
BALTHAZAR THE MAGUS

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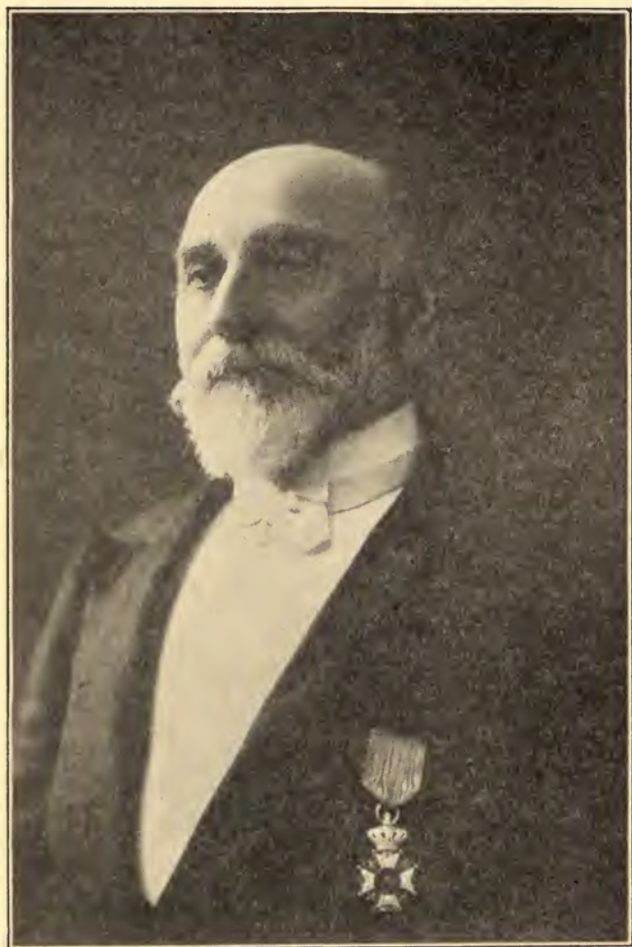
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Balthazar, the Magus

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A. VAN DER NAILLEN.

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CHAPTER I.

MARIUS, as the closing chapter of "In the Sanctuary" relates, had been selected, of all Americans, as the most worthy to receive the highest honor the Order of the Magi can confer. He was consecrated Magus, under the name of Balthazar, and to him was entrusted the building of sanctuaries, and the founding of monasteries, or places of retreat, in which novices and neophytes, destined to the priesthood of the Order, might spend this period of preparation. The wide scope of his mission, and the sublimity of its nature, aroused and impassioned him; his field of action included the American as well as the European continent, but his zeal and sympathy rivaled his responsibilities. Exercising to the full the power with which he was invested, he devoted more than a year of travel to the study of religious rites and spiritual conditions in the various countries of the two hemispheres. He went in person to all places where the pernicious influence of discordant vibrations prevented him from projecting the supersensitive waves of his higher consciousness.

The result of these studies was both alarming and consoling. Balthazar observed, with acute distress, the dense and somber odic atmosphere that enveloped every large city, like a funeral shroud; it revealed a deplorable moral degradation, conglomerated of the hatred existing between rich and poor, the corruption of public affairs, the sensuality of the masses, and the subtler, though no less degrading, vices of the higher classes. In the absence of any true religious belief, and the consequent lack of high ideals, egotism and pride reigned in undisturbed arrogance to the perpetuation of social misery. On the other hand, however, he distinguished, threading the somber haze like golden veins, a vast number of luminous radiations, which finally united in a vaporous mass, radiant as sun-steeped clouds. These luminous regions constituted the reservoirs of the Ideal:—the highest and noblest thoughts of the human race. At the same time, in America, a psychic cloud emitting golden radiations, was seen slowly moving from East to West, while, in Europe, an equally luminous vapor formed over many large cities. The Magus saw that these psychic waves reached every brain whose cells were sensitized to the influence of odic forces,—but, with widely differing results. By far the greater number of students of psychic science pursued the study of the mighty energies latent in man only in the hope of producing astonishing occult phenomena. Others, however,—favored by harmonic conditions, their spiritual faculties heightened by meditation,—had

arrived at a perception of the superior forces in Nature. Casting off the trammels of over-conscious personality, they were seriously endeavoring to reach "the Source of all Force." Spurred by the hope of one day attaining a comprehension of divine things, they sought, by assiduous study, holy living, and the constant subduing of all earthly passions, to become equal to the task of establishing a universal synthesis, which would bring into relation the hazy elements constituting the body of modern science and the elements of religious belief, showing them to be the temporary separated parts of one harmonious and sublime Unity. There were those, less developed, who sought, in the manifestations of an inferior Spiritism, merely personal objects or material favors. Of these, Balthazar took only superficial note, for he knew that, sooner or later, the certainty of their discoveries would encourage them to climb the greater height of spiritual knowledge.

In the course of his travels, Marius, now the Magus Balthazar, had met many souls whose degree of development gave him great satisfaction. His high office made him generally known to Occultists, and he was everywhere regarded with respect and veneration. Many wrote to him for spiritual aid, some asking to be enlightened as to the right path, others to be shown that "peace of soul" they had failed to find in purely positive and intellectual studies. Some particularly earnest seekers, desired to receive instruction from his lips, and were ready

to make any sacrifice to compass this favor. To his deep regret, Balthazar found it impossible to respond to these numerous demands. Nevertheless, he soon recognized that, to some degree, he must satisfy the urgent appeals of the many suppliant souls asking for his spiritual assistance.

In a large city, not far from the sea, he purchased a commodious building, situated in an extensive park surrounded by high walls. In this park he erected several villas and a sanctuary, easy of access to all. A gallery connected this sanctuary with the apartments of Balthazar. The interior of the sanctuary was adorned with emblems of the Order of the Magi: on the altar a tabernacle was built, in which were kept the sacred vessels entrusted to Balthazar on the day of his consecration as Magus. Upon the tabernacle stood a statue of the "Virgin of the World"—the "Divine Sophia." Her face was illuminated with an expression of infinite love, the love she has ever abundantly bestowed upon humanity, thereby revealing her divine origin. Her extended arms were a constant invitation to mankind to come to her that she might envelop them with the radiance that gives knowledge of divine things, for the heavenly Sophia is the dispenser, nearest to humanity, of the first radiations of the Spirit. The Order of the Magi holds that the Spiritual Sun of the Universe, as well as the lowest atom of matter is polarized. Parabrahm, the Infinite, the Eternal, constitutes the positive pole of the Spiritual Sun. He is Omnipotence, Omniscience,

Wisdom and absolute justice. He is represented by the "All-seeing Eye," surrounded by an equilateral triangle. His comprehension is boundless, and, in His eternal equity, all things are of equal import.

