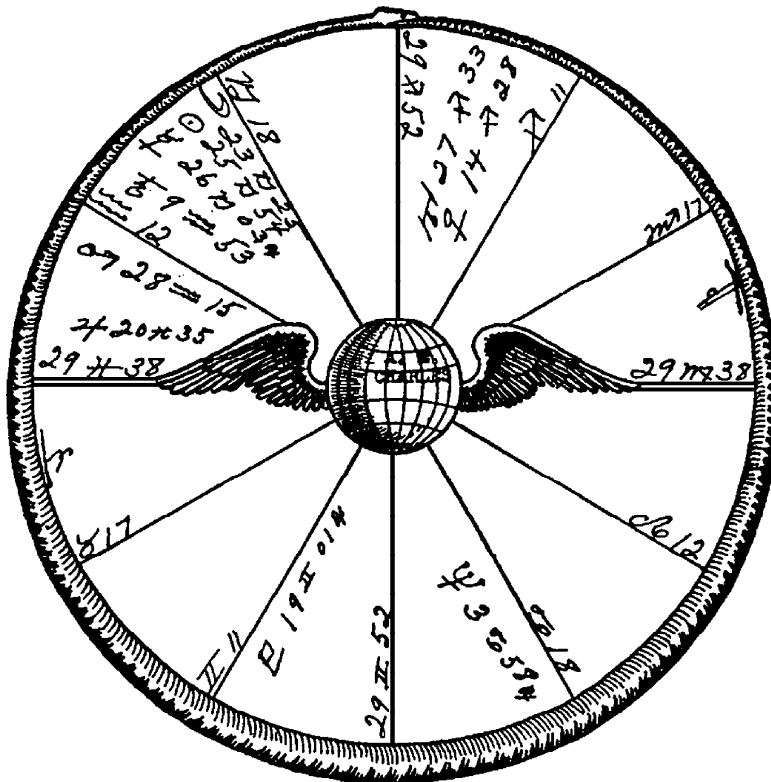
1936, began studies with C. of L.: Venus sextile Jupiter p.

1937, won life insurance law suit: Venus semi-square Mars r.

1940, became Hermetician: Venus conjunction Sun r.

1941, ordained C. of L. teacher: Mercury conjunction Mars r.

1942, ordained minister of The Religion of the Stars and dedicated balance of life to its dissemination. Board member and assistant minister of Church of Light of Tulsa: Venus semi-sextile Neptune p.



A. E. CHARLES

January 17, 1904, 10:21 a.m. G.M.T. 0:17W. 51:15N.

Data given by him personally.

- 1920, joined B. of L.: Sun semi-square Uranus r.
- 1924, passed exam. on Course I: Mercury sextile Jupiter r.
- 1926, in charge of B. of L. in England: Sun trine Pluto r.
- 1927, presented with watch by Cygnus Chapter B. of L. for work organizing and teaching it: Mercury conjunction Moon r.
- 1929, diploma Nature Cure: Mercury sextile Jupiter p.
- 1931, started practice as healer: Mars conjunction Jupiter r.
- 1940, elected Fellow of the Federation of British Astrologers: Venus sextile Jupiter p.
- 1942, taken prisoner of war: Mars square Uranus r.
- 1945, landed back in England: Venus sesqui-square Pluto r.
- 1946, resumed active work as C. of L. minister: Jupiter conjunction Asc. r.

