

Gesellschaft für metaphysische Forschung e. V.

PSYCHIC BOOK CLUB

February Choice

MY LETTERS
FROM HEAVEN

By WINIFRED GRAHAM

*This book will be sent to members
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conditions may cause some delay.*

FROM JOHN REED
45 TANNERS HILL
Deptford, London, S.E.8

BEYOND THIS LIFE

By ANTHONY BORGIA



1942

~~SPIRITUALISM'S AIM -
A FAMILY OF NATIONS WITH
ONE ETERNAL FATHER~~



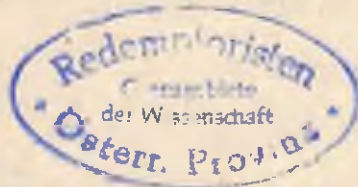
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Preface

It is strange that the organized body known, collectively, as 'the Church', while talking so repeatedly—and so glibly—of heaven, confesses to knowing nothing whatever about that future state. One Church in particular claims, on the other hand, to know a great deal about hell, one of its most important features being that once a person has got into it there is no getting out of it. One's residence there is for all eternity. A priest of this Church was once asked if he really believed in hell. 'Oh, yes,' he replied, 'but I don't believe anyone ever goes there!'

The Church has made the hereafter into a place of mystery, and the whole subject of a future state has been wrapped round with a mantle of religiosity, until people have come to look upon it with fear, with awe, with scepticism, with ridicule, with horror, and with a variety of other emotions according to their several temperaments or upbringings.

Death can come to a person slowly or rapidly, but it *must* inevitably come sooner or later. There is no dodging it. It has been going on since life began. Would it not be a relief to many minds, then, if they knew something, even if only a little, about the possible or probable state of their being after they have made the change from this life to the next? In other words, what sort of place is the next world? The only way to find out is to ask of someone who lives there, and to record what is said. And the latter is precisely what has been done in this present volume.

I first came to know the spirit communicator in 1909—five years before his passing into the spirit world—and during the passage of years I have cherished his memory. Until the present script was written he has never communicated with me directly, but I was once told (by another spirit friend) that he regretted having written a book, while still upon the earth-plane, in which he had dealt unfairly with Spiritualism. He has now revealed how

he wished to set this right by speaking to the earth world, giving facts of the after-life as he found it. The difficulties of communication were explained to him by spirit friends and advisers, but he held to his purpose. And so, when a suitable time was reached, he was told that he could communicate through a friend of his earthly days, and it has been my privilege to act as his recorder. The fact that we knew each other before his passing is a natural reason for his giving me this pleasure.

By telling others, who are still on earth, of his experiences in spirit, he will have attained more than his purpose if he is able to cast out of people's minds the fear of death and the hereafter.

A. V. B.

October 1941

I. My Earth Life

Who I am really matters not. Who I was matters still less. We do not carry our earthly positions with us into the spirit world. My earthly importance I left behind me. My spiritual worth is what counts now, and that, my good friend, is far below what it should be and what it *can* be. Thus much as to who I am. As to who I was, I should like to give some details concerning my mental attitude prior to my passing here into the world of spirit.

My earth life was not a hard one in the sense that I never underwent physical privations, but it was certainly a life of hard mental work. In my early years I was drawn towards the Church because the mysticism of the Church attracted my own mystical sense. The mysteries of religion, through their outward expression of lights and vestments and ceremonies, seemed to satisfy my spiritual appetite in a way that nothing else could. There was much, of course, that I did not understand, and since coming into spirit I have found that those things do not matter. They were religious problems raised by the minds of men, and they have no significance whatever in the great scheme of life. But at the time, like so many others, I believed in a wholesale fashion, without a glimmering of understanding, or very little. I taught and preached according to the orthodox text-books, and so I established a reputation for myself. When I contemplated a future state of existence I thought—and that vaguely—of what the Church had taught me on the subject, which was infinitesimally small and most incorrect. I did not realize the closeness of the two worlds—ours and yours—although I had ample demonstration of it. What occult experiences I had were brought about, so I thought, by some extension of natural laws, and they were rather to be considered as incidental than of regular occurrence, given to the few rather than to the many.

The fact that I was a priest did not preclude me from

visitations of what the Church preferred to look upon as devils, although I never once, I must confess, saw anything remotely resembling what I could consider as such. I did not grasp the fact that I was what is called, on the earth-plane, a sensitive, a psychic—one gifted with the power of 'seeing', though in a limited degree.

This incursion of a psychic faculty into my priestly life I found to be considerably disturbing since it conflicted with my orthodoxy. I sought advice in the matter from my colleagues, but they knew less than I knew, and they could only think of praying for me that these 'devils' might be removed from me. Their prayers availed me nothing—that was to be expected as I now see. Had my experiences been upon a high spiritual plane there is the chance that I should have been regarded in the light of a very holy man. But they were not so; they were just such experiences as occur to the ordinary earthly sensitive. As happening to a priest of the Holy Church they were looked upon as *temptations* of 'the devil'. As happenings to one of the laity they would have been regarded as *dealings* with 'the devil', or as some form of mental aberration. What my colleagues did not understand was that this power was a *gift*—a precious gift, as I understand now—and that it was personal to myself, as it is to all those who possess it, and to pray to have it removed is as senseless as to pray that one's ability to play the piano or paint a picture might be removed. It was not only senseless, it was unquestionably wrong, since such a gift of being able to see beyond the veil was given to be exercised for the good of mankind. I can at least rejoice that I never prayed for release from these powers. Pray I did, but for more light on the matter.

The great barrier to any further investigation of these faculties was the Church's attitude towards them, which was—and is—unrelenting, unequivocal, narrow, and ignorant. However long were any investigations or in whatever direction, the Church's final judgement was always the same, and its pronouncements unvarying—'such things have their origin in the devil'. And I was

bound by the laws of that Church, administering its sacraments and delivering its teachings, while the spirit world was knocking upon the door of my very existence, and trying to show me, *for myself to see*, what I had so often contemplated upon—our future life.

Many of my experiences of psychic happenings I incorporated into my books, giving the narratives such a twist as would impart to them an orthodox religious flavour. The truth was there, but the meaning and purpose were distorted. In a larger work I felt that I had to uphold the Church against the assaults of those who believed in the spiritual survival of bodily death, and that it was possible for the spirit world to communicate with the earth world. And in that larger work I ascribed to 'the devil'—against my better judgement—what I really knew to be nothing other than the working of natural laws, beyond and entirely independent of any orthodox religion, and certainly of no evil origin.

To have followed my own inclinations would have entailed a complete upheaval in my life, a renunciation of orthodoxy, and most probably a great material sacrifice, since I had established a second reputation as a writer. What I had already written would then have become worthless in the eyes of my readers, and I should have been regarded as a heretic or a madman. The greatest opportunity of my earthly life I thus let pass. How great was that opportunity, and how great were my loss and regret, I knew when I had passed into this world whose inhabitants I had already seen so many times and on so many different occasions. The truth was within my grasp, and I let it fall. I adhered to the Church. Its teachings had obtained too great a hold upon me. I saw thousands believing as I did, and I took courage from that, as I could not think that they could all be wrong. I tried to separate my religious life from my psychic experiences, and to treat them as having no connection with one another. It was difficult, but I managed to steer a course that gave me the least mental disturbance, and so I continued to the end, when at last I stood upon the threshold

of that world of which I had already had a glimpse. Of what befell me when I ceased to be an inhabitant of the earth and passed into the great spirit world, I hope now to give you some details.

II. Passing to Spirit Life

The actual process of dissolution is not necessarily a painful one. I had during my earth life witnessed many souls passing over the border into spirit. I had had the chance of observing with the physical eyes the struggles that take place as the spirit seeks to free itself for ever from the flesh. With my psychic vision I had also seen the spirit leave, but nowhere was I able to find out—that is, from orthodox sources—what exactly takes place at the moment of separation, nor was I able to gather any information upon the sensations experienced by the passing soul. The writers of religious text-books tell us nothing of such things for one very simple reason—they *do not know*.

The physical body many times appeared to be suffering acutely, either from actual pain or through laboured or restricted breathing. To this extent such passings had all the appearance of being extremely painful. Was this really so?—was a question I had often asked myself. Whatever was the true answer I could never really believe that the actual physical process of 'dying' was a painful one, notwithstanding that it appeared so. The answer to my question I knew I would have one day, and I always hoped that at least my passing would not be violent, whatever else it might be. My hopes were fulfilled. My end was not violent, but it was laboured, as were so many that I had witnessed.

I had a presentiment that my days on earth were drawing to a close only a short while before my passing.

There was a heaviness of the mind, something akin to drowsiness, as I lay in my bed. Many times I had a feeling of floating away and of gently returning. Doubtless during such periods those who were concerned with my physical welfare were under the impression that, if I had not actually passed, I was sinking rapidly. During such lucid intervals that I had I endured no feelings of physical discomfort. I could see and hear what was going on around me, and I could 'sense' the mental distress that my condition was occasioning. And yet I had the sensation of the most extraordinary exhilaration of the mind. I knew for certain that my time had come to pass on, and I was full of eagerness to be gone. I had no fear, no misgivings, no doubts, no regrets—so far—at thus leaving the earth world. (My regrets were to come later, but of these I shall speak in due course.) All that I wanted was to be away.

I suddenly felt a great urge to rise up. I had no *physical* feeling whatever, very much in the same way that physical feeling is absent during a dream, but I was mentally alert, however much my body seemed to contradict such a condition. Immediately I had this distinct prompting to rise, I found that I was actually doing so. I then discovered that those around my bed did not seem to perceive what I was doing, since they made no effort to come to my assistance, nor did they try in any way to hinder me. Turning, I then beheld what had taken place. I saw my physical body lying lifeless upon its bed, but here was I, the *real* I, alive and well. For a minute or two I remained gazing, and the thought of what to do next entered my head, but help was close at hand. I could still see the room quite clearly around me, but there was a certain mistiness about it as though it were filled with smoke very evenly distributed. I looked down at myself wondering what I was wearing in the way of clothes, for I had obviously risen from a bed of sickness and was therefore in no condition to move very far from my surroundings. I was extremely surprised to find that I had on my usual attire, such as I wore when moving freely and in good health

about my own house. My surprise was only momentary since, I thought to myself, what other clothes should I expect to be wearing? Surely not some sort of diaphanous robe. Such costume is usually associated with the conventional idea of an angel, and I had no need to assure myself that I was not that!

Such knowledge of the spirit world as I had been able to glean from my own experiences instantly came to my aid. I *knew* at once of the alteration that had taken place in my condition; I knew, in other words, that I had 'died'. I knew, too, that I was alive, that I had shaken off my last illness sufficiently to be able to stand upright and look about me. At no time was I in any mental distress, but I was full of wonder at what was to happen next, for here I was, in full possession of all my faculties, and, indeed, feeling 'physically' as I had never felt before.

Although this has taken some time in the telling, in order that I might give you as much detail as possible, the whole process must have taken but a few minutes of earth time.

As soon as I had had this brief space in which to look about me and to appreciate my new estate, I found myself joined by a former colleague—a priest—who had passed to this life some years before. We greeted each other warmly, and I noticed that he was attired like myself. Again this in no way seemed strange to me, because had he been dressed in any other way I should have felt that something was wrong somewhere, as I had only known him in clerical attire. He expressed his great pleasure at seeing me again, and for my part I foresaw the gathering up of the many threads that had been broken by his 'death'.

For the first moment or so I allowed him to do all the talking; I had yet to accustom myself to the newness of things. For you must remember that I had just relinquished a bed of final sickness, and that in casting off the physical body I had also cast off the sickness with it, and the new sensation of comfort and freedom from bodily ills was one so glorious that the realization of it took a

little while to comprehend fully. My old friend seemed to know at once the extent of my knowledge, that I was aware that I had passed on, and that all was well.

And here let me say that all idea of a 'judgement seat' or a 'day of judgement' was entirely swept from my mind in the actual procedure of transition. It was all too normal and natural to suggest the frightful ordeal that orthodox religion teaches that we must go through after 'death'. The very conception of 'judgement' and 'hell' and 'heaven' seemed utterly impossible. Indeed, they were wholly fantastic, now that I found myself alive and well, 'clothed in my right mind,' and, in fact, clothed in my own familiar habiliments, and standing in the presence of an old friend, who was shaking me cordially by the hand, and giving me greeting and good wishes, and showing all the outward—and in this case—genuine manifestations of being pleased to see me, as I was pleased to see him. He, himself, was in the best of spirits as he stood there giving me such a welcome as, upon the earth-plane, two old friends accord each other after long separation. That, in itself, was sufficient to show that all thoughts of being marched off to my judgement were entirely preposterous. We both were too jolly, too happy, too carefree, and too natural, and I, myself, was waiting with excitement for all manner of pleasant revelations of this new world, and I knew that there could be none better than my old friend to give them to me. He told me to prepare myself for an immeasurable number of the pleasantest of surprises, and that he had been sent to meet me on my arrival. As he already knew the limits of my knowledge, so his task was that much the easier.

As soon as I managed to find my tongue, after our first breaking the silence, I noticed that we spoke just as we had always done upon the earth, that is, we simply used our vocal cords and spoke, quite as a matter of course. It required no thinking about, and indeed I did not think about it. I merely noted that it was so. My friend then proposed that as we had no further need or call to stay in the surroundings of my passing, we might move away,

and that he would take me to a very nice 'place' that had been made ready for me. He made this reference to a 'place', but he hastened to explain that in reality I was going to my own house, where I should find myself immediately 'at home'. Not knowing, as yet, how one proceeded, or, in other words, how I was to get there, I placed myself entirely in his hands, and that, he told me, was precisely what he was there for!

I could not resist the impulse to turn and take a last look at the room of my transition. It still presented its misty appearance. Those who were formerly standing round the bed had now withdrawn, and I was able to approach the bed and gaze at 'myself'. I was not the least impressed by what I saw, but the last remnant of my physical self seemed to be placid enough. My friend then suggested that we should now go, and we accordingly moved away.

As we departed, the room gradually became more misty until it faded farther from my vision, and finally disappeared. So far, I had had the use, as usual, of my legs as in ordinary walking, but in view of my last illness and the fact that, consequent upon it, I should need some period of rest before I exerted myself too much, my friend said that it would be better if we did not use the customary means of locomotion—our legs. He then told me to take hold of his arm firmly, and to have no fear whatever. I could, if I wished, close my eyes. It would, he said, perhaps be better if I did so. I took his arm, and left the rest to him as he told me to do. I at once experienced a sensation of floating such as one has in physical dreams, though this was very real and quite unattended by any doubts of personal security. The motion seemed to become more rapid as time went on, and I still kept my eyes firmly closed. It is strange with what determination one can do such things here. On the earth-plane, if similar circumstances were possible, how many of us would have closed our eyes in complete confidence? Here there was no shadow of doubt that all was well, that there was nothing to fear, that nothing untoward could possibly take place, and

that, moreover, my friend had complete control of the situation.

After a short while our progress seemed to slacken somewhat, and I could feel that there was something very solid under my feet. I was told to open my eyes. I did so. What I saw was my old home that I had lived in on the earth-plane; my old home—but with a difference. It was improved in a way that I had not been able to do to its earthly counterpart. The house itself was rejuvenated, as it seemed to me from a first glance, rather than restored, but it was the gardens round it that attracted my attention more fully.

They appeared to be quite extensive, and they were in a state of the most perfect order and arrangement. By this I do not mean the regular orderliness that one is accustomed to see in public gardens on the earth-plane, but that they were beautifully kept and tended. There were no wild growths or masses of tangled foliage and weeds, but the most glorious profusion of beautiful flowers so arranged as to show themselves to absolute perfection. Of the flowers themselves, when I was able to examine them more closely, I must say that I never saw either their like or their counterpart, upon the earth, of many that were there in full bloom. Numbers were to be found, of course, of the old familiar blossoms, but by far the greater number seemed to be something entirely new to my rather small knowledge of flowers. It was not merely the flowers themselves and their unbelievable range of superb colourings that caught my attention, but the vital atmosphere of eternal life that they threw out, as it were, in every direction. And as one approached any particular group of flowers, or even a single bloom, there seemed to pour out great streams of energizing power which uplifted the soul spiritually and gave it strength, while the heavenly perfumes they exhaled were such as no soul clothed in its mantle of flesh has ever experienced. All these flowers were living and breathing, and they were, so my friend informed me, incorruptible.

There was another astonishing feature I noticed when

I drew near to them, and that was the sound of music that enveloped them, making such soft harmonies as corresponded exactly and perfectly with the gorgeous colours of the flowers themselves. I am not, I am afraid, sufficiently learned, musically, to be able to give you a sound technical explanation of this beautiful phenomenon, but I shall hope to bring to you one with knowledge of the subject, who will be able to go into this more fully. Suffice it for the moment, then, to say that these musical sounds were in precise consonance with all that I had so far seen—which was very little—and that everywhere there was perfect harmony.

Already I was conscious of the revitalizing effect of this heavenly garden to such an extent that I was anxious to see more of it. And so, in company with my old friend, upon whom I was here relying for information and guidance, I walked the garden paths, trod upon the exquisite grass, whose resilience and softness were almost comparable to 'walking on air'; and tried to make myself realize that all this superlative beauty was part of my own home.

There were many splendid trees to be seen, none of which was malformed, such as one is accustomed to see on earth, yet there was no suggestion of strict uniformity of pattern. It was simply that each tree was growing under perfect conditions, free from the storms of wind that bend and twist the young branches, and free from the inroads of insect life and many other causes of the misshapenness of earthly trees. As with the flowers, so with the trees. They live for ever incorruptible, clothed always in their full array of leaves of every shade of green, and for ever pouring out life to all those who approach near them.

I had observed that there did not appear to be what we should commonly call shade beneath the trees, and yet there did not appear to be any glaring sun. It seemed to be that there was a radiance of light that penetrated into every corner, and yet there was no hint of flatness. My friend told me that all light proceeded directly from the Giver of all light, and that this light was Divine life

itself, and that it bathed and illumined the whole of the spirit world where lived those who had eyes spiritually to see.

I noticed, too, that a comfortable warmth pervaded every inch of space, a warmth perfectly even and as perfectly sustained. The air had a stillness, yet there were gentle perfume-laden breezes—the truest zephyrs—that in no way altered the delightful balminess of the temperature.

And here let me say to those who do not care much for 'perfumes' of any sort: Do not be disappointed when you read these words, and feel that it could never be heaven to you if there were something there you do not like. Wait, I say, until you witness these things, and I know that then you will feel very differently about them.

I have gone into all these things in a rather detailed fashion because I am sure there are so many people who have wondered about them.

I was struck by the fact that there were no signs of walls or hedges or fences; indeed, nothing, so far as I could see, to mark off where my garden began or ended. I was told that such things as boundaries were not needed, because each person knew instinctively, but beyond doubt, just where his own garden ended. There was therefore no encroaching upon another's grounds, although all were open to any who wished to traverse them or linger within them. I was wholeheartedly welcome to go wherever I wished without fear of intruding upon another's privacy. I was told I should find that that was the rule here, and that I would have no different feelings with respect to others walking in my own garden. I exactly described my sentiments at that moment, for I wished, then and there, that all who cared would come into the garden and enjoy its beauties. I had no notions whatever of ownership personally, although I knew that it was my own 'to have and to hold'. And that is precisely the attitude of all here—ownership and partnership at one and the same time.

Seeing the beautiful state of preservation and care in

which all the garden was kept, I inquired of my friend as to the genius who looked after it so assiduously and with such splendid results. Before answering my question he suggested that as I had but so very recently arrived in the spirit land, he considered it advisable that I should rest, or that at least I should not overdo my sightseeing. He proposed, therefore, that we should find a pleasant spot—he used the words in a comparative sense, because all was more than *pleasant* everywhere—that we should seat ourselves, and then he would expound one or two of the many problems that had presented themselves to me in the brief time since I had passed to spirit.

Accordingly, we walked along until we found such a 'pleasant' place beneath the branches of a magnificent tree, whence we overlooked a great tract of the countryside, whose rich verdure undulated before us and stretched far away into the distance. The whole prospect was bathed in glorious celestial sunshine, and I could perceive many houses of varying descriptions picturesquely situated, like my own, among trees and gardens. We threw ourselves down upon the soft turf, and I stretched myself out luxuriously, feeling as though I were lying upon a bed of the finest down. My friend asked me if I was tired. I had no ordinary sensation of earthly fatigue, but yet I felt somewhat the necessity for a bodily relaxation. He told me that my last illness was the cause of such a desire, and that if I wished I could pass into a state of complete sleep. At the moment, however, I did not feel the absolute need for that, and I told him that for the present I would much prefer to hear him talk. And so he began.

"Whatsoever a man soweth," he said, "that shall he reap." Those few words describe exactly the great eternal process by which all that you see, actually here before you, is brought about. All the trees, the flowers, the woods, the houses that are also the happy homes of happy people—everything is the visible result of "whatsoever a man soweth". This land, wherein you and I are now living, is the land of the great harvest, the seeds of which were planted upon the earth-plane. All who live

here have won for themselves the precise abode they have passed to by their deeds upon the earth.'

I was already beginning to perceive many things, the principal one of which, and that which touched me most closely, being the totally wrong attitude adopted by religion in relation to the world of spirit. The very fact that I was lying there where I was, constituted a complete refutation of so much that I taught and upheld during my priestly life upon earth. I could see volumes of orthodox teachings, creeds, and doctrines melting away because they are of no account, because they are not true, and because they have no application whatever to the eternal world of spirit and to the great Creator and Upholder of it. I could see clearly now what I had seen but hazily before, that orthodoxy is man-made, but that the universe is God-given.

My friend went on to tell me that I should find living within the homes, that we could see from where we were lying, all sorts and conditions of people; people whose religious views when they were on the earth were equally varied. But one of the great facts of spirit life is that souls are exactly the same the instant after passing into spirit life as they were the instant before. Death-bed repentances are of no avail, since the majority of them are but cowardice born of fear of what is about to happen—a fear of the theologically built eternal hell that is such a useful weapon in the ecclesiastical armoury, and one that perhaps has caused more suffering in its time than many other erroneous doctrines. Creeds, therefore, do not form any part of the world of spirit, but because people take with them all their characteristics into the spirit world, the fervid adherents to any particular religious body will continue to practise their religion in the spirit world until such time as their minds become spiritually enlightened. We have here, so my friend informed me—I have since seen them for myself—whole communities still exercising their old earthly religion. The bigotry and prejudices are all there, religiously speaking. They do no harm, except to themselves, since such matters are confined to themselves. There is no such thing as making converts here!