The negative pole of the Spiritual Sun represents the side of the emotions, the affections, soul-affinities—sympathy, pure love, union and harmony, all crowned by divine wisdom. The emblem of this negative pole of the Spiritual Sun is a woman to whom the name of Sophia has been given by order of the Most High: she is surnamed the "Virgin of the World," the bride of the Eternal, and is the divinely appointed Depository of the tenderest affections, the sublimest emotions of the heart. At the feet of this Virgin of the World, this personification of the purest sentiments and affections, the novice prostrates himself in prayer. He addresses her as a mother: he knows that to her he may open his heart and confess all its weaknesses: he may unveil his failures, lay bare his agonies before the divine Dispensatrix, confident that his sufferings and his prayers will be alike tenderly considered, that a mother's heart will judge him, and a mother's love will lavish upon him consolation and encouragement.

Sophia is the Dispensatrix of the first radiations of Spirituality, of the light that illumines all souls. In this radiance she envelops all those who seek her refuge: to her especially do the novices of the Order of the Magi direct their prayers, knowing that every true prayer addressed to the Mother will be answered.

One morning, as Balthazar was seated on the veranda of his new residence, his servant announced that a visitor requested an opportunity to disclose a communication of importance. The Magus went at once to meet the newcomer and found himself face to face with a stranger whose aura affected him most favorably. Balthazar recognized in him a positive character, a noble and beautiful soul, darkened, however, by discouragement that seemed to originate in some hidden sorrow. The Magus was never deceived in these psychic first impressions. He next observed the appearance of his visitor. There stood before him a man, possibly, thirty-five years of age, of large stature: the full, meditative forehead, the commanding aquiline nose, and the luxuriant hair of ebony blackness, spoke of virility and leadership: but from the beautiful eyes of the stranger radiated a gentleness that softened and chastened his entire countenance. His features, in fine, showed both strength and sympathy, a forceful domination of self, yet a tendency toward resignation almost accentuated to sadness. Such a face, in the contemplation of divine things, could become radiant with angelic sweetness. Assuredly this was no ordinary visitor: the dignity of his carriage, the air of scholarly intelligence, betokened his rare distinction.

The impression made upon the stranger by the Magus was equally profound. When Balthazar appeared at the door of the salon, he was preceded by a powerful auric radiation, attesting the height of spirituality to which he had attained. This radiation

gradually acted upon the visitor, inspiring him with profound reverence. He was convinced that the person who exerted such an intense influence upon him must be superior to ordinary men and endowed with powers beyond their comprehension. Here was a being to whom might be entrusted the most sacred and delicate confidences—by him they would be truly understood and appreciated. In this man he should find a sympathetic counselor, fully competent to elucidate the mighty spiritual and moral problems with which his brain was vexed.

A mutual feeling of confidence and sympathy resulted from these favorable impressions. The visitor bowed low before the Magus, in deep respect, but with the courtly ease and dignity that reveal the heritage of a noble race. The Magus extended his hand in affectionate greeting. Entering at once into conversation, the visitor made known his object.

“Marius” he began “permit me to call you thus, for under this name the world knows you, I am aware that you have been invested with the high rank of Magus. I know the importance of this, I realize the learning, the wisdom, and the great power that has brought you this distinction. For this reason, I am determined to ask your advice and guidance. My soul is torn by doubt, it can find no solace in the contradictions of religious doctrine. Will you enlighten me, will you aid my spiritual aspirations? Will you give me the assistance of your vast knowledge and dispel the uncertainty that distresses me?”

The peculiar softness of the stranger's voice and

its musical intonations harmonized completely with the gentle expression of his eyes. The Magus noted with satisfaction the shapely hands and tapering fingers, the easy and dignified gestures, the gracious smile disclosing teeth of perfect whiteness. An ardent sympathy emanated from the man's whole being, and Balthazar felt himself profoundly impressed by his visitor's personality.

"Judging from your garb," said Balthazar, "you are consecrated to priestly duties. Do not those functions satisfy the aspirations of your soul? Speak, my son. You have come here in all sincerity, and, if it lies within my power to bring you peace, and conviction, my desire is to help you."

"Venerable Master, you have judged aright. My life is consecrated to the service of God. From my childhood I have been devoted to prayer. My parents were deeply religious: probably, from them I inherit the yearning after the things of the spirit, which is a fundamental part of my nature. My mother had a small altar erected in my room; every night and every morning, kneeling before it my last and first waking thoughts were given to God. The sight of me, before the altar, my hands folded, my lips moving in prayer, my eyes fixed on the crucified Saviour gave my mother the greatest happiness. She frequently said that the reflection of some sacred light seemed to envelop me: and, at such times, her own prayers increased in fervor, and she would implore of Heaven that her child, kneeling in that divine radiance, might be consecrated to religion,

and remain forever a faithful servant of the Lord. As you see, my childhood was passed under the most noble influences. Later, during my years of study, I was animated by a desire to follow the example of the Divine Master, to do good to all, to love and serve humanity. At the age of twenty-three, I was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. During the ceremonies of my consecration, it seemed to me that the Heavens opened, and that a light came from on high to envelop me. For several years, I was happy : but, imperceptibly the conviction was forced upon me that the majority of priests lacked the fervor of their office. By degrees the fear seized me that I too might some day fall into a state of religious indifference, such as I had seen in many of my brethren, an indifference engendered, I believe, by the daily repetition of the same invariable acts and ceremonies. These in time become devoid of interest, and degenerate into routine ; the higher aspirations of the soul are allowed to starve. When I finally perceived that many of these priests were frankly Epicureans (expert judges of cookery and wine), I became thoroughly alarmed. Wishing to spare my soul these perils and humiliations, and determined to give its spiritual aspiration toward the divine principle full and entire satisfaction, I decided to petition for admission into a noted religious Order. I was well aware that this Order demanded of its members diligent and profound study, and I purposed, by this means, to acquire knowledge, so varied and important that it

deeming necessary the tortures and executions of the Spanish Inquisition and the infamous Torquemada ; and to my profound astonishment and grief I discovered, on the same shelves, recent works of our modern and most trustworthy authorities setting forth the many similar atrocities and tortures inflicted, in the name of Almighty God, by sundry religious organizations. For instance, Luther held that the Anabaptists ought to be burned ; and declared all measures lawful against Catholics. Calvin burned Servetus alive for denying the Trinity. In England the history of the penal laws of Henry VIII, Elizabeth, Edward VI, Charles I, Cromwell, Charles II, is a history of fines, imprisonment, banishment, torture and death for the practise of the Catholic religion. The Scotch Parliament of 1560 decreed death to all Catholics.

