

**THROUGH
THE
MISTS**

R. J. Lees

A timeless classic of the Spiritual Life

TO THE READER

I heard, within my spirit home, a wail: -
“If only one could come - could tell the tale
Of his experience on that other side;
Could rend the mists - could fling the portals wide,
That we might see - might understand - might know!”
The agony disturbed me, and my heart said – “Go!”
Love cheers me on, but ignorance resists
The power by which I hand this ‘Through the Mists.’

THE AUTHOR.

RECORDER'S NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION

I have no desire to add anything to the following story more than a brief explanation of its origin, and my connection with the same.

It was Christmas Eve, and I was busily engaged with some annuals lying on my table, when a stranger - uninvited and unannounced - entered my room 'while the door was shut.' His presence did not disturb me, since I had entertained such visitors before; so, pointing to a seat, I bade him welcome, and asked the purpose of his coming.

He then explained to me a desire he had long cherished, and asked if I would aid him in its consummation. As soon as his mind comprehended the fact that he had passed the grave, a yearning possessed him to find some means of coming back, and telling how men erred in their conception of that life beyond. At first he feared he had no power to break the silence of the tomb, but with experience came the knowledge of the omnipotence of love, by which the lips of death could be unsealed, the proof of which was granted in our conversation. He desired me to write what he should dictate, then give his story to the world.

How could I answer "No!" Was not I, in common with every human being, seeking for that knowledge he had the power to give? Therefore I did not hesitate to take my pen.

I soon discovered his recital, though unorthodox, threw a flood of light upon the Bible teaching, clearing clouds of doubt away, and reconciling passages therein I could not understand before. He came to me a stranger, but I soon learned to love him, and awaited his return with impatience every morning; now, when he has ceased his record for the present, I look upon the seat whereon he sat so many hours as being in some mysterious manner half-way 'Through the Mists.'

In sending this forth in obedience to his wish, let me append the prayer he breathed when last he left me:- "May God, the Father of the souls of all men, bless this effort of a yearning heart to lift a portion of the weight of ignorance from the shoulders of his brethren in the flesh; and grant that the light of its truth may be a lamp unto their feet in coming 'Through the Mists.'" To this I add Amen!

ROBT. JAS. LEES.

May 1898.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD IMPRESSION

The necessity for a third impression of this book affords a welcome opportunity of expressing my sense of gratitude for having been chosen as the instrument through which this gospel of hope and comfort has been revealed to the world. Nor do I speak for myself alone, but the author, who is present with me as I write, also desires to add a similar confession for himself. His hope and endeavour was to reach and comfort a few of the wounded sons and daughters of sorrow, but already the testimony of ministry to a multitude lies before us, and now in company with its promised continuation – ‘The Life Elysian’ - we send it forth again to carry on its healing mission in other spheres.

In this connection I desire to answer an oft-repeated question and say that my note to the original edition as to how the book originated is to be taken as a literal fact. The volume is not a novel, nor in any sense a tour-de-force of the imagination, but - stupendous as the assertion may appear - so far as I am concerned, it is the record of experiences dictated to me by a visitor from that ‘home of the soul’ to which we are all hastening onward.

Many others, doubtless anxious to be favoured by similar experiences as those I have now so long enjoyed, have asked how they may be attained to. Such an inquiry is not easily answered. Still, after long and prayerful consultation, my friends in the beyond, who understand these things so much better than myself, came to the conclusion to set the process indicatively before the world for the benefit of those who chose to profit by it. This was done, and may be read in the volume entitled ‘The Heretic,’ in which, following the example of Charles Dickens in his ‘David Copperfield’ - while the book is a story and in no sense a biography - the nature of the connection existing between us may be clearly traced, with the successive demands made to test my loyalty and devotion, and then the nature of the reward with which they have more than repaid my humble services.

It is, however, impossible for me to promise that another following in the same steps shall meet with identical experiences. ‘God giveth to every man severally as He will.’¹ As Paul says to the Corinthians: ‘There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.’²

That spiritual gifts were to be the heritage of the followers of Christ is surely beyond question. That they were not intended to be withdrawn, but were promised to as ‘many as the Lord our God shall call,’³ the history of saints in all ages and the invasions of the present day testify, for ‘God is no respecter of persons,’⁴ and ‘whatsoever He doeth it shall be for ever.’⁵ I can say no more.

ROBT. JAS. LEES.

ENGELBERG, ILFRACOMBE,

November 1st 1905.

CHAPTER I

COMING THROUGH THE MISTS

In my earth-life I was called a misanthrope. This is a strange admission with which to break my silence, but being now beyond the consequences to which such frankness might lead, I have no reason - even though I had the will - to speak with less reserve. If any apology be demanded for the pleasant task I have undertaken, let it be found in the ceaseless wail to which I have referred to in my preface to these pages. Is my statement true in that respect? I bid you turn that question inwards. Ask your own heart, and I will be content to take the answer, merely adding that as you are, so is all mankind.

Pardon me one or two sentences in necessary explanation of myself before I carry you across the borders of the other world. My life was overshadowed by the consequences of some prenatal trouble of which I knew nothing, save the phantom remaining to haunt me, and that it robbed me of a mother's guiding hand. My father was an inflexible Calvinist, with a mode of life as carefully arranged as an architectural elevation, while its working details were as rigorously insisted upon. An elder of the Presbyterian Church, with a banking account of sufficient magnitude to allow him to live a life of most unquestioning faith, he spent all the years of his pilgrimage free from the shadow of reproach.

My brother and sister were not so strictly inclined, and their almost open rebellion, as they grew, by no means tended to soften my father's character. For myself I neither received from, nor extended to, any member of the household any sympathy. No one ever spoke to me of my mother - her name, in fact, was seldom mentioned - but I always felt that had she lived we should have been all in all to each other, but she was gone, and I was left alone! Books were my only companions - the poets my greatest favourites. My earliest recollections are of the religious baby-farm to which I had been entrusted, whose managers I learned to loathe for the duplicity and hypocrisy they habitually practised there. With a naturally morbid mind, the shadow of some unknown wrong above me, and a soul shrinking from the appearance of deceit, I soon learned to hate those who did not hesitate to lie in act and prayer, and plead with God to grant success to infamy.

By these things I was gradually led to draw all my comfort from books, and to entertain a great aversion to any fellowship with those about me.

I was naturally of a religious turn of mind, but preferred to solve its questions by the light of my own reason and the plain teachings of the Bible as I could comprehend them. A practical acquaintance with the public worship of the various sects only confirmed my original idea of there being much more of form and fashion than solid worship or spirit in them all, therefore in this, as in everything else, I learned to rely upon myself alone, and trust to the leniency and justice of a righteous God in respect to any error resulting from my honest endeavour to do His will according to the light within me.

Nevertheless, I had companionship and sweet communion in my worship, after this manner: Led by some influence, to me nothing less than an inspiration, I would find myself in one of the courts and alleys so numerous in the East of London, where vice, poverty, and wretchedness most abound; where help, though urgently needed, is seldom met with; where the inhabitants are not learned in metaphysics, but hunger for the bread of practical sympathy. Among such outcast and fallen members of our common humanity, I always found I had a sermon to preach which was comprehended in every part, a gospel to proclaim that they would gladly hear, a seed to sow which brought forth fruit sixty or a hundredfold.

If the Church was right, and I at the last found that I was wrong, the gratitude which these poor unfortunates showed for the interest I took in them would be sufficient to make the pains of my punishment not only bearable but welcome. There would be plenty of good people in Heaven to ensure the happiness of every soul who should gain an entrance to those streets of gold. I had no voice to sing, and if the religious conversation on earth were fair specimens of what would be the standard there, the goody-goodness would have no charm for me. Forced into such society, without any congenial work to do, the place would have no interest - no attraction - for me. It was not my idea of Heaven, consequently I did not want it.

It would be very different with the poor, cast adrift into that other place - for if the Church was right the division would be made more upon those lines than any other. The rich build the temples, keep them out of financial difficulties, are constant at the means of grace, make them fashionable, provide everything necessary to worship God in the beauty of architecture and ritual, while they generously subscribe towards the salary of the minister; paying in every way for their salvation, it is but right and honest they should meet with their reward. But the poor, who have to work long hours, with nothing to give, scarcely one suit to wear, and that unpleasantly suggestive by the odours of the workshop, with their vulgar habits and loud-voiced song, for whose accommodation the white-washed, ill-lighted, draughty mission hall is provided, have no right to expect such an abundant entrance as those who contribute better while they live, and can be drawn in a four-horse hearse when they take their departure.

For this reason the poor always had my sympathy. When I thought upon the subject, I often felt as if I should be glad to find the pearly gates shut upon me, if by that means I could be some little consolation to the multitudes in hell. It was wicked - blasphemous - to feel so, so the vicar once told me; but it was constitutional - part of my unfortunate malady, and he found it useless to attempt to change my mind.

I never could understand the righteousness of poverty here and damnation there; or the logical sequence of riches here and salvation there. It was not according to my reading of the Bible, or the teaching of Jesus in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, as I understood the

English language. It may have been a defect in my power of analogy, but if so I held to the delusion.

It was one evening, when on my way to visit some of these uncared-for people, that the great change overtook me. I was walking along a crowded footpath, engaged in the contemplation of the lights and shadows visible on the faces of passers-by, when I heard a scream, and saw a child in deadly peril among the horses in the road. He was not far away, so bounding forward - with no thought but for his safety - I reached and dragged him from his hazardous position, then turned, and...

Something touched me. I clasped the boy more firmly and stepped forward. The noise ceased, vehicles and street faded away, as if some great magician had waved his wand, the darkness disappeared, and I was lying upon a grassy slope in an enchanted land.

Neither did all the changes lie in our surroundings. Few people would have been enamoured of the ragged child I rushed to save, with his shoeless feet, matted hair, and unwashed face; but the angel I found lying upon my breast would have driven an artist into raptures. For myself, in that instant, I had changed my morning suit for a loosely flowing robe which somehow seemed to be a part of myself; and though I was fully assured of my own individuality. I was curious to know what had taken place, and by what means, in the interval of one solitary step, a transformation of such completeness had been effected.

The lad, though evidently conscious of the alteration, looked into my face with calm laughing eyes, void of any trace of fear; perhaps he expected me to give some explanation, but I needed that myself. Then he buried his head in my shoulder and fell asleep. I sat and nursed him, trying to answer the only question which occupied my mind – “Where are we?”

I was reclining upon the grass of what can only be described as the auditorium of an immense but natural amphitheatre, with the arena occupied by a multitude who appeared to be engaged in the reception of strangers, whom they were welcoming and congratulating. If only I could have understood it, the scene would have been as pleasing as it was brilliant, but, under the circumstances, my feelings were more of curiosity than of appreciation. It resembled the performance of an elaborate tableau of which I held no descriptive programme, being alike ignorant of the place, the players and the purpose. This was all that I could understand: - There were two classes of persons represented - the one, evidently residents, attired in garments embracing almost every shade of colour with which I was familiar, and some the like of which I had never seen before, and therefore have no means to make you understand. The other, by far the smaller of the two, gave me the idea of strangers, who, having just arrived, stood in need of the help and assistance so freely proffered. Where did they come from, I asked myself? To this I was enabled to find a somewhat satisfactory reply. Before me lay a plain, across which numbers were continually coming and going; at its further side I saw a heavy bank of fog lying, the outlines of which were boldly portrayed as if confined within certain limitations. The atmosphere was so

unusually clear, that although the fog was perhaps some two miles distant from where I lay, I could easily discern that they entered the plain from that direction. I now became intensely interested in something which baffled my powers to determine whether it was real or an optical illusion. I noticed that the variegated colour of the dresses worn by those who went from us towards the mists gradually faded, until in the distance but one uniform tone of grey was visible; on the contrary, as they, returned the original hues were as mysteriously restored. It seemed to me, at length, as if some magical influence was exerted by that vapour or that the plain was one which might legitimately, be called enchanted.

The moment I saw the fog I was conscious of a cold chill running through me, not due to any change of temperature, which was warm and genial, but such as one experiences at the thought of leaving a cosy fire to become enveloped in the piercing mist of autumn or early winter. What caused this is more than I can say - perhaps it was sympathy with those I saw emerging from such surroundings; for many were so overcome they scarcely had the strength to reach the open plain; while for some the watchers plunged into the mists and carried them through; others being borne all the way across the plain before they had the power to stand upon their feet.

How long I was thus employed I cannot tell, but suddenly my attention was attracted to someone standing beside me and I arose, for the first time becoming aware that the slope whereon I had been sitting was occupied by many, evidently strangers, like myself. This, however, did not interest me so much just then as it would previously have done; all my mind being centred upon the person who stood beside me, in the hope that he would be able to solve the problem so perplexing to me.

He divined my purpose before I had time to frame a question, and, stretching out his hands towards the still sleeping lad, said :

“There is someone coming who will answer all your enquiries, my duty is to take the boy.”

“To take the boy?” I answered, scarcely knowing whether I ought to give him up. “Where? Home?”

“Yes!”

“But how shall we get back? How did we come here? Where are we?”

“You must be patient for a little while,” he answered, “then you will know and understand all about it.”

“But, tell me, is this delirium or a dream?”

“No! You will find you have been dreaming; now you are awake.”

“Then, please, tell me where we are, and how we came here; I am so perplexed to know that.”

“You are in a land of surprises, but you need not fear, it will bring for you nothing but rest and compensation.”

“That only increases my difficulty,” I said entreatingly.

“But just now it was night in London, where I saved that boy from being run over. Then everything faded like a flash and I found we were here. Where then, is this place. - What do you call it?”

“The land of immortality?”

“What! - Dead? - How?”

I was conscious of falling back a step as the stupendous announcement fell upon my ears, but there was something so reassuring in his manner that I instinctively returned and grasped the hand he held out to give me welcome. Among all the theories by which I had tried to solve the mystery, this one had never suggested itself - it would not have been entertained for a moment if it had, while the unexpected surroundings would have warranted me in dismissing it. I was astonished at the unquestioning faith with which I accepted his declaration, while his sympathetic composure absolutely forbade any sense of agitation as the startling truth was fully comprehended.

“No! Not dead!” he replied, after a moment’s pause.

Did you ever know dead men to talk, and be surprised? When a boy leaves home for school, or school to take his part in the more serious events of life - when a girl leaves her father’s for her husband’s home, have you been in the habit of saying they were dead? Certainly not! Neither are you right in supposing you are dead since passing through the change which has overtaken you.”

“But I have made an unmistakable exit from one world and an entrance into another; therefore while I am alive to this new life, I am dead to that which I have left behind.”

“You will now be called upon to enlarge your conceptions and ideas; as your homes on earth are separate habitations, and nations form the dominions of different kings, so the various states and worlds in this life become the many mansions in the universal kingdom of our Father-God. Therefore you are only dead to earth in the same way as the schoolboy dies as a scholar, but has the greater power of a teacher; or as the girl ceases to be a resident, and becomes a visitor.”

“I do not understand you,” I replied.

“Let me give you the outline of a parable over which you may reflect until someone else is sent to afford you clearer information. Children are coaxed to sleep on earth by the singing of nursery rhymes, the fabulous heroes of which become historical characters in the minds of the little listeners, until the realities of life dispel the illusion. So children of a larger growth, upon entering this life, find that even so have they been lulled to spiritual slumber by the fictions of the nurses of their souls. It is the awakening to the truth of this fact which makes this a land of surprises, as you will find it to be as you proceed. But now I must leave

you and take our little brother to the children's home, where you will meet him again presently."

With a kindly salutation he departed, and I was left alone to think on all he had said. His parable was pregnant with revelation that the future alone could intelligently unfold, but one thing was evident - I had taken the irrevocable step - had solved the grand secret; yet what had I learned? I was merely waiting with the knowledge that the act of dying had been unconsciously accomplished. What would be the result? Whatever it might be I could not now go back; I had to meet my fate. One thing I had been assured: there was no need to fear. I did not - was not even anxious - I was content. So I waited and pondered.

CHAPTER II

THE JUDGEMENT HALL

My reflections ran in something like the following strain:

A land of surprises, is it? Yes! And why did he not say a land of revelation as well? How long have I been here? An hour - a day - a month? I know not. By my idea of time it seems as if I had but just made that attempt to save the boy; but measured by the revelation, I feel as if I had been here for years.

How strange that I should have no knowledge how I came away! I did not fall - felt no pain - had no indication of reviving from a swoon - how was it? How many people cloud their lives with fear born of the dread they feel of dying; how many teachers delight to dwell upon the terrors of that hour when the soul stands face to face with death? How vastly different has my experience been!

I wonder whether among all the surprises of this life I shall find it possible --

"Oh, God! I know not yet where Thou art, or who Thou art; but the revelation which has been given to me is full of love and bright with promise, therefore I feel it has come from Thee, and fills my soul with hope. I know not yet if I am saved or lost; but in Thy mercy hear me, and in Thy pity for the sons of men, permit me, if it be possible by some means which I do not know - by some method Thy love is able to devise - once more to make my voice to reach the mortal state, and help to lift the weight of error lying upon the shoulders of my fellow-men. Thou knowest, O my God, the blindness and ignorance of those who now profess to lead Thy children on. Many have not tasted Thy great love; many have not felt Thy grace; many are groping in the dark, blinded by the traditions of men; many have wandered from the fold. The songs of Zion have been forgotten in the greed for fame, and wealth, and power; and weary pilgrims tramp their homeward way, with sighs, and groans, and tears, beating time to the rhythm of their march. If any joy is here for me, O God, my Father, I am ready now to forfeit it. If the penalty I must pay is agony in hell, I am willing

to endure it, if in Thy mercy Thou wilt send me back, with power to tell the truth of Thy unchanging love, and lift the load of doubt from those who, seeking, know Thee not.”

Is it wrong of me to say I know not where or who God is? Perhaps so! But it is honest, and I cannot but think that honesty is right. Everything around me is so contrary to what I expected, I feel afraid to trust to anything I knew; and the torment of yearning for my fellows to know the truth as far as I behold it, force me to breathe that prayer. If some strong hand could, but for an instant, tear the veil aside, and bid the multitudes of earth behold the future as it really is, what a revelation it would be! How it would change their sighs to songs, remove all doubts of God’s eternal love, and proclaim a gospel for which all hearts are crying. It would be to earth what it is to me; I who more than once, or twice, or thrice had been cautioned that the life I led could only meet with condemnation at the bar of God; and yet I found the first words addressed to me were words of hope and encouragement - ‘I need not fear’ - How different a declaration is made on earth, where the love of God is limited to suit the requirements of every sect, while wrath and retribution are left as infinite quantities to drive the sinner to salvation. What can such teachers think when they awake to a knowledge of the truth as I have found it here?

“Here! But where is ‘here’? That is a question that has not yet been satisfactorily answered. Is it heaven? No; surely not! Or if so, how strangely different from the harping, singing, crown-decked throng the Church expects to find. It is not - ! No! All the surroundings are just as incapable of such an interpretation. What then can be the condition of this place? Is it possible that there is an intermediate state after all? Perhaps so! And over the crest of these hills the judgment throne may stand to which I shall be summoned by and by. I had not thought of that; but the suggestion comes without a trace of fear, the words I have heard fill me with hope which I am sure can never be betrayed. Whatever the issue may be I am content to learn it in the usual course of events, in the meantime I will rest.”

It is a popular idea that our entrance to the spirit-world will be greeted by friends and relatives who have preceded us, and in in any cases this is so; but strange to say, even after I had learned the nature of the change which had come over me, the thought of such a meeting never occurred to me, until I felt, rather than heard, someone call my name. I turned, and saw a young woman, clad in the daintiest of pink robes, coming down the hill towards me. I was not sure, but thought her face bore a resemblance to one I had known in the long ago, except that the old furrows of care and want had been transformed into lines and curves of beauty. I had long since forgotten her, but she remembered me, and with eyes brilliant with welcome, and hands extended to clasp my own, she was the first of all I knew to greet me.

“A thousand welcomes” she cried, as she grasped my hands; “I have but just received the news of your coming; am I the first to meet you?”

“Yes, Helen, the first of all I know.”

“I am glad of that; I always hoped it would be so. I have watched, and prayed and waited for it; it is all I can do to thank you.”

“Thank me for what?” I asked in astonishment.

“I need not tell you that,” she answered. “Our Father knows, and He will repay you.”

At that moment I found that heaven is quite as much a condition of the soul as a locality, and true friendship is a great factor in completing that condition. Only a short time before Helen’s advent I had almost satisfactorily assured myself that I was not yet in heaven, but her appearance had reversed the decision. It had brought me such an overwhelming sense of joy. I was so satisfied, I had no conception there could be more happiness to follow; and this resulted from the presence of one to whom I had been but imperfectly known on earth.

Her story, so far as I knew it, was not a long one. Her mother had died of sheer starvation in her endeavour to maintain three children and a sick husband by her labours as a charwoman, supplemented by Helen’s scanty wages in a match factory. The girl was but fifteen years of age when the whole burden of that home fell upon her shoulders in its heavier form of greatly diminished means. Bravely she struggled on, toiling far beyond her strength to keep the wolf of hunger at bay, and save the home from its threatened destruction. But the wages for matchmaking are more easily counted in coppers than gold, and the little extra she could earn in other ways was but a drop in the ocean of their requirements, so she fell in the heat of the battle, crushed and broken-hearted.

I learned her story just before her death, and called to see her in the hospital where she was lying. On several days I sat for half an hour or so trying to comfort her with the assurance that the children would be cared for when she was taken away, for I found the uncertainty as to their welfare was the sharpest thorn in her dying pillow. She was deaf to the missionary’s entreaties to prepare her soul for death. - She had no fear for that. - Did not care about herself. She wanted to know the children would be safe, and when I gave her a solemn promise she grew calm and closed her eyes in peace.

Her personal connection with those children I had long forgotten, since our acquaintance was of such brief duration; but in the first moments of that re-union I felt I had discovered one of those consolations for which I had long been seeking - a sister’s love.

“Are you surprised that I should be the first to meet you?” she asked.

“I can scarcely say; surprises double on each other so rapidly that I begin to think they are natural here.”

“If not surprised, are you glad that you have met me once again?”

“Yes, Helen! More than glad,” I answered, “for your sake quite as much as for my own. You have been happier here than you expected, have you not?”

“Yes! Much happier; and it has always seemed to be increased by your assurances that it would be so. Once I almost feared you were wrong; but when I found that you were right, for your sake I was increasingly glad.”

“It always appeared to me,” I responded, “ that whatever was done for love’s sake could not be wrong. I did not profess to know much about God, and now I am conscious of knowing even less than I thought, still I have not changed my idea.”

“Why, ‘God is love,’ Fred; that is all we know about Him. ‘That which is born of love is also born of God.’⁶ Come home with me and let me tell you what I have learned about Him since I came here.”

“Not yet,” I answered. “You must not forget that I have just arrived, and do not know where I have to go at present.”

“You will learn all about that as you proceed,” she said, as she turned to go; “come with me now.”

“But have I no one to see? Is there no - ”

She saw the perplexity and uncertainty which must have been so plainly visible upon my face, at which she smiled and asked:

“Is it the judgment seat you are looking for?”

“Yes! For at present I know nothing of my position, nor where I must go.”

“Fred, get the earth ideas out of your head as soon as possible.

You have already passed the judgment hall, and carry its verdict in the dress you wear.”

“Passed it? Where? I have no knowledge!”

“Perhaps not; but it lies there in those mists from which you see so many coming into the plain,” and as she spoke she pointed in the direction to which my attention had been previously called.

“Is that the way I came?” I asked.

“Yes; that is the only way of entrance into this life!”

“I knew nothing of it - was not conscious of anything until I found myself lying here where we are now standing.”

“That is quite possible, since yours was one of those sudden passages which hurry you so quickly into this state as to leave no consciousness of the event. I often think it is a great blessing to come in such a way.”

“Why? But do I weary you with my questions?”

“No. It will be a pleasure to tell you as much as possible though, as I have not been here so very long, you will have many questions to ask that I cannot answer, and will have to submit them to others who know more than me.”

“I feel that you are just the teacher that I require at present, since all is so different from what I expected. I am like a child with everything to learn.”

“I shall be glad to tell you what I can; but you must not talk of being tired, for no one wearing our colour can grow weary.”

“Wearing our colour” I repeated, not knowing what she meant.

“Yes. You will presently understand that the colour of the dress is an indication of the condition of the wearer; but you cannot grasp this until you have seen it for yourself.”

“But tell me why you think it best to enter this life in the manner in which I came?”

“If you will regard the entrance of a soul into this life as birth, rather than death, and the sickness preceding it as a more or less prolonged labour, with a corresponding prostration to follow, you will understand me better. See,” she continued, pointing towards the mists, “how many have to be assisted - some even carried - into life; how some pause to gain strength to come forward, and tell me, do you not think it preferable to come as you have done?”

“When you consider it in that light of course it is; but you know we have been taught to look upon it from the other side.”

“That is a great error, which has to be corrected here. Man practically regards the earth life as the chief, rather than the subordinate condition of existence. As a spiritual being, he should be educated to look upon everything from a spiritual standpoint, in the same way as a schoolboy is encouraged to regard his studies in the light of what they will afterwards enable him to accomplish. Earth is not all, neither is it a finality of development, but rather the elementary stage, upon which this is the next advance, while the errors of the lower state have to be uprooted here before we can assume the positions we should be fitted to enter upon on our arrival; this, however will be more forcibly illustrated for you presently.”

“I am anxious to hear something about that judgment hall. If I came through it unconsciously, as I must have done, how can a righteous sentence be passed upon a man in such a condition?”

“The idea of the judgment hall is another misapprehension owing to the literal interpretation of what was only intended as a parabolic metaphor.”

“Do you mean that I have no knowledge of it, for the simple reason that no such place exists?” I asked.

“So far as there being a regular trial and sentence by a personal judge, it is a fiction; the verdict of the bar of God is more just and unerring than that could be, and asks no evidence other than the defendant offers. The text which hung above my bed in the hospital is the law upon which that judgment is given, and from which no appeal is asked or granted – ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.’⁷ Justice cannot miscarry, since no man is called to give evidence against his fellow. As the

soul comes into contact with those mists, it separates from the flesh, and is stripped of any false and seeming character, which may have been assumed, no matter under what circumstances or for what purpose. The function of the mists is to dissolve everything but the spiritual. There all the seals of life are broken, everything which has been hidden is revealed, the books are opened wide, whether to acquit or to condemn. It would be just as rational to expect a builder to say, as he put the final touches to a cottage, 'that ought to have been a cathedral, and I believe it is'; or for a farmer to say to his men, 'that field of turnips should have been wheat, and I believe it is; go and reap it,' and find their belief honoured in the transformation, as for a man, when he feels the chill of dissolution upon him, to think that by the acceptance of any creed or system of belief, he can, in that moment of fear, eradicate the evils of a life-time, and receive an abundant entrance into everlasting joy. No, Fred! As the mortal drops away there is evolved from the spirit a natural covering in accordance with its life and character, the colour being determined by the acts and motives of the past - not by the creeds it has held or the professions it has made - and that colour is the righteous sentence which the soul has passed upon itself by virtue of the invariable law of God."

"Then you subordinate faith to works?"

"Works are to faith precisely what the spirit is to the body - the life. 'Faith without works is dead,' therefore faith can only be manifested by works. The teaching of Jesus is 'Inasmuch as ye did it,' not believed it, and nothing but love and noble deeds are able to enter this life in company with the soul; all forms of belief are lost in yonder mists."

"Who then can be saved?"

"We hope that every individual child will be, ultimately, and I think if one shall be excepted it will be his own fault entirely."

"Why so?"

"Because that judgment is not final, it only determines what position the soul must assume on entering this life, it has still the power to elevate itself as well as the assistance of others who are always working to raise those in the conditions beneath them. Thus the sentence is not for eternity and vindictive; it is probationary and remedial."

"Why, Helen, do you mean to say there is no hell?"

"Not by any means; we have hells of torment far worse than your imagination can picture, but they are only purifying conditions and have been provided in the fullness of our Father's love, as you will presently be made to understand."

"I have been fortunate in finding such a teacher to correct my ignorance," I said. "Before I saw you I felt like a child at school whose education had been sadly neglected; but now, it seems that all I know is wrong, and has to be uprooted."

“You will find that full provision has been made for all corrections as you proceed,” she answered. “And knowledge is easily acquired by those who wish to learn. It is an active life upon which you enter; every person capable of work has some appointed mission, so that we are all ‘workers together with God.’ My place for the present is here, to meet those who have just arrived, so I have been especially instructed in such matters as are first enquired into.”

“If the verdict is given upon works alone, who are they who receive the abundant entrance promised so liberally to believers?” I asked.

“In that judgment,” she answered, “every act, motive, and attendant circumstance in the life of a man has its legitimate consideration, and is appraised at its sterling value, and the balance struck accordingly. Acts of charity originating in expediency are gauged by the attainment of the object desired, and leave no balance to the life’s account; munificent philanthropy bestowed for political or selfish purposes is recompensed by the approbation it received; the building and endowment of a hospital or church by wealth amassed in the drink or such like traffic, is counterbalanced by the shattered lives and ruined homes of its many victims. Self-sacrificing love, to relieve pain, distress and want, not done to be seen of men, but from sympathy with the weak and unfortunate brother; the motive which prompts a man to give what he himself may need, to lessen the sufferings of another; the patient endurance of wrong until the Father determines to avenge; the charity which rises to the defence of the weak against the strong, at the expense of obloquy and shame; the heart which refuses to condemn when appearances are black because the whole circumstances are not known; the man who, when injured, steps in to break the blow of justice because he too would wish to be forgiven;- these are they who, in that judgment, lift up their heads and hear ‘well-done.’ This makes all men equal in their advantages and adds commensurate responsibility where wealth or power has been entrusted.”

“Would you teach men to repudiate wealth?” I asked.

“Certainly not; but we would teach them that every gift is only held in stewardship, and that they will be called upon to render an account in the mists. Our Father has placed upon earth enough to supply the needs and give some comforts to every one of his children; but the strong have taken away the portion of the weak, until luxury and starvation abounds. Is this right? No! And at the judgment, the plea that the wealth so held was honourably acquired will not avail, since God designs that it must also be, lovingly dispensed. Take one such man, who, having made division of his wealth among his children, saw the elder taking the portion of the younger son away; think you that father would be willing to complacently allow the wrong? Shall God be less just than we demand a man should be? Of course not! The bond of brotherhood is more powerful than legal right in the sight of God, and the verdict of His court is given in accordance with family responsibility, not mercantile law.”

“Suppose one was anxious to carry out a good work but pressure of circumstances prevented. How would that be regarded?”

“That will be more ably explained to you by others presently, but in the meantime I can partially answer it by telling you of one of the first receptions I attended after my arrival.”

“Do you hold receptions then in heaven?”

“Yes. Though they are somewhat different to yours. When any friends go across the boundary to bring a pilgrim home, we call it a reception. That I refer to was one of those abundant entrances you speak of, and Omra went to welcome the brother.”

“Who is Omra?”

“The governor of this state, and the highest spirit I have seen except Jesus.”

“Have you seen Him, Helen?”

“Yes, once; but He was at a distance from me, so I did not speak to Him. But to tell you of this reception. The man we went to meet was an inmate of a workhouse, but there were thousands of spirits present to receive him.”

“From a workhouse?”

“Yes! I shall never forget the scene. When Omra drew near to the bed, the closing eyes caught a sight of him, and the coming saint cried to his friend, who was asleep on a chair beside him: ‘John! John! I am going now; someone has come for me! John! Don’t you see how light the room is? See, the angels! And - and- No! Not Jesus! Not for me! Then the poor feeble frame, which had half risen in his excitement, fell back; and the watcher found it cold when he awoke, for the spirit had dropped its veil of flesh.

“As the soul came away, Omra threw his arm around him, and bade him welcome. Then, with a bewildered, almost frightened look, the man gazed upon the host that crowded round him, and, turning to Omra, stammered:

“This – is – not - for me! It is - a mistake! You - did not - come for me?”

“Yes, we did, my brother,” replied Omra; “we do not make mistakes; they are all behind you now.”

“But – but - it cannot be for me. I - I have not - been a good man! My Lord - it must be a mistake! What have I done?”

“Fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and ministered to the sick,” Omra replied.

“Ah! Now I know you are wrong. I have been almost all my life in the work ‘us. I never had any money to do it at all. I know’d it warn’t for me.”

“You once gave your dinner to a hungry lad.” said Omra.

“You gave a pair of boots, you could badly spare, to a wandering tramp; you gave your glasses to a poor old woman who could not see to read, and left yourself in the same

condition; you sat beside an old comrade when he was ill, and nursed him back to health; you have been patient in your enforced poverty, and encouraged others to hope for the best and be contented. – Have you not?”

“Well, yes I did sit beside old Bill, a bit; but he’d ‘a’ done the same for me, if I’d ‘a’ wanted it. I don’t know much about the rest.”

“But we do; such deeds are never forgotten with us, and there are many things you wished to do if you had but had the power. Such honest will is always accepted by God as if the deed had been successfully performed, and so, you see, we are not wrong.”

“By this time he had been carried some distance from his body, and had assumed his new robes, in which he was triumphantly escorted to one of the many mansions prepared for such as he.”

“What a surprise for him,” I remarked, as she concluded; why, it must have been as great as my own. But where are these homes you speak of? I have not seen anything in the shape of a building yet.”

“They are over the crest of the hill; have you not been to the top?”

“No.”

“Come then, let us go; that will enable you to turn your back on the mists, and I will show you the country in another direction.”

CHAPTER III

A PRISMATIC LANDSCAPE

I am not - or was not in the other life - an enthusiast. No person, however imaginative they might have been, would have used such a word in the delineation of my character. Cold, dull, unimpassioned, prosaic, phlegmatic, even stupid, would have been considered appropriate epithets by many; but enthusiastic – never! Such a spirit is born of lively imagination and appreciation, but I had not the one, and was constantly assured I knew nothing of the other; how, then, could I be enthusiastic? This was undoubtedly true of the old life, but does that justify me in saying it is equally so in this? Is the change in character and temperament so slight; are we so much of our old selves, merely translated into new fields and surroundings, that everything which was true in the past is equally true of the present? These were questions which instinctively rose to my mind, but I had not the power or knowledge to answer them. That some changes had taken place I was fully conscious, though whether they were permanent or otherwise I had no means of ascertaining for the present; further experience might show they were prompted for the moment by the strange circumstances crowding upon me. For instance, I was by no means inquisitive in the past, but since I had found myself here I had done nothing but ask: how?

when? whence? or why? from myself and the only two friends I had had the opportunity to speak to.

This undertone of speculation was running through my mind, while my more active senses were delighting in the magnificence of the view I beheld on reaching the summit of the slope. Being quite happy in my original position, and having still a multitude of questions to ask, I was not in the least degree desirous of moving, even though I had been told of the greater beauties of the country I could so easily reach. When Helen made the suggestion, if the choice had been left to me I should have deferred our departure, or, what is more probable moved in the other direction, towards the mists. She seemed perfectly to understand my desire, and said:

“It is quite natural you should wish to go that way, but it would not be well for you at present.”

“Why?” I asked.

“The influences being somewhat unpleasant just now.” she replied, “ you would find it difficult to return; when the attraction is broken there will be no objection to your going to watch the new arrivals.”

“What attraction?” I asked.

“The attraction of your body. When the dissolution takes place so suddenly, as in your case, the magnetic link is not completely severed for a short time, and the soul feels an almost irresistible desire to go back towards the body. The same experience is common to friends still in the body -

Full many a time they say - Good-bye!
Yet still they linger at the door,
And when they tear themselves apart
Love cries - Come back one moment more!

It was to break this influence and set you free that I asked you at first to come home with me; it was too strong upon you then, but now you can accomplish it, so we will go.”

“Do all these who are lying here feel that attraction?” I asked.

“Yes; but they are induced to leave as soon as possible.”

“I see some are not detained at all.”

“No. They have grown weary of the body, and readily part with it, so have nothing to hinder their going to their homes at once.”

“How long does the attraction usually last?”

“It varies considerably, as frequently circumstances over which the soul has no control, are exercised to prevent the desired freedom; for instance, many are held in restraint by grief of friends long after the influence of the body has been overcome.”

“How can that be?”

“I have told you that love is the greatest power we know; of this the soul is conscious so soon as it leaves the body, and the perturbation of friends has therefore a sympathetic attraction, too strong for its resistance; it forms an anchor which binds the spirit to the earth. Sometimes we have much difficulty in counteracting the pernicious influences of grief, which love would certainly prompt the bereaved ones to restrain if they could but once be made to witness the effect it produces.”

“But is not the spirit compelled to come away?”

“No! We use no force in this life under any circumstances. Every person retains the use of his free will, the exercise of which invariably produces its own reward or punishment.”

“Well! The old life has not many attractions for me, and I have no desire to renew it upon the same terms, so we will do as you desire - go forward.”

We reached the summit of the slope, and I stood entranced by the scene which lay before me. From the foot of a gentle declivity, clothed in grass of the richest, softest green I had ever beheld, a landscape stretched away on every side dressed in more, shades of colour than I had power to estimate. I had gazed upon the skies of Italy, beautiful and calm, but the cloudless grandeur of their star-illumined glories was like the cold placidity of death-bound sleep, in contrast with the infinite and vaulted dome of eternal energy beneath which I stood, involuntarily bowing before the baptism of life with which it bathed me. I had seen the magnificence of some Oriental landscapes, with the radiance of a legion colours thrown in rich mosaics all around, but it were profanation to compare such hues and shades and tints with these before my eyes. Pulsations of visible vitality throbbed and trembled in stone and tree and flower, each of which poured forth its rhythmic quota to the harmonic proclamation which sounded from every side that death is swallowed up in victory, and over the threshold of the future - reaching to the horizon of either pole - the legend ran - ‘Life, life, eternal life.’

But why attempt the impossible? Words never yet were able to convey an adequate idea of many scenes on earth, how then can they be used to tell the greater glories which the language of the soul has not the power to paint, but leaves the entranced beholder to understand by silent comprehension. Oh, hearts! the milestones of whose pilgrimage are lettered alternately with battle, defeat, and failure; ye outcast wayfarers, ostracised from all that once was dear; ye who are hungering for a look of sympathy, thirsting for a kindly word, groping for one ray of hope; ye crushed and mangled, maimed and tortured on the rack of social propriety; ye banned and banished from a soulless church, because your weary feet have stumbled by the way; ye martyrs to the greed for wealth, and fame, and power; ye, weary of life’s struggle, all, yea, whosoever will sink down to sleep, and in the wild delirium of your dreams, give rein to all your fantasies; let your imagination conjure before you all you wish for or would dare to crave; picture to yourselves all you think of heaven; revel among the anticipations of what you there would find; then multiply the

product yet a thousand times, and grasp the concept. if you can. But even though you reach the height of this desire, you will not have caught more than a faint reflection of the provision made for the enjoyment of the righteous when their bloodstained feet have reached the goal of heaven.

From the foot of the hill on which I stood, a hundred paths diverged to every part of the landscape, not the monotonous prosaic roads to which earth is so accustomed, but every one had, not a name, but a distinctive colour corresponding with the city or district to which it led. They were arranged so that the darker shades curved themselves on either hand in the foreground, each having, a greater or less depression according to its tone until I lost them as they sank beneath my feet; the lighter tints appeared to have a corresponding elevation, until in the centre of the prospect lay one straight line of faultless white leading to an arc of brilliant purity in the far distance.

Helen left me for a time that I might gaze on the sight undisturbed, and when she returned was accompanied by several friends more or less intimately known to me. We sat down and talked over the events of our past lives, and speculated upon our future prospects with a feeling of restful satisfaction and enjoyment to which I had hitherto been a stranger. Each individual seemed in some inexplicable manner to add to my sense of gladness, and even now when I know so much more of the life then new to me, I look back upon that reunion as one of the sweetest recollections of spirit experience.

“You can begin to understand the significance of the coloured dresses now.” Helen said, during a pause in our conversation.

“Yes! I perceive that each person takes the road corresponding in colour to the dress he wears. But who are those in parti-coloured robes - a combination of pink with electric blue?”

“They are messengers or teachers; it was Eusemos, one of their number, who attended you at the time of your accident, and brought you to the place where I found you. See, that is he, coming to take you away and teach you more than I am able to!”

He was a Greek, and beautiful as an Apollo. Though I had no consciousness of having seen him before, his smile of welcome and recognition forbade the idea that we were strangers. As I rose he caught me in a brother’s embrace, and held me closely to him, without one word to break the hallowed silence of his greeting.

“Are you rested now?” he asked at length.

“Yes,” I answered; “but so bewildered.”

“That is by no means an uncommon experience; the revelations that await the soul on arrival here are calculated to overpower until you have been taught the simple key by which everything is solved.”

“Who will teach me this grand art of solution?” I asked

“I will, if you desire to know it.”

“When?”

“Now if you wish.”

“Who would not wish to learn so great a secret? My soul is hungering for such knowledge. What is the mighty power?”

“Love!” he replied. “This life in all its phases, its multiform developments, its heights and depths, is but a grand commentary on that one word. Love is the only study we pursue, the food we eat, the life we live; and it is to participate in joys of this inexhaustible knowledge that you are now invited, and Myhanene asks me to introduce you to such features of it as I am capable of.”

“Who is Myhanene?” I asked.

“One of the messengers or teachers between this and the next stage of life, who acts as ruler of several cities or circles in this state.”

“But is not God the ruler?”

He is the Supreme, King of kings, and Lord of lords; but under Him are many subordinates - cherubim, seraphim, archangels, ruling over the different dominions and divisions of this life, and Myhanene is one of the lowest authorities.”

“That is another piece of surprising information,” I said.

“So I anticipated” he replied, “though it ought not to be for the fact has been clearly revealed to man; but ‘darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people,’⁸ who in their ignorance have wandered from the way and are lost in the wilderness of doubt, confusion and error.”

“And where does the root of this error lie, as seen from this life?”

“In the doctrine that the soul has to make its eternal and final choice on earth, rather than that being the elementary stage of its unending development. The legitimate duty of earth is to ground the soul in the practical principles of love, in order to fit it for its entrance upon the higher duties of this estate. Abstract speculations in theology are not the studies man is called upon to undertake, especially when his teachers work upon indefinite theories, and have no absolute knowledge. Even here we are not competent to speak upon many matters our brethren in the flesh have settled to their own satisfaction; but we must wait until we reach those conditions in which the necessary faculties will be developed to understand the present mysteries. Advanced instruction in science is not given by pupil teachers to the scholars in an infant class; and our Father knows the requirements and capacities of His children better than to have so designed the course of their spiritual education.”

“I notice how you appeal to reason in all your illustrations,” I said, being anxious to hear his opinion about it.

“Undoubtedly,” he replied. “All laws have their root and centre in God, and are therefore capable of being reasoned upon so far as we can comprehend them. The so-called natural laws are spiritual laws translated into requisite expressions for physical existence, and, if rightly understood, would serve as an index to spiritual progress. The struggle for supremacy of creed and influence has, unfortunately, resulted in exalting the letter of the law, while the spirit of its revelation has been ignored; hence the rise of error and misconception. Take for instance the present orthodox idea of heaven. Suppose at the mists a harp was thrust into every unskilled hand, while every unmusical voice commenced an unending shout of ‘Glory, glory, glory’; well, it might be their ideal of heaven, but what would be the opinion of such as Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the thousands of others who understand the laws of harmony? One moment’s serious thought would make it impossible for such an idea to remain as true.”

“Perhaps so. But I am unable to see how it would be possible for them to form an accurate conception of this life; it is so different from what I expected to find it, and I was no friend of orthodoxy.”

“Why is it so different? Not because it is unreal; but that you have formed an unnatural opinion of it. The change from mortality to immortality is but a stage in the development of the soul, similar to that which changes the blossom to the fruit. The natural law is not broken and destroyed in either case; it is but carried forward another stage towards the object to be achieved. You never find the blossom of the sloe to be the progenitor of a peach, or the bud of a daisy to expand into a rose. So in the translation from the lower life to this, precisely the same law is in operation; this being the complement and continuation of that. But it becomes such an occasion of bewilderment from the fact that man is erroneously taught to believe that, by a simple act of faith, exercised even in the hour of dissolution, he has the power to accomplish such an impossibility in the case of his soul which, you say, would be insane to suggest in relation to the fruit or the flower.”

“Not that man has the power,” I suggested, “but that God is able to accomplish it in the exercise of His omnipotence. I never heard of any sect who claimed to have the power; that is universally ascribed to God alone.”

“In precept you are right,” he answered, “but in practice man is supposed to have all the power, and God nothing whatever to do with it.”

“It may be my ignorance,” I replied, “but still I fail to see where you are right.”

“Let me use a by no means uncommon illustration. God is represented as having made certain provisions for man’s salvation, subject to his repentance; this repentance to be exercised, or not, as the individual may determine, and it is as the arbiter of his own fate that he is pleaded with.”

“And is it not so?” I enquired.

“In the sense that he cannot be forgiven before repentance, yes; but the teaching I repudiate is that the exercise of repentance in man is able to work an impossible change in the nature of the individual the moment he consents. Hear my case, and tell me if I am not right. A man whose life is weighted with outrage, cruelty and murder, stands face to face with dissolution, shrinking from the step about to be forced upon him. In the prison cell, while the execution bell is tolling, and the hangman depriving him of all power to help or avert his fate, the minister is pleading with him to repent, assuring him all may yet be well; God is ready to forgive, Jesus is willing to receive, and angels are waiting to carry his blood-washed spirit home. His moments are but few, and an eternal destiny is hanging in the balance of his own decision. Where, I ask, is any power left in the hands of God in such doctrine? and yet you know that what I say is true. Such a man is assured that nothing but himself stands in the way of immediate and absolute forgiveness, no matter what his life has been.”

“But even repentance is the gift of God,” I replied.

“I know it; and do not wish to undervalue such an act, but only to protest against the power attributed to it. A man, by neglecting the caution of his friends, may sustain the fracture of a limb, or bring himself into difficulties, after which he repents of his foolhardiness; but does that repentance save him from the consequences of his rash conduct? Of course not; and the same law obtains in relation to the soul.”

“In the light of your present experience and knowledge, how would you proclaim the law of God to man?” I asked.

“No one can make a simpler or more perfect declaration of it than Jesus, when he said ‘One is your father, even God, and all ye are brethren.’⁹ In the exercise of His paternal duties, God is not a respecter of persons. From every child obedient love is expected, and after that, brotherly affection towards every member of the family without exception. This is the whole law of God, and rigorous observance of it is enforced, with a commensurate punishment for each violation. ‘Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.’⁷”

These words revived the intense desire to get back again to earth, which before possessed me and prompted my prayer upon the slope; they seemed to strengthen the hope that in some way my yearning might possibly be gratified, and I asked:

“If the family relationship is so closely observed, and the transition only a development, not a severance, is it not possible that some provision exists whereby we may still reach the earth and help to correct these grievous errors?”

“Yes! such naturally exists, and all the testimonies of earth bear evidence to the fact; but, seeing a ministry like this would be fatal to all creeds and sects, as it would break down the profession of the priest, it has therefore been anathematised and pronounced to be of hell.”

“But surely we have power to conquer such opposition and proclaim a truth which will appeal to reason and common sense.”