Such being the case, then, I supposed that our own religion was fully represented here. Indeed, it was! The same ceremonies, the same ritual, the same old beliefs, all are being carried on with the same misplaced zeal—in churches erected for the purpose. The members of these communities know that they have passed on, and they think that part of their heavenly reward is to continue with their man-made forms of worship. So they will continue until such time as a spiritual awakening takes place. Pressure is never brought to bear upon these souls; their mental resurrection must come from within themselves. When it does come they will taste for the first time the real meaning of freedom.

My friend promised that if I wished we could visit some of these religious bodies later, but, he suggested, that as there was plenty of time it would be better if first of all I became quite accustomed to the new life. He had, so far, left unanswered my question as to who was the kindly soul who tended my garden so well, but he read my unspoken thought, and reverted to the matter himself.

Both the house and the garden, he told me, were the harvest I had reaped for myself during my earth life. Having earned the right to possess them, I had built them with the aid of generous souls who spend their life in the spirit world performing such deeds of kindness and service to others. Not only was it their work, but it was their pleasure at the same time. Frequently this work is undertaken and carried out by those who, on earth, were expert in such things, and who also had a love for it. Here they can continue with their occupation under conditions that only the world of spirit can supply. Such tasks bring their own spiritual rewards, although the thought of reward is never in the minds of those who perform them. The desire of being of service to others is always uppermost.

The man who had helped to bring this beautiful garden into being was a lover of gardens upon the earth-plane, and, as I could see for myself, he was also an expert. But once the garden was created there was not the incessant toil that is necessary for its upkeep, as with large gardens

upon earth. It is the constant decay, the stresses of storm and wind, and the several other causes that demand the labour on earth. Here there is no decay, and all that grows does so under the same conditions as we exist. I was told that the garden would need practically no attention, as we usually understand the term, and that our friend the gardener would still keep it under his care if I so wished it. Far from merely wishing it, I expressed the hope that he certainly would do so. I voiced my deep gratitude for his wonderful work, and I hoped that I might be able to meet him and convey to him my sincere appreciation and thanks. My friend explained that that was quite a simple matter, and that the reason why I had not already met him was the fact of my very recent arrival, and that he would not intrude until I had made myself quite at home.

My mind again turned to my occupation while on earth, the conducting of daily service and all the other duties of a minister of the Church. Since such an occupation, as far as I was concerned, was now needless, I was puzzled to know what the immediate future had in store for me. I was again reminded that there was plenty of time in which to ponder the subject, and my friend suggested that I should rest myself and then accompany him upon some tours of inspection—there was so much to see and so much that I should find more than astonishing. There were also numbers of friends who were waiting to meet me again after our long separation. He curbed my eagerness to begin by saying that I must rest first, and for which purpose, what better place than my own home?

I followed his advice, therefore, and we made our way towards the house.

III. First Experiences

I have already mentioned that when I was first introduced to my spirit home I observed that it was the same as my

earth home, but with a difference. As I entered the doorway I saw at once the several changes that had been brought about. These changes were mostly of a structural nature and were exactly of the description of those that I had always wished I could have carried out to my earthly house, but which for architectural and other reasons I had never been able to have done. Here, earthly needs had no place, so that I found my spirit home, in general disposition, exactly as I had ever wished it to be. The essential requisites indispensably associated with an earthly homestead were, of course, completely superfluous here, for example, the severely mundane matter of providing the body with food. That is one instance of the difference. And so with others it is easy enough to call to mind.

As we traversed the various rooms together, I could see many instances of the thoughtfulness and kindness of those who had laboured so energetically to help me reconstruct my old home in its new surroundings. While standing within its walls I was fully aware of its permanence as compared with what I had left behind me. But it was a permanence that I knew I could end; permanent only so long as I wished it to be so. It was more than a mere house; it was a spiritual haven, an abode of peace, where the usual domestic cares and responsibilities were wholly absent.

The furniture that it contained consisted largely of that which I had provided for its earthly original, not because it was particularly beautiful, but because I had found it useful and comfortable, and adequately suited my few requirements. Most of the small articles of adornment were to be seen displayed in their customary places, and altogether the whole house presented the unmistakable appearance of occupancy. I had truly 'come home'.

In the room that had formerly been my study I noticed some well-filled bookshelves. At first I was rather surprised to see such things, but upon further thought I could see no reason, if such as this house could exist at all with all its various adjuncts, why books should not also have their place within the scheme. I was interested to learn what was

the nature of the books, and so I made a closer examination. I found that conspicuous among them were my own works. As I stood in front of them I had a clear perception of the reason, the real reason, for their being there. Many of these books contained those narratives that I spoke of earlier, in which I had told of my own psychic experiences after giving them the necessary religious turn. One book in particular seemed to stand out in my mind more than the others, and I came to the full realization that I now wished that I had never written it. It was a distorted narrative, where the facts, as I had really known them, were given unfair treatment, and where the truth was suppressed. I felt very remorseful, and for the first time since coming into this land I had regret. Not regret that I had, at last, arrived in the spirit world, but sorrow that, with the truth before me, I had deliberately cast it aside to place in its stead falsehood and misrepresentation. For I knew that so long as my name lived, that is, so long as it had any commercial value, that book would continue to be reproduced and circulated and read—and regarded as the absolute truth. I had the unpleasant knowledge that I could never *destroy* what I had thus done.

There was, at no time, any sense of condemnation over this. On the contrary, I could feel a distinct atmosphere of intense sympathy. Whence it came, I knew not, but it was real and concrete nevertheless. I turned to my friend, who, during my inspection and discovery, had been standing discreetly and understandingly at a little distance apart, and I asked for his help. It was instantly forthcoming. He then explained to me that he knew exactly what had lain before me concerning this book, but that he was debarred from making any reference to it before I made the discovery for myself. Upon my doing so, and upon my subsequent appeal for his help, he was at once enabled to come to my aid.

My first question was to ask him how I could put this matter right. He told me that there were several ways in which I could do so, some more difficult—but more efficacious—than others. I suggested that perhaps I could

go back to the earth-plane and tell others the truth of this new life and the truth of communication between the two worlds. Many, many people, he said, had tried, and were still trying, to do so, and how many were believed? Did I think that I should have any better fortune? Certainly none of those who read my books would ever come within miles of receiving or crediting any communication from me. And did I realize, also, that if I were to present myself to such people they would at once call me a 'devil', if not the very Prince of Darkness himself!

'Let me,' he continued, 'place a few considerations before you concerning this subject of communication with the earth world. You know full well that such is possible, but have you any conception of the difficulties surrounding it?

'Let us assume that you have found the means to communicate. The first thing you will be called upon to do will be to furnish clear and definite identification of yourself. Quite probably, upon your first declaring who you are, there will be some hesitation at accepting your name simply because it carried weight when you were incarnate. However important or famous we happen to be when upon the earth-plane, as soon as we are gone to the spirit-plane, we are referred to in the past tense! Whatever works of a literary nature we may leave behind us are then of far greater importance than their authors, since to the earth world we are "dead". To the earth, the living voice is gone. And although we are still very much alive—to ourselves as well as to others here—to the earth people we have become memories, sometimes permanent, more often than not memories that rapidly fade, leaving mere names behind them. We know, moreover, that we are very much more alive than we have ever been before; the majority of earth people will consider that we could never be more "dead"!

'You will be *commanded*, then, to provide a deal of identification. That is quite proper in such circumstances, provided it is not carried to extremes, as so often it is. After fulfilling this condition, what next? You will wish to

intimate that you are alive and well. If the people with whom you are communicating are no mere dabblers, no doubt will be placed upon your statement. But if you wish to send such news to the world in general through the customary channels, those who believe it is really you who have spoken will be those who already know of, and practise communication with, the spirit world. For the rest, who will believe it is you? None, certainly none of your former readers. They will say that it cannot be *you*, but that it is a "devil" impersonating you. Others will quite probably take no notice whatever. There would, of course, be a number who would imagine that, because you have passed into the world of spirit, then you will at once have become endowed with the profoundest wisdom, and that all you say will be infallible utterances. You can see some of the difficulties that will confront you in this simple matter of telling the truth to those who still sit in the darkness of the earth world.'

My friend's forecast grieved me considerably, but I appreciated the extreme difficulties, and I was persuaded to leave the project for the time being. We would consult others wiser than ourselves, and perhaps some course would be outlined whereby I could achieve my desires. I might find that with the passage of time—speaking in a mundane sense—my wishes might change. There was no need to distress myself. There was much that I could see and do, and much experience to be gained that would be invaluable to me if, in the end, I resolved to try and carry out my intentions. His best advice was that I should have a thorough rest, during which time he would leave me. If, when I was quite refreshed, I would send out my thought to him, he would receive it and return to me at once. So, making myself 'comfortable' upon a couch, I sank into a delightful state of semi-sleep, in which I was fully conscious of my surroundings, yet at the same time I could feel a downpouring of new energy, which coursed through my whole being. I could feel myself becoming, as it were, lighter, with the last traces of the old earth conditions being driven away for ever.

How long I remained in this pleasant state, I have no knowledge, but eventually I fell into a gentle slumber from which I awoke in that state of health which in the spirit world is *perfect*. I at once remembered my friend's proposal, and I sent out my thoughts to him. Within the space of a few seconds of earth time he was walking in through the door. His response was so bewilderingly rapid that my surprise sent him into merry laughter. He explained that in reality it was quite simple. The spirit world is a world of thought; to think is to act, and thought is instantaneous. If we think ourselves into a certain place we shall travel with the rapidity of that thought, and that is as near instantaneous as it is possible to imagine. I should find that it was the usual mode of locomotion, and that I should soon be able to employ it.

My friend at once noticed a change in me, and he congratulated me upon my regaining my full vigour. It is impossible to convey, even in a small measure, this exquisite feeling of supreme vitality and well-being. When we are living upon the earth-plane we are constantly being reminded of our physical bodies in a variety of ways—by cold or heat, by discomfort, by fatigue, by minor illnesses, and by countless other means. Here we labour under no such disabilities. By that I do not mean that we are just unfeeling logs, insensible to all external influences, but that our perceptions are of the mind, and that the spirit body is impervious to anything that is destructive. We feel through our minds, not through any physical organs of sense, and our minds are directly responsive to thought. If we should feel coldness in some particular and definite circumstances, we undergo that sensation with our minds, and our spirit bodies in no way suffer. We are never continuously reminded of them. In the realm of which I am now speaking, all is exactly attuned to its inhabitants—its temperature, its landscape, its many dwellings, the waters of the rivers and streams, and, most important of all, the inhabitants one with another. There is therefore nothing that can possibly create any unhappiness, unpleasantness, or discomfort. We can completely forget

our bodies and allow our minds to have free play, and through our minds we can enjoy the thousands of delights that the same minds have helped to build up.

At times we may feel saddened—and at times we are amused—by those who, still upon the earth, ridicule and pour scorn and contempt upon our descriptions of the spirit lands. What do these poor minds know? Nothing! And what would these same minds substitute for the realities of the spirit world? They do not know. They would take away from us our beautiful countryside, our flowers and trees, our rivers and lakes, our houses, our friends, our work, and our pleasures and recreations. For what? What conception can these dull minds have of a world of spirit? By their own stupid admissions, no conception whatever. They would turn us into wraiths, without substance, without intelligence, and merely surviving in some dim, shadowy, vaporous state, dis severed from everything that is human. In my perfect health and abounding vitality, and living among all the beauties of this world of strict reality—a mere *hint* of which I have only so far given you—I am forcibly impressed by the magnitude of ignorance shown by particular minds upon earth.

The time had come, I felt, when I would like to see something of this wonderful land, and so, in company with my friend, we set forth on what was, for me, a voyage of discovery. Those of you who have travelled the earth for the sake of seeing new lands will understand how I felt at the outset.

To obtain a wider view, we walked to some higher ground, whence a clear panorama unfolded before the eyes. Before us the countryside reached out in a seemingly unending prospect. In another direction I could clearly perceive what had all the appearance of a city of stately buildings, for it must be remembered that all people here do not possess a uniformity of tastes, and that even as on earth, many prefer the city to the country, and *vice versa*, while again some like both. I was very keenly interested to see what a spirit city could be like. It seemed easy enough to visualize the country here, but cities seemed so

essentially the work of man in a material world. On the other hand, I could advance no logical reason why the spirit world should not also build cities. My companion was greatly amused by my enthusiasm, which, he declared, was equal to a schoolboy's. It was not his first acquaintance with it, however; most people when they first arrive are taken in the same way! And it affords our friends a never-ending pleasure to show us round.

I could see a church in the distance built on the usual lines externally, and it was proposed that we might go in that direction, and include other things on the way. And so we set off.

We followed a path that led for part of the way beside a brook, whose clear water sparkled in the light of the heavenly sun. As the water pursued its course it gave forth many musical notes that constantly changed and weaved themselves into a medley of the most dulcet sounds. We drew to the edge that I might look at it closer. It seemed to be almost like liquid crystal, and as the light caught it, it scintillated with all the colours of the rainbow. I let some of the water run over my hand, expecting it, by its very look, to be icy cold. What was my astonishment to find that it was delightfully warm. But still more, it had an electrifying effect which extended from my hand right up the arm. It was a most exhilarating sensation, and I wondered what would it be like to bathe fully within it. My friend said that I should feel myself being charged with energy, but there was not a sufficient depth of water to immerse myself in it properly. I should have the opportunity, as soon as we came to a larger body of water, to indulge in a bathe. When I withdrew my hand from the brook, I found that the water flowed off in flashing drops, leaving it quite dry!

We resumed our walk, and my friend said he would like to take me to visit a man who lived in a house which we were now approaching. We walked through some artistically laid out gardens, crossed a well-turfed lawn, and came upon a man seated at the outskirts of a large orchard. As we drew near he rose to meet us. My friend

and he greeted one another in the most cordial fashion, and I was introduced as a new arrival. It was explained to me that this gentleman prided himself upon the fruit in his orchard, and I was invited to sample some of it. The owner of this pleasant retreat seemed to be a man of middle years, as far as I could judge, though he could have been much older than he appeared to be at first sight. I have since learned that to try to guess the ages of people here is a difficult and almost dangerous task! For you must know—to digress a little—that it is the law that, as we progress spiritually, so do we shake off the semblance of age as it is known on earth. We lose the wrinkles that age and worldly cares have marked upon our countenances, together with other indications of the passage of years, and we become younger in appearance, while we grow older in knowledge and wisdom and spirituality. I am not suggesting that we assume an exterior of extreme juvenility, nor do we lose those external indications of personality. To do that would make us all of a deadly uniformity, but we do, in truth, return—or advance, according to our age when we pass into spirit—towards what we have always known as 'the prime of life'.

To resume. Our host led us into the orchard where I beheld many trees in a high state of cultivation, and in full fruit. He looked at me for a moment, and then he took us to a splendid tree that looked strongly like a plum tree. The fruit was perfect in shape, with a deep rich colouring, and it hung in great clusters. Our host picked some of it, and handed it to us, telling us that it would do us both good. The fruit was quite cool to the touch, and it was remarkably heavy for its size. Its taste was exquisite, the flesh was soft without being difficult or unpleasant to handle, and a quantity of nectar-like juice poured out. My two friends watched me closely as I ate the plums, each bearing upon his face an expression of mirthful anticipation. As the juice of the fruit streamed out, I fully expected to spill an abundance of it upon my clothes. To my amazement, although the juice *descended* upon me I could find, upon examination, no traces of it! My friends

laughed uproariously at my astonishment, and I thoroughly enjoyed the joke, but I was much mystified. They hastened to explain to me that as I am now in an incorruptible world anything that is 'unwanted' immediately returns to its own element. The fruit juice that I thought I had spilled upon myself had returned to the tree from which the fruit was plucked.

Our host informed me that the particular type of plum which I had just eaten was one that he always recommends to people who have but newly arrived in spirit. It helps to restore the spirit, especially if the passing has been caused by illness. He observed, however, that I did not present the appearance of having had a long illness, and he gathered that my passing had been fairly sudden—which was quite true. I had had only a very short illness. The various fruits that were growing were not only for those who needed some form of treatment after their physical death, but all enjoyed eating thereof for its stimulating effect. He hoped that, if I had no fruit trees of my own—or even if I had!—I should come as often as I liked and help myself. 'The fruit is always in season,' he added, in great amusement, 'and you will never find any of the trees without plenty of fruit upon them.' In response to my question as to how they grow, he replied that like so many other questions in this land, the answer was only possible from those of the higher realms, and even if we were told that answer, there is more than a strong probability that we should not understand until such time as we, ourselves, went to dwell in those realms. We are quite content, he said in effect, to take so many things just as they are, without inquiring into how they come about, and we know that those things provide a never-failing supply because they come from a never-failing Source. There is no real need to delve into such matters, and most of us are quite content to enjoy them with heartfelt thanks. As to the actual supply of fruit, our host said that all he knew was that as he picked his fruit other fruit came and took its place. It never over-ripened because it was *perfect* fruit, and, like ourselves, imperishable.

He invited us to walk through the orchard where I saw every kind of fruit known to man, and many that were known only in spirit. I sampled some of the latter, but it is impossible to give any indication of the delicious flavour of them because there is no earthly fruit that I know of with which comparison can be made. We can only, at any time, give such an indication to the senses by comparison with that which we have already experienced. If we have not had that experience then we are at a complete and absolute loss to convey any new sensation, and nowhere is this more appreciable than in the sense of taste.

My friend explained to our genial host that he was escorting me round to show me the land of my new life, and the latter gave us many good wishes to speed us upon our way. He repeated his invitation to visit him whenever I wished, and even if he were not about at the time of any call I might make, I was to help myself to the fruit to my heart's content. He said I should find that the fruit trees would perform the duties of a host as well as—even better than—he could! And so with further expressions of thanks and goodwill, we again set forth.

We returned to our former path beside the brook, and continued our walk in the direction of the church. After we had proceeded for a little way, I noticed that the brook began to broaden out until it expanded into the dimensions of a fair-sized lake. We could see many groups of happy people gathered at the side of the water, some of whom were bathing. The lake was bounded by an encirclement of trees, and there were flowers in abundance arranged in such a way that although a certain orderliness was observable, yet there was no hint of distinct ownership. They belonged to all in equal right, and I observed most particularly that no attempt was made by anyone to pick, or root up, or otherwise disturb them. One or two people were to be seen with both their hands placed round some of the blooms in almost a caressing manner, an action which seemed to me so unusual that I asked my friend for enlightenment on the matter. He replied by taking me

over to a young girl who was thus curiously occupied. I was rather diffident of so intruding, but I was told to 'wait and see'. My friend bent down beside her, and she turned her head and gave him a friendly word and smile of welcome. I concluded that they were old friends, but such was not the case. In fact, he told me afterwards that he had never seen her before, and he explained that here in spirit we need no formal introductions; we constitute one large united gathering in the matter of ordinary 'social' intercourse. After we have been here a little while, and become accustomed to our new environment and mode of living, we find that we never intrude since we can read at once the mind of a person who wishes for a period of seclusion. And when we see people out in the open—of garden or countryside—we are always welcome to approach and hold friendly converse with them.

This young lady was, like myself, a new-comer, and she told us how some friends had shown her the method of gathering from the flowers all that the flowers had so lavishly to give. I bent down beside her, and she gave me a practical demonstration of what to do. By placing the hands, she said, round the flower so as to hold it in a sort of cup, I should feel the magnetism running up my arms. As I moved my hands towards a beautiful bloom, I found that the flower upon its stem moved towards *me*! I did as I was instructed, and I instantly felt a stream of life rushing up my arms, the while a most delicate aroma was exhaled by the flower. She told me not to pick the flowers because they were for ever growing; they were part of this life, even as we are ourselves. I was very grateful for her timely admonition, since it was the most natural thing in the world to pick flowers that were already in such profusion. It was not quite the same in the case of the fruit, I learned, because the fruit was meant to be consumed. But the flowers were themselves decorative, and to cut down the flower by picking it was equivalent to cutting down the fruit trees. There were flowers, however, that were growing expressly for the purpose of being picked, but these under immediate consideration had as their

principal function that of health-giving. I inquired of our young friend if she had tried some of the good fruit we had just sampled, and she replied that she had.

My friend suggested that I might like to go closer to the water's edge, and that if the young lady were alone, perhaps she would care to join us in our excursions. She responded that nothing would give her greater pleasure, and so we all three moved towards the lake. I explained to her that my friend was a seasoned inhabitant of these lands, and that he was acting as my guide and adviser. She seemed to be glad of our company, not that she was lonely, for such a thing does not exist in this realm, but she had had few friends while on earth and had always lived something of a solitary life, although she had never, on that account, been indifferent to, or unmindful of, the cares and sorrows of others. Since coming into spirit she had found so many kindly souls of a similar disposition to herself, and she supposed that perhaps we had been in like case. I told her briefly a few things about myself, and as I was still wearing my earthly attire—that is to say, its counterpart!—she knew me, more or less, for what I had been professionally. My friend being similarly clothed, she laughingly said that she felt she was in safe hands!

It was recalled to my mind what had been said about bathing, but I was rather at a loss how to broach the matter of the necessary equipment for the purpose. However, my friend saved the situation by referring to it himself.

All we needed for the purpose of enjoying a bathe was the necessary water in which to bathe! Nothing could be simpler. We were just to go into the water precisely as we were. Whether we could swim or not, was of no consequence. And I must say I was astonished at this strange departure from the usual procedure, and I naturally hesitated a little. However, my friend quite calmly walked into the lake until he was thoroughly immersed, and the two of us followed his example.

What I was expecting to result from this I cannot say. At least I anticipated the customary effect of water upon

one in similar circumstances on earth. Great, then, was my surprise—and my relief—when I discovered that the water felt more like a warm cloak thrown round me than the penetration of liquid. The magnetic effect of the water was of like nature to the brook into which I had thrust my hand, but here the revivifying force enveloped the whole body, pouring new life into it. It was delightfully warm and completely buoyant. It was possible to stand upright in it, to float upon it, and of course, to sink completely beneath the surface of it without the least discomfort or danger. Had I paused to think I might have known that the latter was inevitably bound to be the case. The spirit is indestructible. But beyond this magnetic influence there was an added assurance that came from the water, and that was its essential *friendliness*, if I may so call it. It is not easy to convey any idea of this fundamentally spiritual experience. That the water was living one could have no doubt. It breathed its very goodness by its contact, and extended its heavenly influence individually to all who came within it. For myself, I experienced a spiritual exaltation, as well as a vital regeneration, to such an extent that I quite forgot my initial hesitancy and the fact that I was fully clothed. The latter now presented a perfectly natural situation, and this was further enhanced by my observing my two companions. My old friend, of course, was perfectly used to the water, and our new friend seemed to have accommodated herself rapidly to new usages.

