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HEAVEN REVISED
A Narrative of Personal Experiences After
THE Change called Death.

By
Mrs. E.N. DUFFEY

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INTRODUCTION.

Old theology has created for the belief of its adherents a future of its own: a heaven of harps and crowns, idleness, palm-bearing and perpetual psalm-singing, to enjoy which even the most devout Christian understands that his nature must be wholly changed; and a hell of physical torture to which the

majority of mankind are condemned to infinite punishment for finite transgressions. It is a picture of the future, wearying on the one hand and appalling on the other – the paradise of a fool, the pandemonium of a demon.

It is the mission of Spiritualism, with its direct communication with the inhabitants of both the higher and the lower spheres, to revise these conceptions of the future, and bring them more in harmony with reason and common sense, justice and mercy; to recognize the law of progress as the law of the spiritual as well as of the material universe, and to set the star of hope in the zenith of even the deepest hell; and this is what is meant by the title which this story takes.

I did not think out my narrative; I did not plan or plot. I could not have known less of what was to be written had I been writing at the dictation of another. The ideas were not gathered from various sources, for at that time I had heard little and read less upon the subject of Spiritualism. I had but a superficial acquaintance with the philosophy of Spiritualism, as I was a convert of but a year; and often I was puzzled to know whether what I recorded was strictly in harmony with spiritualistic teachings. This was especially true of the chapter entitled, "Into the Depths." During the entire period in which I was engaged in this writing – some three or four months lived and moved in a sort of dream. Nothing seemed real to me. Personal troubles did not seem to pain me. I felt as though I had taken a mental anaesthetic. I finished the work one Saturday evening. On Sunday evening I spoke as usual before our spiritual society. On Monday morning I awoke for the first time my usual self. Real life had come back to me.

I believe that I wrote through unseen assistance, but I hesitate to ask others to endorse this belief. I hesitate even to express it, realizing as I do how often well-intentioned Spiritualists mistakingly attribute to the Spirit-world that which emanates only in their own too often ignorant and ill-informed minds. I know how difficult it is to draw the line between one's own thoughts and impressions, and those which result from inspiration from higher sources.

The reader must decide for himself. If he be a believer in spirit inspiration, he will accept my own belief, and think that "Heaven Revised" was written inspirationally. If he be a skeptic, and hesitates to do this, he will be only sharing the doubts and questionings which sometimes possess myself.

Bartow, Fla. Mrs. E. B. Duffy.

Heaven Revised.

A Narrative of Personal Experiences

After the Change Called

Death.

CHAPTER I.

DEATH.

I am a traveler, and having passed the first stage of my journey, and being now fairly set out upon my second, the impulse seizes me, as it seizes upon all who have left dear friends behind, to let them hear from me – to write them a letter, telling of the new things I have seen, the strange experiences encountered. One of earth's famous poets has spoken of that land in which I am journeying as the "bourne from whence no traveler returns." That is true in a certain sense. We cannot return to take up our old lives again, to resume our old relations, and assume our old duties. We have struck our tents and passed on – into the inevitable future which awaits us. You may not even behold us, until you, too, join us, the first stage of your journey left behind; but we may send you messages; we may impress your minds with pictures of ourselves, both as we have been and as we are, which shall be so vivid that you may be excused for mistaking them for realities. But they are, after all, only faint images of the real living personalities which still exist, and amid their changed conditions still preserve their identity.

We may, too, write you letters; for in this nineteenth century a postal system has been established between the here and there, the is and the was, which makes communication possible. That which for ages has seemed the greatest difficulty – how to send a letter – has been conquered, only to find a still greater one rising up behind it – how to write a letter which shall be intelligible; how to transcribe conditions and translate ideas into a language which shall be comprehensible to you.

Alas ! my dear friends, I shall, I fear, be able only to give you a shadowy idea of this newly discovered country, which is, after all, the real, while your earth is but the shadow and prototype. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of that which is in this land beyond the grave.

In looking back from where I now stand, I cannot but wonder that the earth-life assumed such importance. The perspective is entirely changed. Much of that which, in the first stage of my journey, seemed of the greatest magnitude, has strangely dwindled in its proportions; and apparently everything concerning it has taken on a new coloring and a new meaning. The reason is that now I begin to perceive, from my present position, the true relations of all earthly conditions and happenings. When I was in the midst of them, I gained only narrow and distorted glimpses. Those nearest me were magnified beyond reality; those at a distance dwarfed in like degree. Thus even I, who prided myself upon being a close and correct observer, a careful analyzer of all that came under my observation, and a deep and original thinker, have been overwhelmed with astonishment, not to say chagrin, in discovering how little I knew of even the surface life around me – how still less of that deeper and inner life which is the real and actuating power of humanity, but of whose existence there is so little realization until it comes to the surface here.

But I did not set out to either moralize or philosophize in writing this letter; though I dare say I shall unwittingly do

enough of both before I have finished it; otherwise I should not be true to my own character; but I will suppress the impulse for the present, and tell you of the first stage of my journey, that stage which you call death.

Of the mere happenings of my earthly life, what matters it? What I am is of the only importance; by what means my character was disciplined, my intelligence cultivated, possibly my nature warped in some ways, are of no moment. When you behold a gem, you admire its beauties and deplore its flaws; but it never occurs to you to inquire about the processes by which the lapidary polished it. I am what I am. I shall be some day – a day so far distant in the unending ages of eternity that it seems no nearer to me than to you, save as a clearer comprehension of the fact brings it with fuller force to my mind – united with the great source of power, wisdom and love, which overshadows and permeates the universe, my identity lost in all save memory, which shall forever individualize every soul that has lived and suffered. When memory goes, then comes annihilation; but there is no such thing as annihilation in this vast universe.

I lived, I toiled, I suffered, I loved, I struggled with temptations, and I sometimes sinned – the common lot of humanity. In these words may be summed up, not only my earthly existence, but that of most mortals. For those to whom any of these experiences are not given in the earth life, they are reserved in fuller measure in the life into which I have now entered.

I knew that I was standing face to face with death, but I did not tremble nor shrink. The terrors of orthodoxy had long lost their hold upon me, and I was prepared to meet the inevitable change like a philosopher. Nay, more; I was prepared to watch its approach and analyze its effect upon myself, with all the enthusiasm of a student who did not wish to miss this one supreme opportunity to gain knowledge which had hither-

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to eluded the grasp of mortals. I would be calm, and note death's approach, step by step. If it were possible to me, I would impart my newly acquired knowledge to others, and, perhaps, do mankind a service by robbing this dread hour of its terrors.

Earth would fade away, and I seemed to be floating out into an unknown realm of existence; of all that which I expected to remember at this hour, nothing occurred to me. There was no review of my life, such as I had read about; no thought of either past or future; only this one feeling, which sprung up in my heart to the exclusion of all else – my loved ones ! I had not regarded myself as an excessively affectionate woman. Reason had been trained to govern all my impulses and emotions, and I truly believe my life-work had been better performed in consequence. But in this last hour love seemed the sum and substance – all that was worth cherishing – of life. Then would suddenly come back to me a remembrance of the task to which I had set myself, and in striving to accomplish it, my will, which was always strong, and was strong even in death, would rally my life-forces, and thus defeat its own object. As I had

all my life fought and struggled, and sought to attain the unattainable, so, true, to my nature, I would not even allow myself to die in peace, but all unwittingly prolonged and postponed the hour.

At last I became wearied, and fell into a sweet sleep, a sleep so restful that in the half-consciousness which preceded the moment of complete unconsciousness, I remembered that in all my life I had experienced but one or two as perfect and satisfying. For such a sleep I was contented even to postpone the hour of death.

When I awoke it was with that almost guilty sense of one who feels that he has slept longer than custom or prejudice sanctions; and for the instant I was glad that I was very ill, that such an indiscretion might be forgiven me. The waking was even sweeter than the sleeping. I did not care to open my

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eyes, but lay filled with a sense of peace and rest – peace and rest – such as in the long, weary years of my life I had dreamed of and longed for, but never before experienced. How sweet was the rest, how perfect the peace ! If it only might endure forever! But I was better. "I was not to die after all, and I must presently submit to the old bondage, and again know the weariness and unquiet of life. Presently I became aware that there was a sound of subdued voices in conversation in an adjoining room. Though I could hear them plainly through the open door, at first I gathered no sense of what they were saying; and then as I became more fully awake, I heard a sentence which fixed my attention in an idle way:

" I have no doubt she nibantwell; but, then, she was so very peculiar."

The response came: " Yes, very; and very set in her way."

Again the first speaker: "She saw a great deal of trouble, but I have no doubt she brought much of it on herself. You almost always find that that is the case."

" That is so. Why, I kaow ," and then followed a

grotesquely distorted narration of certain incidents in my own life.

I was startled. Of whom were they speaking? Of me – me? "She was?" What did it all mean? Did they really think me dead? With a guilty consciousness of having played eavesdrojDper, I hastened to call one of the speakers by name, to assure her that I was still in the land of the living. They were both neighbors, and I knew them well. She paid no heed to my voice, and the conversation went on without interruption. Again I spoke louder than before, and still they heeded not. I was now aroused to the fullest mental activitj'-, and utterly forgetful of my supposed enfeebled condition, started up to manifest myself to them in some manner which should secure their silence, when

For an instant I seemed frozen with terror, or something akin to it, by a strange object which met my view. What was

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that in my chamber, my chamber where I lay so ill – that object lying rigid and white, in the familiar yet ever repulsive attitude of death? There were the outlines of the head, the projection of the arms crossed upon the breast, the extended limbs, and the upturned feet. Over all was thrown a white sheet; but with a new experience in vision, as I looked at it my sight seemed to penetrate beneath the snowy pall, and I recognized my own features. My God! was I then really dead? How can I describe to you the emotion which swept through me, and which seemed to shake my whole being to its very center? Then, and not till then, did the past sweep like a wave over me, and all that I had been taught and hoped and feared of the great transition, and the life which was to follow it, seemed to come out in my memory with unparalleled distinctness. It was a solemn, an awful moment. The terror passed as soon as it came, but its solemnity impressed itself upon me. Yet you will scarcely believe it that the next sensation was one of mirth. Then I was playing eavesdropper in spite of myself; and verifying the truth of the adage that listeners never hear any good of themselves, while I wondered in grim humor if the act under the circumstances in which I was placed, were as dishonorable as if I were still alive.

As in the earth-life the sublime frequently borders upon the ridiculous, and there is often but a single step from solemnity to mirth, from joy to sorrow, from hope to despair, and all this that our characters may acquire their proper equilibrium; so my first experience in the Spirit-world was of the same nature.

I could not silence those babbling women, and so I let them talk, and for the first time in my existence, had an opportunity to see myself as others see me. Well, the lesson was a good one, and not without its uses, even though I had passed beyond the influences and conditions of earth. It held up an imperfect mirror before my spiritual vision in which my defects of character were brought into greater prominence by distortion; and thus the first lesson was imparted to me.

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After a time the impulse seized them to look upon the face of the dead whose character they were dissecting so candidly, not to say mercilessly. We were a group of three, although one was invisible to the other two. As they were unconscious of my presence, so I soon forgot theirs, while I looked with a strange wonder upon the form of that which had once been I. As I regarded the pale worn features, and with invisible hand smoothed back the grizzled hair from the forehead, an ineffable pity filled my soul for my old self, which now seemed separated and apart from my present one. In my life I had affected to scorn the earthly tenement which imprisoned my soul. But when I gazed upon it dispassionately from an outside standpoint another feeling overwhelmed me. How wan, how worn

it looked ! How heavy were the lines of care upon brow and cheek ! How the hair had whitened ! How the body had struggled and suffered, and toiled for the spirit within – always losing – always losing – first youth and beauty, and then health and strength, in the service of that spirit; and at last when the soul stood triumphant in a newer and fuller life, a complete victor over body – that body had met its final and greatest loss, in that it had lost the life which had animated it. No longer should it love, or suffer, or toil. It was completely vanquished, and yielded all that it had to give. With a new-born love and pity for self, which were as unselfish as though they had been expended upon another, and with a reverential feeling as well, I tenderly kissed the cold brow, and in that moment forgave it all for which I had reproached it in the past: for its weaknesses which had crippled my spirit; its imperfections which had warped it; its limitations which had chained it. Surely in that moment of triumph over mortality I could afford to be generous. More difficult still, I could be just. I realized and acknowledged how, even through the infirmities of the physical frame, my spirit had been strengthened and disciplined.

Then I was dead ! How strange it seemed to be dead, and yet with such superabundant life ! How mortals misapprehend

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the meaning of the word. To be dead means to be alive with a vitality earthly humanity does not know. How long had I been dead? It seemed to be early morning. The watchers were silent, having dozed off to sleep in their arm-chairs. The rays of the lamp were paling before the light of the approaching day, which was heralded in the east by scarlet banners flung across the sky. When I had fallen asleep – into that peaceful sleep from which I had wakened in another world – the night had been far spent. I must have passed away at the ebb of the tide, when day was struggling with darkness, and nature itself was at its lowest ebb. I had probably been dead twenty-four hours. I had fallen asleep on earth; I had awakened in the land of spirits.

The land of spirits ! Strange as it may seem, I for the first time realized this fact. My thoughts and emotions up to this point had all been connected in some way with the world and the life I had left behind me. But where were the spirit forms of the loved ones who had passed on before, and whom I had expected to meet me at the gateway, and to welcome and guide me into the life eternal? On the threshold of this new life I felt no fear at my seeming isolation, but a sense of disappointment and loneliness, and of bewilderment also, stole over me. Even as these thoughts passed through my mind, the room and all it contained seemed to dissolve before me. I found myself upon a great plain which gently inclined toward a valley through the depths of which flowed a stream. I cannot describe the beauty of the scene. Earth is beautiful, and its beauties found their way to my heart; but the Spirit- world is far more so. The scene seemed strangely familiar. It was so like, and yet so unlike, an earthly valley, where I had spent many happy hours – perhaps the happiest of my life. It seemed, indeed, the earthly valley glorified and spiritualized, as who shall say that it was not? The grass was intensely yet softly green, and starr-

ed with myriads of daisies. When last I had beheld the earthly valley, it was still beautiful, but it had the beauty of death,

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that sent a chill to my heart, and over it there hung a pall of cloud which completely enshrouded its depths. But my valley was resurrected, and was mine evermore.

I was walking, but strange to say my feet did not touch the ground. I walked along just above the surface of the earth, just as I had done many times in dreams – the realest dreams I ever had. What a strange sensation it was to be freed from the weight of the earthly body – to be released from the physical law of the attraction of gravitation ! I felt that I might rise to any height to which I aspired, yet was content for the present to keep near the ground.

But my friends – my spirit friends – where were they? Why was I thus so isolated in my new life? I was not conscious of having uttered a thought aloud, but as if in response to it, I found myself in the presence of two youths whose radiant countenances possessed more than mortal beauty. Years ago I had laid away with an aching heart and many bitter tears, two beautiful babes, first one and then another; and many times thereafter I stretched out my arms with soul-felt longing towards the unknown land whither they had gone, as if to reach to them and bring them back to me. But when I clasped my arms to my breast again, they were always empty. My babes, how I had longed for them, yearned for them ! They had always been babes to me in my memory, little tender clinging things, finding their whole world in mother-love. But when I beheld these youths beside me, some subtle instinct revealed to me that they were my babes, now nearly grown to manhood. I felt neither hesitation nor surprise in the recognition. It was as though I had always expected them to appear thus to me. I only held out my arms with an unutterably glad impulse, crying, " My boys ! Mine ! "

Is there a more contentful, more blissful word in our language – in any language – than that word "mine"? Whether we say it of child, friend or lover, home or heaven, we have expressed the supremest emotion of our hearts. It indicates the

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fullest fruition of our hopes and desires, whether they be worthy ones or unworthy ones. Barren and pitiful indeed is the life of that wretch who can not say " mine " of some joy, some hope, or some love. It is the first feeling of the infant heart when it begins to realize its possession of motherly tenderness and care, long before it can give the feeling its appropriate word. It will be the ultimate emotion of the soul, when, having passed through the cycles of eternity, it shall at last have reached the center and source of all, and shall be able to say of infinite wisdom and love, " mine " !

CHAPTER II.

THE GRAVE AND THE RESURRECTION.

My lost ones were in my arms, and for a time my soul was filled with a bliss too deep for words. At last emotions struggled into utterance.

" Our mother ! " were the glad words I heard from lips which had never learned to pronounce them in their brief earth lives, and then there were eager questionings and glad responses.

"We have been with you, mother," said the elder, " through all these years. Daily we have visited y[^]u. We have nestled in your arm. You never called us that we did not come, x[^]nd we spoke to you, and tried to comfort you, but you did not always hear us; and sometimes when our messages reached your heart, you did not comprehend from whom they came. You have been our mother still, our helper and our guide; and we in turn have helped and guided you as far as lay in our power, as we could not have done had we remained with you on earth. As far as we could understand your troubles we have helped you to bear them. When they were beyond our comprehension, as they sometimes were, we were still permitted to give you our sympathy and love, and thus you have been unconsciously soothed and strengthened."

This is the substance of what my boy said to me, though not perhaps the very words. I was in such a tremor of joy my memory may not have taken exact note of them.

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Then my younger boy spoke: " To us was reserved the privilege of first meeting you on your entrance to the Spirit-world. Others are waiting to see and to welcome you, but we felt that the first hour ought to be ours. "

" My blessed guardian angels ! " I exclaimed.

"No, not your guardian angels; only your loving children. Your guardian you will presently see. It is through her kindness and considerateness that we are with you first. She is here even now. "

I turned, and saw standing at a little distance a woman, apparently of mature years, but with the radiance of heavenly youth and beauty upon her brow. She held out her arms to me exclaiming, " My child ! "

I felt impelled towards her, and yet hesitated for an instant. " You are not my mother? " I said, half by way of asser-

tion, half in inquiry.

"Your spiritual mother, not your earthly one. The ties of spirit are far more real and enduring than those of the flesh."

Her arms were still extended, and as we mutually advanced, they encircled me, and I felt a deep inward conviction of the truth of her words.