“That is by no means so easy to be accomplished as you anticipate. It has been taught for ages that the Bible, as the Word of God, needs a critical and scholarly interpretation that its teachings may be rightly understood - this is the basis of all creeds - and establishes the necessity of trained men to read it in accordance with the sectarian spirit they are engaged to foster.”

“Then you consider all the error is to be found in the formation and division of the sects?”

“Part of it, but the origin is in making the book to be an infallible dictator, and claiming that it contains the whole and final message of God, to man. It makes no such pretension for itself, neither is it in consonance with the methods of God’s procedure that it should be so. He gives the sunlight day by day; sends the rain as occasion requires, and makes each year to produce its own harvest. This is the law throughout the whole scope of creation, and is it reasonable to suppose He would vary or abrogate it in His personal intercourse with His children, by speaking once, and leaving the interpretation of His message to the mercy of whoever chose to make a profession of expounding it? Even the rivalry of the creeds forbids such an assumption; and to suppose that God can lightly regard such false pretensions, very seriously impugns the character of His love towards His children.”

“Your words are tinged with a glorious hope for the future of the race,” I said, “in swinging the doors of mercy upon the hinges of infinite love; but tell me something of the condition those take in this life who have followed these teachings.”

“In this life every man is held responsible for his own deliberate acts and motives, but all consequent punishment is remedial, not vindictive. The noblest gift with which he is endowed is the power to reason; this being so, he is expected to consult and use it in everything he does. If then he possesses this gift only next in inferiority to Divinity itself, is it consistent to suppose it is only adapted to the minor details of life, while it becomes a dangerous counsellor in the weightier matters of the soul? Such an idea is a libel upon the Giver. But here comes a difficulty - the natural consequence of the free use of reason on earth would mean destruction to the narrow limits of creed and dogma, hence its loud denunciation by the Church. On the other hand, if a man being so endowed, is content to accept the dictates of his fellow, rather than stand upon the solid foundation of the consistency of the eternal God, he must not be surprised if he is called upon to take the inevitable consequences of his preference of man’s speculation to God’s revelation.”

“I fail to see how he is to know,” I replied, “if you take the Bible away from him.”

“I am not by any means doing so,” he said. “The record of God’s methods of dealing with His children under various circumstances are invaluable guides to men; He being forever the same, the annals of the past form useful indications, not necessarily arbitrary laws, for the future. The men who wrote those books were men who walked and talked with God,

and their communings are recounted for the comparison and encouragement of others, not to supersede or prevent such companionship in the future. By no means would we take the book away; but to say that our Father has ceased to speak to men is to charge Him with being a respecter of persons in the narrowest sense of the term, for why should He have spoken to Abraham, to Socrates, or to Buddha and not to the toiler of the present time? His light shineth on every land, He maketh the rain fall on the fields of the evil and the good, men may fail, but God is the same forever. When mankind, therefore, learn to use the Bible, not abuse it, when they reason over it and seek its spiritual, not its creedal interpretation, when they search for truth instead of priestly sanction, when they recognise the messengers of love as angels from heaven, not emissaries from hell; then will they hear our voices behind them, saying in the language of the still future revelation - this is the way, walk ye in it, and our Father's kingdom will be established on earth on the same basis as we see it here.¹⁰ When this time comes, then our world will cease to be so full of surprises to the multitude of pilgrims who are continually joining, us”

“What would the old world be like,” I asked, “under such a system of government?”

“Come and see.”

CHAPTER IV

THE MOUNT OF GOD

EUSEMOS led me down the hill towards that point from which the different roads radiated, and which was necessarily a common meeting-place for the multitudes continually coming and going. There was no visible reason why this should be so - no barrier or hindrance to their passing directly from, or to, any particular road or point they wished to reach - no gate at which they must gain admission or examination to prove their qualifications, yet by mutual consent all persons gravitated towards that common centre in their passage either way. I grew momentarily more interested in my new and overpowering surroundings as every fresh thought and scene impressed itself upon me. It was while I descended into this busy, ever-changing, joyous throng that I for the first time fully comprehended the fact that death lay out of sight behind us, and as I did so I stopped - stopped to try and realise all I had passed from - what I had passed to, and the incomprehensible change of circumstances into which I had been carried, while yet myself I still remained the same. Every single incident with which I became acquainted appeared to self-contain a heaven, and more of it than I had had power to imagine on earth, yet each was so designed as to proclaim it but an instalment of our home where the word would be heard breathed from the lips of an Infinite Father in the perfect chord of love, the echoes of which will linger on for aye in the vast expanse of that eternal dome beneath which we shall ultimately find our rest.

The scene before me was one of the chief items in the earth idea of heaven, and since we had left time as well as death behind, there was no reason why I should not stay to study the realisation of that upon which every soul had so frequently meditated. My companion saw my desire, and standing silently at my side, seemed to add by his sympathy, to the intense enjoyment I there experienced. How many conquests over death I witnessed! The old enemy of man would have been routed a thousand times if he had marshalled his forces there. Husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, friend and friends meeting after intervals more or less prolonged, with a full consciousness that they were now beyond the parting; hands rudely torn apart in the chill of the mists resumed their clasp with the knowledge that the death paralysis was powerless to intervene again; eyes on earth sightless, now feasted their hungry vision upon those who had guided them in their darkness; ears strained to listen to a mother's voice were now entranced with the sweetness of that music; tongues long silent poured forth their gratitude; and arms, which had been powerless, closed in the rapt embrace of love. In all that joy it never occurred to me that I alone stood there without such welcome from those I knew, the yearning desire for one for whom my life had been a constant groaning, never once possessed me; I was so happy in the contemplation of the bliss of others, I had no idea that I was singular in my condition.

Neither was I. Had I not a friend, who though unknown to me before, was yet dear to me already as if he had been a brother - had I not been more blessed than many in the reception Helen had accorded me, and in the assembly of friends from whom I had but just parted for an interval? I was by no means a stranger in a strange land, but a favoured son who felt free to wander at will over his Father's wide domain.

Favoured indeed! for the privilege which was mine I soon discovered was not the lot of all to enjoy. There are two sides to every picture, and it was not long before I found a reverse even to that which lay before me. I was not alone, but I soon saw one and then another who laboured to pass unnoticed through that joyous throng, anxious to avoid recognition, full of fear and terrified by apprehension lest their presence should be detected by individuals from whom they shrank. In a glance at such poor creatures I received a revelation, and learned a truth more emphatic than any argument could have presented to my mind; the relative positions of heaven and hell were practically illustrated, and I realised that.

In no geography can heaven be found;

But in the ocean of a righteous soul
It forms an island, with its coast rock-bound,
And quiet haven, where no tempests roll.
One breath of sin upon God's throne would tell,
And start the conflagration of a hell.

My attention had been particularly attracted by the greetings passing between two who were evidently brother and sister, the former of whom had but just arrived; the fervent ardour of their youthful embraces, the happy contentment upon the face of the girl, the

gratitude and satisfaction so visible in the boy, were very beautiful to look upon. As I watched their joy, participating in their happiness I was conscious of asking myself when my capacity of bliss would reach its limit, and whether it was not possible for me presently to awake and find that all had been a dream. With this, as if to give some weight to such a suggestion, my eye fell upon a woman, robed in a dress of reddish-brown who watched that boy and girl with looks and feelings I never thought possible to find in such a place. In her eyes the fires of terror blazed; from her face the perspiration rolled in beads of agonising fear; her limbs were palsied with dread, and she shrank and pushed to make her escape before they recognised her presence. Once and again she darted away from the spot on which they stood, as occasion offered her a chance to achieve her wish, but inexorable fate was fast upon her heels, and seemed to blast every hope almost before its birth. Each fruitless attempt but left her nearer to that happy couple who were unconscious of her until the crisis came, and the terror-stricken wretch was forced upon their attention in her frantic efforts to escape. No one in all that crowd showed any sign of sympathy for her in her distress; no hand was outstretched to help her clear a way by which that unpleasant encounter could so easily have been avoided; she was, in all that throng, so completely alone that I felt more than once as if I must go forward and render the assistance of which she stood so much in need; yet something held me back - told me that things were better as they were, and bade me watch and wait.

Speechless and motionless the terror-stricken woman stood, like a craven felon waiting for the law's decree. The boy shrank back, but the girl with a look of infinite pity beaming on her face, stepped forward, and did what no one else had done: she,

Who might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy, -

cleared the needed way, and if she spoke a word it was but of pity and compassion, as she pointed where the woman could escape. With this came strength to move, and as the culprit - for such I felt convinced she was - darted away I saw a brilliant flash of light shoot from the eye of her benefactress, which struck and shone upon her troubled breast like a resplendent jewel.

“Did you see that flash?” asked my companion, whose attention had evidently been attracted by the same incident.

“Yes!” I answered; “what was it?”

“That girl's forgiveness for some great wrong the woman has done. That light will remain with her until she has paid the penalty of her sin, when she will be enabled to realise its meaning, and it will have a powerful influence in working her salvation.”

“Poor soul!” I ejaculated; “where will she go? How sad it seems that in all this multitude there is no one to meet her - no one to give her advice, or offer a word of consolation.”

“It would be a mockery to do so at present,” replied Eusemos, and you will not find any of that here. Only those are met who can be welcomed. But if you watch her, you will see where she will go.”

“Are you not afraid she will go wrong in her ignorance?” I asked.

“Can men live beneath the ocean’s waves, or fishes consort with the eagle in his sunward flight?” he answered; “neither can she take a place for which she is unfitted. We need no angels with flaming swords to guard our ways.”

“But see!” I cried, “she is going wrong! Her dress is by no means the colour of the road she is taking.”

“Watch her,” he calmly responded.

I did so.

In her eagerness to escape from that dreaded presence, as she cleared the crowd, she darted heedlessly into the first road which presented itself, exerting all her strength to put a distance between herself and the girl she had wronged. Her idea seemed to be that safety lay in flight, so all her energies were called into force to make that flight as rapid as possible. Her course, however, was not long continued. Was it her strength that failed, or did she merely pause to take her breath? I knew not. Then I saw her reel as if grown faint from her exhaustion and excitement - reel and reach out for some support, but none was there; then she turned, and, though at such a distance, in that clear atmosphere, I could see an added agony of pain written upon her face. Something forced her to return - forced her to re-approach that from which she tried to flee. A second, and yet a third attempt she made, but all of no avail, the same inexorable power compelled her to return, until she entered on a path which by its colour I could see was right; down this she passed without a trace of effort, and soon was lost to sight beneath our feet.

“Poor soul I” I murmured; “where will that road lead her?”

“It abounds in subterranean caverns into which but little light can penetrate. In these places such as she rush to hide themselves from the presence of those they have injured, and who they fear will follow to torment them. Terror makes their hell. They know not who or what is near them, they feel that every soul they come in contact with has come to take revenge and thus each becomes a source of terror to the other. There she must stay until some spirit in a less miserable condition can gain sufficient of her confidence to induce her to leave those dens for a less wretched abode this being the first step towards the happiness it is possible for every soul to reach. But we will pass along.”

For some time our progress was not a rapid one, as my companion met numbers of his fellow messengers and others, all of whom had a word of welcome for me, and the many interesting features of my surroundings prompted me to make frequent pauses that I might the better understand them. When, at length, we had reached the outskirts of the

multitudes, and were started upon our projected mission I was glad to hear Eusemos refer to that incident which had interested and yet so perplexed me.

“I see,” he began, “that you are unable to reconcile that woman’s presence here with the simple law of love governing this life.”

“Yes, I am,” I answered, “and should be glad if you will explain it to me.”

“I will, then you will see that the Lord is good unto all and His tender mercies are over all His works; and for myself I do not see where I could find a more forcible illustration of it than in such a case as that to which your attention has been called.”

“How so?”

“When she made her escape,” he answered, “you saw her take the path on which we are now walking; noticed how every person she met passed by without speaking or pointing out that she was wrong. Now I ask you to mark the buoyancy, the exhilaration, the happiness and peace which increases with every step we take, and say, if you can why it was that she turned back from such a path of her own free will?”

“I cannot tell,” I answered.

“It was simply because that which is a source of increasing enjoyment to you was the cause of pain to her; she was rushing into an unnatural condition as pronounced as that of a fish out of water. Of her own free will and deliberate act, she fitted herself on earth to take a certain place in this life, and she cannot, even if she would, assume any other without enduring the pain which would naturally ensue. She has made her choice, and love intervenes to save her from the additional torment that is the legitimate outcome of her own acts; this is fully manifest in the provision of that place to which she has now gone. She will not be abandoned and left altogether to the mercy of those will be her associates there; others in a happier condition go down to such as she, and tell them to hope, encourage them to repent, endeavour to induce them to come away, and finally lead them on the way to happiness.”

“Then she has not gone into that hell where the fire is not quenched?” I asked.

“The fire of hell is one of those metaphorical phrases misunderstood on account of its literal interpretation,” he responded.

“Will you explain it for me, as you understand it?”

“With pleasure and in doing so I will use the illustration you are most familiar with. It was said of Jesus, ‘He shall baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire’¹¹; of Himself He said, ‘I came to send fire on the earth’¹²; and man is assured that ‘our God is a consuming fire.’¹³ Do you understand these to be as literal as the fires of hell?”

“Certainly not,” I replied.

“But why not; what authority is there for making any distinction?”

“I am at a loss to answer you,” I replied, “other than it is in accordance with traditional custom so to do.”

“It is a creedal necessity,” he answered, “and this is the great source of so much confusion, contradiction, and spiritual ignorance. The word of God is spirit as well as truth and must ever be interpreted by the spirit, not the letter, that being merely the form in which the spirit finds expression, as the mortal body is but the organ of expression for the soul. The fire of the spirit is love. Therefore to say that God is a consuming fire is but another way of declaring that God is love. Now love in its debased form becomes passion, and if unrestrained will speedily burst all bonds and leave a man the prey to his own devouring lust with all the evil in his nature contributing fuel to the flames. When such an one is severed from the body and forced into this state of existence, where can he go? You have seen a case which does not present anything like such aspects of depravity, yet it was torture for her to stand where we are now, how much more would it be so for such a man as I describe? Even the very place to which that woman has gone would be intolerable to him, but still he must not be punished in revenge; therefore God has formed an abode congenial to such a nature, where, for the time being, he can plunge in his mad frenzy into the ocean of his unsubdued passions, and be tormented in gathering the harvest of the seeds he has sown while the unquenchable fire will burn and work its purpose. But in that word ‘unquenchable’ our Father’s love is again made manifest, since the fire can only burn up the chaff; or in other words, the time will come when the lust and passion will be consumed, then the wheat shall be gathered into the garner, and the soul will come out from the ordeal as gold well refined; but the sanctified fire of love will still be burning in that soul which will thus be saved from the very uttermost.”

“Do you know this,” I asked eagerly, “or do you only hope it will be so?”

“We know it; it is the one great law of life that you will find is everywhere in operation here. It should be so on earth but the multitude of the words of men have become the grave of knowledge, and the light of inspiration has been vanquished in the darkness of such a sepulchre. You will not find much preaching here as you are used to understand the word; with us to preach is to act, and all action has love for its incentive, since we have practically learned that he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.”

“Oh! what a gospel of love you proclaim,” I cried; “what music it would be to earth. With such a message I can well understand that ‘love never faileth.’¹⁴”

“The gospel we declare is that which was given to men, and is peculiarly fitted for the earth condition.”

“I have now another question to ask on a point that, as yet, appears to be at variance with your universal law of love.”

“Let me hear it, my brother,” he responded.

“How do you reconcile its application with that woman being allowed to enter with, and see the joy of happier persons?” I enquired.

“You imagine it has a tendency to increase her punishment,” he rejoined.

“I fail to see how it can be otherwise.”

“That I am perfectly willing to admit; but first of all you must remember that the way you came is the usual way of admission, and that whatever punishment is endured is the natural consequences of deliberate sin, as things done in ignorance or without intention exact no penalty in the judgment of the mists. But those who have sinned with deliberate intent, or culpable negligence - in many cases following the same course for years, stifling the voice of conscience, and crushing out their spiritual life - receive their just reward and punish, and it must necessarily be that their pain is increased, as they realise, what might have been under other and better circumstances.”

“But might not that additional pang be saved them?” I asked.

“No! God never turns aside to avoid the consequences of a man’s folly; but on the other hand even that pang you so much regret is permitted by that same law of love. Although she is at present unconscious of it, that woman has gained one point of information which will give her hope and consolation presently, the which she could not have learned had she not had that unpleasant experience.”

“What is that?” I asked.

“She knows that there is no gate at which an angel is standing to keep her back from the way of life; and will presently be brought to understand that the only obstacle in the way of her happiness lies within herself. When she is able to recognise this it will become a powerful incentive to improve her condition; it will teach her that her punishment has been to purify and not vindictively inflicted; it will be a text upon which her teachers will build a hundred arguments, until she learns that even in her dark condition she has not been forsaken, but, though she knew it not, the hand of God was guiding her.”

“Thank you,” I said. “As you expound them I can understand how the tender mercies of God are over all His works, but now I have another difficulty I would like you to clear up. There are many children born who are morally incapable of discerning right from wrong; how is this regarded on their arrival here?”

“In all cases justice and equity are meted out unerringly,” he replied, “and the penalty of all sin will fall upon the shoulders of the sinner. In an earthly court a kleptomaniac or an idiot would be pitied for his misfortune, not punished, though he had broken a law. Is man more righteous than our God? That maimed body or unbalanced mind is the result of sin more frequently than accident and someone must bear the punishment thereof - who shall it be? Listen to this awful truth. ‘Every man shall give an account of the deeds done in the body’¹⁵; one of those deeds is the deadly wrong of propagating life without thought or reference to a healthy and competent body in which it can perform the functions requisite to its

advancement, which leaves the child to bear the consequences of the sins of its father or mother in its own organism. This may transfer the infirmity, but it cannot change the responsibility. The sins are borne by the child, but the errors committed in its incompetency are accounted as the sins of that father still, and he will be called to answer for them at the bar of God.”

“That is a terrible thought” I said, as he concluded.

“It is nevertheless true,” he replied “‘whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.’”

I had been too much engrossed in the subject of our conversation to do more than mechanically notice the scenes through which we were passing; but, at this point, my attention was arrested by a change that was taking place in the appearance my companion, who was now surrounded by a soft and momentarily increasing halo, from which I became conscious of drawing the necessary power to accompany him. Our course was along the brighter way, occupying the centre and crown of the landscape, but its character had so changed since we commenced our journey, that in its present transparency it looked like a path of sunbeams up which we sped our aerial flight, rather than a regular road in a kingdom more substantial than Greece or Rome because it held a more legitimate right to the designation ‘Eternal,’ since its creator and builder was God. The soft and fragrant atmosphere seemed to lift us in its embrace beyond the reach of weariness; the breezes redolent with life and rest kissed and wooed us with amorous caresses; the penetrating sunlight bathing the country pierced us through and through, until we shone with that glory, the like of which beamed from the face of Moses when he had been in the presence of God on Sinai.

It was to me as a delightful dream. The real and the unreal blended in perfect harmony, in which I found no room for even the suspicion of surprise. On more than one occasion I remember reasoning with myself that it was more than like - it was surely a dream; from which I should presently awake to face the stern realities of my disappointed life with an additional pang added thereto by the recollection of its pleasant illusion. And I am still conscious of a shudder running through me at the thought of how I could sustain such a heavy blow as I needs must suffer. My companion noticed this and drew me somewhat closer to him, while he answered my thoughts in one of those semiconscious reveries so characteristic of this life, and which have more of encouragement and suggestion in their tone than admonition. I caught more of the spirit of what he said than the letter, and as the whole was an impromptu, I could not ask him to repeat it to me, so that I am sensible of the injustice I do him in attempting to reproduce the lines which made such an impression upon me at the time; but the following will give a crude idea of what he said:

“All dreams are as real as the waking;
Then why should we spurn their delights?
The soul climbs permissible heights -
When sleep bids the heart pause its aching –

And gazes with eyes which are bright and strong
On the promised home it will reach ere long.

“The soul is the man, and eternal;
The body but lives for a day, -
‘Tis of earth and must needs pass away
But the soul, in its visions diurnal,
From the mountains of sleep looks over the river
And hails the beloved in the land of ‘forever.’

The child, and the man, and the maiden,
Have dreamed and will dream evermore
‘Tis the solace for all men - heart-sore,
And true rest for the soul heavy-laden
Till in that last sleep, the body forsaking,
The soul enters heaven - that dream without waking.”

I had neither opportunity nor disposition to reply, for with the end of his rhapsody, we paused, turned, and the scene which lay before me caused me to break away from the train of thought which had called forth such a pregnant lesson, while I was carried captive by the indescribable glories of the panorama towards which he waved his hand.

As we stood upon the hillside from which we started, the one noticeable feature in the landscape, as I have said, was the radiation of the many coloured roads leading to the numerous cities now visible, but which then were hidden from our view. At our feet, running to the right and left, was one of darkest hue-crimson-black, having its termination round or underneath the hill, and down which I had watched that unfortunate and terrified woman pass from sight. This gloomy and foreboding path formed the basis or foundation of the scene; the next and each succeeding road assuming a lighter tint in almost imperceptible gradations, until the ray of purity up which we had travelled, formed a climax to the whole and capped the double prism as a crown. As I recalled that view in the light of the many explanations I had since received, I thought that the arrangement was a grand prophetic symbol of this happier life, showing the natural and uninterrupted progress which the soul was enabled to make from the far extremity of sin, to rest and perfect happiness in the time to come. And my heart was glad.

Another thought recurred to me at this time - the question I had put to my guide respecting the pang that former view was calculated to cause in the breasts of those more unfortunate persons I had met with, and I realised the unspeakable mercy and love that had been exercised in the design displayed before me. The former prospect was but the reverse of the picture, which now I had rounded to gaze upon such glories whereof eye had not seen neither could it enter into the heart of man to conceive. If that sight would serve to add a pang to any soul as it rose again before the memory, I could well understand how this would overwhelm it with despair. Truly, the mercy of God is over all His works.

Far, far away upon the western horizon, softened and warmed by the wide expanse which lay between us, hung the mists across the boundaries of the country. Their appearance now was not black and chill as when I last looked upon, but a soft, crimson hue suffusing them, made them to look like the rich tapestries the sun draws across the windows of the sky when the autumn day is closing, and the weary labourer hies him homeward before the tempest, which he hears rumbling in the distance, overtakes him. Behind us, at an altitude my vision could not estimate or measure, over the mountain peaks, stream rays of glory, bathing and nourishing all that land. It was as though, while one invisible sun was setting in the distant west, from out the eastern dawn another - the Sun of Righteousness, it might be - was rising from the bosom of the sea of love. Between this dawning and that sunset what a multitude of weary souls were enjoying that rest upon which, like myself, so many had but recently entered.

For the purpose of our view we were standing upon the slope of some majestic mountain chain, the height of which defied my powers of computation. If I sought its peak, my eyes were blinded by the arc of light which beamed upon me and frustrated my quest; while far away, until my vision grew uncertain in the distance, I could see the range extend like the natural boundary line of two adjacent nations. The path which served as vantage-ground for observation was like the even crest of a smaller range running from the base towards the brow of the glory-crowned and immeasurable hill behind me. In the distance lay a plain of apparently illimitable proportions, undulating and picturesque beyond description, in which hill and dale, lake and stream, terrace and plateau, park and pasture, grove and garden, city and homestead, palace and mansion, were so arranged and disposed as to contribute their own peculiar feature to the grandeur of the whole. Throughout that vast domain, each shrub and flower, each house and hill, each stream and lake, had its legitimate balance to maintain in the general harmony; and wonderfully beautiful was the effect produced in the accomplishment of the design.

In hours of weariness and disconsolation in the olden life, I had tried to frame an outline ideal of what heaven must be - who had not? My highest conception had a background of disappointment and irritation. It was like a fascinating painting of some glorious sunset, entrancing with its beauty as you first beheld it, but as you gaze upon it, strange, weird, half-visionary phantoms rise from out the canvas and cast their gloomy shadows like corpse-mantles over the genius which had first so charmed us; - phantoms of dissatisfaction, regret, and unreality. Everything upon the canvas is stiff, cold, lifeless; the drama has been caused to stop as the artist caught some situation most congenial, and of its poetry, no more will ever reach the ear of man than the irritating monotone on the lip when the command to stand was given. How can we know the sunset from such an inadequate presentment. The pigmy, momentary conception may be faithful, yea, perfect in its colour and situation at the instant it was caught, but it needs the quick succession of the changing tints, the rolling and curving of the clouds, the rapid entrances and exits of the dying hero, Day, accompanied by the soft sobbing and sighing of the breezes. It

demands the presence indicated, and the increasing power portrayed, as step by step the sombre Night achieves his dark advantage, until at length he drowns the sun in the life-blood of his victim, and the black curtain falls over the tragic scene as Twilight, no longer able to sustain the unequal conflict, closes her eye in death. All this, and more, we need before the artist can depict his sunset faithfully upon the canvas; and so of heaven we need still further countless complications and impossibilities before we can conceive a faint ideal of that which awaits us. My previous conceptions fell thus short of the reality of the scene which lay before me as I stood upon that mountain side; yet this was not heaven itself, but only one of the first halting-places within the ranch of God's infinitude, where homeward-bound souls could rest and refresh themselves in their migration from the earth, towards their Father's house of many mansions.

I would pause here, nor further attempt the impossible, were it not for my yearning for the welfare of my brethren, who are still behind me, and cherish the many errors of the flesh in their ignorance of the life upon which I have entered. The consciousness of the inadequate powers I possess to convey a knowledge of the truth I have found, almost forbids me to proceed, but I will be content if only I can in some small measure make it known that this existence is not a vague and vapoury state with nothing more substantial than a cloud in which to lay the foundations of our habitations. To us it is as real and tangible as the earth is to you, and, therefore, when I use the designations of beauty and grandeur which are familiar to the earth, it is not that I would indicate this life to be as crude and gross as that which lies behind me, but rather that the means are not available for me to convey a just conception of its realities any more than the artist has power to reproduce the sunset in all its sublimity and entirety.

In those first moments of contemplation I became conscious of an enormous increase in my powers of sight, for as language fails me to express the quality of the scene unfolded to my view, so also am I powerless to convey an indication of the area over which that celestial panorama was unrolled, yet from the foreground to the far-away horizon I could plainly see in that haze-less atmosphere of eternity, not only the effects in aggregate but the component parts of each feature which in turn arrested my attention. Did I say it had its plains and streams? It were far more true to say my eye wandered over vast continents, fruitful and picturesque, each bounded by proportionate seas and oceans, from the poetic billows of which the sting of all destruction had been torn away. Mansion and palace gleamed resplendent in the shadowless sunlight, not cramped or circumscribed in detail or design, to suit the exigency of space or limit - not robbed of grace or beauty by the use of coarse material having the power to resist the storm and tempest as effectually as it can blast the architectural dream; - what need of such restrictions in the domain of the infinite, that kingdom where they refuse to traffic in the merchandise of tempest or decay. Each habitation had its terraces and crescents, gardens and quadrangles, all its own in such noble and magnificent proportions that its vision may have made to sleeping Nimrod the first suggestion of the

royal and stately Babylon. The spiritual quarries from which coral and marble, porphyry and alabaster, malachite and jasper had been cast out as coarse and valueless, furnished the substance for each edifice, while the garniture was worked in multiform mosaics of diamond and sapphire, carbuncle and beryl, pearl and ruby, amethyst and emerald, relieved by gems of tint and lustre earth has never seen. The carvings were the work of sculptors who wore the rich mantle of perfect inspiration, a solitary thread of which had fired the ideality of Phidias and Angelo. Egypt may righteously have gloried in the magnificence of her hundred-gated Thebes; been proud of the unrivalled luxuries which found their home in the princely Memphis; extolled the unequalled perfumes compounded in the royal Zoan, but in her greatest glory she had never caught a glimpse of such palaces as these. The gardens of old Babylon were forgotten in the contemplation of such horticultural attainments; the statues of Apollo, Venus and Athene in the admiration of which the Greeks exhausted their enthusiasm, were figments not to be recalled in the presence of such grace and beauty; the rose of Sharon blanched its cheek in the face of such rich blossoms; and the aroma from the sweet incense of Jerusalem only became a type of the perfume wafted by the breezes from those trees which are robed in a living green without the experience of an autumn tint.

The scene was animated by the multitude of persons who were everywhere moving to and fro, not with the hurried step of him who races to the gamble of the exchange, or the fear written upon the face of another who rushes to secure that skill which may save the life that is hanging in the balance; there was no visible apprehension lest each bush or tree should hide an enemy, or trembling dread of some watchful tyrant's frown; on the contrary, a serenity and leisure which took no cognizance of time or necessity seemed to sway an universal rule, while a quiet contentment defied all power to introduce disturbance. Peoples of every nationality intermingled without distinction; no cold formality, condescension, or patronage was visible amongst them, but rather a recognition that each possessed some power to augment the happiness of his fellow, and that the society of all was necessary for joy to reach its full ideal. It was a sacred, holy sight to gaze upon, and again and again, I asked myself what was the magic power which spread the hallowed feeling around us. I was unable to answer this until the soft winds swept past me and seemed to whisper:

They rest from their labour to-day -
‘Tis the lull when the storm is scarce o’er;
They are joining the friends they had missed,
Whom they thought had been lost evermore.”
‘Tis the peace of re-union which crowns them,
While their eyes are scarce dry from their sorrow
They have met and are resting to-day,
And there never can come a to-morrow.

My eye moistened, and I bowed my head in gratitude as I received the revelation, and, turning to my companion, I asked:

“What is this place?”

“The Mount of God; one of the vestibules of heaven,” he answered.

“If this is but a vestibule, what will the glory of the inner temple be?”

“I cannot tell,” was his modest reply, but it was filled with the music of such an intense longing as to waken echoes in my soul, the cadences of which are even yet vibrating within me.

“Are there other entrances from the earth than this?” I asked.

“Yes; many.”

“And are they all equal to this?”

“Yes.”

“They might rightly be called vestibules of rapture,” I continued; “but there is one thing that very much surprises me.”

“And what is that, my brother?” he asked.

“To see the distinctive colour and feature of each nationality is retained here.”

“The erroneous idea that this will not be so is very prevalent on the earth; and yet it should not be, especially with those who make such a study of the Bible as your country professes to do. Does not John tell you that in one of his visions he saw: ‘A great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues?’¹⁶ Now, seeing that colour and feature could be his only distinguishing marks, why should you be surprised to find his vision verified?” He smiled as he saw my confusion, as the truth of his broader and more literal rendering of the vision made me to recognise a phase of revelation from which my eyes had hitherto been held; and then continued: “All these mistaken ideas are due to the inconsistent methods which men apply to the reading of their sacred books; fact and metaphor, parable and history are so continually confounded for the purpose of establishing some very unimportant point, that in the minds of many persons it becomes at length an utter impossibility to distinguish the one from the other; while undue emphasis placed upon some sentences, irrespective of their connection, prevents the great majority of mankind from knowing really what are the plain teachings of the books they hold in such superstitious reverence. I noticed your astonishment just now when I told you that Myhanene is a ruler here. It was a look of incredulity, as if you thought I had spoken blasphemy.”

“That was because I had no idea of there being any other power here than God.”

“Neither is there; but that power is exercised through duly appointed ministers. The same thought applied to reading your Bible, as you have been accustomed to give to any other

book, would have prepared you for this. Jesus, in the parable of the talents, clearly gave you to understand that the wise servants should be made rulers over two, five, or ten cities; He promised His disciples that they should sit as judges, and His followers look forward to the time when they shall reign with Him; why, then, should you be surprised to find that what He said was true, and that such offices really are in existence here? Another common error has reference to the character and nature of this land, and our methods of life. Jesus assures His disciples that there were many mansions in His Father's house. Ezekiel and John saw a city, pilgrims are reminded that on earth they have no continuing city, but are to seek one yet to come, whose builder and maker is God. Congregations are frequently singing of Jerusalem:

When shall these eyes Thine heaven-built walls
And pearly gates behold,
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong
And streets of shining gold?¹⁷

They enter into compacts to meet each other at the fountain; anticipate their sweet communions while reclining on our green and flowery banks, or resting beneath the shadow of the tree of life, they revel in the glory which will be theirs when they gather at the river, speculate as to what they will do when they stand among that company which no man can number, every member of which will wear a golden crown while their hands shall bear the victor's palm or strike the strings of a sweeter harp than David ever played¹⁸; yet they would be seriously shocked if anyone was to tell them that all these things were really in existence here, and charge you with blasphemy - trying to make heaven a place as gross and material as earth. Their only conception of our present state of being reaching no further than that we are continually flying about in a cloudless ether singing 'Glory! Glory! Glory!' and have not so much as an empty cloud upon which to find repose; and that this unceasing flying and singing is our eternal rest. However, I must leave you at this grove until our friend Cushna shall arrive, when he will show you many points of interest and instruction."

While he had been talking we were retracing our steps, and had now arrived at a magnificent grove of trees towards which waved his hand, as if my new conductor was to be expected that direction.

"I am very grateful for all the information you have given me," I exclaimed, as he took me in a brotherly embrace, preparatory to leaving, "but may I ask one more question before you go?"

"With pleasure," he replied.

"Will you explain to me why I have been able to ascend so far above my own condition as to gain the sight you have shown me, while that poor woman was compelled to return until she had found her own?"

“Yes! Messengers or teachers have the power and are permitted to lend of their strength to those to whom they minister and thus help them to reach superior heights occasionally, to look upon those things which await them in the future. This stimulates new aspirations and incites to further progress. The limit to which I was enabled to carry you was reached at the point where we turned, but that was high enough to make you understand something more of the power of love operating in another direction for the purpose of continually raising up the whole community towards God.”

With this he bade me God-speed till we met again, and, turning, left me like a lightning flash and I was once more alone but my heart was glad.

CHAPTER V

THE HOME OF REST

One of the great charms of this life is the singular appositeness of every event to the time and place of its occurrence; wish and desire are very closely interwoven with the opportunity for their gratification. Almost the first communication made to me after my arrival was that I should find it to be a land of surprises. Now that I had time for a little thought and reflection, one of the chief of these was found in the perfectly natural condition of everything - physical, intellectual and spiritual. This was in nothing more emphatically noticeable than in my inclination and surroundings the moment after I had lost my guide and companion. While he was present all my powers were on the *qui vive* both to see and hear the lessons he exerted himself to unfold, and these succeeding each other with such amazing rapidity left me no time for anything more than crude appropriation, while my memory was called upon to store them hurriedly for more mature consideration and reflection by and by. How much food for calm digestion I had thus acquired, I had not even time to think, though doubtless it was fully known to my instructor, and his departure was due to the necessity for me to pause and see how far I had travelled in the pilgrimage of knowledge from the point where I had first made his acquaintance. At all events my first idea when left alone was that nothing could be so welcome to me as the one opportunity now within my reach.

In the olden life, when my soul wished to throw itself before the majesty of the Infinite, and the quiet country lay beyond my reach, I would turn to Westminster Abbey, and surrounded by the matchless beauty of its nave, where stone and harmony, poetry and architecture, symmetry and history are blended in such unparalleled design, throw restriction to the winds, and soar upwards on the wings of the hallowed associations which bathed the Abbey like a benediction. I asked no preacher to direct my thoughts, since the memories of a thousand years discoursed within the pulpit of my breast; I sought no choir or organ, for in the arches and triforium, lingered the echoing cadences of Jubilate and Miserere sung by pious monks in centuries passed by. I wished to join no congregation save that of those great and noble examples whose bodies lay beneath my feet. Alone in such

silent grandeur, in the presence of the peace of death, where the sunbeams falling through the clerestory windows seemed like ladders dropped by angels whence the souls of saints might climb to heaven, my heart was free to make its full confession and hear the absolution whispered in the silence of that house of prayer.

It may be that in some of those seasons of reverie and renunciation Eusemos had found a place among the angels and ministering spirits which surrounded me unseen; or perhaps when meditating on the many things I failed to understand, with the mantle of night around me and a canopy of stars above, he may have carried one of my many prayers for light and guidance upward, and thus have learned the habit of my soul-communion with the accessories most congenial to that state of mind. Who can tell? It might be so; or, on the other hand, it might be due to that natural adaptation of everything to each other to which I have referred. Whichever it was, one thing is certain; the desire for contemplation and the discovery of the one place most calculated to enhance my wish were simultaneous revelations, for the scene of my reflection was a combination of both my favoured haunts.

I have said it was a grove or avenue leading at right angles from the path whereon we had been walking; a gentle descent a mile or more in length, formed of stately trees so planted that their branches held each other in kindly embraces. Overhead a roof more exquisite in architectural beauty than even that of Westminster - the leaves like glass transparent, lending an added softness to the sun as they passed its beams through into the sanctuary which wooed me. The emerald carpet reflected the glory which seemed articulate with invitation to enter and gather up the harvest of hope deferred, and reap the hundredfold fruition of all the sighs and prayers which met with no response on earth.

This invitation was too welcome just then for me to refuse, so I turned from out the open path into that soft retreat of melody and repose. Above my head the leaves rustled in rhythmic lullabies, at my feet the flowers found voice and wooed my soul in love-songs of perfume; in the distance I could hear cascades of water adding their soft and refreshing music to the harmony while the carolling notes of winged songsters first made me conscious of the fact that birds, as well as men, find in paradise a continuation of their earth existence.

The grove ran through the centre of what may be called a garden park well stocked with large and luxuriant trees, somewhat low in growth, compared with the avenue itself, but having far-reaching arms like oaks or chestnuts, beneath which were beautiful beds of flowers or mosses, whereon numbers of people were reclining. Many others were walking to and fro with that languid, careful gait naturally assumed in the first days of exercise after sickness; others again, were resting on the numerous seats dotted about the grass, as if although their strength was not yet so far regained as to allow of walking, yet so reposing they were drawing a first invigoration from the life-giving aroma of the breezes which fanned them. The whole aspect of the place was that of a convalescent home, and I could not perceive any incongruity in the thought that such places could serve a useful purpose to

the weary and heavy-laden souls of earth, to rest and recoup themselves after the prostration of life's fitful fever. The possibility of this made me glad, as well as offered more food for reflection; and seeing a vacant patch of moss beneath the branches of a wide-spreading tree, I threw myself upon it, without a question as to the right and propriety of so doing, and gave myself up to contemplation.

I cannot say how long my reverie continued, or that the course my thoughts pursued was very definite and consecutive. I was most conscious of the fact that I was resting; not merely enjoying one of those brief lulls overwrought strength demanded for recuperation, and which was so frequently forced upon me in the other life, but I was filled with a sense of returning vigour and youth, carrying with it at first the suggestion, then a continually increasing certainty, that the reel of life was being rapidly turned backward, as it were, and that I was regaining the robust health for so many years waning away. It was a surprising, a delightful experience, and I yielded myself to it readily and gratefully. I lay in a state of semi-enchantment; every moment brought some new sensation, and a thousand capabilities seemed to be on the point of unfolding within me, of which I had been unconscious, had never dreamed of before. Strange feelings supervened, as if bands were snapping, restrictions giving way; and my soul enlarging, expanded and rejoiced in its new-found freedom.

I no longer felt I was the victim of circumstances, for all contending influences had been withdrawn, and something whispered that their absence was not a temporary cessation in the struggle, but that I had secured a victory final and complete. The state of mind engendered by all these revelations can neither be described to nor appreciated by those who have not passed through the blissful experience. Every cell in my soul laboured to absorb the overpowering revelation; every avenue in my being drank, and drinking, still thirsted for the life-exalting stream which overflowed me; every fibre in my body thrilled and trembled under the sweet new functions it was called upon to perform. While I was thus half-intoxicated with the exquisite pleasures in which I bathed, the very air playing around me seemed to be peopled with a hundred fairy voices which cried: "Yield, yield!" and, nothing loath, I threw myself in fearless abandonment into their embraces and lost my consciousness in the rejuvenating sleep of paradise.

I have no idea how long that sleep continued, since time in this new life is measured by result achieved and not by revolutions of the sun or dial. All I can say is that when I woke I found all the transformations which had induced the slumber in their commencement had been completed. The furrows had been kissed away from my face, the silver threads in my hair eliminated; the fountain of weariness within me had been dried up; while all the new powers and capabilities were so blended and dove-tailed into my being, that though the same old consciousness and recollection remained - the same individuality with its loves, its hopes, and aspirations - I was equally aware that a new and enlarged nature had been added by those mysterious influences at work upon me - a nature invulnerable alike to weariness and disappointment.

Perhaps one of my strangest experiences of this life occurred at this moment. I had scarcely aroused myself from the power of that slumber when I felt that it was leaving me, never more to return. How I knew this I cannot tell, yet the certainty of the fact could not be denied. Pain, doubt, disappointment and the hundred other sensations of earth with which we are familiarised as being peculiar to the body, it is easy to tear one's self from, and the partings brings with it a degree of satisfaction. But Sleep is different. It is the most tried and by far the most constant friend which poor humanity can possess. Its breast is a pillow upon which every head may safely lie in weariness; its arms are never full, and every outcast vagabond is always sure of its caress.

In its disrespect of persons it comes nearer the character of God than any other attribute of earth - the saint and sinner, the prodigal and thrifty, the profligate and prudent receive from sleep an equal salutation. She has no power to judge, and faithful to the work assigned her, welcomes to her house alike the assassin and his judge, the rival armies of contending nations, the hunted and the hunter, and bids them rest beneath her sure protection without a sense of fear. Some call her fickle and uncertain, and seek to find in her that measure of perfection impossible to be attained by earth, of whom she is a child; upon themselves let all the blame of her shortcomings fall since the error is their own for lifting up a standard nothing mortal has power to reach. Who dares to rise and say she has her favourites in the family of man? If any speak and seek to bring such evidence, it will be found that in her seeming choice the great nobility of her soul will shine more beautifully bright. Where would such be found? Not in the palace or the mansion where flattering courtiers or whining sycophants are wont to seek for place or power, but in the hovel or the den she may be found to linger perhaps in tenderer sympathy, while she seeks to close the eyelids with a surer seal.

Here with her Godlike grasp she curbs the cravings of the hungry stomach, and with her visions makes endurance possible till tardy relief brings up supplies; or else, in concert with her sister Charity, she lingers by the bed of pain, that her anaesthetic charm may numb the poignant shafts which make the victim long for ease or death. Within the audience-chamber of her home what severed hearts have been united, what prodigals persuaded to return, and what misunderstandings explained. Yea, has she not done even more than this, for when the sorrowing mother, father, friend has fallen fainting into her arms, broken-hearted at the loss of one whom Death has slain, has Sleep not, once and again, come forth to champion the cause of the bereaved, and standing at the gate of Death exerted the power that made the cruel bolts give way, and held the gate ajar while dead and living met again in communion hallowed by the parting? This, and far more than this, had she been to me; of all my earthly friends most dear; and at the moment of my waking I was conscious she was withdrawing her hand from mine and I should never grasp it more. Through all the vicissitudes of life she had been my faithful companion - the only one, so far as memory served me, who had never in any single instance, forsaken me.

Now we were parting. She had reached the limit of her domain, but my path lay onward across a future without a horizon, a sunset or a daybreak. In such a life there was no need for Sleep. Is it strange or wonderful that I should woo the fading sensation to linger in its adieu? Yet I was not sorry to part from such tried and pleasant companionship; it marked a stage in ascent of the ladder of life. I was grateful for the service it had rendered me, but the newly-acquired powers were taking hold upon me, and I was anxious to secure the possibilities they brought within my reach. Therefore we parted with the earnest wish that every needy soul would find her as faithful and consoling as she had been to me, and when in turn they too should part from her pleasant company that it would be with the fragrant memories I should continue to cherish.

I had scarcely recovered myself before my attention was attracted to a man who might be the doctor of the imaginary sanatorium in whose grounds I had been reposing. He was at some distance from me when I first saw him, and as he neared, made frequent stoppages with one and another of the convalescents as if enquiring after their welfare and condition. This gave me an opportunity of observing him before he reached me, for I felt confident that such was his destination.

Contrary to Eusemos he was rather short in stature, but being spare of build it was not so noticeable as might otherwise have been the case. His face and complexion were Egyptian, with bright liquid black eyes brimming over with kindness and good humour, the first physiognomical reading of it proclaiming him to be an embodiment of sympathy and tenderness. In age he might be young, but there was something in his action and movement which made me think he was old - very old, and that his lithe and youthful vigour were necessary to bear the weight of that experience so obviously manifest in everything he did. There was none of the nervousness and excitement about him one naturally looks for in young men who are clothed in the mantle of authority; no impatience at being hindered or reluctance to perform an unexpected duty. On the contrary each and every transaction he was called upon to execute, no matter how trivial, was attended to with a thoroughness which suggested that it was the principal object of his care or solicitation. It was evident that time was of no importance to him, for he was ready alike to smooth a couch, help a patient to a more desirable location or throw his arm around another who wished to take a walk. I could not hear his voice, but I was confident from his demeanour, that not a little of the success accomplished was due to his cheery conversation, which seemed to impart the strength of which they stood so much in need. Any one of these, or numerous other, services being rendered, he would tarry awhile then with a kindly wave of the hand turn away and look for an opportunity to lend some other assistance wherever it should be asked or he with his alert perception deemed it beneficial.

It so happened that I had time to observe him well before he reached me, and all ideas of his being a stranger to me, or I to him, had vanished from my mind. I had risen from my couch, but the half-droll, half-reproachful look sparkling in his eyes as he came to meet me made me forget my previous intention to apologise if I had committed any error in using

the floral couch on which I had taken my sleep, for I felt conscious that I had only an indulgent friend - shall I say, father - to deal with. As he came up, his hand was extended to take mine, which he clasped and shook in true fraternal greeting, gave his shoulders a very peculiar and significant shrug, inclined his head towards his left side, and looked humorously into my eyes, as he asked

“May I offer my congratulations this time?”

“This time?” I repeated, taxing my memory as to where I could possibly have seen him before.

“Now, now!” said he, shaking his head and one finger in a humorously menacing manner. “You have been napping, and I caught you at it.”

“Yes, I have been sleeping” I replied; “but I am sorry if I have caused you any trouble or inconvenience by so doing.”

“Hush, hush, hush, hush! Don’t apologise” he said; “that which is natural is right, and never needs to be repented of. As to trouble and inconvenience, you parted from them as you came through the mists, and if you wish to renew their acquaintance, I am afraid you will be disappointed, for they could not exist in this life.”

“I hope then, that by sleeping I have not interfered with your arrangements, for I presume you are the friend I expected to meet me here.”

“Yes, I am Cushna; and as to your sleeping, why, that was more an item in the programme than a disturbance of the same.”

“I am glad to hear that. But, tell me, have I been sleeping for long, for I have not the least idea?”

“Neither have I,” he replied, with another of those significant shrugs of the shoulders which I found to be indicative of a vein of humour passing through his mind. Then he continued: “You see it may be that we are at a disadvantage in that respect; or, on the other hand, it may be fortunate we have no idea of time, since, in the first place, we have no clocks here, and then, if we had, they would not go.”

“Why not?”

“Let me explain. This very pleasant spot is the Home of Rest, and all who are here come for that purpose. Now you understand that there was nothing extraordinary in my finding you asleep. Well, in the long, long ago - how long I have idea, but probably in the early years of earth’s history - it is said that Time paid a visit to this home, and was so delighted with the facilities for rest and repose that it stopped, and no one has induced it to move since. That is why I cannot say how long you slept, and also the reason why clocks would not go if we had them Is it not a good one?”

