

## An Hour With Mr Leadbeater

by Ernest Wood

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I looked up again enquiringly from the piles of letters, answered and unanswered, that lay before me on the little round-cornered, black table in the famous octagon room. The sunlight glared at me from the smooth river, and smiled upon me from the luscious grass and the green palm-fronds. The hum of distant liquid voices reached my ears. The white cat lay coiled asleep upon the sofa. The round clock pursued its humble patient song. But he did not move his head, still bent upon the facile fingers, scribing obediently the message of the inner worlds. My eyes rested with open admiration and gratitude upon his form, powerful as a Greek statue, though seated at the prosaic desk.

Involuntary I sighed, as I laid down a small handful of selected letters with a little rustle.

“Yes?” and I looked up again, to find his eyes smiling at me half-humorously over the rims of his spectacles.

“More articles,” said I, – a formula in constant use. “The ‘Theosophical Thirst Quencher’ would like one on ‘Parabrahman’; ‘The Shining Light’ wishes to publish full details about ‘Avitchi,’ ‘The Peaceful Aspirant’ desires you to dows with an authoritative statement its long and heated correspondence on the subject of ‘Taking the Kingdom of Heaven by Storm’; the ‘Practical Theosophist’ desires an article on ‘Comets and Falling Stars’; the –”

“Enough!” I remained silent, waiting, while he mused a while. “I wonder if people really want to know these things; and if they do, if they know why?”

I waited silently for a few moments, and then took up the question.

“How different all these questions must seem to the Ego on his own plane; I suppose that when he is awake at all he has his own interests and activities on the higher mental plane; which must be rather different from those of the personality! Yet I don’t quite see why the personality should favour different activities if it is, so far as consciousness is concerned, only a reflection of the Ego!”

My generalship succeeded beyond all expectations. The noise of the rabbit drew even the white cat, a gentlemanly ruffian, out of his slumbers; he yawned and stretched himself, wiped his feet on my immaculate dhotie and sharpened his claws in the calf of my leg.

Mr. Leadbeater disposed his paper-weights to save his treasures from the snatching fingers of the monsoon wind, and sat up.

“Certainly,” said he, “The Ego lives a life and has interests and activities on his own plane; but you must remember that he only puts down a very small part, so to speak, of himself. That part gets itself entangled in interests which because of their partiality are often along different lines than the general activities of the Ego itself. In fact, the Ego lives a life of its own on its own plane, and does not pay particular attention to the lower life of the personality, unless something rather unusual happens to it.”

“I fancy I have heard you say that it is one of the works of the Masters to ray out upon the Ego a constant stream of divine influence. Does any or much of this get passed on to the personality?”

“Well, that depends upon the connection between the Ego and the personality, which is very different in different cases. There is almost infinite variety in human life. The spiritual force rays upon the Ego and some little of it certainly comes through into the personality; because, you see, though the Ego has put forth a part of himself he does not cut himself off entirely from it, though in the case of all ordinary people the Ego and the personality are very different things. The Ego in such cases has not much grasp of the personality, nor a clear conception of its purpose in sending it forth; and, again, the small piece which meets us in the personality grows to have ways and opinions of its own. It is developing by the experience which it gains, and this is passed on to the Ego; but along with this real development it usually gathers a good deal which is hardly worthy of the name. It acquires knowledge, – but also prejudices, – which are not really knowledge at all. It does not become quite free from the prejudices – not only of knowledge, or rather the absence, but of feeling and action as well – until the man reaches adeptship. It gradually discovers these things to be prejudices, and progresses through them; but has always a great deal of limitation from which the Ego is entirely free.

“You ask how much of the spiritual force passes on to the personality. One could only decide in a particular case by using clairvoyance. But something of it must flow through always, because the lower is attached to the higher, just as the hand is attached to the body by the arm. It is certain that the personality must get something, but then it can only receive what it is able to receive. It is also a question of qualities. The Master might quite conceivably be playing upon certain of the qualities of the Ego which were very obscure in the personality, and in that case, of course, very little would come down.”

“It is not unlike the reverse action in which the personality, as it were, feeds the Ego,” I remarked. “There the lower experience may be retained in the tendencies of the permanent atoms of the physical, astral and lower mental planes, and draw the Ego again into like experiences according to their vibration rates; but only those things can be handed on to the spiritual or permanent Ego which are compatible with its nature and interests.”