"My child," she continued, "the ties which bind us are those of a kindred spiritual nature and kindred earthly experiences. My trials on earth were similar to yours; my struggles and even my failures like yours, only mine more desperate, more complete. When I entered this life, and realized, as I had not done before, the meaning of it all, and saw my own mistakes and failures, and comprehended how I might have avoided many of them, I cried out in agony of spirit that it was unjust that I was not permitted to undo them – to set them right. Then my work was revealed to me, and rebuked and humbled I accepted it. The higher spirits, to whom knowledge is given which is withheld from us who are still so near the earth, pointed out to me a child whose womanly destiny was to be like my own. I must go to her, stay by her, and help her by the light

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of my experience. Oh ! that was so long ago, you were yet a little child. I have been with you all these years, helping, strengthening, comforting; and it makes me glad and grateful to know that my influence has been felt, and has been in many instances attended by good results, so that your life is not the complete failure that mine seemed to be. But remember, only mine seemed to be, my child; for by my own failures did I know best how to help you; and thus all things have worked together for good."

"But how did you speak to me?" I queried. "I know some are privileged to hear spirit voices, but I have – had, I mean – not that gift."

"There you mistake. There are few mortals to whom some spirits, or class of spirits, cannot speak and make themselves heard. If they draw around them good spirits, then their messages lift them upward, and give them spiritual strength and wisdom. If through their vices they seek the companionship of evil spirits, then their tendency will be downward. We do not speak in audible words, but our messages are to the heart, and are felt rather than heard. You often heard me when you imagined it was only your own mind, your own thought speaking. Sometimes you repulsed me, and then other spirits, whose influences were not good, came in, and you morally retrograded. But at all times your children could approach you. You never even unconsciously repulsed them; and through their loving agency I would find my way back to you again. My child, I have been with you all these years. I know your heart far better than your own mother could know it, who, strange to say, does not possess that spiritual kinship with you which I possess. I know you far better than you know yourself."

Again gathering me in a tender embrace, she kissed me

gently, I almost fancied pitifully. It was so sweet to be thus offered and to accept the manifestations of affection. A reserved woman on earth, I was thought to be a cold woman as well; and thus, through many respected, and some few felt a genuine

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friendship for me, the number of those who really loved me was very small.

I have not narrated the conversation of my guide exactly as it occurred. It was more or less interrupted by questions by myself; but I have given the substance of what she said to me.

"My more than mother," I said at length, "I want to ask you a question about something that perplexes me. I thought our departed friends met us at the threshold of the spirit existence. Why was I condemned to pass from one world to another alone?"

"Condemned is not the word, my child," she replied with a bright smile. "Nor were you alone. You were only seemingly so. We and many more stood near you, anxiously watching and eagerly waiting, ready to make ourselves manifest. To many souls the passage from mortality to immortality is a dread one, and they need all the assistance that loving spirit presences can give, to keep them in courage until they become familiar with their surroundings; but you were not one of these. Alone you chose to walk in most things during your earth life; your thoughts and experiences, even your emotions you kept shut within your own soul. You breast the tide of death with a brave heart, calling for no help. You needed the apparent solitude and isolation when the new experiences of spirit life were forced upon you, in order that you might the more fully understand them. When the need came to you for companionship, you called for it, and behold how quickly we responded to your call."

I stooped and gathered a cluster of daisies which grew at my feet. They had long been my favorite flowers, so common and yet so beautiful. As I held them, regarding them with the same admiration I had ever felt for them, a new revelation came to me. The flowers were speaking to me! Not in a word-language, but in a soul-language which I understood for the first time. How often had I been both soothed and perplexed in the earth-life in the companionship of nature, which I had always

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loved with a passionate devotion. Each tree, each leaflet, each blossom, seemed to have a message for me, but I knew not their language; and I only half gathered their meaning, as one from gestures and expression may gather a glimmering of the meaning of a stranger or guest who speaks only in a foreign tongue. I was certain of the message, and I often conjectured what it might be. Sometimes I thought I comprehended it, and the belief was a very pleasant one; but my spirit understood their language, and was glad in consequence. How can I tell you

of their message? It was, as I have said, not in words, but was a direct communication of emotions, unmeasured and unfettered by language. How shall I translate to you a strain of rare melody? How with mathematical precision give the aesthetic results of the harmonious blending of colors? How, then, to your earthly natures convey the sense of perfect peace, joy, hope and faith which these flowers brought to me; not as a vague intangible feeling, but as a positive and assured possession? This experience gave me my first actual realization of my changed condition; that I was no longer mortal, but a spirit, freed from the limitations of mortality, and with a spirit's perception and possibilities. Heretofore I had been in a maze of wonder – everything was so new and so strange! Emotion had so crowded upon emotion that I had realised nothing, and all my feelings had still been from the earthly standpoint. I seemed to have been a mortal who, by some chance had strayed into the realm of spirits; but the flowers – the daisies which grew in the fields, and are trodden heedlessly under foot – had reminded me of my spiritual birthright, and that I understood them was the surest proof of the truth of their message.

" Sweet, perishable things ! " I exclaimed as I pressed them to my bosom. " Even you have your lesson for me. How strange it is that I am so slow to comprehend that even the flowers of the field are capable of instructing me. I am bewildered. My intelligence has not yet developed beyond its earthly

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measure. I do not yet even realize my own privileges and possibilities."

"That is not strange, my child," said my guide. "It would be most strange, indeed, if it were otherwise. How many children of earth realize the possibilities of their spirits while they are yet in the earthly condition? and when they come here, and the horizon is so suddenly widened around them, it takes time for their vision to extend to its utmost limits. But I have something to tell you of the flowers you love so well. They are imperishable here. Death and decay wait not on them any more than on your own spirit."

" Oh, mother, is that so? " I exclaimed in an ecstasy of delight. " How often on earth it has pained me, pained me inexpressibly, to see these beautiful creations of nature, which have by their beauty administered to our finest and most sensitive needs, droop and fade, and then be cast aside to perish. I could never shake off the feeling that we were guilty of ingratitude in thus trampling them under foot when they no longer gave us pleasure."

" You must no longer call me mother," said my companion with a sweet seriousness. " Your own mother is waiting to welcome you when you are prepared to see her; to her the title belongs, and it would pain her to hear it bestowed upon another. Call me Margaret. I am still your guide as long as you need my assistance; but I shall become daily more and more your companion. We shall presently be sisters, not mother and daughter."

"Margaret, my sister," I said, kissing her hand, "no name could suit you better; no name be sweeter for me to utter. See, I fasten my daisies, my marguerites, upon your breast. You belong each to the other. You each speak the same language to me."

" Yes, they are my flowers, as they are yours," she answered simply; "that proves our spiritual kinship."

I cannot tell you all we talked about that beautiful heav-

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enly morning. There seemed so much to say, both to Margaret and to my children, that for a time I was oblivious of all else. Then the remembrance came to me of the friends I had left behind in earth life. Why had I not thought of them before? Because events and experiences had been pressing on me too fast for any more to crowd themselves in. But a panic suddenly seized me. In their bereavement how overwhelmed with grief they would be! How could they get along without me? I must go to them at once, and seek by some means to make my presence known and felt, and to comfort those stricken ones. But when and how should I find them? I looked around me in dismay. I was in the spirit-land; how could I find my way back to earth? How I had left the earth I knew not. I had probably been borne thence by spirit forces, while my spirit was yet weak from its new birth.

No sooner were my wishes spoken than my boys said, " We will show you the way; we have traveled it so often, we know it well."

Immediately the scene around us dissolved until all that remained was a luminous cloud, and we descended, half floating, half walking, until I found myself in the old home I had known so well. How strange it seemed to glide, not like a ghost, but a veritable ghost, silent and unseen, through its rooms and passage ways ! They who had been so long used to my presence, and who were even now mourning the departure of my spirit with sincere and overwhelming grief, if they were but to catch a glimpse of my spirit form as it thus wandered, would be almost paralyzed with terror. I realized as never before how inconsistent is the fear of apparitions.

Eagerly I sought to comfort the mourning ones; and what agony it was even to my newly emancipated and happy spirit, to find that I could not make my presence known.

" Oh, what shall I do ? " I exclaimed in dismay.

"You can do nothing," returned Margaret. "You are yet so new to the Spirit-world, and have so much to learn. Some

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day you will know how to reach and communicate with your friends; now you must permit me to do the work for you."

Gently she approached the weeping ones, softly laid her hands by turns upon their brows, whispered a few words of comfort in their ears, and to my surprise their tears ceased falling; they became calmer, and their conversation, which had been entirely of their loss, now took a happier and more hopeful turn.

Margaret beckoned to me, and we left them thus, and were on our way back to the land of spirits, though I fain would have remained longer.

"No," said Margaret, who seemed to divine my very thoughts; "you are not yet able to help them; and their grief only pains you." " Yes," again in answer to my thoughts; " I shall do your work for you, I shall not forget or neglect them."

" But why can not I do that which I so long to do – that which seems so easy for you? "

" Oh, you have so much to learn ! " replied Margaret half smiling. " You have not yet escaped from the limitations of an imperfect nature. You are still under the rule of law and ever will be. You cannot communicate with your friends until you have learned first the proper methods, and next how to use them. Did you think because you had become a spirit, that all things were possible to you? I can reach them because I have so long been familiar with the means of communication, and especially because of my long association with you. I have also been brought en rapport with your children. I have in a certain sense been their spiritual mother as well as yours. But do not be impatient. You have all eternity before you in which to learn."

I will not go into further detail of how the hours passed of that first day in the Spirit-world – how unconsciously I, who have so recently left the earth, drop into the earth language! "There shall be no night there!" and there are consequently no days, as I once measured, and as you still measure

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time. Time in the Spirit-world is measured only by emotions, events and deeds; counting it thus, how long that day was! When my spirit was strong enough to bear their presence, and my desire had summoned them, my father and mother came to me, and many friends who had preceded me to spirit-life. Need I tell you of the joyous greetings, the words of affection, and all the tender confidences which spring up when those long separated are at last united to part no more? I realized that I was indeed in heaven. On this my first day was given a realization of its bright and happy side, and no hint was then imparted of the darker phases of the spirit-life, and the trials and severe experiences it held in reserve for me. For spirit-land is not all beautiful. There are dark places and darkened souls, as there are on earth. Nor have our disciplines ended with our mortal existence, but are continued here, and must continue until our souls are entirely purified and refined.

It was probably the next day as you count time that Mar-

garet came to me and said: " There is an interesting ceremonial about to take place on earth, at which I think you would like to be present."

I had not thought of it – my funeral! One does not think of one's own funeral as an event of immediate occurrence while one is still alive; and I had not yet been able to realize that I w^{as} dead in any sense that made a funeral necessary.

We attended, of course. There were the usual outward signs of mourning: the black plumed hearse, the casket covered by a heavy pall, the sombre and cumbersome garments. An intense desire seized me to preach my own funeral sermon. Spirits frequently controlled mortals and spoke through them; why not I ? I looked my wish to Margaret, and she smiled and said, " You can try."

Alas ! I knew no more how to carry out my purpose than does a child to direct and control a steam engine. So after an impotent effort, I took my stand beside the casket and lis-

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tened to the discourse. How weak it seemed; how utterly inappropriate to the occasion ! If I could only have spoken, I would have uttered words which should have poured a flood of light regarding the spirit life into the minds of the listeners, and comfort and consolation into their hearts, so that their cheeks should be wet with tears of joy instead of sorrow. Oh, how hard it was to remain silent when there was so much to say!

For a final hymn they sang: " Nearer, my God, to Thee." It had always been a favorite of mine, and perhaps in remembrance of this it had been selected. I had once sung it weakly and tremulously, with the voice of faith and longing. As it was sung at my funeral it fell upon the air like a wail, so impregnated were the voices with the sorrow of the occasion. But there was one singer there to whom all their ears were deaf. Yes, I sang – I sang gloriously; my voice rang out in a glad shout of triumph;

"And when on joyous wing
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon and stars forgot,
Upward I fly,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

It was not merely that the hymn revealed itself in a newer and fuller meaning to me; but there was rapturous joy in the discovery of a new possession – a new faculty of expression – I could sing. I could sing even better than I had hoped or wished to sing on earth.

To me one of the saddest things of the earth-life had ever been that the spirit was in all directions hindered and curtailed in its expression. Through the weakness of the body it must content itself with imperfect, inadequate utterance, or else remain dumb. But freed from the immortal frame, I had acquired a new and a wonderfully expressive language – the lan-

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guage of music. And so at my own funeral I sang triumphantly, though mortal ears heard me not; and as I sang, lo ! a chorus of angel voices far and near joined in the hymn, which rang from earth to heaven a ladder of divine song, up which it seemed as though all souls might have ascended to the vestibule of paradise. But though the strains rang out jubilantly in a mighty gush of music, the mortals heard only their own weak, sad wail, and were deaf to the harmonies of heaven.

When the casket was opened, I was the first to gaze upon the face of the dead; so, too, was I the last. There were numerous and costly flowers, but I was glad they had placed in the folded hands – the thin-veined hands, which, whatever they had found to do, had done with their might – not lilies (few are worthy to bear them), but daisies which brighten by their beauty the highways and byways of the common places of life; the daisies she – I – had loved so well. How the persons of the pronouns perplex me; I seem not to know whether I am speaking of myself or some one else. I tried to take one of these daisies as a memento of the occasion, and transplanting it to immortal bowers, see if I could not bestow upon it the gift of immortality. But I was astonished and perplexed. Though I could consciously touch it, I could not remove or displace it. So even spirit had its limitations.

Again Margaret smiled, and again she said: " You have so much to learn."

Then I laid beside the perishable earthly flowers, the spirit blossoms I still bore with me, but after a moment snatched them back again. No, I could not condemn the precious spirit treasures to the darkness of an earthly tomb. Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes; but spirit to spirit.

My tears fell on the coffined form no less than those of the mourners. I seemed to be taking an eternal farewell of my past self. Thenceforward all connected with my earthly life would live only in memory. The thought was an inexpressibly

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sad one, though there was so much of sorrow in the past, so much that I would naturally be glad to bury forever not only to sight but to memory as well.

I stood by the open grave as the casket was lowered into it, and a sense of the full meaning of death came over me, as

it had never done before – not even since my entrance into the Spirit-world. I was done with earth forever save as my work might temporarily call me thither, and as the clods closed above my cold clay, I was almost overwhelmed with a realization of the solemn future which I now faced with all its responsibilities and its possibilities. I was dead and buried forevermore to earth. I had been resurrected in the Spirit-world.

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CHAPTER III.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AND THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH
HANDS.

I cannot tell you all the experiences which crowded upon me in these first hours and days of my changed condition. Everything was so new, so strange, so different from what I had anticipated. Scarcely a moment that did not bring me fresh knowledge or new experience; and I was so eager to learn, that I sometimes pressed forward faster than my capacity for reception or execution justified, and then I met checks and disappointments. Disappointing and even painful was the conviction which gradually forced itself upon me, that the spirit has its limitations as well as the body; that in being freed from the fetters of flesh which so long seemed to shackle it and hold it down to the weak potentialities of earth, I had not passed at once into a state where infinite wisdom or infinite power was possible to me. True progress is always slow. But I could not content myself to progress slowly; so, with an impetuosity which often defeated its own object, I sought to grasp that which could only come as the reward of long and patient endeavor.

Nor were these outward conditions the only things which took me by surprise. I myself seemed changed – radically changed; yet when I came to reflect, I realized that it was only in seeming. I had passed while on earth for a cold, almost a hard, unsympathetic woman, unswayed by passion, and with a nature incapable of either great joy or great pain. None, not even those who thought they knew me best, dreamed

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of the Storms of passion which sometimes swept through my soul, swaying it hither and thither as a reed is shaken by the blast. No matter what my grief, my friends seldom saw me in tears; and they knew not how I choked them back with almost death-gasps, because I scorned to seem weak. I could feel a dagger

at my heart with an unmoved countenance, and even smile and utter light, idle words, or hum the fragment of some familiar song, while it was being turned and twisted to do greater execution. Few ever noticed the convulsive claspings of my hands in which the nails set deep into the flesh – the only outward sign I gave in the presence of others of the agony within; but when I was alone, then all restraints removed, I could wail, moan, wring my hands, and give myself up to a perfect abandon of misery. Of joy I might probably have known as great an extreme had the opportunity come to me; but I dared not. Joy seemed so uncertain, so illusive, I dared not grasp it, lest it vanish from me; and so gradually had seemed to die out of my heart the capacity for more than a tranquil, negative happiness; and even this, as the years wore on, had become narrower and narrower. Not that I had grown morbid or discontented; but the pain of my life had seemed to numb me to all sensations but those of suffering.

But here! Who was I? What was I? Only my old, true self, after all, but deprived of the screen of the earthly body, behind which I could conceal my emotions; without the mask – which I had worn so long that even I had come to regard it as the true semblance of myself, by the means of which I could present an unperturbed exterior while I was being shaken and torn by inward tempests. The words of the familiar song came back to me:

"We shall know each other there."

Truly, yes, without disguises or concealments; and we shall learn to know ourselves as well. This self-knowledge is not acquired at once. I realize that it is only beginning with me; for when I have come to a thorough knowledge of self, I shall have acquired a knowledge of all things – even of God.

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How patient my friends were with me ! How they taught me and helped me or checked me and bade me restrain my impetuosity, as the case demanded. The bonds and bars of earth life being removed, I was like a child to whom is given unwanted liberty. I knew not what to do with it or with myself. I wanted to realize all the possibilities of my new existence, before I was fully prepared for any of them; and as a consequence of this rashness, the lessons which the future had in store for me sometimes came with a suddenness and a harshness for which I was little prepared.

"Does not each spirit find its own appropriate sphere?" I asked, urged to the question quite as much by curiosity as by a genuine desire for knowledge. " I seem to be hovering on the border land of many spheres, with no place assigned me. Where am I to find my home and my work? "

" The sphere you are to occupy will be of your own choosing. An ordeal is before you. I wish that it might have been delayed," Margaret replied with a troubled countenance. "But here in the Spirit-world desires are answered. To many the ordeal is so tempered and softened by time and circumstance that they scarcely realize they have passed through it until the end is reached; but none can escape. It comes to all in some one form or another. Your impatient nature, which cannot

wait until the future develops itself, but must snatch at impending events and draw them untimely to you, brings you face to face with something which will require all your courage and fortitude to meet."