My mind was saved further perturbation when I recalled that as I withdrew my hand from the brook the water ran off it, leaving it quite dry. I was already prepared, then, for what ensued as we came out of the lake. As I emerged the water merely ran away, leaving my clothes just as they were before. It had penetrated the material just as air or atmosphere on earth will do, but it had left no visible or palpable effect whatever. We and our clothes were perfectly dry!

And now another word about the water. It was as clear as crystal, and the light was reflected back in every ripple

and tiny wave in almost dazzlingly bright colours. It was unbelievably soft to the touch, and its buoyancy was of the same nature as the atmosphere, that is to say, it supported whatever was on it, or in it. As it is impossible to fall here by accident, as one does on earth, so it is impossible to sink in the water. All our movements are in direct response to our minds, and we cannot come to harm or suffer accident. It is, I am afraid, rather difficult to give a description of some of these things without going beyond the range of earthly minds and experience. So much has to be witnessed at first hand to gain any adequate idea of the wonders of these lands.

A short walk brought us to the church that I had seen in the distance, and which I had expressed a keenness to visit.

It was a medium-sized building in the Gothic style, and it resembled the 'parish church' familiar on earth. It was situated in pleasant surroundings, which seemed the more spacious by the absence of any railings or walls to define its ecclesiastical limits. The surface of the stone of which it was constructed had the newness and freshness of recent building, but in point of fact, it had been in existence many years of earth time. Its exterior cleanliness was merely consonant with all things here—there is no decay. Nor is there any smoky atmosphere to cause blackening and discoloration! There was, of course, no churchyard attached. Even though some people cling so tenaciously to their old earthly religious predilections and practices here, it is hardly to be supposed that in erecting a church in which to carry them on, they would also include an entirely useless burial-ground!

Close beside the main door there was the customary notice-board, but this gave only the nature of the services, which were those of the Established Church. No mention was made at all of the times of the services, and I wondered how any congregation of this kind could possibly assemble where time, as it is known on earth, has no existence. For here there is no night and day by the alternation of which time can be measured. It is perpetual day. The great

celestial sun for ever shines, as I have already told you. Neither do we have the many other indications of time that force themselves upon the earthly consciousness—such, for example, as hunger and fatigue. Nor in the more lengthy passage of time such as the ageing of the physical body and the dulling of the mental faculties. Here we have no recurrent seasons of spring, autumn, and winter. Instead we enjoy the glory of perpetual summer—and we never tire of it!

As usual, I turned to my friend for information on this point of congregational assemblage. To gather the people to the church was perfectly simple, he said. Whoever is in charge has only to send out his thoughts to his congregation, and those that wish to come forthwith assemble! There was no need for bell-ringing. The emission of thought is far more thorough and exact! That is simple so far as the congregation is concerned. They have merely to wait until the thought reaches them, either in a direct call to attend, or by the urge to attend. But where does the ministering clergyman obtain *his* indication of the approach of service-time? That question, I was told, raised a much greater problem.

With the absence of earth-time in the spirit world, our lives are ordered by *events*; events, that is, that are *part* of our life. I do not refer now to incidental occurrences, but to what, on earth, would be regarded as recurrent happenings. We have many such events here, as I shall hope to show you as we proceed, and in doing so you will see how we *know* that the performance of certain acts, individually or collectively, are clearly brought to our minds. The establishment of this church we were now inspecting saw also the gradual building up of a regular order of services, such as those who belong to its particular denomination on earth are familiar with. The clergyman who is acting as pastor to this strange flock would feel, by his duties on earth, the approach of the usual 'day' and 'time' when the services were held. It would be, in this respect, instinctive. It would, moreover, grow stronger with practice, until this mental perception

would assume absolute regularity, as it is considered on the earth-plane. With this firmly established, the congregation have but to await the call from their minister.

The notice-board gave a list of the usual services commonly seen outside an earthly church of the same denomination. One or two items were noticeably absent, however; such as the provision for marriages and baptisms. The former omission I could understand; the latter could only imply that baptism was unnecessary, since only the baptized would be in 'heaven'—where presumably they deemed this church to be situated!

We went within, and found ourselves in a very lovely building, conventional in design, and containing little that is not to be seen in any such church upon the earth-plane. There were some beautiful stained-glass windows portraying scenes in the lives of the 'saints', through which the light poured evenly from all sides of the church at the same time, producing a strange effect in the air from the colours of the window-glass. Provision for heating the building was, of course, quite superfluous. There was a fine organ at one end, and the main altar, built of stone, was richly carved. Beyond this, there was a certain plainness which in no way detracted from its general beauty as a piece of architecture. Everywhere was there evidence of a lavish care being expended upon it, which, considering where this church was existing, is not surprising, when it is remembered under what dispensation such a building can exist at all!

We sat down for a little while, finding a calm and peaceful air about the whole place, and then we decided that we had seen all there was to be seen, and we made our way out into the open.

IV. Home of Rest

As we walked along, at least two of us pondered upon what we had seen—and its implications. Our young friend—who told us her name was Ruth—put a number of questions to us, but I withheld any attempt to answer, since I was but a new-comer myself, in favour of my friend, whose name—Edwin—I have omitted to give so far.

Ruth, it appeared, had never been an active 'church-goer' whilst on earth, but she was a kindly soul, as it was plain to see, and it was plain to see, also, that her abstinence from church-going had made no difference to her ultimate destination as viewed by the earth. Her service to others had done more for her spiritual welfare than all the outward display of congregational religion, which so often *is* but outward display. Like myself, she was very surprised to find, here in spirit, the complete paraphernalia of orthodox religion. Edwin told her that she had only seen one example of it so far, and there were plenty of others. Having seen this, however, one had seen them all, more or less. Each denomination, of course, holds to its own particular creed and formularies, such as it had on earth, with a few minor differences, as we had just seen.

Such spiritual somnolence is no novelty in spirit. The earth world is to blame. Religious contentions and controversies are at the bottom of all the ignorance and lack of knowledge that so many people bring with them into the spirit world, and if the minds of such people are stubborn and they are unable really to think for themselves, then do they remain shackled to their narrow religious views, thinking it to be all the truth, until a day of spiritual awakening dawns for them. Then they will see that their slavish adherence to their creeds is holding them back. It is to be so much lamented that for every one who leaves, for ever, these misguided congregations, another will come to fill his place—until the time comes

when the whole earth knows the truth of the world of spirit. Of course they do no harm as they are, here, beyond retarding their own spiritual progression. Once they realize what they are doing to themselves, and take the first step forward, their joy knows no bounds. They will realize the 'time' they have apparently wasted.

Now it may be asked, if, with the acquisition of knowledge and truth, these extensions of earthly religions into the spirit world are better done away with, what will you put in their place? It sounds like a condemnation of communal worship.

By no means. We have our communal worship here, but it is purged of every trace of meaningless creeds, of doctrines and dogmas. We worship the Great and Eternal Father in truth, absolute truth. We are of one mind, and one mind only. And no one is called upon to believe blindly—or to profess to do so—something which is utterly incomprehensible to *any* mind. There are many, many things here which we do not understand—and it will take aeons of time before we even have a faint gleam of understanding them. But we are not asked to understand them; we are asked to take them as they are. It makes no difference whatever to our soul's progression. We shall be able to progress far—and far beyond that—before we shall ever need to *think* about understanding such things. And so we have one mind in our worship of the All-highest.

Such are the matters we discussed—it was Edwin who expounded—as we walked along in the beautiful air of God's heaven.

Ruth espied a rather stately building set among some well-wooded grounds, which also aroused my curiosity. On appealing to our guide, Edwin told us that it was a home of rest for those who had come into spirit after long illness, or who had had a violent passing, and who were, in consequence, suffering from shock. We wondered if it would be possible to peep inside, without appearing to be curiosity-seekers. He assured us that it would be quite in order to do so, as he had given his services there, and was

therefore *persona grata*. Added to which was the fact that he knew we had that necessary sympathy which would banish any thought of inquisitiveness. As we drew near I could see that the building was in no sense a 'hospital' in outward semblance, whatever its functions might be. It was built in the classical style, two or three stories high, and it was entirely open upon all sides. That is to say, it contained no windows as we know them on earth. It was white in colour as far as the materials of its composition were concerned, but immediately above it there was to be seen a great shaft of blue light descending upon, and enveloping, the whole building with its radiance, the effect of which was to give a striking blue tinge to the whole edifice. This great ray was the downpouring of life—a healing ray—sent to those who had already passed here, but who were not yet awake. When they were fully restored to spiritual health, there would be a splendid awakening, and they would be introduced into their new land.

I noticed that there was quite a number of people seated upon the grass in the grounds, or walking about. They were relatives and friends of those who were undergoing treatment within the hall of rest, and whose awakening was imminent. Although, doubtless, they could have been summoned upon the instant when necessary, yet, following their old earthly instinct, they preferred to wait close at hand for the happy moment. They were all supremely joyful, and very excited, as could be seen by the expressions on their faces, and many were the friendly smiles we received as we walked among them. Many of them, too, came forward to welcome us among them, thinking that we had come for the same reason as themselves. We told them of our true purpose, however, and they sped us on our way.

I observed that most of the people waiting in the gardens were not habited in their earth clothes, and I assumed that most of them had been in spirit for some considerable time. Such was not necessarily the case, Edwin told us. They had the right to wear their spirit robes by virtue of

the fact that they were inhabitants of this realm we were now in. And the robes they wore were eminently suited to both the place and the situation. It is difficult to describe this costume because so much rests in being able to give some comparison with a particular earthly fabric. Here we have no such materials, and all outward appearances are produced, not by the texture of the material, but by the kind and degree of light that is the essence of a spirit robe. Those that we now saw were in 'flowing' form and of full length, and the colours—blue and pink in varying degrees of intensity—seemed to interweave themselves throughout the whole substance of the robes. They looked very comfortable to wear, and like everything here, they require no attention to keep them in a state of perfect preservation, the spirituality of the wearer alone accounting for that.

The three of us were still wearing our earthly style of raiment, and Edwin suggested that, for our present purposes, we might change to our natural element in the matter of clothes. I was quite willing, of course, to fall in with any suggestion that he might like to make, as I turned to him for everything in my lack of knowledge. Ruth also seemed very keen to try this change, but the question that puzzled us both was how it was to be accomplished.

Possibly there are people on the earth-plane who are willing to believe that such a situation as this would involve the ceremony of being formally presented with a spirit robe in the presence of a goodly gathering of celestial beings, who had come to witness the bestowing of our heavenly reward, and to be officially invited to take our 'eternal rest'!

Let me hasten to say that *such was most emphatically not the case*.

What *did* take place was very simply this: immediately I had expressed the wish to follow Edwin's suggestion of discarding my earthly style of clothes, those very clothes faded away—dissolved—and I was attired in my own particular spirit robe—of the same description as these

I could see about me. Edwin's had changed likewise, and I noticed that his seemed to send out a greater strength of colour than mine. Ruth's was the same as mine, and needless to say, she was full of joyful delight with this new manifestation of the spirit. My old friend had experienced the change before, so his costume was not new to him. But speaking for myself—and I am sure for Ruth—I never at any moment felt the slightest embarrassment or strangeness or self-consciousness in this revolutionary—as it might seem to be—alteration in our external appearance. On the contrary, it seemed quite natural and perfectly in order, and unquestionably it was in proper keeping with our present surroundings, the more so, as I soon discovered when we walked into the home of rest. Nothing would have been more incongruous than earthly apparel in such a building, which in its interior disposition and accommodations was totally unlike anything to be seen upon the earth-plane.

As we entered, Edwin was greeted as an old friend by one who came forward to meet us. He briefly explained his mission and our presence there, and we were made welcome to see all that we wished.

An outer vestibule led into a lofty hall of considerable dimensions. The space that would ordinarily be devoted to windows was occupied by tall pillars set some distance apart, and this arrangement was carried out through all four walls. There was very little in the way of interior decoration, but it must not be supposed from this that the apartment had a cold, barrack-like appearance. It was anything but that. The floor was carpeted with some very soft covering in a sober design, and here and there a handsomely wrought tapestry was hanging upon the walls. Occupying the whole of the floor space were extremely comfortable-looking couches, each of which bore a recumbent form, quite still, and obviously sleeping profoundly. Moving quietly about were a number of men and women intent upon watching the different couches and their burdens.

I noticed as soon as we entered this hall that we came

under the influence of the blue ray, and its effect was one of pronounced energizing as well as tranquillity. Another noticeable quality was the entire absence of any idea of an institution with its inevitable officialdom. There was no question of patronage, nor did I feel the least shade of being among strangers. Those in attendance upon the sleepers did so, not in the attitude of a certain task to be done willy-nilly, but as though they were performing a labour of love in the sheer joy of doing it. Such, indeed, was precisely the case. The glad awakening of these sleeping souls was an ever-recurrent joy to them, no less than to the people who had come to witness it.

I learned that all the 'patients' in this particular hall had gone through lingering illnesses before passing over. Immediately after their dissolution they are sent gently into a deep sleep. In some cases the sleep follows instantly—or practically without break—upon the physical death. Long illness prior to passing into the spirit world has a debilitating effect upon the mind, which in turn has its influence upon the spirit body. The latter is not serious, but the mind requires absolute rest of varying duration. Each case is treated individually, and eventually responds perfectly to its treatment. During this sleep state the mind is completely resting. There are no unpleasant dreams, nor fevers of delirium.

While gazing upon this perfect manifestation of Divine Providence, the thought came to me of those absurd earthly notions of 'eternal rest', 'everlasting sleep', and the many other equally foolish earthly conceptions, and I wondered if, by some chance or other, this sleep I was now beholding had been distorted by earthly minds into a state of eternal slumber, whither all souls pass at dissolution, there to await, in countless years' time, the awful 'last day'—the dread 'Day of Judgement'. Here was the visible refutation of such a senseless belief.

Neither of my two friends had awakened in this—or other—hall of rest, so they told me. Like myself, they had suffered no lengthy illness, and the end of their earth lives had come quite quickly and quite pleasantly.

The patients resting upon their couches looked very peaceful. Constant watch is kept upon them, and at the first flutterings of returning consciousness, others are summoned, and all is ready for the full awakening. Some will wake up partially, and then sink back again into slumber. Others will shake off their sleep at once, and it is then that those experienced souls in attendance will have, perhaps, their most difficult task. Until that moment, in fact, it has been mostly a matter of watching and waiting. In so many cases it has to be explained to the newly awakened soul that he has 'died' and is alive. They will remember usually their long illness, but some are quite unaware that they have passed over into spirit, and when the true state of affairs has been gently and quietly explained to them, they often have an urgent desire to go back to the earth, perhaps to those who are sorrowing, perhaps to those for whose care and welfare they were responsible. They are told that nothing can be done by their going back, and that others of experience will take care of those circumstances that are so distressing them. Such awakenings are not happy ones by comparison with those who wake up with the full realization of what has taken place. Were the earth world more enlightened, this would be the more often the case, and there would be a great deal less distress to the newly awakened soul.

The earth world thinks itself very advanced, very 'civilized'. Such estimation is begotten of blind ignorance. The earth world, with all things appertaining thereto, is looked upon as of the very first importance, and the spirit world is regarded as something dim and distant. When a soul finally arrives there, it is quite time enough to begin thinking about it. Until that time comes there is no need even to bother about it. That is the attitude of mind of thousands upon thousands of incarnate souls, and here, in this hall of rest, we witnessed people awakening from their spirit sleep. We saw kind and patient spirits trying so hard to convince these same people that they had really 'died'. And this hall of rest is but one place out of many

where the same service is being carried on unceasingly, and all because the earth world is so very superior in knowledge!

We were shown another large hall similarly appointed, where those whose passing had been sudden and violent were also in their temporary sleep. These cases were usually more difficult to manage than those we had just seen. The suddenness of their departure added far greater confusion to the mind. Instead of a steady transition, the spirit body had in many cases been forcibly ejected from the physical body, and precipitated into the spirit world. The passing over had been so sudden that there seemed to them to be no break in their lives. Such people are taken in hand quickly by bands of souls who devote all their time and the whole of their energies to such work. And in the hall of rest we could now see the results of their labours. Had so many of these souls had but a small knowledge of spirit matters, these awakenings would have been so much the happier.

I do assure you it is not a pleasant sight to see these gentle, patient helpers wrestling mentally—and sometimes almost physically—with people who are wholly ignorant of the fact that they are 'dead'. It is a most saddening sight, which I can vouch for from first hand evidence, for have I not seen it? And who is to blame for this state of affairs? Most of these souls blame themselves when they have been here long enough to appreciate their new condition, or, alternatively, they blame the world they have but recently left for tolerating such blindness and stupidity.

Edwin hinted that perhaps we had seen all that we wished, and truth to tell, both Ruth and I were not sorry to leave. For it must be recalled that we were both comparatively new arrivals, and we had not yet sufficient experience to be able to withstand sights that were in themselves distressing. So we passed out into the open again, and we took a path that skirted a large orchard of fruit trees, similar to, though much more extensive than, that wherein I had had my first taste of celestial fruit. It was close at hand for the use of the newly awakened—and, of

course, for anyone else who wished to partake of the stimulating fruit.

It occurred to me that Edwin was expending a good deal of his time upon us, perhaps at the expense of his own work. But he told us that what he was now doing, was, in many respects, his usual work—not only to help people to become accustomed to their new surroundings, but to help those who were just beginning to shake off their old religious ideas, and break away from the stifling of their minds as members of orthodox communities here. I was glad to know this, because it meant that he would continue to be our *cicerone*.

Now that we were again in the open, the question arose: should we continue to wear our spirit dress, or should we go back to our old attire? As far as Ruth was concerned, she would not hear of any changing back. She declared her perfect satisfaction with what she was wearing, and demanded of us to know what possible earthly costume could ever improve upon it. In the face of such a powerful argument, we were bound to submit. But what of Edwin and me? My friend had only reverted to his earthly cassock to keep me company and to help me feel at home. And so I decided that I would stay as I now was—in my spirit apparel.

As we walked along we fell to chatting about the various earthly notions touching the personal appearance of spirit people. Ruth mentioned 'wings' in connexion with 'angelic beings', and we were all at once agreed that such an idea was nothing less than preposterous. Could any means of locomotion be more clumsy or ponderous, or thoroughly unpracticable? We supposed that artists of ancient days must have been largely responsible for this wide departure from actuality. One presumes they thought that some means of personal locomotion was essential for spirit people, and that the ordinary mundane method of using one's legs was far too earthly to be admitted, even as a remote possibility, into the heavenly realms. Having no knowledge whatever of the power of thought here, and its direct application in the literal movement of ourselves

through these realms, they were thrown back upon the only means of movement through space known to them—the use of wings. One wonders if there are still earth people who really believe that we are only partly removed from some form of large bird! Among the thinking, modern science has managed to dispel some of the absurd conceptions so long prevalent.

We had not gone very far when Edwin bethought him that we might like to make our way to the city which we could see plainly not too far away. I say 'not too far away', but that should not be misunderstood into meaning that distance here is of any account. It certainly is not! I mean that the city lay sufficiently close for us to visit it without making any deviation from our general direction. Ruth and I agreed at once that we should like to proceed there forthwith, as a city of the spirit world must be something of a new revelation to us in itself.

Then the question came to our minds: should we walk, or should we employ a faster method? We both felt that we should like to try exactly what the power of thought can do, but as before, in other circumstances, we were both devoid of any knowledge of how to put these forces into action. Edwin told us that once we had performed this very simple process of thinking, we should have no difficulty whatever in the future. In the first place, it was necessary to have confidence, and in the second, our concentration of thought must not be a half-hearted affair. To borrow an earthly allusion, we 'wish ourselves' there, wherever it may be, and *there* we shall find ourselves! For the first few occasions it may be required to make something of a conscious effort; afterwards we can move ourselves whithersoever we wish—one might almost say, without thinking! To recall earthly methods, when you wish to sit down, or walk, or perform any one of the many earthly actions that are so familiar, you are not conscious of making any very definite effort of thought in order to bring about your desires. The thought very rapidly passes through your mind that you wish to sit down, and you sit down. But you have given no heed to the many muscular

movements, and so on, involved in the simple action. They have become as second nature. And so it is precisely the same with us here. We just think that we wish to be in a certain place, and we are there. I must, of course, qualify that statement by saying that all places are not open to us here. There are many realms where we are not able to enter except in very special circumstances, or only if our state of progression permits. That, however, does not effect the method of locomotion here; it merely restricts us in certain well-defined directions.

Being severely practical, I mentioned to Edwin that as we wished, all three of us, to be together, then must we not all wish to be at the same place, and must we not have some very definite locality in mind upon which to fasten our thoughts? He replied that there were several factors to be borne in mind in this particular instance. One factor was that it was our initial essay in thought locomotion, and that he would, more or less, 'take charge' of us. We should automatically remain in close contact with each other, since we had voiced the wish and intention of doing so. These two facts together were sufficient to afford us a safe and sure arrival in company at our desired destination! When we became quite proficient in these methods we should have no difficulty in this connexion.

It must be remembered that thought is as instantaneous as it is possible to imagine, and there is no possibility of our losing ourselves in illimitable space! I had had my first example of travelling through space in this way immediately after my passing, but then I had moved comparatively slowly with my eyes firmly closed. Edwin then suggested that it would give us some pleasant amusement if we were to try an experiment for ourselves. He assured us that we could not, in any circumstances, come to any harm whatever. He proposed that Ruth and I should project ourselves to a small clump of trees lying about a quarter of a mile away—as measured by the earth. We all three sat on the grass, and we gazed at our objective. He suggested that if we felt at all nervous that we might hold each other's hands! Ruth and I were to go alone, while he

would remain on the grass. We were just to think that we wished to be beside yonder trees. We looked at one another with a great deal of merriment, both of us wondering what would happen next, and neither of us taking the initiative. We were pondering thus, when Edwin said: 'Off you go!' His remark must have supplied the requisite stimulus, for I took Ruth's hand, and the next thing we knew we found ourselves standing beneath the trees!

We looked at one another, if not in amazement, then in something that was very much like it. Casting our eyes whence we had just come, we saw Edwin waving his hand to us. Then a strange thing happened. We both beheld immediately before our faces what seemed to be a flash of light. It was not blinding, nor did it startle us in any way. It simply caught our attention just as the earthly sun would do when coming from behind a cloud. It illumined the small space before our eyes as we stood there. We remained quite still, full of expectancy for what might transpire. Then clearly, beyond any vestige of doubt, we heard—whether with the ear or with the mind, I could not then say—the voice of Edwin asking us if we had enjoyed our brief journey, and to go along back to him in exactly the same way as we had left him. We both made some remark upon what we had heard, trying to decide if it were really Edwin we had heard speaking. Scarcely had we mentioned our perplexity at this latest demonstration of the spirit, when Edwin's voice spoke again, assuring us that *he* had heard *us* as we cogitated upon the matter! So surprised and altogether delighted were we with this fresh manifestation of the power of thought, following so swiftly upon the other, that we determined to return to Edwin upon the instant, and demand a full explanation. We repeated the procedure, and there we were, once more, seated one each side of my old friend, who was laughing joyously at our wonderment.

