The following talk was given on a Friday, the day Mother used to read to the children.

**Reminiscences of Tlemcen**

Once again, this evening, I am not going to read, but I won’t tell you a story; I am going to tell you about Madame X.

Madame X was born on the Isle of Wight and she lived in Tlemcen with her husband who was a great occultist. Madame X herself was an occultist of great powers, a remarkable clairvoyant, and she had mediumistic qualities. Her powers were quite exceptional; she had received an extremely complete and rigorous training and she could exteriorise herself, that is, bring out of her material body a subtle body, in full consciousness, and do it twelve times in succession. That is, she could pass consciously from one state of being to another, live there as consciously as in her physical body, and then again put that subtler body into trance, exteriorise herself from it, and so on twelve times successively, to the extreme limit of the world of forms.... I shall speak to you about that later, when you can understand better what I am talking about. But I am going to tell you about some small incidents I saw when I was in Tlemcen¹ myself, and a story she told me I shall also tell you.

The incidents are of a more external kind, but very funny.

She was almost always in trance and she had trained her body so well that even when she was in trance, that is, when one or more parts of her being were exteriorised, the body had a life of its own and she could walk about and even attend to some small material occupations.... She did a great deal of work, for

¹ In 1907.
in her trances she could talk freely and she used to narrate what she saw, which was noted down and later formed a teaching—which has even been published. And because of all that and the occult work she was doing, she was often tired, in the sense that her body was tired and needed to recuperate its vitality in a very concrete way.

Now, one day when she was particularly tired, she told me, “You will see how I am going to recover my strength.” She had plucked from her garden—it was not a garden, it was a vast estate with ancient olive trees, and fig trees such as I have never seen anywhere else, it was a real marvel, on a mountainside, from the plain to almost half way up—and in this garden there were many lemon trees and orange trees...and grapefruit. Grapefruit has flowers which have an even better fragrance than orange blossoms—they are large flowers and she knew how to make an essence from them herself, she had given me a bottle—well, she had plucked a huge grapefruit like this, (gesture) very large and ripe, and she lay down on her bed and put the grapefruit on her solar plexus, here, (gesture) like this, holding it with both hands. She lay down and rested. She did not sleep, she rested. She told me, “Come back in an hour.” An hour later I returned...and the grapefruit was as flat as a pancake. That meant that she had such a power to absorb vitality that she had absorbed all the life from the fruit and it had become soft and completely flat. And I saw that myself! You may try, you won’t succeed! (Laughter)

Another time—and this is even more amusing... But first I shall tell you a little about Tlemcen, which you probably don’t know. Tlemcen is a small town in southern Algeria, almost on the borders of the Sahara. The town itself is built in the valley which is surrounded by a circle of mountains, not very high but nevertheless higher than hills. And the valley is very fertile, verdurous, magnificent. The population there is mainly Arabs and rich merchants; indeed, the city is very prosperous—it was, for I don’t know what it is like now; I am speaking to you about
things that happened at the beginning of this century — there were very prosperous merchants there and from time to time these Arabs came to pay a visit to Monsieur X. They knew nothing, understood nothing, but they were very interested.

One day, towards evening, one of these people arrived and started asking questions, ludicrous ones besides. Then Madame X said to me, “You will see, we are going to have a little fun.” In the verandah of the house there was a big dining-table, a very large table, like that, quite wide, with eight legs, four on each side. It was really massive, and heavy. Chairs had been arranged to receive this man, at a little distance from the table. He was at one end, Madame X at the other; I was seated on one side, Monsieur X also. All four of us were there. Nobody was near the table, all of us were at a distance from it. And so, he was asking questions, as I said rather ludicrous ones, on the powers one could have and what could be done with what he called “magic”.... She looked at me and said nothing but sat very still. Suddenly I heard a cry, a cry of terror. The table started moving and with an almost heroic gesture went to attack the poor man seated at the other end! It went and bumped against him.... Madame X had not touched it, nobody had touched it. She had only concentrated on the table and by her vital power had made it move. At first the table had wobbled a little, then had started moving slowly, then suddenly, as in one bound, it flung itself on that man, who went away and never came back!

She also had the power to dematerialise and rematerialise things. And she never said anything, she did not boast, she did not say, “I am going to do something”, she did not speak of anything; she just did it quietly. She did not attach much importance to these things, she knew they were just a proof that there are other forces than purely material ones.