My impetuous nature ! I had come to believe myself the most patient of women, but when I began to reflect, I realized that my much-prized patience was but a thin, outward crust, by which I had deceived the world and even my own self, while the genuine impatience of my nature had boiled and surged within, unchecked and unquelled.

I turned to reply, but found myself alone. A sense of injury came over me. I was to meet an ordeal, and yet all had

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left me to meet it alone. Surely this was not kind. But while this feeling was still fresh in my mind, it was quickly obliterated, or at least lost sight of by that which I next experienced.

Now how can I describe to you that which has no parallel on earth ? I can give you only an imperfect idea of what now occurred, though it came to me with a force hitherto unparalleled in either my earthly or my spiritual existence. The air seemed filled with a strange murmur, and clouds descended and shut from my view all outward objects. The murmur increased until to my astonished and dismayed ears it seemed a roar; and the clouds rolled one upon another, until they took a definite shape, and this was what I saw and heard. The story of my life was being told in tones that seemed to me must reach to the farthest heavens, and its events were pictured before me by the tossing clouds. I use the words heard and saw, and yet I am not sure that I did either; but the impression made upon my mind was that as if all senses had united in one grand effort to place my past life in its true phases before me. I sat appalled and dismayed; and then as the record of weaknesses and failures went on, I covered my face with my hands, and sank in agony and shame to the ground.

Truly there is record kept of every event in our lives. With my belief in Spiritualism I thought I had realized that. I knew with a sort of superficial knowledge that not only our personality but our past is written upon all with which we come in familiar contact, so that a sensitive may from even a handkerchief or glove which we have borne about us or worn read the story of our lives; but the belief had conveyed no special meaning to me. I had regarded it as one of the phases of Spiritualism, more curious than actually valuable; and now I was being made to read my own record. I understood why my friends had withdrawn. It was out of kindness, not from want of consideration. "Was ever sense of humiliation more complete than mine ? I thought that even in the earth-life I had formed a tolerably correct estimate of my own character and

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resultant acts; but in these dreadful cloud-pictures, how in

those deeds on which I most prided myself as having been actuated by the purest and most unselfish motives, did there too often rest the dark blot of unconscious egotism or self-righteousness. Was I then incapable of pure motives ?

I could not shut my eyes or ears to that which was passing around me. So after a time I summoned all my courage, and since I must sit in judgment on myself, I resolved to do so bravely and thoroughly. How many sombre pictures there were ! How many half light, half shade; but now and then there was a bright one in which some unconscious unselfishness, some little deed I had done and forgotten, without any thought of secret self-glorification, and which had not only been good in its results, but which had sprung from a fountain of genuine good within my heart, shone out like a jewel from the dark clouds which surrounded it. Truly our unconscious acts, be they good or bad, best attest to our true natures. I was too humiliated for either vanity or self-congratulation when these gem pictures appeared; but a feeling of deep yet humble thankfulness stole into my heart, that there were any gleams of brightness amid so many shadows; and even as this feeling crept upon me, the clouds seemed to lighten, and the sombre pictures took on a tint of comparative brightness from some unknown source, and the rushing, roaring wind died away into a murmur. The story of my life was told, and I had sat in judgment upon myself, and by my own heart was partially condemned, partially absolved. Then I felt conscious of some one near me, and Margaret's arm stole around me, and my face was drawn to her breast and hidden there.

" Has it been more than you could bear ?" she asked.

" No; for I have borne it," I replied.

" See, it is not all ended ! "

" Must I see more ?" I exclaimed with a shudder,
" Surely the limit of my endurance is reached."

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But she only raised my head from her breast, and pointed to the clouds which still seemed to envelop us.

Hesitatingly my eyes followed the direction of her hands, and behold a strange thing was transpiring. The jDictm^es had disappeared, and the clouds were again in violent agitation. Again they took form, and I saw slowly emerge from their misty outlines, and gradually shape itself, a structure, my ideal house, which I had so often beheld in my waking dreams, and sometimes but vainly wished to realize in the earth-life.

"Let us enter," said Margaret.

We did so, and again I encountered a strange experience. Its walls were covered with, pictures – the pictures I had just beheld with such perturbation of spirit. Nothing was hidden – everything stood revealed. But a kindly fate, or shall I say providence ? had placed the gem pictures where they could best catch the light, and should be a perpetual reminder and incentive to

purser and noble endeavor; while the shadow-pictures were put in obscure places, and those which had no touch of brightness in them, but were all dark, were almost hidden from view. It was enough for me to know that they were there, without the agony of being compelled constantly to rest my eyes upon them. There was another peculiarity about this house, not only the house itself but every article of furnishing it possessed seemed somehow to remind me of something in my earth-life, as though it were actually woven or manufactured out of the actions or impressions of that life.

"This is your home," again spoke Margaret. "You should be satisfied with it, for it is what you yourself have made it."

A house not made with hands ! How that phrase came back to me, not made with hands, but built with purposes, endeavors and achievements. How strange that while I was still surrounded by the material forms of earth, doing, or perhaps neglecting my daily duties, I was building myself a house eternal in the heavens !

How kind, how good, how sympathetic Margaret and all my friends were to me ! I came to realize after a time that what had

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seemed such a terrible revelation to the Spirit- world had been only a revelation to myself; that my inmost motives were already known; the good of my nature appreciated, and its evil deplored by those who had, by the laws of spirit-life, been permitted to approach within the circle of personality which surrounded me, as it surrounds us all. How tenderly they encouraged me; how lightly they touched upon my faults and failings, and that only to show me how I might remedy them, and grow in spiritual graces as well as knowledge.

"But," I asked after a time, "must these dreadful pictures always remain a terrible, an unendurable reminder of my weaknesses and sins? "

" Those pictures which our own deeds have painted can never be effaced nor entirely hidden," was the reply. "But the time will come, my dear friend, strange as the idea may now seem to you, when they will be the most valued pictures of all – when you would sooner part with the brightest gems which adorn your walls than these. You wonder why ? Well, I will tell you. In the work which we all must do towards helping struggling humanity, we all need to perpetually remember the bonds which connect us with that humanity, so that we shall be patient and charitable, with a patience and charity which know neither weariness nor cessation, and these pictures are the visible tokens of these invisible bonds. They call us back to the past and to our own weak, erring selves. As we have needed charity, so do we become more ready to bestow it. As we have been lifted up, do we have strength and courage to uplift others. In brief, we must fully realize that we have been human, before we can hope to take the first step towards the development of that divinity within us. As a kite can only soar aloft while the cords hold it fast to the earth, so our spirits will float with a steadier, surer motion for this visible bond which connects us with our earth-life."

It was all so new, so strange, that I could not comprehend it at once. I am not sure that I do so fully even yet, but I think I catch glimpses of the truth. I have found myself more than

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once regarding some of the darkest and most forbidding of my life pictures with a new and strange interest which is not all pain. As it was necessary for the ideal man God to descend to the earth and drink to the dregs the bitter cup of suffering before he could enter with sympathy into the sufferings of humanity, so perhaps it is necessary that we should all know from personal experience what failure and sin are, in order to fully qualify us to help other weaklings and sinners.

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CHAPTER IV.

BUT ARE AS THE ANGELS.

The first result growing out of the experiences I have just narrated, next to that self-knowledge which I began to acquire through their means, was a knowledge of others. My eyes were opened so that when I met certain spirits I seemed to enter intuitively into their thoughts and feelings; and I found, moreover, that, as my life record was placed before the Spirit-world that all might read, so when the desire came to me from good motives to read a like record of others' lives, the desire was readily gratified; but I also found that when the desire was tinged with any feelings of selfishness or uncharity, a cloud seemed to overspread the record so that I could not perceive it clearly. By this means I quickly found those spirits most congenial to me, and ascertained my own place in the Spirit-world — "my own sphere," as I had been wont to think of it. And here again another thing took me by surprise. Though all classes of spirits, both good and bad, do not meet and mingle here as on earth, still there is no strong outward demarcation between the different spheres or grades. Spirits of different approximating grades meet and in outward appearance associate together; but each one recognizes by that inner consciousness, that fine intuition of the spirit which is bestowed in a slight degree as a rare gift upon some favored mortals, those who are their true companions and friends; and thus to the spirit world spirits of different spheres are as plainly and distinctly separated as though each were walled in into a separate heaven. No; I am wrong. A strong chain of sympathy binds all together, causing the lower spirits who have begun to progress at all, to

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turn their regards and their aspirations towards those above them; while the latter always respond in accordance with a law within

their being, to which they could not be false without themselves descending from their high positions. Thus, while wisdom, justice and truth are the centrifugal forces of the spiritual universe, dividing and separating, love, charity and sympathy are the centripetal forces, binding all together.

I had found my sphere in the association of those spirits whose degree of development most nearly approximated mine, and whose society was therefore congenial. I had found my home, which was, as best I could express it, an outward manifestation of my own character furnished and decorated with the fabrics I had woven, the articles I had constructed, and the pictures I had painted, by my thoughts and deeds, while yet in the earth life. It was, as it were, an objective self, and I soon came to love it as we must always love that which is part of ourselves. I had yet to learn what my work should be in the Spirit-world; but I was beginning to grow wiser, and so I curbed my impatience, waiting until that work should develop itself to my comprehension, as I felt the assurance it would do in the fullness of time. Moreover I dreaded by precipitate desires to subject myself to another ordeal. Margaret brought to me one day a woman who was newer to the experiences of the new life than even L
"Love her," she said; "she needs all your love and tenderness."

A rare bond of sympathy seemed to bind us together, even from the beginning, and all unconsciously to myself I began my work by giving a helping-hand to this sorrowing, earth-tried sister. I did not know it then, but I see it now, how we were each mutually helpful to the other, — I in imparting strength to a spirit that as yet had little of its own; she in strengthening me in making a demand for that strength.

I asked her no questions of her past; I thought when she felt like confiding in me she would do so. I would have been content to remain ignorant until she chose to enlighten me, but Margaret thought best it should be otherwise. She told me

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how this woman had in earth-life been bound by human laws to a man who early in her married days had forfeited her respect, and as a matter of course, her love also. But she bore her burden of sorrow to the end, outwardly patient and uncomplaining, and performing for duty's sake, with a heavy heart, those duties which would have been a rare delight if love had been the actuating motive. The end came at last. As she looked for the last time upon the coffined form of her husband, though she wept tears of pity for both, because of the happiness they had missed, she said to herself, "It is better thus."

I saw from the first that a shadow hung over her. She seemed expectant yet fearful of something. When I knew her history, I understood what it was. She was thinking of her husband, and wondering why he had not come to claim her as his wife. Margaret read this feeling clearly, and so after a time she said to her:

"Your mind is not wholly at rest. There is some matter wherein you are not quite satisfied."

"I had hoped— I had feared," she began, and then hesitated. She could not at once clearly define her own feelings.

"Yes, you have both hoped and feared, and when the fear is entirely subdued, and only the hope and wish remain, then they will be realized."

The woman looked up inquiringly. "You are thinking of the man who was once your husband," Margaret continued, in answer to the look. "When you are ready to go to him, not with a revived earthly love, but in a spirit of heavenly love, which is ready to forgive and to aid, then you will see the man whom you now fear. He will not come to you, but you will go to him; and when you come to know him as he really is, and comprehend the causes which conspired to make him what he was and is, your soul will be filled with pity which will make it forgetful of self, and with thought only for him. Then you will stretch out your hands to him and become his savior, and he, with the love he really bears you, still strong in his heart.

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will follow your guidance whithersoever you choose to lead. This is part of your future work — not all of it. But not yet, not yet. You are not yet ready for it

"Have no fears," added Margaret reassuringly; "there are no fetters here to bind the soul. The bonds to which we submit are only those of mutual affection and mutual adaptation. An earthly law bound you together, but you are free here, for death is the great divorcer."

"Are there, then, no husbands and wives — no marriages in this world?" I asked earnestly.

"In heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels," was the reply, given with a bright smile. "But I see you entirely misapprehend my answer. Let me explain. Here among us there are no marriage bonds which bind the soul to the corpse of a dead affection, but there is love fuller and more perfect than the earth knows anything about. You are still tinged with the earthly ideas, and the whole teaching of earth is to degrade sexual affection, and sink it to the lowest depths. Men and women who hesitate to take in vain the name of a purely imaginary deity, will not scruple every day of their lives to profane by light word or unhallowed deed the most sacred part of their natures. Truly, perverted love is a terrible demon. It is the embodiment and personification of selfishness. It tears, it defiles, it destroys and it exults in its destruction. It sends more victims to the lower spheres than any other single cause. You must look there in these spheres of lost spirits, if you would know to what depths a man and a woman will sink who blaspheme against the holy spirit of love which should find a pure temple in every heart. But search out the possibilities of your own soul, and then tell me if love-real love — is the impure impulse, the degrading impulse, the subject for jest, which it is so almost universally regarded. Is not pure love the very essence of unselfishness? Does it not ennoble the soul and purify the heart? Does it not arouse higher impulses and bring the dawn of a spiritual vision to

which one can never attain with it? Is there any earthly happiness which brings mortals nearer heaven than this sentiment of the soul, which by even good people is underrated and despised, and which by the ignorant and evil is turned into scorn? I tell you a man and a woman who truly love one another on earth are already in heaven, and when you open the door of the Spirit-world to admit them, would you shut it in the face of their love? No; let it enter in all its fullness, and glorify their lives here as there."

"But—"

"Yes; I mean all. Do not the flowers bloom, and bloom immortally here? Every opening blossom is a manifestation of love — a sexual union. Would you deny immortality to the flower of life — to that which even as we find it, good, bad and indifferent, is, after all, all that makes life tolerable? It is at the source of all action. It is, when unperverted, the deepest and purest impulse of every heart. It is the constant theme of your novelists, the perpetual inspiration of your poets. It has incited to the grandest and most heroic deeds, and the noblest self-sacrifice. There is no other emotion which has such power over the human heart, and which has so controlled the destiny of nations and of mankind in general. Yes, I know you have been used to a cant about spiritual love, which you have not yet forgotten, even with your present experience in the Spirit-world. You have entertained a dim, shadowy idea that spirits stand stationary like spiritual suns, sending out beams of love, thus enveloping one another; if that is not your precise idea, it is something quite as unspiritual and illusive. But you did not leave your heart behind you with your earthly body. You have the capacity for loving intensified; and not only that you have arms with which to embrace. Would you have been satisfied if, when you first beheld your long lost children, you had stood at a distance and regarded them with your imaginary spiritual affection? No; you instinctively stretched out your arms to them, and took them to your heart, and your kisses were on their lips, their

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brows, their cheeks. Is the conjugal affection less than the maternal? No; my children, we shall all some day, if we may not now, clasp to our hearts some one whom we love, and who will love us with equal ardor in return; but not until we have entirely divested ourselves of the degrading earthly ideas concerning the purest, most sacred, most spiritual sentiment of the human heart?"

"But I thought you said there were no marriages here," we both remarked.

"Nor are there. There are no mismatched couples; no degrading selfishness on one side, no misery and unrecognized self-sacrifice on the other. They are as the angels. Earthly bonds are only perpetuated as the heart has sanctioned them. But

love is the atmosphere of this life. You have not come to the arctic regions, but to the region where love is a pervading influence, warming all hearts. No spirit can find its most perfect development who misses from his life the experience which love can give him. If he has lived a loveless life on earth, the possibility is still reserved for him here. The certainty will come to him in the future. His being cannot be perfected without it."

"Is it possible," the new comer asked, "that I shall come some day to feel this love for my husband?"

"For him who was once your husband," Margaret corrected. "No, there is no bond of spiritual attraction between you. You know that now. He will come to recognize it sooner or later, and though his heart is still turning to you, the time will come when he will find a more perfect happiness than he yet dreams of in the companionship of another."

"Take me to him," cried our companion.

"Not yet; you are not prepared. But you shall have the first lesson in that preparation, and you shall come with us," added Margaret, turning to me; "for I see your mind is full of questioning."

My companion turned toward me with a sweet smile, her eyes being filled with tears, and drawing my arm within her

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own, we followed Margaret, who led the way to a temple which I had often noticed and wished to enter, but had restrained my impatience. Within we found, not a shrine, nor an altar of any kind, but innumerable volumes arranged on shelves which extended from floor to ceiling.

"Do they, then, have public libraries here?" I asked wonderingly.

"You mistake; this is a library of record, wherein all may read, whenever they choose, that which pertains to the lives of themselves and others. Here are the true biographies of earth, not the false, superficial affairs which pass under that name in the life from which you have come."

She opened a volume and bade us read. I read a story which filled me with wonder. It was of a man whose nature was perverted by inherited traits of an ignorant and depraved ancestry. With generous impulses, there was also an inherent weakness of character which caused him to be readily influenced and swayed for either good or evil. Added to these, were the conditions of the sensitive or medium, which through the weakness already spoken of, made him the easy and unresisting victim of evil spirits, who finding the air of even the lower heavens to which they had passed too ethereal for them, and missing those gratifications of sense which were their only conceptions of happiness, continually sought the earth-life, and manifested their evil natures in evil ways.

When we had finished reading the record, I seemed to see

in my companion's heart the depth of pity which opened down for the man thus doomed even before his birth to such an inheritance of misfortune and misery ! All the hardness which for years she had entertained melted away, and she sat down and wept. Yes, we sometimes weep in the Spirit- world, for we have taken with us our emotional natures, and are not yet beyond sorrow.

" Take me to him ! Take me to him ! " she cried. She seemed to feel that every delaying moment was a reproach un-

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til she should stand face to face with him.

As Margaret silently led us away from the temple I turned to leave my two companions, for I felt that in the coming interview, at least, I ought not to intrude. But Margaret beckoned me back, and the woman clasped my hand with a firmer pressure. We followed a path which I had not before trodden. After a time Margaret spoke.

" My child, do not reproach yourself unjustly. You performed your part nobly, and did your duty well. Your self-sacrifice was more than ought to have been required of you. If you failed in a true appreciation of the difficulties which beset his path, it was because you had no knowledge of nor means of understanding them. Blame not yourself, but rather the unjust human law and popular sentiment which refuse to allow those to separate whom God hath not joined together."

We had passed out into a barren plain, and the path was rough and stony. The sky, too, which hitherto had beamed with more than earthly light, seemed to become gradually overcast, until finally, as compared with the light we had left behind us, there was scarcely more than twilight. Looking backward, the light of the region we had left shone like an aurora borealis upon the horizon.