“Yes, my son,” said the Magus “the greatest crimes inflicted upon poor humanity in all ages past and present, have been committed in the name of the two most sacred ideals placed before man : *God* and *Country*. It is consoling, however, to think that as evolution progresses, these atrocities will be abandoned, outgrown—for they are at present condemned by all people of intelligence and heart.

How great was my surprise also to find on other shelves all the noted works of the 19th century, setting forth the principles of the most exclusive Positivism, and the philosophical systems of all schools—Materialism, Agnosticism, Rationalism, Naturalism, even radical treatises on Atheism ! I expressed my

astonishment to the Father Librarian : he replied, with reason, that as our Order claimed to possess the finest intelligence in the world, it was necessary that its members should be acquainted with standard works on all subjects, especially with any new philosophical or religious thesis. "Only by taking notice," he said, judiciously, "of all the arguments arrayed against the Catholic Church, can we hope to successfully defend her."

There were also works of a truly celestial Mysticism, describing marvelous flight of soul ; these exalted my whole being and caused a vibration of spirit such as I had never before experienced. In my sleep, I dreamed of supersensitive regions where the loftiest thoughts find a natural dwelling-place : in these regions all was harmony, joy and happiness. There the highest spiritual aspirations could unfold, and the soul take its flight into illimitable space, ever impelled to rise higher and higher towards greater celestial zones.

Among the works of the Fathers of the earliest Christian Centuries, I passed my happiest hours : they were truly apostolic, they lived in God, and the earth seemed for them scarcely to exist, To contemplate the Supreme Being in His glory, to live with Him, for Him, and in Him, was their constant aspiration, the sole aim of their existence ! What heavenly visions ! Alas ! my happiness was not destined to long duration.

The Superior of our Order undoubtedly looked upon me as a man of promise, who might be of

future benefit to the Order. He frequently conversed with me, even in my room, and in the consideration which he constantly showed me, I fancied I discerned a shade of affection, at least, of sympathy. This astonished me more than a little, for in our Order it said, "Emotion is a sign of weakness," and it is always suppressed and conquered. In these intimate conversations the Superior gave me to understand that my future in the Order would be brilliant, and that I would reach a high position if I continued, as in the past, to uphold the dignity of our august Fraternity. At times he spoke at great length of the great moral influence of the Order, and its vast importance to the world; one day he talked of its agency as a political association, how it might mould the destiny of all Catholic nations, disposing, so to speak, of crowns and sovereigns, even he hinted of the Papacy itself. In a moment of unusual frankness, he confided to me that the Pope himself must bow to the Secret Orders and to the will of our Supreme Council. To retain this great power, a council, composed of our most worthy and learned members, had established absolute rules, to be obeyed in every particular. This passive obedience must be constantly and willingly rendered, and must increase with the degree of one's faith and dignity. He added that, appreciating the nobility of my sentiments he felt assured that I would be entirely faithful to my vows. Days passed and the Superior constantly spoke to me of the pledges demanded by the Order of its followers. Little by little, but with increasing

sadness, I reached the conviction that the chief aim of our Order is to grow in political importance, that religion—that religion which was so dear to me, to the propagation of which I had devoted my life, was not the primal object of our Fraternity. I was willing to admit that, seemingly, this political influence was sought only to keep the people in the way of God : nevertheless, to accomplish a mission so beautiful in itself, many unworthy acts were condoned and some were even commanded. In all conscience I could not approve, and, day by day, as the Superior confided to me important secrets, the sadness of my heart became unbearable.

However, I did not neglect my scientific studies. I was especially interested in Astronomy, for it revealed to me the infinitude of space, the harmony of the laws governing the movements of the stars, their birth, life, development and death—in short the sublime Law of Evolution which justifies man's belief in a higher destiny. This destiny, however, must be merited by a life in harmony with the laws of Nature and of God. Man must find the true path that leads to the Heavenly Father, that he may become *one* with Him, and return to the bosom of the Eternal whence he had his origin. Though I read many books that sought to disprove the law of Evolution, my conviction remained unchanged that that law is the greatest discovery man has been permitted to make. However, I had daily to listen to the condemnation of this law and of the philosophers who proclaimed it, by members of the Order who con-

sidered it contrary to the dogma of creation, and, therefore, at variance with religion. From that hour my moral anguish began. I was forced to admit that the theory of evolution directly contradicts the dogma of special creation, but, at the same time, I felt that the law of evolution is a direct edict from Heaven. Finding, at every turn, that the discoveries of science were in contradiction to the revelations of faith, my position became intolerable. Could I remain faithful to the vows, which, of my own free will and accord, I had taken upon joining the Brotherhood. The consequences of breaking these terrible vows no mortal would dare to assume. These vows I must confess are indispensable to maintain the unity of the Order. I was face to face with my conscience, and it bade me to listen to the call of my soul, to seek God directly. Why should I not study, with the aid of my telescope, the grand manifestation of His universe, the infinitudes of space? Why not, with my beloved microscope, probe the mystery of the infinitesimal cell, a world visible only to the eye of science, yet holding in itself the very matter and beginning of life, the prototype, in its developments and multiplication, of the most complex organs of man?

In my researches, I believe I have already proved the existence of harmonic forces that rule worlds as well as atoms,—forces converging towards a general synthesis whose ultimate Center can only be God Himself, the Supreme Power, directing these forces in the accomplishment of His sublime work!"

The priest ceased speaking: the anguish which tore his soul, was vividly pictured in his eyes filled with tears, his trembling lips, and his rapid respiration. Marius had listened to his visitor's recital with intense interest. He knew that the man had spoken the truth, and he fully comprehended the intense mental anguish that had lacerated this poor soul, driving it to the very edge of despair.

"And now, venerable Master," concluded the priest "I have come to you for advice, in the hope that you will guide me in the way of truth, that I may find the peace of soul that I so sorely need."

The intense anxiety depicted in the priest's face as he awaited the Master's words, moved the Magus to compassion. A sweet smile illumined his features, as he made reply.

