

It is just a year since my election to the Experimental Circle. I well remember how I imagined the Circle would be. I thought of a comparatively few Members meeting together for intensive study and discussion of the Course or some other teaching of Dr Steiner's, I imagined them pooling practical experience and wise thought in questions raised by their work and study, and then all going back to their holdings to carry out further study and experiments. I visualised study and experiment as the 'breathing' activity of the individual Members, and their meeting and return home as the equivalent rhythm of the Circle. It did not occur to me that there would be some members who took part in this process rarely or never.

Perhaps I idealised too much: perhaps the picture was one for another generation. Or possibly I was basing my ideas on the scientific method to which I was accustomed. And yet... Is all well with our Circle? Are we forging ahead of current scientific thought, and discovering facts that Science will be glad to acknowledge in years to come? Have we anything to our credit as a Circle in any way comparable to what George Adams and Olive Whicher are accomplishing? Surely, to deserve our existence we should be the spearhead of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Movement and should aim at evolving thoughts as far ahead of our own time as those of Koberwitz were ahead of the thought of 1924.

Dr Steiner was never one to hang on to institutions that had lost their spiritual justification. Have we reached the time when we should say: "The Experimental Circle in this country has lost its original impulse. It would be better to dissolve it, and metamorphose it into something new that has a greater creative urge," ?

In putting forward such a suggestion one cannot but be very conscious of one's own failings as a Member, and of one's own inadequacy to take part in something more vital. But these things in a sense are beside the point. The question is always "What is our responsibility to the Spiritual world, and are we fulfilling it?" Beside this, all personal questions are insignificant, and if I have expressed myself too radically I beg Fellow Members not to take offence. My striving is only towards what we can achieve together in future. Whether we feel that something new can come to birth, or whether we feel that the present form is adequate, let us review our position together in the News Sheet. This vehicle exists for the strengthening of the Circle activity. Let us know, above all, if there are any who disagree with the premise that the Circle exists for intensive work between its members and that, failing in that, it fails as a Circle.

27th September 1949.

Hugh S Ellis

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THE WORK OF THE EXPERIENTIAL CIRCLE.

In News Sheet No 14 (3), Hugh Ellis expressed his view on the Circle his work, and three Members have made comments:

P. Edwards writes: "...With regard to Ellis' criticism of the Circle, I should have thought that the description of what he hoped it would be, was quite a good picture of what it is, at least as it seems to me. Perhaps if Mr Ellis brought a little more to it instead of expecting a lot to be handed to him on a plate, so to speak, he might see a little more for himself. Incidentally, is it not time he studied the making of the preparations and tried to do some himself? I never feel happy about sending out such large quantities. It makes it feel too much of the factory, I always feel what we send out should be the small quantities which people with one or two heaps in a year really need. People who need Large quantities should in time make their own - but perhaps I have got the wrong idea"

(b) Mrs Mary Obery writes: "I very much agree with parts of Hugh Ellis' letter. It was also a great disappointment to me when I became a Member, to find how little actual experimenting was carried out by Members of the Circle. But when one remembers that we are a Circle of Farmers and Gardeners and not Scientists, one understands better why this is so - and I for one, feel very strongly that we should remain an ever growing circle of farmers and gardeners and not reform as a smaller group of scientists or experimenters, because I feel this is our mission. I do however think that it would be very helpful if the Circle could decide on certain specific experiments all of which could be carried out by each individual member during the year, and all post our findings and data. In that way we should get a very general picture, covering a large part of the country, and many different circumstances. I think a lot of our difficulty in doing something definite is that for the lay experimenter the field is so vast that he (or she!) doesn't know where to begin."

(c) Anthony Kaye writes: "I am a young Member of the Circle, but I do think Hugh Ellis' letter needs active consideration. As a Circle we often receive challenges to our smugness, which is good,, but I well appreciate the activeness of our senior Members in that they always are endeavouring to keep the Circle awake to the rapidly changing times, and in not just letting us sink back to 1924 and to letting us sit on our posteriors listening and not actively participating. ...The description of the German Experimental Circle rather moved me: I don't say we should copy them but I do, like Ellis, visualise a very close cooperation between those who are working in an empirical way on Dr Steiner's indications. My idea is that our Circle lacks that really close cooperation in which we may discuss technical problems into the most intimate details of our farms and market gardens, or even gardens. Might we some day realise meetings in which Members participating know every detail of the working problems etc of all our farms and gardens? I feel quite sure that there are many Members who could give me very valuable advice on what to do on this farm, and, perhaps, I could help them; a. different viewpoint often makes the world of difference. We, who have such practical problems, might perhaps be less shy of discussing them 'in public'...."

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.. .we are members of an Experimental circle - therefore we should be "doing something" !

An admirable refutation of this placing of "the cart before the horse" was made earlier this year. Working through two sets of lectures¹ by Dr.Steiner one certainly has the feeling for this "doing something". This haunting Bogey is, I feel, effectively squashed when we pass through the world with our hearts open".

When we perceive with a warmth of heart the worlds of mineral and plant, and animal kingdoms, we then fulfil the true necessity of evolution and help to free those elemental beings imprisoned in the existence of mineral, plant, and so on. For the Earth's future it is imperative that these elemental beings are freed by our true contemplation, for they are waiting to take up higher tasks.

Nature is inviolable in her pristine innocence and perfection. Man in his life of ideation is violable - to which inner impellation will he listen? His own future and the Earth's is surely, much in his own hands.

With conscience we are compelled to study the forms: wonder is awakened at this study of them, and a true love arises for all that we study thus in the world of Nature. As it is said: it is the small deeds that count in daily routine .. If the members of this Experimental Circle do nothing else other than have this warmth of feeling towards "the Creation" that groaneth" - then much indeed is being attained. Let us not forget the "small" matters that we do today, as against the time-consuming and engulfing questions that we talk about.

A.V.Kaye.

1 Anthroposophy and the human heart" Lecture II.28:IX:1923. Vienna.