"Shall we go back?" Margaret asked.

" Oh, no, no ! " the woman responded with fresh eagerness, and we quickened our steps.

At last we espied in the gloom a figure sitting lonely among the rocks. The woman started and then stood still for an instant. She had recognized the figure.

" Oh, I pity him, so deeply! " she exclaimed, "but there is not one throb of love for him in my heart."

The man seemed to feel our approach, for he turned and looked eagerly in our direction, as if expecting some one. Evidently his expectations were at last realized, for as he saw us he sprang up with a look of joy.

"You have come at last!" he exclaimed. "I have been

waiting for you day by day ever since I heard you had entered spirit-life; waiting in this solitude until I thought I should go mad; and yet you never came ! You saw every one else, of course, before you thought of me !"

I recognized in his fretful and jealous complaining what must have been the earthly character of the man. The memories it awakened seemed almost more than the woman could bear; but she withheld all answer. He continued:

"You will at least stay with me now you have come? "

"No," replied Margaret; "her home is not here."

He stretched out his arms as if to embrace her, but she only took his hand and pressed it with what warmth she could.

"The same cold-hearted, cruel woman you were on earth! " he exclaimed with bitterness.

" The old repellent feelings seemed to be struggling to come back in the breast of my friend. I whispered to her:

" Remember the record. It is not himself who is speaking, but through him generations of undisciplined, selfish and wayward ancestors, and hordes of evil spirits, who, by their frequent influence and control, have perverted what little of good there was left in his nature."

She smiled sorrowfully as she pressed my hand, and then went and sat down beside him; and spoke kindly to him, trying to arouse the better feelings of his heart, not by reproof or moralizing, but by bringing happier emotions uppermost. Margaret and I turned to one side and left them alone.

Presently I felt a strange oppression in my breast, and my head began to swim as if with vertigo.

"We must remain here no longer," said Margaret; "this air is poison."

She called to our companion, who immediately arose and came back to us.

"You will take me with you? " the man asked entreatingly.

" I have looked forward to this meeting all these years. You surely will not drive me away now."

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He entreated so pitifully, that his wife seemed to know not what to say. She looked inquiringly to Margaret.

" Let him come, if he wishes," she responded, much to my surprise.

So with a cheerfulness he had not yet manifested, he walked beside us, forgetting his past grievances in a flow of jubilantly happy conversation.

As we returned, the sky gradually grew brighter and the air purer until we had nearly reached our starting point. The man had hesitated more than once on the route, apparently stumbling oftener as the obstacles in the path decreased.

"I can go no further," he said at last. "We must stop here. I cannot breathe, and the light almost blinds me. We must retrace our steps a little way, for this climate is certainly not a healthy one."

"Your wife's home is further on," said Margaret.

"Her home should be where her husband is," he returned with his old querulousness.

Then Margaret turned to him, and with a severity which she had not before manifested, she said:

"You are no longer on earth. This woman is no longer your wife, but free to come and go as she chooses. Her home is waiting for her, a home which you yourself realize you cannot enter. Shame upon you, who with your selfishness still unchecked or unchanged, are not content with having blasted her mortal existence and filled it with sorrow and care, but now must seek to drag her into the semi-darkness where you find your congenial home. You may come to her when you are fitted, but she cannot go to you, except as an occasional visitor,"

The man drooped in dejection. The blow seemed almost too great for him, and yet he bore it, and at last turned to her with an uncharacteristic gentleness.

"Forgive me," said he, "I will not curse you now as I have done in the past. I will not even seek to do so. I will not again ask you to come to me until I find myself more

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worthy. I did not realize my unworthiness until now. Promise me when that time comes '*

Margaret interrupted: "She can make you no promises, and you must seek to exact none. But I will make this promise in her stead, that when you become truly worthy of the love of a good woman, the desire of your heart, whatever it may then be, shall be gratified."

He slowly retraced his steps, and we turned and went on our way. Looking back, the last glimpse we obtained of him, he was standing with face turned towards us, and with outstretched arms, as if silently entreating us.

The interview was altogether a sad one, and yet not wholly unsatisfactory. My friend's work had begun, and she felt that some little had been accomplished. What a prolonged task it promised to be! However, here we are not limited by time, but have all eternity in which to work.

After Margaret had left us, my friend embraced me silently,

and then took her departure. I sat down to think it all over, and presently became lost in reverie; and when at length I aroused myself from it I found myself repeating: "But are as the angels ! But are as the angels ! "

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CHAPTER V.

INTO THE DEPTHS.

The remembrance of that desolate, cloud-shadowed region haunted me. When next I saw Margaret I questioned her about it. Were many spirits condemned to remain in its desolation and gloom?

" My child," she replied, " how little you know of the world you have entered ! The place you visited is the border land between the higher and the lower spheres. It is where those spirits are compelled to stay whose virtues are merely negative ones; they are, so to speak, outside the gates; whose vices are due to weakness rather than to radical wickedness of heart. There are depths below that where the light becomes dimmer and dimmer, until at last not a ray can penetrate, and the darkened souls remain in perpetual outer darkness.'-

*'Is it possible to visit these places? " I asked hesitatingly.

" It is possible to visit them," was the reply, " if your motive is to benefit those who are compelled to remain in them until they have progressed to a higher spiritual condition. To some the work given to do is to be continual visitants and messengers of peace and hope to these benighted souls. Only high and pure spirits are entrusted with this work. Those to whom still cling the weaknesses and superstitions of earth, have neither the wisdom nor the strength to do this work well, and are themselves in perpetual danger. If your wishes lead you in that direction, it can do no harm and may possibly benefit you, to be able to judge for yourself to what depths the spirit of man may sink. I

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have witnessed it but rarely, for the sight is not a pleasant one, and my work has lain in other directions. I will summon a messenger to accompany you."

In accordance with that subtle law by which spirit can communicate with spirit, though at a distance, Margaret sent her message, and in response to it, there presently appeared the most beautiful being I had yet beheld. Her garments were radiantly white, and a sort of luminous atmosphere seemed to surround her like a halo.

"Do then, indeed, women habitually visit these dreadful

scenes?" I asked, as the messenger was approaching.

"Women are better fitted for the work than men," was Margaret's reply. "They are safer from harm and more respected by the depraved of the other sex than are men. Know you not that a pure woman with a noble purpose in her heart may walk safely, though unguarded save by her own purity and nobility, anywhere, whether on earth, in heaven, or in hell?"

This beautiful woman was unknown to me. I could not enter into her thoughts or divine her nature; but she smiled sweetly upon me, and a sense of delightful companionship stole over me, and I felt at peace and rest in her presence. When she spoke, her voice was rich and mellow, and sweet as the sweetest music. Its very tones seemed to convey her meaning, so that words were almost superfluous.

We at once set out upon our journey. We seemed to descend by steep and circuitous paths. As we proceeded I perceived many spirits, all intent upon their own pursuits. The way grew darker and rougher, and the forms that we saw were more forbidding in their aspects. My companion stopped now and then to exchange a kindly greeting with some one she met, and I noticed with wonder how the grim faces lighted up with a borrowed beauty while she spoke to them, as if her very presence were a benediction. She was evidently held in veneration by all. Still we pursued our way until everything became so changed that it was as though we had entered another world; and here

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my companion began her mission in earnest. A group of men and women were indulging in boisterous mirth and singing ribald songs. She stopped and spoke to them with a sweet seriousness which at once arrested their attention and commanded their respect. There was no seeming condescension in her manner. She spoke to them almost as though she might have been one with themselves; nor was her conversation anything of the sermonizing order. Its chief intent seemed to be to arouse the best and kindest feelings of their hearts, and thus prepare the ground for any good seed which might be sown therein. I took note that the songs and rough jests ceased, and more than one woman drew a little one side, as if ashamed of the part she had been playing.

Being a stranger among them, my companion was questioned regarding whence she came, and she gave an earnest and minute description of the sphere from which she descended. Her auditors looked at one another in silence. One or two shook their heads as if doubtful whether the story were to be taken for anything more than a flight of the imagination. One rougher than the others in his appearance, but yet with a certain honest look about him, at last ventured to speak his thoughts.

"Well," said he, "I have been over on this side a good many years as they count time on earth, and I've never found any better place than this. I know there are a good deal worse ones over yonder, and so I think myself fortunate to be as well off as I am." >

Another taking courage added his testimony. "I'm sure

I'm happy enough here. We have pretty jolly times, don't we, boys?"

All nodded in assent.

One young woman who had been regarding the stranger intently from the moment of her first appearance, said in a low voice, audible only to ourselves:

"This is not the kind of heaven I used to picture to myself when I was in earth-life. I am not in hell, for that is over yonder; so this must be heaven;" but it seems to me there might be

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a brighter, happier place, and if there is, I wish I knew the way there."

My companion put her arm about this young woman, and drawing her to one side, held a long conversation with her. I know not what they said, but when they returned, there was a look of inspiration which I had not before seen on the face of the one, and tears in the eyes of the other. As we passed on I saw that the latter had left her companions, and was sitting by herself, apparently lost in deep thought.

"Are these people really as contented and happy as they seem?" -I asked.

"Yes," my companion replied; "they are as happy as their natures will permit them to be. They have no perception of any higher or better life, and so feel no longings to attain to such a life. As soon as they are made to realize that there is a possibility of progress, an unwonted restlessness will seize them, and they will not long remain here. That young woman will presently find herself stifled by her present surroundings, and will be forced to seek a purer atmosphere."

"Which class of people in earth-life contribute to people this sphere?"

"Those whose hearts are not inherently bad, but whose spiritual natures have not been developed; those who have lived selfish lives, finding in the gratification of the animal instincts and propensities their greatest, in fact their only pleasure. They are incredulous as to even the existence of a higher sphere than their own, because their spiritual perceptions have not yet been awakened."

"What is their manner of living?"

"Very similar to that to which they were accustomed on earth. Good and evil impulses alike sway them by turns. They know no pleasures beyond those of the senses, and selfishness is the dominant feeling. They have their discords and contentions, their misunderstandings and their feuds, the same as on earth; and yet they will tell you, as they have done, that they

are contented and happy. It is this class of spirits that mortals have most to fear. Unscrupulous and almost conscienceless they care not what trick they impose upon the credulous, what the consequences of their evil impulses. There is a constant effort on their part to gain the control of mediums for a gratification of propensities which is denied them in their present life. Oh, earthly mediums can not be too careful to surround themselves with an atmosphere of personal purity, in order to render themselves unapproachable by the influence and control of such spirits as these."

Still we descended. It became so dark that we had almost to grope our way, but here and there there seemed to be beacon fires, which lit up the scene with a lurid glare. At last we reached a plain. The path seemed to lie narrow and uncertain between morasses on either hand. Here and there ditches, half-filled with slime, were revealed in the fitful light of the fires. Forms as of strange, hideous creatures crouched here and there, and glared at us with flaming eyes and hungry faces. I shuddered and cowered, and drew closer to my companion, who walked confidently and fearlessly along the path, her radiant atmosphere gleaming out in the semi-darkness. The path seemed to stretch far ahead through a landscape whose dreary monotony was almost unbearable. Low clouds hung over our heads, and they, too, were lit up with fiery touches by the fires. Great bats flapped their wings and circled round and round overhead, and once the melancholy call of an owl fell upon my ear. Presently other strange cries and wails reached me, causing my blood to run cold with horror.

Involuntarily I exclaimed:

"Listen to the wails of lost souls! "

"Truly, yes," responded my companion; "souls to whom were given the light of truth and the guide of conscience, and the knowledge of the spirit, but who wilfully turned their backs upon them all, and thus forfeited heaven and happiness. Their souls are lost in this morass, while the darkness which envelops

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them prevents their finding the path again without great difficulty. Here they must wander and struggle and wail and despair, until they willingly open their hearts to the truth, and reach out their hands for that help which will surely be given them when they sincerely desire it."

Here and there were rudely constructed huts which seemed to serve the purposes of shelter for the wretched inhabitants of this sphere. In front of one of these sat a woman with disheveled hair and distorted countenance, wringing her hands, and now and then uttering fierce cries.

My companion paused to speak with her.

" Will you tell me the cause of your distress? " she asked.

At first the only reply was inarticulate raving; but presently the maniac, for so she seemed, became calmer, and with a confidence inspired by the sweet, pure face of the questioner, she wailed out:

" I murdered my unborn babes one after another. I had not the excuse of shame which I wished to conceal. I was a fashionable woman, and I wanted my time to devote to society and my own amusement, and children would be in the way; so I mm'dered them, poor helpless things murdered by the one who should rather have sacrificed her life to protect them. Oh, I am a murderess!" she fairly shrieked. "Sometnnes their little innocent faces look down reproachfully out of the clouds, and then I go mad – mad – mad!" and indeed she did, manifesting all the symptoms of the most violent form of insanity.

" Do you not comprehend one of the causes which peoples the lunatic asylums in the earth? It is sometimes a relief for these mad spirits to control a human form, and give way to their paroxysms through that organism. As humanity is elevated and made to recognize and obey the higher laws of its being, this sphere will have fewer inhabitants, and this form of insanity among humans become more rare. When they learn the sin of forcing an unwilling motherhood upon a woman who is neither spiritually nor affection ally prepared for the responsibility and

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the privileg-e, then will the cause of sin such as this woman has committed, be removed. No woman should become a mother until her desires go forth to meet and to welcome the duties and joys which belong to motherhood."

"Do you ever call for your injured children to come to you? " my companion asked the wretched woman.

"Call for them! How should I dare to do so? They would curse me ! "

"No, they would come to love and bless and help you."

"Oh, if I only thought so! If I only dared!" and for a moment her ravings ceased in thoughtful silence.

" Learn to forget yourself and your own misery, and think of these little ones whom you might have loved and cherished. Learn to love them, and love will work wonders for you."

A gleam of hope came into the despairing eyes, and we passed on, leaving her with that new-born hope to comfort her heart.

" When she calls for them in love, then those little ones will be brought to her, and will help to lead her out of this terrible place," was what my companion said to me.

" You leave a word of comfort with every one," I remarked.

"That is my mission," she returned.

Then other sounds fell upon my ears, and in the weird light we saw a man apparently beside himself with terror. His hand was outstretched as if to ward away something which menaced him, and though his face was half averted, his eyes seemed held as if by a spell, by the cause of his terror. Presently I distinguished what it was. A huge serpent lay coiled at his feet, as if about to spring upon him, its tongue protruding and its fiery eyes gleaming upon him and holding him in spite of his will. Lizards crawled over his feet, and rats and all sorts of noisome creatures ran or crept hither and thither about him; but these lesser annoyances were for the instant forgotten in the greater fear which paralyzed him. After a time the serpent, as if its purpose had changed, slowly uncoiled itself and crept away, and

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then these inarticulate utterances which had at first attracted our attention took the form of words, and the man prayed and cursed almost in the same breath. At one moment he defied the hideous creatures which surrounded him, and bid them do their worst; at the next he begged to be delivered from them.

"This is the drunkard's hell," said my companion; "a hell which begins even upon earth. This man gave himself up to the slavery of drink; he destroyed his own prospects in life; begat children upon whom the curse is perpetuated; impoverished his family; seduced his friends to a like destruction; broke his wife's heart; and at last died of delirium tremens. He has brought himself to his present condition, and here he must remain until he feels remorse, not for the consequences of his sins, but for the sins themselves."

Presently we came to another man sitting silent and bent, and with his hands pressed to his breast,

"Behold," said my companion, "a victim of remorse. It burns in his bosom night and day like a perpetual fire, and yet it does not help to lift him out of his present condition, because he will not even admit to his heart a full sense of his guilt, but is continually justifying and finding excuses for himself"

"What was this man's sin?" I queried.

"He won the love of an innocent girl, and through that love, which was yielded entirely and confidingly to him, he dragged her down to her destruction, even glorying in the shame he brought upon her. She in her turn became desperate, and sank to as great a depth of degradation as he, revenging herself upon his sex by luring as many as possible to their destruction. But her sins fall in great measure upon him, and he still refuses to recognize that."

With head still bowed he had not yet perceived our presence. Presently he exclaimed, as if the words were wrung from him by inward agony:

"Oh, it burns! it burns! it is burning my heart out! "Will this inward fire never cease? My God! how can I endure it

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longer? Yet I am sure I was no worse than the rest. If they were justified, why was not I?"

Then my companion spoke:

" Because to you were given greater and clearer powers of spiritual discernment, but you scorned the gifts and made no use of them."

Then something happened which filled me with wonder. The man looked up as the words fell upon his ear and a strange terror seized him, and he shrank back and cowered as if in fear.

"Who are you? " he at length found voice to ask. "Mary, is it truly you, or has my punishment taken on a new form, and is this strange illusion to haunt me in the future, to be a perpetual reminder of that which I would forget? "

"Eobert, it is I," was the reply given in the lowest and sweetest of accents.

" It is false ! " he shrieked, springing to his feet. " It is only an illusion from which I will escape. Mary is here somewhere in this valley of the shadow of death. Why should she not be when I am here? A wicked woman is worse and more degraded than a wicked man – all know that; and I once saw her here when I first came, when she came to reproach me for her misery, and to taunt me with my own."

"Robert, it is indeed I," again replied the sweet low voice. " I was here, but I am here no longer. I have found a better way, a better place. Robert, I loved you once, I love you still; let the past be blotted out between us, and let me lead you up to the light."

She held out her arms to him, and the man sinking to his knees, clung to her skirts and sobbed like a child. For the first time in all his earthly and spiritual life his heart was touched and softened; and then I saw a strange thing occur. I seemed to see the fire within his bosom, and his tears descend and extinguish it; and encircled by the arms of the woman he had so grievously wronged, he felt peace and rest.

"Will you come with me?" the white-robed ministering angel said to this man who was stained with foulness from his

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vile dwelling place, and though she clasped him in her arms, her garments received no stain.

"Not yet, oh, Mary, not yet. I am not worthy. But I will make myself worthy."

I turned away and left them alone, unwilling to profane the sacredness of their interviews by my presence. The kiss she imprinted upon his forehead when at last she found it necessary to leave him, he seemed to receive as a benediction.

" Robert, remember we belong to one another ! " were her parting words.

I would not break the spell which seemed to be upon my companion by any words of idle questioning, as eager as was my curiosity. After a time she herself spoke. As she turned her face towards me it seemed transfigured with a celestial light. There was a radiant smile upon her lips, though tears stood in her eyes.