“Excellent! But I am surprised –”

“That is very probable,” he rejoined, before I could finish my sentence. “Surprise is a native of this life, and whenever you see her you will find her face bright with pleasant smiles, and she is a very delightful companion to grow acquainted with. When she visits the earth, she frequently disguises herself with a veil of disappointment, and pays her visits in the shades of the gloaming, so that but few people have any idea that she is one of God’s favourite angels. But here you will soon learn to love her, and catch yourself listening for her silvery voice in every dell, and looking for the brightness of her coming from every hill-top. No one of the angels contributes so much to our enjoyment in this life as she does, and her visits are always welcome and courted.”

“Under such circumstances, I can well understand that surprises are pleasant things; but I did not think it possible to sleep here.”

“And why not?” he asked. “Sleep is the bride of weariness, and so exemplary is their attachment to each other, that slander has been disarmed before them, and no suspicion has ever marred their nuptial bond. Sleep sometimes is coy, but like the rest of womankind, she plays the part in order to excite her lover’s wooing; and he who seeks to win her best regards, can only gain his purpose in ministering to the requirements of her spouse. Therefore, where weariness is, sleep will come; and where the one is to be found, there is no necessity for the other. When you have been toiling under the weight of a heavy burden, you may lay that down, but the fatigue it has occasioned cannot be so easily laid beside it; when a sickness has been struggled with and subdued, the consequent prostration has still to be overcome; but if that illness prove to be the victor, and secures the divorcement of the soul from the body, think you some miracle is wrought to overcome the weariness of the struggle? Everything in nature - animal, vegetable, and mineral - has its season of repose. After all labour cometh rest. Why should we expect to find an exception in the case of the wearied soul! The conflict and the battle over, does it not still require recuperation and sleep to regain its healthful vigour? ‘So He giveth His beloved sleep!’¹⁹ and in that sleep the boundary is passed at which weariness is compelled to say adieu.”

“Do all persons sleep on entering this life?”

“Not necessarily! Sleep divides two states of the soul’s developments, as night divides two days. Some persons, when they reach this life, have not attained to such a standard as to dispense with it, and their condition remains much as it was before, until they are enabled to reach one of the many homes similar to this where they pass the boundary line and, then, being beyond the reach of weariness, never require to sleep again. Others, again, pass the spiritual standard before leaving the earth, and so make but a temporary stay here, while growing accustomed to their new surroundings; they then pass on to higher homes.”

“I feel as if I could never become familiarised to such a life. It is so strange, or, rather, so different from what I expected. It has so many revelations, so much that I need to have explained that I can fancy eternity will scarcely be long enough for me to understand it all.”

“We shall never be able to understand it all, my brother,” he answered, with a depth of pathos that I had not heard in him before. “I am only just beginning to comprehend, and others, who have reached far higher glories than I have attained to, say the same thing. The highest soul with which we are acquainted says he is but standing upon the shore, looking out and across the sea of infinity, over which he needs an eternity to sail, but he knows not what lies beyond for him to solve and explore before he can discern all the fullness of glory and development God has prepared for our future enjoyment. All we can do is to seek to know that which is here around us, when we have comprehended that, the law of this existence will raise us to wider and higher fields of contemplation, and so we shall mount the ladder whose top rests against the throne of God.”

“Such is a delightful occupation, and all the more so because everything is conducive to knowledge, so far as I have been able to understand - so different to what I was taught or led to expect. But when I look inwards and see my limited powers, then outwards and find that every question I ask gives birth to a hundred others in the reply it receives, I almost fear to think of the time that must elapse before I can begin to climb. What I have already seen is more of heaven than I had ever dreamed - more than I feel I shall ever have the power to grasp - how can I hope to move?”

“I can fully appreciate the feeling which overpowers you,” he said. “What you are I was once; and with a lively recollection of my own experience, it gives me much joy to help you at the commencement of your journey. As for the time which must be spent in these studies, take no care. I told you time had stopped so whatever may be necessary for the accomplishment of God’s design in you, will not in any way diminish the remainder. In this the arithmetic of eternity varies from that of time - when you have subtracted all the ages required to perfect your education the infinite quantity remaining will always be the same. Whenever you see anything you do not understand, ask; and when you ask stand still, and do not hesitate to wait until you have mastered your enquiries. In this way you will soon learn, and to assist in such explanation will be a source of pleasure to every soul you meet.”

“That I have already discovered, for since my arrival I have done nothing but question every friend I have met.”

“Continue to do so; you will then find that knowledge is more easily acquired than you imagine at present.”

“I will not forget your advice. But, tell me, is it customary for newly-arrived persons to travel as I have done?”

“The law of love, by which alone we are governed, is a very flexible one,” he answered, “and adapts itself to every individual requirement; the system of administration being with a view to secure the greatest results in every direction. Therefore the watchers at the mists scrutinise every soul on arrival, not to judge - that being no part of their duty - but to assist to the full extent of their power. They are skilled in reading character, learn the tastes and disposition of all who pass them, and flash their communications to central stations for the

peculiar aid required for each individual; in less time than it takes me to explain, the most suitable provision is made, and one or more attendants are despatched to meet the friend in the arena or on the slopes, which is the appointed meeting-place.”

“How do they recognise the particular stranger they are deputed to help in all the multitude passing to and fro?”

“By the robes they wear.”

“But where so many are of the same colour do they not make frequent mistakes?”

“Never. The messengers engaged in that work are too well initiated into their duties to make any error. The colours may appear alike to you, but to them there are distinguishing shades, each of which indicates a corresponding feature of the mind, and having also certain peculiarities to which individual ministers are assigned. There is no possibility of any mistake.”

“Is this strictly infallible as a guide?”

“Yes. That is produced by the spiritual chemistry of the life they have lived, and nothing is able to change or falsify it - it is a testimony which cannot lie. Directly we see your dress the blending of pink and blue - we know that you have a desire to learn the truth and an open mind to receive it, since blue denotes truth and pink charity. There are other indications that at present you would not be able to understand, which tell of your search after truth, and disappointment in the past, therefore whoever sees you will be anxious to afford all available assistance in rectifying past failures. This is why you are invited to travel, that you may satisfy your thirst for truth by seeing it as it is.”

“I appreciate your goodness,” I replied, “and hope you will not find me a too troublesome student.”

“We are not afraid of that; and now, if you are sufficiently rested, let me give you an insight into some of the services we are called upon to render to the different friends we have entrusted to our care in this home.”

With this he rose from the couch where he had been sitting beside me during our conversation, and placing his arm within my own, led me away in the direction from which he came when I first saw him.

“Was I wrong in thinking these are the grounds of a convalescent home or sanatorium?” I asked, as we walked along.

“Not very,” he answered, “and I am about to ask your attention to the means we employ in administering to the restoration of some who are weak and helpless.”

CHAPTER VI

A MAGNETIC CHORALE

As we walked along my attention was attracted by the chiming of a peal of bells in the distance, and simultaneously an irresistible fascination seized upon me, momentarily increasing, until, at length I felt as if was being impelled forward by some invisible but tangible influence to accept the invitation those rhythmic tongues were issuing far and wide. What that influence was or how it obtained such a mastery over me, I could not tell, and even now, with my more extended experience of this life, I am unable to explain. The sensation produced was novel, entrancing, and, indescribable. Its operation seemed to permeate my whole being, and to exert itself equally from within as without. Neither was it due entirely to my recent arrival, for I perceived that it had the same effect upon my guide as upon myself. By some accountable process I translated the voice of those bells into an appeal for help and assistance which I alone had the power to render, and though I had no inclination to hasten in obedience to call, I was certain that it would not be right to delay. But why should it be me? was a question that I put to myself again and again. I was entirely ignorant of everything surrounding me, why was not the summons to many others walking in the same direction - gathering, as it were, from every visible point of the compass? And as I thus queried I scanned the faces of those nearest to me, and became convinced that they too were moving under the impulse of that same mysterious power. This discovery served to further increase my interest, and excite my imagination as to what the result and explanation would be.

My companion saw, and no doubt fully understood, the perplexity I was enduring, but when I turned and would have sought the interpretation, he merely smiled, and my tongue was silent. So we went forward in obedience to the one impulse attracting us both by its strange magnetic power.

Presently another source of gratification was afforded me, as through the trees I began to catch in the distance broken glimpses of a stately pile of buildings which we were steadily approaching. Hitherto, I had only seen such, as I looked across that boundless landscape under the direction of Eusemos but now, it was evident that I was to have the opportunity of inspecting one of the homes of paradise at close quarters. With this a pleasing spasm of excitement seized me as I involuntarily asked myself - "Will this be my home? - a question I at the same time answered in the negative, but how I know not, unless it was by the power of revelation which is so natural, and yet so infallibly a part of our personality in this life. Therefore I ceased speculate on the ownership of the home, and prepared to examine its character as soon as circumstances would allow of my doing so.

Immediately we reached the open plain, the centre and crown of which it occupied, I intuitively knew that I was looking upon the Home of Rest, or sanatorium, in the grounds of which I had enjoyed my refreshing and rejuvenating sleep. As the physiognomy of a man affords a certain index to his character and disposition so the contour of this home

declared at once its nature and purpose. At a glance I saw it was a citadel of repose, a fortress of rest, an ambuscade of joy to every soul that came that way. Stately and grand in its unassuming magnificence as if its foundations were laid deep down within the eternal calm of God's omnipotence, pure and unsullied in its fabric as the infinite and changeless love of its Divine designer, every stone and feature apparently throbbing with the spirit of mercy and forgiveness which hovered around, I felt as I gazed upon it that I in some manner had solved the mystery of that profound attraction by which I had been drawn towards such a desirable centre. Reverence, gratitude, worship and awe, seemed to be the janitors who stood as guards at the four towers which rose at the terminating points of its stately porticoes.

So much of the building as was visible from where we stood, for me to wonder at and admire its beauties, was undoubtedly a hall of enormous proportions, its shape that of an amphitheatre. Three sides were flanked by spacious piazzas of equal length, carrying out the design to a perfect square, the corners being occupied by four towers which served the purpose of entrances to the hall. The style of architecture was composite, the columns supporting the roof of the porticoes were Corinthian, their material more resembling ivory than marble; the plinths upon which they rested were of pinkish alabaster, and massive enough to form the corner-stones of pyramids, but whereas the Egyptians would have left a Sphinx-like blank upon their faces, these were panelled with exquisite bas-reliefs such as the Grecians loved to carve; the pediments were used as galleries for groups of statuary in the contemplation of which the convalescent inmates of home might learn progressive lessons of the life to which they had been called. In that self-illuminated atmosphere which offered no facility for the birth of shadows, from the distance at which I stood the walls of the hall appeared to be built of stone of a delicate and variable shade of green. I afterwards discovered that this effect was produced by a magnificent screen of elaborately carved and perforated marble, draped around the hall in folds as exquisite and soft as lace, through which the foliage of a noble vine was visible. The towers rose to a considerable height, terminating in minarets like polished silver, from which the bells chimed forth their music; and crowning the hall rose a majestic dome serving the double purpose of completing design and lighting the interior.

The wonderful appositeness of every feature of the scene to each other was again impressed upon me; art and nature being blended in such manner as to enrich the harmony. That garden-like plain so artistically dotted with flowers and shrubs would have been half-voided of its beauty had that noble structure not been there; and as for the hall, it needed that flower bejewelled mantle of a lawn as a fit setting whereon to display its matchless perfection. Blended together the beauties of each were emphasised, while the movements of the multitude kept the balance of the harmony swinging.

Cushna moved forward; and I, enraptured with the scene and wondering what its next development would be, mechanically followed, until I became conscious that it was not his intention to enter by any of the approaches visible to me. Then for a moment I wavered, as

all my soul called me within that place and I was doubtful whether he was not leading me elsewhere. In an instant he divined my difficulty, and appeared to be by no means displeased thereat, but assuring me he was about to enter, led me to the main portion of the building, before hidden from my sight, and which formed the temporary abode of those who tarried at this home for rest and recuperation. At that moment the bells ceased to ring, and I was glad when, without attempting to show me the numerous apartments opening on every hand, he motioned me to follow him along a corridor which led in the direction of the hall. At the end, drawing aside a richly-embroidered curtain, he ushered me at once into what I may legitimately call the arena.

Shall I describe the scene which met my sight? It was a mountain of faces on every side, and over and around us an atmosphere of unbroken peace. I was conscious that I had reached a goal; a period of uncertainty lay behind me. For the time I felt satisfied, and drew a deep breath of relief at having accomplished something, I knew not what; but my heart was glad.

The flower-carpeted floor of that spacious arena contained a number of lounges composed of various aromatic mosses, soft as air, each one designed to produce its own peculiar effect magnetically. Cushna drew my attention to the different odours they exhaled, and invited me to throw myself upon them to test their comfort, and, as I complied, briefly explained that magnetism is the strength and nourishment of the spiritual body. Then he led me to a vacant seat, and left me in charge of a friend, who, he said, would interpret the chorale to me.

Rapidly that spacious auditorium was filling up its seats. Tier after tier, rising one above another, contributed to that sea of faces, upon every one of which happiness had set her name in living characters. From each of the four entrances a steady stream poured in until the hall was full, ceasing when just one seat remained for the last who entered. The dresses worn were of many colours, but only of the lighter shades; all serving to make the groupings as picturesque as they were varied. The lower seats were filled by children wearing robes of spotless white, or tints of the most imaginable delicacy; some of the wearers being of such tender age as to make me wonder how they were kept in the quiet order which everywhere prevailed.

Behind these, thousands of youths and maidens were arranged according to some method I did not understand. Above these again were women in greater proportions still; and finally rank after rank of men to the outer edge of that wide circle. Every nation upon earth had its legitimate representation in that throng, and all were so disposed that each complexion added its own influence to the balance of the picture. But the most pleasing thought of all was that every voice would say 'Our Father', to the selfsame God, and feel at heart that they were members of one family. The Jew was not conscious of election, the Gentile had lost his hatred, the caste restriction of the Brahmin was broken down, the hand of the Arab was no more against his fellow. The Hindu woman had doffed her veil, the Mohammedan had

lost his bigotry, Greek and Roman thought not of deadly feuds, the hand of the Zulu held no assegai, the Indian had no tomahawk, while the Christian had sheathed his sword. Romanist and Protestant gave the preference to each other, the Episcopalian boasted of no apostolic succession, and the narrow-minded sectarian sat side by side with the whilom atheist, whom he had before consigned fire eternal. In such a multitude, with such a bond uniting them I could fancy that I was not very far removed from the inner shrine of heaven.

Was it the association in which I found myself that started such a train of reflection in my mind? I know not, perhaps never shall know; but it afterwards resolved itself into an impromptu symphony, introducing that never-to-be-forgotten chorale. I had scarcely reached its termination before the key note sounded.

In common with those around me, I raised my eyes to the dome, where a dove of tintless electric brilliance poised itself on outstretched wing, as if to hush the tremor of its rapid flight. In its beak it held something which flashed and blazed with a glory that paled the lustre of its carrier, and added perceptibly to the hallowed light which bathed the hall. With one impulse, but without a sound, those thousands rose and bowed their heads in reverent adoration; and when the silence had been hushed into an awful calm the quickened sense of the soul could almost hear that jewel fluttered on the air, and like a flash of lightning dying from our sight the dove had disappeared.

Steadily, as a bubble on the air becalmed, that brilliant globule floated, gradually falling in the centre of that vast concourse of worshippers. Down, slowly down, enlarging as it fell, it gained still greater brilliancy by expansion. I watched it with bated breath, wondering when we should sound the depth of its self-inspiring awe, until, at length bursting with a soft detonating chime, it threw a proportion of its crystal spray on every head within that audience, the which lingered through that service like a jewel sent to flash God's blessing upon His children gathered there.

The echoes of that soft percussion remained while that vast concourse took their seats, bearing the bright insignia of the presence of their Father, who waited to hear and answer prayer.

Seven bars of silence intervened; and then the opening strains of the first chorus fell upon my ears. The theme commenced with a pianissimo number in unison of male magnetisms, for in all that chorale there was not one articulate sound. I looked, and from the heads of the men saw crimson rays emitting, which darting towards the centre of the dome blended with each other, formed into circles of various sizes, and began to gyrate in the room. The movements caused vibrations of deeper or higher tones, according to the size of each circle and the speed with which it moved. The effect of this blending of the bass and tenor was like the muffled music of the ocean's roll when heard from some distant inland hill. The melody was too sweet to set to words without detracting from its cadence; and yet, as I listened to its holy inspiration, its greatest charm being the perfect unison of such diverse nations, religions, and tongues, I felt that heaven had accomplished a triumph in the

setting to such music the immortal poem of Israel's sweetest singer, and that I was listening to a challenge to earth and heaven to 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'²⁰

The invitation issued, and the gamut of their variations being exhausted, the circles ceased their flight, met, embraced, and finally spread themselves as a canopy across the dome. Then succeeded a duct of the blue and amber offerings of the youths and maidens, rising in the volume of its gradual crescendo, the sweeps of blue soprano and curves of amber contralto waking sweet echoes with the declaration – 'It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard - even to Aaron's beard - that went down to the skirts of his garment.'²¹

At this point the women joined their rose-tinted pulse-throbs of a second soprano to swell the trio – 'As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew which descended upon the mountains of Zion.'²² Then the full chorus pealed, a thousand children contributing the brilliance of their untinted music, as the canopy of circles re-formed, and moved to lend their deep foundation to the strain.

It sounded like a choir of angels singing, with the voice of far distant thunders, and heaven's own Bourdon serving as a double bass to the orchestra of the oceans roll. All harmonies, above, beneath, around, with all the chords and voices nature can command, being represented in the universal confirmation – 'For there the Lord commanded His blessing, even life for evermore.'²³

The chorus swelled around us with such majestic force and intensity that every colour flashed its echo to enhance the glory, until the hall was bathed with the perfume of thanksgiving; then gathering over the arena, as the final beat of the last bar was reached, a harmony of shades as sweet as that of sound was formed, and the cloud ascended as an offering of gratitude for our Father's love.

The dome was not yet clear of that prismatic cloud before a chord of even sweeter music fell upon our ears, and I perceived that the jewels on our heads were chiming the acceptance and 'Amen' of God.

Up to this point Cushna had assumed the directorship from the centre of the arena; being surrounded by a number young men and women who moved in graceful order with the rhythm of the music, as if engaged in working out some figure in a mystic dance. On making enquiry I was informed that this chorus was but an introduction to the ceremony, sung aid those special attendants in producing a suitable magnetic condition into which to introduce the patients; and looking intently in obedience to the wish of my instructor, I saw that all the magnetisms had not ascended; some had been distilled – shall I say etherealised? - and filled the arena like the least suspicion of a cloud - and yet, it was not cloud, since such a designation conveys the idea of an unsubstantial vapour which could have been carried hence upon the arms of motion; this had weight and body through which the attendants moved to and fro as bathers move through shallow water, with the exception

that this scarce visible something seemed to offer no resistance. Here is a metaphor which will convey the idea of what it seemed to be: it was like the spectre of a lake, which in its restless wanderings had been conjured to pause for a time, that the spirits of some children of mortality might bathe therein, and wash the last traces of the earth away.

My attention was here called to a man who entered the hall from the corridor through which I came. His tall and stalwart form was clothed in a robe of electric grey, over which he wore a flowing mantle of blue, lined with amber and gorgeously embroidered from his loins downwards. His face, complexion, and general bearing, reminded one of an Arab sheik, except that haughtiness was here replaced by calm humility. Around his head, waist, wrists, and ankles he wore circlets of some strange amalgam, set with gems that emitted rays of light, thereby forming six circles of halo, which invested him with some mysterious power.

As he stepped into the arena a flash of welcome greeted him from that immense assembly. He glanced round the hall, just as a skilled conductor will survey his orchestra to see if all is ready for the baton's wave; reaching the point where Cushna awaited him, he merely bowed his head at which the attendants turned and left the hall by the passage at which he had entered.

Here I took the opportunity to ask:

“Who is this?”

“Siamedes, the magnetic adept who will conduct the chorale.”

“An Oriental, I presume?”

“Assyrian.”

We had no time for further conversation. Scarcely had that single word been spoken before the Assyrian raised his hand, as if to call his audience to attention; for an instant it remained poised, while a luminous sea-green cloud enveloped it, then with a majestic sweep he struck a circle, throwing the halo in the air above him. A pause, and then another sweep repeated again and yet again, each motion adding another circle to expand and follow its predecessor. Only a pulse throb marked the interval between each beat, but that was long enough to change the colour, as he desired to change the note to form that bugle-call with which he summoned his army to march to victory.

The challenge had not died away before a jubilant response was floating in the air. It was a martial strain, and one could almost fancy they heard the steady and measured tramp of the approaching battalions as they came in the strength and confidence of their cause to certain triumph. The gentle crescendo grew in force and volume as each succeeding wave of magnetism rolled into the expanse above us. Their form was no longer circle and curve and flash, as in the opening chorus, but following the example of the Assyrian, each contribution came in vapoury strains to form the novel harmonies of that theme.

Waves of primrose and blue met and kissed each other into the life-chord for which they had been born, then blended in their next development to form the glory-green of hope; clouds of crimson strength from men took to their embraces the white purity of the children's love, and nursed them into tones of sympathy; then each one yielding to the other, united in the pink of charity. Brown and rose, mauve and cerise, auburn and grey, green and gold washed over each other, embraced and eddied round, as each produced the note desired; and having thus achieved the first purpose of existence, they added to their music the perfume of duty faithfully fulfilled, until the air was weighted with fragrant sounds, changing in volume and in kind with every chord and combination.

At length the hall itself was full; perfume was crushing colour and colour crowding sound, but that grand march of life seemed only half complete. Again the adept raised and swept his hand, this time throwing into the transparent clouds around us variegated sparks bright with electric glow, like jewels flashing in the sun. An instant's pause, during which the magnetism of that host changed the form of its appearance, then perfume, sound and colour were supplemented by a myriad gems giving still greater beauty to the fairy-like scene. At length from head of Siamedes a rainbow signal flashed, and the strains music gradually died away, but fragrance, light and colour still remained.

While this was proceeding, the attendants carried the patients in. Very tenderly was the service rendered, for Cushna was careful in the assignation and arrangement of each couch upon which they were laid as if they had been the subjects of excruciating pain - rather than lying in a state of unconsciousness - for whom he was anxious to exhaust his resources to mitigate their suffering. When the last couch had received its occupant a signal was given, and the music ceased.

At this time the hall was like a sea of variegated colours - a magic, incomparable sea, with its now motionless depths illumed by a million fairy lamps; a sea in which a mighty host lay engulfed, overwhelmed with joy and calm content. Well might it be so; for, oh! the life, increasing life, which found its birth therein! Its waters were allowed to rest, that they might softly bathe those sleepers with life's fullness, and re-ingraft the existence which seemed to flicker in its disasters and catastrophes through which their past has led them. The practised eye of the Assyrian attentively watched the progress of each patient as the energising powers around them were absorbed and assimilated, until returning strength began to show itself, and the inoculation had produced its needed change.

When he was satisfied, throwing his mantle back across his shoulders with a kingly gesture, he raised his arms and waved them to and fro as a monarch would sway his sceptre, in confidence that some pre-command would be obeyed. The effect was talismanic. Those mysterious forces immediately assumed intelligence - understood his sign, and hastened to obey.

By the operation of some mystic law, each colour was divided from the rest, some being changed into forms of fruit or flowers; others, weaved into semblances of brocades of silk

and plush and satin, were draped in graceful folds as decorative hangings upon the walls, further ornamented and embroidered with a multitude of gems, which flashed their lustre from the borders. Others, again, were woven into triumphal banners or emblems, with which the dome, arena, and seats were dressed; while the offering of the children, worked into lace of spotless purity, was gathered into festoons and valances to finish the decorations. Thus, by the simple act of the Assyrian's will, was the hall transformed and arrayed, as if for some thanksgiving or welcome home, when a nation meets to honour the return of an exiled chief or king.

As he spread his hands to heaven, every knee around him bent in adoration. I knew it, though my eyes were fixed on him who, facing me, looked like a gladiator preparing for the contest, confident of victory, though death itself should be his adversary. Yet he was not proud or arrogant. All his majesty of mien, the glory of his strength, the perfection of his form, seemed to him unknown or, rather, for the moment were forgotten, and nothing but the child-like heart remained as he addressed his God. His thoughts flew upwards, like spasms of earth-engendered lightning flying towards the sun, pure and untinted by any shade of colour. They were directed to the Great Supreme, and nothing but unsullied purity can gain admission to that sacred presence.

Was there a quiver in their early flight? I do not know; but if so, it was due to the intense earnestness of the soul which poured its libations forth. Still no words; but in the silvern music I thought I could comprehend the burden of his heart: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; all that is in the heavens and the earth is Thine; Thine are all kingdoms, O Lord and Thou art exalted as head over all. Both riches and honour come of Thee; and in Thine hand is power and might, and in Thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, O Father, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name.'

His prayer was done. There was no supplication. His confidence and faith declared that to be unnecessary. The presence of that host around him was a more eloquent and acceptable supplication than he could frame. God requires no superfluities. He was but the representative of the many, who desired to gain a victory over a hitherto triumphant wrong, and he was but the chosen champion for the combat. Stripped for the fray, he paused to lay his weapons at the feet of Him for whose glory he was about to fight, to thank his King for the use of such victorious arms, and then to await the royal sign to strike. He was there to break the bands of captivity, to give freedom to the slave, and in his eye the assurance of triumph shone. His victory was already won in the confidence he possessed.

His steady gaze still rested on that vaulted dome. He knew the answer would not tarry, and when it came it should find him waiting to receive it. A deeper hush fell over us, and then a cloud of glory, like a mantle of sunshine, descended, making him radiant with the power and presence of God.

No need to wait longer when clothed with such authority and sanction. He approached a couch upon which lay a young woman deformed almost past recognition of the human form. She had appliances to nearly every part of her body, not fitted help or render support, but rather to torture and force her in dwarfish and unnatural shapes. The eyes had been purposely turned to make her sight uncertain, while her limbs were so pressed and malformed in order to prevent the possibility unaided movement.

Let it be here distinctly remembered that this deformity was spiritual, but to my astonishment at that time, confirmed by later and considerably extended experience, I found that in the persons of these recent arrivals from earth, for whose benefit and assistance the chorales are specially held, spiritual restrictions arbitrarily forced upon an enquiring mind with a view of preventing it from overstepping dogmatic limits, produce upon the soul a disfigurement in growth as tangible and real as if they were surgical appliances purposely designed to effect such horrible shapes, and the Great Father in His all-embracing provision has designed this process of restoration that such oppressed and struggling souls should be at once restored to their normal condition and enter upon the immortal life free from the disabilities under which they have hitherto laboured. Further, let it not be supposed that I am seeking to create a poetic fiction, for which purpose I allow my fancy to roam in search of novelties or situations; truth is far more strange than any such ideal the mind could frame, and in this record I am satisfied to state the simple facts of God's eternal law, as I have found - and you will find by-and-by.

My descriptions may jar upon your senses by their seemingly vulgar materiality; they may even cause a shock by what appears a coarse portrayal of, and as being antagonistic to, your cherished conception of the nature of this life. For that I cannot hold myself responsible. My attempt is to translate into earth's prosaic vocabulary, so far as circumstances and means will allow, some slight idea of the realities and truths to be found in the poem and the music of this after-life. If the result is but a thick and guttural jargon, void of melody, and disappointing to your hopes, blame me not; the extent of my desire is but to indicate a very brief outline of what the picture might be if the facilities were at my disposal; but that outline is true to scale, as you yourself will find it one day by experience. Should you attempt to re-translate my record from the physical into the spiritual, that you may comprehend the truth as I behold it, let me offer one suggestion, by attention to which at least half your difficulty will be cleared away. Death works one change, and it is this:

In the process of dissolution everything is altered except yourself; old things pass away and all things become new, but you will remain unmoved, unchanged, as the one world makes its exit and another its entrance in the theatre of your life. This transformation is effected in the twinkling of an eye when the wand of the Magician-Death is waved. The material will fade away 'like the baseless fabric of a vision'²⁴ ever after to appear as a vague and

shadowy substance which must be sought for and be but dimly visible to the newly acquired state; while that world upon whose eternal shores your feet will rest, will leap from the realm of vision into a solid and startling reality, having foundations which never can be removed since they are laid deep down in the bosom of infinity, and whose inhabitants have solved the birth-pangs of immortality. Bear this in mind, and read the following pages in the light of this suggestion, then you will understand why I have not hesitated to use that language - however unworthy for the other reasons - which conveys to you the idea that the scenes among which I move are, to me at least, as real and solid as the earth at present appears to you.

Just another thought which offers food for meditation and reflection and may help to remove the impression that my statement of spiritual deformity is erroneous and imaginative. Parental profligacy, immorality, ignorance, accident, and a hundred other pre-natal influences produce physical and mental distortions in a child. Why then should it be illogical to assert that in like manner, spiritual errors, unnatural ideas, and bigoted restrictions, generate corresponding malformations and disfigurements in the soul, when it is set free from the flesh in which its shape and lineaments have been moulded? Whether you may be able to satisfy yourself on the reasonableness of this point or not, the fact remains the same, and the time is not far distant when you will recognise its truth and appreciate the justice of the law by which it is governed. Be not deceived, the diseases of the soul resulting from personal sin are only removed and cured by slow and painful processes; but the unavoidable defects caused by other's sin or force of circumstances, have a speedy rectification in such chorales as that to which I draw your attention.

But to return to my digression.

Very narrowly did I watch the Assyrian as he applied himself to the removal of those torturing restrictions. At the first, I must confess, it appeared to be a useless labour of love upon which he was engaged, since there was scarcely an indication of life remaining in the sufferer. Presently, however, she gave evident signs that she was still sensible to the pain they caused but even then I thought it would be greater kindness to let her die in peace rather than disturb her when too late to save; for in that moment of sympathy I had forgotten that it was impossible for her to die any more, since death itself was dead. With more tender care than a mother could have shown to an ailing child, the soft and gentle hands of that physician loosed and threw aside each bond, until at length the last was taken away and she lay at perfect liberty. She felt the freedom, and, glad to make an effort to use it, endeavoured, with considerable success, to turn, yawned, and stretched out her arms; then finding that all restraint was gone she finally straightened herself upon the couch, and rolling over fell at once into an easy and refreshing sleep. The whole movement was the spontaneous action of a person who, waking from a troubled dream before sufficient rest had been obtained, and feeling the terror of the nightmare broken at once sinks back again to sleep without fully being roused consciousness.

With what interest and sympathy Siamedes watched her progress can better be imagined than described, until she lay in that quiet and comfortable repose to which she had hitherto been a stranger. Then he was satisfied and turned to give his attention to the next case.

All my powers of observation were attracted to the one individual; the further work of liberation would be more or less a repetition of what had already been accomplished, and as there was much I could not understand, I judged a fitting opportunity had arrived to seek some explanation; therefore, turning to my companion, I asked:

“Will you explain what these bonds are, and how such deformities are possible here?”

“I have no doubt,” he replied, “but that this service is full of wonder and amazement to you. It must of necessity be so, until you grow familiar with our law and mode of existence - until you learn how scrupulously this life is a corollary of the one you leave behind. Hypocrisy, sham and cant are masks which are torn off as you come through the mists, and the real man - whether base or noble - stands undisguised, able to read and to be read of all men. With us no subterfuge is available for the concealment of unpleasant deformity, no matter whether it arises from your own sin or the neglect and criminality of another. Everything is known.

“To the practised eyes of Siamedes, Cushna, and thousands of such ministers engaged in their noble work, the real author and source of every such malformation can be told at a glance, and by an inexorable law, impossible to evade, the penalty and punishment of every wrong falls upon the offender. In this you will see there is a balancing of accounts and a righteous retribution for the deeds done in the body. It is a sad mistake to say that death levels all men, and that this life is a new one, while the record of the old one has been wiped out with the sponge of death. All life is a continuation of that which had gone before; and entering here you have but turned over the page to commence another chapter, the story and plot are the same.

“In this you will find that the mistakes of the past are rectified, overdue accounts have to be settled, and compensation awarded to those who have unjustly suffered. Men are here weighed in the balances of God, appraised by a valuer whose judgment is righteous, and against whose verdict there is no appeal but that of repentance. You will find no bribery and corruption; everything is sternly real; all men and things are just what they appear to be.

“The restrictions binding these friends have been worn in violence to their better judgment, but lacking power to conquer the forces opposed to them, they have become victims of circumstances, and have passed their lives in an irksome bondage, being dominated by wills and usages they could not successfully resist. If they had given a ready consent to custom and dogma, followed with unquestioning faith where others led, and been content to crush the right to think, they would have developed the required littleness of soul, without necessity to apply restraint. But they recognised the God within, and refused to still the voice calling them to newer, nobler, higher duties, for the welfare of their kind.

“Their prophetic utterances were dangerous to a craft, hence, the gag must be applied; their eyes saw visions of coming glory for the weary and oppressed, therefore, their sight must be distorted, lest the interests of a class be endangered; the intelligent vigour of the child proclaimed a leader in the man, and church and dogma forged letters to cripple his power, and force the noble stature of the giant into the contortions of the dwarf. You can see it was a battle to the death, noble lives have been hindered from work-wasted, yea worse; for whereas they were ordained for construction and deliverance, being forcibly tampered with they have been perverted by party bigotry, and compelled to struggle for existence instead of scattering the blessings they were designed to carry to their fellows. The result is to be seen in the wrecks which lie before us. Wasted opportunities, wasted intellects, wasted lives! For all these things those who are responsible must be brought to judgment.

“Guilt must be righteously punished, while the excess of pain which the victim has endured must receive its legitimate compensation. With the punishment we have nothing to do, the natural law of this life is fully adequate to that, and every guilty soul will reap the just harvest of the seed he has sown. It is that we may take part in the compensation that we are here. Justice demands that an instant liberation shall be given from those bonds, and life must be lavished upon the sufferers until we have helped to build up and invigorate their souls, then each one shall reach the full development for which it was designed and for which it wept and struggled, but was prevented by action of oppressors.”

“But where do we find mercy and forgiveness in the administration of such inexorable justice?” I asked.

“Every attribute of God has its legitimate sphere of operation,” he replied, “and the inviolate maintenance of each in its appointed order is essential to the continuance of the almighty and all-wise perfection of our Father, but it is impossible for any one of these to usurp the jurisdiction of another. Suppose, for a moment, that mercy was allowed to withstand justice and prevail in any single instance; the immediate result would be an injustice; since to show mercy to the offender would be an injustice to the offended, unless, in turn, you show him mercy too. Carry this to its logical sequence and you will be compelled to abolish justice in favour of mercy, in which case punishment and retribution would become an impossibility; law would be a dead letter, and sin, freed from fear or restraint, would revel in its license. But when we see the working of the attributes of God according to His Divinely appointed plan, we find how infinitely wise has been the adaptation to the necessities of the human family in its development.

“Take those to which you have referred - Mercy, Justice, and Forgiveness. Mercy operates on earth, where patience, forbearance, and long-suffering, are so much needed during the early stages of the conscious existence of the soul. Imagine the catastrophe and disaster

which would ensue if unerring justice was enthroned at such a crisis in life's history - would there be any subsequent immortality to record? Unconscious, practically, of his whence and whither, an untutored experimentalist as to his powers and capabilities, failure and mistake. The law by which he shall develop and learn to understand himself, uncertain if it be right to gratify even the most ardent of his longings, filled with fear and trembling at the forces surrounding him, a volume of nature before him of nature of whose hieroglyphics he is ignorant though called upon to read, himself the most profound mystery among the million other problems - under such circumstances, how often would earth be swept clear of man if justice was applied to every transgression of the law; that justice which is perfect as its Framer?

“No! This attribute cannot be applied to such an undeveloped condition; what man could be found wild enough to imagine that it is? Is not rather the absence of justice so manifest as to be used for an argument against the existence of a God, while it has become a proverb among the nations that ‘Villainy is the heir to Fortune, but Honesty marries Miss.’ Oppression, tyranny and persecution are rampant, that ‘Might is Right’ is the universal motto practically both of politics and religion; the affluent and wealthy are the honoured of the nations, the poor and needy, the curse and bane. Is this right? you will ask me, and I reply, a thousand times no! But even the injustice of man is not strong enough to cause God to change the action of His attributes, and substitute justice for Mercy upon the earth.

“This universal custom is wrong, and man has gained enough knowledge to know that it is so; but God is long-suffering that the oppressor may be able to redeem himself before he is brought in to judgment. Mercy pleads, while hope of restitution remains; but once let the law take hold of the offender, and the issue passes from the court of Mercy to justice. The mists marking the boundary line between that state and this, also form the vestibule of the hall of judgment, and every soul must pass through and receive its righteous verdict before it enters here. Mercy has no power to cross that threshold; the soul stands alone before that inscrutable tribunal its own witness, its own judge, hence its life deeds pass the sentence from which no appeal is possible.”

“But forgiveness; what of that?” I asked.

“That follows later,” he replied. “The penalties enforced by that Justice are for wrongs committed against your fellow-man. Such sins must be redeemed, they are never forgiven, for no one not even God, has power to forgive a trespass against any other than Himself, such being contrary to His own law. When the penalty for sins against his fellow has been righteously discharged then the repentant soul has power to ask forgiveness for his sin against God, which is always freely granted; but it is requisite that he be first reconciled to his brother, for only ‘he that hath clean hands and a pure heart’²⁵ can ascend to the presence of God where Christ will secure his full remission.”

I was silent before the unexpected elucidation of a difficulty which had always perplexed me, for I knew my instructor not expounding his opinions, but actual facts which were very

widely opposed to all the ideas and teachings I had ever heard on earth, and yet they are fraught with the most momentous interest to every soul who has to pass the mists, and in the depths of my being I yearned again to discover some means whereby I could reach earth, and make the revelation for the benefit the blinded and the ignorant. My friend, however, did not leave me long to myself, but called my attention to what was passing in the arena.

Every bandage and restriction had been removed, and all the patients lay free from the bonds with which earth had bound them. The order of procedure had been to take the most serious case first, and so on through the whole, that the resuscitation of all might be accomplished as simultaneously as possible. Very earnestly did I watch the gradual absorption of that mysterious spectre lake into which they had been carried, the wither limbs and contorted frames expanding and growing as they fed upon that strange nourishment, until every trace of colour had been abstracted from the atmosphere in the vicinity of the couches whereon they lay. Then rays of magnetism were drawn from appointed individuals, according as the Assyrian required to form some combination specially adapted to each case, these in turn being broken at the moment when the first traces of colour seemed to evolve from the sleepers. This, I was informed, afforded the natural indication of the condition of each soul.

By the exercise of that mystic power by which he weaved the unique decorations of that hall, Siamedes now resolved the flowers, fruit, and bannerets round the arena and seats, and called them to bathe the sleepers with the mellowed influences produced by the combinations they had formed. The magnetism evolved from each individual had a sympathetic attraction for the corresponding colour called into service, and was drawn in billowy clouds around the couches, over which they rolled to and fro in rhythmic time with the music born of the returning motion. Sweet and soothing was the lullaby it chanted, and the silent hush of the attendant thousands was a fitting accompaniment to the grateful psalm.

Without a sign or movement from the director, who calmly watched the scene, the melody concluded, every thirsty soul had drunk its fill, and the waves of life which yet remained, lifted above our heads, leaving the sleepers 'beautiful in all the soul's expansion'²⁶ and waiting for nothing but a waking kiss to rouse them to a life of which as yet they were unconscious.

The Work was done, the victory accomplished; but the victor betrayed no pride at the conquest in his deep humility. I did not need to be told that the final number of that life-giving chorale was at hand; but what new powers would it develop? Were there still phases of magnetic wonder to be revealed? Other mysteries to be displayed? The thought of the miracle wrought in the condition of those sleepers filled me with hope that I had misunderstood the meaning of my instructor respecting the exclusion of mercy from this life; and, turning to him, I pointed to the couches, and asked:

“Is it not mercy which has been shown to these, in liberating them from their condition of suffering?”

“Not by any means” he replied.

“By what name do you call it then?”

“Justice. Hitherto they have been the victims of an injustice they were powerless to withstand; we have only been the instruments of helping to terminate the effects of the wrong, and introducing them into a commensurate compensation. You judge of justice in the light of your earth impressions; let me advise you to get rid of that idea. Justice rightly dispensed is justness, and such you will ever find it with us; it is the quality of being just carried to perfection, with every attendant circumstance taken into consideration; think of it as such, and you will love its righteousness, in which there is no shade of fickleness, favouritism or partiality.”

“Would you not call it justice tempered with mercy?”

“No! Strict justice needs no tempering. You have been in the habit of thinking of justice as necessarily allied to oppression. It is so on earth, but you will not find that here therefore you have to learn that with us it means strict rightness, and if you add any mercy to that on behalf of either party, the adulteration produces injustice.”

I could see that the error had been mine, due to a misconception and misinterpretation of the word according to the earth impressions; the shadow which had for a time passed across the firmament of my heaven was dissolved by his explanation, and my heart again was glad.

The work was complete. Siamedes spread his hands to give his thanks to God, while every knee again was bowed as the joyous flashes winged their flight. Then, reverently dismantling his shoulders of that halo, he spread it on the air to receive throbs of praise and adoration that pealed like a great Amen, with which it ascended to the Father.

Still that audience lingered, the silence growing moment more profound; but I knew they were waiting for the benediction that would rouse those sleepers to the consciousness of life upon which they had unknowingly entered - to the recognition of the restoration which had taken place - to the realisation of the fact that death had touched them, and in that touch shackles had fallen away, whose weight beforetime had exhausted their energies in a painful but unsuccessful struggle.

What a revelation! It would be a greater surprise than I myself had experienced. What were their surroundings when the tide of consciousness ebbed away and the cloud of oblivion fell upon them? What a gulf lay between that sleeping and the waking! How would they realise its certainty - how be convinced of its fact? Would not the waking be a dream - a fairy dream - more enchanting than the imagination ever conjured up before? It was a time of supreme suspense to me to watch that advent into the knowledge and realisation of immortality, and every sense I possessed was on the alert to follow its development.

It was not long delayed. The walls before me opened, and from that arc of light crowning the zenith of the path on which I stood to contemplate the celestial landscape, a flood of glory fell into the hall, like a harbinger and forerunner of a more resplendent presence still. I looked, and down the halo-viaduct beheld a chariot as of burnished silver – flying - drawn by four steeds of transparent creamy whiteness, gifted with the speed of the winds of a hurricane. Time had not opportunity for birth before the equipage was in our midst, then, pausing for a moment while one of its riders stepped into the hall, it turned and disappeared. The glory-road was then withdrawn, the walls were closed, and my attention was riveted upon the stranger.

He was a young man, scarcely more than a youth; graceful and noble. The first impression conveyed to my mind was the strange combination of the innocence of the child with the wisdom of the sage which formed a very striking feature in his person. I loved him the instant I beheld him. His presence inspired my confidence, forbade the approach of fear, but also whispered a caution against presumptuous assumption. In him were blended strength and gentleness like a bed of down on a granite rock, while he emphasised every quality a man would desire to find in a cherished friend. From his eyes love and patience streamed in a steady, ebbless flow, his mouth breathed the fragrance of fidelity and affection, upon his shoulders rested the mantle of condescension, and his waist was bound with the girdle of constancy. He was a monarch, but his kingship was of service, and his prowess had been gained in lifting up the fallen.

For a brief moment he paused to receive and return the salutation which greeted him, then proceeded to execute his commission by the bestowal of the kiss which should break the seal of that final sleep and usher the sleepers into the day which knows no eventide. Over one and then another he bent his radiant form, loosing the influence of the refreshing spell which still caressed them, and as their eyes opened upon the bewildering scene around, he caught each new-born soul in his strong embrace, lifted it to his feet, and bade it welcome into a life of sympathy and compensation. The revelation and recognition of the truth were simultaneous. It was simply a glance of enquiring wonder, followed by a smile of inexpressible joy, and all was over.

With one impulse the audience rose and sang another chorus - this time it was a welcome home, answered by a pathetic doxology from thankful hearts, the theme of which, words and music, I have tried in vain to learn, and then that Magnetic Chorale was complete.

As the congregation dispersed the new comer lingered in the hall in conversation with the Assyrian, and I asked my companion:

“Who is he?”

“Myhanene!” he replied.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOOR OF HOPE AJAR

The multitude had departed, the hall was nearly empty, the still bewildered initiates had received the congratulations of personal friends and retired to the home from which they had been so recently carried, the three chiefs remaining the sole occupants of the arena; but I lingered in my seat, cherishing a hope I would not breathe to my companion on account of its audacity, yet wildly thinking that it might be gratified by some fortuitous circumstance or unimaginable coincidence. I could not hold myself responsible for its presence, since it came upon me unsolicited, unexpected and unprepared - one of those sudden incursions of desire, which, coming on with a flood, carries the heart away upon its torrent before resistance is possible, even were such advisable; but when it came, and I realised the pleasure of its anticipation, I had no wish to think of opposition, but rather clung tenaciously to the idea as if it were the secret and the key of life. It also resembled a flood in a secondary manner - its force was spent in its first wild rush; but as the moments flew by its current subsided, down, down, and down, until the tiny stream trembled upon the point of stagnation, and the eddy of reaction whispered all was over. I rose to take my reluctant departure, when a tongue of light darted towards us from the little group, and my companion said:

“Myhanene would be pleased to speak with you.”

My expiring hope - my wild desire was granted.

I was glad that I had risen when the message came: it lessened the delay with which I answered it. He came to meet me at the instant, and side by side, his arm around me, and his hand affectionately laid upon my shoulder, we approached Cushna and the Assyrian. As we met, and his arms encircled me, he spoke but two words: “My brother!” but when he had finished there was nothing more to say - language had been exhausted, and comprehension was incapable of grasping a wider expanse.

Had there been a discord in my past experience? If so, it was obliterated from my memory by the music of his voice; if I had suffered heartache, it was eradicated, and the wound healed under the influence of that balm of greeting; if my hopes had felt a blighting frost of disappointment, a rich harvest of fruition sprang into existence under the warmth of that embrace. The words are not new to earth, but men pronounce them with a sharp metallic sound; the resonant fullness can only be estimated when heard in conjunction with the perfect rendering of the music to which I listened. It was a chord that, once struck, can never die away. It fell into my soul like a plummet into the ocean, waking in its first plunge a deep and lingering monotone, but as it sank a chime of melody arose whose virgin song must echo and re-echo till every fathom in that shoreless of sea of life is filled with the harmony which has been born of sympathy. Myhanene was silent, as if listening to the reverberations rolling around us; I was overwhelmed with the stupendous vistas of the

possibility of feeling, the flood-gates of which he threw wide open by the utterance of those two words.

Had I the power, I would not have dared to speak, and thus assassinate such melody as his voice produced. So brief in its delivery, it was yet the longest and most eloquent discourse to which I had ever listened. Even now I am but just able to comprehend its outline; to fully assimilate it will be the study of eternity. Its echoes are still ringing through the corridors of my being, sounding the keynote of my every joy, and will so continue until I bear the still sweeter music of the voice of Him in whose utterance lies the full chorus of the eternal psalm whose lip on earth gave form such sounds no other has had the power to imitate, and who in heaven has skill to wake the strains divine.