“Precisely. Remember, though, that one tends to exclude the good and the other the bad, or rather I should say the spiritual and the material, for nothing is bad. You can sometimes see many of the influences at work, by clairvoyance. On a certain day, for example, you may see a characteristic

very much intensified, with no outward reason. The cause is often to be found in what is taking place at some higher level, – the stimulation of that quality in the Ego. Sometimes a man finds himself overflowing with affection or devotion, and quite unable to understand why on the physical plane. The cause is usually again the stimulation of the Ego, or it may be that the Ego is taking some special interest in the personality for the time being.”

“Perhaps in our meditation we draw such attention on the part of the Ego?” I queried.

“Yes, certainly. But it is well to keep in mind that we must try to reach up to join that higher activity, and not try to interrupt it to draw down its attention to the lower. As regards the influence it is certainly invited by right meditation, which is always effective, even though things may seem to be very dull and quite without zest in the physical. The reaching up of the Ego itself often means its neglect to send energy down to the personality, and this, of course leaves the latter feeling rather dull and in the shade. The extent, then, to which the personality is influenced depends upon two things principally – the strength of the connection at the time between the Ego and the personality, and the particular work which the Master is doing upon the Ego, that is, the particular qualities He is playing upon.”

“Meditation, and the study of these spiritual subjects makes a very great big difference, then, in the life of the Ego?”

“Yes, very much indeed. The usual person who has not taken up these matters seriously has, as it were, only a thread of connection between the higher and the lower self. The personality seems to be all, and the Ego, though it undoubtedly exists on its own plane, is not at all likely to be doing anything actively there. It is very much like a chicken which is growing inside an egg. But in the case of some of ourselves who have been making efforts in the right direction, we may hope that the Ego is becoming quite vividly conscious. He has broken through the shell, and is living a life of great activity and power. As we go on we become able to unify our personal consciousness with the life of the Ego, as far as that is possible; and then we have only the one consciousness and all that we have here is the consciousness of the Ego, who knows all that is going on. But with many people at the present day there is often considerable opposition between the personality and the Ego. In fact, there are many things to be taken into account. If you have to deal with a fairly advanced Ego you will often find him somewhat inconsiderate to his body. You see, whatever is put down into the personality is so much taken from him. I have again and again seen cases where the Ego was somewhat impatient and withdrew into himself somewhat – but in cases such as these is always a flow, which is not possible with the ordinary man. In the ordinary man the part is as it were put down and left, though not quite cut off, but at this stage there is constant communication between the two along the channel. Therefore he can withdraw whenever he chooses, and leave a very poor representation of the real man behind. So the relations between the lower and higher self vary very much in different people and at different stages of development.”

“And at what does the Ego work in these cases?”

“Oh, he may be learning things on his own plane; or helping other Egos – there are very many kinds of work for which he may need an accession of strength. You may have noticed that sometimes, after you have completed a special piece of work that has needed the cooperation to a large extent of the Ego – as, for example, sometimes lecturing to a large audience – he takes away the energy and leaves the personality with only enough to feel rather dispirited with. For a time he admitted there was some importance in the work, but afterwards he leaves the poor personality feeling rather depressed. Of course, depression comes much more from other reasons, such as the presence of an astral entity in a low spirited condition, or of some non-human beings. And joy also is not always due to the influence of the Ego – in fact, the man does not think much about his own feelings when he is in a fit condition to receive an influx of power – but may be produced by the proximity of harmonious nature-spirits, or in a variety of other ways.”

“Is the channel a permanent thing, always open?”

“By no means. Sometimes it appears almost choked up, which is quite an easy possibility in view of the narrowness of the thread in most cases. Then the force may break through again on some occasion such as that of a conversion. But for many of us there is a constant flow in some measure. Meditation conscientiously done, opens the channel and keeps it open.”

“Will you explain how the different kinds of meditation affect the flow, and how we may best bring it down?” I queried.

“Don’t bring it down. It is better to go up to it,” – he glanced reproachfully at me, and meaningly at the clock. I transferred my eyes to its relentless face, and abashed by its stony gaze lapsed into silence, burying myself in the stacks of correspondence.