" You do not understand it? "

" No; it is all a mystery."

" It is true. I am the woman whom that poor wretch betrayed. I once found an abiding place in his death and terror-shadowed valley, and have progressed to my present position only by terrible and prolonged self -conflicts. You wonder why I am sent back as a messenger. A guide in such a land as this should know it well; and I do know it, alas ! too well. I know the outward terrors of these wretched people, and their inward sufferings and struggles; and I know the path which leads out of their present condition, because I myself have traveled it. It is part of the atonement I must make for the sins committed in the past. The obligation to come here will be removed only when I have helped to undo as much evil as I helped to create in the world. Oh ! no one can measure the consequences of his evil acts until he enters the Spirit-world. My garments were once as foul and stained as any of these; but see, thy are white now !" she exclaimed joyously. As I looked at her, the lumin-

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ous atmosphere which still surrounded her seemed to dart out rays of living light.

"Does it not make you very wretched? " I asked, "to come here so continually and witness so much misery?"

"It did at first," was the reply, "but now I feel that no more. The sight of it all only calls forth my fullest sympathies, and gives me power and will to work. Now I can look beyond, and see all these lost souls redeemed and purified, and walking in the light of perfect day. In a little while they shall sing a new song, and this knowledge takes away the pain. My mission for to-day is ended," she continued; " but I have one more place to show you."

Presently we came to a sort of parapet, from which we looked down into what at first seemed unknown and unfathomable depths, so impenetrable was the darkness which overshadowed it; but after a time my vision became strengthened so that I began dimly to perceive what was before or rather beneath us. I saw here and there a figure walking about with a sort of uncertain movement, as one might walk in a dream or in utter darkness. Some of them stumbled, others stretched out their hands as if to feel their way. But far more than were walking were sitting or crouching immovable, as though they were hewn of stone. There was no sound of voices, no shrieks, no wails,

no curses. The silence was profound and oppressive, and was only broken by an occasional sigh or moan, as one sometimes moans in sleep, which low as it was, smote on the ear with terrible distinctness.

What did it mean?

My companion divined my inward questioning, and replied:

" These are in a spirit lethargy – a soul sleep, which has bound many of them for years, and which may bind them for years to come. Their spiritual natures are wholly dormant, and being taken from the material world, where alone their energies found activity, they have necessarily fallen into their present

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state. These souls are, so to speak, yet in embryo, and have not been born into spirit-life."

"From what classes of mortals come these inhabitants of this land of sleep and death? "

" Those who know nothing whatever of spiritual life while on earth. Those in whose hearts were no high aspirations, no sense of purity and goodness, and who mocked at the very words. Those who by vicious lives have murdered the spirituality within them. Those who allowed their souls and their intellects to be fettered by superstitions, and followed blindly the leading of others. Those who lived wholly for self, refusing to recognize the grander meanings and purposes of life. In the sphere we have just left, the spiritual perceptions were not killed, only perverted or put aside. Here they have either never been developed, or else have been so nearly destroyed that only the germ remains. That can never be crushed, and will some day, perhaps in the far future, be developed into active life."

" "Why do we not descend and seek to awaken them to a sense of their needs, and the methods to attain to spiritual growth and development? "

" We can not go to them. They are shut off from all communication from those above them. As they have wholly missed the lesson which the earth-life laid for them, they must go back to the earth to get their first glimmerings of light and knowledge. Those whom you see moving about are beginning to feel the awakening of the faint spiritual life. They will be attracted, without knowing how or why themselves, back to earth, and will then painfully and laboriously learn that which they failed to learn before."

"But if they were to look upward could they not see us? Could we not beckon to them, and so awaken them to a knowledge of something better than their present condition, and to a desire to attain to it?"

" No; as their spiritual senses are dulled, their eyes are blinded to all things spiritual. They can not see us. They could not

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hear our voices. We can only communicate with them by the means of earthly organisms. Sometimes at the stances held on earth, one of these benighted spirits finds his way thither, and by listening to words uttered through mediums, for the first time becomes conscious of the existence of a higher spiritual life. From that hour dates his spiritual progress. But, oh ! his way is a long and weary one ! If mortals could only realize it, how anxious they would be to avoid traveling it themselves, how zealous to help others ! "

" Sadly we retraced our steps to the brighter world above, the experiences of the day being yet all too much for me to fully comprehend. Again I exclaimed, "How much there is to learn ! "

" Yes; eternity leads us along a path of perpetual knowledge. When we have reached the end, we shall stand on an equality with God."

My companion at parting said to me:

"There is yet one sphere which we have not visited; but you have surely seen enough for to-day. I perceive that in the near future you will be conducted thither without my companionship. My work does not call me there.'

" Is it not a still lower sphere? " I asked in consternation.

" No; it ranges above those we have visited. It stands almost on an equality with this, only this is the summer land, and that is the domain of winter."

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CHAPTER VI.

WORK, DEVICE, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

What a sense of freedom had come into my life! There were no petty, binding cares to keep me in bondage; there were as yet no duties to hold me in their inflexible grasp. I was free to go whither I would, and free and eager to learn. Although I had been permitted a visit to the nether spheres, and had acquired some knowledge of their inhabitants and their spiritual conditions, I felt that I had yet everything to learn about my own. I had met many spirits, and they were so kind and cordial that already a genuine friendship was beginning to dawn in my heart for more than one – a friendship which was not to be limited or modified by the vicissitudes and limitations of time, but which was to go on strengthening to all eternity.

One fact impressed itself upon me: while none seemed in haste, all were busy. There was no restlessness, no hurry; but each gave the impression of having definite duties which were

not onerous but pleasurable. Hitherto I had been for the most part so occupied with myself and my own personal happenings, that I had hardly found place in my mind for other than a merely superficial curiosity. But now the question began to come home to me, as something which it was not only my right but my duty to ask, so that I might be preparing myself to make my own choice of work when this sweet hour of rest had ended, and I had become sufficiently strong in spirit to find labor a pleasure instead of a task.

My two boys who shared my home – our home – were my

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almost constant companions, and often my instructors. How strange, and yet how natural it seemed to turn to their sweet, innocent faces and gather from their lips the heavenly wisdom which they had been garnering for years, while I was still troubled about things of earth !

Margaret, too, was my frequent visitor, but she had duties which called her away from me at times, and I the more willingly departed from her because I knew that a portion of these duties at least lay with the loved ones I had left behind. Sometimes my boys and I visited the old familiar place, but there was quite as much sadness as pleasure in the visit, for not yet could I make my presence felt; not yet communicate with those I loved.

"Mother," said my boys to me, "we will take you now to show you what our neighbors are doing."

Then we set out. Our first visit was to a studio where an artist sat at work upon a masterpiece. How the colors glowed beneath his touch ! How, as they were blended, they took the form almost of reality, and the picture, the creation of his genius, seemed, not a combination of canvas and pigments, but an actuality. I had the artist soul within me, but the circumstances of my life had denied it expression. Amid the manifold duties of my earthly existence there had been no time nor opportunity for artistic effort; but every one can cultivate his or her taste. I had done this until I knew and could appreciate a good picture, and find in it a rare spiritual delight; but how crude all earthly efforts seemed when I looked upon the wonder before me. I stood spellbound, reveling in an enjoyment which I had never known before. The artist did not interrupt me for a time, but permitted me to enjoy my transports in silence.

At last he spoke: "You are seeing but half. Would you like to see the other half? "

I looked at him in wonder. What was there to see more?
At that moment the present scene faded instantaneously away, and I could look into an earthly studio, and into the mind and soul of the artist occupant. A strange thing I saw there. I saw

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that he had caught a spiritual vision of the beautiful picture

which I had just examined, and this vision so enchanted him that he needs must liimself try to paint it. So with unwonted haste and fervor he was tracing the outlines upon the canvas before him.

"Wliat does it mean?" I asked,

"It means," replied the artist, "that every picture of genuine merit on earth is the faint copy of a spiritual reality. The artist sees the picture before he paints it, and if you question him he will tell you that his own achievement falls far short of the excellences which were presented to his spiritual vision. They call this gift genius on earth," he added with a smile.

At our next visit we found a poet busy with his pen. On earth he had made himself a name, but his spirit utterances were far grander, far more sublime. Then his inspiration came from the sphere nearest the earth; now it descended from the spheres above. The page seemed to glow with the luminousness of his thought. Again the earth-vision opened up to me, and again I beheld the earthly shadows of the spiritual reality. A woman was busy at some womanly task, and as she worked, fragmentary lines of poetry came into her mind. At first she disregarded them; but they seemed to insist upon being recorded; and so finally, almost sighing at the trouble they gave her, she WTote them down. Then other lines followed, and these, too, she penned in accordance with the resistless impulse which controlled her; and so she wrote on from time to time, not knomng wherefore or what she was writing, until at last a poem began to shape itself, and she perceived its meaning. When the poem was nearly completed, the inspiration left her, and she was compelled to finish it, and by means of her own dulled intellect supply the missing lines. Tlie poem was not the same as that produced by the spirit writer, but identical in idea and sentiment; though having been filtered, as it were, through the medium of her weaker, more earthly intelligence, it was feebler in character, and lacked the loftier expression and purer sentiment.

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" Is this the way our poets write? " I asked in wonder.

*'All true poetry is an inspiration from the higher spheres," was the reply.

Passing on, we paused where an author sat in the midst of a group to whom he was reading a tale he had just written. It was grand in conception and noble in execution, narrating the trials and disciplines of the spirit. As he read the listeners were thrilled, and catching the inspiration of the writer, felt themselves uplifted to a higher spiritual plane. Again my attention was directed to earth, and to my surprise I found there were listeners there also; listeners whose spiritual ears, dulled by the interposition of the material veil, caught not the details of the story, nor even its full beauties, but only a faint impression of its grandeur and truth. They did not know that they were listening, but thought it was the spirit within them moved to this wondrous play of fancy; and forthwith they sat down to write, and each produced a tale, colored and shaped by his or her own experiences, impressions, prejudices and capabilities, yet all

bearing the same faint resemblance to the wonderful spirit storj'^, the spiritual lessons of the one being transferred into earthly lessons by the many.

"Truly this is wonderful, said I, addressing one of the group, for here we have no need to wait for introductions, but soul recognizes soul, and may freely interchange thought without those safeguards of guarantees by mutual acquaintances, which are found necessary on earth.

"Is there, then, no such thing as originality among mortals?"

"No," was the reply. "Earth is only the reflex of the Spirit-world."

We passed on and came to a place where spirits of high intelligence, who had interested themselves with science on earth, and who were there eager to wrest from nature her deepest secrets, even still true to these instincts, and with enhanced opportunities, were acquainting themselves with the operations of

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material and spiritual laws, and experimenting with the results.

Now, behold again the earthly shadow ! Many men felt their influence as it descended to earth, and the minds of many were turned in like directions; and I was impressed with the knowledge that speedily there would be the announcement of a new discovery or invention upon the earth, and that more than one man would claim the credit of it. Do not such things happen often?

I found others, men and women, whose minds were less of a scientific and more of a philanthropic cast, conferring together how best they could help mortals and spirits in the lower spheres, and their work did not stop with themselves, but its influence extended to the earth, and was the motive power of many good endeavors, and many of seeming good to those who were engaged in them, but which, when viewed from the standpoint of the Spirit-world, were perceived to be utterly valueless; for the spirits can only perform through mortals that work which the latter are capable of doing. If they are ignorant, and with distorted senses of right and wrong, then the spirit influence, which might result in so much good, is seemingly wasted, for their efforts will be turned in useless or wrong channels.

*' Would you see still more of this subtle spirit influence which is exerted over mankind? "

I assented, and was taken to earth where an orator was holding an audience spellbound by the eloquence of his words. But I, with my spiritual vision, beheld behind him the inspirer of his utterances – a spirit who seemed to hold him in his control, and not only whispered the words to his mind, but held his whole being as it under a spell. When he had concluded, and his spirit influence had left him, he found himself strangely fatigued, as well he might be after such an unwonted effort, which had called into play his highest intellectual and spiritual powers, and the

audience, in commenting upon his address, said: " He talked as if he were inspired ! " Little did they realize the meaning and truth of their own words.

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Returning to the spirit spheres, I found everywhere each one at work the same as upon earth, and at as great a variety of, and similar, employments; only there was this difference: There was no manifestation of corroding care, no complaint of weariness, no apparent desire to shirk their appointed tasks. Each worked as though it were not only a duty but a pleasure to be thus employed; and as I questioned the different ones, I came to understand that, unlike the manners of earth, where circumstances or misjudgment of others force many into employments entirely uncongenial to them, and in which they can take neither pleasure nor hope to excel because of their want of taste and adaptability, in the new life with which I was trying to familiarize myself, the work of each was that best suited to his or her tastes and abilities, and for that reason was an enjoyment and not a task. Labor was no longer a bondage enthraling body and soul, and dwarfing the intellect, but a delight which aided the faculties to expand and develop themselves in healthful ways.

All professions, all occupations, seemed represented. There were teachers, preachers and physicians. Though the Spirit-world is on earth represented as a place where there is no illness, it is a misrepresentation, for there are sick souls who need the care of those who know how to minister to a mind diseased. Their ailments are moral and spiritual ones, and require like remedies; thus the pharmacopeia of the earthly druggist is unknown here. Another class of physicians devoted themselves wholly to the healing of mortals, using both material and spiritual methods in accomplishing their cures – sometimes effecting them directly, at other times through the interposition of mediums.

It has been remarked by one who thought he was saying a witty thing, that there are no lawyers in heaven. True, there are no lawyers as you understand the term on earth; but there are spirits here who make the natural and spiritual laws of the universe their especial study, and whose business it is to explain to such as have not the time or the taste for thorough investiga-

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tion, those laws which most directly concern their being. Their business is not to mystify and evade the laws, as their namesakes do on earth, but to elucidate them, and as far as possible secure their obedience.

Everywhere, pervading everything, I was permitted to perceive a subtle magnetic bond which connected the spiritual and material worlds so that the reality of the former was shadowed forth more or less distinctly in the latter. In their transmission from the higher to the lower plane of life, there was always more or less lost. The spiritual thought became materialized; the divine truth lost its perfect lustre; the all-pervading love

which actuates the good works of the Spirit-world, when its beams had penetrated through the clouds – and must I say it? – the moral and intellectual miasma of earth, took on tinges of selfishness and phases of wrongly directed effort. The divine ideal became humanized and consequently defective. The picture lost much of its brilliancy; the poem its spirituality; the story, instead of being the record of spiritual experiences, told of earthly woes, and recognized only earthly ideals of happiness. The invention was never quite complete; the discovery still left something undiscovered. Everything bore the mark of the finite – of the limited intelligence, the imperfect nature of humanity; nevertheless the link was there and bound the two worlds together, making them, in a certain sense, inter-dependent, the one upon the other – certainly the lower upon the higher life. If these invisible bonds were severed, the earth would be left in spiritual darkness, and moral chaos would be the result. There would be no hope for the future – no means for progress, and retrogression would become the law of humanity. If these bonds were severed, on the other hand, the Spirit-world would find itself without a motive for much of its present work, and would in time also fall into spiritual darkness, as it became peopled with degraded and darkened spirits from earth-life.

All this I did not perceive of my own wisdom, but it was kindly and patiently explained to me by those who had a broader

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experience and fuller knowledge than I; and as I gradually came to comprehend the truth, how many things it made clear which had been mysterious to me while on earth. It revealed that there was an ordering of, and a purpose in, all things, and that the word "chance" had no longer any place in the language, except as a name for something which existed not.

There was a rare privilege accorded me. Again I find myself at a loss how to describe to you my experience, since there is nothing in earth-life which parallels it. I have to resort to the inadequate phraseology of the senses in order to convey to your mind a comidreliension of results. It seemed as though I saw, or heard, or felt I knew not which, or how – no, I can not tell you. I will only say that it was revealed to me in a way I can not describe because I can not make you understand, that strong but invisible bonds, the same in character as those which connect the earth to the Spirit-world, connect the lower spheres of the latter world with the higher ones, and on these spiritual wires, if I may so call them, descend truths from these higher spheres which enlighten those beneath them. The poet who, while on earth wrote his rare poems through inspiration from above, had not, in passing through the gateway of death, acquired a faculty of original thought and expression. While still on earth he inspired many lesser poets by the beauty, vigor and truth of his productions. Passing onward, when he was freed from the limitations of the body he was enabled to exercise this faculty of inspiring others in far greater degree, so that many earthly poets sang faint echoes of his spiritual songs. But he in his turn was receiving grander inspiration from poets who had ascended to greater spiritual heights, and was himself probably echoing faintly the more glorious and perfect measures of the celestial spheres. Can it be that all truth, all beauty, all love, all wisdom, are sent oflf

from the great central source like rays of light from your earthly sun, permeating all matter and all intelligence ? Should we not, then, both mortals and spirits, so fit ourselves that the divine beams may penetrate our souls?

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CHAPTER Vn.

BLESSED AEE THE TUBE IN HEART.

I can not tell how long it was after this, but probably not long, that Margaret came and said a new lesson was J3repared for me if I was ready to receive it. Thirsting for knowledge, I eagerly assented. A mortal was just crossing to the hither side of the River of Death, and it should be my privilege to be one of those who should welcome her, and give her the first instructions concerning the spirit land. It was a task which I longed, yet dreaded to accept. I thought it must be rarely sweet to help dispel the terrors with which most mortals, trained in an erroneous theology, are sometimes beset, upon their first entrance into the life unknown; but I myself felt so ignorant, so inadequate to what seemed required of me, Margaret reassured me, and told me the needs of the moment would suggest what I should say and do. Moreover I was not to go alone. Othei's would accompany me, and a large band of spirits would wait to welcome the pilgrim as she reached the spirit sphere.

I had but one companion, a man apparently in the prime of life, whose countenance bore the traces of a noble nature. We found the dead – the newly born – still in the deep unconsciousness which, in the case of many, accompanies the passage of one life to the other. She was a woman well advanced in years, but even in the sleep of death, with all the traces of the cares and sorrows and the sins of life (for who are there without sin?), and in spite of the gray hair, furrowed cheek and brow, there was a look of di\dne peace upon her face – a look

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which seemed so habitual that it had softened the lines and wrinkles, and rested in the cui've of the lips.