He was prepared for the onslaught that came—for we bombarded him with questions—and he told us that he had purposely kept this surprise for us. Here, he said, was another instance of the concreteness of thought. If we can

move ourselves by the power of thought, then it follows that we should also be able to send our thoughts by themselves, unhindered by all ideas of distance. When we focus our thoughts upon some person in the spirit world, whether they be in the form of a definite message, or whether they are solely of an affectionate nature, those thoughts will reach their destination without fail, and they will be taken up by the percipient. That is what happens in the spirit world. *How* it happens, I am not prepared to say. That is another of the many things we take as we find, and rejoice therein. We had, so far, used our 'organs of speech' in conversing with each other. It was quite natural, and we hardly gave the matter any thought. It had not occurred either to Ruth or myself that some means of communication at a distance must be available here. We were no longer limited by earthly conditions, yet so far we had not observed anything that would take the place of the usual mode of intercommunication upon the earth. This very absence should, perhaps, have told us to expect the unexpected.

Although we can thus send our thoughts, it must not be assumed that our minds are as an open book for all to read. By no means. We can, if we so will, deliberately keep our thoughts to ourselves; but if we should think idly, as it were; if we should just let our thoughts ramble along under a loose control, then they can be seen and read by others. One of the first things to be done upon arrival here is to realize that thought is concrete, that it can create and build, and then our next effort is to place our own thoughts under proper and adequate control. But like so much else in the spirit world, we can soon learn to adjust ourselves to the new conditions if we have a mind to do so, and we shall never lack the most willing helpers in any or all of our difficulties. The latter, Ruth and I had already found out with relief and gratitude.

Ruth was by now very impatient to be off to visit the city, and she insisted that Edwin should take us there immediately. And so, without further delay, we rose up from the grass, and with a word from our guide, we set forth.

V. Halls of Learning

As we approached the city, it was possible for us to gather some idea of its extensive proportions. It was, I hardly need say, totally unlike anything I had yet seen. It consisted of a large number of stately buildings each of which was surrounded with magnificent gardens and trees, with here and there pools of glittering water, clear as crystal, yet reflecting every shade of colour known to earth, with many other tints to be seen nowhere but in the realms of spirit.

It must not be imagined that these beautiful gardens bore the slightest resemblance to anything to be seen upon the earth-plane. Earthly gardens at their best and finest are of the very poorest by comparison with these that we now beheld, with their wealth of perfect colourings and their exhalations of heavenly perfumes. To walk upon the lawns with such a profusion of nature about us held us spellbound. I had imagined that the beauty of the countryside, wherein I had had all my experience of spirit lands so far, could hardly be excelled anywhere.

My mind had reverted to the narrow streets and crowded pavements of the earth; the buildings huddled together because space is so valuable and costly; the heavy, tainted air, made worse by streams of traffic; I had thought of hurry and turmoil, and all the restlessness of commercial life and the excitement of passing pleasure. I had no conception of a city of eternal beauty, as far removed from an earthly city as the light of day is from black night. Here were fine broad thoroughfares of emerald green lawns in perfect cultivation, radiating, like the spokes of a wheel, from a central building which, as we could see, was the hub of the whole city. There was a great shaft of pure light descending upon the dome of this building, and we felt instinctively—without Edwin having to tell us—that in this temple we could together send up our thanks to the Great Source of all, and that there we should find none other than the Glory of God in Truth.

The buildings were not of any great height as we should measure and compare with earthly structures, but they were for the most part extremely broad. It is impossible to tell of what materials they were composed because they were essentially spirit fabrics. The surface of each smooth as of marble, yet it had the delicate texture and translucence of alabaster, while each building sent forth, as it were into the adjacent air, a stream of light of the palest shade of colouring. Some of the buildings were carved with designs of foliage and flowers, and others were left almost unadorned, as far as any smaller devices were concerned, relying upon their semi-classic nature for relief. And over all was the light of heaven shining evenly and uninterruptedly, so that nowhere were there dark places.

This city was devoted to the pursuit of learning, to the study and practise of the arts, and to the pleasures of all in this realm. It was exclusive to none, but free for all to enjoy with equal right. Here it was possible to carry on so many of those pleasant and fruitful occupations that had been commenced on the earth-plane. Here, too, many souls could indulge in some agreeable diversion which had been denied them, for a variety of reasons, whilst they were incarnate.

The first hall that Edwin took us into was concerned with the art of painting. This hall was of very great size and contained a long gallery, on the walls of which were hanging every great masterpiece known to man. They were arranged in such a way that every step of earthly progress could be followed in proper order, beginning with the earliest times and so continuing down to the present day. Every style of painting was represented, gathered from all points of the earth. It must not be thought that such a collection, as we were now viewing, is only of interest and service to people who have a full appreciation and understanding of the painter's art. Such could not be farther from the case.

There was a goodly number of people in the gallery when we entered, some of whom were moving about wherever their fancy took them. But there were many

groups listening to the words of able teachers, who were demonstrating the various phases in the history of art as exemplified upon the walls, and they were, at the same time giving such a clear and interesting exposition that none could fail to understand.

A number of these pictures I recognized as I had seen their 'originals' in the earth's galleries. Ruth and I were astonished when Edwin told us that what we had seen in those galleries were not the originals at all! *We were now seeing the originals for the first time.* What we had seen was an earthly counterpart, which was perishable from the usual causes—for example, from fire or the general disintegration through the passage of time. But here we were viewing the direct results of the thoughts of the painter, created in the etheric *before* he actually transferred those thoughts to his earthly canvas. It could be plainly observed, in many cases, where the earthly picture fell short of that which the painter had in his mind. He had endeavoured to reproduce his exact conception, but through physical limitations this exact conception had eluded him. In some instances it had been the pigments that had been at fault when, in the early times, the artist had been unable to procure or evolve the particular shade of colour he wanted. But though he lacked physically, his mind had known precisely what he wished to do. He had built it up in the spirit—the results of which we were now able to see—while he had failed to do so on the material canvas.

That was one major difference that I noticed in the pictures, by comparison with what I had seen on the earth-plane. Another great point of dissimilarity—and the most important—was the fact that here all these pictures were *alive*. It is impossible to convey any idea of this paramount difference. These spirit pictures *must* be seen here to understand it. I can only just suggest an idea. These pictures, then, whether landscape or portrait, were never flat; that is, they did not seem to have been painted upon a flat canvas. They possessed, on the other hand, all the completeness of relief. The subject stood forth almost as

though it were a model—a model whereof one could take hold of all the elements that went to the making up of the subject of the picture. One felt that the shadows were real shadows cast by real objects. The colours glowed with life, even among the very early works before much progress had been made.

A problem came into my mind, for a solution of which I naturally turned to Edwin. It was this: as it would be undesirable, perhaps, as well as impracticable, to hang in these galleries *every* painting that emanated from the earth-plane, any idea of preferential treatment based upon the judgement of others did not seem quite consonant with spirit law, in so far as I was acquainted with it. What system is used for the selection of paintings to hang upon these walls? I was told that it was a question that is frequently asked by visitors to this gallery. The answer is that by the time an artist, whether he be good, bad, or just commonplace, has adjusted himself to his new life, he has no further illusions—if he ever harboured any—of his own work. Usually an extreme diffidence sets in, fostered by the immensity and the superlative beauty of this realm. So that in the end the problem becomes one of scarcity rather than superabundance!

When we gazed at the portraits of so many men and women whose names had worldwide fame, whether they lived in distant times or in the present day, it gave Ruth and me a strange feeling to think that we were now inhabitants of the same world as they, and that they, like ourselves, were very much alive, and not mere historic figures in the chronicles of the earth world.

In other parts of this same building were rooms wherein students of art could learn all that there is to be learnt. The joy of these students is great in their freedom from their earthly restrictions and bodily limitations. Here instruction is easy, and the acquisition and application of knowledge equally facile to those who wish to learn. Gone are all the struggles of the student in the surmounting of earthly difficulties both of the mind and of the hands, and progress towards proficiency is consequently smooth and

rapid. The happiness of all the students whom we saw, itself spread happiness to all who beheld it, for there is no limit to their endeavours when that bugbear of earthly life—fleeting time—and all the petty vexations of the mundane existence have been abandoned for ever. Is there any wonder that artists within this hall, and, indeed, in every other hall in the city, were enjoying the golden hours of their spiritual reward?

To have made a really exhaustive study of all the pictures in the gallery would have taken us too long for our present purposes, which were to acquire as comprehensive an idea of this realm as we could, so that later we could find our way about the more easily, and return to such places as had the most attraction for us. This was Edwin's idea, and Ruth and I were heartily in agreement with it. And so we tarried no longer in the hall of painting, and we passed on to another immense building.

This was the hall of literature, and it contained every work worthy of the name. Its interior was divided into smaller rooms than in the hall of painting. Edwin led us into one spacious apartment which contained the histories of all the nations upon the earth-plane. To anyone who has a knowledge of earthly history, the volumes with which the shelves of this section of the great library were filled, would prove illuminating. The reader would be able to gain, for the first time, the *truth* about the history of his country. Every word contained in these books was the literal truth. Concealment is impossible, because nothing but the truth can enter these realms.

I have since returned to this library and spent much profitable time among its countless books. In particular I have dipped into history, and I was amazed when I started to read. I naturally expected to find that history would be treated in the manner with which we are all familiar, but with the essential difference that now I should be presented with the truth of all historical acts and events. The latter I soon discovered to be the case, but I made another discovery that for the first moment left me astounded. I found that side by side with the statements of

pure fact of every act by persons of historical note, by statesmen in whose hands was the government of their countries, by kings who were at the head of those same countries, side by side with such statements was the blunt naked truth of each and every motive governing or underlying their numerous acts—the truth beyond disputation. Many of such motives were elevated, many, many of them were utterly base; many were misconstrued, many distorted. Written indelibly upon these spirit annals were the true narratives of thousands upon thousands of human beings, who, whilst upon their earthly journey, had been active participants in the affairs of their country. Some were victims to others' treachery and baseness; some were the cause or origin of that treachery and baseness. None was spared, none omitted. It was all there for all to see—the *truth*, with nothing extenuated, nothing suppressed. These records had no respect for persons, whether it be king or commoner, churchman or layman. The writers had just set down the veridical story *as it was*. It required no adornment, no commentary. It spoke for itself. And I was profoundly thankful for one thing—that this truth had been kept from us until such time as we stood where we were now standing, when our minds would, in some measure, be prepared for revelations such as were here at hand.

So far I have mentioned only political history, but I also delved into church history, and the revelations I received in that direction were no better than those in the political sphere. They were, in fact, worse, considering in whose Name so many diabolical deeds were committed by men who, outwardly professing to serve God, were but instruments of men as base as themselves.

Edwin had forewarned me of what to expect in consulting these histories, but I had never anticipated the degree of fullness I should find in the narration of the true facts. The supposed motives given in our earthly history books were wide of the mark of the real motives on so many numberless occasions!

Although these books bore witness against the perpetrators of so many dark deeds in the earth world's

history, they also bore witness to many deeds both great and noble. They were not there specifically for the purpose of providing evidence for and against, but because literature has become part of the fabric of human life. People take pleasure in reading. Is it not quite in accord with this life that there should be books for us to read? They may not be exactly the same as the earth books, but they are in precise keeping with all else here. And it is found that the pursuit of knowledge is far greater here than upon the earth-plane, since the necessity of turning our minds to the pressing needs and exigencies of incarnate life no longer exists here.

We passed through many other rooms where volumes upon every subject imaginable were at the disposal of all who wished to study them. And perhaps one of the most important subjects is that which has been called by some important subjects is that which has been called by some truly enlightened soul 'psychic science'—for science it is. I was astonished by the wealth of literature under this heading. Upon the shelves were books denying the existence of a spirit world, and denying the reality of spirit return. Many of the authors of them have since had the opportunity of looking again at their own works—but with very different feelings! They had become, *in themselves*, living witnesses against the contents of their own books.

We were very much struck by the beautiful bindings in which the books were encased, the material upon which they were inscribed, and the style of inscription. I turned to Edwin for information upon these points. He told me that the reproduction of books in the world of spirit was not the same process as in the case of paintings. I had seen for myself how the truth had been suppressed in the earthly volumes either through deliberate intent or through ignorance of the real facts. In the case of the paintings the artist had desired to depict in truth, so to speak, but through no real fault of his own he had been unable to do so. He had not perpetuated untruth, therefore; on the contrary, his mind had recorded what was entirely true. An author of a book would hardly write it with intentions diametrically

opposed to those expressed within it. Who, then, writes the book of truth in spirit? *The author of the earthly volume writes it—when he comes into the spirit world.* And he is glad to do it. It becomes his work, and by such work he can gain the progress of his soul. He will have no difficulty with the facts, for they are here for him to record, and he records them—but the truth this time! There is no need to dissemble—in fact, it would be useless.

As to inscribing the books, are there not printing machines upon the earth? Of course there are! Then surely the spirit world is not to be the worse provided for in this respect? We have our methods of printing, but they are totally unlike those of the earth. We have our experts, who are also artists at their work, and it is work they love doing, or else they would not be doing it. The method of reproduction here is wholly a process of the mind, as with all else, and author and printer work together in complete harmony. The books that result from this close co-operation are works of art; they are beautiful creations which, apart altogether from their literary contents, are lovely to look upon. The binding of the book is another expert process, carried out by more artists, in wonderful materials never seen upon the earth, since they are of spirit only. But the books thus produced are not dead things that require a concentration of the whole mind upon them. They live just as much as the paintings we saw were living. To pick up a book and begin reading from it meant also to perceive with the mind, in a way not possible on earth, the whole story as it was being told, whether it be history, or science, or the arts. The book, once taken in the hand by the reader, instantly responds, in very much the same way as the flowers respond when one approaches close to them. The purpose is different, of course.

All the vast numbers of books we saw were there for all to use at their leisure and to their heart's delight. There were no restrictions, no tiresome rules and regulations. Standing with all this enormous wealth of knowledge about us, I was staggered at my own ignorance, and Ruth felt the same. However, Edwin reassured me by telling

us that we must not let the sight of so much knowledge frighten us, as we have the whole of eternity before us! It was a comforting reminder, and strange to say, a fact that one is inclined to overlook. It takes time to shake off finally that feeling of impermanence, of transience, that is so closely associated with the earth life. And in consequence we feel that we must see everything as quickly as we can, in spite of the fact that time, as a factor in our lives, has ceased to function.

By now Edwin thought it due to Ruth to show her something that would have an especial appeal to her, and so he took us into the hall of fabrics. This was equally spacious, but the rooms were of greater dimensions than those of the two halls we had just viewed. Here were contained the scores upon scores of beautiful materials and cloths woven throughout the centuries, and of which practically nothing remains upon the earth-plane. It was possible to see here specimens of the materials that we read about in histories and chronicles in the descriptions of state ceremonies and festive occasions. And whatever may be said for the change of style and taste that has taken place throughout the ages, the earth world has lost a vast deal of its colour in exchange for a dull drabness.

The colourings in many of the old materials were simply superb, while the magnificently wrought designs revealed to us the art that has been lost to earth. Though perishable to the earth, they are imperishable to the spirit world. After making due allowance for the etherealization of these fabrics by their being in the spirit world, there remained in our minds a sufficiently vivid conception of what these rich fabrics must have looked like in their earthly element. Here again, it was possible to observe the gradual progress made in the designing and making of earthly materials, and it must be admitted, as far as I was able to judge, that progress proceeded up to a point when a retrograde movement was noticeable. I am, of course, speaking in a general sense.

A room of tapestries contained some superb examples of the artists' genius, the earthly counterparts of which

have long since gone out of existence. Annexed to this apartment were smaller rooms where many happy, industrious souls were studying and practising the art of tapestry weaving, with other equally happy souls ever at their side to help and instruct. This was not a tedious work of pupil and teacher, but the enjoyment of pure pleasure, which both could terminate for other things at any time they so wished. Ruth said that she would dearly love to join one of the groups engaged upon a large tapestry, and she was told that she could do so whenever she wished, and that she would be welcomed with all the joy in the world into this community of friends. However, she would, for the present, remain with us upon our expeditions.

It may be thought that what we had seen as yet were nothing more than celestial museums, containing, it is true, magnificent specimens not to be seen upon earth, but museums, nevertheless. Now earthly museums are rather cheerless places. They have an aroma of mustiness and chemical preservatives, since their exhibits have to be protected from deterioration and decay. And they have to be protected from man, too, by uninspiring glass cases. But here there are no restrictions. All things within these halls are free and open for all to see and hold in the two hands. There is no mustiness, but the beauty of the objects themselves sends out many subtle perfumes, while the light of heaven streams in from all quarters to enhance the glories of man's handicrafts. No, these are no museums; very far from it. They are temples, rather, in which we spirit people are conscious of the eternal thanks that we owe to the Great Father for giving us such unbounded happiness in a land of which so many upon earth deny the reality. They would sweep all this away—for what? They know not. There are many, many beauties upon the earth-plane, but we in spirit must have none! Perhaps that is another reason why such deep sympathy is felt for us when we pass into spirit—because we have left behind us for ever all that is beautiful, to pass into a state of emptiness—a celestial vacuum. All that is beautiful, then, becomes exclusive to the earth world. Man's intelligence

is of no further use when once he has passed to here, because here there is nothing upon which to exercise it! Just emptiness! No wonder that the realities and the immense fullness of the spirit world come as such a shock of revelation to those who were anticipating an eternity of celestial nothingness!

It is essential to understand that every occupation and every task performed by the inhabitants of this and higher realms is done willingly, for the pure wish of doing so, and never from the attitude of having to do it 'whether they like it or not'. There is no such thing as being compelled to undertake a task. Never is unwillingness felt or expressed. That is not to say that the impossible is attempted. We may be able to see the outcome of some action or another—or if we cannot, there are others of greater wisdom and knowledge who can—and we shall know whether to commence our task or withhold for the time being. We never want here for help and advice. You may recall my own suggestion earlier of trying to communicate with the earth to set right some matters in my own life, and that Edwin advised that I should seek advice later on upon the practicability of that course. So that it is the truth to say that the wish to do and to serve is the keynote here. I mention these matters so that a better understanding may be obtained of a particular hall that Edwin took us into after we left the hall of fabrics.

This was, to all intents and purposes, a school where souls, who had had the misfortune to miss the benefits of some earthly knowledge and learning, could here equip themselves intellectually.

Knowledge and learning, education or erudition do not connote spiritual worth, and the inability to read and write do not imply the absence of it. But when a soul has passed into this life, when he sees the great, broad spiritual thoroughfare opening before him with its opportunities both manifold and multiform, he sees also that knowledge can help him on his spiritual way. He may not be able to read. Are all those splendid books to remain for ever closed to him now that he has the opportunity

to read, while lacking the ability? Perhaps it will be asked: surely it is not necessary to be able to read in the spirit world? Things being what they are, there must be some form of mental perception to be gathered from books without the material aid of printed words? The same question might be asked of pictures and of all else here. Why the need for anything tangible? If we pursue this line of thought it will take us to that state of vacuity I have just mentioned.

The man who is unable to read will *feel* with his mind that something is contained within the book that he takes into his hands, but he will not know instinctively, or in any other way, the contents of it. But one who can read will, immediately upon his commencing to do so, find himself *en rapport* with the author's thoughts as set down, and the book will thus respond to him who reads.

To be able to write is not necessary, and many who have been unable to do so before passing here, have not bothered to supply the omission after their arrival.

We found in this school many souls busy with their studies, and thoroughly enjoying themselves. To acquire knowledge here is not tedious, because the memory works perfectly—that is, unfailingly—and the powers of mental perception are no longer hampered and confined by a physical brain. Our faculties for understanding are sharpened, and intellectual expansion is sure and steady. The school was the home of realized ambitions to most of the students within it. I chatted with a number of them, and each told me that what he was studying now, he had longed to study on earth, but had been denied the opportunity for reasons that are all too familiar. Some had found that commercial activities had left no time, or that the struggle for a living had absorbed all the means to do so.

The school was very comfortably arranged; there was, of course, no hint of regimentation. Each student followed his own course of study independently of anyone else. He seated himself comfortably, or he went into the lovely gardens without. He began when he wanted, and

he finished when he wanted, and the more he dipped into his studies the more interested and fascinated he became. I can speak from personal experience of the latter, since there is much that I have studied in the great library since my first introduction to it.

As we left the school, Edwin suggested that we might like to sit on the grass beneath some fine trees and rest ourselves. That was simply his way—a perfectly natural one—of expressing it. We do not suffer bodily fatigue, but at the same time we do not continue endlessly at the same occupation; that would mean monotony, and there is no monotony here such as we used to endure on earth. But Edwin knew from experience the different emotions that take place in the minds of newly arrived souls into spirit lands, and so he halted for the time being our further explorations.

VI. Some Questions Answered

Edwin told us that a very large majority of people are no sooner arrived in spirit than a burning enthusiasm overtakes them as the spirit world reveals itself to them in the new life, and they immediately want to rush back to the earth and tell the world all about it. He had already explained to me some of the difficulties in my own suggestion of returning.

Another very natural tendency was to ask numberless questions upon this life in general, and he remarked that in this both Ruth and I had exercised quite an unusual restraint! Certainly I had refrained from asking too many questions, but then, Edwin had explained as much as we should be able to understand as we proceeded. I confessed, though, now that he broached the matter, that there were many things about which I should very much like to know. Ruth said she had the same feelings, and that doubtless

many of our queries coincided. The difficulty was where to begin.

We had allowed our journeyings to bring forth their own problems for Edwin's solution, but there were other considerations of a general nature which arose from the contemplation of spirit lands as a whole. One of the first that arose to my mind as we sat on the grass, with heavenly flowers round about us, was the extent of this realm in which we were now living. It reached as far as the eye could see—and that was a great deal farther than we could ever see upon the earth-plane on the finest and clearest day in the summer. This in itself was too wonderful for words, but it also gave an indication of the immensity of this particular realm. And we had only seen the tiniest fraction of it so far! We still thought in terms of earthly distances. Was there any boundary to this realm? Did it stretch still farther beyond the range of our vision? If there were any termination, what was beyond? Could we go and see for ourselves?