The Assyrian put an end to my contemplation by asking me if I had enjoyed the Chorale.

“I am scarcely in a condition to express an intelligent opinion on anything,” I replied. “I am in a maze of bewilderment, to which every feature and development of this life contributes, rendering me unable to find words, thoughts, or emotions capable of adequately expressing my feelings.”

“I quite understand your position,” he responded. “Fortunately, you are not expected at present to systematically appropriate all you see; but you will acquire the ability to do so as you proceed. This ceremony affords an illustration as to the methods we employ for correcting one of the injustices of earth, as well as the compensation which results to those who have nobly tried to do their duty even when their effects have been frustrated.”

“Duty would be an easy task,” I said, “if a brief vision of such a consummation could be granted in a lull of the battle or during the time of the disappointed warrior’s weeping. But I would like to ask if you generally receive such visible responses to your prayers in this life as that cloud which fell upon you after the invocation?”

“My brother!” - it was Myhanene who replied - “No fervent prayer should be possible either here or on the earth without its definite and visible reply. When, in the other life you preferred a request to your father or a friend, did you not expect such an answer?”

“Undoubtedly, from our fellow-man; but then we each occupied a similar condition; God being a spirit, we have looked for His reply in a spiritual sense.”

“You forget that your petition was offered for your benefit, and that your being material necessitated a material reply. For instance, when you prayed for food to relieve a famine-stricken district, you would require wheaten bread for the sustenance of the body, not spiritual food to strengthen the soul.”

“Certainly! and God would answer that prayer by putting it into the hearts of His people to contribute towards the purchase of such food.”

“Do you think you honour God by calling those His people who refrain from doing a simple act of humanity until He puts pressure upon them; should not a fellow-feeling have prompted it without appealing to God for assistance in the matter?”

“I agree with you in that, but as every good gift proceeds from Him, such a result would be considered an answer to our request.”

“But you have no direct evidence that your prayer rose higher than the roof of the room in which it was breathed. What you consider an answer from God was nothing more than an act of humanity on the part of your fellow-creatures. The Jews would not have been satisfied without an oral authoritative and unequivocal reply.”

“That was in the days of the oracle, but you must be cognisant of the fact that such has long since ceased, and its revival would be regarded as unnatural and contrary to the present Divine method of procedure.”

“Not so! Say rather that it has ceased because of the unnatural and erroneous teachings which have gained the ascendancy. God is ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,’²⁷ and so long as He is God, the thing which hath been, is that which shall be.²⁸ The position which the Church in every age should occupy is, to demonstrate this truth, showing that the recorded facts of the past are presumptively true by the evidence of the corresponding powers manifested to-day; and this because God lives and is unchangeable, whose works are not for a special people, time, and place, but like Himself are for all and for ever. A contrary position is false and illogical, and exposes the man who holds it, while contending for an unchangeable God, to the ridicule and contempt of his adversary.”

“But where is the necessity for such visible signs since the complete revelation was made by Jesus? I am asking not for controversy but with a desire to know the truth as you see it from your higher condition and long experience.”

“Fear not to push your enquiries, my brother; it is always a pleasure to remove a doubt, or expose an error. As to the necessity of visible signs on the earth, we are not called upon to decide; it is sufficient for us that they were ordained in the beginning and have never yet been abrogated. In the revelation made by Jesus - the question of its completeness we must be content to waive for the present - visible signs formed a prominent feature to which He appealed for confirmation of His mission. He promised also they should follow those who believed, for a similar attestation; His promise was redeemed in the history of the early Church; such visible signs were intended, and ought to be the witness of the same to-day.”

“Wherein lies the root of these erroneous ideas and misconceptions so far as you understand them?”

“They have various origins, the first of which is due to the false position into which the Bible has been forced by claiming it to be *the* Word of God, a finished and perfect revelation, instead of taking it at its own value: as containing the Word of God to a specific people, designed for guidance under certain conditions, and but a fragment of that

revelation which began in the beginning of man's existence, and will be carried on to its close. Jesus wrote no law which was handed to His disciples with a command to keep, neither did He commission anyone else to do so after His departure. His injunction was to preach, and that only as the Spirit should give them utterance - that voice of the Spirit being the continuance of revelation until time should cease, leading His followers into all mysteries.

“Another source of error arises from the interpretation and re-interpretation of this most unsatisfactory authority, that it may be made to meet the oft-recurring difficulties due to scientific and intellectual advancement. Truth, as perceived in one century, has naturally been outgrown, and become an error in the next, while the struggle to maintain the authority of the book and adapt its interpretations to the new conditions, caused divisions and dissensions without number, each of which has expelled the error and engrafted its own idea of truth, propagated from an undue emphasis of some passage upon which it is founded, without reference to the many, which others construe into an entirely opposite claim. Gradually these innumerable dogmas have received a wider sanction - at the same time the idea that signs and prophecy have ceased has been taught a necessity - until at length the tradition and authority of the Church has usurped the living word and lively oracles of God, with the unavoidable result of error and confusion.

“Admitting your position for the sake of the argument, and allowing the probability of self-interested teachers promulgating error, by concealing certain aspects of truth for base and unworthy motives, can you doubt that there are many faithful among the people - earnest hearts who are seeking and waiting for the consolation of the Lord - or explain why visible tokens of a Divine presence are withheld from such?

“God has never been left without a witness; faithful watchers in the temple have always kept the lamp of revelation burning, and the oracle alive. History and biography are well illustrated by such examples - the salt of the earth who maintain the standard and show the possibilities from which the Church has degenerated - these only emphasise the truth I am declaring to you, since their experiences are capable of universal extension.

“But where do you find such exceptions to the general rule? They are men and women who think for themselves - who, catching a glimpse of celestial visions, do not turn away and consult the opinion of any teacher as to the legitimacy or otherwise of listening to the voice which calls to them from the cloud of glory, but following the dictates of their own souls they answer ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,’²⁹ and thus are drawn into that communion of saints which needs no mediator, seeks the aid of no priest, and is rewarded by a vision of the true shekinah from which the rended veil of doubt is torn away, bringing them into the hallowed presence of the Lord.

“With the great mass of religionists, such saints are accounted imaginative, superstitious, the victims of Satanic delusions, or slightly deficient in mental responsibility. Some few of the more charitable minded in the Church good-naturedly pity their credulity, and kindly

endeavour to persuade them to relinquish their folly, but the majority of people, and the teachers, hold themselves aloof from the blasphemy they speak, and thunder the guns of warning from the fortresses of tradition against all who lend an ear to the gospel such oracles proclaim. The faith of the Church is in these traditions of men, not in the living, ever-speaking God, hence it is no wonder that the days of miracles are past, and men laugh at the idea of removing hillocks, much less mountains.”

“Surely you do not believe in the literal fulfilment of that promise?”

“There are mountains physical, mental and spiritual,” he replied, “and the latter are quite as difficult to remove as the former, perhaps even more so - and require equally the power of God, but it can be done. Have you not just witnessed the removal of mountains of deformity?”

“I have indeed.”

“How was it accomplished?” he asked. “Not by the assembling together of the great congregation and singing ‘We can do nothing, nothing!’ as our brethren on earth are taught to do; they came to work, and that every soul did its utmost was attested by the result. Before Siamedes offered the invocation, which secured that visible response, he had assured himself that his and their unaided powers were put forth and exhausted; and being confident that of himself he could do no more, he invoked the strength which was beyond and above; and God would have broken troth if He had not honoured such faith. He had not to detail his desires, elaborate his wish, or discourse on the benefits and glory to accrue; his cry was a prophetic thanksgiving for the strength he and every soul knew would be given to them - he was conscious of the fact that his requirements were already known. Everything which could be done in this hall was completed, and there was a pause in the service - an interval only to be terminated by Divine action; and the waiting faith of the multitude captured that action by storm. God had not power to tarry when assailed by such a force, therefore that sign descended and with it the necessary energy to continue the work they had so confidently undertaken. It might and should be so on earth, but instead of healing they inflict most grievous wounds and then send the sufferers here for remedy.”

“They have not the opportunity even if they had the power to do what I have witnessed here,” I ventured to remark.

“God is too wise and just,” he answered, “to require or expect any man to perform an impossibility. But in those things which are well within their capacity do men work according to that rule of faith which you have seen exemplified? Nay verily! Rather, forgetting that they are called to the high privilege of being workers together with God, as you have seen illustrated, they have been educated into the practice of doing nothing but asking God to do it all. When God works for man it is always in conjunction with man; it is no canon of Divine law that the master shall do all the labour while the servant gives the orders. When you ask God to lay the corner-stone, you may rest assured that He will wait for you to get the foundations ready. But the earth idea of the matter is that a man has

nothing to do but to tell God what he wants and then wait for it to be done, and the reference I have already made to prayer for food in case of famine, will enable me to show you how many difficulties they place in the way, even if God did determine to do it all.

Suppose that £10,000 is prayed for to relieve a local distress how is the money to be provided? We have no gold here; it is evident therefore that it must be acquired by an overruling providence in connection with the commercial life of one of the petitioners. Well, the Divine interposition takes place, an abandoned scheme or an unsuccessful transaction is revived upon improved prospects, and £10,000 more than was originally anticipated is gained. What is the result? In his commercial circle the chosen agent is congratulated as a 'lucky dog,' a 'remarkably shrewd fellow,' or something of the kind; the money is banked, the recipient pats himself upon the shoulder, and when he happens to think about the famine fund, consults with himself, and finally decides to contribute £20. It is very evident that both God and the poverty-stricken will be robbed by any system of answer in that direction.

"Now let me suggest another. Suppose our Father determines the money shall reach the poor direct, and for that purpose commissions some messenger from this life to bear the gold to the treasurer in propria persona; if, when asked for the name of the donor, he was to speak the truth, it would not be long before they would be ready to repeat the tragedy of Calvary³⁰ for his blasphemy. So you see that God is powerless to intervene, and reveal Himself to the multitudes, owing to the erroneous ideas which have been fostered and promulgated by teachers whose authority depends upon the discontinuance of visible signs."

"I am sorry to say your argument is only too true; but seeing that this error is the gradual accumulation of ages, how far are individuals held responsible?"

"Every circumstance influencing an individual, either one way or the other, is righteously taken into consideration in the judgment of the mists; but every man is held responsible for the full and right use of the intelligence with which he is endowed. When one declares his belief in an unchangeable God who will reward every man according to the deeds done in the body, he is expected to order his conduct according to that rule, not to say that faith or belief is everything and works have no influence in salvation; or, again, to affirm that did God at one time communicate with men by visible and oral signs, but now has ceased to do so because He has completed His revelations. Such contradictions in word and practice are not flattering to intelligence, and by no means serviceable in the time of judgment. Spiritual manhood can only be attained by work which is alike honouring to God and beneficial to your fellow-man, and that religion alone is recognised that gains the commendation - 'He hath done what he could.'³¹

"All beliefs and forms of creed have been left behind before you reach the judgment, and no man will ever be asked a question respecting them, but the record of your life must show that your love to God has been manifested by your love and devotion to man before you will

have the right or power to enter into the rest which remains. Siamedes and Cushna will show you some instances of harvests which have to be gathered here. And afterwards I shall be pleased to accompany you to some of the homes of peace. May the rich blessings of our Father rest upon you in your endeavours to acquire the truth. Till we meet again - Peace.”

We had reached the outside of the hall by this time, where this noble messenger imparted his blessing to each of us and then departed to continue his mission in other scenes. The Assyrian also took his leave at the same time, first inviting us to visit his home when Cushna found a convenient opportunity.

Myhanene had contributed considerably to my store of information; his indictment was heavy - but true - as regards the earth, while the emphasis he gave to it made me sad but for one fact - the position assumed in his argument opened a door of hope before me, and now he was gone I could see the door was still ajar.

CHAPTER VIII

HOPE BLOSSOMS INTO PROMISE

I was surprised to see that Cushna was as ready to leave as his two companions had been, for it was utterly at variance with all my previous experience that such a gigantic ceremony or service could be held and leave no details to be arranged afterwards. The order with which that audience separated was as perfect as that which had characterised each feature of the Chorale, and contrasted more than favourably in every respect with the scenes we are so accustomed to on earth. There was no unseemly endeavours, by voice or gesture, to attract the attention of a friend; no discourteous interruptions for the sake of a chance word; no rushing to and fro in the crowd to find someone who was missing; or rudely crushing forward in a futile attempt to catch a train.

Friends met, without any multitudinous inquiries as to the health of the absent, or restless, anxious look in the eye, as if fearing the reply would be unwelcome; no farewells and hand-grips, which lingered in the impression that it was the last. But the strangest experience of all was that I held such long converse with the three directors of that service, without a single interruption or attempt to interfere with our communion. With that burst of welcome home with which the Chorale concluded, everything concerning it came to an end; no one individual had positively anything else to do but go. Those who had received such wonderful benefits were joined, and led away, by friends, and the entire concourse separated, perfectly conscious they could meet again individually or en masse whenever they desired to do so without the necessity of inserting any ‘if’ in the arrangement. We were the last to leave the hall, and while I was listening to the revelations which Myhanene was making to me, I was conscious - by that dual power of observation we all possess - of

admiring the undisturbed aspect of the place, which bore no indication of the presence of that great multitude who had departed.

The same lack of commotion was equally noticeable when we reached the open air, where Myhanene and Siamedes took their departure. Everything around me was in the same quiet, restful condition as when I first wondered as to the nature of the building, before I fell asleep or heard the magnetic chiming of those silvery bells.

“Now,” said Cushna, “ I shall be pleased to take you to see a sister in whose welfare I am deeply interested, and whose story you will find to be full of profit and instruction.”

“This, then, is not your home?” I enquired, as he led me away in a contrary direction to that by which we had approached the hall.

“Not by any means,” he replied. “My house is filled with children, among whom I find my chief pleasure and employment. This is but a temporary resting-place for such as those to whom we have been ministering; a kind of half-way house for restoration and recuperation.”

“Are we going to your home now?”

“No. You have much to see and learn before you would be able to understand its nature and arrangement. But you shall presently, when you will be able to renew the acquaintance of the little fellow you carried through the mists when you came.”

“Is he with you? - How is he?” I asked eagerly, as his existence was recalled to my memory.

“Gently, now; gently!” interposed my companion, the which prevented me putting half a dozen other queries crowding to the tip of my tongue. “One question at a time is much the better method, especially here, where a very simple one frequently opens up a volume of information, which we always wish to convey as clearly and definitely as possible. He is with me, as I tell you, and is also, of necessity, well.”

“I wonder what his friends thought about his death? - It is strange that I should never have given a thought to that before, but - ”

“Gently, now; or I shall not be able to answer you. Try to remember that there is no necessity to string your questions together; there is ample time to ask each one separately, and receive full answers to them all. His friends were not troubled very much after the first intimation of it. He was one of a large family, not too generously provided for, with every energy called into requisition to honestly obtain a bare existence, and little time to develop the higher qualities of the soul. It was therefore more of a relief than otherwise after the first shock, because there was one less to provide for.”

“How are you acquainted with all this?” I asked.

“There is another study opening to you. Now you see how wise it is only to ask one question at a time. It is not at all difficult for us to ascertain all the information we require in a case, since, as will be explained to you at a fitting opportunity there is a delicate thread which

forms a connection between child and his body, and by following this we can make all necessary inquiries.”

“How, Cushna! How?” I cried, and my heart beat with a feverish excitement engendered by his words - a daring, impulsive thought that it was possible to throw that door of my hope wide open and for my prayer on the slopes to be literally answered. Appalled at the next moment with my own audacity, the power of movement forsook me, and I waited to hear his answer with a feeling akin to that a felon feels when the dread moment of verdict has come and his life is quivering in the balance. Cushna certainly did not appear to understand the situation sympathetically - on the contrary, a smile of calm amusement played over his face as he quietly replied:

“Now, how do you think we could do it but by sending for the purpose?”

“What! Sending someone from here?” I cried.

“Of course! Do you think anyone on earth would do it and report correctly?”

“But is such a thing really possible?” and the realisation of my dream became momentarily more tangible.

“Why not?” he tantalizingly asked in reply, instead of giving me a direct assurance.

“I don’t know, Cushna,” I cried; “but my heart is tearing itself to pieces between hope and fear. Tell me definitely if it is so or not.”

“It is certainly so, my friend,” he replied, “however hard it may be for you to realise the fact. Myhanene has been speaking to you of an unchangeable God - that implies an unchangeable communion. Intercourse between the two worlds was enjoyed by the men of old, and it must needs be the same now as then.”

“I do not doubt your word; but what you tell me is so far beyond what I dreamed was possible - though I have many times indulged the hope since changing my state - that I doubt my senses when they convey such intelligence to me. Help me to overcome my difficulty, and say if you know this from practical experience?”

“Yes! It was during one of my missions from Myhanene to earth that I first saw the sister we are about to visit.”

“Tell me about her, and perhaps your relation will assist me to grasp this glorious news so far transcending my power of comprehension.”

“A friend, and fellow-worker, who is still in the flesh, had made a request of Myhanene, and I was sent with the reply.

During our interview - the nature and manner of which will be explained to you presently, I noticed a young woman, standing behind one of the company, whom I could see was in great need of help and sympathy; I spoke to her, but she did not - could not - hear me, and several other means by which I tried to attract her attention failed. I could not leave her

without trying to do something to mitigate her terrible agony, but I was unable to help her without knowing the cause which produced her sufferings. To accomplish this I described her and her condition as I saw it, to the company - by a means which you will learn presently - she was recognised and well known to one from whom I learned all that was necessary, and I promised to use my best endeavours to assist her, with what result you will be able to form some opinion when you hear her story and see her present condition.”

“Why Cushna, would you have me believe that death places no obstacle in the way of continued communion between the two worlds?”

“Not by any means, for such an idea would be very erroneous; but, at the same time, I do want you to understand that the difficulties are not insuperable. As you have already discovered, the boundary line is marked by a curtain of mist, and the obstacles we experience are such as are due entirely to that condition of things; continually varying according to the determinating influences which maintain upon the earth side, and regulate the state of the cloud. You cannot understand this for the present, but when an opportunity arises for you to study the phenomenon you will be able to appreciate what I say. In the meantime it is sufficient for you to know that all obstacles may be overcome, and that communion between us and earth is not entirely suspended.”

“You have been permitted to take part in that intercourse; that I might do so - if such a thing was possible - was my first conscious desire after I realised my entrance upon this life. Tell me, shall I ever be able to gratify that wish?”

“Certainly, you may, if you desire it; and I cannot conceive of a more glorious work than to be engaged in helping to remove the doubts and fears under which our brethren upon earth are labouring. I thank the Father for His favour in allowing me to take a share in the great work of re-opening this communion which has been committed to the more powerful teachers of His love. The work is slow in its progress and difficult to prosecute, but the little which has already been accomplished is working with a wondrous leaven, and - truth being powerful to the pulling down of the strongholds of error - it must so continue until the gloom of ignorance is driven away, and the peaceful and harmonious kingdom of God established upon the earth with a basis firm as we behold it here.”

“How soon may I begin? Such a vocation would change the dream of my life into a glorious reality. I was convinced of the presence of error, but though I sought I could not find the truth for which my heart was craving – for which multitudes of others are seeking, wearily and heart-sick. Now I have found it there can be no greater joy than carrying the knowledge back again for their comfort and instruction.”

“Whenever you are ready the opportunity will not be wanting for you to begin, but till then you must be patient. A very limited experience will convince you that great skill is required to uproot error successfully, and plant the truth in its place. Competency for such a work can only be acquired by careful training, diligent study and an extensive acquaintance with the laws and requirements of the spiritual life as you will see them unfolded here. It is far

better to let the old error remain than to pluck it up only to plant a new one in its stead. But I am sorry to say this is what is being done at the present time in very many cases by incompetent persons who have rushed into this communion before they are qualified to do anything beyond the simple fact of demonstrating the immortality of the soul.”

“Is it possible,” I asked in amazement, “that friends can return to earth and teach error?”

“It is not only possible,” he replied, “but I regret to say it is an actual fact, though it is only just to add that - except in the case of deliberately untruthful messengers, wicked earth-bound men and women - the error in every case is due to ignorance rather than design. Let me explain how it arises. Every soul who enters this life is seized with the desire you have mentioned - to get back to earth and make known how vastly different all is to what they had been taught to believe;- at the same time comparatively few have the desire to learn the nature and conditions of our life as you are studying them. The great majority, being satisfied with things as they find them for a considerable period, make no attempt to increase their knowledge. With their minds to a great extent unoccupied, they presently learn the possibility of reaching the earth, and full of the desire to make their continued existence known, they break the silence of death to find themselves called upon to answer a thousand enquiries upon subjects respecting which they have failed to gather information, and the result is the error to which I have referred.

“Think for one instant of the position in which you would be placed, supposing you - at this present moment - had opened up this communion, and the question was asked: ‘Do children grow in the spirit world?’ or again, ‘What are the methods employed to teach children in the next life?’ or third, ‘How do you proceed when you wish to elevate a spirit in a lower condition than yourself?’ To the first you would reply in the light of your experience - you having seen children in the Chorale – and say ‘No,’ which would be an error; to the second enquiry you could answer nothing; and to the third you would have to be content with a simple expression of opinion; this your friends would at once accept as a definite statement, being led, from their earth education, to believe that a kind of omniscience is acquired in the process of death. I may further illustrate and emphasise this by asking you to suppose that your desire to return to earth had been granted at the moment of its conception, or before you had been instructed in the things now made known to you, and that during your interview you were asked respecting these matters, would your replies have conveyed any adequate idea of the truth as you would teach it at this present moment?”

“Of course not,” I was compelled to answer.

“Neither is it possible for others in a like condition to do justice to the enquiries made of them, therefore I say it is best rather to allow the old error to remain, than to pluck it up and plant a new one in its stead. The necessary corollary of this ignorance is contradiction, which gives strong presumptive evidence of the unreliability of this intercourse to those

who most strenuously oppose it, and the whole thing is believed and taught to be a device of wicked and malicious spirits to deceive the unwary.”

“I fully appreciate the wisdom of your advice to wait, and I promise you, that - whenever the opportunity occurs for me to break my silence - I will not offer any opinion beyond the scope of my actual knowledge. But is it not possible for you who know these things, to anticipate such ignorant assertions, and so prevent their mischief?”

“Sometimes, but not very frequently. Nevertheless, in these instances, we are dropping seeds of truth which are springing up and already bringing forth good fruit. But in the great majority of cases, we are prevented from doing as we would by operation of a very powerful spiritual law.”

“What is that?” I asked.

“You have already seen that we are attracted to each other by the law of spiritual harmony and fitness. Kindred souls have mutual feelings, and the full reciprocation of these makes our happiness more complete.”

“Yes! I understand that.”

“That same law of attraction and repulsion exists and regulates the intercourse between the two worlds. Let me tell you my own experience whenever I have tried to open this communication. Generally, I have found the persons to whom I desired to speak intolerantly dogmatic in favour of some accepted creed, which prevented them honestly and freely enquiring into any new spiritual truths. Such an attitude of mind was by no means congenial to me, and my presence being equally repugnant to them, a suspicion was engendered which I was powerless to overcome, therefore I had no choice but to retire and leave such inquirers to the mercy of those who, in their ignorance, would affirm the infallible truth of the accepted creed.”

“Were you not able to expose the ignorance of such teachers, and so do away with their authority?”

“Not very readily, for the simple reason that their low spiritual condition more closely assimilated with the ignorance favoured by the creed. My teachings, being more spiritual, received no sympathy, were pronounced to be false and deceitful; I was commanded to retire, without further attempting to disturb their faith, and leave the work to those who had been tried and thought to be true, because they confirmed those ideas which had been previously taught and professed.”

“And did you leave them?”

“Undoubtedly! I had no right to force my presence upon any person to whom it was objectionable. They were seeking, and they found just what they sought for - not truth, but a confirmation of their creed. They are satisfied; and though we are cognizant of the fact that their intercourse serves to ground their error more deeply, whereas it is designed to

promulgate the truth, we have to be content to wait in the hope of some favourable opportunity to correct the mistake, and when it occurs, use our best endeavours to remedy the evil.”

“What prospect have you of realising that hope?” I asked, with some trepidation, for the bow of promise appeared to be fading from my sky, as I listened to his enumeration of the difficulties which stood in the way.

“I am sure of it” he replied, with a calm confidence which at once restored my drooping faith. “Men are now making the discovery that truth is infinite, while creeds are finite - that, just as it is impossible to reduce the illimitable to a geographical atlas, so is it useless to endeavour to embrace the whole of truth in the most elastic confession of faith. Crumbs of spiritual bread are falling on the earth, and - being full of satisfaction to hungry souls - men are beginning to appreciate that natural food which is prepared in heaven. They, everywhere, are seeking, finding, assimilating, and growing into a visible spiritual stature. They are able to understand as they never did before, lifting their eyes to the hills, praying, entreating for a more plentiful supply of this living bread; and the manna is falling upon such day by, in spite of the Church’s ban, or priests’ anathema. The morning of our hope is breaking, the clouds are fleeing away; and when we cry to the watchmen on the towers of Zion, their responses are full of cheering consolation, bidding us prepare for the victory which is at hand. Truth must conquer, for it is that child which God surnamed Omnipotent; but Nature’s maternal admonitions counsel it to perfect its victory in patience. The units of its followers are steadily multiplying into tens, these will speedily be gathered into hundreds the hundreds into thousands; and so the armies will grow, and be officered from the hosts of heaven; then the two worlds will be united in one final effort which shall usher in the establishment - in a practical form - of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, in which truth shall reign for ever and ever.”

CHAPTER IX

THE HARVEST OF JEALOUSY

How far we travelled during our conversation I have not the remotest idea, but if the changed aspect of the country formed any criterion of the distance it was by no means inconsiderable. When I was at liberty to notice our surroundings I discovered that we were passing through a district possessing as its principal feature a multitude of secluded spots and quiet retreats, but without any indication of a road to guide a stranger, and therefore an interminable labyrinth to anyone who had not a perfect knowledge of its key; but at the same time a sure asylum to the weary and the hunted who stood in need of such a haven of refuge. The atmosphere was heavy compared with that to which I had recently been accustomed; the wind, although not cold, had a chilliness not experienced before; the trees were more sombre in appearance, with dark shadows lingering beneath them; the flowers had lost the brilliance and fragrance which had so impressed me at the Home of Rest, while

the influence of the place seemed to whisper that the severity of sorrow was just taking its departure, although it was still a matter of doubt whether peace could be induced to accept the vacancy thus created.

Presently my companion turned aside and bade me follow him, threading his way as he spoke, through the low hanging branches of the trees, which threatened to hide him entirely from my view unless I quickened my pace and diligently watched the direction he took. A dozen steps behind, our track was obliterated, and I constantly wondered by what sign or power Cushna pushed so confidently forward. My attention was also attracted to a certain moisture apparently exhaled from the leaves and which I was convinced would speedily saturate us if we had far to travel under such conditions; I was further conscious of something more than curiosity - almost alarm - as I saw the colour gradually fading, first from the robes of my conductor, and then from my own, as we advanced. But as I had full employment in clearing my way, I was compelled to refrain from asking questions for the present. When we emerged from the trees our clothing no longer possessed its delicate blue and pink tints, but had been changed to dark grey; and what surprised me equally with this was the fact of its being perfectly dry in spite of the showers of dew which had so copiously fallen upon us. As Cushna paused for me to overtake him, he smiled at my perplexity, and without waiting for me to ask, proceeded to give the explanation of such an astounding phenomenon:

“This,” he said, “is perhaps one of the most tender and beneficent provisions of our Father. Whoever come to visit or minister to one of the friends located here, experience this transformation upon nearing the end of their journey. The object is to enable us to meet on apparently equal terms, by preventing them from knowing the difference in our condition, and thus to enable us to give them the greater assistance. As you will soon discover in the case of Marie, the state of all at this point of development, is one that requires the most careful and sympathetic treatment, and the friends employed in the mission are specially appointed by Myhanene from among those most closely associated with himself.

“The condition of all those you will find here is one of repose, succeeding a period of indescribable agony - the hush of uncertainty, following in the wake of the storm of hell - and the soul is indisposed to rouse itself from the dreamy numbness in which it finds its present relief from that suffering which, being scarcely over, is so vividly impressed upon its memory. Hope is not yet strong enough to counteract the fear that any exertion may result in a return of the dreaded past; confidence is not able to supplant distrust, and the only means by which they can be roused from this state of lethargy is by association with the messengers from the Hills of Wisdom, who inspire the feeble confidence of these needy ones by the assurance of the realisation of that hope they have gained.”

“This change in our appearance, then, is but another variation of the great law of love?” I asked.

“Precisely so,” he responded; “nothing but love.”

Our path now lay down a gentle declivity between the hills, but before we reached the level of the valley, we turned, as if to round a clump of trees having a remarkable wealth of foliage, and branches which swept the ground; on reaching the further side, however, I discovered that they served to conceal the entrance to a pleasant dell in which was situated a solitary house - the first I had seen in the whole district. The little domain was a welcome retreat for one who wished to live a life of solitude; a hundred safeguards having been raised - natural and unsuspecting - against intrusion; and without a trace of path, or indication of any presence in the vicinity, it was almost beyond the range of possibility for a visitor to make his appearance in that peaceful dell, except those who by their knowledge of the homestead gave evidence of their interest in the welfare of its solitary resident. The garden, grounds, and general arrangement offered every inducement for the exercise and development of the mind, with abundant scope to wean the heart from sorrow, in congenial and ever varying employment. The house was not a large building - such an one would have been out of character in these surroundings - but it was exceedingly cheerful and picturesque - a mountain home, engaged for the purpose of repose and restoration, with everything provided to make one forget the past and care nothing for the future, but yet by no means a permanent habitation being devoid of that society for which the healthy mind seeks, and chafes to find inaccessible.

As we emerged from the narrow pass by which we entered, two ladies were walking leisurely across the grounds away from us, with arms affectionately entwined around each other. They looked like kindred spirits whose thoughts, too deep for words, were drawing from the well of silence a draught of refreshing sympathy.

Their preoccupation gave me an opportunity of observing them before they were made aware of our presence. From the moment I beheld them I was confident that the shorter of the two was present in the capacity of minister - or should I not use the more familiar appellation, angel - following the example of the Great Teacher in laying aside her rightful state that she might by her sacrifice be the more powerfully competent to help her unfortunate sister. The taller of the twain bore very conspicuously the evidence of weakness and weariness, and was only too glad to avail herself of the strength of her companion, so unassumingly placed at her disposal.

“Azena has been here almost constantly since Marie came,” said Cushna, as we stood watching them.

I made no reply. I would rather he had not spoken - a wish my friend was quick to appreciate, and I was left undisturbed to witness a practical lesson in nursing and sympathy which awed me with its angelic tenderness and unrestrained devotion. Such a vision of salvation needed no interpreter; my heart stood still in its sacred presence, while it made me conscious of a closer touch with God than I had ever felt before. My soul trembled with the holy tension put upon it; my feet paused in a direct refusal to cross the threshold of the temple while the fragrant incense of such a worship was ascending, and

but for Cushna's interference I should probably have yielded to my strong desire to leave that hallowed spot. But standing thus I solved a problem in spiritual mathematics, as I saw the antithesis of life - heaven and hell - curved by the power of love, until they touched, overlapped, and blended to form the circle of divinity. In that illustration I grasped the stupendous assurance that it will be impossible for any single soul ultimately to resist that gravitation which operates in the higher life for the purpose of lifting up the fallen, or rescuing the lost; and the words of Jesus - 'until He find them'³² came to me at that moment with a force and meaning I had never seen before.

There were no outward signs to indicate the extremes which were linked together by the encircling arms of those two women, but the perceptions of my soul were quickened to discern that a legion phantoms from each of the two conditions peopled that spot, and wrestled with terrible vigour for the victory. The winds paused as they passed by, to watch the issue of the conflict; the flowers trembled alternately with hope and fear; the trees folded their arms with statuesque stolidity; and even the grass bade its pulse stand still lest in the absorption of nourishment, the movement of its expansion should give advantage to the enemy of life. Yet in this audible silence I did not fear or doubt the issue; why, I cannot tell, except it was that Cushna endowed me with his confidence, by which I realised that truth and love alone have an inherent immortality; death, pain, and hell are mortal, and having once been felled, they can never rise again. The omnipotence of right surrounded and enveloped us, its mystic influence thrilled me with its power, bidding me stand still - as the Prophet of Sinai once commanded the Israelites to stand in such a presence - and see the salvation of our God.

Still unconscious of our approach, their communion continued its unbroken flow, until they reached a point in the grounds where some distant object was brought within their view, the sight of which roused Marie from her reverie, prompting a degree of animation and interest which contrasted forcibly with her previous tranquillity. I was not unpleasantly affected at the change, since it broke the protracted spell which had enthralled me, and I was again anxious to be brought into closer contact and learn the story of her in whom my conductor manifested such a deep interest. I was curious, however, to know what had wrought such a change in her manner, and asked him for the explanation.

"From that point they obtained a magnificent view of the country," he replied, "extending to the region of the hall from which we have come. This brings back to Marie a somewhat indefinite recollection of a home in which she slept her first exhaustion away, after she was induced to leave the place of her torment. The memory of that brief period - between the time when she awoke and her coming here - Azena uses to inspire her hope and desire to get away and re-mingle in those scenes, and for that purpose they will remain as long as possible where they are. We, however, may be of equal assistance in another way, and so I think it is well to make them aware of our presence now."

With this lie projected a small but brilliant flash which immediately arrested their attention. Marie's face positively beamed with pleasure as she recognised who was calling her, and, relinquishing her embrace of Azena, she ran towards us and greeted Cushna with all the affection of a daughter. My presence was forgotten in those first moments of re-union, not being at all necessary to their happiness, and since there is no formality of introduction demanded in this life, I joined Azena and left Cushna to make all necessary explanations then call for me when he desired my company. I was surprised to find how free and unrestrained our intercourse was from the moment we met. Turning from our friends we walked by mutual consent towards the point at which they were standing when Cushna called them. As we did so I asked:

“Does this place seem dull and gloomy to you in comparison with your own home?”

“Dull” she exclaimed, her face suffused with the brightness of her smile. “No, no, anything but that! Heaven consists in condition more than locality, and to have a share in driving the clouds from poor Marie's life is quite sufficient to turn any place into a heaven.”

I was silenced; for it was by no means difficult to conceive that heaven would always be found closely attendant upon such a companion and I could appreciate the benefits to be derived from silent communication such as Marie was indulging in when we first saw them. The music of her laughter would soon prove fatal to melancholy, and before the brightness of her eyes the clouds of sorrow be compelled to disappear. With the slight knowledge I possessed of the law of procedure here, I could easily understand her attendance and ministry upon Marie; it was another example of the unvarying and perfect fitness of every detail of this life to its requirement and necessity. What could be more apposite than that this poor, wounded, crushed soul - that it was occasioned by her own sin does not alter the fact - should be entrusted to the tender and patient care of a nurse whom a painter would solicit from the gallery of dreams to sit as a model of charity. If throughout eternity, heaven did no more than knit such hearts together in the close affection I had witnessed, it would - well - that would make it heaven.

“I am anxious to see the view which Cushna tells me may be had from the bottom of the grounds,” I remarked presently.

“Yes! You must see that,” she replied. “it is just like that dear old Doctor Grand-pa to find this place for Marie.”

“I don't think that he has much the appearance of a grand father,” I said. “Though every inch of him is a doctor.” Yet there was something about him in spite of his youthful visage which told me that that dual epithet was the most comprehensive and correct one which could be applied to him. He had been an unsolved enigma from the moment I first met him, and the idea of obtaining a further insight into the character which had so perplexed me was a very welcome one.

“No,” she responded. “He scarcely looks old enough, does he? But that is by no means due to his lack of years, it must rather be ascribed to the eternal youth we enjoy. When he came into this life he was both a Grand-pa and a Doctor, and though he has grown so very youthful in his form and bearing, we are compelled to give him his double cognomen or we should only refer to half of what he is even now.”

“Has he been here long?”

“Yes! He lived in the early days of Egypt. I think it was prior to the building of the pyramids.”

“And does he remember his earth life?”

“I do not think he has forgotten a single incident either in his earth or present life, if he will give himself a moment to recall it. One of the things which makes him like a grand-pa still is the delight he finds in gathering a number of us together and recounting episodes from his own experience for our instruction and amusement. He is, I think, the most unselfish man I ever met, having no thought for himself, but only existing to augment the happiness of every one with whom he comes in contact. Always planning new pleasures and surprises, when he introduces them he does it in a kind of apologetic tone, as though he had committed some offence and was about to ask for pardon; and when he sees the additional happiness invariably resulting from his labours, he himself is quite happy, first in sympathy with those whom he has made so glad, and then, again, that he has been the means of such enjoyment. Why, now; let me tell you how it is that Marie is here. He met her first on the other side of the mists. Has he told you?”

“Yes, he told me how and where he met her.”

“But he has not told you how long and difficult was his work before he could induce her to listen to him; of the conflict he had with malignant spirits who delighted in her torture and tried to frustrate all his endeavours; you know nothing of his many failures to make her come away from such horrible surroundings, if only for a space, to prove that no one but herself stood in the way of her peace, since the legitimate penalty of her sin had been paid. No one but himself knows the extent of this - and no one ever will, for it is buried with the thousand similar secrets in the oblivion of his own breast, never to be willingly recalled or thought of again. I have heard something of this from Marie; but, poor child, her memory of that period is happily overcast, though she has told me enough to show the struggle was a fierce one, and the reward of it will, by and by, be not the least of the bright jewels which will sparkle in his diadem. When at length he accomplished his object, he gained permission to carry her to his own home, where he could watch her as she slept through the prostration that succeeded her suffering, and while she slept he could scarcely be persuaded to leave her side, lest even in her sleep she should feel his absence and be lonely. Such devotion had its reward, and was powerful in removing much of her weight of trouble. His determination to make her happy won her confidence first, then her love, and finally was the means of enabling him to be the minister of her salvation.

“It is very pathetic to hear Marie speak of her waking, and Cushna’s tender but compulsory announcement that he would take her to her own home where she would be better for a time than even where she was. She was full of fear that if he left her she would be drawn back to the agony of the past, and pleaded long and tearfully to be allowed to stay. That could not be, and so he did the next best thing to it; knowing she must be located here for a time, he searched the district till he found this house, which affords from this point the view of which he spoke. This lovely valley is an incessant theme of admiration for her, and on the hillside in the far away, but yet distinctly visible in the glory-light which plays upon it, stands Cushna’s house - her other home, as she always calls it; - and she delights to stand here talking of him, and watching for his coming, as he generally does, straight across.”

The beautiful panorama unrolled before me, the circumstances we were discussing, and the close proximity of two of the chief actors in the thrilling drama, filled me too full for speech - I could only contemplate how each succeeding incident in my career bore ever stronger testimony to that law of love which is the mainspring of this life.

“At the time Cushna called us,” she continued, after a moment’s pause, “we were looking at his home, which Marie considers the central feature of the landscape, and she was wondering - ”

“How long do you intend to keep her waiting.” We turned to find Cushna had stolen upon us unobserved. How much of our conversation had been heard we had no idea, but his next sentence told us that he well knew what its drift had been. “Azena,” he said, “I am sadly afraid that you are a little tell tale, and I shall be compelled to administer some correction to you.”

“You are a good, dear old grand-pa, and deserve to be kissed for listening – there - there,” she cried, as she threw her arms around him and saluted him on either cheek.

“Oh, these children!” he replied, as he shook his head at her in mock gravity; and then, turning to me, he said, “I think you had better go and keep Marie company while I give this child a scolding.”

“Why, you dear old darling, you would not know how to begin if you tried,” were the last words I heard as I turned away.

I was glad to be able to hear Marie’s story from her own lips, but as I neared her and saw her face darken by the shadow of some approaching agony - so changed from its brightness as she greeted Cushna - I would have gladly foregone the recital, if by that means I could have witnessed a return of her former happiness. But again I was impelled by that mysterious influence which operates, to carry us over points of difficulty and uncertainty, always in the right direction, even though opposed to inclination and understanding for the time being. In spite of the consequences, I knew it was best to go forward and leave to Cushna’s future explanation whatever might transpire of an incomprehensible nature. I

had already learned so much of the development of blessings from the most apparent improbabilities as to feel confident that all things worked together for good, and began to watch for the manifestation of all kinds of surprises in every new feature of the life as it was presented to me. As Marie came towards me, I was conscious of the effort she exerted to overcome the premonition which so visibly enveloped her, and the unsuccessful attempt she made to greet me with a smile which died in its birth-throb; but I knew that my own face only too faithfully represented my feelings at the moment, so our interview commenced with a greeting signally ominous of its tragic termination.

Cushna had made all necessary explanations as to the object of my visit, and so, with very few preliminaries, Marie proceeded to give me her experiences as follows:

“I am an American, the only child of a Southern millionaire, idolised by my parents, and pampered, proud and wilful from my infancy. When I wished for anything I only had to speak and it was mine. My education, both by practice and by precept, taught me that money was almighty, and as its supply to us was practically unlimited, I grew up with the idea that I was to be obeyed, and no wish I cherished or expressed could ever be thwarted. Of course this tended to make me very exacting - even overbearing - but I was by no means cruel or wicked as the world would judge. Having the money I had a right to all the pleasure it would bring, and if my enjoyment was unfortunately the cause of pain to another, I was not to be blamed for that; it was their misfortune, and they had no right to expect me to forego my desire out of consideration to their feelings. Such was my philosophy, and I acted upon it.

“We were church people, my father always liberally contributing to the various agencies promoted therefrom; punctilious in our attendance at the services, my name being duly enrolled as a member upon reaching the appointed age. Whenever I felt inclined or desired an excuse for breaking an irksome engagement I would take a class in the Sunday school, or find it necessary to pay a charitable visit. It was not often, I allow, but as I looked upon it as an act of condescension upon my part to do such work at all, it was not to be expected that I should be anything like regular in my attention to those duties.

“There was never but one girl I could really call my friend - that was Sadie Norton. Our social position was fairly equal, but I being a trifle the older of the two, could rightfully assume the premier place. Then Sadie was not exactly the girl to command or lead, so I was in no way interfered with in my assumption of leadership, and for that reason our companionship became a very close one. A friendly rivalry existing between our parents was to some extent reflected by us, but without lessening the sisterly feeling which had been engendered, and rather strengthened than otherwise with years. We were always together, and no festival, sociable, at home, or surprise party was considered complete unless we were present; upon every scheme put forward at the church we were consulted; every philanthropic object sought our patronage, and before we were out of our teens every eligible fellow in the town and country was angling to catch us. This latter fact opened an

avenue for a great increase of our fun; not that we thought of marrying, for a moment, but we very seriously interfered with many others who did, and for a year or two were perfectly enraptured at the number of matches we were enabled to break off. Presently a fine young fellow came along, bringing very satisfactory credentials to my father and others, and all the girls in the town set their caps at him. Sadie and myself determined to go for him as well, and by playing him, alternately, keep him from anyone else, as well as give him a teasing- But he took matters in a most awfully serious light, and before a month had passed made me a formal proposal. I must confess that I too felt very serious about the matter, and would have accepted him if that would not have ended the romance we had determined to enjoy. So I laughed at him, and when he enlisted my mother's aid, I stood on my dignity, and very cavalierly told him I was not of the marrying kind. He went away looking very crestfallen, but I laughed.

“My experience of men had not been a long one, but I knew his cloud would only last till sunrise. Every man enters upon the April season of his life when he falls in love, and the way he is treated and trained by the woman he woos, at such a time, has much to do with the formation of his permanent character. So I thought, and therefore determined to give him such a schooling as would bring him out the hero into whose keeping I would entrust myself, so far as I deemed prudent. I made a mistake. The morrow came, but brought no Charlie. I was piqued. He was trying for the mastery, but he would find his match. A week passed and I did not see him. Neither did Sadie, for I had prepared her in case he should try the effect of flirtation. A month went by without a sign of him; circumstances had also prevented me seeing much of my friend. Then we met. It was at Sadie's birthday party; and the first thing she told me was that Charlie had proposed - my face lighted with the anticipation of the fun we should have presently. She continued - that she had accepted him. The blood rushed back to my heart - I stood speechless as a statue. In a moment my blood boiled and dashed through my veins in cataracts of maddened fury. Jealousy and disappointed love devoured me; my brain reeled under the strain; I fell, and remember no more.

“The day they were married I was swinging in the balances of life and death, from brain fever. All through my delirium their names were seldom off my tongue, pleading, entreating, or cursing them, as the frenzy impelled me; but after my reason returned I had strength of mind never to mention them again. The magic potency of wealth was pressed into service in every conceivable form to wean my thoughts from my sorrow, and so skilfully did I play the part I had arranged in the early days of convalescence, that everyone was presently congratulating themselves on matters not really being so serious as was at first imagined. They little dreamed my composure was but a mask, and that in my soul I was plotting and planning how to best obtain the revenge which I would either secure, or die in the attempt. Sadie had been false; had taken advantage of our temporary estrangement to carry her base design to success, and she had succeeded with fatal effect. She had deceived Charlie as wickedly as she had injured me, for it was impossible she

could be the wife I should have made him. He was not so much to be blamed since he had been made the tool of her cunning duplicity. But she should feel the weight of my vengeance. I would find them if I had to travel the world in my quest; I would return her perfidy fourfold, and take him from her even if I died in the hour of my triumph.

“For five years I continued my secret but unsuccessful inquiries, but I never for one moment faltered or forgot my vow. So perfectly did I hide my jealousy that my acquaintances began to think I was really happy again. How little we know of the man, while we rapturously applaud the actor; the stage and the home have not infrequently a gulf between them quite as impassible as the division between Dives and Lazarus; and we poor simpering mortals laugh at the memorised lines, but have no eyes or ears for the life-blood which gurgles from the heart meanwhile. I was deaf and blind to everything but the one object of my life; they thought me happy, while there was nothing in earth or heaven could make me so but the man I had lost, and who had been stolen from me by the base ingratitude of my seeming friend.

“Accident discovered his whereabouts - a small paragraph in an old newspaper, from which I was cutting a pattern; I saw his name, learned all that was necessary, and at once began to formulate a plan for reaching him. Life from that moment assumed something of a hopeful hue; but my excitement very nearly ruined everything. I would to God that it had done so. Having found him, it was easy to go to him, since an old college friend was living in the same place, and to arrange to pay her a visit was only a matter of a few days. My next step was more difficult, as everything depended upon our first interview.

“One rash or false move and all would be lost. But even here fortune - or, as I know it now, misfortune - favoured me. I met him accidentally, and alone. He recognised me, and spoke before I was aware of his presence. I saw his agitation knew his old love was not dead, but by an almost superhuman effort I preserved a seemingly indifferent calmness even when I asked after his wife. I read volumes in his reply; he had discovered his mistake, was not happy, and the assurance of it made me frantic with delight. He was mine - I knew it - if only I acted with caution, kept my hand concealed, and waited an appropriate opportunity. We met several times after the same fashion, but he never once visited me, or invited me to his house. Presently he asked me to keep a clandestine appointment. I refused. He urged it for the sake of ‘auld lang syne’; finally I consented. I was lost, but that was the price I had calculated to pay if I could win him, and I had done it. In less than a month his wife and children were deserted, and we were flying east.