. ^' Surely this was a saint upon earth ! " I exclaimed reverently as we stood beside her.

"You speak truly," was my companion's response; and as I glanced at him when he uttered these words, I detected a resemblance between the two, therefore I was not sm-prised when, bending over the sleeping form, he uttered the word, " Mother."

The sleeper opened her eyes, and a joyful light shone in them as they fell upon her son. She stretched out her arms exclaiming, "At last ! at last ! "

I turned aside and left mother and son to this their first interview, after having been severed, and then united, by death. Then when they needed me I returned, and by kind words and necessary explanations sought to make the woman understand that she was at last really free from the earthly bondage. Then we half lead, half bore her away from earth, and as we approached the spirit land, lo ! a great throng came out to meet us, and gathering around, they welcomed her with terms of love and gratitude, as one would welcome a friend and savior. Each had some story to tell of a kindness done, of a word spoken in season, of sympathy accorded when most needed, of faults gently re-proved – ^in brief, of work which an angel might do and be proud of, but which had been done by a weak, an erring woman (for are we not all weak and erring in the earth-life?).

I felt my heart go out in a sudden gush of affection towards this woman, and I fancied that one of the greatest privileges the Spirit-world could bestow, would be to give me her sincere friendship. She seemed one among a thousand, and instead of teaching her I might learn from her.

"You shall not lose sight of her," said Margaret, to whom I expressed this wish. "But I have something to tell you regarding her. If these very ones who have so eagerly welcomed her here to-day, and who have so gratefully acknowledged the benefits she has conferred upon them, had, while still in their mortal

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existence, known her true history, they would have turned from her as from a woman accursed."

"Would they have been just in so doing? " I asked in wonder.

"Oh, earthly vision is one thing, and spiritual vision is another. Does her face bear the stamp of the blessing or the curse of heaven?"

" Its blessing, assuredly."

" Then let not what I have told you lead you to prejudge and misjudge. Wait until you know her full history, which shall presently be revealed to you, and then we shall be able to measure your spiritual progress by the judgment which you accord this woman. Meantime there is one place within your reach which you have not visited. Will you do so now? "

The direction that we took I remember not, nor the time occupied in reaching our destination. The air grew chilly, and the sky took a steely blue. The light was dazzling, and the scene one of rare beauty, but so cold, oh, so cold ! I shivered as the breath of winter fell upon me. I then recalled what Mary, the ministering angel, had said about the domain of winter. In the distance snow-crowned mountains gleamed and glittered in the sunlight, and giant icebergs, carved in a thousand beautiful and fantastic shapes, reflected all the colors of the prism. Rivers of ice wound their way through the landscape, dazzling in the light, but currentless. The trees were cased in

crystals, reflecting the light from a thousand points, while the flowers and shrubbery were seemingly of congealed vapor, as fantastically beautiful as the frost-tracery upon earthly windows. Silver and crystal everywhere – pearls and diamonds; but no warmth of color, no warmth of light – beautiful and cold. The very houses were ice palaces or ice cottages, more radiant than marble.

I saw many people who seemed for the most part perfectly content with their climate, as though they had never wished for

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or perhaps known any other; only I noticed that now and then one shivered slightly, as if unconsciously.

A strange object met my view here. As strange as was everything about me, this object, being found anywhere in the Spirit- world, seemed out of place. It was a man who wore only the scantiest of rags, and carried upon his back a sort of sack. He was seeking here and there for rubbish of any and every sort, which, when found, he gathered up and put in his bag with an eagerness that amounted almost to a greed. He shivered continually, and now and then muttered to himself: "I am so cold! Will I never be warm again?" When he met a passer-by he held out his hand as if asking alms.

"Are there then beggars and tramps in the Spirit- world?"

"Yes, many," was the reply of my companion. "They are found principally in this and the lower spheres, though they occasionally wander even into higher ones. They belong nowhere, as they have no home. You are astonished and want an explanation. Well, I will tell you what this man was, which will account for what he is:

"In earth-life there was once a merchant prince whose name was a power in the financial world. Rising from poverty and obscurity, he reached the topmost round of the financial ladder. He was strictly honest as the world counts honesty. He told no business lies. He met all his obligations promptly and fully; but he was selfish to his heart's core. He oppressed the poor. He paid his employes the lowest wages for which he could get men and women to work, and when old age overtook them, he turned them off to linger on and finally to die in destitution, and put younger ones in their places. If he ever gave to charity, he did it blowing a trumpet before him, so that he might reap a sevenfold advantage in his business. There was not one man or woman in all the world, outside his own family, who could say that they had ever known him to speak a genuinely kind word or do an unselfish act. In his veins seemed to flow ice instead of blood. At last he passed away, and not one human being

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was the better for his having lived, save those who inherited his money. He had heaped up wealth on earth, but he could not take a penny of it with him; and, though he belonged to an

aristocratic and exclusive church, he had utterly neglected to lay up treasures in heaven. He had not even builded himself a house. Therefore you behold him homeless, friendless, destitute, begging of those whom he once oppressed. It is the old story of Dives and Lazarus revised. True to the instinct of greed which governed him on earth, he must accumulate something, and as his accumulations there were utterly worthless when gauged by the standard of eternity, so he goes on gathering worthless rubbish."

This story gave me much to think about; but I put it aside for the present, in the more absorbing interest which the scene awakens.

"But what strange place is this," I asked, "where winter seems to reign perpetually? "

"This," Margaret responded, "is the realm of pure intellect and of self. Truth sheds its light here, but the beams of love which lighten and vivify the sphere from which we came, never descend, never melt the perpetual ice and snow of this fairy-like scene; never warm human hearts. Here those who lived purely intellectual lives find their congenial home – men who were given up wholly to scientific and business pursuits, and never cultivated the affections; men who were honest and upright from pride or instinct, but who never knew the meaning of the word charity; men who sought to be just but not merciful; men who were never stirred by kindly or affectionate impulses toward their own sex, and who knew not the higher meaning of the word love in their association with each other. Here some of the so-called wisest men and the brightest geniuses of earth have found themselves upon their first entrance to the Spirit-world. But as truth may and does enter here, it furnishes an open door through which they may pass, if they will, to the warmer spheres beyond."

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It was a very curious scene to me. I watched its inhabitants one after another as they were busy at their work, for they, too, were all busy. Margaret at last directed my attention towards one man, and told me to study him well, I did so, and this was the story that was gradually revealed to my intelligence:

I seemed to see a young boy possessing a warring nature, irreconcilable with itself, growing up in poverty and obscurity, and compelled to fight the battle of life against heavy odds. He was a strange boy, not silent but uncommunicative, and nobody understood him; and as he grew up and peculiar inherited traits developed themselves, he became a strange man, and people understood him still less, – though few ever realized the fact.

Surrounded in all the years from early youth up to the prime of manhood by adverse circumstances of diverse character, beset by temptations to which he yielded, and giving way to weaknesses of character that seemed to continually clog his progress, there was some subtle power which guided and protected him, and which, while he constantly struggled with the circumstances of his life and his own inherent weaknesses, – and almost as constantly failed, and thus seemed to be continually descend'

ing, – yet constantly urged him upward and onward in a moral and intellectual progress, which he himself comprehended quite as little as any one else; yet this progress seemed almost wholly objective, and only stamped the outside of his nature, not entering into it deeply. By all precedents given his character, prenatal antecedents, and the surroundings of his life, with its temptations, and its absence of opportunities for development in right directions, he should have descended until he found his level with the ignorant and the degraded.

But his subjective development was purely intellectual. He seemed a man almost without moral perceptions when judged inwardly, though his outward character had won the respect of all. He was a sort of faun, if we may imagine that the progress of intelligence and civilization for two thousand years should destroy in that mythical creature something of its old simple

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spontaneity, and put intellect in its place, while he still retained his close sympathy and association with nature. In the truest meaning of the term he was a selfish man. That is, as a philosopher, his views of life were centered in self. He believed that self was all that existence held for any one. Springing out of this selfish philosophy were terrible consequences to others. Outwardly cold in his demeanor, and passing in the estimation of his acquaintances as incapable of emotion, at times there surged through his being tidal waves of passion which swept him off his feet, and when they receded, left on each occasion a fresh victim wrecked and stranded on the beach. I will do him the justice to say that he struggled against these almost periodical tides – struggled as few men ever struggle; but they seemed as resistless as the ocean tides, and at last he came to regard resistance as useless, and saying, "It is fate," yielded himself up to them. When they had passed, humiliated, he would flee from the society of men, and especially from that of women, leading the life of a recluse, no one but himself knowing the thoughts and feelings of his heart. For his victims he felt a sort of tender, romantic pity, – nothing more; and as time wore on and took them further and further away from his presence, all the pain of the pity died out, and the remembrance came to be pleasurable. It was impossible that his feelings should reach out so far from self as to enter into their shame, their agony, their remorse, possibly their degradation.

He had won himself a name before the world, for he was gifted with a marvellous imagination. Whether in describing scenes, narrating events or depicting passion, he displayed the master hand, and men read and admired; women read and worshiped. The love of such a man was something to be sought, and to be proud of when attained. Therefore unusual temptations beset him – temptations from which he fled in his wiser moments, to which he succumbed in his weaker ones.

At last, when he had reached middle life, he met a woman toward whom he was for some reason attracted. She was no

longer in the flush of youth, and her beauty had faded. To her innocent woman's nature, totally ignorant of his character, this man's friendship seemed something to be prized. It was the old story of Francesco de Rimini and Paolo. They read together some tale of wild and passionate romance, until at last " their lips all trembling kissed."

" The book and writer both were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day they read no more."

And now the scene changed, and I seemed to see the woman's story, and it was this:

Marrying early and unfortunately, she had suffered untold agonies in her married life. Though she was a mother, and her maternal instincts had been stirred to their depths, she knew nothing of that conjugal devotion which recognizes maternity as its highest manifestation. Her life had been barren and cold, and when the heel of this man's passion came suddenly upon her, it took her unawares, and with all the innocence of an undeveloped nature she did not at first understand it. When at length its meaning dawned upon her, she realized at the same time that he had become very dear to her; but she did not yield without a struggle. She passed sleepless nights and fasting days. You will say that there ought to have been no doubt, no hesitation in her mind – that the way of right doing was very clear. But you know not, no, no^ one of you, what your own conduct might be under like circumstances, a like trial. It is possible you might yield without a struggle.

As suddenly as he came to her, did her lover desert her. The gust of passion was past, and he had never known the spiritual phase of love. When he came to himself, he felt the old humiliation at his weakness, the old remorse, not for the sin, but that he had not better mastered himself; and penning her a brief note, in which he expressed this humiliation and remorse, and telling her his only safety was in flight, he bade her farewell forever. She was stunned. The blow was so sudden and so severe, it seemed more than she could bear; but whea the first

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poignancy had passed, its effect was to cause her to idolize her lover still more than she had done in the past. He had surely loved her, but had sacrificed that love to his sense of right and duty. Was he not to be revered? And thus she told herself that she ought to feel glad that he had sacrificed her and retrieved his sin. Coming to a consciousness of her great error, and humbled in spirit, she resolved that her whole future life should become an atonement, and thus that became to her a sacrament which was to him a sin. She had wandered unwittingly from the beaten path, and retracing her steps, she went on to the end of her life-journey, finding herself, tlu'ough her very mistake, stronger and wiser, and better prepared to help others. Thus she secretly wore the scarlet letter within her soul, but it became to her, as it was to Hester Prynne, the badge of her higher mission, the reminder of her duty to others, the talisman of spiritual vision; and heaven's peace entered her heart, and wrote itself on her features, so that it was still traced

upon her soul after it had quitted the body, as I myself had witnessed. Oh ! my dear friends, there are many modern Saint Mary Magdalenes, of whom the world has no knowledge !

Now this was my saint, whose very garments I had in my ignorance felt like touching reverently ! Where was I? What was I to think? I seemed to be losing all my old bearings.

" Well, what is your judgment? " at last Margaret asked.

"I know not," I replied. *'I need your help."

" Then answer me: Was this woman blessed or cursed by this unlawful love? "

"Surely she seemed to be blessed," was my hesitating reply.

"Were others blessed or cursed because of it through her? "

" Undoubtedly they were blessed, for did I not see the almost innumerable multitude who came to welcome her, and who bore testimony to her good deeds?"

"I draw no conclusions for you," returned Margaret. " You must draw them for yourself. But when will mortals realize their own short-sightedness, and learn to suspend their judgment

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concerning the conduct of others ! They can not look into one another's souls and perceive actuating motives; and in judging superficially they often judge unjustly. They do not realize that sometimes our very sins may become stepping-stones to a higher spiritual life, and bring us nearer heaven."

"But did this woman never learn the real cause of her lover's desertion?"

"No; she has idealized him until this day, and even now she is hojging the hope she has cherished for years of meeting and being united with him in this world where it will be no sin. He came to the Spirit- world years ago. His fierce passions and his mental struggles burnt out his life, and he died prematurely. This woman was his last victim, and he, who never knew what real love is, nor believed in it, but who lived a purely intellectual life, save when scorched by a brief simoon of passion, has found his home in this winter land, where he must remain until the last of his victims has progressed out of the degradation for which he is responsible. See, he shiverst Some of the inhabitants are impervious to cold, but he is. not. During all the years since his death he has not been permitted to gain a trace of this woman, and he knows not whether the consequences of his action upon her life have been evil or otherwise. He is dreading the results to himself for he has not yet learned to think of her – of others; nor has he yet been willing to hasten the day of his deliverance by descending to the darker spheres and helping to lead out those whom his own weaknesses and sins have helped to degrade."

"But wiiy is it that he himself is not- condemned to those

darker spheres, like that wretch whom I saw in the Valley of the Shadow of Death?"

"Because there are extenuating circumstances. Because, in fact he has fought the battle of life against lieavy odds; and though he continually failed in many ways, his failures count for liim more than many another man's successes, because he struggled more than most. His sentence is to wait loveless and

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alone until the consequences of his past errors are undone, and he has learned the existence, and come to feel the need of that love which is as far above that passion by which he blasted so many lives, as the higher spheres are above the spheres of darkness and terror, and of obli\ion. In brief, he must learn to forget self in the thought of other selves, before he will be free from the fetters of ice which now enchain his soul.'*

"But the woman who loves him – ^who has loved him so faithfully all these years, and who looks forward to meeting with him – will not the disappointment crush her?"

" It might if it came upon her too suddenly. But tlie knowledge will not come as a disappointment when she is properly prepared to receive it. Their souls are not mates, and she will presently realize tliat fact, and will be reconciled."

In my eagerness to fully master the subject which liad been presented to my mind by the experiences just narrated, I talked wifn others who were endowed with greater wisdom tlian I, and the following is the substance of what they said to me:

In most other matters which concern human w^elfare, whether political, social or religious, the world has seen many changes. Human thought has been revolutionized many times. Old orders of things have been overturned and annihilated, in spite of the croakings of that large class of conservatives which has existed in all ages, and which always turns its eyes admir- ingly towards the past, deploras the present, and predicts e\al for the future. Chaos has sometimes seemed to result, yet in the end each succeeding condition has shown itself an improve- ment upon its predecessor. But in the relations of the sexes there has been little inherent change. The forms and ceremonies of marriage have varied with different nations and different races; sometimes a wife was stolen, sometimes purchased, sometimes as- sumed the relation by her own free consent; but the idea of wifhood in the mind of the husband to-day is substantially the same as that in the comprehension of the tent dwellers who first rudely organized society; that is, that a wife is some-

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thing which a husband owns or possesses. More than that, the idea of the conjugal union, conceived when man was wholly on a material plane, and knew nothing whatever of his spiritual nature, and founded on the fiercest instinct of humanity, and the most debasing when it is not held in check by reason and mod-

ified by spiritual development, – is still entertained by the multitude. Still further, the world does not yet comprehend that it is love, not law, that creates true marriage. Law recognizes it but does not and can not make it. It is right that it should be recognized and regulated by law for the good of society, the preservation of homes, the protection of wives, and the maintenance of the rights of children. Love without marriage is to be condemned for many reasons, but marriage without love is equally accursed.

To those whose hearts are pure, love, even under the most unfortunate circumstances, may become a blessing and a sacrament; they will cast off the evil and retain only the good; but to those in whose hearts impurity dwells, though ten thousand priests should solemnize the bonds, and ten thousand legal documents ratify them, marriage can bring only sin and degradation.

If there is a paradise on earth, it is a home where husband and wife truly love each other, and seek through their marriage a development of their spiritual natures; nor are such marriages impossible, or even infrequent. Happy homes are the bulwarks of a nation's prosperity.

Men and women can not belong to one another, save as they have freely bestowed and freely received their mutual affections. No man or woman can stand between wife or husband and heaven, acting as mediator or mentor. Each must be responsible directly to God and his or her own conscience; and as a broader knowledge concerning humanity will lead us to dictate less to others what they shall do, and judge more rarely what they have done, so the same knowledge will recognize the need of greater freedom for husbands and wives; greater confi-

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dence and less unworthy suspicion; and as a sure result, a greater sense of personal responsibility on the part of each.

There is much more I wish I might say to you on this subject, but I have already sermonized too long, and it may be I have already said too much, for so few of you have ever dared think upon this subject, the most important to humanity, that it may be possible you have entirely misapprehended me. A majority of you entertain the same horror of free thought and fearless investigation in regard to social matters, that before the advent of modern Spiritualism was entertained toward the same liberality of thought and investigation in regard to theology. But I lived upon earth long enough to see the terrible prejudice against the epithet "free thinker" die away and be almost forgotten save in the most bigoted minds. Indeed who are there of you who does not now pride himself upon being a "free-thinker" on religious matters in the truest and best sense of that noble term? Some of you will, I hope, live to see the same desirable freedom of thought exercised in regard to social matters. But whether you have understood me or not, I do not think I have spoken in vain. What I have said will lead you to think, in spite of yourselves, and some day you may, perhaps, repeat your reading with a clearer comprehension. In truth I do not know that I myself quite understand all its bearings; but I have

sought faithfully to repeat in substance Avhat was said to me. The lesson, so far as I can imderstand it, is this: That unselfish love may of itself eliminate thG evil which may pertain to it, and be blessed of heaven; while a selfish, sensual love, though the sanction of church and state rest upon it, carries with it only a curse, and retards the progress of the spirit.