"I understand only too well, my brother, the state of your soul, and I fully sympathize with you. Ah! you are not the only one who has gone to his Calvary," he added with a sigh, thinking perhaps of his own ordeals, "but even the journey to Calvary is an ascension. To every sincere and intelligent man, trained in some dogmatic faith, the seeking of a direct way to God is beset with difficulties. The disciple in pursuit of truth must face the antagonism, even the sarcasm and pity, of those whose creed he has shared: they are willing to remain on the first round of the spiritual ladder, satisfied with the teachings of men who often understand the sacerdotal functions only from the dogmas which their creed compels them to believe. Such men

dare not, they do not possess sufficient intelligence to lift their thoughts to a higher spiritual plane. The true disciple, then, needs all courage, when, with a sad heart, he takes up his cross and ascends his Calvary, but he feels, that despite his sufferings, he is in contact with a mysterious source of strength that lends him power and urges him onward. In regard to your own sad personal experience I would say that the danger of all religious systems lies in too rapid development. When a new faith is established, its founders are worthy to be spiritual leaders. Their motives are pure, their aspirations sincere, and their faith is strong and true. Souls in search of spiritual knowledge are predisposed to a sort of hypnotic suggestion that involuntarily emanates from the propagators of new religions, for the power of suggestion is intimately connected with the manifestation of real religious conviction. Believers multiply in proportion to the strength of the original conviction. The new idea spreads: soon many converts are scattered over an extended territory; the necessity for organization is felt. This organization is gradually established: it aims to keep up the feeling of mutual responsibility among the believers, and to give them material as well as spiritual aid and protection. Leaders are chosen, and, in order to form a strong and homogeneous association, strict obedience is required to certain rules. Formal instructions are sent to all hierarchic rulers. Such arrangements are the basis of organizations. Little by little, property is pur-

chased : the brethren must have places of meeting and prayer. Donations are requested and received, the amount of property increases—it becomes of importance. The property must be protected—it is soon considered necessary to be on good terms with the legislators. At this point, danger threatens : while the leaders are engrossed in seeking to obtain civil prerogatives, the religious ideal suffers. As these leaders grow in power, many become despotic, some, even grow cruel. The Roman Catholic Church furnishes only too many examples of the despotism and arrogance of religious rulers. The primitive Christians followed their belief with simple heroism : they marched with joyful resignation from persecution to martyrdom. Later, when the Papacy became almost omnipotent in Catholic countries, the infamous Inquisition was instituted that so-called disbelievers might be tortured by so-called Christians. Thousands were burned at the stake, and why? Because they could not in conscience believe a few absurd tenets introduced by the priestly hierarchy.

Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Order of Jesuits, was a true Saint. The rules which he established to gain mastery over one's self, to conquer the debasing influences which constantly thwart man in his attempt to profit by divine inspiration, could not be improved upon by priest or mystic. During the lifetime of Loyola, the members of his Order professed and followed the simple Christianity of the Apostles. The time came, however, when the growth of this Order made it a powerful organization.

General and secondary chiefs were elected; and many of the men who occupied these posts were distinguished in diplomacy and statecraft. The Order accumulated great wealth and power; its authority finally overshadowed the very Chair of St. Peter. But, as the Order approached the zenith of its power, the central ideas of its founder, the great principles of faith and charity, were forced aside to make way for material ideals. Under elaborate ceremonial, in magnificent churches, Loyola's simple creed languished and faded.

Nor did the Roman Catholic Church alone demand, under penalty of cruel persecution, unquestioning adherence to a dogmatic creed. After the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew, when the streets ran blood in the name of the Lord, the Huguenot pilgrims sought, in a new and distant country, amid wild beasts and savages, a refuge that they might worship their God according to the dictates of their conscience. Yet these pilgrims, the very people whose religious liberty had cost so much blood, in their blind fanaticism, burned at the stake women, some of them *enccinte*, whom they adjudged guilty of witchcraft. In our own day, the rulers of Russia, Persia, Turkey, and several lesser States, abrogate to themselves supreme civil and religious authority. Their subjects face this alternative; obey and practise the religion of which their sovereign is High Priest, or refuse to obey, and be condemned, as heretical rebels, to torture or exile.

Oh! when will religious leaders learn the lesson of

tolerance; that, in the quest of souls, they must themselves exemplify the attributes of the Godhead, and labor in the spirit of self-denial, godliness, kindness and love. Then will they devote themselves entirely to spiritual study and to their holy mission as pathfinders to the Lord.

The oath of absolute obedience, demanded of every high ecclesiastical dignitary, is the scourge of every Church, and the main cause of fanatical excess. He, who would violate this oath, even from a charitable motive, finds himself irrevocably disgraced. Such a state of soul slavery is entirely contrary to the spirit of true religion. To have any value, religious sentiment must spring spontaneously from the depth of our being. To meditate, to believe, to pray by a system of rules arbitrarily imposed by the Superior of a religious organization, necessarily arrests all spiritual progress and paralyzes the spontaneity of every effort of the soul. Truly by obeying the laws of Church, a pure and exemplary life is ensured, charitable and helpful to our fellow-men; but, in following the difficult road of spiritual progress, or in assisting others to find it, the essential factor is, not compulsory guidance by doctrine or precept, but the spontaneous aspirations of the soul towards celestial regions, transports, kindled in the heart by divine love. These intense aspirations constitute vibrations of high potentiality, which, by effecting the development of certain cells, enables the aspirants to reach a higher plane of spiritual existence. The only vibrations that can render these

cells supersensitive are generated by our intense and continuous aspirations toward that divine love which permeates all creation.

"Your soul, my brother, feels its chains. The narrow limits imposed upon you confine your spiritual efforts; your soul is imprisoned, its wings are pinioned, it cannot soar untrammelled toward the Infinite. At times, truly enough, it escapes its bondage, and rising into the ethereal regions, meets and mingles with the spiritual rays of the divine Sophia. Your soul is attuned to the melodies of the Infinite, and is sometimes transfigured and illumined in its flights by the harmonic subradiations of the Spiritual Sun. You are conscious that in those supremely happy moments of transitory illumination you have penetrated to celestial spheres, far beyond the confines of your Church.

"Master," replied the priest, "you truly comprehend the condition of my soul, the agony that possesses me. Ah, save me from this terrible uncertainty: extend to me the hand of brotherly assistance."

With indescribable friendliness, the Magus extended both his hands: the priest grasped them, in deep emotion, as if the gesture itself afforded him consolation.

"For the present," said the Magus, "return to your duties. Arrange to spend some time with me: I extend my hospitality to you. Then we may converse at leisure, and seek some means of harmonizing your position with your aspirations."

The visitor departed, thoroughly satisfied with

CHAPTER II.

THE fame of Balthazar spread in the city. The priest was partly responsible that, in the intellectual centers, they talked freely of the philosophical and religious knowledge of the Magus who had so mysteriously settled in one of the wealthy quarters. From the gossip of workmen it was generally known that the chapel in the park was neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish, that its walls were covered with unintelligible and mysterious emblems, the Virgin overlooked the tabernacle, and before it was placed the Lamb of God with the Cross. This newcomer was a target for curiosity: but his kindness and profound intellect were generally acknowledged.