“I was happy now that I had repaid Sadie’s deceit in her own coin. I could never be Charlie’s wife, but that was nothing; I was his, he was mine, and my account with my rival was square. We were together and alone, that was all I had craved for, and my revengeful prayer had been answered. In my rebellion God stood aside and let me gather all the necessities for a heaven of my own design, and when the work was finished, He bade me enter. Then, lo! I found my heaven to be God’s exquisite and perfect hell.

“Having accomplished my desire, and the tension under which I had lived so long being over a speedy collapse ensued. I had never really recovered from my first blow, but my craving for revenge had given me strength which was only obtained by heavy drafts upon my constitution. No sooner had I attained my wish, and the necessity for duplicity over, than the tax upon my vitality put in its claim, and it was evident that I had but a short future before me. In less than two years I was a confirmed invalid, unable to move, while we were compelled to face the awful fact that I was dying. At this time my father found me, and reproaching me for the dishonour I had brought upon his name, vowed if ever Charlie crossed his path he would shoot him like a dog. I pleaded with him, but he was inexorable - told me Charlie had left me as he had left his wife, that he had quitted the town, had gone no one knew where, and that it was impossible I could ever see him again. All the old jealous fury came back at this, followed by brain fever, then delirium, and finally a blank.

“When I awoke it was dark - horribly dark; I could almost touch the blackness, and I was lying upon a bare floor, cold as a block of ice. I called Charlie - my father - my nurse! But there was no response save the echo of my own voice, which seemed to mock and rejoice at the terror I felt creeping over me. Where was I? Great God! Could it be possible that I had gone mad, or that I had been placed under restraint to keep me from following Charlie? I rose to make what inspection was possible of my surroundings, under the circumstances, but in the ague of my fear I fell - fell without the strength to rise. All my senses resolved themselves into the power of feeling; quickened and intensified a hundredfold that I might contemplate with horror the process of my own petrification - voiceless, sightless, sleepless.

“How I prayed for the fever and delirium to return and conquer the icy terror which crept so slowly, so agonisingly over me. Vain prayer! I was a prisoner in the rigid domain of despair, beyond the reach of help, or rest, or pity; the sportive toy of all the remorseless machinations which are germane to such a state. I was being slowly converted into a block of frozen - yet living - flesh, and my abnormal sense of feeling heightened as the infernal transformation went on. Why was it? Where was I? Who were my relentless persecutors? How long before the morning would break? Would the day bring me relief, or wake me from the agonising dream? These, and a thousand other queries, propounded their unending enigmas for my additional punishment, till I would gladly have rushed into the arms of madness for rest; but alas! I was deprived of even such a consolation. At length my feet, my hands, my head, my eyes, my tongue, my heart, my brain were icebound: then the furies boiled in my blood, and lashing it into angry foam by its excessive heat, sent it in maddened cataracts through my veins to finish the exquisite suffering, which I must needs lie still and bear.

“Of the termination of that period I have no recollection. Whether I suffered until pain wearied itself out in the intoxication of its own excesses, or whether the intensity of my torture became an anaesthetic and lulled me into the sleep of agony, remains a mystery. I only know that for a space my existence lay in oblivion, but of its duration and nature I cannot say anything.

“When my memory again took up the thread of life I was still in the same state of semi-palpable blackness amid a silence which terrified me to listen to; but the sharp agony of my suffering was over, or, rather, I should say, a respite had been granted while the nature of my torment was being changed to one, if possible, of a more agonising description. I was still ignorant of my whereabouts, or of the character of the great change that had really taken place in my career, though I was quite conscious I had gained strength, was free from actual pain and had acquired the power to move if I desired to do so. I also quickly recognised how incalculably my condition had improved from that which immediately preceded my period of unconsciousness, but I yearned for some degree of light, either natural or artificial, that I might discover my surroundings and make some guesses as to what had taken place, as well as estimate the difficulties to be contended with.

“The duration of this suspense, in which my only companions were the fantastic shadows of the subterranean gloom, was too long for me to appraise - it seemed to be centuries, but I know now that such could not be - but at length - oh! such a length I had my wish partly gratified. I saw a light; but it was so small and far away as to be useless for my purpose. No sooner did I observe it than I was conscious of an involuntary movement as if I was being irresistibly drawn in that direction. At first I experienced an almost imperceptible gliding sensation, gradually increasing in velocity until I was carried from my feet and borne rushing through space as upon the wings of a hurricane. On and on, league after league, with an ever-increasing momentum towards that magnetic beacon which, expanding as I travelled, yet appeared to be as far away as ever.

Oh! the fear and suspense with which that aerial voyage filled me! It was not the pain of my previous punishment, but the dread of the consequences which might result, and I was powerless to avert, was almost as terrible in its effects. Suddenly the power by which I had been attracted or impelled, seemed to be exhausted, and I fell, scared but unhurt, upon the threshold of that light to find it radiated around the only person for whose presence I sighed, and wept, and groaned. It was Charlie! I had found him - was with him again. Something told me that the force by which I had been carried hither - reluctantly in my ignorance - was by some means connected with his intense desire to see me, and in my new-found happiness at our re-union I wept and reproached myself for the hard thoughts I had so willingly entertained against the unknown benefactor who had come to my relief, released me from my prison-house, and so brought us together again in spite of my father’s strategy and opposition.

“Then another something dashed my hopes by suggesting that what I saw was only an hallucination - the cruel vagaries of a dream, and that I should presently wake to find my father as inexorable as ever, and Charlie gone I knew not whither. The thought that such a development might be realised was an unbearable one; the shadow of such a suspicion could not be allowed to rest upon me for a moment; I would take measures, to resolve the doubt at once.

“I passed into the circle of light which enveloped him. How much he had changed since we parted. His jet-black hair was profusely lined with silver, the once calm face was furrowed, the brightness of his eyes was dimmed, and his stalwart form was bowed. At the moment he was thinking of me, and I was conscious of his having passed through an ordeal almost as fierce as that I had been compelled to bear. As I reached his side he murmured my name, while his hand moved as if to make an attempt to take my own, but lost in the depth of his reverie, perhaps unsuspecting that I was so near, he did not raise his eyes to meet my hungry gaze, which was feasting upon the sight of his presence. Oh! how happy I felt. His tone and manner revealed to me he loved me as much as ever, and made me fearful to put my project into execution, lest the result should prove unpropitious.

“He had not returned to Sadie, but driven from my side had found this retreat - where it was by no means troubled me or excited my curiosity - where he had perfected a plan for my deliverance; and was he not lost in abstraction, as he nervously awaited the result - so lost that he little knew what success had been accomplished. I lifted my head and saw that the far away look had not faded from his eyes, in which I noticed a strangely suspicious light was beaming. I started to my feet in horror, and shook him, in my fear that the joy of our reunion had proved too much, and that his reason had deserted him. He only shivered as if the room had grown chilly. Then I questioned my own sanity. Could it be possible my mysterious journey had been the delirium of a madwoman’s raving? ‘Oh! God!’ I cried, ‘reveal this mystery, or it will kill me. Charlie, Charlie! don’t you know me? Speak but one word, and tell me so. I have been ill; but I have never swerved in my love for you. If you think I have done wrong, oh! my love, forgive me, and let me nurse you back again to health. We will be happy yet. Come, let us go away. Say you know me, and I will be content; Charlie! just one word, dear; say you know me!’

“At this he roused himself abruptly, picked up a book, and began to read without so much as a word, a look, or a sign that he recognised my presence. I recoiled in amazement, dumbfounded. He was not mad - but how could I account for this warrantable treatment? Why would he not speak? Surely if my presence was unwelcome, he would tell me so; if he feared the discovery, he would take means to conceal me; if I was still the same to him as before, he would clasp me in his arms, and greet me. Anyhow, I could not account for my reception except upon the basis of that cruel suggestion, that I was only the victim of a dream. God knows my suffering was real; whether anything else would prove so should be presently determined, for I would watch and wait. By and by, I reproached him for his conduct, to try if that could win a response; but he only smiled, and wearily laying his book aside, turned to someone whom I could not see and said: ‘Will you tell your mamma that I wish to speak to her?’

“What did he mean? What was any other woman to him when I was present? Was it possible that he had gone back to Sadie after all, and wished her to be at hand to witness my humiliation? All my old jealousy was aroused at the thought, and a sudden frenzy carried me past all restraint, in anticipation of the coming scene. I felt a stranger enter, but

was neither able to see nor hear who it was, a fact adding considerably to the mystery and terror which possessed me. Was I equally invisible and inaudible to her? It would seem so, for while I heard every word which Charlie uttered, and saw every movement he made, and could understand that the conversation had not the slightest reference to myself, I was still ignored as completely as if I had had no existence.

“Was it possible they were playing an arranged part to drive me to distraction? Who was this woman? Oh, God! that I had been equally deaf and blind to Charlie’s conduct as she was to me. It was not Sadie, but I heard him call her by a name he never could have given to me. Then I knew his baseness and treachery, found a full explanation of the conduct I had received. He was simply mocking me. Whether she was cognisant of my nearness or not, he was aware of it - had secured my presence that I might witness his happiness with a rival who had supplanted me, as I had taken him from Sadie - that he might laugh as he saw how the knowledge of it would torture me. This was too much. The certainty of his desertion maddened me; but to witness his love passages with my rival goaded me into a diabolical frenzy, and I determined to kill him before her eyes. Alas! ere I had time to move, the light which surrounded him expired, and I was left again in that Egyptian blackness, afraid to stir on account of the terror which came back with my blindness.

“Still could hear him - worse, I could hear her; heard without the power to stop my ears, or prevent my knowledge of what she said and called him. Rage and jealousy tormented and mocked my helplessness, until I prepared to follow the sound and wreak my revenge by laying them dead side by side. Horror! When I would have slain them, I found that I was as powerless to move as I was to see, and I was compelled to stand and listen to his perfidy, unable to make a sound to drown the echoes of his caresses.

“A thousand times over would I have chosen the gradual petrification of my previous state; the tortures of hell were increasing; was it possible that it could hold anything in store more excruciating than my present punishment? I prayed to go mad, that in my madness I might find relief from such poignant pain; but my prayer came back like a stream of molten lead falling upon my head and burning fiery channels into my brain, increasing my agony yet a hundred fold, and bringing to me a consciousness that my actual retribution was but just commencing; that it would continue to increase, and I should be compelled to bear it, since no escape was possible. I was chained to him, and for periods of time, as long as eternity it seemed to be, I was made to endure this indescribable development of excruciating chastisement, with every nerve quickened to a sense of feeling defying description, while memory itself is not strong enough to grasp its intensity. Madness could not come to my relief; death could not listen to my pleadings; insensibility was palsied and could not approach me; pity was beyond the reach of my wailing, and mercy had not power to enter the domain in which I was a prisoner.

“What could I do? - Nothing but suffer! Why was it that no one would wake me from such a horrible nightmare? I cried, but there was none to answer me. I was in all the agonies of

hell without even the poor consolation that I was suffering in company. I could not bear it; yet I could not escape. Was there no possible limit to human endurance - no high-water-mark of vengeance, which, having touched, I should know that my sin had been atoned for? I must have help from somewhere - anywhere - so long as it broke the infernal monotony of my ever increasing pain.

“Such a quick and lively sense had I of the exquisite tortures which were accumulating around me that I would gladly have served with slavish obedience any power which would manifest itself to change my condition if only to vary the punishment. If cessation was impossible, I would be content to take the rest of change, and for this I made a last appeal, even though my prayer returned, as in the case of that which initiated my state of fury - and I cried ‘Oh, God or devil! any being of pity or remorseless cruelty, hear me, and end my torments! Take me, tear me, or destroy me; drown my reason past all hope of restitution, or, by one tornadic blast of torture, put an end to feeling and terminate this agony. Hell! Hell! in mercy, take pity on my condition; open your gates and let me bathe my sufferings in your fiery lake. Hell! Hell! I say, in mercy open and let me in!’”

As she proceeded with her story I perceived that the present faded from her mind, and she was back again, for the time, feeling and enduring a recollection of the horrible past. Gradually she changed into the woman she once had been until great beads of perspiration stood upon her face; her eyes dilated with a maniacal gleam, and she writhed in the sufferings which had been such a terrible reality. When her strength gave way with the intensity of her last effort she fell exhausted at my feet. I, too, had been so carried away by her dramatic recital as to be oblivious for the moment, as to where we were; and as she fell looked nervously around, almost expecting to see those mythical gates opening before me in answer to her entreaty. It was with a long sigh of relief that I recognised Cushna and Azena hastening towards us.

“Hush!” he said, calmly as though the sight afforded him intense gratification, “let her sleep, she will soon be better.” “Cushna!” I cried, “can this be true?” “Yes, poor child, it is true; and much more that is beyond her power to tell you. She had been reaping that harvest of her jealousy for more than twenty years when I first saw her.”

“And you saved her. I can well understand why it is her chief pleasure to watch for your coming.”

But he was too busily engaged with Marie to offer any reply.

CHAPTER X

AN EXPLANATION

I have a vivid recollection of the fearful enjoyment and nervous bravery with which, as a child, I hunted for curios washed up by the in-coming tide, paddling with my naked feet in the fluctuating waters on the sea beach. I have no doubt but that I accomplished the whole gamut of childish heroics in my adventures; and I am sure there were interludes of surprisingly rapid recessions as my watchful eye caught sight of some advancing wave calculated to reach out its arms a few inches beyond its predecessor. Hope and fear, success and failure, pleasure and disappointment irregularly alternated in my experience until, drenched with spray and cold, my guardian carried me away from the scene of my exploits, with scarcely sufficient treasure in my possession to convict me of petty larceny.

It was an analogous experience through which I passed at this stage of my new life. I was again beside the sea - the infinite sea of spirit life. Wave after wave of revelation was rolling in, breaking upon the rocks of my ignorance, and drenching me with a blinding spray of knowledge. The mighty force, the rapid succession, the bewildering unfoldment, left me no time to appropriate the treasures which were continuously, and but for the moment, laid open to my view. Strange and unexpected objects were almost ceaselessly brought before me - revelations of sight, touch, and hearing came upon me like a flood, and I could only stand confused, confounded and perplexed before the mighty force which surrounded - enveloped - me.

I had been told it was love, all love, and that I should be presently able to understand and appreciate it; but now, I was like a lad thrown into the water, unable to swim; the force of the waves and the tide were against me. I tried to profit by the instruction I had received, but in my inexperience and lack of the power of immediate appropriation, I found it more natural to flounder and aimlessly battle with the storm which threatened to engulf me, alternately hoping and almost doubting the result.

Such was candidly my attitude for a brief period at the time of which I am speaking. Without opportunity for reflection, events of such an unexpected, and previously considered impossible character, were being so rapidly unfolded before me, that with a nature prone to doubt and full of dismal forebodings such as mine was, it was too much for me to reach so near the perfect ideal as to view the developments of my instruction with feelings of equanimity and calm confidence.

There is a general idea among mankind that by the simple process of dying we are translated into a condition of omniscience, and solve every problem 'in the twinkling of an eye.'³³ It was with a sense of deepest gratitude that I discovered the fallacy of such teachings, and the wider my experience ranges the more astounded I am that this preposterous assumption could ever have originated, or found a sanction in the minds of intelligent human beings. Every single question I asked, every scene I beheld, every sound I

heard, had its own special revelation to make, and the rapidity with which each successive wave of information rolled over me, allowed me no time for recovery from the grandeur of its power and scope, before which I reeled in wonder and amazement; and the same is equally true of the present as it is of the past.

What, then, would have become of me if the full flood of the knowledge I have acquired - and, let me assure you, I have but yet been able to touch the merest fringe of that still to be attained - had broken over me like a thunder-bolt at the moment when I opened my bewildered eyes upon the slope where I so unsuccessfully tried to answer the simple query: Where am I? Be not deceived, God ever tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. He knows our frame, and has ordained that our soul-expansion shall proceed under conditions best suited to our state, and which also tend to magnify His Majesty and love.

Knowledge can only be acquired as we have power to assimilate each successive phase of truth; it has no force, no life, no energy, unless applied; and the man who tries to accumulate it without the correspondingly necessary strength to utilise the same, if successful, would only find he had gathered together and built an edifice which, for lack of support, would fall and crush him in its ruin. This strength to wield the weight of knowledge can only come by steady growth, and therefore if it were practicable to test the instantaneous, explosive principle - 'in the twinkling of an eye' - in its expansion, it could never give the finite strength enough to grasp the infinite; this must be attained by the gradual transformation of our lives into the Christ-life, which in its turn must be converted into the infinite as we further expand into the likeness and character of God.

When we stand in close proximity to an overwhelming surprise, I have no doubt it is the perturbation caused and from which we have not had time to recover, that leads us to suppose this last event to be the most momentous in our career. Some such idea as this took possession of myself as I gazed upon the inanimate form lying at my feet, and which neither Cushna nor Azena appeared anxious to disturb for a time. I tried, but vainly, to reconcile the painful episode I had witnessed with the one law of love which I had been assured held universal sway in this life. The problem was too deep, too complex, for me to undertake, and at length I was reluctantly compelled to put it aside until I could gain some wider experience than my own to elucidate the mystery.

While I was thus disturbed and perplexed, my two companions were calmly watching the unconscious Marie. Evidently there would be something for them to do, but the period for action had not yet arrived. Now was the time for waiting - and this they did in patience - calmly waited and watched, being perfectly ready for ministry when required. When that moment came, with very tender care and sympathy, they performed the service so well understood, and before the tear-dimmed eyes were again opened we had resumed our journey, leaving the spiritual convalescent to the sole charge of that friend on whom she had learned to repose.

I had intended on my return to ask Cushna to give me time to study the action of those mysterious dews in changing the colour of our dresses, to have sought for some explanation of his power in finding his way so unerringly through a trackless country, and a score of other matters which had suggested themselves to my mind, but all were forgotten, and now I had but one desire, which at the earliest moment I laid before him.

“Cushna! tell me,” I cried, “how can you reconcile your one law of love with the terrible scene I have just witnessed?”

“I can well understand your difficulty,” he replied, “and will try to explain it to you. Never forget that all life is a growth - a gradual transition from what we are, to what we shall be, by assimilating the influence of every experience through which we pass. Sudden changes are so in appearance only; closer inspection will show they are all effects of causes which have been working, silently and unperceived it may be, and preparing developments which escape notice until forced upon our attention by some outward unfolding. All expansion works from the inner to the outer life, but we are naturally unable to admit the reality of anything which lies beyond the scope of observation.

“In nature we are not always accustomed to find sharp dividing lines; the darkest night rises by an imperceptible gradient into the glory of the cloudless morning; while it is very difficult for an inexperienced eye to decide at what moment the tide ceases to ebb and begins to flow; you cannot see the movement by which a flower unfolds its petals, yet the action is going on while your eyes are diligently watching. So it is with the spiritual life; it unfolds, never leaps; it flows like a stream, never bounds like an antelope; its progress is a steady silent advance only evidenced to us as stages are reached.

“Such has been the career of Marie. It is impossible for me to relate, or make you understand how, or by what means, she has been gradually weaned from the terrible agony in which I first found her, a remnant of which you have just witnessed; you will become acquainted with that in a more practical form when you find employment in a similar mission. Let me for the present be satisfied by indicating to you how there is nothing inconsistent with the law of love in asking her to tell her story. The retention of individuality demands that the memory of the past shall never be effaced - the scar of every wrong we have done will for ever remain, till, when we have paid its penalty, it ceases to be a source of pain - the wound slowly heals, the discomfort dies away, but the scar endures.

“Marie has now reached this healing stage, and every time she tells her story it is like another dressing of her wound - painful for the present, but beneficial in the result. Every recital is less agonising than the last, and the exhaustion it causes induces a sleep from which she derives additional strength, which is very necessary to her progress. Without this she would be content to remain as she is, in the lull of rest after the poignant anguish, without sufficient energy to prompt her to further progress; therefore what you have seen is but a wise provision to obliterate the past, so far as the pain is concerned, and push her on to a happier condition than she at present enjoys.”

“But could not that be attained by her talking of the past to Azena?”

“No! Not so effectively. Besides, such a course would be a waste of energy, which you will never find here. Everything is made to serve some useful purpose, and so you have learned what will be a valuable lesson by the present repetition; it has been helpful to others in the past, and still will be when her story is told again. In this way she becomes a powerful minister for good, while others are working for her salvation. Again, so far she has been limited to her one companion and must not be allowed to confine herself exclusively to Azena, or she will never feel the need of other friendships. Every visitor she has tends to excite new interests, so that when Azena leaves her - as she will when the telling of her story does not occasion an after-sleep by its exhaustion - she will be so oppressed by her loneliness as to be forced from her retirement and find congenial society among those who are in a somewhat happier condition than her present home.”

“And how long will it be before all this can be accomplished?”

“That varies very considerably - generally about the same length of time as the previous imprisonment.”

“Have you any idea how long that was?”

“Yes! As I have told you it lasted about twenty years.”

“Twenty years! Oh! what a hell! What an experience! How I wish she could preach such a sermon in the ears of earth! My soul is full of longing to go back again and burn these revelations into my fellows. Oh! it is terrible to me to think how blind they are to these awful realities. I want them to know, to realise, that nothing but lives - noble self-sacrificing lives - and deeds can enter here to help in the determination of their future. I want to tell them that every wrong must be atoned for, and that by him who commits it. That there is no help, no escape but every soul must work out its own salvation and thus be instrumental in bringing about a reformation whose result will be the doing of the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven.”

My companion made no attempt to interrupt me, but as he walked beside me I could see a half-amused, half-regretful smile play across his face, and when I had finished he replied in his gravely quiet tone:

“There are thousands - millions of friends here who have been animated and swayed by the feelings which now move you; but when the opportunity has come and they have proceeded to carry out their noble desires they have found that which will yet be your own experience. In the first place, you will not be believed as to your identity, and will be called upon to fight a long and by no means complimentary battle to prove you are a messenger from this life. Next, having gained this point in the presence of a few, they will begin to demand from you numberless signs and wonders to strengthen this proof and gratify their curiosity. When you have succeeded in this, and your heart is burning to begin your work, someone else will be brought in, and they will demand that you shall go through the unwelcome

process again, for the gratification of the late newcomer. In fact, this is the normal condition in which they desire to circumscribe our work, and the greatest care is needed not to drive them away before we have attempted to sow some grain of truth.

“When you reach this effort you will find that they will claim to know even more about this life than you yourself, and you must be prepared for contradiction and correction in everything you say; while many of them will generously and frequently tell you that the error you are trying to teach savours very much of the realms of darkness because it is opposed to their teachings and beliefs. Let me advise you not to grow too enthusiastic over your anticipated mission to earth; the great majority of mankind at present prefer to postpone any definite knowledge of this life until they arrive here. But I wish now to draw your attention to other experiences.”

CHAPTER XI

THE HOME OF THE ASSYRIAN

My friend's remarks threw a shade of depression over my newly-born enthusiasm, and started a review of probabilities in my mind which rendered me indifferent, for the moment, to his attempt to change their theme. But his second endeavour roused me to a consciousness of the panorama which lay before me, and succeeded, for the present at least, in putting an end to any feeling of gloom.

I have said that my first impression of Marie's home was that it offered every facility, by its ever-varying employments, for weaning a heart from sorrow; but the idea was only an abstract one, as neither those surroundings nor yet the more beautiful grounds in which I had met Cushna, at the Home of Rest, had, consciously, brought before my mind the question of manual labour in this new life. But the time for this had now come; and a fresh surprise carried my mind and enquiries away in another direction.

We were standing upon the crest of a mountain - one of a chain curving itself around a valley sufficiently picturesque to inspire a poet or artist with a dream of Eden. From between the hills, at the farther end, a silver stream fell in a series of lofty cascades into the plain, which thus divided into almost equal portions, was enhanced in beauty by the crystal presence of the majestic river. One feature here presented particularly attracted my attention, and led me to enquire whether art had not been called to the assistance of Nature to produce the pleasing result. Near the centre of the valley the course of the river was suddenly diverted to the right and left for the purpose of forming an island, perhaps about a mile in extent, which made a splendid platform or foundation for the extensive palace or mansion which was the principal object of attraction.

“You are quite right,” said Cushna, in answer to my enquiries. “The stream has been at some time turned aside for the purpose of forming the island.

“But you don’t mean to tell me there is such a thing as manual labour in heaven - is it not a perfect place as far as such things are concerned?”

“To answer your last question first,” he said, “heaven is not, at present, a perfect place. I know such is the earth idea, but it is unscriptural, and has not a shadow of justification in the teaching of Jesus, who told his disciples – ‘I go to prepare a place for you,’³⁴ which very truth implies imperfection, because unprepared. On the other hand, this life is one in which ‘every power finds full employ’; the poet is capable of receiving higher inspirations, but of what avail if he may not write them? Did the talents of Raphael, Fra Angelico or Turner only unfold for the momentary span of earth’s uncongenial day? Do you think that the dreams of beauty and grace which are here begat of the genius of Phidias or Michael Angelo are to be condemned to lie imprisoned in the sanctuary of their own conception?”

“Where are the mighty architects who built Thebes and Babylon, Jerusalem, Athens and Rome - have such minds no inspirations when they behold the sites, the capabilities and the resources of immortality? Are Handel, Mozart and Beethoven tired of harmony, or have they drained the fount of music dry? One recoils from the thought of what heaven would be without the active employment of such great minds as these.

“Let me ask you also, has not the gardener some ideal to consummate, and shall he be deterred from giving scope to his genius where it may be displayed free from the unpropitious influences against which he had to contend on earth? Music and painting, sculpture and architecture, have had their plodders and toilers, who have lived and died unsuccessful and unappreciated, quite as much as the labourers of the pick and shovel. They loved their art, and heaven’s compensation is to be found in the realisation of their hopes. Yes, my friend, there is room for work here; but what makes all the difference, there is no toil or labour. Our only incentive to work is love, not to earn an existence, but to produce an outward semblance of that which is born within and which prompts and forms the mainspring of our activity.”

I was silent, but my mind grew heavy with the thoughts it carried.

The one object that attracted my attention more than any other was the palace or mansion occupying the island, and which I was informed was the home of the Assyrian, an announcement causing me some amusement at first, as the idea of its being a residence of any kind would have been the last to enter my mind.

My first and instinctive conception of it was a vast floral pyramid built and arranged as a central and finishing effect in a charming valley. The base of the building was, perhaps, more than a quarter of a mile in extent, but the gradual elevation of the ground from the water’s edge gave it the appearance, from the point at which I first beheld it, of its being of considerably greater proportions than it was in reality. It was not until we had crossed one of the picturesque bridges which formed the approach, that I could entirely divest my mind of my original idea, for the presence of the number of people who were visible was quite as consistent with the one explanation as the other. But when ascending from the river my eye

began to penetrate the foliage. I could then discern the architectural arrangement by which the pleasing and novel effect was produced. Each storey, of which there were ten, was so constructed as to leave a terrace some thirty feet in width around the whole building; the outer edges being planted with beds of flowers, then shrubs, and finally palms and other trees, whose branches made a stately promenade.

My undivided attention, however, could not be given to the building, for Cushna had already communicated our approach to Siamedes, who came to meet and welcome us as we crossed the bridge. We were also objects of curiosity to numbers of others, who, I was informed, were anxious to learn who the newcomer might be, and whether it might be possible I was the bearer of news from friends still on earth. I found that this was one of a number of homes where the souls of those who are wearied in well-doing³⁵, and have fought and come off 'more than conquerors'³⁶ might rest awhile, and be ministered to, in order that they might enter upon the joys of heaven with all their energies revived and strengthened, so as to be able to fully appreciate those glories which further awaited them. Here they grew strong, while the vibrations of the conflict pass away; experience the peace of the eternal hush after the storm, enjoy the relief of throwing off the armour, and enter upon the liberty of repose, never again to be broken. I was told that the condition of individuals varies considerably at such times, but that, generally, they are limited in their knowledge of what transpires on earth, and for this reason, watch new arrivals for information.

Siamedes was not attired as I saw him at the Chorale, but had assumed a loosely flowing robe of electric grey, over which alternate blushes of pink and blue seemed to beat like pulse throbs, but he was not the less regal in appearance. The first time I met him he was arrayed in robes of state; now, he was the monarch at home. But oh! what a conception of royalty I formed, as I watched this subsidiary ruler of the King of kings! The diadem he wore was one of service, while the sceptre he swayed radiated an influence, in the presence of which revolt and treachery would have been annihilated; the gems with which it was set excited no greed or avarice, while it was wielded not with a mandate of destruction, but a command to live. The hand of the tyrant or oppressor could not grasp it, neither could the stain of blood ever touch it, for that emblem of rule Divine has come from the hands of God, who had Himself engraved upon it the name of - Love.

As I looked upon him I was involuntarily drawn towards him, when he threw his arms tenderly around me, and we walked forward - I, at least, being perfectly happy and contented. How could I be otherwise? I was beginning to grow accustomed to the great advantages I had inherited in this new life, which was void of any time limit; and as page after page was turned over, I could see how occupations were provided to engage my soul through the long eternities which lay before me. The old visionary and inane heaven had passed away, and in its place had been discovered a rest which would be an employment, a worship which was an unfoldment, an apotheosis only to be reached by the expansion of the divinity, which although unknown had always lain buried within myself.

We sauntered along. Why not? I stood on the shores of the eternal sea, and every step had its myriad of grains, each with its special revelation to make. Every person we met had a different life story to tell, and I had nothing to do but learn. Now, we spoke to one who had but just awoke to understand the change that had taken place, and I could study the same bewilderment in another which I experienced under somewhat similar circumstances. Anon, we watched one, whose probationary rest being over, was looking away in the direction from which the friends were expected, who would escort her to the 'place prepared' for her. Every incident had its own peculiar interest and charm, as it discovered the methods of God in dealing with the sons of men on earth, in leading the blind by a way they know not.

"Our conversation with these friends," I at length remarked to Siamedes, "gives me the impression that you do not hold Chorales here. Is that correct?"

"Yes! My visitors are the opposite of those you saw at the home of rest, and need very different ministrations. They were victims who succumbed, against their better nature, to creedal intolerance; they were overpowered while struggling to get free. These are conquerors who, following the teachings and example of Jesus, have worked out their own salvation in spite of creed."

"Then perhaps you can answer me a question which puzzled me many times in the old life?"

"I will, if possible," he replied kindly.

"Which of all the denominations, or religions if you will, contribute the highest percentage of the redeemed?"

"We recognise but one religion here, that is - Love; and all its disciples have but one denomination - lovers of mankind. No one of all the man-made religions holds a monopoly of this attribute. But earnest and conscientious followers of it may be found in all. Its worship is service to humanity; its litany, noble deeds, its prayers, tears of sympathy; its sermons, simple lives, known and read of all men; its songs are lullabies to soothe the broken-hearted; its faith the immolation of self; and its hope - Heaven. This is the only religion which can write the passports of heaven for the pilgrims of earth. Systems of theology have no more charm for us here than they had on earth; but in every heart there is a latent ideal towards which all mankind is blindly reaching out, a vague and undefined hope to which all the nations are ignorantly aspiring, a settlement of political problems that is only just beyond the reach of statesmen, a method of international arbitration by which peace shall reign on earth; these are all generating in the womb of futurity. And oh! how near that future is; how soon might all be accomplished, if only systematic theology could be cleared away and simple minded souls could raise the true standard of the cross that all the world might see and recognise that every difficulty would be overcome, every problem solved, and every ideal attained in - Jesus."

We were by this time passing through a magnificent vestibule leading evidently to the courtyard or garden, which I could see in the distance. From either side of us ran corridors, out of which apparently innumerable apartments opened; and here, I had a splendid opportunity for noticing the self-luminous atmosphere to which I have before alluded. In the very centre of so vast a vestibule one would naturally expect to find an almost midnight gloom; yet neither here, nor in the corridors adjacent, could there be detected the slightest indication of a shadow. Stair-cases of stately proportions rose at intervals to the terraces above, on all of which, wherever facility offered, were found trees, plants, and flowers, in more than oriental luxuriance, interspersed with statuary and tapestries which baffle all attempts at description.

On reaching the courtyard I at once discovered the reason of its being selected as the starting-point of my inspection of the palace. In the centre stood, or played - I hardly know how to describe it - an unique aqua-botanical marvel which was at once both tree and fountain. From a coral-tinted basin it rose in a huge body of water, some four or five feet in diameter, as if passing through a transparent conduit. At the height of fifteen feet, its branches began to reach out in every direction, each of which was luxuriant with its triple burden of ever-changing leaf, and flower and fruit. I say ever-changing, because no sooner had leaf, or flower or fruit reached full development than by some mysterious power it was severed from the tree, as though gathered by unseen hands, and carried into one or other of the multitude of apartments which completely surrounded us. It was an object lesson in the process of nature, the mighty forces of which were visibly operating before my eyes. I gazed upon the sight in amazement, almost awe, and at the same time marvelled to what use the products of this wonderful tree were applied.

As if to answer me, Siamedes stooped and gathered two or three of the leaves which had fallen at our feet; in colour they were of a pale, bright, almost emerald green, while to the touch they were soft and velvety. When I had thoroughly examined them, my companion closed his hand upon them, and as they were pressed I was conscious of a very soft and delicate odour, producing a marked and exhilarating effect upon me. Then he opened his hand, upon which there was left just a trace of moisture but no sign of the leaves remained. A smile passed across his features as he beheld my astonishment, and he proceeded to explain this singular phenomenon.

“This,” said he, “is the tree, and also the water of life, so necessary to restore the weary and recuperate the exhaustion of those who come here to rest. It forms a method of re-invigoration which is the equivalent of the Chorale. The stream which supplies and energises this tree, as also many other in similar homes, is the strongest and richest of which we have any idea; we are told it takes its rise in the vicinity of the throne of God, for it never varies in the constancy of its flow. To us who know it best and watch its workings, the most marvellous quality it possesses is its remarkable adaptation to the particular requirements of every case to which it ministers. It leaves nothing for us to do but watch and wait while it works a complete restoration. When its cooling spray falls into the eyes,

the foundations of the fountain of tears are completely wiped away; it lingers upon the care-worn brow until every furrow has disappeared; it drops its seed within the broken heart, then laves it with melody until the song of victory has bloomed. But come and see some of the friends who are lying beneath the benediction of its waters till they recover from the effects of earth's 'fitful fever.'³⁷"

I shall not attempt to describe the apartments in which these weary children of earth were sleeping the shadows away. If words would serve me for the purpose, no mind imprisoned in the limitations of mortality has power to grasp it. Let it suffice to say that love had contributed the handiwork of its devotion; affection had lavished its choicest treasures; the gems of ease from every land had been improved upon; sympathy and skill had exhausted their store-houses, until the Great Designer of the heavens had made that resting-place for His children touch the standard of His own desire, and then pronounced it good.

On reaching the second terrace Siamedes stopped as we neared the entrance to one apartment, in order to explain to me the circumstances of the case. Here was lying a mother whose awakening was being watched for by three of her children. She was the daughter of an ignorant but extremely orthodox tradesman, who had inherited his religion as a kind of heirloom. She married a man who had been set apart by his family for the pulpit, but he himself was too conscientious to preach what to him was but half the truth, and in spite of the urgent persuasions of both sides, persisted in following his trade as a printer. With the advent of family responsibilities his newly-born parental feelings still further widened the gulf between himself and orthodoxy, and he gave up the last idea of becoming a preacher. His wife was fearful, but her love was real. Whispers of his state of mind began to be heard in the church, and for the sake of others he was requested to resign. His wife went with him. Then the man's disappointed parents, seeing their hopes fast drifting into oblivion, laid their heads together to try and restore the wandering sheep, and after much prayer they came to the conclusion that God had ordained a little trial as a means of securing the backslider's return. They thereupon visited his employer, and by a few slanderous suggestions secured his dismissal. Nine months of gradually increasing privation followed, in which the three children were augmented by a fourth, but the righteous parents dare not help them to resist the chastisements of God by affording any relief. But the wife never allowed the fire of her love to go down; no murmur was ever breathed from her lips; no anxious inquiry if he had succeeded, when his weary footsteps sounded on her ears like music at night, lest her asking should increase his disappointment.

One by one she parted with every little treasure, which from her girlhood she had learned to prize, that she might contrive to find something for those still more precious treasures God had entrusted to her training. Still they withstood the entreaties of the church for they failed to see that their misfortune was the will of God, and half-suspected it had more to do with the will of a much less generous parent. It was a heavy battle they had to fight for years; at most the husband's success secured but a bare existence, and the children

continued to come until thirteen had called her mother. Bravely she bore her part, putting forth almost superhuman endeavours to make both ends meet. 'God knew what was best, and in the end all would come right if she did but do her duty.' So it was that the midnight hours saw her mending, patching, darning; morning found her weary, planning, hoping.

In the lonely hours of the day, when the children were at school and her husband at his work, she was weeping, praying, and longing for the rest which never came. One by one three graves had been opened before her, and heaven received three darlings over whom her mother's heart yearned with an everstrengthening love. Yet for the world she had her smiles, and few people ever dreamed of the struggle with which she had to contend. She was not conscious of how she was over-taxing herself; she only knew how much more was needed than she had time or strength to accomplish. But rest comes at length. The fierceness of the battle, the ceaseless turmoil, the unending strife, the hope deferred grew too heavy for her shoulders, and while yet comparatively young she sank beneath the load.

As he finished his recital, he approached and drew aside the rich hangings which fell across the entrance, and we stood within the apartment where this heroine from life's battle slept, watched over most lovingly - can I say, patiently - by those three who had a right to call her by that sweetest name a woman knows. The eldest was a youth just short of manhood, the next a girl not much his junior, and the third a lad just entering on his teens. In their robes of almost untinted whiteness, they looked like angels waiting there, not bright and brilliant in their persons, but with a soft and subdued halo breaking from them, enough to show they were no denizens of earth. Two other friends were there besides, but Siamedes made me to know that these were ministers whom Myhanene had left in attendance, when he received her from the body and brought her there.

The only sounds which broke the silence were the soft kisses the children pressed upon her lips, and cheeks, and forehead, as though they were impatient for that sleep to end that they might hear her voice again. Ever and anon I saw the flush of excitement rise on each eager face as she turned or moved upon her couch, and I discerned that I had been brought here to see her wake. Presently she breathed a sigh, stretched, turned, then stretched again. The attendants gently drew the children away; Siamedes left me, and took his place beside the couch. Slowly he waved his hand over the sleeper's face, which now I could not see, but from the movements of her body I thought her sleep was nearly, if not quite, at an end.

Another stretch, a quiet moment, then a long-drawn sigh, followed by: "Oh dear; why - where am I?"

"Mother!" cried all the children in chorus, as they bounded forward to embrace her.

But I was outside. That meeting was too sacred for me to stand and gaze upon.

Shortly afterwards the curtains were again drawn aside, and she was led forth to take her first glimpse of - shall I say, heaven? What else could it have seemed to her? Whatever it

had previously been, it was undoubtedly heaven now to the children who clung so closely around her.

How beautiful she looked in her newly-found strength and peace, which clothed her like a robe of sweet repose, and the consciousness breaking upon her that she could never know weariness and weakness again!

As they stood upon the edge of the terrace among the flowers, for her to take a survey of the surroundings, I was surprised to find that Myhanene was at her side. In the concentration of my attention upon her, I had not noticed that it was he who led her from the room. Where and how had he come? When I hurried out he was not there - he had not entered since from the terrace - how had he come? Siamedes joined me at this moment, and I referred my query to him.

“Myhanene brought her from earth,” he replied; “and therefore it was for him to be the first, after her children, to welcome her.”

“I had no idea that he was here.”

“He was not. When I saw her waking I sent for him.”

“Does he live near, then?”

“Near and distant only exists spiritually here,” he replied. “But I see you are not yet acquainted with our methods of communication and travel.”

“No.”

“You remember,” he continued, “when you were at the Chorale, Myhanene projected a flash of light when he wished to speak to you?”

“Yes!”

“You did not understand that, but your friend read the message it conveyed and gave the interpretation. Those flashes fly with the rapidity of thought, and find their destination instantly, and when occasion demands, we have the power to travel with equal celerity; so you see, prayer is answered while we are yet speaking, and the idea of time and space annihilated in spiritual ministrations.”

“Then you do not always walk or ride?”

“By no means! Why, in the visits you have been making, your passage has been through the air frequently, only it comes so natural here that you have not noticed it.”

Any further conversation was interrupted by Myhanene calling us to congratulate our sister, after which the children made a long explanation as to who Siamedes was, and all he had done for them while they were waiting; then gently drawing her towards the edge of the terrace, Myhanene threw his arm around her and in one happy group they commenced their aerial journey towards that rest which was the legitimate compensation of that once oppressed soul.

Several other visits were paid and the stories of their lives recounted for my instruction, but I must content myself with recording the last, which at once arrested my attention by the presence of a number of bright purple hair-lines which, emanating from the body of the sleeper, passed across and out of the room, I knew not whither. My friend informed me that these were love-cords which existed by reason of the uncontrollable grief of the friends left behind. Great difficulty, he explained, is frequently experienced in dealing with these earth attractions, and if friends could only know how their unrestrained grief finds a response in those they mourn - disturbing and breaking their rest - it would do much to remedy the wrong they are thus unintentionally the cause of. Should the sleeper awake before the force of these cords can be weakened, which not unfrequently happens, the soul is drawn back again to earth, and naturally participates in the agony of its friends, which is also increased by the discovery that it is both powerless to make its presence known, or in any way minister to the relief of the mourner.

In the case before us, messengers had been continually dispatched, and every available influence employed to try and stem the torrent of these sorrowing friends. Now she was waking, and Siamedes could see that the inevitable must come. This reminded me of my conversation with Cushna about crossing the mists. But he was away, having left me as soon as we passed the bridge on our arrival. I mentioned the matter to Siamedes and dared to venture the hope, that if she was drawn back, and anyone followed her, I might be allowed to bear them company.

“I will send for Cushna,” he answered; “perhaps he will undertake the mission, and take you with him.”

I saw the message of light fly upon its errand, then its response, and almost immediately Cushna himself was beside us.

I was now to witness a second awakening, which might have been as beautiful and peaceful as the other; but, oh, how different!

My reader, think of these experiences of mine as you may - class them in the category of fiction if you choose - but for mercy's sake hear me as I plead for self-restraint when you mourn the absence of a loved one called away. God knows the cry of a broken heart is bitter, but remember, if the first duty of a follower of Christ is love, the second is self-abnegation. Your loss is their gain, then I ask you rather to rejoice, for great is their reward. If you really love them, calm your grief, for the discarding of the body has not disturbed the seat of love and your agony vibrates on its chords as much as ever, and reaching them where they are, it disturbs their rest and postpones their happiness. Remember while here their joy corresponded to your participation therein; do you think they are so immediately changed that they could gaze in rapture upon the Saviour's face, perfectly conscious of, yet indifferent to, your agony? If you grieve for love's sake, calm yourself; if you weep for sentiment and fashion, you may continue - that will never reach them where they are. Love, pure, unselfish love has this power, and it is to this I now

appeal. You would not weep if you could stand for one brief moment where I have stood, and see the things which I have seen; you would then be content to let the loved ones rest in peace upon the bosom of their God; and therefore I appeal to you, dry up your tears and let them rest until your morning breaks, and your shadows have flown away.

By this time there was not the slightest doubt about the sleep being at an end, and I could see that with every fresh sign of consciousness the lines exerted an increased influence upon her. In her half-sleep she murmured several names as though she was being called but was too weary to rouse up at present; then she reluctantly woke into a dazed, half-petulant state; next a hazy recollection seemed to seize her. Shuddering, she turned in the direction in which the lines were running, at the same time vacantly responding -“I’m coming, dear.” Then she rose from the couch, the cords momentarily increasing their power over her; slowly she moved at first, but every step augmented her strength and speed; anxious marks began to show upon her face as she drew the hangings aside and stepped upon the terrace. Her excitement now grew intense, she hurried forward, and I would have interposed to save her from throwing herself over, but Cushna held me back. Mistaken love was carrying her to such an agony as I little dreamed of then; and no one had any right to use force to restrain her. All we could do was to follow and save. She reached the edge of the terrace but did not hesitate or waver. She threw herself over and was gone.

Cushna grasped my hand, and bade me come across the mists upon a mission of salvation.

CHAPTER XII

ACROSS THE MISTS

For the first time, which was perhaps due to what Siamedes had said to me, I realised that we were not walking; and my rapid passage through the air was as pleasant as it was novel. There was no effort in my flight, in fact I was not aware of exercising any power of locomotion at all. Cushna held my hand and perhaps exerted whatever force was necessary to carry us on our way. For a considerable time he did not speak, or give the slightest indication that he was conscious of my presence.

Our transit was certainly not an instantaneous one; perhaps I was not yet capable of making such, or it may have been due to other causes - I cannot tell, but when I saw the mists only a short distance in front of us, a thousand questions rushed through my mind, while a thrill of excitement took possession of me. Under my changed conditions would the earth offer itself as a surprise, or not? At what distance would it be? Should I know the first place I sighted? Which, if any, of my acquaintances should I see first? Should I see London at all?

We drew close to the mists but made no sign of descending to pass through them, at which I was somewhat surprised, until I remembered Helen saying, that in going back to earth we

cross over them. Yes, we were above them! Now for the grand secret from the reverse side of life! What would it be? - what would it reveal? Why!

We had passed them. It was dark and I was disappointed. I would much rather have crossed in the daylight on my first return. It was so cold, too – I felt the chill pass through me, and for a moment I hesitated to go forward. I had no idea at what distance, or in which direction the earth lay; in all the gloom, whether far or near, there was no beacon-light to attract my attention. Cushna urged me on for a time, then halting, still in the darkness, asked me playfully what I thought of my view of earth from the immortal side.

“I have not seen it yet,” I replied, “nor perceive any sign of it unless these indistinct and confused sounds arise from it.”

“That is just what I was expecting. You have fallen into the one great error of mankind in misunderstanding the relationship which exists between the physical and the spiritual sides of life. This arises from want of thought, and forms the greatest stumbling-block in the way of communication between ourselves and those left behind; and its discussion opens up the whole of this question. In the body they fail to grasp the true difference existing between the spiritual and physical conditions, very erroneously imagining that the latter is the superior of the two. They hold that to throw off the body is to give up all advantages, all powers, and all achievements. Work, progress, and development cease, and the soul becomes visionary and intangible, being incapable of following any of the pursuits for which the earth afforded it every advantage.

“Death puts down its foot and says to the mighty influences of the mind - ‘Thus far, but no farther’³⁸; the grave opens its jaws and cries to the swelling ocean of human capability - ‘Here shall thy proud waves be stayed.’ In the body they are able to attack and overcome difficulties but we have lost the power of doing so, having laid it down at the grave. Such is the delusion cherished by one section of humanity; our church friends form another. They suppose, and very correctly so, that if communication was to be opened the stream of revelation would be continued, but they fondly imagine that God has said His last word in that respect, therefore argue that any attempt to break the silence of the tomb is an artifice of the devil to destroy their souls. Now a little quiet and impartial reasoning would soon disturb the foundations of both these objections and opens the door to more light upon the subject.