Certainly there was a boundary to this realm, Edwin explained to us. And we could go and see it for ourselves whenever we wished. Beyond this were other and still more realms. Each soul as it passed into spirit passed into that realm for which it had fitted itself when upon the earth—into that realm and no other. Edwin had in the beginning described this land as the land of the great harvest—a harvest that was sown on earth. We could judge for ourselves, then, whether we considered that harvest a good one or a poor one. We should find that there were others infinitely better—and others infinitely worse. In plain words, there are other realms immeasurably more beautiful than that in which we were now happily living; realms of surpassing beauty into which we cannot penetrate until such time as we have earned the right to enter, either as visitors or as inhabitants. But though we may not pass into them, the glorious souls who dwell in them can come into realms of less celestial rarity, and can visit us here. Edwin himself had seen some of them, and we hoped to do so as well. Indeed, they

constantly make visitations to consult and converse with the dwellers here, to give advice and help, to give rewards and commendations, and there was no doubt but that my own matter could be placed before one of these master souls for his guidance upon it.

At certain times, too, these transcendent beings make special visitations when the whole realm is celebrating a great occasion, such, for example, as the two major earth festivals of Christmas and Easter. Ruth and I were very astonished at the latter, because we thought them both to be so essentially of the earth. But it was the manner of celebrating them, and not the festivals themselves, which was particular to the earth. In the spirit lands both Christmas and Easter are looked upon as birthdays: the first, a birth into the earth world; the second, a birth into the spirit world. In this realm the two celebrations synchronize with those upon the earth, since there is then a greater spiritual link between the two worlds than would be the case if the festivals were held independently of season. It is not so, however, in the higher realms, where laws of a different nature are in operation.

On the earth-plane the anniversary of Christmas has remained fixed for many centuries on a certain date. The exact day of the first Christmas has been lost, and it is impossible now to ascertain with any precision, by earthly means, when it occurred. Even were it possible, it is too late to make any alteration, since the present fixture has been established by long tradition and practice. The feast of Easter is movable—a stupid custom, since oft-times the chosen date bears no relation to the first and original date. There is some hope that a change will be made, and the feast stabilized. In no sense are we subservient to the earth in these matters, but at the same time a foolish obstinacy would lead us nowhere. Therefore it is that we *co-operate* with the earth-plane in our united rejoicings.

The higher realms have their own very good reasons for what may seem to be a departure from a recognized order. Such reasons do not concern us—until we ourselves pass to those higher states.

Beyond those two great festivals we do not have much else in common with the earth world in the matter of feasts. The most of the latter are merely ecclesiastical feasts which have no spiritual significance in the broadest sense, since so many are the outcome of religious doctrines which have no application in the spirit world. The feast of Epiphany, for example, is founded upon a very colourful story, and was in ancient times celebrated by the people in a secular fashion as well as a religious. It is now solely religious, and of very little moment here. The feast of Pentecost is another instance of the Church's blindness. The Holy Spirit—to use the Church's phrase—has been, is, and always will be descending upon all those who are worthy to receive it! Not upon one specific occasion, but always.

Both Ruth and I were very interested to learn how Christmas was celebrated in these realms, since, on the earth, beyond a few church services, the feast of the Nativity has developed into a secular affair, the main feature being that of prodigious eating and drinking. Edwin told us that in spirit we can experience the same degree of happiness as is the case on earth where that happiness is the outcome or expression of kindness; where our merrymaking is blended with the knowledge or the remembrance of whose great day we are celebrating. Those of us who wish—and there are many such—can decorate our houses and dwelling-places with evergreens, as we were accustomed to do on earth. By evergreens I mean those particular trees and shrubs that are so-called on earth. Here everything is eternally 'ever-green'! We join together in merry company, and if it is felt that the time would not be right without our having something to eat, then, is there not a superabundance of that most perfect fruit, that I have told you about, to delight the hearts of the most fastidious?

But I have only told of the more personal side of this feast. It is at this time that we have visitants of the higher realms to see us, perfect beings, among whom is he whose earthly birth we are celebrating. And these beauteous

souls have but to pass upon their way to fill us with such an ecstasy of spiritual exaltation as to remain with us for long after their return to their high estate.

At Easter time we have similar visitations, but there is a far greater degree of rejoicing, because to us the birth into the spirit world must, by the very nature of things, be of far greater significance. Indeed, when once we have left the earth-plane we are inclined to forget our earthly birthday, since the greater contains the lesser. It is only our earthly connexions, if we have any, that will serve to remind us.

I have enlarged upon this subject somewhat to try to show you that we are not living in a state of fervid religious emotion for all eternity. We are human, though so many people still on the earth-plane would have us to be otherwise! Such people will inevitably be in the same relative position as ourselves one day, and nothing is so calculated to instil humility as the realization of what one once held as firm and decided opinions.

I have digressed a little from our first topic as we threw ourselves on the grass, but in our conversation one thing led to another until we seemed to have wandered some way from our course.

Mention has only been made of the higher realms. What of the lower spheres that Edwin spoke about when I referred to the boundaries of this particular realm? We could visit them whenever we desired. We can always proceed to a realm lower than our own, while we cannot always mount higher. But it was by no means advisable to wander into the lower spheres except under expert guidance or before proper tuition had been given. Before informing us more fully upon this subject, Edwin advised us to see more of our own pleasant land first.

And now as to what constitutes the precise boundaries of this realm. We are accustomed to a knowledge of the rotundity of the earth and to seeing with our eyes the distant horizon. In contemplating this world of spirit we must abandon in many respects that idea of distance which we measure with the eye, since distance becomes

annihilated by our immensely rapid means of transit. Any suggestion of terrestrial flatness is soon dispelled by the view of hills and rolling downs.

Again, the atmosphere is crystal clear and our sight is not limited by the instrument of a physical body. We are not confined to keeping our feet on the ground. If we can move ourselves laterally over these lands by the power of our thought, we can also move ourselves vertically—Edwin told us. And I must say that this had never occurred to Ruth and me as yet. We were still in some ways limited by our earthly notions and habits of thought. If we could sink beneath the waters without harm, but rather with enjoyment, then, of course, we must be able to mount into the 'air' with the same safety and enjoyment! Ruth did not express any very keen desire to do so—just yet! She preferred to wait, she said, until she had become more thoroughly acclimatized. I wholeheartedly shared her sentiments in the matter, which caused our good friend the greatest amusement.

In alluding to these few features I have done so because the earth world has always looked upon the spirit world as being relatively up or down. These are really considerations of a highly scientific nature, and I am not competent to enlarge upon them; moreover, as an inhabitant of these lands my whole outlook, both mental and spiritual, has had to undergo sweeping and fundamental changes, in spite of the fact that I had some small knowledge before I passed over. It is really of little moment the precise location of the spirit world with its many realms or spheres.

Where is the boundary between the earth world and the spirit world? Upon the instant of my passing, of which, you will remember, I was fully conscious, when I arose from my bed in response to a very definite urge, *at that moment I was in the spirit world*. The two worlds, then, must interpenetrate one another. But as I moved away under the support and able guidance of Edwin, I was conscious of moving in no definite direction. I might have been travelling up, or down, or along. Movement, there

certainly was. Edwin later informed me that I had passed through the lower spheres—and unpleasant ones—but that through the authority of his mission of coming to help me into my realm, we were both fully protected from any and every description of unpleasant influence. We were, in effect, completely invisible to all but those of our own realm and higher.

The transition from one realm to another is gradual as far as outward appearance is concerned, as well as in other respects, so that it would be difficult to assign to any particular locality the designation of boundary. That is exactly how the boundaries of our own realm are situated. They seem to melt almost imperceptibly into one another.

Edwin now proposed that by way of practical illustration we should go and see one of these boundaries that had perplexed us so much. We again placed ourselves under Edwin's expert guidance, and we moved off.

At once we found ourselves upon a very wide expanse of grassland, but we both noticed that the turf felt less soft beneath our feet; it was, in fact, becoming hard as we walked along. The beautiful emerald green was fast vanishing, and the grass was taking on a dull yellow appearance, very similar to earthly grass that has been scorched by the sun and has lacked water. We saw no flowers, no trees, no dwellings, and everywhere seemed bleak and barren. There was no sign of human life, and life seemed to be rapidly disappearing from beneath our feet, as by now the grass had ceased altogether, and we were upon hard ground. We noticed, too, that the temperature had fallen considerably. Gone was all that beautiful, genial warmth. There was a coldness and dampness in the air which seemed to cling to our beings, and cast a chill over our very souls. Poor Ruth clung to Edwin's arm, and I am not ashamed to say that I did the same, and was very glad to do so. Ruth then visibly shivered, and stopped abruptly, imploring us not to go any farther. Edwin threw his arms around both our shoulders, and told us that we had no need to be the least afraid, as he had the power to protect us fully. However, he could see the state

of deep depression, as well as oppression, that had fallen upon us, and so he turned us gently round, placed his arms about our waists, and we once more found ourselves sitting beneath our own lovely trees, with the glorious flowers close beside us, and our own warm air once more closing upon us with its heavenly balm.

It is perhaps superfluous to add that Ruth and I were both glad to be back again in the city. We had been only on the *threshold* of the lower spheres, but we had gone far enough to gather more than an inkling of what lay beyond. I knew that it would be some time yet before I would penetrate there, and I could now clearly perceive the wisdom of Edwin's admonitions.

As we were on the subject of these spiritual boundaries, and in spite of the fact that we had temporarily ceased our explorations, I could not refrain from asking Edwin about the frontiers of the higher realms. I knew that there could not possibly be anything unpleasant about these, and so I hinted that, by way of contrast and to offset our recent chilling experience in the other direction, we might perhaps visit the border through which our celestial visitants pass. Edwin said that there was no objection whatever, and so once again we started off.

Again we found ourselves upon grassland, but with a striking difference. The turf upon which we were walking was infinitely softer than that of the interior of the realm. The green of the verdure was even brighter than we had thought possible. The flowers were growing in still greater profusion, and the intensity of colour, of perfume, and of health-giving power transcended anything we had encountered. The very air seemed to be imbued with rainbow tints. There were few dwellings at the spot where we were immediately standing, but behind us were to be seen some of the most stately and beautiful houses I have ever seen. In these houses, so our friend told us, lived wondrous souls who, though nominally belonging to our own realm, were by virtue of their spiritual progression and particular gifts and work, in close contact with the higher realms, into which they had full authority and the requisite power

to pass upon their various occasions. Edwin promised that we should return to this place after we had seen as much of the city as we wished, and there we could discuss—in one of the houses—my future work, as well as Ruth's. He had taken Ruth under his wing, and for her part she expressed her gratitude for his kindness in doing so. It had several times crossed my mind what form of spiritual work I could engage myself upon, as soon as I had become sufficiently familiar with the new life and the new land.

Just as we had been heavy with chill and oppression at the borderline of the dark spheres, so were we now warmed and filled with such an elation that we were almost silent in wonderment. As we moved along, bathed in radiance, we felt such a spiritual exhilaration that Edwin's description of the visitations of personages from the higher realms at once came to my mind, and I almost knew what to expect when I should be fortunate enough to witness such a visitation. Standing here, one had the overwhelming desire to strive for that progression that would entitle one to inhabit one of the lovely houses, and to qualify for the honour of serving some one of the dwellers in this higher sphere at whose gateway we were standing.

We walked a little way forward, but we could proceed no farther. There were no visible barriers, but we felt that we could not breathe if we went onward. The whole atmosphere was becoming so much the more rarefied the farther we penetrated, that in the end we were bound to retrace our steps on to our own ground.

I could see many souls dressed in the most tenuous of garments, the soft colours of which seemed hardly to belong to them but to float about the fabric of their robes—if fabric one can call it. Those of them who came sufficiently near smiled to us with such a friendly greeting that we knew we were not in any way intruding, and some waved their hands to us. My friend told us that they were aware of our purpose there, and for that reason they would not approach us. They would allow us to enjoy our experience by ourselves, and quietly to absorb the beauties and splendours of this wonderful borderland.

And so, rather reluctantly, we turned; and we quickly found ourselves back in the city in our former spot under the trees. We both felt more buoyant than ever after this brief visit, and I am sure Edwin did too, notwithstanding his having been in spirit so much longer than we had.

We did not speak for a little while after our return, each of us engaged upon our own thoughts, and when we finally broke our silence, it was to ply our good Edwin with questions. To enumerate all these questions would be tedious, so I will give, in a consecutive form, Edwin's answers as a whole.

First, with regard to the lower spheres, whose threshold had so depressed us. I have since visited them in company with Ruth and Edwin, and I have made expeditions through them, just as we are now making through our own realm. I therefore do not want to anticipate what I wish to say later as to our experiences there. For the present, then, I will only say that when we paid our visit to the boundary, we made our way there directly and rapidly, and we had no consciousness of the intermediate states through which we passed. It was for this reason that our sudden change of environment was so noticeable. Had we made our progress slowly we should have perceived the gradual decline of all those pleasant and enjoyable features that constitute the heaven of this realm. And those who dwell within this area of decline are in the same relative position to ourselves in respect of movement: they would be inhibited from passing higher just as we were on the borders of that higher realm.

The same conditions obtained in our journey to the borders of the higher realm. We traversed the distance so quickly that we were unable to observe the gradual alteration in our surroundings. Otherwise we should have seen the country taking on a higher degree of etherealization, a greater intensification of colour and brightness, observable not only in the physical features of the realm, but also in the spirit raiment of those whose homes approximated the more closely to the border.

To visit the lower realms it is necessary to have—for

one's own protection—certain powers and symbols, of which Edwin told us he was in full possession. Such places are not for curiosity seekers, and no one would be foolish enough to go there for any purpose other than a legitimate one. Those who wander in that direction alone, without authority, are soon turned back by kindly souls whose work it is to save others from the perils that lie beyond. Many souls are continuously passing backwards and forwards across that sad border in the performance of their work. It is true that we saw no signs of anyone near us when we were there, but like ourselves, when we made our journey there, they move quickly to their destination.

At the border to the higher realms there is no need for such sentinels to keep others from crossing, because the natural law prevents it. When those of a lower realm travel to a higher, it is always by authority, either vested in the traveller, or in some other person of a higher sphere, who will act as escort. In the former case, such authority takes the form of symbols or signs that are given to the holder, who will always and upon every occasion receive—even unasked—every assistance he may need. Many of these symbols have the power in themselves of preserving the traveller from the overwhelming effects of the higher spiritual atmosphere. This latter would not damage the soul, of course, but a soul thus unprepared would find itself in much the same situation as upon earth when one emerges into brilliant sunlight after a *prolonged* stay in *complete* darkness. But as in the case of the earthly sunshine one can, after a suitable lapse of time, become again perfectly at ease in the normal bright light, it is not so in the case of the higher realms. There is no such adaptability there. The 'blinding' effect will be continuous to one of a lower state. But with a perfect dispensation, means are provided so that the visiting soul shall undergo no spiritual discomfort or unhappiness. And that is just what one would expect, since such visits are made for happy reasons, and not as tests of spiritual stamina and endurance. When it is necessary to make a journey to even higher spheres, it then becomes imperative, in many cases,

that an inhabitant of those realms should, as it were, throw a cloak over his charge, in just the same way as Edwin, upon a lower scale, threw his protecting arms about us when we journeyed to the lower sphere.

Such, in substance, was what Edwin told us in reply to our many queries.

We now felt that we were sufficiently 'rested', and upon Edwin proposing that we might care to resume our inspection of the city, we accordingly did so.

VII. Music

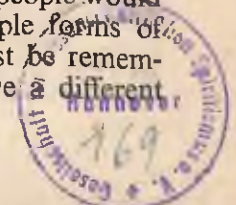
Music being such a vital element in the world of spirit, it is not surprising that a grand building should be devoted to the practice, teaching, and the fostering of every description of music. The next hall that our friend took us into was entirely dedicated to this important subject.

When I was on earth I never considered myself a musician, in an active sense, but I appreciated the art without very much understanding it. I had heard some splendid vocal music during my brief sojourns at different times in one of our metropolitan cathedrals, and I had had some very scanty experience of listening to orchestral music. Most of what I saw in this hall of music was new to me, and a great deal of it very technical. I have since added appreciably to my small knowledge, because I found that the greater the knowledge of music the more it helped one to understand so many things of the life here, where music plays so important a part. I do not suggest that all spirit people should become musicians in order to comprehend their own existence! The imposing of such a condition upon us would never be consonant with the natural laws here. But most individuals have some latent, innate musical sense, and by encouraging it here, so much the greater can be their joy. The latter, in effect,

is exactly what I did. Ruth already possessed some extensive musical training, and so she felt very much at home in this great college.

The hall of music followed the same broad system as the other halls of the arts. The library contained books dealing with music as well as the scores of vast quantities of music that had been written on earth by composers who had now passed into spirit, or by those who were still upon the earth. What are called upon earth 'master-works', were fully represented among the musical scores upon the shelves, and I was interested to learn that there was hardly a work that had not since been altered by the composer himself since coming into spirit. The reasons for such 'improvements' I shall make plain later on. As before, the library provided a complete history of music from the very earliest times, and those who were able to read music—not necessarily instrumentally, but with a familiarity of what the printed notes indicated—were enabled to see before them the great strides that the art had made during the ages. Progression, it seems, has been slow, as in other arts, and freakish forms of expression have obtruded themselves. Needless to say the latter are not entertained here for reasons connected with those that inspire composers to alter their works after passing here.

Also contained in the library were so many of those books and musical works that have long since disappeared from earthly sight, or else are very scarce and so beyond the reach of so many folk. The musical antiquary will find all those things that he has sighed for on earth, but which have been denied him, and here he can consult, freely, works that, because of their preciousness, would never be allowed into his hands on earth. Many apartments were set aside for students who can learn of music in every branch, from theory to practice, under teachers whose names are known the earth world over. Some there are, perhaps, who would think that such famous people would not give their time to the teaching of simple forms of music to simple lovers of music. But it must be remembered, as with the painters, composers have a different



appraisement of the fruits of their brains after passing into spirit. In common with us all here, they see things exactly as they are—including their compositions. They find, too, that the music of the spirit world is very different in outward results from music performed on earth. Hence they discover that their musical knowledge must undergo sweeping changes in many cases before they can begin to express themselves musically. In music, it can be said that the spirit world starts where the earth world leaves off. There are laws of music here which have no application to the earth whatever, because the earth is neither sufficiently progressed on the one hand, and on the other because the spirit world is of spirit, while the earth world is of matter. It is doubtful if the earth-plane will ever become ethereal enough to hear many of the forms of spirit music in the higher realms. Innovations have been tried, so I have been told, on the earth-plane, but the result is not only barbaric, but childish as well. Earthly ears are not attuned to music that is essentially of the spirit realms. By some strange chance earth people have essayed to produce such music on the earth-plane. It will never do—until the ears of those still incarnate have undergone a fundamental alteration.

The many types of musical instrument so familiar on earth were to be seen in the college of music, where students could be taught to play upon them. And here again, where dexterity of the hands is so essential the task of gaining proficiency is never arduous nor wearisome, and it is, moreover, so much more rapid than upon the earth. As students acquire a mastery over their instrument they can join one of the many orchestras that exist here, or they can limit their performance to their many friends. It is not by any means surprising that many prefer the former because they can help to produce, in concert with their fellow musicians, the tangible effects of music upon a larger scale when so many more can enjoy such effects. We were extremely interested in the many instruments that have no counterpart upon the earth-plane. They are, for the most part, especially adapted to the forms of music

that are exclusive to the spirit world, and they are for that reason very much more elaborate. Such instruments are only played with others of their kind for their distinctive music. For that which is common to the earth, the customary instrument is sufficient.

It is natural that this building should be possessed of a concert hall. This was a very large hall capable of seating comfortably many thousands. It was circular in shape, with seats rising in an unbroken tier from the floor. There is, of course, no real necessity for such a hall to be under cover, but the practice merely follows others in this realm—our own dwelling-houses, for example. We do not really need those, but we like them, we have grown used to them while upon earth, they are perfectly natural to life, and so we have them.

We had observed that the hall of music stood in grounds far more extensive than those we had already seen, and the reason was soon made clear to us. At the rear of the hall was the great centre of concert performances. It consisted of a vast amphitheatre like a great bowl sunk beneath the level of the ground, but it was so large that its real depth was not readily apparent. The seats that were farthest away from the performers were exactly upon ground level. Immediately surrounding these seats were masses of the most beautiful flowers of every possible hue, with a grassy space beyond, while the whole area of this outdoor temple of music was encompassed by a magnificent plantation of tall and graceful trees. Although the seating arrangements were upon such an expansive scale, much more so than would be at all practicable upon earth, yet there was no sense of being too far from the performers, even in the farthest seats. It will be recalled that our vision is not so restricted in spirit as upon earth.

Edwin suggested to us that we might like to hear a concert of the spirit world, and then he made a strange proposal. It was that we should not take our places in the seats of the theatre, but that we should take up a position at some distance. The reason, he said, would be manifest as soon as the music began. As a concert was due to start

very shortly, we followed his mysterious suggestion, and seated ourselves on the grass at some considerable distance from the actual amphitheatre. I wondered whether we should be able to hear very much so far away, but our friend assured us that we should. And, indeed, we were joined by numbers of other people, at that very moment, who, doubtless, had come for the same purpose as ourselves. The whole place, which was empty when Edwin had first brought us in, now contained many people, some strolling about, and others, like us, seated contentedly on the grass. We were in a delightful spot, with the trees and flowers and pleasant people all about us, and never have I experienced such a feeling of real, genuine enjoyment as came upon me at this moment. I was in perfect health and perfect happiness, seated with two of the most delightful companions, Edwin and Ruth; unrestricted by time or weather, or even the bare thought of them; unhampered by every limitation that is common to our old incarnate life.

Edwin told us to walk over to the theatre and look down over the seats once again. We did so, and to our astonishment we found that the whole vast hall was packed with people, where there was not a soul to be seen but a *short* time before. The musicians were in their places awaiting the entrance of their conductor, and this great audience had arrived as if by magic—or so it seemed. As it was apparent that the concert was about to begin, we returned to Edwin at once. In answer to our question as to how the audience had arrived so suddenly and unperceived, he reminded me of the method of bringing together the congregation of the church that we had visited in the first days of our travels. In the case of this concert, the organizers had merely to send out their thoughts to people at large who were particularly interested in such performances, and they forthwith assembled. As soon as Ruth and I had shown our interest and desires in these concerts, we should establish a link, and we should find these thoughts reaching us whenever they were emitted.

We could, of course, see nothing of the performers

from where we were situated, and so when a hush came upon all around us, we were thus sufficiently informed that the concert was to begin. The orchestra was composed of some two hundred musicians, who were playing upon instruments that are well-known to earth, so that I was able to appreciate what I heard. As soon as the music began I could hear a remarkable difference from what I had been accustomed to hear on the earth-plane. The actual sounds made by the various instruments were easily recognizable as of old, but the quality of tone was immeasurably purer, and the balance and blend were perfect. The work to be played was of some length, I was informed, and would be continued without any break.