For some time a Brahmin from India had been giving, in private meetings and to a few privileged persons, discourses on the faith of Brahma. He was regarded by his listeners as a highly learned representative of the Oriental priesthood, in short—as an illuminatus. Led by her interest in the Hindoo philosophy, and anxious to bring about the meeting of two philosophers, a noble old lady, accompanied by her husband, drove to the house of Balthazar in a splendid equipage. The card she sent in bore the inscription

GENERAL AND MRS. OAKLEY.

Balthazar went at once to the salon. As soon as he crossed the threshold, he ascertained, by the aura of his visitors, that they were sincere persons, full of religious aspirations. Entering at once into conversation, the visitors stated the object of their call:

"We owe you apology, Dr. Marius," said the general, "for this unexpected visit. Your reputation for kindness encouraged us to take this step. We have learned of your interest in psychic and occult science, and in those philosophies that are concerned with the human soul and its evolution. A Hindoo scholar, who ranks high in the priesthood of Brahma, lectures next Monday afternoon at three o'clock in our salon. Your presence would greatly honor us."

"I shall avail myself of your kind invitation with pleasure," answered the Magus, with a gracious smile.

"Shall I send my carriage for you?"

"Thank you, I have my own." After a few moments of conversation, General and Mrs. Oakley departed with a very favorable impression of the Magus and of the welcome he had extended to his visitors.

"Dr. Marius impresses me," said the general to his wife, "as a scholar and a saint. His expression is singularly sweet, yet, when his eyes met mine, I felt that he was reading my soul. But I bore his look without fear, for he was seeking only for the good that is within me."

"He is an extraordinary man," answered Mrs. Oakley, thoughtfully, "an indefinable influence radiates from him that penetrates me, and makes me

sympathetic. As you say, a delightful sensation comes from his deep and mystic glance. Personally, his influence seems to expand my soul : I think, my dear, that we have found a true friend."

On the following Monday at the appointed hour Balthazar was met by General and Mrs. Oakley at the door of their reception-room, with a few words of welcome and appreciation of his coming, they conducted him to the salon, where a seat had been reserved for him. The company felt the greatest interest in the Magus, but its expression was regulated by the natural reserve of people of noble rank. The large salon was already filled. Soon the Brahmin entered, greeting many as personal friends. He wore the garments of his caste, a turban of some fine white material, and a silk robe, also of white. His complexion was of a light copper tinge, his beard and hair extremely black. A platform was provided at one end of the room : and, when the lecturer had ascended it, Balthazar was able to observe him more carefully. He appeared to be a man of only twenty-seven or twenty-eight years. The aura that surrounded him had been somewhat disturbed by many greetings, but Balthazar could see that his religious convictions were honest, and the bluish radiance about the speaker's head vouched for the purity of his life. The afternoon's discourse was concerned with the interpretation of a portion of the Bhagavad-Gita. The lecturer proposed to prove the necessity of conquering the Ego in order that its place should be filled by the sense or feeling of altruism. He

proved clearly that actions prompted exclusively by personal interest are of no value from the standpoint of spiritual evolution, and that deeds which only benefit self, retard spiritual progress by fortifying the inner Ego, thereby transgressing the law of God. This law commands us to overcome the Ego, that we may be immersed in the Divine Impersonality. He explained with fervor how necessary it is to strive to attain "Nirvana"—absolute deliverance, the state in which weakness is no longer to be dreaded, exertion is no longer imperative—the zenith of man's destiny—perfect happiness. He emphasized the Bhagavad-Gita's command—the necessity of continuous action. Contemplation without work, spiritual exercises and prayers that purpose only our own salvation, are ineffectual, for they benefit only the Ego. Action is imperative—action effective in goodness, constant work for all. The lecture so far expounded beautiful doctrines, Balthazar felt, however, that the Brahmin's teachings were somewhat mystical, and that he confined himself too much to generalities. He described the perfect happiness of Nirvana in glowing terms: but, at the same time, he placed Nirvana at such an incommensurable distance from man, that innumerable incarnations upon this unfortunate earth were first required. The lecture, to Balthazar, failed lamentably in practical application, and afforded little, if any aid to earnest men and women, for their thousand daily struggles with the opponents of spirituality. And the conclusion of the discourse astounded and shocked him. The

Brahmin stated that the law of Brahma must be obeyed, that if the law commands to kill, one *must* kill. He repeated with extraordinary emphasis :

“ Yes, if the law of Brahma orders you to commit murder then murder must be committed.”

To Balthazar this statement was a violent shock.

“ This Brahmin,” he said to himself “ is so full of the fire of his religion, that the law of Brahma, that is, the arch-priest of Brahminism, should command it, he would declare “ holy war,” and lead the faithful to massacre in the name of his eternal God. Now I understand why the golden rays rising from his head extend only to a certain height.” “ How sad it is,” he thought, “ that noble precepts should be tainted by such cruel fanaticism. These teachings, surely will not save humanity and restore its lost faith. But this man is young : advancing years will bring him wisdom,—experience, travel, association with other intellects, will bring him to understand the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita more broadly—to understand that man reaches Nirvana by constant battling against animality, the ruling passion of the senses which paralyzes our best efforts to evolve toward higher life. To kill the animal passions, to murder sensual appetite, not to slay our brothers and our equals, is the command of Brahma.”

These thoughts tended to depress Balthazar ; but his earnest conviction that the more enlightened priests of India would in time reject these inconsistent and repulsive interpretations, soon restored his serenity.

The lecture ended, and the Brahmin gone, General and Mrs. Oakley introduced Balthazar, or rather Marius, since that was the only name by which the world knew him, to several people, among others to a young woman who had been watching him with discreet persistence for some time. Marius was invited to an adjoining room, where, as the audience dispersed a few ladies congregated.

Tea was served. Marius saw that the sentiment that had prompted the invitation and that prevailed in the little circle, was alike natural and sincere. A desire for further instruction in the science of life was clearly expressed. As it was his mission to teach, Marius gladly complied with his host's wishes.

"You see, Dr. Marius," said Mrs. Oakley, "we are trying to study the philosophy of life. The attention our circle paid to the Brahmin's argument speaks for our sincerity. We are, all of us, people of the world. The claims, I might say the duties of society leave us little spare time. But experience and thought have shown us the emptiness and nothingness of the egotistic pleasures in which we have spent our lives. Moments come when even the slightly developed soul yearns for freedom and expression. Thoughts change and assume a more elevated character: we abandon frivolous books for works of philosophy and religion. Finally we dare to communicate our new thoughts to our friends, to find often, to our great and glad surprise, that they too, have felt the spiritual renaissance. This has been our experience. We find many who, like us, are weary of wasting their

time in a thousand useless things, in listening to the idle adulations of society, whispered in their ears in luxurious rooms, and changing at their departure into the hiss of slander. We are determined to end this mode of life.