“In the first instance the brain is not the mind, but simply the convenient instrument by which it operates under certain circumstances. Between the two there exists an impassable gulf, so deep and dark that the wisest man has not discovered by what means they are connected. To base an assumption upon this ignorance is the height of folly, and equivalent to declaring that the violinist is dead because the strings of his violin are broken. The second, or church side of the objection, is, if possible, the more inconsistent of the two. They worship God as unchangeable ‘without variableness or shadow of a turning,’³⁹ which knowledge of Him is derived from the immutability of His laws. The Bible is interwoven in

its warp and weft with the ministry of angels. The reappearance of Christ after death is the very corner stone of their faith without which it would be vain, and yet they deny the possibility of an open communion and declare that this changeless God has changed, or at least this one law has, and that angelic ministry has ceased.”

“You are quite right in your indictments,” I said; “but I fail to see what connection this has with my not being able to see the earth - that is, if we are within sight of it.”

“That which puzzles you is capable of a very simple explanation, and you will then see that the two illustrations are grounded in one truth. Our theological friends do not believe in angel ministry, because we are insensible to their sight; you also are unable to appreciate our present contiguity to earth for the same reason. Why is this? Simply because you have changed the stand-point of your observation, and in doing so have become invisible to earth and the physical, while they have at the same time become equally imperceptible to your spiritual sense. To yourselves you are both as real and tangible as ever, but to each other you are as unreal as you have been taught to consider us to be. So you have to look for earth now as to you a visionary, intangible, and almost immaterial world, and as such I will point it out, while you, as a spiritual being, will remain the substantial and real. Is not this contrary to all your ideas?”

“Certainly; but like most other people my ideas were hazy and unsatisfactory.”

“But you thought of us as invisible, immaterial, impalpable creatures?”

“I suppose I did, whenever I gave any thought to the subject at all.”

“So we are to them generally, and so are they to us; this is due to the fact that the point of sensation of resistance is different. Now you will be in a position to understand what has been a mystery. You still continue to be as real and tangible as ever, but everything else is altered. The spirit-world has become the objective and natural, while earth has changed to the invisible, to a great extent. That which formerly was solid and obstructive to you is now no longer so; - buildings, trees, and even the physical bodies of men are no more to us than the purple haze which wraps itself around the shoulders of a mountain, and offer no more resistance.”

“Why, Cushna!” I gasped, as the revelation unfolded itself, and following the motion of his hand, I gradually perceived the visionary outlines of objects surrounding us, “this is the greatest surprise of all! How can I understand it?”

“You must be patient,” he replied. “A student does not understand a language as soon as he has mastered the alphabet; but that does not hinder him from continuing his study, if he is wise. No man knows how he is able to think, but every searcher for knowledge is glad to use his brain, in spite of the explanation which lies beyond his reach. So must we act in our development. Every successive stage through which we pass will have its mystery, but each in turn will be solved, and give place to greater problems, until all our powers having been

unfolded, we shall see God, If our friends on earth would recognise this, they would fulfil their mission better.”

“I can begin to see now the difficulty of reaching them; but is it not possible to do something to correct these errors?”

“Yes! Love conquers death, and that one great law which governs and controls everything with us, is also the means by which we may reach and save mankind. Sympathy, whether pure or impure, base or noble, holy or unholy, has a natural attraction for that which is like itself, and its power is not destroyed by the grave, as you have seen in the cause of our present mission. Love links soul with soul, and has power to bridge any gulf if it is only strong and true. This is partially admitted on earth. For instance, it is allowed that a mother who is with us may be cognizant of the continued welfare of her child, then why should they deny the possibility of information being carried the other way? The experiences of the child cannot be of any assistance to the mother, but those of the parent would make an inestimable difference to the child. Why then should the useless knowledge be ordained, and that which would be helpful denied? Is this the usual method of God’s procedure? The telegraph wire will carry a message equally well in both directions, why, then, if love can pierce the mists from earth, and cry ‘come back!’ should it not be able to travel with equal force the other way, and cry ‘come forward’?”

“Still, there are difficulties in the way.”

“Yes, but by no means insurmountable, because not natural. They arise entirely from the misconception I have referred to. Give us on the earth-side a base of operation which would exist if the simple teachings of Jesus were followed, and the rest would be very easily accomplished.”

“I rather wish I had first returned by daylight. I think the darkness causes me more confusion than I should otherwise experience.”

“Another mistake!” my companion replied with evident amusement. “You are not yet able to grasp the full situation. Everything you see that is real is spiritual, but things are not quite so black as they naturally appear in contrast to the shadowless life you have grown accustomed to lately. There are signs of daybreak all around us, and there is no doubt that the sun is rising.”

“Do you mean the spiritual sun?”

“Yes! The Sun of Righteousness, which will chase away the night of selfishness, ignorance, bigotry, and superstition, and establish on earth peace and goodwill to man.”

“What does the cold, keen air indicate?”

“The degree of charity registered by the spiritual thermometer.”

“Look at that shadow moving, Cushna; what is it?”

“A man,” he replied, “in whom there is no spirituality, therefore we see him as a dark shadow. As one becomes more Christ-like the body becomes illuminated with a lambent glory which corresponds to the shadowless light of paradise.”

“Is that always so?”

“Always. The amount and quality of light radiating from a man, declares his real condition. We do not need to be told, it is impossible to deceive us, because it is impossible to tamper with the witness.”

What a flood of light this simple incident threw upon a whole host of Bible passages which rushed through my mind with the rapidity of thought; the prophecy of Isaiah, ‘darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people’⁸; the postulate of St John, that ‘the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not’⁴⁰; and the terribly clear declaration of the Saviour - ‘This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.’⁴¹ Then there involuntarily passed through my mind other words which gave emphasis to the vivid illustration afforded me by his remarks:- ‘Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.’⁴² What another revelation was here opened up before me of the awful sublimity and reality of life.

My companion did not leave me long to think over these things before he recalled to my mind the particular reason of our visit, and indicated his wish to turn his attention in that direction. As I followed him my eyes became more accustomed to the twilight in which we were moving, and though everything still remained indistinct and shadowy, I was enabled to trace their outlines better and understand what it was we were passing.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

Presently we entered the precincts of a cemetery. I could see the vapoury monuments standing like grey-clad ghosts to guard the couches whereon the dead were sleeping. At a little distance from us was a woman, who, at the first glance, I identified as the object of our solicitation. She was standing at the side of a newly-made grave, upon the mound of which I presently discerned another young woman, sitting with her head buried in her hands, weeping. No explanation was necessary to tell me this was one of the friends whose uncontrollable grief had drawn this sister-soul back from peace and happiness to an experience the nature of which, at present, I had not the slightest conception. I was more than interested. It was my first object-lesson as showing the power of love in conquering death. Those fine purple lines, to which I have before alluded, were brighter and stronger now, binding their souls in closer union, while I saw continuous flashes of sympathy darting to and fro, thoroughly read and comprehended by the one, but by the other, alas, unheeded and unknown, so oblivious was she of her heart’s desire.

How I yearned for the power to break the last traces of that barrier down, and see them fall into each others' arms, the chasm of their tears bridged over, and the gulf destroyed. In my sympathy I grew so eager to try and accomplish this, that Cushna drew me back, lest my impatience might destroy what otherwise was within the bounds of possible achievement. He was as calm and unmoved as the gravestones around us; without the slightest trace of feeling or emotion, until I began to wonder whether he could really be the same man who had betrayed such depth of feeling towards Marie. I discovered later on that his calmness was but the placidity of confidence, every power he possessed was on the alert, waiting and watching that he might render the more substantial service whenever the moment for doing so arrived.

It was a pathetic sight to see the love of the weeping sister entwine itself around that spirit's form, in spite of the evident reluctance of the one to yield to the influence of grief. Poor child, what a different lot hers might have been at that moment but for the flood of that misguided sorrow! That she realised this was only too plainly visible. Her love had not changed, but oh, if she had but rested a little longer! If she had but gained a little strength, or knew in what way she could minister and be of service to the mourner; but now she was helpless; she was made to suffer in witnessing the agony, without any power to minister thereto. The triumph of grief became momentarily apparent, the ever-contracting lines had drawn them side by side, and the arm of the immortal passed unfelt around the trembling form of her less fortunate sister; lips, too much of heaven for flesh to feel, pressed their kisses upon that throbbing brow in vain attempt to soothe and calm, until I wondered how it was possible for a veil to hang between them.

Now appeared to be Cushna's time for action, and he at once made our presence known, at the same time encouraging our friend to speak to her sister, a proceeding which, strange as it may appear, she had not yet attempted since our arrival. At the sound of his voice she turned with a half-inquiring, half-incredulous look, as if to ask 'if she cannot see me, how can she hear?' but he persuaded her and promised his assistance, by which it might be possible at least to make some little impression, until I saw she began to hope even while she trembled with fear.

Gently withdrawing her arm, she arose, then threw herself upon her knees before the weeping girl, looked steadfastly into her face, and murmured:

"Sarah! - Dear! - Sarah!"

The sound was soft and musical as a summer's zephyr, and was successful, I think, even beyond Cushna's expectation. The girl lifted her head, the tears for a moment ceasing to flow. She looked around as if uncertain whether the echo of her own grief had deluded her, or she had really heard a voice. Love wrestled with fear, and doubt with strong desire, until fear and doubt prevailed and grief resumed its sway.

The success, however, was beyond all anticipation. Something had been done, and the speaker was by no means daunted at the final result. Had she not stopped the tears for a moment?

“Speak again,” said Cushna encouragingly.

Again the soft voice sounded, but this time it was accompanied by such an intensity of love and pathos, which surely must destroy all doubt in the mind of the sister.

“Sarah, dear! - don’t weep; it is I, Lizzie. I felt your grief, and it has brought me back from heaven.”

This time the voice was heard more distinctly; her head was raised before the message was half completed, and the eyes, still swimming in tears, were anxiously turning in every direction. No one was visible; where could the sound come from? There could be no doubt about it; the old, familiar tones were too well known to her for that, though they came so softly as to be scarcely distinguishable from her own thoughts. Ah, there might be the solution. It was just what Lizzie would have said, and memory had deceived her until she imagined she again had heard her voice. To save this second disappointment, Cushna now drew near and threw all his influence upon the girl whose mind was so divided, at the same time telling Lizzie to call her once again. Hope and certainty now prevailed. There was not the slightest room for doubt; it was her sister who had spoken to her, even though she was invisible. With a scream of joy she bounded to her feet and hurried homewards with the happy news.

We followed. Lizzie was elated at the completeness of her unexpected success. Cushna had again become calm and thoughtful; I was in a condition of indescribable bewilderment. If what I had just witnessed was all it appeared to be - that is, if it was real and not a dream - death was a chimera which would presently disappear, and the declaration of Christ to Martha - ‘he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die’⁴³ - would become a literal fact, instead of a spiritual illustration. The distance which now divided us from earth had already become so small that a faint whisper could traverse it and be distinctly heard upon the other side; soon it would but be a veil, perhaps thin and transparent enough for our forms to become visible; then the rent - and all would be restored.

But I was premature.

The joyful tidings of which she was the bearer lent fleetness to the steps of Sarah as she hurried home, like the Magdalene, with the news that the stone had been rolled away from the grave and her sister was not dead.

“She spoke to me while I was sitting on her grave,” she cried, in wild excitement. “I couldn’t believe it at first, but she spoke again, called me by my name, and told me she was here; but still I could not think it true. Then, for the third time, I heard her, and could not doubt. She is not dead, but still with us, even if we cannot see her. She is here! Listen! Listen! and you will hear her as I have done!”

Poor soul! The exuberance of her joy was attributed to an unhinged mind, and parents and friends wept still more that grief at the death of one child had drowned the reason of another.

In vain did Lizzie try to make her presence known; her soft and gentle voice could not possibly be heard in the clamour of such authoritative prejudice. She waited for a moment's quiet at her sister's side, when she spoke to her again, but if her voice was heard, it no longer fired the new-found joy - the cold waters of bigotry had too effectually quenched that to be rekindled, at all events for the present. At this discovery, she, too, began to weep; earth receded from heaven; the chasm which for one brief moment had been bridged over, and seemed so bright with hope, had again become a black and impassable gulf, and the ignorant assumption of friends on earth acquired the power to dim the joys of paradise.

Cushna's attentions were now directed to draw Lizzie away from the house where the influences of attraction had entirely ceased to operate, love having been supplanted by intolerant superstition. Under these circumstances, his pure and unselfish devotion had the greater force, she turned towards the sympathy, and as in the case of Marie, her grief gave place to exhaustion. Cushna now flashed for assistance, giving her into the charge of friends to carry back to Siamedes where she would sleep again.

"How long will she sleep this time?" I asked, as they left us.

"I cannot say; probably as long as before; the time varies according to circumstances."

"Will she come back here again?"

"That is very possible," he answered; "I have known some friends come back three or four times. Others are so fascinated by this mistaken grief as to be held prisoners by it, and almost defy any power to draw them away."

"How different it would have been if it had been possible for her sister to have seen as well as heard her."

"Not at all; it would only have been taken as another evidence of the poor girl's insanity."

"When we left the grave I thought everything would end so happily."

"I was by no means hopeful of such a result; experience teaches me otherwise. I should grow more sanguine if I could see a disposition on the part of mortals to admit the possibility of our having attained to some knowledge at present beyond themselves. But we cannot expect too much from them so long as they imagine our only employments are singing 'Glory, glory, glory,' or writhing in unutterable torments. They fight the battle, we wear the crown; they perfect reason and knowledge, we rest from our labours. They hold us in the relative estimation of antiquated volumes upon the shelves of life's library, out of date, not reliable guides to follow, and certainly extremely dangerous to consult."

"Does not this discourage you in your work?"

“No! Our knowledge of the government of God shows us that all the erroneous ideas of men can only delay, they cannot prevent, the success of truth ultimately. They attach an undue importance to the earth-life, and transfer the great advantages, which are the peculiar features of this estate, to the earth condition when they do so. With them everything is determined by the three score years and ten; the temporal governs the eternal; the finite controls the infinite; the things which are not, are placed in jurisdiction over the things which are. We know better and, therefore, can wait, if needs be; at the same time, we are not unconscious of the advantage of a right commencement.”

“Is not that a somewhat dangerous doctrine to preach?” I asked.

“Why so? It is the truth; and I have no fear of consequences when the truth is spoken. If the declaration of the love of God is not strong enough to draw all men unto Him, the suppression of that truth, or the foundation of any system of terror will never drive men to Him. When God has formulated a plan of salvation, it only shows you how man arrogates all knowledge to himself when he dares to step in to revise and correct it.”

“I should almost shudder to think of the way some men would live,” I replied, “if they were assured that the wrongs of life might be rectified afterwards.”

“That is because you are only looking at one side of the truth. Let us see how it would work out if everything was told. Suppose for a moment that the communication between the two worlds was a recognised fact, and Marie was able to tell on earth the story of her experiences in both, as you have heard it, do you think many of her hearers would care to cultivate her jealousy?”

“No!” I answered. “If they could hear it as I heard it, no one would dare to face the consequences.”

“Then why fear the proclamation of the whole truth, seeing that it is but the application of righteous sequence - ‘whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,’⁷ but the harvest will be a natural not a vindictive one.”

“You are right, Cushna,” I was compelled to acknowledge. “My idea was unjust, because ignorant.”

“Now,” said my companion, “I will give you a glimpse of a brighter side of our work, where you will see a cause for hope, and all those results obtained which you looked for between Lizzie and her sister.”

My thanks had scarcely time for expression before we entered a room almost as tangible as ourselves. This fact considerably perplexed me at the time, but I afterwards discovered it to be due to the spirituality of the man, who used it as a study. The house was one of those modest artizan dwellings which abound in the southern outskirts of London, constructed for occupation by two families, and the particular room was the one designed for a kitchen on the upper storey. The plate rack served for the shelves of a very modest library, while the furniture consisted of an armchair, couch, and table, at which sat a man who had

scarcely yet reached the prime of life, evidently deeply interested in a book. Cushna bade me watch the different effect of his speaking to that which accompanied Lizzie's first words to her sister.

"James!" he said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

Instantly the reader raised his head, looked at us with a smile of welcome, and answered:

"Oh! Cushna; is that you?"

"Yes! Are you busy?"

"Not if you want me," was the reply.

"I wish to show this brother how easily we can speak with you, so I would like you to write a message for us."

The book was laid aside, paper and pen were at hand in a moment, and he was waiting to begin. In the delight of this new revelation everything else was, for the moment, crowded out of my mind. All was so very natural, that I almost forgot I had passed into the world of spirit. There was not even a shadow between the two states now - they were not two any longer, but only two aspects of one.

"Perhaps you would like to give the message?" Cushna suggested.

"I would, but this disclosure completely drowns my powers," I replied.

"Then I will. Let me see, what shall I say?"

"This is a good opportunity for one of your impromptus," said the waiting scribe.

"Very well, then. You may call it:

THE PASSAGE OF DEATH.

Oh, brethren of earth,
Where the soul has its birth,
At the thought of the Jordan who quiver
When I fell asleep, I found that the deep
Was the wave of a cloud - not a river.

Men say that the tomb
Lies hidden in gloom,
Whence demons and devils forth sally;
I came through the place
In running my race,
And I tell you there is not a valley.
They say, as a guard,
At a gate that is barred,

An angel is standing in state;
I passed o'er the ground,
But no obstacle found,
So I tell you - there is not a gate!

No gate where men quail,
No dark low'ring vale,
No river your course to resist;
I felt but one chill –
Then a hush - all was still,
And I stood on the slopes - Through the Mist.

There was no slip, doubt, or uncertainty from the beginning to the end of the message; no wonder or amazement expressed on the part of the amanuensis, who wrote as calmly as a clerk receiving letters by dictation from his employer. I realised in those few minutes that if no other link existed in all the earth, that one was quite sufficient to hold the two estates of life in an indissoluble bond of union, and capable of being strengthened until all the errors of the flesh should be corrected, and the last rebellious child of earth had answered to his Father's invitation – 'Come.'

The writing finished, it was read over, then placed aside to be added to a volume of such messages, which, from time to time, were being received from members of the large band of spirits at whose disposal that truly inspired teacher placed his services. This accomplished, he asked:

"Can I do anything more for you?"

"Not for the present."

"Shall you see Zangi soon?"

"I can send to him if you need anything."

"You might tell him that Aylmer is not very well, and I should be glad if he will look at him."

"What is wrong?"

"Oh! nothing much, but it gives him an excuse to ask for Zangi."

"Tell the child that I will let him know at once. God bless you."

I was informed that to such an extent had communication been opened with this family that several of the children could converse with us almost as readily as the father. Yet there was nothing to distinguish them from the ordinary run of mankind. The privilege was a sacred one, which entailed a great responsibility, so it was never paraded before the vulgar crowd, to gratify a morbid curiosity. Comparatively few were made acquainted with the

astounding facts, and fewer still were they who were permitted to be present when any such interview was held. In the presence of this family some of our friends had even been able to assume a solid body, as the angels did of old, and minister to medical and other requirements. The attachment of this little fellow (only eight years old) for Zangi, arose from gratitude for the instantaneous replacement of a dislocated ankle which the doctor had said would be weeks before he would be able to use it.

“Cushna!” I cried in amazement, “will there ever be an end to the surprises you are unfolding to me? Why, you speak as if the whole thing was as natural as passing from one street to another.”

“It is even more so,” he replied, “when we have the necessary basis of love to work upon, and a waiting mind to answer when we speak. The man who hears us will be heard by us, and be responded to when he calls. This was the secret of the old time prophet’s inspiration, in this incident you have witnessed nothing new, but have simply been made aware that the old methods and advantages have not been changed or ended. I know it is strange and surprising, but that is because mankind has erred and strayed from the truth, having sold their birthright of open communion for a mess of ecclesiastical pottage⁴⁴, not because God has changed or His system of government in any way altered. But the days of error in this respect are numbered. This channel of communication is but one out of thousands which have now been opened, and are being used constantly by us to ‘ring out the false and ring in the true.’⁴⁵”

“No one needs to be told that creed and reason are at variance; it was this that kept me outside the church all my life.”

“One of the most flagrant illustrations of this is to be found in the position the Church has almost universally assumed in the matter of spirit communion. It is taught as an article of the faith that evil spirits possess, and exercise, the power of communicating with man; they can appear to converse and enter into compacts with, and even take possession of the bodies of those who are in affinity with themselves. But holy men and women who have passed from earth have no such powers or privileges afforded them, the permission for intercourse in their case having been withdrawn long ago because the mission of such had been fulfilled. Directly you bring your reason to bear upon such a doctrine you explode it; without saying anything about the changeless character of God, which must ever be borne in mind. It makes Him to be arbitrary and unjust in the most cruel sense, in granting to His enemies advantages which He withholds from His friends; it gives enormous facilities for temptation to the powers of darkness, but denies the same liberty of action to the ministering spirits attendant upon the children of light; it opens wider avenues in the road to destruction, while it closes up one of the brightest paths which lead to life; yet all the while they say ‘God is no respecter of persons,’⁴ that ‘He willeth not the death of a sinner,’⁴⁶ that ‘He will save to the uttermost all who will come to Him,’⁴⁷ but they are not able to see that their theology places a great stumbling block in the way of all who try to come.”

“But is it a fact,” I asked, “that evil spirits have equal facilities for communication as the good ones?”

“If you will remember two very simple truths,” he replied, “they will aid you to solve many otherwise mysterious problems. First, there is no bondage of force in any condition of our life. You have already seen illustrations of this. Every soul is free to make its own choice, but they naturally choose that which is most congenial. On earth the meadows are the natural habitation of the sheep, the water of fishes, and the air of birds; it is not necessary - nor is it attempted - to place any restrictions to prevent any one of them from trespassing on the domain of the other, it being quite sufficient that they are not constitutionally fitted for it. So it is with us; a sinner can no more dwell in the region of the saint than a sheep can soar upwards in company with the eagle.

“The second point for you to remember is: the power of sympathy. This is almost omnipotent. As you have just seen in the case of Lizzie, so it is all through creation, like attracts like. In the absence then of any deterrent force, when this attraction of sympathy has been established, whether it be of a holy or unholy nature, the souls naturally gravitate towards each other; but no soul from our side is ignorant of the fact that it is individually responsible for whatever results therefrom. With the present erroneous ideas which exist, it is not surprising that the lower and ignorant spirits find the greater attraction to earth.”

“Then you regard the present state of your communication with earth as being a somewhat deplorable one?”

“Not by any means. The present time on earth is characterised by a great thirst for knowledge - there is an earnest spirit of enquiry after truth. In the human soul there has always been a natural craving to rend the veil which hides immortality from view - a craving born of the inspiration which forebodes success. Daring souls, regardless of the anathemas of the Church have pushed the enquiry forward until the veil has given way and the light is streaming out. But the enquirers, while breaking free from errors in one direction, are generally found to hold with even greater tenacity to others which lie in another direction, so that the attraction they form is not with spirits whom the truth has made entirely free, but lower minds who stand in close affinity with their own desires.

“A word of caution I must give you here, and that is how very necessary it is to draw a distinction between those whom I have termed the lower friends on our side and the lowest. We are not yet, at all events, divided into two classes - good and evil; but the method of division that I have pointed out naturally suggests almost innumerable grades of conditions through which it would be quite impossible to draw a dividing line. Now the class of souls attracted by these enquirers are spiritually in affinity with themselves, but by reason of their life with us, they can teach many truths which will prepare the way for higher and more powerful ministers to follow them. The present outlook, therefore, is not at all a cheerless one, but, on the contrary, full of hope and promise.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SLEEP TO DEATH

By this time we had recrossed the mists, consciousness of which recalled my desire to ascertain the relative position of the two states to each other. My companion at once acceding to my request, led me to a suitable point for making the observation. I had grown accustomed to the gloom overhanging the shadow-land by this time and as again the lights and shades blended in a soft twilight over the boundary, I had no difficulty in gaining my information.

Again I could see the error of speaking of the two conditions as two worlds, since they hold the same relationship to each other as the sea bears to the land, while the mists are but the spray and vapour which arises as the waves of the one break upon the shores of the other. Still the simile is very unsatisfactory, but I know of none to suit my purpose better. On the immortal side that vapoury curtain hung in calm repose, but towards the earth it swelled and rolled like the restless wave of a flowing tide. At one time it would simply ripple along the shore, at another gather strength and throw itself afar, while in its recession I could see it bearing out to sea the souls of those for whom it had been commissioned. Some were reached in the gentle wash and flow after the force of its breaking was spent, the keels of their barques being gently lifted from the sands of time, then drifted away peacefully in the mist on to the ocean of eternity. Over some the wave broke in all its strength and fury, making their frail crafts to creak and plunge in wild commotion as the moorings were torn away and each unprovisioned boat was swept along to battle with the surf of an unknown sea.

What a transforming miracle was wrought during that momentary immersion in the mists. As its copious baptism fell upon each, it washed all the tawdry subterfuges of the flesh away, broke the chrysalis of the soul, letting the true man come forth, some to the resurrection of life, many, alas! to the resurrection of condemnation. I saw the judgment then. I saw there men who had lavished wealth upon themselves and made great professions that they might win esteem, and rank, and fame as they lulled their clamorous consciences into slumber by the hope that a magical process of chemistry would somehow be found, by which the world's esteem and approbation would transmit itself to the soul. But the mists dissolved that hope, and the trembling ego came forth naked, barren and pauperlike, for only deeds of pure unselfish love can be carried through that ordeal, which all have to pass.

While I was engaged in making these observations, my attention was several times attracted to persons who were passing either way, not through but over the mists, as we ourselves had done. Of itself there was nothing in this to excite my curiosity, since their errand might have arisen from a similar cause to our own, or been occasioned by a multitude of other reasons. But at least half of these travellers were attired in such peculiar, robes as to make it very doubtful to me as to which estate of life they belonged. For some

time I tried to solve the problem myself, as to who they were, but all my explanations were unsatisfactory, so at length I referred the question to my companion.

“Those are sleepers visiting their friends,” he replied.

“Is it possible so many are drawn back again?” I asked in amazement.

“You mistake me; I did not mean drawn back to earth as Lizzie was. These are persons still in the body, who during the hours of their sleep have come away from earth to meet with their friends who are with us.”

“Why! - Cushna!”

“Is this another surprise to you?” and my companion laughed outright at the blank astonishment written upon my face. “Ah! my brother, Paul was more than right when he said - ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him!’⁴⁸ We can only give you glimpses now of some of the avenues of research which will be successively opened for your study, until you will become overwhelmed by the contemplation of the boundless provision made for our happiness by His infinite love.”

“Let me clearly understand you, Cushna. Do you mean that before a person dies, when the body is taking its customary sleep - between night and morning - the soul has power to come away to rejoin and hold communion with the friends who are dead?”

“That is precisely what I wish you to understand.”

“But! - ”

“I am perfectly prepared for your astonishment,” he replied, “but what I tell you is nevertheless a fact; this you would have comprehended more clearly had you been content to have gone home before starting on this tour of enquiry.”

“Home?” I answered, as another flood of enquiries and associations surged around me at the mention of that single word, for, as he breathed it, it seemed laden with music, peace, and fulfilment of every desire that had ever disturbed me: but I crowded it back for the present that I might learn something more of this new revelation. “How should I have known it then?”

“Because there you would have touched the point of recollection, and at that, the whole experiences of your sleep-life would have been restored to you.”

“But it seems incredible,” I replied.

“Things are not always what they seem,” he said. “Let us speak of this matter a little, and I think you will soon see that the door of possibility is at least standing ajar, if not wide open. To begin with, man is created in the image of God, which of course is in a spiritual rather than a physical sense, for God is spirit. This offshoot of, emanation from, or begotten of God which becomes man then, partakes of the characteristics of its source or origin. ‘He

that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,'⁴⁹ and the mind is like its God - possesses the inherent quality of continuity of action or operation. On earth the physical body is the organ through which the mind works, but being only capable of a limited amount of labour before weariness ensues a period of rest and recuperation becomes necessary. The spirit is still willing, it is the flesh that is weak, so night has been ordained to meet the requirements of the body; but there is no night in heaven, simply because the spiritual part of man never wearies, therefore has no need to rest in the sense in which the body demands it. Now, as sleep is a state of unconsciousness impossible to attain in the immortal spirit, it is absolutely necessary that the latter shall be withdrawn in order that the body may secure the former, and since there is no physical restriction in the spirit-state, what more natural than that at such times the communion between kindred souls should be resumed?"

"What is the difference, then, between sleep and death?"

"Very little indeed, so far as leaving the body is concerned but in the case of the sleeper a provision is made for return, by means of the life-line, a bright electric hair-line, very similar to those you saw recently, by which a kind of telephonic communication between soul and body is maintained. So long as this line remains unbroken the soul has power to return, once snap it and the sleep becomes death."

"How can each sleeper make sure of finding the desired friend?"

"There is provision made for that, as for everything else," he replied. "Just as there are localities adapted to every possible condition of the soul which has left the body, so there is a sleep-state - a boundary, or half-way condition - where these meetings take place. We will visit one of these rendezvous if you wish it."

"I should be delighted," I replied. "But do all sleepers come here?"

"There is nothing to prevent them doing so if they choose, and I have no doubt but that the great majority of mankind do."

"Then why is it that no one appears to know anything about it?"

"There are two reasons for this. I will take the one naturally existing first, because it is the one most easily explained. I have already indicated to you the reason why we are invisible to our friends on earth, and they invisible to us. We each stand outside the gamut of the others' perceptive faculties, and between us lies a gulf only to be spanned by sympathy. This same difficulty exists between the physical brain and its spiritual equivalent, preventing the translation of the memory of the higher into the lower condition. Still, the task is not at all a hopeless one; as I have said, the difficulty is natural, and therefore may be overcome; the sleep-state could then be pressed into service as a most important factor in the regeneration of the world."

"How?"

“By directing rather than repressing the natural tendencies to remember, which are to be found generally in children. If these could only be nurtured it would be impossible to estimate the advantage and consolation thereby secured by obliterating the idea of death. Let me suppose a case, by no means an uncommon one. An only and much-loved child dies when but two or three years old, but the mourning mother lives on for twenty, thirty, or perhaps forty years, her only hope being that she will meet her darling again in heaven.

“Now, the joy of their re-union will be altogether regulated by their mutual recognition of each other whenever that meeting happens. No intercourse has taken place during the long interval; the mother has continued to think of her baby-child, while the angel has but dim recollections of the girl-mother she knew in the long ago. But instead of these hopes being gratified the child beholds a strange woman, with face wrinkled with care, hair silvered, and form weakened and bowed, until she fails to recognise the parent she has waited for. What of the mother? In that woman ‘beautiful in all the soul’s expansion’²⁶ is it possible she has regained her child? No! indeed death did rob her, and there would be no power in heaven to make a restoration, if such were the facts of the case. Thank God they are not!

“Now just let us turn to the realities which exist and learn how much better God is in such cases than men imagine. When the child is brought here, the love-lines are attached, with which you have now grown familiar; but in this case there is a counteracting agent brought into action to prevent any undue influence being exercised until such time as the child is able to understand. This is accomplished by the guardian angel of the little one, who now becomes her instructor, nurse if you will, and part of whose duty consists in developing the love which at present maintains between her charge and its mother for no severance of love is ever permitted to take place on our side. This can only be effected by the sin of the mother placing her out of sympathy with the child. Here it is that the sweet ministry of the sleep-state comes in with its continued communion, which can laugh at death and at least one-third of the lives of parent and child are spent in each other’s companionship, ignorant as the mother may be of the fact.

“The child, however, is satisfied, because her love is built up and strengthened, while the earth experiences of the mother become valuable object-lessons, which the guardian is ever careful to use in the education of her charge. Months pass by, and at length the still aching heart of the mother cries out ‘Oh! If I could only see her in a dream, it would comfort me!’ and she knows not that her prayer is the first vibration of her sleep-memory which all this time has been striving to translate itself into her waking hours; but so it is.

The prayer awakens another hope:

Begotten by some deep-found faith
in love’s unknown mysterious bowers,
Which feels omnipotent o’er death -
Nor earth, nor hell, restrains its powers.

God hears the prayer - He had heard and answered it, when He laid the foundations of the government of life - a few mornings later the mother awakens with a dim recollection that she has seen her child, and is consoled thereby. It was just her own darling. Of course it was, being the memory of one of her first interviews. Now the dreams will become more frequent, the child will grow, the sleeper's memory will become clearer, the communion more intelligent and rational, until, at the time of parting, the kiss will be the usual one with which a child is dismissed to school, given with the perfect consciousness that she will be home again at the appointed time."

"Why, Cushna!" I exclaimed, as he paused, "you will wipe away even the remembrance of death if you go on."

"If Jesus tried to do so and failed," he replied, "I can never hope to succeed. There are very few of his professed followers who appreciate the fact that he never in any single instance voluntarily used the word in relation to the change of states. 'She is not dead, but sleepeth'⁵⁰; and they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 'Our friend, Lazarus, sleepeth, I go that I may awake him out of his sleep!'⁵¹ Death? - there is no death! it is swallowed up in victory since Jesus hath brought life and immortality to light. 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living.'⁵²"

"You said there was a second difficulty in the way of the universal knowledge of this sleep-life," I suggested.

"There is a second and unnatural obstacle in the way, and this is much more formidable than the one I have referred to. It is created and maintained by the Church, which could not possibly exist upon its present basis if the sleep-life were recognised, therefore the natural tendencies I have spoken of as existing in children have to be checked and crushed as wicked superstitions which are the work of the devil. These seeds sown in the young grow up and produce a harvest of bigotry almost insurmountable in the man. This is due to the position which the Church has gradually assumed, that it is:

'Finished all that God has promised,'

and therefore there is no further revelation to be made. This compels the preacher to drop the role of prophet, and assume the position of priest or lawyer; there is no counsel of God to proclaim, he has only a written law to enforce; no need for him to be in advance of his flock, leading like an Oriental shepherd; there are no new pastures now into which the sheep can be led. Instead he must play the English part and follow the sheep, who are more under the influence of dogma than of shepherd. The duty of the prophet is to stand upon the tower, watching for both the day-star and the enemy; but when the full day of creed has come, and there is nothing more to expect, what need to occupy the tower any longer? Now, let me apply these illustrations. The modern preacher is fitted for his position by a

course of college or university education; in logic, classics, the theology of school-men, and the creed he is to expound; such is the lawyer.

“The prophet has always been selected entirely for his power to receive and transmit the new revelation which God declares to the world. ‘Hear now My words,’ says God, ‘if there be a prophet among you, I will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.’⁵³ Here is God’s provision for a continual revelation, and the sleep-state is the university from which it shall be promulgated. The teachings of Jesus are in perfect harmony with the law of Moses in this matter – ‘Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak’⁵⁴; and Peter, on the day of Pentecost, urges the same Gospel truth:

“This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel - ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit: and they shall prophesy.’⁵⁵ It was in the sleep-state where God met Solomon and blessed him with His gift of wisdom; it was in a dream by night that Joseph was warned to flee into Egypt with the infant Christ; and in the same condition was told to get back again, for they who sought the life of the child were dead. What more need I say? The facts are plain; if the doors of the sleep-state are thrown open, a wider revelation will be given, which will carry away the creedal institutions of earth, and the vocation of the priest will vanish.”

“But surely you would not counsel men to put faith in the vagaries of every dream?”

“Certainly not, my friend; I think you have forgotten that I hinted at the necessity for encouraging and protecting the natural tendencies to be found in children. Like every other gift of God, this requires most careful development and education before it can become totally reliable in its operation.”

“But how can a distinction be drawn between the true and the false?”

“That is not at all difficult to decide. In the Old Testament, when God first promised a prophet, He very carefully laid down a rule by which the true man should be known from the pretender: ‘When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.’⁵⁶ Jesus confirms this rule when he says: ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’⁵⁷ Confidence in a prophet would always be regulated by the value of previous utterances, while the standard of trial would always be the cross of Christ. This, however, is not the beginning. First of all, men have satisfactorily to establish the fact of such a revelation, and this must and can be pursued exactly on the same lines as the investigation of any other strange phenomenon in the domain of science. Once obtain an impartial and full enquiry into the evidence already available, and then immortality will be at once removed out of the region of belief and take its place before the

world as a scientific demonstration. But in attempting to get this, all the thunders of ecclesiastical anathema are hurled against you because the establishment of this fact would be a necessary death-blow to their systems; and mankind are not yet free enough from superstition even to pursue such an enquiry which the Church pronounces to be one of the wiles of the devil.”

“What a boundless gospel you open to the vision!”

“This is the gospel, and is it not such an one as we might expect from a God of Love? It is the gospel lost in Eden; faintly seen and but dimly comprehended by patriarch and prophet of old; its day-break glories were sung by the angels in ‘Peace on earth, goodwill to men’⁵⁸; for a moment it shone with noon-day glory around the life of Christ; then the shadows of systematic theology began to obscure it, and the twilight has deepened into night, in the darkness of which men could scarcely recognise the Nazarene if they met him. I only tear away the clouds a thousands sects and creeds have conjured up to obscure the sun, and free from prejudice invite you to see ‘what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,’⁵⁹ free from any of the limitations devised by man. But now that we have spoken so much of this phase of life, come and see it for yourself.”

CHAPTER XV

THE CITY OF COMPENSATION

During our conversation we had been walking in a beautiful valley lying between the mists and the slopes upon which I found myself on my arrival. As I did so, listening to the revelations my companion was unfolding for my benefit, many and varied were the thoughts that flashed through my mind. One of these made a deep impression upon me, and deserves a place in this record on account of the influence it exerted. It ran something in this way:

On earth, when a felon is torn by the law from home and friends to pay the penalty demanded by his crime, man - with all his faults and unjust ideas - has made a provision for the convict to be visited at stated intervals by his friends, in addition to the correspondence which is allowed. I know the visits are not frequent, and that the correspondence is restricted, but the provision is made; and is it possible that frail, fallible man can be more merciful than God? Can God by any means inspire an act of humanity He Himself would be unwilling to perform? Can the creature, under any circumstances, manifest a greater degree of charity than the Creator? The thought quivered in my mind but for an instant - to have given it lodgment would have dishonoured the Infinite Love; but it lingered long enough to accomplish its mission, for as it left it carried away the last shadow of doubt. From that moment I was satisfied that sleep is the trysting-place where severed souls may meet again.

Some distance to our right lay a beautifully wooded district towards which the great majority of our sleep visitors wended their way. Turning our steps in the same direction, I soon discovered that behind that natural screen lay a more populous centre than I had yet met with in my new life. There was also something, too, so half-familiar about the surroundings as to cause me more than once to look around and assure myself where I was in reality.

I knew I had never visited the place before, and yet nothing was strange or unexpected to me, a fact the very opposite of every other experience I had hitherto enjoyed. I stood occasionally to admire lovely nooks and rustic spots with which I seemed to be thoroughly acquainted, or addressed and returned congratulations to passers-by with the readiness of a life-long intimacy, yet it was impossible to recall when or where we had met before. Presently, however, I solved the difficulty to my own satisfaction.

The whole confusion of mind was due to the multitude of scenes through which I had so hurriedly passed, and the varied subjects which had been crowded through my mind without any possibility of quietly digesting them. This, no doubt, was the cause of the confusion so inextricably jumbling the two lives together yet leaving both equally familiar.

Several times I turned to my companion, with a hope that he would help me out of my dilemma, but seeing he was buried in one of his brown studies I refrained from disturbing him, and walked on in silence.

Just before we reached the trees, we turned by mutual impulse away from the more frequented parts into a secluded haunt which somehow, I knew, would lead us to the most picturesque view of the city lying before us. I led the way, there was now no need for a guide, since every step grew more mysteriously familiar to me. Down into the lovely little glen, across the rose-clad bridge which spanned the rivulet, where I must stand a moment to listen to the flute-like music of the silvern cascade; then up the flower-dressed bank again towards the moss-covered boulder which stood directly in my line of vision. Never mind, it was soon rounded, and --

There was no need for question then; standing beside that rock I touched the point of recollection which Cushna had before referred to; all along that walk the preparation had been going on, and in one flash the clear memory of my sleep-life had been restored to me. Around me lay scenes dear to me from infancy. Oh, what an explanation that one moment made of half the mysteries of my life! How often had I wakened from my sleep with a dull sense of forgetting something, for the loss of which my heart felt heavy, but my memory was powerless to recall it; I had sighed to renew some sweet companionship I had formed in the 'vagaries of a dream'; I felt confident that someone, somewhere, understood my wishes and fostered my 'foolish whims,' but where and who was it? Some unknown influence was always working upon me to 'do this' or 'go there.' My friends looked pitifully upon me, regarding me as the victim of strange fancies from which I had not power to break away.

Frequently, when I was visiting the poor, I would come across the face of some sufferer which was quite familiar to me, yet I knew I had not seen it on earth before. Life had abounded in such mysteries, which in my solitude I had tried, in vain, to probe, I knew that in some far away court a man lay ill and starving, but how I was aware of it I could never tell. I was conscious that if I walked along a certain street at a given time I should meet such and such an one, of whose existence I was ignorant apart from my 'strange fancies,' but I would go and meet them; there was no need to tell their stories – I knew them. I simply performed my mission and passed on.

A thousand impulses, strange as these, had been the ruin of my life in the estimation of my friends, while their development and indulgence had considerably aroused the pious fears of my family, exercised the professional acumen of several physicians, and been the subject of serious conversations and many prayers of devout clergymen; but all of no avail, the combined effect being to increase rather than diminish the malady. I was accused of lack of natural affection, was not amenable to reason, despised the common-sense things of life, and in the anxiety of my friends to protect me from myself it was always a mystery how I escaped the doom of an asylum. Was I happy? No! Two ever-present difficulties prevented that. The unnecessary suffering and starvation of my fellows, and an insatiable longing for something or someone which I could never define - a craving of the soul I did not know how to gratify - a hungering for some unknown sympathy for which I knew not where to seek.

But a great part - perhaps all - of the mystery had at length been solved, the key had been found, and henceforth the enigma of life would be easily read. Was it a tear of gratitude which dimmed my eye as the realisation burst upon me? Perhaps it was, for there is one joy at least which can only find an adequate expression in the language of tears.

"Cushna, my friend," I cried in my ecstasy, "I know it all now; but none of the revelations you have made to me can compare with this."

"Why! do you mean to say you know this place?"

"Know it! Why, I am truly at home now. My earth life was not real; that was sleep - sleep in which I restlessly dreamed of this - now I am awake. Yes! I do know it! Henceforth I have to enjoy fullness of life in a condition where solution follows mystery as naturally as fruit comes after flower."

"Now you can understand all we have been speaking of respecting the dual life."

"I can," I replied, "but how was it I did not remember it even after my death?"

"Because you have been carefully prevented from touching the point of recollection until the most opportune moment."

"The place seemed to grow strangely familiar to me as we were coming along," I said. "I was about to ask you the cause of it several times, only you were thinking."

“Yes! I did not wish to make any explanations. It was much better for you to learn it as you have done; and now you feel yourself at home, you will be able to dispense with my services.”

“I do not at all like the idea of losing you,” I replied.

“You will not do that; I shall see you by and by. In the meantime you have many friends here you will wish to see, and any of them will be able to make what explanations you desire.”

He was gone - but I was not alone. How could I be in the midst of scenes every one of which called forth a multitude of experiences that had lain buried unconsciously in my mind until now.

Who is able to understand the mind? What undreamt-of histories, revelations, and possibilities lie stored away in its vast abyss, into which the intellect can find no light to help it penetrate. Consider but the corridors of memory, and who can estimate what priceless tablets of the past are waiting our discovery? Are there records of being, of æons, of epochs, reaching back and back until at length every individual soul may read its genealogy and trace each step in its adventurous pilgrimage from God? Who can tell? But who can doubt but that the mind holds secrets which the fickle flesh could never keep - secrets which are too infinite to whisper into the ear of mortality; their weighty import, quivering on the sensorium, would shatter it, and leave it deaf to every other sound. Earth, understand the mind of man! Why, in comparison, it has scarcely yet been able to grasp the idea of its conception. But in the calm hours of sleep, that subtle embryo steals away to Paradise, where its generation is continued within the womb of love, until the fullness of its time arrives; then the soul is called away and in the birth of death inherits the possessions of a larger self - the memory of another life, the knowledge of unexpected powers. How can the full beauty of the plant and flower be seen when the seed has only just been discovered? How can we know the oratorio when the overture has but just commenced? How can we paint the summer when we have only felt the frost? Neither can we, who have only watched the flutterings of the wings of mind against the cage of earth, describe the majesty of its soarings in the congenial atmosphere of heaven.

My meditations were brought to an abrupt ending by the sound of a well-known voice close behind me:

“Hello, Mass’r Fred! So yo’s here at last.”

“Yes, Jemmy, here at last.”

“I got’n idea you warn’t com’n roun’ dis road for a bit. Ain’t it beau’ful? Has you been up de mount’ns?”

“I scarcely know where I have been, Jemmy, I have seen so much.”

“Did you see an’body you know yet?”

“Not here; but I have only just discovered that I know the place. Cushna never told me; he let me find it out for myself.”

“Dat’s jus’ like ‘m; he keeps on s’prisin’ you all de time.”

“That’s been my experience,” I answered, “ever since I arrived.”

“N’ber min’, Mass’r Fred, you s’ll soon see someb’dy now. We’ll soon fin’ you when I fetch ‘m.”

Away that dear old friend went to convey the news of my arrival, and left me to recall the pleasant memories of that companionship. I cannot attempt to recount the multitude of incidents which crowded around me in connection with him, but I will mention one lesson he taught me, which, I think, must have exercised an unconscious influence upon me in the lower life. It arose from my expressing surprise that negroes retained their colour in this life. The dear, good fellow replied, that it was all of the goodness of the Lord, that every colour, as well as every clime and kindred, should be found in heaven; and then he went on: There were many people who hated niggers and thought they ought not to be treated the same as white folks, they won’t go to school or church with them, won’t eat with them, or mix with them in any way, but when they got to heaven they would find that niggers were as good in the eyes of the Lord as white folks, and they will have to mix with them then.

I shall never forget his glee when he wondered what the white folks will do if they object to climb the golden staircase beside the niggers, for there’s a mighty long procession of ‘darkies,’ and they are going up all the time. Then again, he continued, looking more serious, it would have been mighty hard on the nigger if the Lord had changed his colour, for everybody would have laughed at him and said, “I told you so,” and that would have made him feel awful sick. But the Lord would not have it so, therefore He left everybody in their natural colour until love reigned, and no one thought anything about the tint of another’s skin.

I thought there was a volume of truth in his simple philosophy, which wiser men would do well to consider.

That familiar phrase of the whilom slave, which seemed to come to his lips as the natural reply to every perplexity – ‘It’s all of the goodness of the Lord’ - led my thoughts away from the individual to the city which lay before me - the city so full of newly-found memories, and which, from my own experience, I had learned to call the City of Compensation, owing to the fact that it possessed more features of that character than any other I could recall. In my old life I had been frequently driven to the verge of atheism, by a fruitless attempt to reconcile the incongruities of life with the idea of a just and merciful God. Why should the man who was born blind be compelled to bear the ignominy of begging his daily bread with the hundred-and-one other hardships which fall to the lot of poverty; while the man who lay in the lap of indolence and luxury should possess all the physical blessings nature could

crowd upon him? By what law did genius and want find such attraction for each other, while intellectual incompetency and wealth walked hand in hand? Where was the justice in a life of vicarious pain, which had its origin in another's sin? Mere was the righteousness which threw its influence on the side of the tyrant and oppressor, while the honest saint was left without sign or answer to his cry?