When next I saw the heroine of the romance I have narrated, I remarked a wonderful change in her appearance. She was no longer old and worn, bearing the traces of her weary and sorrowful mortal years; but youth had come back to her – youth and beauty. The peace of heaven still set its seal upon her brow, but the wrinkles and lines of grief and care were obliterated.

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ated. Radiant as she was with spiritual beauty, I felt more strongly attracted towards her than ever, and feeling that the privilege that had been accorded me in being the second to greet her on the shore of immortality, gave me a certain right. I did not scruple to seek her acquaintance. I found her character a singularly sweet one. She had partaken of the Tree of Life, and her eyes had been opened to the knowledge of good and evil; but an atmosphere of moral purity pervaded her presence, and all the evil thoughts seemed to hide themselves abaslied. Oh, love ! how little mortals understand it ! What sins are committed in its name ! How it is bound, strangled and outraged ! and yet how it forgives, and blossoms into beauty and blessing wherever it can find an abiding place in a human soul ! How cold would be the earth, how cold would be human hearts without it! and who shall dare to say that this angelic visitant, when it knocks for admittance, is not heaven-sent? Let angels in the higher spheres alone be the judges. One who has been revered as a teacher and worshiped as a Savior of humanity, lo ! these eighteen hundred years, said . " Neither do I condemn thee ! " and again, " Much shall be forgiven because she hath loved much." The loving was not the sin but the saving grace.

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CHAPTER VIII.

LO! A GREAT MULTITUDE.

The tide of immigration sets steadily from yom* land to om*s. There is no emigration back to earth. All faces are turned toward the Spirit- world; all feet are hastening hitherward, and all must come at last face to face with death, and standing on the shores of the mystic river, must bid an eternal farewell to earthly life, and venture with hesitation and fear, or with courage and faith, into the unknown and mysterious realm beyond.

These pilgrims are coming, coming, coming, leaving behind them all that possessed material value on earth, and bringing

only – themselves. If they have cultivated their spiritual natures and held themselves above the level of materiality, then they are rich indeed; but if earth and its cares engrossed all their attention, and they had neither time nor thought for that "better part" for which Mary was commended, then no beggar on earth could be poorer or more destitute than these souls when they enter the life immortal. Nor do intellectual enlightenment, moral regeneration and spiritual illumination wait upon them to be put on like an outward garment as soon as they have reached the spirit sphere. They are the true riches which must be acquired by laborious effort. As a man was upon earth, so does he find himself when he first enters here. He who is ignorant, is ignorant still; he who is filthy, is filthy still; superstition still holds those spirits in its thrall who were its victims upon earth.

It would seem to you that all must become Spiritualists

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■When they reach here, and the avenues of knowledge are thrown open to them; and I will surprise you when I say that there are Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and Quakers here, and all the different sects of religious beliefs, just as among you. There are those who bow to the supremacy of a spiritual pope, and who yet find auricular confession and the observance of rites and ceremonies, necessities to their religious life. True, they encounter much to surprise them when they enter here. Heaven is altogether different from what they pictured it; but their beliefs and prejudices are stronger than the facts which come under their observation (is not this also the rule in the earth life?), and so they merely readjust themselves, still clinging as far as possible to their old tenets. But the time comes, sooner or later, when they grow out of these superstitions, and, getting at first faint glimpses of the truth, these glimpses become brighter and clearer as they seek for them.

There is no more interesting study than to watch the arrival of these immigrants – these pilgrims, and to note their first impressions, experiences, surprises and disappointments. It is also sad to stand beside the bed of death, as it is often our privilege and our duty to do, and witness the terror with which theology has invested the passing from death unto life. Is it true that the Christian knows how to die? He may meet death serenely if he be a man of strong character, hopeful disposition, and with nerves not easily shaken; but with such a character, he would meet it no less bravely, were he a rejecter of all religious faiths. If he be timid and weak, given to apprehension, and shrinking from danger, not all the consolations and hopes which religion can afford will save him from becoming terror-stricken when the last dread hour approaches. There is something appalling even to the stoutest heart, in going out to meet the unknown, and that is what all, save Spiritualists, must do. To them, and to them only, is the Spirit-world revealed. To them it is given to know that they are passing from darkness unto light; from death unto life; from mortality to immortality. How strange that this

glorious truth, which should be indeed the corner-stone of existence, is rejected by so many earthly builders !

A woman was dying – one whom I knew upon earth. We were merely casual acquaintances, not friends, because she was a rigid churchwoman, and I was not. As the sheep were to be separated from the goats in that final terrible day, so it seemed to her meet, that as far as practicable the same separation should be effected in earth life. This appeared a very simi:)le matter. All members of the church – her church – were going to heaven; all who were members of no church were destined for the other place; while she took to herself great credit for charity in suspending her judgment in regard to members of churches other than her own. She was most sincere in her religion. It tinged all her actions, and was, indeed, her very life. At last her hour had come. Her pastor was summoned. She felt tliat there was no security for her future, miless he should, by his j^resence at her deatli-bed, furnish her a sort of credentials – give her a letter of introduction, as it Avere – to that heaven of winch she so often spoke. He encouraged and composed her, allaying her fears, and assuring her that she had only to lean on her Savior, and when she opened her eyes in spirit life she would find herself in his arms. As she passed from earth with the name of Jesus on her tongue, and her whole thoughts centered on him, so she was born to sjnrit life with the same intense feeling clinging to her; the same utterances upon her lijDS.

"Jesus, oh ! my Savior, help me ! " she exclaimed. Then as her newly acquired spiritual vision discerned the many forms standing around her, she reached out her arms imploringly, crying: "Who are you? Are you angels? Which one of you is Jesus? Surely my Savior will be here to welcome and receive me!"

"Jesus is here," was the reply given her; "but we have come to welcome you ! "

" Then take me to him ! Let me behold him and be assured of his love and forgiveness ! "

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At that moment her eyes fell upon me, and with a start of terror she added:

"You here! Then where am I? In mercy tell me where I am ! If you are here then I must be "

She stopped short, the horror of the situation paralyzing speech. If she, a professing Christian, who had cast all her sins upon Jesus, and believed she had received his forgiveness and assurance of eternal happiness, found herself, after all, on the threshold of the future life, face to face with one doomed to perdition, then her conversion must have been a delusion, her hopes a snare; and no wonder she could not voice her apprehensions.

"Oh, take me to Jesus! Will not some one show me the way to my Savior? " were her agonized entreaties. But when I stepjDed forward, wishing to reassure her, she recoiled, and covering her face with her hands, endured the agony of a despair

which has no parallel on earth.

But those whom she recognized as friends gathered around and encircled her, and took her in their arms and bore her away from earth, while the rest, myself among them, followed at a little distance, eager to see the first awakening of this soul to a comprehension of the realities of spirit-life. They laid her tenderly down in a bower where immortal flowers gladdened the vision, and lent a sweet perfume to the air, where the melody of murmuring brooks fell restfully on the wearied ear, and of all that would delight, charm and soothe, nothing seemed lacking. But her eyes were blind, her ears deaf to the sights and sounds of heaven. She was disappointed beyond measure that she had not entered the celestial city of the apocalypse, with golden streets bordering a sea of jasper. She felt that this city must exist somewhere, and that she had been excluded because somehow the vicarious atonement had proved a failure in her case.

"Where is the great white throne?" I heard her ask.
" Shall I not see that? Shall I not stand before that and adore
€rod forever? "

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And again the negative answer troubled and perplexed her beyond measure.

Once more she asked:

" Am I to have no golden harp? "

A golden harp was placed in her hand.

"Why, I can not play," she exclaimed in surprise, after a futile attempt to make music upon what was to her a new instrument.

"No," was the response; "not until you have learned."

"Do we then have to learn here? I thought we were done with that when we were done with earth, and that I should play the harp as readily as I should sing."

A smile and a shake of the head gave answer.

"Where is my crown? Surely I was promised a crown if I bore the cross faithfully on earth."

Some one wove a wreath of golden flowers and j^laced it upon her head – a coronet of whose beauty angels might be proud. But she removed it disdainfully; and then, glancing around her, she seemed to notice for the first time that her friends were crownless and harpless.

"Am I in heaven? " she asked as if completely bewildered.
"Where am I? Where are your crowns and harps?"

"You are in the land of spirits," they assured her, "and we neither wear crowns nor carry harps, because we have no need of them."

"Oh! I can not understand it. If my pastor was only here to explain it to me ! Oh ! if I could only find Jesus ! Jesus promised to be my friend, but he has forsaken me." She bowed her head and wept in utter liopelessncss.

Then those whom she had loved before death di\dded them, gathered around her, and recalling her to her own personal affairs, caused her to temporarily forget her theological terror and doubt in the delight which this reunion afforded her – delight which had been at first entirely overlooked in the overruling feelin']]: of the hour.

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After a time I again ventured to draw near her, and found that she received me, not cordially, but without her first manifestation of dismay. I tried to tell her something of the new life into which she had entered, but she shook her head, saying:

*'I can not understand it, that you and I should both be in the same place, when I thought my sins were forgiven and heaven secured to me by the blood of Jesus, while you – you were a Spiritualist! " This in a tone as though that word necessarily embodied the worst that could be said of any one.

" But if my pastor were only here to explain it to me, or if I could find my Savior? "

Poor, halt and blind soul, that can not walk save as it leans upon another, and can not see save through the perceptions or understanding of another ! It has a weary way before it ere it comes into the full light of spiritual truth.

Another death bed made a strong impression upon me. It was that of a little child who closed its eyes peacefully and unconsciously upon the pain of earth life, and awoke to the painlessness and perfect joy of life immortal. It knew not that it had passed through any change, for loving faces still surrounded it, and loving tones fell upon its ears, and when the mother's arms were stretched out in the agony of sudden childlessness, her babe was laid tenderly in them, but she knew it not. In the night time when she awoke, and with scalding tears and aching heart called for her little one, it was placed in her bosom, and nestled its head where it had so often done of old, and its presence brought peace and comfort of which she was conscious, though she knew not their source. That little one is with her daily, its being still intertwined with hers, and dependent on mother love. Oh! bereaved mothers, believe this; your babes are not lost, they are with you learning the lesson of life from you. Then walk steadfastly and purely, that you offend not these little ones.

In the great multitude which was perpetually passing from death unto life, I specially noticed two old men. They were

equally aged, having reached nearly the extreme limit of human life, and bowed and tottering they came to the end of their journey, and their feeble frames and whitened hairs were laid away in the bosom of mother earth, dust to return to dust, while their spirits passed to the new life beyond; and yet how different were the experiences of these two men on their first entrance into this life. One found himself with the infirmities of age still clinging to him, his mental powers still weakened, and his spirit come to a halt, as it were, in its progress. He seemed still to belong to the past in the quality and method of his thoughts; his mind turned backwards rather than forwards; and even the Spirit-world was not altogether satisfactory to him, because it differed so materially from that future life which had taken form through early religious teachings, and became crystallized in his imagination. This could not be heaven, because this was not as he had pictured heaven to be; and so, blind to the beauties which surrounded him, disregarding the advantages which were presented to him, and through force of long mental habit opposed to that progress which he found to be the law of immortality, he was querulous and discontented, and his thoughts sometimes even turned back regretfully to the earth-life. There at least he was at home; there he had become fixed in his habits, and there was nothing to molest or upset him. Here there were continually disturbing elements, which forced him out of old grooves, whether he would or would not, and finally shook him out of himself.

The other old man, equally feeble physically when he passed from earth, quickly lost the traces of age upon his entrance into spirit-land. His form speedily appeared erect, his step became buoyant, and a new light was kindled in his eyes. His age he had left behind him upon the earth, and it was buried in the grave with the mortal body. Only the shadow had fallen upon his spirit, but that was speedily dispelled, and in a short time he became as one in the prime of life.

I could not understand the reason of the different experi-

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ences of these two men, and, as usual, I turned to my guide for enlightenment.

"The reason is a very simple one," she replied, "and needs no explanation to those who have watched these men in their earthly existence." Then she proceeded to explain that one of them had lived for time only, the other for eternity. The one allowed his spirit to be subordinated to the body, and to share and be subject to its conditions. As his physical frame grew old, he allowed its weaknesses and deficiencies to leave their mark upon the spirit; and fettered and burdened as it thus was, it soon came to share that body's inertness and its waning powers. Therefore he has entered this world old in spirit, and can only grow young again slowly and painfully. His youth will come back to him some day, but only through conscious effort on his part, — greater effort than he would have been compelled to make in order to resist the encroachments of the material upon the spiritual, to which he so weakly succumbed.

The other kept his soul young, regarding time as only the

first division of eternity. Though the bodily senses became dulled, the spiritual vision remained clear; though the period of bodily activity passed away, and he was compelled to step aside in the affairs of life, and let other and younger men take his place, he did not sit with his face turned towards the past regretting the long ago, but by strenuous effort preserved his mental vigor, kept pace with the times in his observations and opinions, and lived in an active enjoyment of the present, and a lively hope for, and belief in, the future. He kept his heart young to the last, and cultivated his affections and emotions as a religious duty, as something which not only bound him to his fellow creatures, but which should uplift him spiritually. Old age was but the husk which wrapped around but only partially disguised the soul within; and that soul when the worn-out frame fell away from it, and it entered its true home, rejoiced at its new-found freedom. The shadow which time and its happenings had cast upon it passed away forever, and he regained

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full possession of the youth which he had never wholly lost, but had treasured up all the more carefully within himself, as the outward and physical manifestations passed away one by one.

There are many sad scenes connected with death which we are called upon to witness. Understanding as we do how few realize or even know of the intimate relations existing between the earth and the spirit-life, the agonized parting of friends is most painful to witness. There is such bitter grief, such depths of hopelessness in the hearts of the living, as they look for the last time into the mortal eyes of those who are called away to a higher life, and feel that the parting is a final one. It is our mission to comfort as well as we may these sorrow-stricken ones, and to bring them that hope and consolation which can only come through a belief and knowledge that the dear departed are ever near, and that death brings them into closer spirit communion. You should all work with us unceasingly to hasten the day when this knowledge will become the possession of all mankind, and when death will thus be robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory.

But aside from the natural and common causes for sadness at these final hours on earth, there are often special circumstances which invest death beds with peculiar interest, solemnity or horror. Sometimes an innocent creature who has lived a blameless life, as we judge of human lives, harming no one, and doing good to many, but who has neglected until too late to provide itself with a church passport to heaven, finds itself suddenly called upon to render up its account. Then are the apprehensions and terrors of the dying one enough to move a heart of stone. Even we, who stand upon the other side and know how groundless they are, are compelled to bestow our deepest sympathies. So we press closely around, and take the released spirit in loving arms, and speak to it gentle words. "We lead it in green pastures and beside still waters, and our reward is to behold the wonder, the gratitude and the joy which suddenly take the place of fear and despair. Surely love is greater than

retribution, and has, a stronger hold upon the human heart.

At another time perhaps a poor lost soul, weighed down by the terrible denunciations of a false theology, and possibly having a premonition of its real impending doom, hurls itself through the gateway of death with curses upon its lips, and fierce rebellion in its heart, defying the power which it can not resist. Then how solemn and how sad the awakening to the actualities of spirit-life. Darkness is to be its portion until it seeks for the light; but even in this outer gloom, where there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, there is not that sense of utter abandonment of protecting care, that giving over to divine vengeance, that pitiless delight in the torments of suffering souls, which are the crowning honors of the orthodox hell. No ! The spirit feels and knows that the hell in which it must exist is of its own making; that it is not the creation of a deity who saith "Vengeance is mine;" and that divine love and divine pity brood over all, and still hold all in their keeping, ready to help and to lead from darkness into light, when the wickedness and the waywardness have worn themselves out, and the prodigal humbly says: "I will arise and go to my father."

Let the churches write upon the portals of their infernal regions: "Who enters here leaves hope behind;" but though light, love and truth, and all else which bless and uplift the human soul may be excluded wholly or in part from the lower spiritual spheres, one star beams steadily above them all, with a pure and perpetual flame – the star of Hope !

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CHAPTER IX.

FIT TEMPLES FOR HOLY SPIRITS.

I had from the first been anxious to return to the earth and communicate with the dear friends I had left there; and when I realized that I had not sufficient knowledge for that, I was still anxious to be permitted to go where such communication was held, and behold from the spirit side of life that which I had often beheld and taken part in from the earthly side. True to my belief in Spiritualism I had faithfully attended the weekly circle, and had received the various manifestations and communications with more or less credence. Though my faith was founded on a rock and could not be shaken, there had, nevertheless, always been a feeling of dissatisfaction, away down deep in my heart, that the words of inspiration which were addressed to us from the spirit spheres, were not more inspired, more worthy of the source from which they emanated, or were supposed to emanate.

The time finally arrived when I was permitted to attend the very circle of which I had once been a member. A dozen or more persons sat in a semi-darkened room, clasping one

another's hands. Around them were circles upon circles of spirits, of every grade, all anxiously awaiting an opportunity to communicate with those of earth. Of the mortals present three or four were recognized mediums, possessing diverse gifts. Two or more of these were attended by their little familiar spirits, through whose agency the communication of others was usually received.

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Various motives had brought the remainder of the circle thither. Some were actuated merely by curiosity. One or two came with an earnest and honest desire to investigate. The larger number were simply anxious to hear from their departed friends; but of the entire number not more than one or two were really seeking spiritual light and truth; and each one attracted around him spirits whose moods and motives corresponded with his own. There were idle, mischievous spirits, bent on having a good time; there were earnest spirit investigators, ready to second the efforts of mortals; there were those who had recently departed from the earth, and were most eager to send back a word of comfort; there were light and pure spirits who sought an opportunity for impressing mortals with the grand truths which Spiritualism holds in reserve for those who truly desire them.

A clairvoyant first spoke, and described the spiritual forms which were presented to her vision. As I listened to the descriptions, I who beheld the spirits described, looked at Margaret in amazement. A youth nearing manhood was represented as an infant, still dressed in earthly baby habiliments. A man apparently in the prime of life, grand and glorious in his presence, was depicted as decrepid with age, and wearing an earthly garb of a quarter of a century ago. In no case did age, appearance or garments in any way correspond with the actual presence before me; and when a spirit from one of the lower spheres, with a mischievous leer upon his countenance, gained possession of the medium, and I heard a description of Jesus with the crown of thorns upon his head, giving also the name of Jesus, my disgust and indignation had reached their height.