The opening movement was of a subdued nature as regards its volume of sound, and we noticed that the instant the music commenced a bright light seemed to rise up from the direction of the orchestra until it floated, in a flat surface, level with the topmost seats, where it remained as an iridescent cover to the whole amphitheatre. As the music proceeded this broad sheet of light grew in strength and density, forming, as it were, a firm foundation for what was to follow. So intent was I upon watching this extraordinary formation that I could scarcely tell what the music was about. I was conscious of its sound, but that was really all. Presently, at equal spaces round the circumference of the theatre, four towers of light shot up into the sky in long tapering pinnacles of luminosity. They remained poised for a moment, and then slowly descended, becoming broader in girth as they did so, until they assumed the outward appearance of four circular towers, each surmounted with a dome, perfectly proportioned. In the meanwhile, the central area of light had thickened still more, and was beginning to rise slowly in the shape of an immense dome covering the whole theatre. This continued to ascend steadily until it seemed to reach a very much greater height than the four towers, while the most delicate colours were diffused throughout the whole of the etheric structure. I could understand now why Edwin had suggested that we should sit outside the theatre

proper, and I could follow, also, why composers should feel impelled to alter their earthly works after they have arrived in spirit. The musical sounds sent up by the orchestra were creating, up above their heads, this immense musical thought-form, and the shape and perfection of this form rested entirely upon the purity of the musical sounds, the purity of the harmonies, and a freedom from any pronounced dissonance. The form of the music must be pure to produce a pure form.

It must not be assumed that every description of discord was absent. To lack discord would be to produce monotony, but the discords were legitimately used and properly resolved.

By now the great musical thought-form had assumed what appeared to be its limit of height, and it remained stationary and steady. The music was still being played, and in response to it the whole colouring of the dome changed, first to one shade, then to another, and many times to a delicate blend of a number of shades according to the variation in theme or movement of the music.

It is difficult to give any adequate idea of the beauty of this wonderful musical structure. The amphitheatre being built below the surface of the ground, nothing was visible of audience, of performers, or of the building itself, and the dome of light and colour had all the appearance of resting on the same firm ground as were we ourselves.

This has taken but a brief while in the telling, but the musical thought-form occupied such time in formation as would be taken by a full-length concert on the earth-plane. We had, during this period, watched the gradual building of the outward and visible effect of music. Unlike the earth where music can only be heard, there we had both heard and *seen* it. And not only were we inspired by the sounds of the orchestral playing, but the beauty of the immense form it created had its spiritual influence upon all who beheld it, or came within its sphere. We could feel this although we were seated without the theatre. The audience within were basking in its splendour and enjoying still greater benefit from the

effulgence of its elevating rays. On the next occasion we should take our places in the huge auditorium.

The music at last came to a grand finale, and so ended. The rainbow colours continued to interweave themselves. We wondered how long this musical structure would survive, and we were told that it would fade away in roughly the same time as would be taken by an earthly rainbow—comparatively a few minutes. We had listened to a major work, but if a series of shorter pieces were played, the effect and lasting power would be the same, but the shapes would vary in form and size. Were the form of greater duration, a new form would conflict with the last, and the result to the eye would be the same as two different and unconnected pieces of music, when played together, would be to the ear.

The expert musician can plan his compositions by his knowledge of what forms the various harmonic and melodic sounds will produce. He can, in effect, build magnificent edifices upon his manuscript of music, knowing full well exactly what the result will be when the music is played or sung. By careful adjustment of his themes and his harmonies, the length of the work, and its various marks of expression, he can build a majestic form as grand as a Gothic cathedral. This is, in itself, a delightful part of the musical art in spirit, and it is regarded as musical architecture. The student will not only study music acoustically, but he will learn to build it architecturally, and the latter is one of the most absorbing and fascinating studies.

What we had witnessed had been produced upon a scale of some magnitude; the individual instrumentalist or singer can evolve on a greatly reduced scale his own musical thought-forms. In fact, it would be impossible to emit any form of musical sound deliberately without the formation of such a form. It may not take a definite shape such as we saw; that comes from more experience, but it would induce the interplay of numerous colours and blendings of colours. In the spirit world all music is colour, and all colour is music. The one is never existent without

the other. That is why the flowers give forth such pleasant tones when they are approached, as it will be remembered of my early experience with flowers. The water that sparkles and flashes colours is also creating musical sounds of purity and beauty. But it must not be imagined that with all this galaxy of colour in the spirit world there is also a pandemonium of music going on unremittingly. The eye is not wearied by the fullness of colour here. Why should our ears be wearied by the sweet sound the colours send forth? The answer is that they are not, because the sounds are in perfect accord with the colours, as the colours are with the sounds. And the perfect combination of both sight and sound is *perfect harmony*.

Harmony is a fundamental law here. There can be no confliction. I do not suggest that we are in a state of perfection. We should be an immensely higher realm if we were, but we are in perfection in so far as this realm is concerned. If we, as individuals, become more perfect than the realm in which we live, we, *ipso facto*, become worthy of advancing to a higher state, and we do so. But while we are where we are, in this realm or higher, we are living in a state of perfection according to the limits of that realm.

I have dwelt rather at length upon our musical experiences because of the great position of music in our lives and in the realm in which we are living. The whole attitude to music held by so many people of the earth undergoes a great change when they eventually come to spirit. Music is looked upon by many on the earth-plane as merely a pleasant diversion, a pleasant adjunct to the earthly life, but by no means a necessity. Here it is part of our life, not because we make it so, but because it is part of natural existence, as are flowers and trees, grass and water, and hills and dales. It is an element of spiritual nature. Without it a vast deal of the joy would depart out of our lives. We do not need to become master-musicians to appreciate the wealth of music that surrounds us in colour and sound, but as in so many other features of this life, we accept and enjoy to the full, and in the enjoyment

of our heritage we can afford to smile at those who persist in believing that we live in a world of emptiness.

A world of emptiness! What a shock so many people have upon their coming into the spirit world, and how immensely glad and relieved they are to find that it turns out quite pleasant after all; that it is not a terrifying place; that it is not one stupendous temple of hymn-singing religion; and that they are able to feel *at home* in the land of their new life. When this joyful realization has come to them, some of them are reminded that they looked upon the various descriptions of this life, that have come from us from time to time, as 'rather material'! And how pleased they are to discover that it is so. What is it, if it is not 'material'? The musicians that we heard playing were playing upon very real, solid instruments from very real music. The conductor was a very real person, conducting his orchestra with a very material baton! But the beautiful musical thought-form was *not* so very material as were its surroundings or the means to create it, in just the same relative way as an earthly rainbow, and the sun and moisture that cause it.

At the risk of making myself very tedious I have reverted more than once to this strange fallacy that the world I am living in, here in spirit, is vague and shadowy. It is strange that some minds strive always to banish from the world of spirit every tree and flower, and the other thousand and one delights. There is something of conceit in this—that makes such things exclusive to the earth world. At the same time, if any soul thinks that such things have no business to exist in the spirit world, he is at liberty to abstain from both the sight and enjoyment of them by betaking himself to some barren spot where his susceptibilities will not be offended by such earthly objects as trees and flowers and water (and even human beings), and there he can give himself up to a state of beatific contemplation, surrounded by the heavenly nothingness that he thinks should be heaven proper. No soul is forced into an unwilling task here, nor into surroundings that he considers uncongenial. I venture to assert that it will not

be long before such a soul emerges from his retreat and joins his fellows in the enjoyment of all the delights of God's heaven. There is just one fault—among one or two others—that the earth world possesses: the overwhelming superiority, in its own mind, over every other world, but principally over the spirit world. We can afford to be amused, though our amusement turns to sadness when we see the distress of souls upon their arrival here, when they realize that they are, at last, faced with eternal truth beyond all question or doubt. It is then that humility so often sets in! But we never reproach. The reproaching comes from within each soul itself.

And what, perhaps it will be asked, has all this to do with our musical experiences? Just this: that after every new experience I have thought the same thoughts, and very nearly spoken the same words to both Ruth and Edwin. Ruth has always echoed my words; Edwin has always been in agreement with me, though, of course, what we were seeing was not new to him by any means. But he still marvelled at all things here, as indeed do we all, whether we have but just arrived, or whether we have been over here many years of earth time.

As we walked along after the concert, Edwin pointed out to us the dwelling places of many of the teachers in the various halls of learning, who preferred to live close to the seats of their work. They were, for the most part, unpretentious houses, and it would have been comparatively easy to guess the occupation of the owner, so we were told, from the various evidences within of their work. Edwin said that we should always be welcome should we ever wish to call upon any of the teachers. The exclusiveness which must necessarily surround such people when they are incarnate vanishes when they come into spirit. All values become drastically altered in such matters. The teachers themselves do not cease their own studies because they are teaching. They are ever investigating and learning, and passing on to their pupils what they have thus gained. Some have progressed to a higher realm, but they still retain their interest in their former sphere, and

continuously visit it—and their many friends—to pursue their teaching.

But we have already spent some time on this subject, and Edwin is waiting to take us on to other places of importance in the city.

VIII. Plans for Future Work

A short walk brought us to a large rectangular building which, our friend informed us, was the hall of science, and my fair companion and I were at a loss to know how science, as we always understood the word on earth, could have any place in the spirit world. However, we were soon to learn many things, the chief of which was that the earth world has the spirit world to thank for all the major scientific discoveries that have been made throughout the centuries.

The laboratories of the world of spirit are many decades in advance of those of the earth-plane. And it will be years before many revolutionary discoveries are allowed to be sent through to the earth world, because the earth has not yet sufficiently progressed.

Neither Ruth nor I had any very great leaning towards science and engineering, and Edwin knowing our taste in this direction, proposed that we should give but a moment or two to this particular hall.

In the hall of science every field of scientific and engineering investigation, study, and discovery was covered, and here were to be seen so many of those men whose names have become household words, and who, since passing into spirit, have continued their life's work with their fellow scientists with the full and immense resources of the spirit world at their command. Here they can solve those mysteries that baffled them when they were on earth. There is no longer any such thing as

personal rivalry. Reputations have no more to be made, and the many material handicaps are abandoned for ever. It follows that where such a gathering of savants can exist, together with their unlimited resources, the results must be correspondingly great. In the past ages all the epoch-making discoveries have come from the spirit world. Of himself, incarnate man can do very little. Most people are content to consider the earth-world as sufficient unto itself. Indeed it is not! The scientist is fundamentally a man of vision; it may be limited, but it is there nevertheless. And our own spirit scientists can—and do—impress their earthly colleagues with the fruits of their investigations. In many cases where two men are working upon the same problem, the one who is in spirit will be far ahead of his confrère who is still on earth. A hint from the former is very often enough to set the latter upon the right track, and the result is a discovery for the benefit of humanity. In so many cases humanity has so benefited, but, alas, in so many cases humanity has suffered sorrow and tribulation through the devilish perversion of those discoveries. Every one of them that is sent from the spirit world is for the advantage and spiritual progression of man. If perverted minds use those same things for the destruction of man, then man has only himself to blame. That is why I affirmed that the earth world has not spiritually progressed enough to have many more splendid inventions that have already been perfected here. They are ready and waiting, but if they were sent through to the earth-plane in its present state of spiritual mind, they would be misused by unscrupulous people.

The people of the earth have it in their power to see that modern inventions are employed solely for their spiritual and material good. When the time comes that real spiritual progress is made, then the earth-plane can expect a flood of new inventions and discoveries to come through from the scientists and engineers of the spirit world. But the earth-plane has a long and sorrowful way to go before that time comes. And in the meantime the work of the spirit scientist continues.

We in spirit do not require the many inventions of the earth-plane. I think I have sufficiently indicated that our laws are totally different from those of the earth-plane. We have no use for inventions that will increase our speed of travel as with you. Our own method of transit is as rapid as thought, because thought is the motive power. We have no need for methods of saving life, because we are indestructible. We have no need for the hundreds of inventions to make life easier, safer, more comfortable and enjoyable, because our life is all that, and more than that already. But in this hall of science many, many devoted, men were working for the betterment of the earth-plane through the medium of their researches, and lamenting that so much could not be given to the earth because it would not be safe as yet to do so.

We were permitted to see the progress that had been made in locomotion, and we were amazed at the advance that had been made since the days when we were on the earth-plane. But that is as nothing to that which is to come. When man exercises his will in the right direction, there will be no end to the enormous rewards that he will gain in material progress, but material progress must go hand in hand with spiritual progress. And until they do the earth world will not be permitted to have the many inventions that are ready and waiting to be sent through.

The generality of people of the earth world are very stubborn. They resent any encroachment on their preserves, or upon what they have presumptuously claimed as their preserves. It was never intended that when the results of our scientists' researches are communicated to the earth they were to be seized upon by the few to the exclusion of all others. Those that have done so find that they have to pay a very heavy price for their brief span of earthly prosperity. Neither was it intended that the two worlds, ours and yours, should be as they are now—so far apart in thought and contact. The day will assuredly come when our two worlds will be closely interrelated, when communication between the two will be a commonplace of life, and then the great wealth of resources of the spirit

world will be open to the earth world, to draw upon for the benefit of the whole human race.

The sight of so much activity on the part of my fellow inhabitants of this realm had set my mind to thinking about my own future work and what form it could take. I had no very definite ideas upon the matter, and so I mentioned my difficulty to Edwin. Ruth, it seems, was troubled similarly, so there were the two of us, having, for the first time since our arrival, some small feelings of restlessness. Our old friend was not the least surprised; he would have been more surprised, he said, if we had felt otherwise. It was a sensation common to all, sooner or later—the urge to be doing something useful for the good of others. It was not that we were tired of seeing our own land, but that we had rather a self-conscious feeling. Edwin assured us that we could continue to go upon our explorations indefinitely if we so wished, and that none would criticize or comment upon our actions. It would thus be treated as a matter of our own concern. However, we both felt that we should like to settle the question of our future work, and we appealed accordingly for the guidance of our good friend. Edwin suggested at once that we repair to the borders of the higher realms, where, it will be recalled, he said earlier we should be able to go into this matter. And so we left the hall of science, and once more we found ourselves on the outskirts of our realm.

We were taken to a very beautiful house, which from its appearance and situation was clearly of a higher degree than those farther inland. The atmosphere was more rarefied, and as far as I could observe we were approximately upon the same spot as on our first visit to the boundary. Edwin led us into the house with all the freedom in the world, and bid us welcome. As soon as we entered I knew instinctively that he was giving us welcome to *his own home*. Strange to say, we had never inquired about his home or where it was situated. He said he had purposely kept our minds off the subject, but that was only his natural diffidence. Ruth was enchanted with everything she saw, and scolded him for not telling us all about it

much sooner. The house was built of stone throughout, and although to the eye it might have appeared somewhat bare, yet friendliness emanated from every corner. The rooms were not large, but of medium size, and suitable for all Edwin's purposes. There were plenty of comfortable chairs, and many well-lined bookshelves. But it was the general feeling of calm and peace that pervaded the whole dwelling that struck us most forcibly.

Edwin bid us be seated and make ourselves at home. There was no need for us to hurry, and we could discuss our problem *in extenso*. At the outset I frankly admitted that I had no particular ideas upon what I could do. While on earth I had been fortunate enough to be able to follow my own inclinations, and I had had, consequently, a busy life. But my work was finished—at least in one respect—when my earthly life ended. Edwin then proposed that perhaps I would like to join him in his work, which was principally concerned with taking in hand newly arrived souls whose religious beliefs were the same as we had held upon earth, but who, unlike ourselves, were unable as yet to realize the truth of the change they had made, and of the unreality of so much of their religion.

Much as I liked my friend's proposal, I did not feel competent enough to undertake such work, but Edwin waved aside my objection. I should, he said, work with him—at first, at any rate. When I had become used to the task I could continue independently if I so wished. Speaking from experience, Edwin said that two or more people—and here he glanced at Ruth—could very often give far greater help to an individual soul than could one working entirely alone. The weight of numbers seemed to have a greater power of conviction upon one who was particularly stubborn in holding on to his old earthly religious ideas. Since Edwin felt that I would be of real service to him, I was very pleased to accept his offer to join forces with him. And here Ruth brought herself forward as another candidate for service under him, subject, of course, to his approval. Not only was the latter instantly forthcoming, but her offer was gratefully

accepted. There was much, said he, that a young woman could do, and the three of us, working in such complete harmony and amity, should be able to do some useful work together. I was more than glad that Ruth was to join us, since it meant that our happy party would not be broken up.

There was, however, another matter that was in my mind, and it concerned that one particular book that I wished I had not written when I was on earth. I was not rendered unhappy by the thought of this still persisting, but I wanted to be free of it, and although, no doubt, my new work would eventually bring me that complete peace of mind, I felt that I would like to deal with the matter in a more direct way. Edwin knew what I was hinting at, and he recalled to me what he had already said about the difficulties of communication with the earth world. But he had also mentioned that we might seek guidance from higher up. If I still wished to try my hand at communication then we might appeal for that guidance and advice now, and thus we could settle the whole question of my future work.

Edwin then left us and retired into another room. I had hardly been chatting with Ruth for a moment about our new occupation when our old friend returned bringing with him a very striking-looking man who, I knew at once, had come from a higher sphere in answer to Edwin's call. He did not appear to be one of our own countrymen, and my observation was correct, since he was an Egyptian, as Edwin told us later on. He spoke our own tongue perfectly. Edwin introduced us, and explained my wishes and the possible difficulties of their fulfilment.

Our visitor was possessed of a very strong personality, and he gave one the strong impression of calmness and placidity. He would, one imagined, always remain perfectly unruffled.

We all seated ourselves comfortably, and Edwin acquainted him with the extent of my knowledge concerning communication with the earth world.

The Egyptian placed some considerations before me. If,

said our visitor, I was fully determined that by returning to the earth-plane to speak I should retrieve the situation that was giving me cause to regret, then he would do everything to assist me to achieve my purpose. It would not be possible to do what I wanted, though, for some years to come. But in the meantime I was to accept his definite assurance that I should eventually be able to communicate, and he made me a promise to that effect. If I would have patience, all should be as I wished. I was to leave the whole matter in the hands of those who had the ordering of these things, and all would be well. The time—to use an earthly term—would soon pass, and the occurrence of certain events, meanwhile, would make the path clear and would provide the requisite opportunity.

It must be remembered that what I was asking was not merely to return to the earth-plane to endeavour to record the fact that I still lived! What I wanted was to try to undo something that I wished I had never done. And it was a task, I could see, that could not be accomplished in a moment. What I had written I could never unwrite, but I could ease my mind by telling the truth, as I now know it, to those who were still on the earth-plane.

The kindly Egyptian then rose and we shook hands. He congratulated us on the way we had accustomed ourselves to our new conditions of life, wished us joy of our new work whenever we should start, and finally gave me a repeated promise that my own particular wishes should have their certain fulfilment. I tried to express my gratitude for all his help, but he would not hear of it, and with a wave of the hand he was gone. We remained for a while discussing our plans—I was looking forward keenly to starting our work.

It must not be thought that we were part of a campaign to convert people, in the religious sense in which that word is used on earth. Far from it. We do not interfere with people's beliefs nor their viewpoints; we only give our services when they are asked for in such matters, or when we see that by giving them we can effect some useful purpose. Neither do we spend our time walking about

evangelizing people, but when the call comes for help then we answer it instantly. But there comes a time when spiritual unrest will make itself felt, and that is the turning point in the life of many a soul who has been confined and restricted by wrong views, whether religious or otherwise. Religion is not responsible for *all* mistaken ideas!

There is a surprising number of people who do not realize that they have passed from the earth in the death of the physical body. Resolutely they will not believe that they are what the earth world calls 'dead'. They are dimly aware that some sort of change has taken place, but what that change is they are not prepared to say. Some, after a little explanation—and even demonstration—can grasp what has actually happened; others are stubborn, and will be convinced only after prolonged reasoning. In the latter case we are oft-times obliged to leave such a soul for a while to allow a little quiet contemplation to work its way. We know we shall be sought out the instant that soul feels the power of our reasoning. In many respects it is tiring work, though I use the word 'tiring' in its strictly limited sense of the spirit world.

Ruth and I were both more than grateful to Edwin for his generous help in our affairs, and I was particularly so, both to him and the Egyptian, for the excellent prospect of communicating with the earth world. In view of our decisions to co-operate with Edwin in his work he made the suggestion that as we had seen a little—but only a very little—of our own realm, we might now profitably make a visit to the dark realms. Ruth and I both concurred, adding that we had by now sufficient self-confidence to withstand anything of an unpleasant nature that might be before us. We should, of course, be under the immediate protection and guidance of our old friend. Needless to say that without this we should not have attempted to go, even had we been permitted.

We left Edwin's beautiful house, quickly traversed our own realm, and again we were on the borders of the lower realms. Edwin warned us that we should feel that sense of chilling which we experienced before, but that by an

effort of will we could throw it off. He placed himself in the middle of us, Ruth and I each taking one of his arms. He turned and looked at us, and was apparently satisfied with what he saw. I glanced at Ruth and I noticed that her robe—as had Edwin's—had taken on a dull colour, approaching almost grey. Looking at myself I discovered that my own dress had undergone a similar change. This was certainly perplexing, but our friend explained that this toning down of our natural colours was but the operation of a natural law, and did not mean that we had lost what we had already gained. The practical application of such a law meant that we should not be conspicuous in uncongenial surroundings, nor should we carry the light of our realm into those dark places to blind the vision of those who dwelt there.

We were walking along a great tract of barren country. The ground was hard under foot; the green of trees and grass was gone. The sky was dull and leaden, and the temperature had dropped very considerably, but we could feel an internal warmth that counteracted it. Before us we could see nothing but a great bank of mist that gathered in density as we advanced, until finally we were within it. It swirled round in heavy, damp clouds, and it seemed almost like a dead weight as it pressed upon us. Suddenly a figure loomed out of the mist and came towards us. He was the first person we had met as yet, and recognizing Edwin, he gave him a friendly greeting. Edwin introduced us and told him of our intentions. He said he would like to join us, as perhaps he could be of some help to us, and we readily accepted his kind offer. We resumed our journey, and after a further passage through the mist, we found that it began to clear a little until it vanished altogether. We could now see our surroundings clearly. The landscape was bleak in the extreme with, here and there, a dwelling-house of the meanest order. We came closer to one of the latter, and we were able to examine it better.