I was not by any means the only one who had been perplexed by such enquiries, but from my new vantage-ground I could interpret these problems in another and better light. Earth is not the Omega as well as the Alpha of life; in fact, it is not the whole but only part of the first. It is his ignorance and a false estimate of earth which makes man attach an undue value to its condition. Things assumed a very different aspect in the explanations my memory afforded in my newer state. I remember how I had seen the blind man enter that city while his body enjoyed its sleep, and how at a glance I learned that he himself was not blind, the defect lay in the instrument through which he operated. It is only on the mortal, the transitory, side that the gloom exists; on the immortal his vision is unclouded; therefore his hours of darkness only correspond to another's sleep. His memory may not be strong enough to bring back to earth the consciousness of what has passed, but who shall say the resignation of these children of darkness may not be due to the echoes of their sleep-life, which still reverberate through their waking hours?

In this city the ears of the deaf are unstopped, the tongues of the dumb are loosed, the maimed leap, the idiot understands, the paralysed forget their infirmity, and the bed-ridden feel their strength return; such are some of the kindnesses of the Lord to the unfortunates of earth, during their hours of sleep; do I not rightly call it a city of compensation?

These are memories of gratitude and hope; but there are others of even more weighty import, which for the warnings they convey, I dare not pass by in my message through the mists. I have often been a witness in this city of a mother pleading with her child to keep the yet unfulfilled promise which was sealed in the kiss of death, but since forgotten or ignored; I have seen the mask of friendship torn from the face of hypocrisy; heard the lying tongue convicted by its own utterances; seen the base intriguer exposed before his victim; have heard the yearning counsels of love to wayward children; witnessed the sympathy and affection lavished upon the unfortunate and the prodigal, and listened to the assurances of the presence of loved ones - unseen and unheard - in the hour of trial and temptation. I have seen the continued communion of souls, which the chill of death had no power to break; and the meeting of friends, who, in their despair, had vainly imagined they would never look upon each other's face again.

Oh, ye of earth, who received from the closing lips of some loved one, the trust or commission they could not linger here to execute, I bid you recall how sacredly you vowed to perform those farewell promises which you have since neglected, as you have forgotten the body which crumbles in yonder grave. That is not your father, mother, friend, which is

lying there; they are not dead! They are not away! In the silent corridors of sleep, you are still meeting them night by night. They know your perfidy, and that your word is broken; time after time they have earnestly pleaded with you, while just as often has your promise been repeated, until not one, but a hundred broken oaths are registered against you on the tablets of your soul. Stand still for one moment, and you will feel the weight of these unheeded vows lie upon your conscience until its still small voice cries out in agony, bidding you to keep your word. Why do you not take heed? It is not now a matter which lies alone between yourself and friend; he has been called into the inner sanctuary of God, who will Himself now defend His saint, and exact the retribution of your deceit.

When the hour of morning calls you back to earth, how frequently do the echoes of your last assurance continue to ring within your ears? Quit you like men be strong; arise and keep your compact in spirit and in letter before the weight of your perjury grows too heavy for your soul to bear. And ye who weep, look up! Hush the voice of your mourning, and dry your moistened eyes. The loved ones have not gone away; their kisses are still lingering in freshness upon your lips. Those tender tones, like the departing vibrations of imagination, which steal over you when first you open your eyes, are not all illusions; your dear ones have been with you. You carried to them last night tidings of your home below, and they have told you of theirs above. Can you not feel the pressure of their embraces around you still? and that they expect you will keep your tryst to-night. Oh, no! They are not lost; but Jesus loved them so, he drew them just a little nearer to Himself, where they could rest in peace

‘Beyond the heart-ache and the fever.’

Their exaltation has not ended - it has only changed the hours of your communion from the uncertain seasons of earth’s day, to the calm and peaceful hours of night. Think for one moment: Are you not conscious how much their love for you has strengthened? So, too, has the atmosphere of their present lives worked out a like result in you; and this, nurtured and continued, will lift you up, and drawing you with themselves closer to God, will finally bring you where they are. They are still more yours in this holier communion than ever you knew before; but they have been honoured in their election to that host whom Christ employs as ‘ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.’⁶⁰

CHAPTER XVI

COME UP HIGHER

If an angel had visited me on earth - and when I say angel, I do not mean one of those inestimable saints of whom we are accustomed to speak as angels in disguise, but a real, live, orthodox angel with shining raiment and snowy wings - and told me that I possessed so many friends in the whole realm of creation, I could scarcely have believed him. But by

this time I was beginning to know how next to impossible it is for man to understand much of his real self on earth. Let him for once get but a momentary insight into the true condition of things and he will be humbled to the dust, and the prayer of faith - not in a lifeless creed, but in the living God who is immanent, real, tangible to the soul - would be 'lead Thou me on.'⁶¹ At the flood of its revelation, coming like a tidal wave - as the returning memory of my sleep-life had just overwhelmed me - it would carry away all tyranny, oppression and selfishness. It would need but one glimpse, one baptism, one blow; the victory would be won and the real brotherhood of man forever an established fact.

Hitherto I had not been able, consciously, to call any man my friend in the truest sense of that word; not because I had no desire to do so, for God can witness to the agony with which I mourned my loneliness, but circumstances would not permit it. Those, who by virtue of position might have filled such a place, looked upon me as a crank, with scarcely the right to be at large, without a single interest in the legitimate pursuits of life, and the victim of a morbid craze which led me to spend my leisure among the vulgar poor. With my hatred for conventional hypocrisy, how could I hope to find congenial friendship with these? I could have purchased a hundred associates from the enormous class who sell their companionship for cash considerations, but cant and flattery is not food for hungry souls, nor is the slavery less degrading because its fetters are of gold. I might have found many true and congenial hearts down the courts and alleys I so frequently visited - and secretly, more than once, did I realise something of what it might have been - but the insuperable barrier of society, which forbids the brotherhood of man, stepped in.

Not that I feared very much for myself, but the open recognition of such acquaintanceships would, added to my many other 'eccentricities', have established the desired missing link of evidence and the walls of some private 'house of retirement' would have put an end to the little sunshine I was able to carry to such miserable places. I was friendless in life, there was no doubt about it. It was my cross, a sad and heavy one, but I tried to bear it, and I found it grew lighter when I became the friend of others much less fortunate than even I myself. That lonely longing, was it not the earth vibration of the friendships I enjoyed nightly in this other life? How the compensation of the one struggles to heal the wound it finds within the other! Here I had so many friends, dwellers on both sides of life, that all attempts to formulate a plan by which I could speedily visit them ended in failure, so at length I determined to let the matter arrange itself.

There was one building in the city that possessed a peculiar interest for me, and thither I turned my first attention. It was the rendezvous of those street arabs who, in large cities, earn a precarious living by selling papers and matches, and to it they attached the designation of 'The College.' Many were the nights I had spent in this place watching the delight with which the visitors appreciated the provision here made to counterbalance the hardships of their other life, and listening to the multitude of experiences which everyone had to recite. Here, too, it was very seldom but one or more of the bright spirits of still higher regions came to minister to these little hungry and ragged wanderers. At such times

the difficulties of their fate were always the theme of discussion, and the angel-teacher would patiently and lovingly show and illustrate how 'these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'⁶²; working in season and out of season to ground his audience in those acts of reciprocative kindness which so uniformly mark the dealings of this class with each other.

Men wonder where these children, gutter-bred, learn these acts of humanity and consideration, which for purity of motive put so-called Christian philanthropy to the blush; where they are taught to help to bear each other's burdens - where they are first instructed in the practical application of the golden rule. I can answer the enquiry. They are instructed in the elementary schools of heaven, to which they are summoned while their bodies be asleep in dark corners and doorways, under barrels or carts, or in the outhouses of your Christian city. Angels, who have learned the deeper secrets of the love of God, meet with these despised and outcast children there, teach them the geography of home, and show them the surest way to reach that rest which still remaineth. How could their bare and chilblained feet scale the sharp and icy points of your cold theology while the howling winds of fierce damnation raged around with threatening force. They would slip, fall, and their little souls lie in mangled masses at the foot of some precipice of sectarian contention they could never enter heaven by such a path. But do not fear, the angels know the road, and in the lessons of their dreams these little pilgrims are travelling homewards through the green meadows of forbearing love, led along by the once outcast Jesus. You need have no anxiety about their welfare because they fall short of your sectarian standard, when you shall enter you will find many such whom you once knew waiting to sing your 'Welcome Home.'

A hundred happy voices hailed me as I passed through the tapestries hanging across the entrance, and in a moment I was surrounded by a group of friends who were anxious to embrace me. No need for circumspection here; I could lift the joyous urchins in my big, clumsy arms and kiss and pet them as I chose, for were we not brothers and sisters all?

It seemed almost impossible to realise that those laughter-making children were the same that but one or two short hours ago, with hungry stomachs and shivering bodies, were struggling in the hurrying crowds of busy cities, pleading piteously for the unsympathetic passer-by to buy a paper or box of matches in the hope that the transaction would secure a meal. Yet so it was. And I wondered what the consequence would have been if the veil could have been lifted before the eyes of one of those who impatiently pushed the child aside; if he had been made to understand that in one short hour that unwashed, uncared-for gutter-snipe would be in the company of some of the angels of God, in the land of compensation? If the simple truth of the night advantages of these day-frustrated ones could only be known, how different their lot would be! What a messenger service would be established across the mists! But would not the removal of the hardships necessitate the cessation of the compensation? If so, the mitigation of the evils of the body would be purchased at the sacrifice of the welfare of the soul, and that would be a price too high to

entertain. No, it must not be! God knows best; but heaven forbid that this idea of their compensation should restrain the hand outstretched to rescue or to save. God's ministry is to counterbalance man's neglect, but the harvest of such omission the man will be compelled to reap by and by.

These re-unions have another and, in some respects, perhaps, an even more pleasant side than the one I have dwelt upon. The former comrades and companions of these children regularly meet with them again, and are made to minister to their less fortunate friends. Very touching it is to listen to their recital of the pleasures into which they have entered, and the contrast of their present life with the one with which the listener is alone acquainted. Hope is inspired in the gloomy soul, and a thousand speculations made as to the why and wherefore of some apparently untoward event, until the young immortal cries: "But it will be all right; it must be all right; and when you come here (and that won't be long now) then we'll remember to look and see how it come all right." By such means are they comforted, and consolation is distilled into their lives, which strengthens them to bear their otherwise intolerable burden.

I had not finished my salutations before the curtains were again drawn aside, and another visitor entered, whose appearance caused even more excitement than my own. I did not know at first, but I afterwards recognised that it was he - Arvez - who had carried my little charge from my arms when I lay upon the slopes. I also recalled several previous visits which he had paid to "The College," and then I became conscious of the object of his present mission. The coming dissolution of the body is in every case known on this side of life in advance, whether by accident or lingering disease. At this time the harvest of life can be ascertained, the condition of the soul on entering immortality be known, and its first dwelling-place assigned. From henceforth the soul about to be born is conducted, during its hours of sleep, into its new surroundings, and so made familiar with its coming home. This was the mission of Arvez, there was not one in all that assemblage but knew it; every eye was fixed upon him, every child crowded to get near him; upon every face was written the hopeful query: "Is it I?"

Was it a shade of disappointment that passed over those faces when the messenger found and designated the lad he sought? If so, can you wonder at it? They knew the sufferings, the privations, and the hardships of the fortunate one would soon be over; for themselves, no one could tell how long the struggle would last, or how fierce it yet might be. Nevertheless they showed heroic courage in the general assent they gave to the cry of joy which broke from the lips of a companion who knew the fortunate lad well.

"It's Limpy Jack; but I'm most as glad as if it wor me."

There was no appearance of accident or deformity to justify the sobriquet by which his friend described him, but that occasioned no astonishment in my mind, for the reason I have already explained, that the deformities of the body are not perpetuated in the soul.

Immediately the decision was known, the group opened that the lad might go to Arvez, who lifted him in his arms, congratulated, and kissed him, at which another cheer broke forth, making the place to ring. That kiss was the seal of death upon his brow, an evidence of which would be conveyed to the body, so that the sign could be known and read on earth that he would soon be called to heaven.

The boy who announced his name followed him as he came forward, and when the cheer died away, looked up at Arvez and asked:

“Is he acomin’ soon?”

“Presently; as soon as we can bring him away,” was the kindly response.

“Jack, you won’t go and forget us when yer come, will you?”

“In cours’ I won’t! Why, won’t I come here reg’lar, like I does now? In cours’ I will.”

“All right jack; I’ll trust yer; an’ when I wake I’ll try and remember yer acomin’, an’ I’ll look arter yer till yer do.”

“God bless you,” said Arvez, as he kindly patted that faithful little head. Then he turned away to carry the lad to see his new home. I was anxious, if possible, to know their destination, so turned towards the door where Arvez was waiting for a moment.

“Where do you take him?” I asked.

“To the house of a sister who is not altogether unknown to you; will you go with us?”

“I shall be delighted,” I replied; “but will he live with her?”

“For the present. He needs instruction and guidance, and she will undertake that duty.”

We travelled what must have been a long distance, but the process of aerial locomotion is by no means wearisome, and the time was pleasantly occupied in listening to the multitude of questions propounded by the lad, and patiently answered by Arvez. There was no necessity for me to speak, for the answers so kindly given to the boy were full of information to myself, while I was more than once amazed at the care and patience which were expended upon replies to questions that on earth would have sorely taxed the equanimity of the most forbearing.

We passed by several cities of considerable size, whose many beauties were a never-failing source of admiration, not only for Jack, but for myself as well. Every object was but another evidence of the pleasures yet in store for me, when the opportunity should be afforded for leisurely visiting each scene and sipping the sweets of knowledge which abounded. There were cities I then imagined, and have since confirmed, that were the originals to which Rome, and Athens, and Carthage, Babylon, Thebes and Nineveh aspired in the days when their beauty touched its zenith.

Toil on, oh, pious soul; what though on earth thy pilgrim feet may never stand within the sacred shrine of thy heart’s desire; what if thy tear-dimmed eyes shall never look upon the

land thy kindred call by the sweetest name of home! Thy every aspiration awaits thy coming in far more beautiful guise where the eternal noon abides for ever more. The Jew whose wandering feet have never stood upon the Mount of Olives, the Mohammedan whose eye was never fired at the sight of the mosques of Mecca, the Catholic who had vainly hoped and longed to gaze upon the Vatican, the Christian who falsely dreamed that he would one day stand within the walls of Bethlehem or climb the hill of Calvary, and every earnest soul who had some holy sanctuary, where, with unshod feet, his spirit would fall in worshipful adoration; take courage, when love has wrought its work of purification on your heart, when your hands have grown tender under the touch of kindness, when in your eyes are lighted the beacon fires of affection, and your souls are clothed in the robes of charity and forgiveness, when the Christ of God is born again in you, and you through tribulation have been baptised into Him, you will find the better goal than that for which you sigh, and the realisation shall be far beyond your anticipation in that home where the soul in every respect 'shall be satisfied when it awakes in His likeness.'

CHAPTER XVII

A POETESS AT HOME

It was evident, however, that no one of all these cities was to be our present destination. On and on we sped; every instant unfolding some new beauty, calling forth some deeper note of admiration or bathing us in the more profound depths of silent wonder, until we reached a range of hills which seemed to be clothed with all the fragrance and the glory of hope's ideal fruition.

Here we paused. Beneath our feet, upon the gentle declivity near the foot of the mountain, stood a single house, not large compared with many I had lately seen, but perfect in the possession of every feature an artistic soul could desire. It was like a realised dream in which some weary painter, musician or poet had sought - and found - rest. Nature herself had been the gardener of the landscape lying before us. I do not mean the unkempt, entangled and disordered nymph which earth calls Nature scattering weeds, briars and thistles in wild confusion all around: but the beautiful angel, who, timid at the result of man's disobedience, withdrew with all her kindred host to heaven, where she could perfect her handicraft in unmolested freedom, and work out in veritable fact and amplified minutiae the sketchy dreams and ideals which should be born within the expanding souls of men. Here Colour had wooed, won, and lived in sweet fidelity with Music. Before me lay the natal bowers of Beauty, Enchantment, Harmony, Grace, and Rhythm, each of whom held court in one or other of the hundred odorous halls of grove, or hill, or mountain pass. Echo and Song chanted their roundelay upon the heights for which the lake rippled its approbation in silvery tones; birds of dreamlike plumage warbled their anthems in trees of evergreen luxuriance, through which the breezes breathed the fragrant perfume of the

flowers; while over all, the heavens unrolled their canopy of atmospheric tones and tints which have no names or counterparts on earth.

Several friends came to meet us as we approached the house, among whom I recognised a lady who frequently visited 'The College' and was a great favourite with the children. Jack no sooner saw her than he bounded forward with every demonstration of affection. There was no shyness or vulgarity in his demeanour - this child of the gutter - for had not the sleep part of his life been given to educating and preparing him for the duties and pleasures of this home, and though the alternate circumstances of his waking state had compelled him to assume a low disguise, his royal antecedents had been discovered, and his right was undisputed now. He was the son of a king brought home from exile, there were no enquiries as to where he had wandered and what his associates and position had been, enough that he was found, and though his visits could be but transient for a brief space, all knew that his absence could never again be for long.

Congratulations and rejoicings occupied the interval between our arrival and Jack's departure, for the morning on earth soon recalled him to the sale of matches, and the tearing cough was rapidly snapping the cords of life. Oh, what a contrast in the two conditions! How ignored on earth, how rejoiced over and welcomed in heaven! But some will ask me why no knowledge - no recollection of the fact, if fact it is! I answer, because you have been schooled to think and still foster the idea that all dreams are the vagaries of the brain, and that the sleep life is a myth and fantasy. God gave to Solomon the promise of his wisdom in a dream, and used the same means to bid Joseph to take the child Jesus into Egypt, and if He changes not He uses the same vehicle now, but ye despise them, then charge your folly upon God. That is my answer to your why?

When the time came for Jack's departure Arvez accompanied him as far as the boundary, but I remained in order to gratify a desire I had long entertained for a talk with our hostess. Arvez was quite right when he told me that she was not unknown to me. Personally I had met her on many occasions as she ministered to the habitués of 'The College' - but there was a deeper sense than this in which I knew her; had not her poems been almost my only companions in the solitude of my earth life? She had seemed to understand life, as I knew it, with its deep soullongings and unalleviated heartaches, like an almost kindred soul, but she had conquered and found a calm for which I vainly searched. I had learned from the memorials given to the world after her decease that she had been born in the lap of the church, but her father, who was a clergyman, cherished his creed as though it was a Divinely silken thread for the purpose of leading pilgrims to their home, not as a barbed or iron fence that would tear and mangle the unwary.

Her education had been in the ministry of love, as being the centre and circumference of all true religion, and under its ever-broadening and deepening influence she had been carried out as upon the bosom of a majestic river into the infinite ocean of her God. Yes, she drifted out, but as she glided heavenward she sang - told all her deep experiences, reflected back

again the sunlight which fell upon her soul, thus her voice came with wonderfully soothing influence upon the storms and troubles which encompassed me. She seemed to know the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the wondrous love which strung her heart, and when the storms swept over her she would sing of the calm, and so deftly interweave the two as to leave no room for doubt as to our safety. When the night of trial was black and no friendly gleam shone out to guide her feet, she possessed those wings of faith by which she could mount up, and far above the gloom, look ahead to where the Sun of Righteousness was rising with glorious promises of the day. From such Alpine heights her song would come with no uncertain sound, a guiding voice leading more benighted souls to follow her as she had followed Christ.

I had followed her, and now I stood beside her for the first time upon her own level. Was there any wonder I should wish to stay behind and pour out my soul in gratitude for all she had done for me.

We watched Arvez and his charge until they disappeared over the crest of the hills, then, turning, she grasped my hand and said:

“Now we can talk, and I may welcome you.”

“And I may thank you for all you have done for me, by your pen,” I answered.

“But those thanks are not due to me, my brother, they are God’s; He filled my cup so full of mercies that it must needs overflow; and whatever music sounded in my verses was not of the cup but in the falling blessings with which the goblet filled.”

“I know it,” I replied, “and my soul does magnify His name; but I cannot be unmindful of the fact that the form of the receptacle has much to do with the sweetness of the music.”

“Yes, that is so,” she answered, with a far-away look in her eyes and a softened tone which was scarcely audible, “but even then the thanks are doubly His, for did He not form the cup as well? Come into the garden,” she added, as if not wishing to pursue the subject further, “where we may talk among the flowers. Is it not compensation for all earth’s toil to be recompensed with such a home as this?”

“It is indeed, but yet this is scarcely your ideal of heaven.”

“No, not my old ideal; but I can see where I, in common with all mankind, made a great mistake. We are not afraid to recognise facts or admit a doubt here for fear of exposing some weakness in our teachings, so I can face the difficulty which would sometimes rise like the shadow of a fear, as I contemplated the sudden transference of a soul from earth into the presence of the King. Then it was a constant struggle for faith to gain anything like a clear conception of heaven. If you tried to listen to its music there was always a kind of dread that one might hear a discord from some inharmonious voice which had not yet had time to learn the song; you could never look steadily upon its citizens without the tremor of a fear lest one should be found upon whose raiment the semblance of a stain remained. The death-bed, especially in some cases, seemed too near the throne to be quite safe.”

“And now?” I queried.

“Now, I can best compare the earth idea of heaven to the experience of a mountaineer, who, at daybreak, starting from the inn, takes a longing look at the peak he desires to reach. Faith takes one mighty leap, and stands like a monarch upon the towering height, laughing at the toilers who are climbing, resting, and anon, slipping, so far behind. But faith is not the tourist, and in its gigantic leap has carried forward nothing but its own imagination; he who exercised it is still among his fellow travellers, and, spite of it, will be compelled to climb the steep ascent with careful tread, or he will never reach his goal. Yet faith is good; for it gives, by its confidence of success, buoyancy to the step, and conquers the thousand doubts which others will suffer owing to the difficulties of the way.”

“If then, it were possible for you to write again, you would sing these later experiences?”

“Possible to write!” she exclaimed, with some slight amazement. “Why may I not write now, as well as others sing? Genius of every kind in the mortal state can only experience its birth - the growth, expansion, and fruition remain for us. One note of music was once breathed below by angel lips, but earth has never heard the fulness of her song; childlike fingers twang the strings, but the harp cannot be tuned in the conflict of worldly discords; how then, can flesh pronounce judgment on the anthem of the worlds? Thank God, I can and do still write. I learned on earth the letters; I am now trying to spell the words with which I shall write in the by and by my songs in heaven; and since you have heard my first, let me sing you one of my present sonnets.”

She turned and ran into the house as she said this, but almost instantly returned carrying a book, from which she read the following, which I append by her permission:

WAITING

Waiting now upon the threshold,
Just within the porch of life;
Safe from all the storms and tempests, -
Hushed the discord and the strife;
Stilled the heart with its wild beatings,
Calmed the hot and fevered brain
Waiting now, and resting sweetly,
‘Till the Master comes again.

Waiting, where the rippling wavelets
Of life’s river lave my feet;
Washing off the stains of travel,
Ere the Master I may greet;
Till the voice is full and mellow,

And I learn the sweet, new song;
Till the discord is forgotten,
That disturbed my peace so long.

Waiting, till the wedding garment,
And the bridal wreath is here;
Till our Father's feast is ready,
And the bridegroom shall appear
Till the seeds of life have blossomed,
And the harvest-home we sing.
Gathering up my life's long labours
for my bridal offering.

Oh! 'tis not as men would teach us -
just one step from earth to God;
Passing through the death-vale to Him,
In the garb that earth we trod;
Called to praise Him while aweary,
Or to sing, while yet the voice
With love's farewell sob is broken,
Could we, fitly, thus rejoice?

No! we wait to learn the music,
Wait, to rest our weary feet;
Wait to learn to sweep the harp-strings
Ere the Master we shall meet;
Wait to tune our new-found voices
To the sweet seraphic song;
Wait to learn the time and measure,
But the time will not be long.

Wait to understand the glory
That will shortly be revealed
Till our eyes can bear the brightness
When the book shall be unsealed.

Oh! the vision would overpower us,
If it suddenly were given,
So we wait in preparation,
In the vestibule of heaven.

As she read, or, rather, breathed forth the lines of her poem, we were walking down the hillside, but she gradually drew me away into her condition of oblivion to external surroundings, which at their best were but the inanimate properties of heaven - calm tributaries to the soul of heaven itself; but in her voice which thrilled me with its fervent pathos - in those eyes, which looked away in patient yearning down the vistas of hope - I seemed to catch a glimpse of heaven itself, and it absorbed me. Her recital was a calm confession of trust in God, and though the inflections of her voice sounded as if she was far away, yea, even in the near presence of her Master, she lingered over each recurring 'waiting' as if she drew from its deep spring the full sweetness of the assurance that 'they too serve who only stand and wait,'⁶³ and was reluctant to turn away from the refreshing draught. She had forgotten me - everything save her God, with whom again she was holding such sweet communion, and the continued utterance of her lips was like the spontaneous ebullition of overflowing music generated in her soul. Someone has said 'a somnambule like an angel seems, in the unconscious grace with which she moves,' but I was looking direct upon an angel, entranced by an ecstatic vision of a heaven brighter than she had ever seen before. I dared not speak, not even when she ceased to read, but hanging on the inspiration which enveloped her I walked beside.

How long this reverie continued I shall never know, but when, at length, she drew the deep breath which roused her to the consciousness of my presence, I was surprised to see how far we had wandered. She did not speak, but raised her beaming eyes, as if to watch the homeward flight of her reflections, and I was by no means anxious to break the sacred silence on which they floated.

"Do you not think," she presently asked, "that those are sweeter thoughts than the mistaken ideas we held on earth?"

"Indeed they are; but if at present you have only reached the vestibule, what will the glory of the inner sanctuary be?"

"I cannot say; neither am I in a position to understand if any of our friends were to try and explain it to me. It is impossible to clearly comprehend that which we have not seen, and the attempt to do so only fosters incorrect conceptions. I cannot see, and so I am content to wait until my eyes can bear the brightness of the revelation; in the meantime I have much to learn, and many sweet enjoyments to gather on my way to holiness."

"Then you think there are still other preparatory stages before you reach the final home?"

"Oh, yes! There are others, how many I have no idea. The question which sometimes occurs to me is: Shall we ever reach the last? Is there a final? Since God is infinite, is it possible for us to arrive at any limit? Think how far we were from holiness when we commenced our pilgrimage on earth, and what a trifling distance we have yet travelled, then you will understand that there must yet be innumerable such stages before we can hope to stand in the undimmed splendour of His presence. With the new powers and greater knowledge which my new life has given me, unfolding a wider conception of His purity and my own

unworthiness, I sometimes think it will be almost necessary for the remembrance of our earth life to pass away before we can bear to look upon His face.”

“But you do not think our identity will be lost?”

“No! We can never lose that; that would be to annihilate ourselves. But when I think of the searching power of those eyes which are too pure to behold iniquity, if the consciousness of what I have been is not lost before I am called upon to bear it, that sacred beam will call to my memory reflections of my once sinful self sufficiently intense to stain my purity and turn that gaze away.”

“What shall we do then?”

“I know not. That is one of the problems to be solved in the higher light; for the present we have to wait; it is enough for me to know that ‘God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.’”

“When you think of such a consummation, do you not wish for the intervening stages to hasten by that you may obtain it?”

“Yes; and yet, no!” she answered slowly. “That is the absolute ideal of every true soul, which, in common with them, I am anxious to reach. But at present I have not the capacity to appreciate and enjoy it, so the gift would be too overpowering, and would only crush, instead of elevate me. You must remember that one who has been successfully operated on for blindness can only, be initiated into the light by degrees. We have all been blind, and God’s light will only come as we are able to bear it. He is too wise to allow any possibility of disaster. So the climax of anticipation can only be attained when the soul has, by process of natural growth, reached its full stature, and that is certainly not yet. As for waiting - well, I am something like a child who recognises his inferiority to a man, but the consciousness thereof by no means lessens his present joy. The longing for autumn fruit never mars the brightness or spoils the perfume of summer showers. Neither does my great desire to meet my Father face to face diminish my pleasure here.

“On the other hand, every step I take towards Him becomes another messenger to me, bearing some fresh revelation of His love, every halting-place becomes another unfoldment, and every message quietly expands my soul into a closer likeness of Himself. I am happy, always more happy - my cup is full to running over. It is ever enlarging, so that it holds, and I comprehend the more. I am even now in heaven, as far as I can understand it, from the fact that if greater pleasure were here, I could not possibly appreciate it. Yea, there is more now than I can anyway understand - my cup runneth over, but how much I know not. Therefore I am content, because every power and capacity I have is satisfied; but there are other powers and possibilities which I shall grow into by and by, then they will also be as fully provided for. With this knowledge I look forward, like the boy, to that which lies before, and like him, perhaps I build my castles in the air of what I shall then do; but,

in the meantime, I thank the Father for His wondrous love in the past and present, and am content to wait His future revelation.”

“In what light do you look upon your earth life, with your present knowledge?”

“If I had to write my own epitaph from my present point of view, I am afraid I should be compelled to write ‘of the earth, earthy; very earthy.’ I did think I sang of spiritual emancipation, but now I find I was but a slave myself, without a dream of liberty until I breathed its freedom upon these delightful hills.”

“Of course, you know it is still possible to reach the earth, and correct our false ideas of the past.”

“Yes; by the kind assistance of some of our friends I have already broken the silence of my sleep and given to earth several such thoughts as those I have read to you. But we have many difficulties to remove before we can make much progress in that direction.”

“I can see that, since several of these have already been explained to me. But they are obstacles which present themselves to minds who have left the earth a long time; I would like to know what is the first obstacle as you see it.”

“Your conversance with my writings,” she replied, “will make you somewhat surprised when I mention one of the first difficulties I discovered, but it will serve to show how very different things appear from this side. One of the first lessons we have to teach on our return is, that the word of God can never be a printed book. God is, and His word is like Himself, an ever-present, ever-living, moving power; what is written can never be more than an historic record of what was the word of God to Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, or Paul. The seasons, the flowers, the harvests, and the sunshine were not given long ages ago, once and for all; God continually renews each in its own appointed time; so it is with His word. It is like a well of water, continually bubbling up, not a stagnant pool, that for two thousand years has maintained a dead, unvarying level. Men have to learn that He speaks to-day, if they will but listen, as much as ever He did. A printed book only traces the course of the stream in the past, it cannot show the broadening revelation of the present, and only faintly indicates the idea of future boundless love. This our brethern on earth have yet to learn, and with it they will recognise that the ordination of the ministry of angels is the everlasting channel through which the word of God must flow. This is the gospel of Christ, the gospel of Redeeming Love.”

“Still love!” I exclaimed; “how naturally everything here appears to resolve itself into that one word.”

“It is the whisper of every tree in heaven,” she replied, “the breath of every flower; yon rippling waters sing it to the banks which drink their kisses, the dew bears it to every blade of grass, the zephyrs chant it as they pass; yon craggy peaks declare it all the day, and in the vaulted dome above its echoes find eternal habitation; it is the architect of every home, the motive power of every act, the subject of every prayer. Love unaided designed the plains of

heaven, fitted every bower, and spread each couch upon which the pilgrim soul might rest. Flower, tree, and shrub; hill, dale, and stream, and all that clothes this happy state in which we dwell, are evolutions from herself. She is our Mother, our Father's bride - how can we do other than magnify her name?"

"Love, then, will be your theme in future ministry to earth?"

"Yes! That was the one gospel of Christ, and following Him it is the only theme that can fall from heaven. I would sing of love waiting to crown the victor when the fight is done; I would breathe it into the ear of him who feared the issue of the battle, and tell it to inspire the nobility of youth; its bread should feed the hungry, its waters cool the fevered tongue of the roué, its balm should be employed to heal the broken heart; I would use it as the key of hope to release the prisoner of fear, build it up as a tower of refuge for the tempted, make it the one consolation for the bereaved; it should become the anchor of the merchant, the restraining power of the spend-thrift, the curb for avarice, and the fetter by which I would hold the brute. I would gather the nations together that they might hear the requiem its cataracts would sing as they buried war's alarm; I would marshal earth's battalions side by side and march them through its perfumed spray, to wash the curse of caste and colour from each soul and leave them brothers all. Fear, punishment and retribution I would hold in long restraint, while I tried to charm each wanderer homeward, as I sang the legitimate music his Father composed to win him back from sin and misery to his rightful home and heritage."

At this point our conversation was broken off by a ray of light flashing across our path, like a clear sunbeam, shining above the soft glow to which I have before referred. My companion raised her head and exclaimed joyfully:

"Ah! here is Myhanene!"

"Where?" I asked eagerly, for as yet he was not visible, to me at least, and I hoped I might be able to see his coming with that instantaneous flight that Cushna had told me of.

"He will be here directly," she replied; "that ray announced him."

"Who is he," I asked, "that his coming always seems to make everyone so glad?"

"You have seen him then?"

"Yes; I have seen him twice, but as yet I know very little about him."

"The more you get to know him, the more you will love him," she answered. "He is one of those pure and consecrated spirits who make heaven wherever they go. His presence adds lustre to brightness just as that flash illuminated our path, and the atmosphere around him is fragrant with the presence of Jesus. He came away from earth as a child, and the innocent simplicity of the child remains upon him still. In him we can see what sin has robbed us of, and the type of soul which would be found but for our disobedience. By the purity of this childlike nature he has been able to approach so near to the Master as to fit

him to become a messenger between the next condition of life and this; a link is thus formed that holds the two in close communion.”

“Do you wish me to infer that there are difficulties of communication between this and the higher states, many ways analogous to those which exist between this and earth?”

“No, not exactly that. The word difficulty conveys an erroneous impression to your mind, and yet it is perhaps the best I can employ. Words derive shades of meaning from the localities, surroundings, and circumstances in which they are used, and the different condition of the two persons using the same word frequently causes misunderstanding and confusion, especially when one employs the word to denote or describe a something of which the other is entirely unacquainted. My failure to convey to you just what I desire is the very illustration I need to explain what I mean by Myhanene’s forming a link between the two states of our life.

“The expansion and purification of the soul naturally elevates it, and with that elevation comes an enlargement of powers and capabilities which need to be gratified; clearer conceptions of God, deeper insight into His workings, with the solution of mysteries, and capacity to discern how the complex present is working out the perfect future. These new powers and developments have to be educated so that each stage of life forms, as it were, another class in the school of eternity, and as each study absorbs the whole soul of the student you will understand what I mean by links or intermediaries like Myhanene who hold us each to each. They stand between the two, ministering to both, without being quite absorbed in either.”

“But is he not a ruler of some places in the lower condition?”

“Yes, you may rightly designate him as such, but he would not wish you to give him such a title, for though he does rule, his sceptre is one of affection, and he prefers to be considered as friend, counsellor, or tutor at the most. His office is one which naturally pertains to his condition of life.”

“From my brief experience of him I can readily understand you. His method of performing an official function has already been a revelation to me.”

“And every time you see him you will receive an additional revelation,” she answered. “He is a living exposition of the Master’s injunction - ‘He that would be the greatest amongst you, the same shall be servant of all.’⁶⁴ But here he is.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FAMILY OF HEAVEN

As Myhanene came towards us my companion’s designation of him as a living epistle of humility lingered in my mind, but I also thought I could detect the realisation of another ideal raised by Jesus, to which His followers should strive to attain - ‘Ye are the light of the

world; a city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid.' Shining with the self-radiating lustre of spiritual truths which he had learned and assimilated in the greater altitudes of his brighter home, how could he be other than welcome; coming as the prophet of that life which lies before us - like an advance guard to indicate what we shall be when we reach those heights.

Having folded us each in his embrace as he breathed his salutation, he turned to me and said:

"Arvez told me you were here, so I came to ask you to accompany me to a festival to which I am going."

"You are very kind to think of me," I replied; "in the press of all your duties I should have thought you would have forgotten me long ago."

"We never forget here," he replied, with such a peculiar emphasis upon the latter word as to impart a volume of meaning to it.

"Surely I know it, and ought not to have given expression to such a thought, after all the experience I have had, especially with Arvez and the little fellow we so recently brought here from 'The College.'"

"Poor darlings; how glad such children are to come away from their hard and cruel lives. Do you know it always seems to make this life a trifle brighter for myself when one of their number arrives."

"Of course I cannot understand all you know and feel," I replied; "but even I experience a sense of peculiar joy at the thought of the change in store for Jack. What a mighty transition, what a new life it will be for him."

"Yes," he answered reflectively, "and what an amazing compensation. Sometimes I almost wish I could feel what passes through the soul of such an one when first he realises what has taken place, and fully understands the reality of the change. What a revelation of the love of God must seem to overwhelm them. When I think of it I can almost feel grateful that he has permitted man to sin, because nothing else could have opened up the possibility of sounding the matchless grace of His full forgiveness and restoration."

"When you came, Myhanene, I was wishing to ask a question about that boy, which perhaps you would answer."

"If I can I will be pleased to do so."

"Why was he brought here above all other places - had he nowhere else to go?"

"He had nowhere else to go," he replied, "not that he was an outcast, but because he, like every other person, is subject to a law. The earth-life produces types or qualities of soul, and every quality has a provision made for it here; in each condition there are souls who are specially attracted to us and we to them - these become our friends and companions. Our sister, here, finds that attraction in this little waif from earth, and so will love, cherish, and help him to understand the elements of his new career."

“Perhaps I did not make my meaning clear,” I replied.

“I wondered if he had no father, mother, or other relative here to whom he would naturally go?”

“I understood your meaning well. You have fallen into a very common error, and one which I had better explain and uproot at once, or it will involve you in difficulties by-and-by. You must now learn to draw a distinction between relationships of the body and those of the spirit; the latter being the only ties we recognise here.”

“Do you mean - ”

“That one is our Father, even God, and all we are brethren⁶⁵,” he replied before I had time to finish my question.

“That must be true in a sense,” I answered, “but I cannot forget that one of the common ideals framed of heaven is to have the family complete. Am I to understand that this, like so many others, is an erroneous one?”

“Very erroneous, and almost impossible, since heaven could not exist under such circumstances, from the simple reason that to complete any one family you would be compelled to break at least two others in order to furnish the parents to the children. Then consider the variety of tastes, dispositions and spiritual development which you find in the same family, and the provision made in this life to minister to each under the most favourable circumstances. Selfishness is eradicated and our happiness augmented tenfold more by the absence of those we love, when we know such secures their well-being, than it would be by their presence and the sacrifice of advantage which would necessarily ensue.

“Every individual soul born into our life has become, by its life on earth, self-conditioned, and God has provided for it, having respect to two facts only, first, the law which ever works to secure holiness; and next, the means to attain that condition under the most favourable circumstances to the individual. Think for a moment of the endless complications which would arise if your ideal could be put into execution; then, I am sure, you will see how impracticable the idea becomes, and that by no other means could happiness be secured to us than by this, God’s own appointed law.

“What the future holds I know not, but develop as it may I can only see the possibility of forming groups of twin souls in the one great family of heaven, until many other stages have been passed. Such kindred souls are by no means unusual, and in their influence act and re-act upon each other and so are drawn together in a communion of which the earth friendship can form but a very faint conception. There relationships are rightly termed blood-relationships, but flesh and blood cannot enter this life, and therefore kinship has to be lifted into another and more spiritual bond - of God the Father we are born into the spirit and thus become brethren and sisters of the one great family of heaven.”

“Would you preach this doctrine on earth?”

“Of course I would; it is truth and ought to be proclaimed. Is such not the gospel of the Christ, extending the horizon of the family to earth’s remotest bounds, destroying in its unrollment the distinctions which exist between class and class, erasing the animosity of nations and obliterating all traces of colour, language and time? Would not such a recognition be the charter of ‘Peace on earth, and goodwill to man?’⁵⁸ Would not the feud between capital and labour, the tacit understanding between nations that might is right, and the doctrine of the survival of the fittest find their natural termination and solution in the influence of such a revelation?”

“In other words, if we had a free course to preach this gospel, can you tell me any more direct method of answering that sentence and supplication in our Saviour’s prayer that the earth is continually repeating - ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven?’⁶⁶ That granted, what would naturally result? The recognition of the one great fact that pure affection, whether between members of the same family or not, is an attribute of the spirit, not of the flesh, and can only be secured or dissolved by spiritual approachment or estrangement. God, who is Spirit, gives birth to such relationships, and ‘whatsoever God hath joined together no man can put asunder.’⁶⁷”

“I must bow before your reasoning,” I replied, “but to return to our little friend. Is it possible that he will never see his parents again?”

“I cannot by any means say that,” he answered. “First, because I am ignorant of who or what his parents are; and second, because we do not know what infinite possibility our Father has in reserve for future revelation. But sometimes when I meditate on what may be, my vision seems to catch a glimpse of a glorious possibility which, I feel certain, lies well within the scope of God’s great and boundless love. In such visions I have seen the last repentant soul of earth approach the throne, while all heaven was silent in the presence of the awe-inspiring joy that by His forgiveness of this last sin God was about to add the final touch to the glory of the redeemed - and with breathless wonder we looked upon each other, and on Christ, asking in mute anticipation what the attendant revelation - the climax of all redemption - would be.

“Heaven complete! Who can understand, anticipate, or picture it? Every group and every circle perfected! Every prayer answered, every ideal attained, every soul saved! Each change through which we have passed from glory to glory having transformed and re-adjusted us as we grew in likeness more and more in the image of our Divine Head. Then I have thought that when every piece in the complicated mosaic of infinite love shall be placed in its God-appointed position of the eternal design; when the mighty doors of that final revelation shall swing back, that we may enter the very presence of our Father, and behold Him as He is, then we shall find that between the days of the flesh and that re-union there has been some subtle connection by which every family has again been united, to pass the throne complete, in the great review of all peoples, climes and tongues, chanting the one universal anthem of thanksgiving. Oh! what a sight. The fathers of every

race in the van of its vast battalions, and after them their families complete, linking on with those who follow, until every age, and kindred, and colour shall be included and not one soul be absent from the countless family, who shall cry 'Our Father' to Him who bids them 'Welcome home.'"

"Do you think such a consummation is possible?"

"Yes, and it is the only way by which I can imagine that God can bring all things into subjection to Himself as He has promised. If only one soul, even Satan himself, shall at last be alienated from God, He cannot be all in all, so far as I am able to understand the meaning of the kingdom, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, but to grant such liberty to only one alien soul would be to risk again the ruin of the whole by his influence, and thus again necessitate another scheme of salvation; to lose but one solitary soul from the family of mankind would shatter the attribute of God's omnipotence, because He could not remain Almighty if, while He willed the salvation of all, He failed to secure the one that would then remain estranged.

"Yes, my brother, it is possible for such a consummation, for is it not declared that 'God will have all men to be saved,'⁶⁸ and furthermore, that 'as in Adam all died even so in Christ shall all be made alive'⁶⁹; the two 'alls' are co-extensive, and it is an act of basest injustice to our Father to entertain for but one moment the thought that His scheme of redemption would not be as complete and efficacious as the necessity of sin demands. God so loves humanity that He has provided a way of escape, and having done this, and also being able to save to the uttermost, do you think it reasonable to suppose He will be thwarted in His design?"

"But are you not neglecting the fact that salvation very much depends upon the willingness of the individual - a condition which is always attached to the invitation?"

"No! I am not forgetting anything," he replied. "You are thinking of man's free-will and opposing that to God's supremacy, as though man is able to stand against Him. Circumstance and condition are the centre and circumference of man's boasted free-will, the only dwelling-place of the Absolute is infinity. Men close the door of the grave over the body of a departed brother and say, 'his doom is sealed,' and in their ignorance know not that behind the veil the clearer light of God is falling upon the new-born soul, leading him under more favourable conditions to understand that the 'accepted time' for his repentance is God's eternal 'now.' No! no! probation is not bounded by mortality; man by his perversity and rebellion may hinder and delay, he cannot prevent the achievement of salvation. The ultimate lies in God. 'who will have all men to be saved.'⁷⁰"

"You know not, my friend, what joy this knowledge gives to my soul," I cried; "when I met Eusemos he began to open this discussion to me, but it seemed too much, too glorious, and I feared to press it lest it should by some means fail in all it seemed to promise to me; since that time Cushna has shown me much which has revived and strengthened my hopes; my sister here, and again yourself, have both unfolded more of the Divine mind in this

direction, until what was once a hope only becomes a knowledge, for I feel the weight and truth of your communion, which is not a discussion but a revelation, for which I am more than grateful. There is still another point, however, upon which I would ask for information, if you will yet permit me to press another question.”

“Ask and ye shall receive,” was all he replied, but in his look and tone there was a volume of meaning that made me almost forget my question for the time. They were the words of the Master’s promise, and in the utterance there seemed to be so much of the spirit and influence of the Christ that involuntarily I turned to see if any addition had been made to our company. When next I looked upon Myhanene, I thought his face seemed even softer than before, a deeper expression beamed from his eyes, and a presence rested upon him before which I bowed my head, even while I felt more desirous than ever to ask my question.

“Would you also teach this truth on earth?”

“Yes!” he answered, “I would declare the whole counsel of God simply and unreservedly.”

“Where, then, would be the restraining power from sin?”

“Such a gospel would change that entirely. Now men are taught to come to God from fear of the torments of hell, but I do not think that is God’s ideal way. If I understand Him aright He would have them drawn by the story of His love, rather than driven to Him by the lash of terror.”

“But the animal element is so strong in human nature, I am afraid, that without some restraining power it would be difficult to keep the masses in check, and if they heard the doctrine of final salvation for all, what incentive would they have to live moral, not to say righteous, lives?”

“I say I would declare the whole counsel of God, and I have full confidence in its sufficiency without any fictitious invention or device of man. The truth, as we know it, is quite enough for every purpose. Let me recall to your mind the case of Marie, which you saw; does it require any more than the knowledge of her punishment to be an effectual warning against jealousy and the evils which spring from it; and yet Marie’s punishment is not eternal. She has passed its ordeal, and the poignancy of it is wearing away, until presently she will take her place and position among the saints in light, nothing remaining by which her sin will be recognised by those with whom she associates.”

“Now I will ask you to try and cast your mind forward across the ages until we reach the time of which I told you I sometimes catch a glimpse, when earth’s family shall be all redeemed. Marie will be there, white and radiant, and holy as any in all that countless throng. No soul looking upon her will be conscious of that great sin which has been atoned for and forgiven; but will she herself then have forgotten it? No! The pain of the sin will be gone, the punishment will be over, no trace of it will remain to be read by any curious beholder, but the scar - the memory - will be there, and for herself eternity will never be

able to wipe out its recollection. Imagine what the regret of a soul will be, brought into close contact with Christ and God, feeling to overflowing the intensity of the love wherewith He hath loved us, and yet to know that it has sinned against and grieved such love. Such knowledge would have a restraining power from sin, or at least this is God's provision for so doing; surely He knows best, and there I am quite content to leave it. But we must go."