When I used to go out in the evenings — towards the end of the afternoon I used to go for a walk with Monsieur X to see the countryside, go walking in the mountains, the neighbouring villages — I used to lock my door; it was a habit with me, I
always locked my door. Madame X would rarely go out, for the reasons I have already mentioned, because she was in a trance most of the time and liked to stay at home. But when I returned from the walk and opened my door — which was locked, and therefore nobody could have entered — I would always find a kind of little garland of flowers on my pillow. They were flowers which grew in the garden, they are called Belles de Nuit;\(^2\) we have them here, they open in the evening and have a wonderful fragrance. There was a whole alley of them, with big bushes as high as this; they are remarkable flowers — I believe it’s the same here — on the same bush there are different coloured flowers: yellow, red, mixed, violet. They are tiny flowers like... bluebells; no, rather like the convolvulus, but these grow on bushes — convolvulus is a creeper, these are bushes — we have some here in the garden. She always used to put some behind her ears, for they have a lovely smell, oh! delightfully beautiful. And so, she used to take a walk in the alley between these big bushes which were quite high, and she gathered flowers, and — when I came back, these flowers were in my room!... She never told me how she did it, but she certainly did not go in there. Once she said to me, “Were there no flowers in your room?” — “Ah! yes, indeed,” I said. And that was all. Then I knew it was she who had put them there.

I could tell you many stories, but I shall finish with this one she had told me, which I did not see myself.

As I was telling you, Tlemcen is very near the Sahara and it has a desert climate except that in the valley a river flows which never dries up and makes the whole country very fertile. But the mountains were absolutely arid. Only in the part occupied by farmers did something grow. Now, Monsieur X’s park — a large estate — was, as I said, a marvellous place... everything grew there, everything one could imagine and to a magnificent size. Now, she told me — they had been there a very long time — that

\(^2\) *Mirabilis*, Marvel of Peru; significance given by Mother: Réconfort, Solace.
about five or six years before, I think, they had felt that these barren mountains might one day cause the river to dry up and that it would be better to plant trees there; and the administrator of Tlemcen ordered trees to be planted on all the neighbouring hills; a wide amphitheatre, you know. He said that pine trees should be planted, for in Algeria the sea-pine grows very well. And they wanted to try it. Well, for some reason or other—forgetfulness or fantasy, heaven knows!—instead of ordering pine trees they ordered fir trees! Fir trees belong to Scandinavian countries, not at all to desert lands. And very conscientiously all these fir trees were planted. Now Madame X saw this and I believe she felt like making an experiment. So it happened that four or five years later these fir trees had not only grown but had become magnificent and when I went to Tlemcen the mountains all around were absolutely green, magnificent with trees. She said to me, “You see, these are not pine trees, they are fir trees”, and indeed they were—you know fir trees are Christmas trees, don’t you?—they were fir trees. Then she told me how after three years when the fir trees had grown, suddenly one day or rather one December night, as she had just gone to bed and put out her light, she was awakened by a tiny little noise—she was very sensitive to noise; she opened her eyes and saw something like a moonbeam—there was no moon that night—lighting up a corner of her room. And she noticed that a little gnome was there, like the ones you see in the fairy-tales of Norway and Sweden, Scandinavian fairy-tales. He was a tiny little fellow with a big head, a pointed cap, pointed shoes of dark green, a long white beard, and all covered with snow.

So she looked at him—her eyes were open—she looked at him and said, “But... Eh! what are you doing here?”—she was a little worried, for in the warmth of her room the snow was melting and making a little pool on the floor of her room. “But what are you doing here!”

Then he smiled at her, gave her his sweetest smile and said, “But we were called by the fir trees! Fir trees call the snow. They
are trees of the snow countries. I am the Lord of the Snow, so I came to announce to you that... we are coming. We have been called, we are coming.”

“Snow?... But we are near the Sahara!”

“Ah! then you shouldn’t have planted fir trees.”

Finally she told him, “Listen, I don’t know if what you tell me is true, but you are spoiling my floor. Go away!”

So he went away. The moonlight went with him. She lit a lamp — for there was no electricity — she lit a lamp and saw... a little pool of water in the place where he had stood. So it was not a dream, there really was a little being whose snow had melted in her room. And the next morning when the sun rose, it rose upon mountains covered with snow. It was the first time, it had never been seen before in that country.

Since then, every winter — not for long, just for a little while — all the mountains are covered with snow.

So that’s my story.