It was a small, squat house, squarely built, devoid of ornament, and looking altogether thoroughly uninviting. It even had a sinister look in spite of its plainness, and it

seemed to repel us from it the nearer we approached it. There was no sign of life to be seen at any of the windows or round about it. There was no garden attached to it; it just stood out by itself, solitary and forlorn. Edwin and our new friend evidently knew both the house and its inmate quite well, for upon going up to the front door, Edwin gave a knock upon it and without waiting for an answer opened it and walked in, beckoning us to follow. We did so and found ourselves in the poorest sort of apology for a house. There was little furniture, and that of the meanest, and at first sight to earthly eyes one would have said that poverty reigned here, and one would have felt that natural sympathy and urge to offer what help one could. But to our spirit eyes the poverty was of the soul, the meanness was of the spirit, and although it roused our sympathy it was sympathy of another kind, of which material help is of no avail. The coldness seemed almost greater within than without, and we were told that it came from the owner of the house himself.

We passed into a back room and met the sole occupant seated in a chair. He made no attempt to rise or give any sign of welcome. Ruth and I remained in the background while the other two went forward to speak to our unwilling 'host'. He was a man just past middle years. He had something of an air of faded prosperity and the clothes he wore had been obviously neglected, whether through indifference or other causes—in the light of my earthly recollections!—I was unable to say. He rather scowled at the two of us as Edwin brought us forward as new visitors. It was a moment or two before he spoke, and then he railed at us rather incoherently, but we were able to gather that he deemed himself to be suffering under an injustice. Edwin told him in plain terms that he was talking nonsense, because injustice does not exist in the spirit world. A heated argument followed, heated, that is to say, on the part of our host, for Edwin was calm and collected, and, in truth, wonderfully kind. Many times did the former glance at Ruth, whose gentle face seemed to brighten the whole dingy place. I, too, looked at Ruth,

who held my arm, to see how this strange man was affecting her, but she was unperturbed.

At length he quietened down and seemed much more tractable, and then he and Edwin had some private conversation together. At the end of it he told Edwin that he would think about it, and that he could call again if he wished and bring his friends with him. Upon this he arose from his chair, escorted us to the door, and showed us out. And I observed that he was *almost* becoming affable—though not quite. It was as if he was reluctant to submit to being pleasant. He stood at his front door watching us as we walked away, until we must have been nearly out of sight.

Edwin seemed very pleased with our visit, and then he gave us some particulars of the strange man.

He had, he said, been in spirit some years now, but in his earth life he had been a successful business man—successful, that is, as far as the earth-plane judges such things. He had not thought of much else than his business, and he always considered that any means were justified in gaining his own ends, provided they were legal. He was ruthless in his dealings with all others, and he elevated efficiency to the level of a god. In his home all things—and people—were subservient to him. He gave generously to charity where there was likely to accrue the greatest advantage and credit. He supported his own religion and church with vigour, regularity, and fervour. He felt that he was an ornament to the church, and he was much esteemed by all those connected with it. He added some new portions to the edifice at his own expense, and a chapel was named after him as the donor. But from what Edwin had been able to glean from his story, he had scarcely committed one decent, unselfish action in the whole of his life. His motive was always self-aggrandizement, and he had achieved his purpose on earth at the absolute expense of his life in the spirit world.

And now his grievance was that after having lived such an exemplary life—in his own estimation—he should be condemned to live in such comparative squalour. He

refused to see that he had *condemned himself* to it, and that there was none other to blame but himself. He complained that the church had misled him all along, since his munificence had been received in such fashion that he believed his gifts to the church would weigh heavily in his favour in the 'hereafter'. Again he could not see that it is motive that counts, and that a happy state in the spirit world cannot be bought for hard cash. A small service willingly and generously performed for a fellow mortal builds a greater edifice in spirit to the glory of God than do large sums of money expended upon ecclesiastical bricks and mortar erected to the glory of man—with full emphasis upon the donor.

This man's present mood was anger, which was all the greater because he had never been denied anything whilst upon the earth. He had never been accustomed to such degrading circumstances as those at present. His difficulties were increased by the fact that he did not know quite whom to blame. Expecting a high reward, he had been cast into the depths. He had made no real friends. There seemed to be no one—of his own social position, he said—who could advise him in the matter. Edwin had tried to reason with him, but he was in an unreasoning frame of mind, and had been so for some long time. He had had few visitors because he repelled them, and although Edwin had made many visits to him, the result was always the same—a stolid adherence to his sense of injustice.

Upon Edwin's latest call, in company with Ruth and myself, and with the friend whom we had met on the way, there were distinct symptoms of a coming change. They were not manifest at first, but as our visit drew to a close he had shown signs of relenting from his stubborn attitude. And Edwin was sure that it was due as much to Ruth's softening presence as to his own powers of reasoning with him. He felt sure, too, that were we to return to him on our way back, we should find him in a different frame of mind altogether. He would be unwilling to admit too soon that the fault was his entirely, but perseverance will work wonders.

Ruth was naturally pleased that she had been able to be of service so quickly, though she disavowed any claim to have done anything but merely stand there as an observer! Edwin, however, at once pointed out to her that while she disclaimed any action of an external order, she had shown a real sympathy and sorrow for this unhappy man. That explained his frequent glances at her. He had felt that commiseration, and it had done him good, although he was unaware of the cause of it. And here Ruth begs me to add that her very small share would have been of little use in this man's recovery had it not been for Edwin's long and unceasing work on his behalf.

This was our first encounter with unfortunates of the lower spheres, and I have been somewhat protracted in giving details of it. It was, in many respects, straightforward by comparison with what we met later, and in recounting it I have done so because it was an introduction to our future work. For the present, however, it was not intended that we should do anything but make our observations of the dark realms.

The four of us resumed our journey. There were no paths to follow, and the ground was becoming decidedly rocky in formation. The light was rapidly diminishing from a sky that was heavy and black. There was not a soul, not a house, nor any sign of life to be seen. The whole district seemed colourless and empty, and we might have been wandering in another world. We could see dimly ahead of us, after the passage of some time, something which had the appearance of dwellings, and we moved in their direction.

The terrain was now rocks and nothing else, and here and there we could see people seated with their heads down, seemingly almost lifeless, but in reality in the depths of gloom and despair. They took no notice of us whatever as we passed them, and very soon we drew level with the dwellings we had viewed distantly.

IX. The Dark Realms

At close view it became clear that these dwellings were nothing more than mere hovels. They were distressing to gaze upon, but it was infinitely more distressing to contemplate that these were the fruits of men's lives upon earth. We did not enter any of the shacks—it was repulsive enough outside, and we could have served no useful purpose at present by going in. Edwin therefore gave us a few details instead.

Some of the inhabitants, he said, had lived here, or hereabouts, year after year—as time is reckoned upon earth. They themselves had no sense of time, and their existence had been one interminable continuity of darkness through no one's fault but their own. Many had been the good souls who had penetrated into these Stygian realms to try to effect a rescue out of the darkness. Some had been successful; others had not. Success depends not so much upon the rescuer as upon the rescued. If the latter shows no glimmer of light in his mind, no desire to take a step forward on the spiritual road, then nothing, literally nothing, can be done. The urge *must* come from within the fallen soul himself. And how low some of them had fallen! Never must it be supposed that those who, in the earth's judgement, had failed spiritually, are fallen low. Many such have not failed at all, but are, in point of fact, worthy souls whose fine reward awaits them here. But on the other hand, there are those whose earthly lives have been spiritually hideous though outwardly sublime; whose religious profession, designated by a Roman collar, has been taken for granted as being synonymous with spirituality of soul. Such people have been mocking God throughout their sanctimonious lives on earth where they lived with an empty show of holiness and goodness. Here they stand revealed for what they are. But the God they have mocked for so long does not punish. *They punish themselves.*

The people living within these hovels that we were passing were not necessarily those who upon earth had committed some crime in the eyes of the earth people. There were many people who, without doing any harm, *had never, never done any good to a single mortal upon earth.* People who had lived entirely unto themselves, without a thought for others. Such souls constantly harped upon the theme that they had done no *harm* to anyone. But they had harmed themselves.

As the higher spheres had created all the beauties of those realms, so had the denizens of these lower spheres built up the appalling conditions of their spirit life. There was no light in the lowest realms; no warmth, no vegetation, no beauty. But there is hope—hope that every soul there will progress. It is in the power of each soul to do so, and nothing stands in his way but himself. It may take him countless thousands of years to raise himself one inch spiritually, but it is an inch in the right direction.

The thought inevitably came into my mind of the doctrine of eternal damnation, so beloved by orthodox religion, and of the everlasting fires of so-called hell. If this place we were now in could be called hell—and no doubt it would be by theologians—then there was certainly no evidence of fire or heat of any kind. On the contrary, there was nothing but a cold, dank atmosphere. Spirituality means warmth in the spirit world; lack of spirituality means coldness. The whole fantastic doctrine of hell-fire—a fire which burns but never consumes—is one of the most outrageously stupid and ignorant doctrines that has ever been invented by equally stupid and ignorant churchmen. Who actually invented it no one knows, but it is still rigorously upheld as a doctrine by the church. Even the smallest acquaintance with spirit life instantly reveals the utter impossibility of it, because it is against the very laws of spirit existence. This concerns its literal side. What of the shocking blasphemy that it involves?

When Edwin, Ruth, and I were on earth we were asked to believe that God, the Father of the Universe, punishes, *actually punishes* people by condemning them to burn in

the flames of hell for all eternity. Could there ever be a more gross travesty of the God that orthodoxy professes to worship? The churches—of whatever denomination—have built up a monstrous conception of the Eternal Father of Heaven. They have made of Him, on the one hand, a mountain of corruption by shallow lip service, by spending large sums of money to erect churches and chapels to His 'glory', by pretending a grovelling contrition for having 'offended Him', by professing to fear Him—*fear* Him Who is all love! And on the other hand, we have the picture of a God Who, without the slightest compunction, casts poor human souls into an eternity of the worst of all sufferings—burning by fires that are unquenchable.

We are taught glibly to beg for God's mercy. The church's God is a Being of extraordinary moods. He must be continually placated. It is by no means certain that, having begged for mercy, we shall get it. He must be feared—because He can bring down His vengeance upon us at any moment; we do not know when He will strike. He is vengeful and unforgiving. He has commanded such trivialities as are embodied in church doctrines and dogmas that at once expose not a great mind, but a small one. He has made the doorway to 'salvation' so narrow that few, very few souls will ever be able to pass through it. He has built up on the earth-plane a vast organization known as 'the Church', which shall be the sole depository of spiritual truth—an organization that knows practically *nothing* of the state of life in the world of spirit, yet *dares* to lay down the law to incarnate souls, and *dares* to say what is in the mind of the Great Father of the Universe, and *dares* to discredit His Name by assigning to Him attributes that *He could not possibly possess*. What do such silly, petty minds know of the Great and Almighty Father of Love? Mark that!—of *Love*. Then think again of all the horrors I have enumerated. And think once more. Contemplate this: a heaven of all that is beautiful, a heaven of more beauty than the mind of man incarnate can comprehend; a heaven, of which one tiny fragment I have tried

to describe to you, where all is peace and goodwill and love among fellow mortals. All these things are built up by the inhabitants of these realms, and are upheld by the Father of Heaven in His love for all mankind.

What of the lower realms—the dark places we are now visiting? It is the very fact that we are visiting them that has led me to speak in this fashion, because standing in this darkness I am fully conscious of one great reality of eternal life, and that is that the high spheres of heaven are within the reach of every mortal soul that is, or is yet to be, born upon earth. The potentialities of progression are unlimited, and they are the right of every soul. God condemns no one. Man condemns himself, but he does not condemn himself eternally; it rests with himself as to when he shall move forward spiritually. Every spirit hates the lower realms for the unhappiness that is there, and for no other reason. And for that reason great organizations exist to help every single soul who is living in them to rise out of them into the light. And that work will continue through countless ages until every soul is brought out from these hideous places, and at last all is as the Father of the Universe intended it to be.

This, I am afraid, has been a long digression; so let us return to our travels. You will recall my mention of the many heavenly perfumes and scents that come from the flowers and that float upon the air. Here in these dark places the very opposite was the case. Our nostrils were at first assailed by the most foul odours; odours that reminded us of the corruption of flesh in the earth world. They were nauseating, and I feared that it would prove more than Ruth—and indeed I, myself—could stand, but Edwin told us to treat them in the same way as we had mastered the coldness of the temperature—by simply closing our minds to them—and that we should be quite unaware of their existence. We hastened to do so, and we were perfectly successful. It is not only 'sanctity' that has its odour!

In our travels through our own realm we can enjoy all the countless delights and beauties of it, together with

the happy converse of its inhabitants. Here in these dark lands all is bleak and desolate. The very low degree of light itself casts a blight upon the whole region. Occasionally we were able to catch a glimpse of the faces of some unfortunates as we passed along. Some were unmistakably evil, showing the life of vice they had led upon the earth; some revealed the miser, the avaricious, the 'brute beast'. There were people here from almost every walk of earthly life, from the present earthly time to far back in the centuries. And here was a connecting link with names that could be read in those truthful histories of nations in the library we visited in our own realm. Both Edwin and his friend told us that we should be appalled at the catalogue of names, well known in history, of people who were living deep down in these noxious regions—men who had perpetrated vile and wicked deeds in the name of holy religion, or for the furtherance of their own despicable, material ends. Many of these wretches were unapproachable, and they would remain so—perhaps for numberless more centuries—until, of their own wish and endeavour, they moved, however feebly, in the direction of the light of spiritual progression.

We could see, as we walked along, whole bands of seemingly demented souls passing on their way upon some prospective evil intent—if they could find their way to it. Their bodies presented the outward appearance of the most hideous and repulsive malformations and distortions, the absolute reflection of their evil minds. Many of them seemed old in years, but I was told that although such souls had been there perhaps for many centuries, it was not the passage of time that had so dealt with their faces, but their wicked minds.

In the higher spheres the beauty of mind rejuvenates the features, sweeps away the signs of earthly cares and troubles and sorrows, and presents to the eye that state of physical development which is at that period of our earthly lives which we used to call 'the prime of life'.

The multitudinous sounds that we heard were in keeping with the awful surroundings, from mad raucous laughter to

the shriek of some soul in torment—torment inflicted by others as bad as himself. Once or twice we were spoken to by some courageous souls who were down there upon their task of helping these afflicted mortals. They were glad to see us and to talk to us. In the darkness we could see them and they could see us, but we were all of us invisible to the rest, since we were provided with the same protection for the dark lands. In our case Edwin was taking care of us collectively as new-comers, but those whose work lies in rescue had each his own means of protection.

If any priest—or theologian—could have but one glimpse of the things that Edwin, Ruth, and I saw here, he would never say again, as long as he lived, that God, the Father of Love, could ever condemn any mortal to such horrors. The same priest, seeing these places, would not himself condemn anyone to them. Is he more kind and merciful than the Father of Love Himself? No! It is man alone who qualifies himself for the state of his existence after he passes into spirit.

The more we saw of the dark lands the more I realized how fantastic is the teaching of the orthodox church to which I belonged when on earth, that the place which is referred to as eternal hell is ruled over by a Prince of Darkness, whose sole aim is to get every soul into his clutches, and from whom there is no escape once a soul has entered his kingdom. Is there such an entity as the Prince of Darkness? There might conceivably be one soul infinitely worse than all the others, perhaps it will be said, and such as he could be considered as the very King of Evil. Edwin told us that there was no evidence whatever of such a personage. There were those from the upper spheres who had traversed every inch of the lower realms, and they had discovered no such being. There were also those whose knowledge was prodigious, and who positively affirmed that the existence of such a person had no foundation in fact. Doubtless there are many who, collectively, are a great deal more evil than their fellows in darkness. The idea that a King of Evil exists, whose direct function is to oppose the King of Heaven, is stupid; it is primitive

and even barbaric. The Devil as a solitary individual does not exist, but an evil soul might be called a devil, and in that case there are many, many devils. It is this fraternity, according to the teachings of one orthodox church, that constitutes the sole element of spirit return. We can afford to laugh at the absurdities of such teachings. It is no novelty for some wondrous and illustrious spirit to be called a devil! We still retain our sense of humour, and it causes us very great amusement, sometimes, to hear some stupid priest, spiritually blind, professing to know about things of the spirit of which, in reality, he is totally and completely ignorant. The spirit people have broad backs, and they can support the weight of such fallacious rubbish without experiencing anything but pity for such poor blind souls.

It is not my intention to go into further details of these dark spheres. At least, not at present. The church's method of frightening people is not the method of the spirit world. Rather would we dwell upon the beauties of the spirit world, and try to show something of the glories that await every soul when his earthly life is ended. It remains with every single soul individually whether this beautiful land shall be his lot sooner, or whether it shall be later.

We held a short consultation together, and decided that we should now like to return to our own realm. And so we made our way back to the land of mist, passed quickly through, and once again we were in our own heavenly country with the warm, balmy air enveloping us. Our new friend of the dark realms then left us after we had expressed our thanks for his kindly services. I then bethought me that it was high time I went to have a peep at my house, and so I asked Ruth and Edwin to join me, as I had no wish to be alone nor separated from their pleasant company. Ruth had not yet seen my home, but she had often wondered—so she said—what it would be like. And I thought that a little of the fruit from the garden would be most acceptable after our visit—short though it was—to the lower realms.

Everything in the house was in perfect order—as I left it to go upon our travels—as though there were someone

permanently looking after it. Ruth expressed her complete approval of all she saw, and congratulated me upon my choice of a home.

In reply to my query as to the invisible agency that was responsible for the good order of the house during my absence, Edwin answered me by himself asking the question: what is there to disturb the order of the house? There can be no dust, because there is no decay of any sort whatsoever. There can be no dirt, because here in spirit there is nothing to cause it. The household duties that are so very familiar and so very irksome on the earth-plane, are here non-existent. The necessity for providing the body with food was abandoned when we abandoned our physical body. The adornments of the home, such as the hangings and upholstery, do not ever need renewal, because they do not perish. They endure until we wish to dispense with them for something else. And so what remains that might require attention? We have, then, but to walk out of our houses, leaving all doors and windows open—our houses have no locks upon them! And we can return when we wish—to find that everything is as we left it. We might find some difference, some improvement. We might discover, for instance, that some friend had called while we were away, and had left some gift for us, some beautiful flowers, perhaps, or some other token of kindness. Otherwise we shall find that our house bids us welcome itself, and renews our feeling of 'being at home'.

Ruth had wandered all over the house by herself—we have no stupid formalities here, and I had asked her to make the whole house her own whenever she wished, and to do whatever she liked. The antique style of the architecture appealed to her artistic nature, and she revelled in the old wooden panelling and carvings—the latter being my own embellishments—of the past ages. She eventually came to my small library, and was interested to see my own works among the others upon the shelves. One book, in particular, she was attracted to, and was actually perusing it when I entered. The title alone revealed much to her, she said, and then I could feel her sweet

sympathy pouring out upon me, as she knew what was my great ambition, and she offered me all the help which she could give me in the future towards the realization of this ambition.

As soon as she had completed her inspection of the house, we foregathered in the sitting-room, and Ruth asked Edwin a question which I had been meaning to ask him myself for some time: Was there a sea somewhere? If there were lakes and streams, then, perhaps there was an ocean? Edwin's answer filled her with joy: Of course, there was a seaside—and a very beautiful one, too! Ruth insisted upon being conducted there at once, and, under Edwin's guidance, we set forth.

We were soon walking along a beautiful stretch of open country with the grass like a green velvet carpet beneath our feet. There were no trees, but there were many fine clumps of healthy-looking shrubs, and, of course, plenty of flowers growing everywhere. At length we arrived at some rising ground, and we felt that the sea must be beyond it. A short walk brought us to the edge of the grass-land, and then the most glorious panorama of ocean spread out before us.

The view was simply magnificent. Never had I expected to behold such sea. Its colouring was the most perfect reflection of the blue of the sky above, but in addition it reflected a myriad rainbow tints in every little wavelet. The surface of the water was calm, but this calmness by no means implies that the water was lifeless. There is no such thing as lifeless or stagnant water here. From where we were, I could see islands of some considerable size in the distance—*islands* that looked most attractive and must certainly be visited! Beneath us was a fine stretch of beach upon which we could see people seated at the water's edge—but there was no suggestion of over-crowding! And floating upon this superb sea, some close at hand—others standing a little way out, were the most beautiful boats—though I think I am not doing them full justice by calling them mere boats. Ships would be more apposite. I wondered who could own these fine vessels, and Edwin

told us that we could own one ourselves if we so wished. Many of the owners lived upon them, having no other home but their boat. It made no difference. There they could live always, for here it is perpetual summer.

A short walk down a pleasant winding path brought us to a sandy seashore. Edwin informed us that it was a tideless ocean, and that at no place was it very deep by comparison with terrestrial seas. Storms of wind being impossible here, the water was always smooth, and in common with all water in these realms, it was of a pleasantly warm temperature that could occasion no feelings of cold—or even chilliness—to bathers. It was, of course, perfectly buoyant, possessed no single harmful element or characteristic, but it was, on the contrary, life-sustaining. To bathe in its waters was to experience a perfect manifestation of spiritual force. The sand upon which we were walking had none of the unpleasant features associated with the seashore of the earth-plane. It was never tiring to walk on. Although it had every appearance of sand as we had always known it, yet to the tread it was firm in consistency although soft to the touch of the hand. In fact, this peculiar quality rendered it more like well-kept lawns to walk on, so closely did the grains hold together. We took some handfuls of the sand, and allowed it to run through our fingers, and great was our surprise to find that it lacked every trace of grittiness, but seemed to the touch more akin to some smooth, soft powder. Yet examined closely it was undeniably solid. It was one of the strangest phenomena we had met so far. Edwin said that that was because we had, in this particular instance, carried out a more minute examination of what we were beholding than we had done hitherto in other things. He added that if we chose to make a close scrutiny of all that we saw, whether it be the ground we walked on, the substance of which our houses were made, or the thousand and one other objects that go to make up the world of spirit, we should be living in a state of continual surprise, and there would be revealed to us some small idea—but only a very small idea—of the magnitude of the

Great Mind—the Greatest Mind in the Universe—that upholds this and every other world. Indeed, the great scientists of the earth-plane find, when they come to live in the spirit world, that they have a completely new world upon which to commence a fresh course of investigations. They begin *de novo* as it were, but with all their great earthly experience behind them. And what joy it brings them, in company with their scientific colleagues, to probe the mysteries of the spirit world, to collect their data, to compare their new knowledge with the old, to record for the benefit of others the results of their investigations and discoveries. And all through they have the unlimited resources of the spirit world upon which to draw. And joy is in their hearts.