CHAPTER XIX

THE SANCTUARY OF SILENCE

I had food for reflection. The infinitude which every new experience opened to me, and the rapidity with which each succeeding one overwhelmed me, proved to be such a weight of glory that I almost wished to rest from the liberty and love continually unfolding with ever-increasing wonder. Standing in the presence of this gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, as interpreted by these angel friends, how truly and literally could I endorse Paul's conclusion, that even under the most favourable conditions on earth men but 'see through a glass darkly'⁷¹; yet in all that had been made known to me, the most careful attention was given to show that all the difference lay in the interpretation of the word which had been delivered: in no single case had a revelation been made to me in violation or substitution of that word. Another fact I invariably noticed was that whenever Scripture was quoted, the words and teachings of the Master always had pre-eminence, and were regarded with authority to which the writings of the Apostles only occupied a very secondary importance, a system of precedence entirely at variance to the custom with which I was so long familiar.

This rule was so impressed upon me that upon more than one occasion I mentioned it, but always to hear the same reason advanced for its adoption. Jesus Christ was the Mediator of the new covenant, and so was able to speak with more power and authority as to its scope, methods, and the conditions by which its privileges could be secured. This being so, it was always not only the safest, but the simplest way to 'hear Him'⁷² rather than to listen to what others had to say about Him. If any doubt or difficulty existed, every child who seeks to know the mind of the Father, as revealed in Christ, could ask of Him and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, by whom the Master promised to reveal to His disciples the inner mysteries of God, and to bring all things to our remembrance.

As I say, I had abundant food for reflection as I walked with Myhanene amid the flowers and trees of those hill-tops, which have never been swept by storm; and he, with that sympathy and intuition which endears him to all who know him, fathomed my mood, and came to my assistance in a communion of silence, which yielded a richer harvest of information than language could have borne. There are conditions of the mind when its yearnings are too heavy for words to raise into utterance, or too ponderous for the tongue to wield; they lie, like the unknown treasures of the sea, in the silent caves of our own deep experience, where the fathom-line of language has not yet had length enough to reach; but they who wish to see and understand the native worth and strength of these soul-longings must dive into the depths of sympathy in which they lie, and by the lamp of kinship read the mystic hieroglyph which pleads for light and truth.

Such silences he had no doubt sounded many times before, my frame of mind was one with which he was by no means unfamiliar, and with a generosity I can never repay, he came to my assistance. Simultaneously, he seemed to throw both arm and soul around me, external objects faded from my sight, while I was drawn into a rapt communion in which I could

read his inmost soul. I have never yet been able to satisfy myself with any explanation of that unique experience, neither shall I here attempt such a fruitless task. With regal condescension but childlike liberality he led me into the palace of his experience, where he threw open the doors of rooms furnished with royal luxuriance and tables spread with every viand for which my soul was hungering - bidding me enter in the name of Christ, and eat, and drink, and live.

With shoes from off my feet I accepted his unspoken invitation, passed across that sacred threshold, wandered through those halls of fellowship, and banqueted on truth, while the orchestra of his heart wooed me with angel music, set to that petition from Gethsemane's prayer - "That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in Us"⁷³; and so I listened, wondered, and ate; I bowed my head and worshipped, in the realisation of the possibility of how a prayer could find its rich fulfilment.

I have no recollection of any external events of that journey in the shape of either direction, distance, or landmarks by which we passed: since that time I may have grown familiar with its varied scenes, have paused to study the multitude of lessons which its flowery beds could teach, have lingered in other contemplations under the trees I passed with Myhanene, but I do not know it. The surroundings were blotted out in the presence of the reverie, and of that I have been able to keep no other record than one full cup of rapture, while the overflow has gone to bless some other soul.

I remember, however, a question which passed across my mind during the ecstasy of that communion, to which I received no reply either then, or since; yet still I keep and treasure it, for I am well assured it will be answered and I shall realise all the glory which the answer will reveal. The voice came as an accompaniment to the music of that prayer, rising within myself as if it were the tongue of some inward prophet, directing my gaze to a glory too bright for me to look upon, and I asked myself: "If this communion with a servant be so sweet, what shall I feel when the Master is my host? If when on the way to Emmaus, the heart of the disciples burned within them, in spite of their fearful, crushed and wounded souls - even when they knew him not - what will be the fervent heat when I shall see and know the Lord?" I remember how I pondered over the thought - how I wished for the knowledge, even while I feared, and then I hoped - yes, while I hungered - that many stages might yet intervene before I was permitted to clasp His sacred feet, and give my soul sufficient time to purge itself and grow strong enough to bear and comprehend the weight of such wondrous bliss.

"This is the place."

"No! No! not yet," I cried, as the announcement of my companion roused me from the sweet reverie by which I had been so completely engrossed, and in the startling confusion of the moment, I was conscious of the presence of a fear-tinged hope that He whom I so longed to see was near, while I was equally swayed by a regret that even such a denouement should end the pleasure which had so entranced me.

Myhanene smiled at my discomfiture, and I thought I could detect something in his look which told me how perfectly he understood all that had been passing through my mind, but he very quietly said:

“My experience in this life has taught me that it is always best to reach the mountain’s peak before attempting to understand the view, or satisfy myself as to the effect the scene will produce upon me when I get there.”

The *double entente* of his remark was not lost upon me, but the spell having been once broken, the door of my reverie closed, and I found we were standing upon the crest of a hill in the presence of a scene which demanded all my admiration and attention.

Before and beneath us lay a plain of such exquisite beauty as I can find no words to describe, and of such extent I cannot trust myself to estimate, but I distinctly remember wondering as I gazed upon it whether it might not have been permitted to the immortal Homer, during the pilgrimage of his sleep, to stand where I was standing and drink in the revelation which created his picture of that Elysium where:

Joys ever young, unmixed with pain or fear.

Fill the wide circle of the eternal year;

where all the heroes, passing without the pain of death - lest even the memory of it should bring a shadow upon their joy:

For ever rest upon the never-withering banks of flowers.

It may have been so, who can tell, for if it is part of God’s immutable law that He reveals Himself to prophets in dreams and visions of the night (note Numb. xii. 6) who shall deny the possibility that the prophetic door in heaven has not always stood, and still stands, open to the songster as to the preacher-seer?

The harvest of the poet’s vision,

With all its subtle web of music metaphor
and perfumed-imagery, is not the climax
of any earth-sown seed; neither evolves
from ‘modes of thought’ evolved by helpless molecules.
The poet has a soul. So when the warder, Night,
Opens the door, called Mortal, of his prison-house,
and bids the seer rest, within the cell of sleep,
This soul takes wing, and through the fields
of his Elysium-Heaven-or what you will,
He roams, entranced, by angel-tutors led,
Gathering fresh vision seeds of embryonic truths
With which to enrich the hope-aureoled gospel

He prophesies in song, that he may help the oppressed
To toil and wait the dawn of better days
of which his eyes have caught the breaking rays.

It must be so. Did not David and Paul carry back to earth the knowledge of such visits, and was not the theory, which had been explained to me, of sleep in perfect harmony with such an hypothesis? More than this, how often had I in my old life wrestled with my memory, striving to tear from out its mystic chamber some coveted experience of the night that only lingered in some ill-defined vibration in my mind? Were these experiences unique to myself? I who had no poetic element in my composition? No! No! As I gazed upon the scene before me, now admiring its indescribable beauties, and again questioning myself with the multitude of thoughts which spontaneously presented themselves, I became more than ever impressed with the fact of how completely the two conditions inter-sphere each other for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, and my understanding opened to the appreciation of the declaration, 'Ye must be born again,'⁷⁴ before one is able to participate in the revelation of the world of spirit, as the natural man becomes absorbed in the world of matter.

Save for the two brief remarks I have recorded, my companion made no attempt to disturb my contemplation, but left me to drink in all the knowledge I could appropriate without assistance, a pleasant method of tuition universally adopted here, leaving the mind in the first place to adapt and assimilate that to which it naturally opens, to which is added emphasis and strength by replies and explanations to the queries the revelations call forth.

I had divined the meaning of the exclamation which had so startled me at first, and knew that, for the present, we had reached the end of our journey. I had been invited to a festival, but of its nature and purport I had not the faintest idea, and the conversation and communion we had had by the way left me no inclination, even had the opportunity occurred, to make any further enquiry in relation to the matter. From the appearance of the place I was of the opinion that it was something of a floral *fête* we were about to witness, for the location chosen was a veritable enchanted home of floriculture.

Every tree, shrub, and plant bore flowers of size, colour, perfume, and beauty of which many were unknown to me, and far exceeded anything I had yet beheld. Trees of the palm-like species raised trunks of transparent amber and pink, while from the extremities of their branches fell large variegated waxen bells, like canopies, above the heads of those who sat beneath. No tree in all the plain but had its bloom, and no flower but retained its distinctive odour, which could be ascertained and enjoyed at will. I gazed with wonder, too, upon a novel use this vast display of flowers was put to. Clusters, and beds, and terraces were formed into seats of soft repose or galleries and orchestras, from which strains of celestial music were already floating upon the air, while the vast concourse of people -

gathered from I knew not where, since within the whole range of vision no building could be seen - patiently waited for the advent of some comptroller of proceedings.

“Since there is nothing without a purpose here,” I asked my companion at length, “may I know what is the special object of this gathering?”

“Certainly. It is a time of examination – graduation - if you like it better. Some, perhaps many, of the friends here assembled have become entitled to promotion, and this gathering is for the purpose of testing them; if you prefer the idea; it is a judgment day.”

“Why do you speak indefinitely of the number of the fortunate ones; do you not know them?”

“No! We do not know them until the test is applied; when all who reach the standard will be easily distinguished by a result against which there can be no appeal; but the great majority of the assemblage have come to witness the translation and join the thanksgiving. You have already beheld the awakening which ensued in the case of some new arrivals, so I thought it would be equally interesting for you to see this next change.”

“I am intensely interested,” I replied, “but now I understand the gathering better I am more impressed with the idea of watching a wedding festivity than a parting ceremony.”

“That is due to the correct appreciation in the minds of everyone of the change about to take place. Here you see a repetition of the scene you witnessed at the home of the boys, where every child wished and hoped to be promoted to the higher life. Such would be the result on earth also if the birth of death was correctly understood. Each change produces a further development of power in the man, of which there can be no cessation, and at the same time separates him from all influences which would be a hindrance in the future, while he is introduced to the companionship of others who are able to stimulate him to greater spiritual attainments. Those who will leave their friends here presently will not be severed from them; the love existing between them will still continue, for those who ascend will be like mountain guides, who carry with them a cord by which they can assist their friends behind to make an easier ascent.”

At this moment a soft sound, like the vibration of a silver bell, reached us; as far as I was concerned it had no meaning, and would have passed unnoticed, but to those in the plain below it was full of import - a signal for the commencement of the festival. It was like a bugle sounding the ‘fall in.’ Every orchestra became tenanted, and at various points large companies of singers gathered together in marching order in such arrangement as to indicate that the central point of the display would be near where we were standing. The assembling gave me an opportunity of forming an estimate of the vastness of the multitude which had been brought together.

Never before had my eyes rested on such a concourse swayed by one common impulse, animated by the self-same joy, free from a single shade of jealousy. A second chime sounded from the invisible bell, in answer to which a thousand instruments, as soft and

sweet of tone as most of them were strange of kind, breathed forth the overture of that service. Now the voices of the choristers blended with the music, and each of the companies moved forward with a rhythmic motion that was neither march nor dance, but rather a gliding complement emphasising the measure of the theme. Then all the great congregation surrounding us took up the chorus, and for the first time in my new life I listened to the song of the redeemed, which surged around me like the sound of many waters, which was poured forth to 'Him who hath redeemed us and washed us from our sins, making us kings and priests unto God and to His Father for ever and ever.' Whether this music was sweeter than that of the magnetisms I had heard first in the Home of Rest I am not even now able to determine; they were both perfect of their kind, so far as I could form an opinion, and only differed from each other as the beauty of the flower varies from the grandeur of the sunset's glory.

The musical part of the service was not of long duration, or, in the multitude of influences it wrought upon me, I was lost to every other sense than the magic of this new-found charm, so that its termination came all too soon; but as its final echoes were dying away, and the congregation stood with bowed heads, as if waiting for a benediction, Myhanene touched me, and, turning, called my attention to an orb of light that was falling like a meteor towards us from over the mountains which towered peak over peak in the far away. I turned to ask my companion for an explanation, and found that he had been transformed in his appearance, and stood beside me arrayed in all the glory with which I had first beheld him. Neither of us spoke, but as the orb alighted on the hill-top near us, mantling the whole with a radiance with which I was almost afraid to be enveloped, he motioned me to stand and watch while he went to greet the one who led the shining host who stood around us.

I was alone among the heavenly beings, the most lowly of which were of equal rank with him who had just left me; this I could well ascertain by their colour and brightness, for I was becoming so conversant with it as to determine easily. But who and what was the station of their chief? That he was greater and mightier than anyone I had yet met I needed not to be told; the homage paid to him by my friend would have revealed that; but it was also proclaimed by the diadem of glory he wore as a distinctive badge, in addition to his individual brightness, which outshone all else. In his hand he carried a large crystal globe that reminded me of the bright, but tiny, jewel I had seen carried by the dove in the Magnetic Chorale. As I looked upon it, even from the distance at which I stood, it seemed to blush and palpitate with a power I could not define - if life were visible I should call it life, - perhaps holiness, perhaps love, it might be all three combined, but it so impregnated the atmosphere as to render it difficult for me to retain my position.

I have no words to describe that angel chief, and it is better not attempted; but I, even amidst the awe with which his presence inspired me, fell a victim to the habit I have contracted of asking the how and why of everything, and found myself trying to solve the problem that, given the fact that eternal progression of the soul was the law, and every

angel in heaven had once been a man, how long would it require for one in my position to reach the point at which he stood? I gave it up, however, and recalled myself to watch the more immediate proceedings.

He took up his position on a kind of natural platform just below me on the hill-side, while his attendants gathered around and behind him, like a court in the presence of a monarch. I vainly anticipated he was about to address the congregation, and at once wondered what a lecture, speech, or sermon in heaven would be like; but not a word was spoken; the experience was rather the reverse, for as he stood, his eyes slowly passing over the great assemblage, I felt the unutterable joy of listening to that great revelation, 'silence in heaven,' which forms one chapter in that 'mystery of godliness' that cannot be translated into language. In the temple of holiness not built with hands, which is eternal in the heavens, there is a sanctuary of silence, into which, no matter how many may enter, they can bring no vibration of a sound - the eternal hush ever remains unbroken.

Here the soul bows itself in worship, and in answer to its prayer of perfected faith, listens to the voice of the Eternal Father, who reveals Himself without a cloud between. It is here the eyes are opened, and, for the first time, 'the pure in heart see God.' It was in such a worship this congregation bowed, and I among their number. Were they all within that sanctuary of silence? Not by any means. I did not understand it then; from the threshold the great majority of us stood and listened to the unbroken and profound peace that dwelt therein, but we heard not the voice of the Father speaking; this was the test, the standard by which to measure the souls to be promoted, the declaration of whose adoption would be visibly pronounced by and by.

The silence ended with a spontaneous and universal deep drawn breath of gratitude, like a fervent Amen which could not be confined within the soul, and I felt - all felt - that in that quiet some great mysterious charge had taken place; that some had passed again, not from death, but from life into life more abundantly; but how or who had thus been changed from glory unto glory no one but they who had heard the voice could tell.

We were not kept long in suspense. Scarcely had the sound of that Amen died away, when the angel chief stepped forward to the edge of the platform, and floated his crystal globe upon the air. Over the centre of the multitude it expanded, and, stretching itself like a cloud of light, gently descended towards the worshippers. So thin did the mysterious film become, that presently it was entirely lost to sight, but still the sense of smell could trace its odoriferous perfume, sweeter by far than all the flowers, and I knew that, though unseen, it had a mission which I watched to see made known. It reached its goal - fell like a dew of benediction on all, but some - many - were changed by its influence until we, as well as they, could read in no unmistakable language their title clear to advance.

At this moment another company of immortals descended from the hills on my right to the plain, chanting a song of welcome to the friends they were to accompany to their new

home; this song was answered by a jubilate from the assembly, during which the chosen ones arose, were joined by the choir above, and the festival was over.

CHAPTER XX

BEULAH LAND⁷⁵

When the visitors, whom I can only describe as being from the hill country and beyond, had retired, they who were left behind on the plain - instead of giving expression to useless regrets and disagreements with the selection made, as is so generally the custom on earth - embraced, congratulated and rejoiced with each other that they had been permitted to partake of the pleasures I had witnessed. I did not speak to any of them, though many passed near to me from time to time, as I felt an inward consciousness that though with them, I could not consider myself of them - I was, in reality, only a kind of visitor to whom an unwonted courtesy was being extended in making acquaintance with the many phases of the heavenly life, for although I was a citizen of immortality, I was by no means sure what my status and position would prove to be when my complimentary wanderings were over. I gathered, however, from the observations I made and the expressions heard, that if the great majority had not been translated they had all been benefited and elevated by the service. Every soul had been drawn nearer, and further prepared for the change which must ultimately come to all. If they had not yet reached the standard they had grown towards it; if in the sanctuary of silence they had not actually heard the voice of the Omnipotent, they had at least listened to the awful hush which precedes sound. Therefore they were stronger, holier, happier, for the experience they had shared, while they returned homeward filled with a hope in which there was no room for disappointment.

When Myhanene came back to me, after having bidden his friends adieu, I began to ask the volume of queries which the events had suggested.

“Who was the angel chief of that bright company?” I asked.

“His name is Omra,” he answered, “and I think that is all you can understand about him at present; if I were to try to explain his rank, station and duties, I should only be speaking in enigmas, so I am afraid you must be content with his name only.”

“Have the friends who were - promoted - I can find no other word to express my meaning - gone to be with him?”

“No; they have passed into the vicinity of the home of our sister, the poetess - where I found you.”

“And I should like to ask, if I may, where does Omra live?”

“That you can never know except by sight, and I am not sure that I could lend you strength enough to catch even a distant glimpse of his home; you have seen the power of his glory when subdued in accommodation to the surroundings of this festival, but the brightness of his estate is the native purity which radiates from the holiness which is part of those who

dwell so much nearer to God. But while I cannot hope that you will be able to define his home, if I can only succeed in pointing out its splendour, it will be another revelation to further stimulate your aspirations, and furnish food for reflection by and by.”

“My soul thirsts for the knowledge,” I replied; “but I have seen so much that I almost fear to tax my recollection farther; still you know what is best, and I am content for you to decide.”

“Come then, with me; every cup in heaven is filled to overflowing. You remember the promise of Christ - you must realise it here - ‘to him that hath shall be given,’⁷⁶ yea, even ‘good measure, pressed down and running over,’⁷⁷ neither is there any need to be anxious, for the overflow cannot be lost; your memory may not recall it at once, but when the need arises it will be forthcoming; therefore, come on, and look as far as possible along the pathway of your future unfoldment.”

I must confess that I was timorously glad to hear his decision. I longed to behold the glory which should be revealed, but I was conscious of my own weakness and inability even as he spoke of it, and questioned myself as to what the effect would be when I stood in its presence. Nevertheless, I had confidence in my guide, as well as an inward assurance that I was beyond the possibility of injury, so with nervous reliance I took his proffered hand and we started on our new journey.

How long our companionship would last I had not the slightest means of knowing, but I was ever increasingly aware that the longer I spent with any one of these friends the more hopelessly I fell in arrears with the queries suggested by their presence. Therefore, though the scenes through which we passed were more than sufficient to call forth all my powers of admiration and observation, my thirst for information was still greater, and I speedily began to tax his generosity further.

“In my intercourse with our sister,” I said, “she seemed to give expression to opinions which differed considerably from those I have heard expressed by others; was I correct in my conclusions, or do you think I misunderstood her?”

“I have no doubt you are quite correct,” he replied. “We have very marked differences of opinion on some points.”

“How is that? I surely expected to find all such divisions at an end here.”

“There is a vast distinction, my brother, between differences and divisions. I know that on earth differences of opinion frequently cause very painful divisions, but it is not so here, where we have learned that ‘the truth but makes us free.’⁷⁸ Below it is held as a cardinal principle in practice that the geologist shall appraise a dogma at exactly the same value and according to the estimate of the theologian, or he is regarded as an atheist, and is rightfully shut out from the company of the faithful; and the same rule is more or less stringently applied to every other branch of learning. How absurd. Did not the same God Who inspired the pen inspire the rocks; did He infuse ink with the whole revelation and leave the rest of

chemistry a blank; was His will bequeathed entirely to the printing press, and the other manufactures left in pauperism; were the confines of His love left to the discrimination of a bookbinder, and the artistic world ignored; has the Illimitable and Infinite submitted to absorption by a Jewish nation and left no possible record for astronomy to read?"

"As the macrocosm, so you will find the microcosm has its arrangement in order to produce the natural harmony for which it has been designed. We have arrived at the knowledge that no man can grasp - much less monopolise - the whole of truth, but every mind appropriates its own congenial molecule; by and by the whole of this variety of thought will be gathered together as a florist arranges his flowers into a choice bouquet - every individual mind will then give utterance to its natural tone, and the volume of the whole will create and produce the perfect harmony of truth's full chord. In accordance with this you will find there is still a variety of opinions upon minor matters - preference for shades of thought regulated by the conditions of different individuals - but you will never meet with anyone who will call blue pink, or black amber."

There was no room, neither was I in any mood for argument to my questions he simply made a pronouncement in reply, which for the present I received, intending to make it the subject of reflection first, then discussion afterwards if necessary, when suitable opportunity should occur. There was also another reason which prevented me from pursuing our conversation further for the present. For some time, while listening with close attention to my friend, I had become aware that as we sped onward the atmosphere became lighter, until, as he concluded, I found I had quite lost the power of speech. I was overwhelmed with sensations strange and undefinable - not unpleasant, but rather the contrary; - I had entered the domain of some invigorating, irresistible happiness, which buoyed me up and carried me forward with an increasing impetus which overpowered and silenced me. The sense of weight, of fear, of doubt, of everything save an inexpressible joy, had left me.

I looked at my companion and then realised that the buoyancy and impelling power was due to the effort he was putting forth to give me of his strength to ascend. But I presently became conscious that even he was growing limited in this respect. There was for an instant a perceptible waver in our flight, but he threw his arm around me and drew me so close to himself that I became irradiated with his own brightness, which thrilled through me, seeming to bid defiance to all weakness; then, by a single effort of his will, like a lightning flash, he bore me across the intervening space, and we alighted upon the peak of some azure-tinted, celestial mountain. How far we travelled upon that flash of will I shall perhaps never know, but it gave me an illustration of the speed at which it is possible for Myhanene to journey, and the method by which he reached the home of the Assyrian, which had previously caused me so much astonishment.

Heaven lay unrolled before me. I can find no other word to convey even a crude suggestion of the scene - its purity, its beauty, and its peace - in its presence all that I had before

beheld paled into insignificance. From our feet a mighty plain stretched into the far away, bathed in a soft, unchanging, pulseless light, that by some miracle may once have kissed the pearl and made it blush with all its modest loveliness. Then, in the distance - however far the eye might travel - undimmed, distinct and vivid as the foreground, there rose to view chain on chain, and tier on tier, the heavenly mountains - countless hills on which equally countless terraces were spread - terraces large as plateaus, each vieing with the other in mansions, parks and flowers, like models of angel cities standing in galleries Divine, all canopied with the smile of God. Each terrace was bathed in its own distinctive glory, the brilliance increasing with the ascent. The sight conveyed to my mind the idea of a grand celestial staircase leading to the throne-room of the Infinite. At either extremity of those steps, as though to preserve the balance and complete the design of the heavenly architecture, rose the peaks of intersecting ranges, like regal janitors, bathed in atmospheric hues, changing in their ascent into tintless glory where unsullied crystal pillars formed the background of the vision, bearing upon their shoulders a structure that blazed and flashed like a diamond reflecting the light of some eternal sun.

Myhanene, when he had given me time to drink in the rapture of the scene, called my attention to that home of indescribable magnificence in the distance, and simply said: "That is Omra's home."

But this, I was told, was not heaven upon which my eyes were feasting; it was but the Beulah Land or link between the lower and a higher condition of the soul's development. My friend had crossed that almost illimitable plain - in the near foreground of which he pointed out his own home to me - ascended that divine staircase, and with Omra stood, as I was then standing, to look upon scenes more glorious yet beyond; Omra had gazed upon others purer still; but how many lay between that point and God I cannot learn, yet up these successive galleries of holiness each soul must climb before it can be satisfied, and see Him as He is.

Myhanene would now have carried me to see his home, but such an ocean of bewildering majesty overpowered my sense of comprehension that I prayed him to take me back.

CHAPTER XXI

HOME

Every detail of this life is educational. When one has opportunities for retirement to meditate upon the knowledge he has gained, he is overcome by the mass of information which here naturally unfolds from a single episode, as also the unanimity of testimony to enforce the one great law by which this life is governed, even though the contributing agencies appear to have no possible connection with each other.

It will be remembered that one of the first incidents which attracted my attention after my arrival was the action of that poor woman trying to make her way towards homes for which

she was unfitted; Eusemos explained the theory of the law operating upon and preventing her carrying out her desire; Cushna afterwards illustrated it for me in the case of Marie; and now Myhanene had given me a practical example of it in my relationship to the entrancing scene which lay before me. There was no external power present to prevent me reaching such abodes of rest, the way was open, and I was sure I should find a welcome if I could only reach their portals; but that 'if' was the all-sufficient 'why' I did not gratify my heart's desire. There was no more barrier to my breathing the life atmosphere of those heavenly mountains than there is on earth to prevent the Laplander from sharing the beauties of the tropical summer; the only reason was in myself, my present nature was unadapted to the surroundings, hence they were not congenial to me; so, while it was heaven in a measure to Myhanene and his friends, I was overpowered - shall I say, uncomfortable - and anxious to be away.

But while I was standing on those heights, with my companion's arm still around me, I learned one sweet lesson more completely than I had ever anticipated - the tender sympathy and humility with which those higher, holier natures render assistance to the weaker. Oh! the devices, the resources they have at command, and the readiness and the unostentation with which they are brought into requisition to stimulate and encourage one to put forth every endeavour to reach all possible developments and corresponding advantages! Their love takes hold upon the soul like a mighty magnet, and it feels wooed and lifted - unless the Divine influence is wilfully repudiated and released - almost against itself into continual re-births of holier being. There is no patronage, no attempt to kindle a feeling of indebtedness for the service they so willingly perform, but they commence - and carry on their mission - as if soliciting a favour, and all the advantages were theirs. Whatever they may have done, they have a wonderful power and aptitude of making you feel - no matter how great your enjoyment has been - that by far the greater happiness has accrued to them.

What was it that prompted Eusemos to show me that panorama of the country, or Cushna to give me the delight of witnessing the Chorale? Why should Siamedes instruct me in respect to the nature and condition of the sleepers, or Myhanene carry me to behold the delights in which he lives? I had no claim upon them, no power to render them, in the least, any compensation; there was only one motive, one reason - love, that great master impulse which sways its unchallenged sceptre throughout the whole domain of immortality! I knew it - felt it. The one desire which actuated all with whom I had been brought into contact, had been to prevent my becoming too satisfied at the outset of my new life with the conditions with which I should find myself surrounded, whatever they might prove to be. Activity is the natural heritage of the soul, excelsior its motto, and holiness its goal; thus their united endeavour had been to arouse in me a great desire to reach out after the ideals which ever lie on before; to realise the fact that the legitimate satisfaction of man can only be achieved when, like the Psalmist of old⁷⁹, he awakes to the consciousness that he has attained to the likeness of God.

Yes! I had learned that lesson, and as I gazed upon the vision before me, I felt conscious that their object would not be altogether frustrated, at least in my case. The wish to be able to roam those fields of bright glory, which were the home of my friends, but yet so far from me, was born within me, and I determined that my hope should not be crushed or thwarted by any object or duty which must necessarily lie in between, but through all and everything, I would press on until my feet had climbed unto this goal of my first desire in heaven. Myhanene prophesied that the sight would fire my aspirations if I could but attain to it, and he was right - these aspirations now were all aglow; I was anxious to find my present home, that I might understand from whence I was to commence the stupendous ascent. I knew not where I should find it - hitherto, had never given it more than casual thought - but I longed to reach it now. Wherever it might be, it could be no more than the resting-place for a sojourner; whatever its pleasures might be, I had gazed upon others for which my soul would pant, 'as the hart panteth after the water-brooks'⁸⁰; however rich its beauties, I had beheld greater, the memory of which could not be effaced, and I should never rest contented till I called them mine.

Then the question involuntarily suggested itself - 'Shall I be contented then?' - but so it would ever continue to arise if I attempted to answer it, so I pressed it down, and determined to bound my first ideal here. But as I came to this conclusion, a shadow passed over my mind as I thought of what an almost interminable distance might lie between me and the object of my desire. Myhanene was instantly conscious of its presence, though he did not speak, but I felt a thought which proceeded from him that opened out before me into another reverie-revelation that had more influence and consolation than words.

There is but one way for all mankind to travel on their pilgrimage to God; the earth stages had been tampered with and rendered difficult to trace, but from where my feet were standing the way was clear and unmistakable. It was the way called Straight, whose engineer was God Himself, and it bore His stamp and seal, even as we find it upon the face of Nature. At this point Nature became to me the interpreter of grace, and my soul drifted with its flow into the ocean of another revelation. What man can stand with watch in hand and say - 'The day is dead, and night is born?' Who can divide accurately the seasons as they come and go? Who is learned enough to fix the boundary of sleep? The early frosts of winter are sandwiched into autumn's golden days, and spring dove-tails her sunshine into icy blasts; daylight comes back with insinuating pulses, stealing a footing unobserved upon the cheek of night; the opening leaves put forth so stealthily that even though we stand on guard to watch, we should be compelled to say - "It is not; yes, it is."

In Nature there are no leaps and bounds, no *cul-de-sacs* or chasms, or sharp divisions in its great law of progress; the order is, unfoldment from within, stimulated by the appropriation of congenial nourishment from without. This same development is also observable in the stages of life, so far as they come within the cognisance of mortals. Who is learned enough to discover the instant of being, or tell the time of the soul's departure? Who can say when unconsciousness unfolds into consciousness, or the instinct of the babe

gives place to intelligence? Who can define when responsibility is born, or draw a line between infancy and boyhood? So the parallel of nature and soul might be continued. But enough! If the same law is evident at the commencement, and continues as far as man can trace it, by what right do we assume that any change occurs beyond our ken? Given the same God as Creator and Preserver - Author and Finisher - and He unchangeable, why not the same law, and that Immutable?

The thought consoled me, gave me strength and peace. The distance between me and my ideal was no doubt great; but it would be reached by a natural process of which the duration, to a great extent, lay in my own hands. 'God is no respecter of persons'⁴; there is no royal road or cross-country cut to the throne reserved for an elect few, but One Way, which is 'the way, the truth, and the life,'⁸¹ and he who makes the attempt to climb by any other will be cast out as a 'thief and a robber.'⁸² No, no, the red-handed assassin neither by lip or heart confession can take one leap from the scaffold - untaught, still trembling, and with lips from which the echoes of profanity have scarcely died away - into the presence of that God who is 'too pure to behold iniquity.'⁸³

Salvation does not guarantee a sudden transition from debauchery to the white-robed throng, from the ribald jest of profligacy to 'sing the song of Moses and the Lamb'⁸⁴; it means 'acceptance in the beloved'⁸⁵ when the penitent prodigal has carried out his determination to arise and go to his father - has made the pilgrimage from the far country to the homeland; passed the cross where he receives the promises and becomes an inheritor of that faith which 'is the substance of things hoped for'⁸⁶; adopted into the family of saints and entering into the companionship of Christ, who will never again leave him or forsake him, he will be led on from glory unto glory, at each successive stage his soul unfolding that purity and holiness which will ultimately enable him to:

Dwell in the eternal Light
Through the Eternal Love.

My companion was by no means anxious to terminate my visit even though I had suggested it. He was happy - so happy - there; it was his home, and when I had an interval either in my reverie, or wonder, to bestow on him, I was conscious of the intensity of his fervent wish that it was mine also - but it could not be for the present, so next to that, he allowed me time to look upon it until the enthusiasm was strong within me, which declared it should be as soon as I could rise to its requirements; then a gentle pressure of his arm indicated his wish, and I turned away.

"How long have I been here - in this life?" I asked, when my power of speech returned to me.

"Only a few weeks according to the computation of earth," he replied. "Why; are you tired?"

"No! I shall never be tired again, I can feel that; but I have learned so much and been so interested that I have never given a thought to time before."

“Why have you learned so much?” he asked.

“That is a question you could answer best,” I replied.

“It is simply because you have asked so much. Your earth-life was one long note of interrogation; not so much to your fellow-men, for they did not understand - could not have answered - you; but your queries were to yourself, to us. Now you have commenced to find the answers in the little we have been enabled, at present, to do for you. But, remember, we have only begun, we shall be glad to continue presently; in the meantime I will take you to your home, where you may recall your experiences so far, while you rest for a while and get rid of those influences of the body which still cling to you, and would prevent your enjoyment of other revelations that await you.”

“Home,” I repeated; “did you hear my wish then, as I stood upon the hill? I have been so interested that I had not given one thought to this until I was looking upon yours, which made me wonder what distance could lie between the two. Was my thought a premonition of what was coming next?”

“Perhaps it was,” he replied; “come and see.”

Our way led through a succession of picturesque groves, alternated by lovely dells and glades, where we passed by few individuals, thus enabling our communion on many themes to be undisturbed, but I will not weary you with their recital here. I have volumes of greater experiences yet to relate, and if this effort but achieves its object, as expressed in the earlier pages, I will come again and continue my pleasant task. As we walked along, I observed every now and then the bright thought-flash speed away from my companion in advance of us, while ever and anon a response came back, telling me that while he was instructing me, he was also holding converse with some distant friend. At that time I was unskilled in reading such correspondence and was therefore entirely ignorant of its nature, but whatever it might be it only aroused a passing curiosity in my mind at its novelty - my interest was entirely centred in the subjects we were discussing.

In passing through one glen, which from its extreme beauty excited my admiration and put an end to our communion, we - to me suddenly and unexpectedly - came across Cushna, Arvez, and several other friends who were unknown to me. These, at Myhanene's suggestion, joined us, as he evidently did not wish to linger on the way. Shortly afterwards we met Eusemos and a company of choristers, who greeted us with a song of welcome; they too joined us, and we went forward listening to their music until we encountered Azena, with a large company of women, who came to meet Myhanene when they heard he was coming that way. Other additions were constantly being made to our numbers, many of the friends bringing instruments, others wreathed in flowers, as I had seen them in the festival, until we became the central objects in a long procession, joyful and exultant in the songs they sang to welcome my companion, whom I could not wonder they loved so well.

Presently we entered a narrow valley between two ranges of hills, at the extremity of which we ascended a gentle slope whose summit commanded a view of a city magnificent beyond any earthly comparison. In appearance it looked as if built of pinkish alabaster, in design a regular square, with avenues running east and west, north and south, sub-dividing it into numerous sections easily distinguishable from where we stood by the broad divisions, and luxuriant in the mass of foliage which robed the trees.

The buildings were elaborately ornate in character, and though of a considerable height, were in the main but of a single storey, with flat roofs, serving the double purpose of garden and promenade. Each palace - for only such a designation conveys anything like an adequate conception of their proportions - was surrounded by grounds of considerable extent, which in their arrangement displayed the varied tastes and designs of their residents, but the whole completed such a perfectly harmonious picture that Myhanene's ideal of the ultimate harmony of differences spontaneously flashed upon my mind. Everything, everywhere, as far as the eye could reach, proclaimed wealth, luxury, and repose; and as I looked over the wide area of the city I asked myself if it were possible that I should find my home in such blissful abodes as these.

As we paused to survey the scene a chime of bells added their welcome to the music with which we were surrounded. This appeared to be a signal for all the city to turn out of doors, and the whole multitude came forward to meet us. One of the first was Helen, and close behind her came one and then another whom I had known in those horrid dens and purlieus of London. Some of them were persons to whom I had been sent by that mysterious influence of which I had spoken and that I could never understand; some I had helped by reading to them, while to others I had been of service in other ways; with some I had talked and tried to solve their doubts, endeavouring to reconcile their painful surroundings with the consistency of a God of love; to others I had attempted to explain my vague ideas of heaven or sought to give them some little solace by expounding my hazy theology, the recognition of more than one brought to my memory a forgotten promise we had made to meet each other 'beyond the river,' to which they were true of purpose, while I could only claim to be so by accident.

As I looked upon these well-remembered faces - in spite of the marvellous changes which had been wrought upon them - I felt that their number had somehow multiplied considerably, for though every single individual was well known I had no idea the aggregate was half so great. They were no longer paupers, as when we parted, but in the interval, had somehow - and there is only one how - been converted into kings and queens, priests and priestesses to God the Father, and I felt more than honoured now to renew our friendship.

When I had come to an end of the more personal congratulations, the music swelled again into a chorus, in which the whole multitude joined, of welcome home. It was at this

moment that I realised that all this ovation was on my account, and yet I could scarcely believe it so until I turned to Myhanene and asked "Is this really for me?"

"Yes, my brother!" he replied. "In this city you will find your home for the present, and our friends have come to bid you welcome."

Then I understood that the thought-flashes which had excited my curiosity were only signals, and our meetings with Cushna and other friends along the path were parts of an arranged programme, I, all unknowingly, being the central object.

The procession re-formed, but this time upon a much more imposing scale, and I was led forward, the honoured one in such an honourable company, with Myhanene still at my side and my more immediate friends and acquaintances grouped around. Tears of joy and gratitude were my only response to the soul stirring welcome accorded to me, and the tokens of affection lavished upon me on every hand; even the bells seeming to become instinct with life as they breathed forth a sympathetic congratulation. Turning down one of the nearer avenues I could see our leaders passing into the grounds of a palace so exquisitely laid out as to engage my attention beyond all others, even when I first caught sight of them in the distance. But when I reached the entrance, and its full beauty burst upon me, I paused bewildered, to ask what place it was. "Home," was the only word my companion spoke in reply, and led me forward under the influence of such an ecstasy as one is sometimes permitted to experience in the domain of dreams.

On nearing the house I perceived that the draperies which in this life serve the purpose of doors, had been drawn aside, indicating that all were welcome to enter; but the multitude fell back to the right and left, their song ceased, and Myhanene took my hand and led me on. On gaining the entrance I saw the spacious porch fill with a company which might have been the angel host at that festival I had so recently witnessed. The central figure was clad in robes of light, though I did not recognise him, for my eyes, as yet, were too unused to look upon such brightness. Again I paused, but my guide, divining my thoughts, answered, "It is Omra"; there was no time for more words, we were nearly at the crown of the steps, and in another moment I felt an inexpressible thrill of joy as his arms were thrown around me, and he exclaimed:

"Welcome, our beloved one, in the name of our Father; enjoy thy rest"; then he raised my head and kissed me, while the assembly breathed "Amen."

I did not speak. What could I have said? Who could find language appropriate for such an occasion? But there was no awkward pause, or feeling of discomfort that something was expected which I did not know how to perform. Omra avoided that.

"What a multitude of friends you have with you," he remarked in a persuasive manner, as an invitation to view the scene.

At the foot of the steps, in a distinctive group, stood all those London friends of whom I have already spoken, and to these he drew my special attention, saying:

“My brother, the Lord has promised that 'they who sow in tears, shall reap in joy'⁸⁷; in these, our friends, I wish you to behold the fulfilment thereof. Here you may see, so far as it has yet been gathered, the harvest of your life's work. You went to them bearing seed more precious than you could estimate, and though with a trembling hand and an uncertain knowledge you scattered it, still as the word of God it accomplished that whereto He sent it; now your day in the harvest field is over, your work done; you return to the God who sent and commissioned you, bringing your sheaves with you. In the name of Christ who redeemed us, I thank you for your ministry of love for inasmuch as ye did it to these ye did it also to Him.”

In vain did I assure him that in the little I had been able to do I had been most greatly blessed; that the ministry to which he referred had been the bright spots in an otherwise most intolerable life; that the enjoyments which naturally accrued were far more than compensation for any sacrifice it might have demanded; while I was painfully conscious of how much I had omitted to do in comparison with the trifle accomplished. He knew all about it, as I should understand when at leisure to study the record of my work, which had been kept and was open to my perusal within. There I should see the nett results so far, compiled by one too wise to err in judgment or estimate. Then he gave me his benediction and departed, leaving Myhanene to further introduce me to my home.

I wish I could find words to convey even a faint idea of the beauty and completeness of that house, but if I attempted it I should fail, even at the outset. So that must pass. But there is one matter to which I must refer, because of its serious import to those still in the flesh. Jesus Christ, speaking of the many mansions in His Father's house, said to His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you.”⁸⁸ But what about the furnishing thereof? This is a thought which had never once crossed my mind until I entered my new abode; then another great revelation was made to me. Every article of furniture, ornament or decoration, was most vividly associated with - as though it had been manufactured from - some act, word, or feature of my earth-life. It was a terrible truth to learn; how I wished I had known it earlier!

One of the rooms contained a series of pictures giving the record to which Omra had referred; at a glance I could see the result was by no means perfect. The original design, in every case perfectly visible, was always more or less spoiled in the equally apparent errors. In them I could easily detect the weaknesses I still laboured under, and the numerous defects which would need to be remedied before I could reach that higher link of life, from the view of which I had just returned. In studying this record, I could fairly estimate the work that lay before me, but was also conscious of the fact that such a home and surroundings wherein to undertake the task must in themselves be calculated to contribute half the success. Then again what inestimable advantages were available in the new and larger faculties which I had become possessed of; what companionships should I enjoy; what experience could I not consult?

Myhanene presently led me past one doorway, over which the curtains were closely drawn. I would have entered there, for some invisible power took possession of me; a voice from out the silence seemed to call me, and I paused in answer to its cry. But claiming my attention to other objects, as if ignorant of my wish, my guide led me up to the roof, from which I could take another view of the city, and one which, in the time to come, would be the most familiar and valued from its associations. The air, and the interest the view aroused, overcame the agitation I felt in passing that forbidden door, and when I had grown quite calm, my companion said:

“Now, my pleasant duty is at an end for the present; come with me one moment, and then I will say adieu.”

When we again reached that door he waved his hand for me to enter alone, then passed out and was gone.

I knew what he meant. In that room one was waiting to welcome me home, for the touch of whose vanished hand, and the sound of whose voice my heart had ever cried and groaned; one who had sacrificed her life in giving me mine; one whose absence had sadly unfitted me for the battle I had been compelled to fight; one whose name I had frequently called upon in the darkness of my desolation without any answering response. Had she but been spared to me even for the first few years, so that the presence of her memory could have remained with me, how different might my life have been; the misanthrope might possibly then have become a man, playing a manly part in the regeneration of the world, and accomplishing some little work worthy of remembrance. But alas! the shadow born with me could not be dispelled, and the burden of its gloom was the cross which was now to be finally lifted from my shoulders.

Reader, when I was at the home of the Assyrian I stood, like you do now, upon the threshold of such another meeting; but you will remember I told you when that moment came, which was too sacred for a stranger's eyes to look upon, I turned away that I might not profane the occasion by my presence. Now I would ask you to pardon me if I should leave you here while I pass through the draperies; and for the first time in my whole existence that I know of, gaze upon that long-sought face. The ground across this slight boundary is far too sacred to me for strangers' feet to tread at present; the vision awaiting me too holy to offer for public inspection. For me earth's fitful fever now is over; I have safely found my way, by our Father's goodness, 'Through the Mists,' and for the present, wishing you an affectionate adieu, I raise these silken folds, to find myself at home within the loving arms of - MY MOTHER.

THE END .

-
- ¹ 1 Corinthians 12:11
 - ² 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
 - ³ The Acts 2:38-39
 - ⁴ The Acts 10:34
 - ⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:14
 - ⁶ 1 John 4:7
 - ⁷ Galatians 6:7
 - ⁸ Isaiah 60:2
 - ⁹ Matthew 23:9
 - ¹⁰ Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4
 - ¹¹ Matthew 3:11-12
 - ¹² Luke 12:49
 - ¹³ Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29
 - ¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:8
 - ¹⁵ Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10
 - ¹⁶ Revelations 7:9
 - ¹⁷ Joseph Bromehead, in *Psalms and Hymns for Public or Private Devotion* (Sheffield, England: Britannia Press, 1795)
 - ¹⁸ Revelations 15
 - ¹⁹ Psalms 127:2, King James Bible
 - ²⁰ Psalms 133:1, A Song of degrees of David
 - ²¹ Psalms 133:2
 - ²² Psalms 133:3
 - ²³ Psalms 133:3
 - ²⁴ Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene 1 – 146-58
 - ²⁵ Psalms 24:3-4
 - ²⁶ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807 – 1882, See also Chapter II in *The Life Elysian*
 - ²⁷ Hebréeën 13:8
 - ²⁸ Ecclesiastes 1:9
 - ²⁹ 1 Samuel 3:9
 - ³⁰ Luke 23:33, The crucifixion
 - ³¹ Marcus 14:8
 - ³² Luke 15:4, The lost sheep
 - ³³ 1 Corinthians 15:52
 - ³⁴ John 14:2
 - ³⁵ See also Galatians 6:9
 - ³⁶ Romans 8:37
 - ³⁷ Shakespeare, *Macbeth* Act 3, Scene 2: 19-23
 - ³⁸ Job 38:11
 - ³⁹ The General Epistle of James 1:17
 - ⁴⁰ John 1:5
 - ⁴¹ John 3:19
 - ⁴² Matthew 5:14
 - ⁴³ John 11:26
 - ⁴⁴ Reference to Genesis 25:29-34
 - ⁴⁵ “The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true.” – Lord Alfred Tennyson in “Ring out, Wild Bells”, 1850
 - ⁴⁶ See Ezechiel 18:23
 - ⁴⁷ Hebrews 7:25
 - ⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:9
 - ⁴⁹ Psalms 121:4
 - ⁵⁰ Luke 8:52, Matthew 9:24
 - ⁵¹ John 11:11
 - ⁵² Matthew 22:32, Mark 12:27, Luke 20:38
 - ⁵³ Numbers 12:6
 - ⁵⁴ Matthew 10:19, Mark 13:11, Luke 12:11
 - ⁵⁵ Acts 2:16-18
 - ⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 18:22
 - ⁵⁷ Matthew 7:16
 - ⁵⁸ Luke 2:14
 - ⁵⁹ 1 John 3:1
 - ⁶⁰ Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews 1:14
 - ⁶¹ John H. Newman, “Lead, Kindly Light”, 1833, *Hymnal Companion*
 - ⁶² 2 Corinthians 4:17

-
- 63 Sonnet from John Milton, around 1655, when he had become blind
64 Matthew 23:11
65 A reference to Matthew 23:8 and 9
66 Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2
67 67 Mark 10:9
68 1 Timothy 2:4
69 1 Corinthians 15:22
70 1 Timothy 2:4
71 1 Corinthians 13:12
72 Mark 9:7
73 John 17:21
74 John 3:7
75 Isaiah 62:4, Poem by Edgar Page Stites, 1876
76 Mark 4:25, Matthew 25:29
77 Luke 6:38
78 John 8:32
79 Psalms 17:15
80 Psalms 42:1
81 John 14:6
82 John 10:1
83 Habakkuk 1:13
84 Revelations 15:3
85 The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians
86 Hebrews 11:1
87 Psalms 126:5
88 John 14:2