“Now that we have started in the better path, the great problem of our destiny confronts us. Formidable it is, but it includes most radiant hopes, and sweetest consolations. Immortality, especially attracts us, is it not worthy of every effort to probe man’s darkness and doubt? When we die, shall we live again? Our perplexed souls long to find the true light that will penetrate the veil of the unknown. This problem surpasses in interest, all others. Has any person, sect or religion found its solution; does any one know the truth? All religions unite in an emphatic Yes; but, behold, men of science, students all their lives, honest men, ardent seekers after Truth, whatever it may be, answer by a no less emphatic No. And the arguments that support their No, are taken from positive science, and seem conclusive. We know these arguments: that, after death, there will be no organs, therefore no functions—no glands, no secretions; no liver, no gall; no brain, no thoughts, when the brain is disintegrated after death, its thought dies forever—hence, no immortality. And sometimes they add, for our comfort: “Immortality is a beautiful dream: we are sorry to destroy it, but Truth must triumph!” Balthazar listened with interest to Mrs. Oakley’s lucid words. She continued fervently:

“And yet, whatever scientists may say, at the bottom of our hearts there burns a little light, whose rays, as it were, shine to the innermost recesses of the soul, revealing there the secret hope, persisting always, that death is not the end of man, that continued existence is a fact, and immortality a divine truth. We are eager to attend demonstrations of psychism, given by eminent scientists who shall have reached by patient investigation and profound study of the phenomena of nature, a conviction contrary to that of material science. We wish to have man's existence after earthly death confirmed: we want to know that his happiness beyond the tomb depends upon the amount of good he has done on earth, the degree in which he has triumphed over matter. This is the invariable information given by highly developed, sensitive beings speaking in a state of trance. This is also the teaching of all religions: they agree on that point, though they may differ radically as to the mode of our existence after death. The heaven of the Arabian differs from the reward that awaits the elect of the Hindoo faith: sometimes, the preparation, the laws to be followed that heaven may be deserved, are diametrically opposed. So, amid all religions. Where is Truth to be found? In what doctrine, in what religion can we truly believe?”

The nervous strain of intense speaking almost contorted Mrs. Oakley's face.

Marius took up her question gently;

“The way that leads to Heaven,” he replied “is

not a fair, straight highway, whose shade-trees delight and protect the traveller. It is a difficult and circuitous path, upon whose stones and briars we leave shreds of flesh. Like Pascal's center and circumference of the Infinite, this path is everywhere and nowhere. The individual soul must seek its way for itself, and suffering is the badge of spiritual ascension. As in the physical world, there are no two persons just alike, so, in the hyperphysical world, no two souls are found in an identical degree of evolution. Each has its idiosyncrasies; the road that takes one soul to God, offer no inspiration to another. To be assured of finding a way to Truth, a soul must employ, in the search, constant and complete fervor.

"If this rule is strictly followed, progress will soon be noticed. A feeling of infinite satisfaction and serenity announces the entrance to the path of Truth. One condition, only, is demanded of the disciple, that he shall place himself under the protection of "the Source of all Strength," and that he shall constantly invoke His aid and enlightenment. These, Madame, are the first steps upon the road that leads upward to the Knowledge of our destiny."

"But, Dr. Marius," questioned Mrs. Oakley, a little distressed, "if all souls differ, if each possesses a distinct personality, unless they follow the same road, how can they be qualified to receive the same teachings?"

"The prime elements of all philosophy and reli-

gion are the same," answered Marius, "and they may be imparted, for a long period and with great benefit, to all persons. There comes a time, however, when each student must follow the special path determined for him by his personal inclinations, his tastes and his idiosyncrasies, a human soul possesses identity, personality, as distinctly as does the body. When it has reached a certain degree of advancement, the soul selects its own way, and, as the butterfly leaves the chrysalis, so the soul takes flight, and with radiant outspread wings seeks Heaven."

The young lady who had been introduced to Balthazar as Miss McDonald, and who had shown great interest in him, followed every word of the speaker with intense eagerness. Her sympathy, gleaming in her eyes, increased with every moment. Mrs. Oakley resumed the conversation :

"Your words, sir, comfort me. I will tell you in confidence that for some time past we have all been deeply interested in the religions of the East. The physical and psychical results, which the followers of these religions obtain by complying with their dogmas, not only seem remarkable, but they appear to surpass human understanding, and to upset the laws of positive science. During years of study in the spiritualistic philosophy of the great religions, a few of us have been drawn together, by some law of sympathy, no doubt. We communicated to each other the results of our researches, and after a few meetings we decided to apply to a philosophical and religious association of the Orient, famous the world

over, for permission to form a circle under its protection. We were granted this favor, and have organized the circle. For a year now, we have been receiving instructions from the central organization. The young Brahmin, whose interesting lecture you have just heard, is one of several teachers sent to us by the central council: his lectures are to continue for eight days. You see, Dr. Marius, we are serious in our efforts to avail ourselves of religious truth, and to reach God or Parabrahm. Unless we are greatly mistaken, you are a master in Mystic and occult sciences. Therefore we come to implore you to aid us with your advice, when doubt comes to us, when our hearts hesitate to accept certain dogmas from the Orient. This has sometimes happened in our circle. We beg of you to assist us in these crisis."

"The Oriental religions interest me greatly," replied the Magus, "and their precepts are frequently sublime: but it does not become me to advise you, or members of your circle. That is the province of your directing superiors. To ask advice or interpretation of others would be on your part—unintentionally, of course—a discourtesy to your superiors. Moreover, I fear that any criticism of their teachings that I might make would have no plausible proof of justice or good judgment." Mrs. Oakley's face showed her disappointment.

"I could not have expressed myself very happily, Dr. Marius," said she, "in asking your advice, we had no intention of bringing up points which could

be included in our teacher's plans. All we desire is to have your opinion on the extent and importance of psychic science in general, and to chat familiarly with you upon subjects that interest us, to be instructed by you. Will you refuse us your co-operation, even to such a limited extent?"

The good lady was so earnest in her request, and her voice was so entreating, that Marius could no longer persist in his refusal. Moreover, he knew intuitively that to some of these souls groping after happiness, he could be of great service.

"Be it so, Madame," said he, extending his hands "from time to time we will discuss philosophy and religion."

"Oh, thank you," exclaimed Miss McDonald, with intense feeling. Stepping forward, the young lady extended a white and aristocratic hand, which the Magus cordially pressed. At the moment of the hand clasping, Balthazar was conscious of a warm current, denoting a vibrant nature, full of tender emotion, a well-developed, well-balanced brain, a soul filled with the noblest aspirations—in short, a personality far above the average, and in peculiar harmony with the most subtle psychic forces. He recognized a privileged being who aspired toward God, as naturally and inevitably as the flowers aspire toward the quickening rays of the spring tide-sun.