Our little experiment with the sand led us to place our hands in the sea. Ruth fully expected it to taste of salt, but it did not, much to her surprise. As far as I could observe, it had no taste at all! It was sea more by virtue of its great area and the characteristics of the adjacent land than anything else. In all other respects it resembled the water of the brooks and lakes. In general appearance the whole effect was totally unlike the earthly ocean, due, among other things, to the fact that there was no sun to give its light from one quarter only and to cause that change of aspect when the direction of the sunlight changes. The overspreading of light from the great central source of light in the spirit world, constant and unmoving, gives us perpetual day, but it must never be assumed that this constancy and immobility of light means a monotonous and unchanging land—or seascape. There are changes going on the whole time; changes of colour such as man never dreamt of—until he comes to the spirit world. The eyes of the spirit person can see so many beautiful things in the world of spirit that the eyes of incarnate man cannot see—unless he be gifted with the psychic eye.

We wanted very much to visit one of the islands that we could see in the distance, but Ruth felt that it would be a nice experience to travel over the sea in one of the fine vessels that were close to the shore. But the difficulty arose

—that is, it seemed as though it might arise!—as to the boat. If, as I understood, these were 'privately' owned, we should first have to become acquainted with one of the owners. Edwin, however, could see how Ruth was so longing to go upon the water that he soon explained the exact position—to her unbounded joy.

It seemed that one of these elegant boats belonged to a friend of his, but had it been otherwise we should have found that we would be welcome to go aboard any one of them, introducing ourselves—if we wished to observe that formality, though it was unnecessary—to whomsoever we found on board. Had we not already received, wherever we went, that friendly reception and assurance that we were welcome? Then why should there be any departure, in the case of the boats of the sea, from the fundamental rule of hospitality that operates in the spirit world? Edwin drew our attention to a very beautiful yacht that was riding 'at anchor' close to the shore. From where we were she had all the appearance of having had much attention devoted to her—our opinion was afterwards confirmed. She was built on the most graceful lines, and the grand upward sweep of her bows held the promise of power and speed. She looked much the same as an earthly yacht, that is, *externally*.

Edwin sent a message across to the owner, and in reply received an instantaneous invitation to us all. We therefore wasted no time, and we found ourselves upon the deck of this most handsome vessel, being greeted with great good cheer by our host, who immediately took us off to present us to his wife. She was very charming, and it was obvious to see that the two made a perfect couple. Our host could see that Ruth and I were both very keen to see over the boat, and knowing from Edwin that we had not been long in spirit, he was so much the more pleased to do so.

Our first observations at close hand showed us that many devices and fittings that are essential to earthly ships were here absent. That indispensable adjunct, an anchor, for instance. There being no winds, tides, or currents in

spirit waters, an anchor becomes superfluous, though we were told that some boat-owners have them merely as an ornament and because they did not feel their vessels would be complete without them. There was unlimited space on deck, with a copious provision of very comfortable-looking chairs. Below deck were well-appointed saloons and lounges. Ruth, I could see, was disappointed because she could see no evidence whatever of any motive power to drive the vessel, and she naturally concluded that the yacht was incapable of independent movement. I shared her disappointment, but Edwin had a merry twinkle in his eye which ought to have told me that things are not always what they seem to be in the spirit world. Our host had received our thoughts, and he immediately took us up into the wheelhouse. What was our astonishment when we saw that we were slowly and gently moving away from the shore! The others laughed merrily at our bewilderment, and we both ran to the side to watch our progress through the water. There was no mistake about it, we were really on the move, and gathering speed as we went. We returned at once to the wheel-house, and demanded an instant explanation of this apparent wizardry.

X. A Visitation

Our host told us that the power of thought is almost unlimited in the spirit world, and that the greater the power of any particular effort or concentration of thought the greater the results. Our means of personal locomotion here is by thought, and we can apply that same means to what the earth world would call 'inanimate objects'. Of course, in the spirit world nothing is inanimate, and because of this, then our thoughts can have a direct influence upon all the countless things of which the world of spirit is composed. Ships are meant to float and move upon the waters;

they are animated by the living force that animates all things here, and if we wish to move them over the water we have but to focus our thoughts in that direction and with that intention, and our thoughts produce the desired result of movement. We could, if we wished, call upon our scientific friends to provide us with splendid machinery to supply the motive power, and they would be only too pleased to oblige us. But we should have to focus our thoughts upon the machinery to make it generate the necessary driving force. Why, then, go this long way round to produce the same result, when we can do so directly and just as efficiently?

But it must not be concluded that anyone can move a boat through the water merely by thinking that it shall do so. It requires, like so many other things, the requisite knowledge, its application upon well-ordered lines, and practice in the art. A natural aptitude greatly helps in these matters, and our host told us that he mastered the subject in a very short time. Once the ability has been gained, it gives one, so he said, a most satisfying feeling of power rightly applied, and not only of power, but the power of thought, in a way that is not perhaps possible in some other ways. Perfect as the movement of ourselves can be through the realms, yet the movement of such a large object as a boat, simply and easily, magnifies the wonder of the whole of spirit life. Our host explained that this was only his own point of view, and was not to be taken as an axiom. His enthusiasm was increased by his enthusiasm for the water and a love of ships.

We noticed that he guided the boat in the usual manner, with a rudder operated by the wheel in the deck-house. That, he said, was because he found it sufficient work to provide the movement of the boat. In time, if he wished, he could combine the two actions in one. But he much preferred to use the old method of steering by hand as it gave him physical work to do, which was, in itself, such a pleasure. Once having given motion to the ship, he could forget about it until he wished to stop. And the mere wishing to stop, however suddenly or gradually, brought the

vessel to a standstill. There was no fear of accidents! They do not—cannot—exist in these realms.

All the while our host was explaining these matters to Ruth and me—Edwin was busily engaged in conversation with our host's wife—our speed had increased to a steady rate, and we were moving in the direction of one of the islands. The yacht was travelling through the sea with the most perfect, steady motion. There was no vibration, naturally, from any machinery, but the very movement through the water could be perceptibly felt, while the sounds from the gentle waves as the boat cut along made the loveliest musical notes and harmonies as the many colours of the disturbed water changed their tints and blends. We observed that in our wake the water quickly settled into its former state, leaving no appearance of our having passed through it. Our host handled his craft skilfully, and by increasing or diminishing its speed he could create, by the different degree of movement of the water, the most striking alternations of colour and musical sound, the brilliant scintillations of the sea showing how alive it was. It responded to the boat's every movement as though they were in complete unison—as indeed they were.

Ruth was simply ecstatic in her enjoyment, and ran to our host's wife in the full ardour of her new experience. The latter, who fully appreciated her young friend's feelings, was just as enthusiastic. Although it was no novelty, in the sense of a first experience, she said she could never cease to marvel, however familiar she should become with her ship-home, at the glorious dispensation that provided such beauties and pleasures for the dwellers in spirit lands.

We had by now approached sufficiently near to the island to be able to view it quite well, and the boat turned in her course and followed the coast-line. After continuing along in this fashion for a little while, we sailed into a small bay which formed a picturesque natural harbour.

The island certainly came up to our expectations in its scenic beauty. There were not many dwellings upon it; those that were to be seen were more summer-houses than

anything else. But the great feature of the place was the number of trees, none of them very tall, but all were of particularly vigorous growth. And in the branches we could see scores of the most wonderful birds, whose plumage presented a riot of colour. Some of the birds were flying about, others—the larger variety—were walking majestically along the ground. But all of them were unafraid of us. They walked with us as we strolled along, and when we held up our hands, some small bird would be sure to perch upon our fingers. They seemed to know us, to know that any harm coming to them was an utter impossibility. They did not require to make a constant search for food nor exercise a perpetual vigilance against what on earth would be their natural enemies. They were, like ourselves, part of the eternal world of spirit, enjoying in their way, as we do in ours, their eternal life. Their very existence there was just another of those thousands of things that are given to us for our delight.

The birds which had the most gorgeous plumage were evidently of the kind that live in the tropical parts of the earth-plane, and which are never seen by the eye of man until he comes to the spirit world. By the perfect adjustment of temperature they were able to live in comfort with those of less spectacular appearance. And all the while they were singing and twittering in a symphony of sound. It was never wearying, in spite of the quantity of sound that was going on, because in some extraordinary fashion the musical sounds blended with each other. Neither were they piercing in quality despite the fact that many of the small birds' songs were themselves high-pitched. But it was their trusting friendliness that was so delightful by comparison with the earthly birds, whose life there takes them into another world almost. Here we were part of the same free world, and the understanding between the birds and ourselves was reciprocal. When we spoke to them we felt that they knew just what we were saying, and in some subtle way we seemed to know just what *their* thoughts were. To call to any particular bird meant that that bird understood, and it came to us.

Our friends, of course, had encountered all this before, but to Ruth and me it was a new and very wonderful experience. And the thought came to me that had I really considered the matter, and perhaps used my mind a little more, I might have known that we should eventually see something of this sort. For why, I asked myself, should the Great Father of Heaven create all the beautiful birds solely for the earth-plane?—and make them to live in places that are frequently quite inaccessible to man, where he can never see them and enjoy them? And even those that he *can* see and enjoy—are they to perish for ever? Would the far greater world of spirit be denied the beautiful things that are given to the earth world? Here was the answer before and around us. It is in the conceit and self-importance of man that he should think that beauty is expressly created for *his* pleasure while on earth. Incarnate man thinks he has the monopoly of beauty. When he becomes discarnate he eventually wakes up to the fact that he has never really seen *how great* beauty can be, and he becomes silent and humble, perhaps for the first time in his life! It is a salutary lesson, the awakening in spirit, believe me, my dear friend—with many a shock to accompany it.

The perfect blaze of colour from all the birds we could see about us was almost too much for us to take in at one visit. They were beyond description, and I shall not even attempt it. We strolled on through delightful groves, past the musical murmuring of the many brooks, through glades of velvet grass, as in an absolute fairyland of nature. We met people on the way, who called a greeting to us, or waved their hands. They were all happy among the birds. We were told that this part of the island was exclusive to the birds, and that no other form of animal life intruded upon them. Not that there was any fear or danger that they would come to harm, because that would be impossible, but because the birds were happier with their own kind.

We eventually returned to the boat, and put to sea again. We were interested to discover whence our host had

acquired his floating home. Such an intricate piece of building would require experts, most surely, to plan it, and others to build it. He told us that a boat was evolved under precisely the same conditions as our spirit houses, or any other buildings. A prerequisite is that we must earn the right to possess it. That we understood. What, then, of the many people in spirit who on earth designed and built boats of every description, either as a means of livelihood or as a form of recreation? Would the latter, particularly, abandon such pleasure when they could continue in their handicraft? Here they have the means and the motive to carry on with their task, whether it be for work or for pleasure. And it can be said that though many build their boats for the pleasure of doing so, yet they give great pleasure to many others who have a fondness for the sea and ships. Their pleasure becomes their work, and their work is pleasure.

The task of actually constructing a craft is highly technical, and the methods of the spirit world, so entirely different from those of the earth-plane, have to be mastered. Although we must earn the right to possess in the spirit world, we have the aid of our friends in the actual building. We can form in our minds, when on earth, the shape of something we long to have—a garden, a home, or whatever it may be. It will then be a thought-form, and will be converted from that into actual spirit substance by the help of experts.

Our return was as delightful as our outward journey. When we drew into the land again, our host extended a permanent invitation to us to visit them on board whenever we wished, and enjoy with them all the recreation of sailing on the sea.

As we walked along the sandy beach Edwin recalled to our minds the great building in the centre of the city, by telling us that very shortly there would be a visitation from a being of the higher realms, and for which many would be foregathering in the domed temple. Would we care to join him? It was not in any sense to be considered a specific act of worship for which this personage was

visiting the realm. Such things as worship do not require conscious effort (they come spontaneously from the heart), but our visitant would bring with him not only his own radiance, but the radiance of the heavenly sphere which he graced. We at once expressed our eagerness to go with him, as we both felt that we would not have ventured there alone, since we had all along been under Edwin's guidance.

As we walked down the broad avenue of trees and gardens, we formed part of a great concourse of people who were all proceeding in the same direction, and obviously for the same purpose. Strange to say, that although we were among so many people, yet we never experienced the feeling, so common on earth, of being amongst a large crowd. It was an extraordinary feeling, which Ruth shared with me. We supposed that we had expected our old earthly sensations would have overcome us; the fear that in such an immense assembly of people there would be something of the confusion that one is accustomed to on the earth-plane; the jostling and the noise, and above all the sense of time passing, when our enjoyment would be over and passed. To have such ideas as these was quite ridiculous, and Ruth and I laughed at ourselves—as did Edwin—for expressing such notions, or entertaining them for an instant. We felt—because we knew—that everything was in perfect order; that everyone knew what to do or where to go; that there was no question of another's superiority over ourselves for reasons of privilege. We felt that we were expected for the support we should give, and that a personal welcome was waiting for us. Was not this sufficient to banish all feelings of discomfort or uneasiness?

There was, moreover, a unity of mind among us that is not possible on the earth-plane even with those of the same religious beliefs. What earthly religion is there where all its adherents are entirely of one mind? There is none. It has been thought essential on earth that to offer up thanks and worship to the Supreme Being there must be a complexity of ritual and formularies and ceremonies, with creeds and dogmas and strange beliefs, over which

there is as much diversity of views as there are numbers of different religions.

It may be said that I have already told of the establishment of communities of those same religions here in the spirit world, so that the spirit world is in no better case than the earth world. When the earth world becomes really enlightened these communities here will disappear. It is the blindness and stupidity of the earth world that causes them to be here at all. They are given tolerance, and they must exercise tolerance themselves, otherwise they would be swept away. They must never attempt to influence or coerce any soul into believing any of their erroneous doctrines. They must confine themselves strictly to themselves, but they are perfectly and absolutely free to practice their own false religion among themselves. The truth awaits them on the threshold of their churches as they leave their places of worship, not when they have entered. When a soul at length perceives the futility of his particular and peculiar religious beliefs he quickly dissociates himself from them, and in full freedom and complete truth—which has no creeds nor ecclesiastical commandments—he offers up his thoughts to his Heavenly Father just as they flow from his mind, free and unaffected, stripped of all jargon, simple and heartfelt.

But we have our temples where we can receive the great messengers from the highest realms, fitting places to receive the Father's representatives, and where such messengers can send our united thanks and our petitions to the Great Source of all. We do not worship blindly as on earth.

As we drew close to the temple we could already feel ourselves being, as it were, charged with spiritual force. Edwin told us that this was always the case because of the immense power, brought by the higher visitants, which remained undiminished within a wide circle of the temple. It was for this reason that the temple stood completely isolated, with no other buildings near it. Gardens alone surrounded it—a great sea of flowers, extending, it almost seemed, as far as the eye could see, and presenting such a galaxy of brilliant colour, in great banks and masses, as

the earth could never contemplate. And arising from all this were the most heavenly sounds of music and the most delicate perfumes, the effect upon us being that of pure exaltation of the spirit. We felt that we were lifted up above ourselves right out into another realm.

The building itself was magnificent. It was stately; it was grand; it was an inspiration in itself. It appeared to be made of the finest crystal, but it was not transparent. Massive pillars were polished until they shone like the sun, while every carving flashed its brilliant colours until the whole edifice was a temple of light. Never did I think such scintillations possible, for not only did the surfaces reflect the light in the ordinary way, but they gave out a light of their own that could be felt spiritually.

Edwin took us to some seats which we knew to be our own—we had that feeling of familiarity with them as one does with a favourite chair at home.

Above us was the great dome of exquisitely wrought gold, which reflected the hundreds of colours that shone from the rest of the building. But the focus of all attention was upon the marble sanctuary—which word I must use for want of a better—at the end of the temple. It had a shallow balustrade with a central opening at the head of a flight of steps leading down on to the floor. We could hear the sounds of music, but whence it came I knew not, because there was no sign of any musicians. The music was evidently provided by a large orchestra—of strings only, for there were no sounds of the other instruments of the orchestra.

The sanctuary, which was of spacious dimensions, was filled with many beings from higher realms, with the exception of a space in the centre, which I guessed was reserved for our visitant. We were all of us seated, and we conversed quietly amongst ourselves. Presently we were aware of the presence of a stately figure of a man with jet-black hair, who was closely followed—very much to my surprise—by the kindly Egyptian whom we had met in Edwin's house on the boundary of our realm. To those who had already witnessed such visitations, their arrival

was at once the indication of the coming of the high personage, and we all accordingly rose to our feet. Then, before our eyes, there appeared first a light, which might almost be described as dazzling, but as we concentrated our gaze upon it we immediately became attuned to it, and we felt no sensation of spiritual discomfort. In point of fact—as I discovered later—the light really became attuned to us; that is to say, it was toned down to accord with ourselves and our realm. It grew in shade to a golden hue upon the extremities, gradually brightening towards the centre. And in the centre there slowly took shape the form of our visitant. As it gained in density we could see that he was a man whose appearance was that of youth—spiritual youth—but we knew that he carried with him to an unimaginable degree the three comprehensive and all-sufficing attributes of Wisdom, Knowledge, and Purity. His countenance shone with transcendental beauty; his hair was of gold, while round his head was a lustrous diadem. His raiment was of the most gossamer-like quality, and it consisted of a pure white robe bordered with a deep band of gold, while from his shoulders there depended a mantle of the richest cerulean blue, which was fastened upon his breast with a great pink pearl. His movements were majestic as he raised his arms and sent forth a blessing upon us all. We remained standing and silent while our thoughts ascended to Him Who sent us such a glorious being. We sent our thanks and we sent our petitions. For myself, I had one boon to ask, and I asked for it.

It is not possible for me to convey to you one fraction of the exaltation of the spirit that I felt while in the presence, though distant, of this heavenly guest. But I do know that not for long could I have remained in that temple while he was there without undergoing the almost crushing consciousness that I was low, very, very low upon the scale of spiritual evolution and progression. And yet I knew that he was sending out to me, as to us all, thoughts of encouragement, of good hope, of kindness in the very highest degree, that made me feel that I must never, never despair

of attaining to the highest spiritual realm, and that there was good and useful work ready for me to do in the service of man, and that in the doing whereof I would have the whole of the spiritual realms behind me—as they are behind every single soul who works in the service of man.

With a final benediction upon us, this resplendent and truly regal being was gone from our sight.

We remained seated for a while, and gradually the temple began to empty. I had no inclination to move, and Edwin told us we could stay there as long as we wished. The building was, therefore, practically empty when I saw the figure of the Egyptian approaching us. He greeted us warmly, and asked me if I would be good enough to go with him, as he wished to introduce me to his 'master'. I thanked him for his continued interest in me, and what was my astonishment when he led me into the presence of the man with whom he had entered the sanctuary. I had only been able to see him from my seat, but close to I could see that a pair of dark sparkling eyes matched his raven hair, which was made the more pronounced by the slight paleness of his complexion. The colours of his attire were blue, white, and gold, and although these were of a very high order, they were not of such intensity as were those of the principal visitor. I had the impression that I was in the presence of a wise man—which indeed he was—and of a man with a great sense of fun and humour. (It must be ever remembered that fun and humour are not, and never will be, the sole prerogative of inhabitants of the earth-plane, however much they may like to claim a monopoly of them, and however much they may like to deny us our lighthearted merriment. We shall continue to laugh in spite of their possible disapproval!)

The kind Egyptian presented me to his master, and the latter took me by the hand and smiled upon me in such a manner as to take away, completely, any feelings of diffidence that I had. In fact, he simply diffused assurance in one's self, and he placed one perfectly at ease. One would, without disrespect, call him the perfect host. When he spoke to me his voice was beautifully modulated, soft

in tone, and so very kindly. His words to me filled me with joy even as they left me filled with wonder: 'My beloved master,' he said, 'whom you have just seen, bids me tell you that your prayer is answered, and that you shall have your desire. Fear not, for promises that are made here are always fulfilled.' Then he told me that I should be asked to wait for a period before the fulfilment, because it was necessary that a chain of events should take place before the right circumstances were brought about in which my desires should find fruition. The time would soon pass, he said, and I could, meanwhile, carry on with my intended work with my friends. If at any time I wished for advice my good Edwin would always be able to call upon our Egyptian friend, whose guidance was ever at my service. Then he gave me his blessing, and I found myself alone. Alone with my thoughts, and with the abiding memory and the celestial fragrance of our transplendent visitants.

I rejoined Edwin and Ruth, and told them of my happiness. They were both overjoyed at my great good news which had come from so exalted a source. I felt now that I would like to return to my house, and I asked Edwin and Ruth if they would accompany me. Thither we repaired, and we walked straight into my library. Upon one of the shelves was a particular book written by myself when upon the earth-plane, and which I wished that I had never written. I removed the book that was immediately next to it, leaving the space unoccupied. According to my answered prayer I should fill that space with another book, written after I had come to spirit, the product of my mind when I had seen the truth.

And linking arms together, we all three walked out into the garden—and into the heavenly sunshine of eternity.

Epilogue

My explorations and excursions in company with my good friends Edwin and Ruth ended, for the time being, after our first visit to the temple. I have given you a record of my experiences commencing from the moment before my passing into spirit, together with some observations upon the process of passing as it occurred to me. And I have attempted to sketch for you an outline—the merest outline—of this realm in which I am now living.

Some there are, assuredly, who will totally disagree with what I have described. They will assert that the land of which I am a happy inhabitant is far too worldly, far too material. Then I make answer that we prefer it so—we, who are the spirit people, who live in this land, prefer it so. I would not exchange it—nor would any of us here—for any of the fancy conceptions of the 'hereafter'.

Man, when he is on earth, is so *very* superior. When he comes into spirit lands he is often glad to have some unassuming soul take him by the hand, as one would a tiny child, to show him the elementary things of the new life. I cannot, and I will not, alter one word of what I have said, because I have spoken the truth.

The death of the physical body should never be made into a mournful business, nor should the contemplation of a world of spirit be looked upon as evidence of a morbid mind.

I once employed the term 'necromancers' to those patient souls on earth who forgather for the purpose of allowing us to speak to them. It is a bad word, and I repudiate it utterly. The evocation of the so-called dead is an utter impossibility. We come only of our own free will, and there is no power on earth that can *force* us to come. We come because we wish to come. 'Calling up the dead' is a stupid fiction. Again we have signs of incarnate man's self-estimation. As 'dead' people we are vastly inferior, and we are therefore at everyone's beck and call, among those upon the earth-plane, who may wish to 'call us up'!

It may be remarked that I have made no mention of having met those of my relatives and friends who have passed into spirit—other than Edwin—since my arrival in the spirit lands. In point of fact, I have met them all, and we continue to meet. And many are the happy occasions we have had, and are having, together. I have omitted all such reference because I wished this to have no resemblance to a family chronicle.

The time—in an earthly sense—has passed, and I have had my promise fulfilled to the letter. During my period of waiting for that event, I have worked with my two companions, Edwin and Ruth. The three of us have laboured in harmony and complete accord, and we hope to work together for a long time yet. Many are the kind friends who have helped towards the achievement of my wish, and in blessing them, I would say also to you: *Benedicite omnipotens Deus.*