I turned to Margaret with impatient angry words: " Was clairvoyance after all only a delusion ? "

" No, my child. You do not understand. Let me explain. Neither mortal eyes, nor spirit eyes in mortal form can behold spirit. It is too ethereal to be perceived. But for purposes of identification it is possible to impress the medium's brain so that

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he believes that he sees; and in order to make the identification complete, this impression is almost invariably of the spirit as it appeared while still dressed in mortality, the impression corresponding with the memory of friends. It is not a delusion; it is not even a deception. But those who are content to stop at this phase of spirit manifestation, and seek nothing further, know nothing whatever of Spiritualism. They accept the guarantee

for the thing itself; that which is offered in testimony of truth for the truth."

"But why was that deception about Jesus permitted? "

"Truly that was a deception; but when you visited the lower spheres, was it not explained to you that spirits of a low grade, who have no clear perceptions of right and wrong, take pleasure in deluding humanity? It affords them rare amusement. The ignorant and credulous offer themselves as willing victims to this class of spirits."

"But how can humanity protect itself from the impositions of this class?"

"The way is very plain. Let mediums themselves in their personal characters rise above them, and they can not approach them for purposes of evil; and on the other hand, let mankind at large bring to the study of these phenomena its reason and its judgment. Let it not take all spiritual utterances on faith, simply because they are spiritual in their source. Let it discriminate between the good and the evil, the wise and the foolish, that which if accepted will benefit, and that which will prove injurious. But to return to the subject of mediums, study this clairvoyant, and see what she is."

I did so, and her character was revealed to me, showing me that she was not only ignorant and credulous, but with no clear convictions of duty, no just conceptions of the importance of her mission as a medium of communication between the two worlds. The display of clairvoyant powers concluded, one spirit after another took possession of her organism for a brief time. The communications of those who wished to speak to earth friends

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were for the most part brief and unsatisfactory, though several names were correctly given. Why was this? In answer, the power was given to me to perceive in part the method of communication. The impression was made upon, and the work performed through, the brain of the medium, and this being dull and untrained, responded but faintly to the touch of spirit hands. One of the higher band of spirits found opportunity to attempt communication through her; but what a look of dismay and discouragement came over him, when he heard his brilliant thoughts dulled, the truths he would utter obscured, his meaning perverted, and his very language murdered, in passing through the channel of this woman's intellect. Disappointed, he soon ceased his efforts, and again a degraded spirit stepped in, and with scarcely a break in the discourse, proceeded at some length with a jargon of ideas, and a grammar eliminated of all recognized rules; and when he concluded, he announced the name of one of the most brilliant statesmen America has ever known. This name was received with a rapture of delight by a large number of those present, while the boon companions of the mischievous invisible were equally expressive of their pleasure. Oh, it was rare fun for them.

Then a second medium was controlled by one or more spirits. I could look into his heart and see good impulses there,

but also impurity and lack of high principle. He, too, though not so much the plaything and jest of mischievous immortals, drew around him only a lower class of spirits, and nothing of any real spiritual value was received through his mediumship; and as I studied him, I saw that it was impossible that there ever would be, until he was radically changed. This instrument, like the other, gave forth only weak and discordant notes, even when played upon by master spirits, because it was imperfect and out of tune.

A third medium opened her lips in her turn, and I waited anxiously to see and hear what would be the message, and how delivered. Again I was given that inner perception of charac-

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ter. I saw a woman of weakly good impulses, superstitious in her nature, and with a zeal for her faith which was only excelled by her ignorance. Only partially controlled by unseen powers, she allowed her eagerness and imagination to run away with her. She mistook her own impulses for genuine impressions from the Spirit-world, and that which she gave was a medley of truth and falsehood, reality and delusion, — the whole so debased by ignorance and misconception as to be utterly worthless; yet the woman did not intentionally deceive. She was a victim of her own zeal and her own mental delusions, while other victims, enshrouded in the same mental and spiritual darkness as herself, listened intently and even reverently to what she said, and accepted her words without question.

"You see," said Margaret, "what we have to contend with in our attempts to establish communication between the material and spiritual worlds. Not only must man look through a glass darkly in his attempts to behold the light, but the glass is too often unnecessarily obscured by ignorance, folly and evil. We need patience."

Almost disheartened, I then turned my attention to the fourth and last medium, to see if any hope were left for the communication of truth from the Spirit-world. As I studied her from my vantage ground of the Spirit-world, from which we can look through the disguises of the flesh, I found that she was a woman of quick perceptions, keen discernment, true to the heart's core, and fully appreciating the privileges and duties which fell to her because of her peculiar gift. I had known all these four mediums while I was still in the flesh, and had gained a tolerably accurate estimate of their different characters, but had never realized as now, the important bearings these characters and acquirements had upon their mediumship. As I still regarded the fourth speaker, I noted that she was surrounded only by bright spirits. As others approached her, they seemed restrained at a certain distance by some invisible barrier which, try as they would, they could not pass. She was herself true,

and therefore as a medium she uttered words of truth. She was intelligent, and did not unwittingly pervert the truth. All her desires and aspirations seemed to be directed heavenward, and the cry of her soul seemed to be: " Oh, make me worthy – make me more worthy of the mission to which I am appointed ! " And a bright band of angels, as if in response, encircled her head with a glowing diadem of stars, while their hands were extended above her in benediction. Even she was not perhaps fully capable of becoming the messenger of communication from the brightest and best of those who have passed to the Spirit-world from the earth life; but then how few there are – where can they be found? – who are thus in all things capable"!

But still another shock was in store for me. Words were spoken in which there was much wisdom – words which were not unworthy of almost any source; but when a name illustrious in the annals of literature, whose possessor had passed to spirit-life more than a generation ago, was given, I felt my heart sink within me. I knew the spirit thus named was not present. I had already sufficient knowledge to feel assured that he passed onward to a sphere whose inhabitants do not return to earth. Was there, then, no dependence to be placed in the utterances of mediums? Were even the best liable to self-deception? Margaret, ever watchful, divined my thoughts.

"Look," said she, pointing upward. As I obeyed her I beheld, or seemed to behold – for if it was not sight, it was a perception as strong as the sense of seeing – a succession of links extending from sphere to sphere, and from spirit to spirit, and on this chain of links the thought has been conveyed, originating far heavenward, and descending from spirit to spirit, until it had finally found utterance on earth. Oh! these wonderful spiritual bonds which can bring earth in communication with the higher spheres, and bind all together as a perfect whole !

On this occasion I realized as I had never before the difficulties which beset the Spirit-world in its attempts to establish communication with earth. Mortals themselves are very igno-

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rant of the necessary conditions. Then their imperfect natures draw around them more or less degraded spirits, who naturally interfere with, if they do not utterly thwart, the efforts of the higher and purer ones. Then mediumship being, as it might be said, an accident of the physical and mental organization, mediums are as a rule quite unprepared for the work required of them. Untrained, too often the reverse of spiritual in their natures, too often without a sense of moral responsibility, from such harsh, discordant instruments, though their keys be touched by angel fingers, mortals can never hope to hear the melodies of heaven. The first need of Spiritualism is conscientious, pure minded mediums, fully recognizing the grave responsibilities resting upon them, and seeking to fit themselves in every way for their work.

How clearly I see now, as I did not see in earth life, that the more fully mediums cultivate themselves in every direction,

intellectually as well as spiritually, do they lessen the labor of their spirit visitants who have a work to do on earth, and can only perform it satisfactorily by the help of mortal agency? The wiser, purer and truer is the medium, not only will a higher class of spirits be attracted, but truth itself will be less adulterated in passing through his or her intelligence. As water to the spectator apparently takes on the color of the glass which contains it, so must the nature of the medium tinge and modify all that to which he or she gives utterance.

At last the supreme moment had come. I was permitted to attempt the control of a human organism. That which seemed so easy, I found very difficult, but I was kindly instructed and assisted until I finally succeeded in uttering a few words, and in partially establishing my identity. From one point my effort was very unsatisfactory, and not at all what I had pictured to myself while in earth life that it should be. Then I had resolved that I would make no blunders, utter no foolishness, and that my tests should be perfect; but I fell far short of my earth-born intentions. Perhaps I may reach them in the future. I

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shall try. There was, however, supreme satisfaction in having been allowed to make the effort, and in finding that I was even partially successful. To succeed at all now, meant greater success at some future period.

There was one incident which I came very near forgetting to relate. Among the many spirits of nearly all grades which thronged to the spirit side of this earthly stance, after a time there entered one who seemed unlike all the rest. Though he bore the outward form of manhood, he seemed almost to belong to a lower order of beings. Upon his face was a vacant expression, as if intelligence were nearly lacking, and in its stead was almost the look of a wild beast. He seemed scarcely to see or hear what was going on around him. Indeed he must have been blind and deaf to most of the spiritual happenings; but crouching down in an abject attitude, he remained silent and motionless. Was he conscious of what was passing? If he was, for some time he gave no sign, and I presently became satisfied that the direct spirit utterances fell on deaf ears. But after awhile a dull curiosity seemed to be awakened in what the mediums were saying. It was evident that he heard them, and perhaps indistinctly saw them. Neither the reprehensible deceits of the lying spirits, nor the discouraging failures of the true ones, seemed to make more than a surface impression upon him. But finally, when through the agency of the only worthy medium present, beautiful truths were being uttered, his face took on a new expression. I was impressed to watch him intently. He looked perplexed, as if some faint, far off memory was struggling to the surface. The words had recalled something which he had so long forgotten that it had almost become to him as though it had never happened. The struggle went on, and at last memory was triumphant. An expression of intense pain swept over his face, and this was followed by fearful passion. What was it? I could not tell. Was it a far-off innocent childhood and of a time before he had all but murdered his own soul, and thus sent it to a long sleep? No; I could not tell. But,

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snapping and snarling like a wild animal, and uttering broken sentences as of half forgotten but terrible oaths, the man crept away with hideously contorted motions, not even seeking to rise to his feet, but using all fours. The spectacle was a horrible one.

" You have beheld the first awakening of a soul from its death-like lethargy," said Margaret, who, too, had witnessed the scene. "It can never sleep again, but through agonies untold must begin to work out its own redemption. He will be attracted hither again and again, each time to retreat in the same fury of debasing passion, until after many times he will become calmer, and will stay and listen, and will hear a few words, perhaps, which shall shed a little spiritual light upon him; and from merely feeling he will begin to think. He has a long and weary way before him, for he is just setting out upon the road; but though he knows it not, his face is turned toward the light – toward the light only – it does not reach him yet."

Poor, lost human soul ! Oh ! the outer darkness where it has so long dwelt ! Oh ! the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth which must be its portion before it finds itself in the light of divine truth and warmed by divine love !

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CHAPTER X.

THE FIELD IS THE WORLD.

At last I have found my work. It was not appointed for me arbitrarily, as is so often done on earth, I did not even choose it, but I recognized it as my work, because, in spite of many misgivings, I have found myself specially suited to it; and as I begin to realize the scope of this work, how many things this realization makes plain which were obscured before. How it untangles the threads of life, and shows a i)urpose and plan where all heretofore has seemed j)urposeless. It is not my mission to be a ministering angel to the lost and wandering spirits in the lower and darker spheres. I am not yet pure enough and wise enough for that. But I have borne the burdens of humanity. I know what it suffers, and how it is tried and tempted. I know its battles with self. I have charity for its failures because I have myself failed so many times; and, thank the overruling love and goodness, I know something of its victories. I realize my kinship to this humanity, and with it lies my work. Yes, though my home is no longer there, but is eternal in the eavens, my labor is still upon earth. There I shall be permitted yet to do the many things which, through weariness or possibly disinclination, I left undone during my mortal

existence. How grateful I am for this. To every one is not given the blessed opportunity of setting right the wrongs for which he is responsible, repairing the failures and atoning for the errors of his past, as it is given to me.

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I may not live my own life over again, but by the experiences of that life, gained through weariness, pain and bitter anguish, I may help and bless other lives, lighten others' burdens, whisper words of wisdom into listening ears, and lay my hands in benediction upon those bowed down with trouble or affliction. Could any work be more welcome to me ? Surely not, and gladly I go back to do it. I shall speak to you; through the hands of your mediums I shall write to you; I shall be with you in your labors; and in your hours of happiness and rest I shall still stand by you trying to lift your minds from things temporal to things spiritual. When temptation comes to you, I shall not desert you, but shall bid you be strong and remain true to your better natures. But if you hear me not, and weakly yield, shall I turn away from you in contempt and scorn ? No, a thousand times no ! By my own sins have I learned that charity which suffereth long; and in your hours of completest spiritual degradation shall I strive to come nearest you, clasping my arms about you in a loving pity, and seeking to bring you back to your better, nobler selves. Truly there is more joy in the Spirit-world over the one sinner that repenteth, than over the ninety-and-nine that go not astray.

I am still weak, I am still ignorant. The future holds out to me an ever-broadening vista of knowledge and experience, in contrast with which my personality seems to shrink smaller and smaller. But the years of earth-life have brought me some wisdom, and that I can utilize. Though still in the ABC class of spiritual wisdom, looking backward as I now do over the past, by the means of the newly-learned spirit alphabet, I am beginning to spell out the meaning of all my earthly experiences. While I was still on earth many of them were as if written in hieroglyphics which it was impossible for me to decipher; but with the heavenly key I am beginning to read them, and to comprehend their meaning; and, with a full remembrance of all the weariness, the bitterness and the anguish, I can say to-day that, even if I could, I would undo nothing in that past. Each

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experience has its place, meaning and purpose; and I expect to see all this clearer and clearer as eternity rolls on. Oh ! a wonderful and solemn thing is human life, with results which are never ending.

It is not the purpose of this letter to describe to you in what manner I have finally learned how to reach and communicate with those still in the flesh. Suffice it to say that I have done so. Neither will I weary you with personal matters by describing my ministrations to my own special loved ones, and what delight they have brought to me, what consolation to them. But though I shall never forget those whom I have left

behind, and shall always be drawn to them by the ties of spiritual kinship, as ever I was by ties of the flesh, my heart is growing large enough to include all humanity in its love and compassion, and my field of labor is wherever there are human souls needing help or comfort.

There are many of us to whom this work is given, and to us it seems the best and noblest work which can be done – probably because it is best suited to us. Perhaps some day when I have grown in wisdom and righteousness, and when my knowledge of the spirit life shall be perfect enough to warrant it, I shall be promoted, not only to a higher sphere, but to a higher field of labor, and shall find my work all here, bidding farewell to earth forever. Such a result does not now seem to me desirable; but when the time comes I shall desire it because I shall be prepared for it.

There is one thing I wish to speak of, though it may appear somewhat out of place in this chapter; but it has not seemed to come in appropriately anywhere else. One day my boys, my own beautiful boys, said to me:

" Our beautiful mother I "

Beautiful! How strangely the word sounded, applied to me. I had been beautiful once, but that was long ago.

I chide them for their loving flattery, for I still carried the

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picture in my mind of the gray hair, the dull eyes, and the thin, lined cheeks and brow, out of which all youth and beauty had long ago vanished, which had been the semblance of my earthly self. Lovingly they assured me they were not flattering me, and in proof they brought me a mirror, and I beheld myself once more. Myself, and yet not myself! There were the general outlines of the features, just as I had long been familiar with them; but the wrinkles of care were smoothed away; the traces of age had vanished; and more than the beauty of youth – a beauty of the spirit – illuminated them. Humbly and gratefully I recognized the fact that I was indeed beautiful, with a beauty upon which time should cast no shadow, nor sorrow mar, and to which eternity should bring still greater perfection. What more can I say to you now? Oh! there is so much still untold, that it seems useless to begin the telling. I shall speak and write to you again; I have already assured you of that. But now I bring this long letter to a close. I only purposed to tell my first experiences in spirit life, and these I have narrated here as faithfully as the conditions of spirit control will permit me. More obstacles than you can realize have stood in the way of my making myself perfectly understood. First of all, there is the difficulty of expressing ideas and describing events which have no counterpart in mortal existence.

In many ways I know I have rendered myself liable to misapprehension. Thus, when I speak of different places, of going and coming, my meaning has not been the same that you would attach to those phrases. Each one here creates his own surroundings. His heaven or hell proceeds from within himself

outward until it surrounds him like an actual locality. Those who dwell in darkness do so because their souls are dark and send out no rays of light, I did not visit differently located spheres, in the same sense that you would understand the term; but was permitted to view darkened spiritual states, and made to realize what was the effect upon those who existed in such conditions.

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The senses, too, play a subordinate part here. They are as keen as in earth-life, but there is a newly developed sense or spiritual perception which outranks them all, and by means of this many of om* impressions are received, and much of our knowledg-e acquired. I cannot describe this sense to you because you would not comprehend, and can only approximate its effects.

Then there have been other obstacles in the way of a complete expression of what I would wish to say. Imperfect mediumship is one of the greatest of tliese. In the hap-hazard way in which mediums are developed, there are very few indeed who are capable of becoming passive amanuenses for spirit control. The medium's thoughts and opinions, and especially modes of expression, will always creep in more or less,, giving a color and character of greater or less degree to all that which purports to proceed from the Spirit-world. Then it has not always been possible to hold the same strength of control, and as this has weakened, expression has become more difficult.

But with all these drawbacks, I have succeeded in saying substantially that which I wished to say; to describe to you the Spirit- world as I have found it, and to seek to impress upon your minds the fundamental religious truths of Spiritualism, that as a man is on earth, the same will he find himself upon his entrance into immortal life, and reward shall be given to every man according as his work shall be.

Spiritualism is the religion of personal responsibility, of never-dying hope, and of eternal progress. It is the religion which meets every need and every trial of life, holding a clearly burning beacon to light the way; and as men live up to the highest knowledge of truth within their hearts, newer and greater truths shall be given them, and they shall be led by spirit hands, spirit voices shall whisper in their ears, and their souls, shall be attuned to the harmony of heaven. The knowledge of the spirit is the fountain of living waters which flows from the great central throne whence proceed infinite v/isdome and

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infinite love. The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

May the Spirit of Peace find its way to all yom* hearts, and abide with you now and forever.

Troth Wears no Mask, Bows at no Human Shrine, Seeks Neither Place nor Applause;
She only Asks a Hearing.

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