Balthazar left the Oakley house with many favorable impressions; and the company that had listened to his words unanimously pronounced him a man of rare parts and unusual attainments. On his return

to his apartments, his thoughts turned to the Brahmin's lecture and the subsequent meeting. He felt sure that the distinguished ladies in whose company he had passed the afternoon were seeking the true way in all earnestness of heart. His sanguine soul saw in the spiritual efforts of these favored women of the world a sign of the possible redemption of humanity. Their spiritual aspirations had not been aroused by earthly suffering or by cruel and constant struggles for material existence—struggles which cause many enlightened souls to despise this earth where happiness is so illusive and to lift their eyes toward higher regions in the search for comfort and compensation. No, these noble women were not actuated by personal motives. They were women of wealth, position and education. The motive prompting their devotion to transcendental studies was to be found in a secret suffering that they themselves barely understood, a nostalgia of the soul, an irresistible desire to allow their spirits the free range of ethereal regions. They longed to bathe in the divine radiance of the spiritual Sun—the Eternal God.

If women such as these, having at command all the material pleasures afforded by earth, will voluntarily abandon the world to consecrate themselves to spiritual studies, despite the sacrifices required: if they possess the fortitude and character to free themselves from the thralldom of the senses, their souls should be able very rapidly to reclaim their rights and powers in overcoming the materialism of minds

uncorrupted by evil habits and dissipation. They would need guidance in their spiritual development : and Marius determined to regard any assistance he could offer them as a sacred and pleasurable duty.

CHAPTER III.

BALTHAZAR walked in his park, enjoying the fragrant flowers, the thick-foliaged trees, and the glorious aspect of his new domain. The sight of the main building crowning the slight elevation, whence it commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country, delighted his eyes and heart. A little beyond, he caught a glimpse through the trees of the stately sanctuary, erected on a huge rock, and connected by a covered gallery with the central mansion. At any hour, in any sort of weather he could visit his beloved temple. Two side doors opened into the chapel from the park ! these were designed for the use of neophytes. Gazing upon the sanctuary, its beautiful situation and charming natural surroundings, the Magus wondered, if it would not be best, in order to preserve a pure and highly spiritualized aura, to reserve this sacred place exclusively for himself and his most advanced disciples. But he left the final decision of this important question for a more favorable moment.

His faithful servant approached and handed him a letter. Bathazar perused it, smiling gently. It was from the priest, who had so recently visited him and bore the news that his personal affairs were now so arranged that he could absent himself from his

duties at pleasure and for an indefinite length of time. He emphasized his impatience to begin the new life, and to receive the instructions, which, he intuitively felt, would bring him spiritual knowledge and peace of mind ; and he requested Dr. Marius to admit him at his earliest convenience.

Balthazar, deeply gratified, immediately dispatched a cordial answer ; he assured the priest that the house was open to him, and begged him to feel, in naming the hour of his arrival, that he would be an ever welcome guest. He then gave orders to his servant that, upon his arrival, the visitor should be shown to his apartments.

The next day Balthazar was affectionately greeting the priest.

“William, my faithful servant,” said he, “will conduct you to your room, where you must make yourself perfectly at home ; he will show you the park, which is at your disposal ; and the sanctuary which you are free to enter as your heart dictates. This room is a general reception room, avail yourself of it at any time ; I am myself frequently here. This bell, near the main door,” he added, pressing a button, “is for William. If at any time you wish to speak to me, call the servant, and he will find me. If I am at liberty, I will come immediately ; if not, as soon as possible I will respond to your request. Now that is settled ; and all that remains is for you to regard this as your own house. William,” he spoke to the servant who had just entered, “take Mr. Albert—(you will be called Albert while you are here, for

we are never known but by a single name)—William, take Mr. Albert to his room, and see that he has every comfort and attention."

Thanking his host, Albert followed the servant. The room that had been assigned to him was on the first floor ; the hangings were costly, and the ceiling was one immense decorative painting. The furnishing, though simple, was in excellent taste. On the mantel-piece was a statuette, recalling familiar images of the Virgin Mary ; above its head were inscribed the words, " Sophia, Virgin of the World, Dispensatrix of the first radiations of the Godhead." At either side was placed a candle, and before the statuette stood a prie-dieu upholstered in blue velvet. There were no pictures on the wall, nothing to distract the attention. The room seemed a little close—Albert went to the window, and throwing it open, found, to his satisfaction, that it looked directly upon the park, upon majestic old trees, and arbors hung with clustering blue glycina. Immense flower-beds and luxuriant hanging-baskets filled the air with perfume.

" Penance itself," he thought whimsically, " would be acceptable here."

It occurred to him that in all probability he would be subjected to severe discipline, but, to gain peace and a nearer approach to God, he was willing to pay any price. He lighted the candles upon the altar of Sophia ; sinking to his knees upon the prie-dieu, his hands clasped, his eyes fixed upon the Virgin, he began to pray with a fervor that he had never before brought to his devotions.

"O divine Mother of the World! I have just placed myself under the guidance of a saintly man. Since you are here the witness of my most intimate thoughts, my most earnest strivings, Dispensatrix of divine radiations, I implore thy assistance. Lead my thoughts to truth, guide my meditations in a heavenly path, deliver me from overwhelming temptations, give me fortitude in my trials, and, above all, from time to time, shouldst thou find me worthy, let my troubled heart be assuaged by the divine radiations whose dispensatrix thou art. Holy Mother, thou readest my motives; thou knowest my doubts and trials, my ardent desire to know Truth and walk in the path of God. Oh, Kind Mother, I place myself under thy protection in the firm conviction that thou wilt hear my prayer, that thou wilt assist my efforts, that my weakness will open thy heart to pity, and that, knowing my fervent ardor, thou wilt send me aid and encouragement. Holy Mother, from this day forth, I will follow with unflinching courage the path laid out for me, under thy sheltering protection and the guidance of thy noble vicar, Marius."

Having arranged his belongings and made his toilet, the priest rang for the servant, who, henceforth, was to serve him as well as Marius. Upon the man's entrance, Albert said, "William, I wish to see the park; kindly take me there and show me also the arrangement of the house."

"Certainly, sir."

William took the Abbé Albert to the dining-room, the great living-room, a reception hall, which he had

already seen, and through several anterooms to the salon. After showing him all the rooms he led him into the park from a main hallway. "If you will follow the road to the right, sir," said William respectfully, "you will come to the door of the sanctuary. A bell will ring to announce dinner. If you desire nothing further, sir, I will return to my work."

"Thank you, William, you may go."

Albert walked slowly in the direction of the sanctuary. As he approached it, he noticed that the building had three doors. One, the main entrance, opened into the gallery that communicated with Balthazar's private apartments, this he reserved for his personal use; two other entrances, to the right and left of the altar respectively, gave admittance to the sacred place. Albert found himself at the left door; he stood there, pondering if he should enter. The Abbé felt considerable hesitancy in passing the portals of this sacred temple although Marius had given him personal sanction to do so. But arguing that he was a priest, and, silencing his scruples, he entered.

The temple was not as large as its exterior had led him to suppose: two rooms behind the altar considerably lessened the body of the building; it would hold, at the most, one hundred people. The altar was of white marble, as were the three broad steps leading to it: on the marble panel at the front of the altar was carved in relief the Lamb of God bearing on its neck the pilgrim's staff and the traditional gourd; from the staff a streamer was dis-

played, on which one could read the words "Purity on the journey." The Abbé Albert meditated a long time upon this inscription.

"If the pilgrim wishes to keep in the way of the Lord," he reflected, "he must be pure. The newborn lamb is spotless, he is mild and docile—so should the pilgrim be, dazzling in whiteness as the lamb, gentle and submissive to the decree of Providence and to the rules his superiors lay down for his guidance." Kneeling he added—"I myself have taken up the staff, a traveler in unknown lands, a pilgrim seeking his way, the path to the Eternal God. Oh, powers of Heaven, grant that this staff shall be my support, to sustain my weakness amid the fatigues of my arduous journey. May my gourd always contain pure water to quench my soul's thirst and to give me new strength!" The temple filled with sudden brilliance; Albert lifted his eyes and saw a ray of sunlight streaming through a round window in the center of the dome. Upon the glass was painted the Mystic Eye of the Eternal, surrounded by the sacred triangle; the sunbeam, coming through the opening, shone full upon a painting, hung at a considerable height above the altar. It lighted up the enormous picture almost fantastically. Albert regarded it with lively interest. The canvas represented the three Magi in sacerdotal vestments, prostrated before an object, intended by the artist to be brilliant, but now, actually scintillating in the sunlight. To his great surprise, the priest discovered that this shining object was not

the figure of an infant, newly-born, but a golden disk, in the center of which (half-blinded by the light) he managed to read the inscription—"Spiritual Sun." The radiations of this spiritual sun seemed to pass through the bodies of the Magi, making them transparent, and, clustering in their brains, formed there foci of light, resembling miniature suns. The priest was forcibly impressed by this picture, which, gloriously resplendent in the sunlight, seemed to be the work of superhuman hands. He intuitively understood the high import of the sublime teachings contained in this admirable mystic work.

While Albert, oblivious of himself, was lost in contemplation of the painting and the deep emotion its exalted significance inspired, the private door opened noiselessly, and Balthazar appeared upon the threshold. Beholding the priest in profound meditation before the picture that crowned the altar, the Magus stopped, and extending his hands toward him, prayed :

"Beautiful priestly soul, may you be penetrated by the aura of the Spiritual Sun, even as were these Magi, my predecessors ! May you go forth without wavering to the combats you must meet, and may you return from them victorious ! The Religious Orders will have no pity upon you, but, protected by Parabrahm, their attack shall not overcome you."

Albert lifted his eyes to the statue of Sophia, which he had just noticed, and believing himself alone, he extended his arms toward her in silent in-

vocation. The Magus continued his prayer : " And thou, Divine Mother of our Order, condescend to take under thy gracious protection this child of earth here now in exile, whose heavenly soul is torn by doubt. Up to this hour, kind mother, he has, been sad and suffering—a true orphan. Deign to adopt him, guide his steps, envelop him in a ray of thy divine consciousness, enlighten, support, and conduct him in the right path. At this moment, he implores of thee the same favor ; ah, noble Mother, he is worthy of thy protection,—grant thou his prayer ! "

The Magus withdrew quietly, not wishing to disturb Albert's devotions. He had scarcely closed the door, when the priest, conscious of some influence, turned around. Not seeing anyone, he bade an affectionate farewell to Sophia, and, happy as if a ray of the bright sunlight had penetrated to his heart, he repaired to the park where he breathed in deep draughts of the vivifying air. Contented and at rest, he walked the length of the grounds, admiring the flowers, and even speaking to his favorites. The tones of a bell reached him : it was the signal announcing dinner. He experienced a momentary embarrassment, for this would be the first repast with his generous host, but, as Marius came to meet him, his hesitation disappeared. The Magus was smiling and called to him as he approached :

" Come and dine, Mr. Albert. By the way, permit us to call you by that name entirely, for it is not necessary that visitors who happen to meet you,

should know who you are even when here, I would advise you to discard the priestly garb."

"Certainly. Will you allow me to call you my dear Master—all other names seem commonplace."

"Agreed: now let us go in."

The linen was of snowy whiteness, the service of the finest porcelain, the glass rare Venetian, the covers of chased silver. The master asked Heaven's blessing on the meal. Albert expressed his astonishment when meat was served, as it was generally understood that mystics scrupulously abstained from it. The Magus answered him at some length:

"The man who has progressed far on his path of evolution no longer eats flesh, his body has no need of it, for his activities, always lofty, are highly intellectual and spiritual. The physical expenditures which he is obliged to make, do not demand this alimentary restorative. The vital energy which highly developed man, like all created beings, must expend, can easily be restored from the nutritive elements contained in vegetables, cereals, fruit, their product, and milk. The meat is served for you: not that I insist upon your eating it, but I should advise you to keep your body in the best possible condition: that is absolutely necessary. The change in food will come about naturally and gradually proportionately to the evolution of your cellular system. It is essential that I make this important truth very clear to you, for it constitutes a mighty factor in evolution, and is frequently misunderstood. From such misconstructions grievous errors enter into the

alimentation of novices and neophytes, errors resulting in such serious consequences as anemia, neurasthenia, and even serious disturbance of mental equilibrium. A too weakening of the vital forces is achieved, instead of the high spiritual state longed for by the aspirant. If, for example, you have been accustomed, because of the arduous duties of your ministry, to a substantial nourishment by meat, and, on coming here, suddenly abstain from it under pretext of becoming spiritualized, what is going to happen? Without any gradual transition, your body will find itself deprived of essential part of its accustomed nourishment, and, in consequence, your whole being will experience discomfort. Your brain-cells will undergo excessive excitement and they will be rendered incapable of receiving the high odic forces which are developed by prayer and meditation; for these influences make themselves felt only when one is in a state of tranquillity; they can make no impression upon a brain whose cells are in a state of continuous trepidation. Therefore, if meat has always been a part of your diet, do not deprive yourself of it for the present. The desire for meat will disappear in proportion as your spiritualization progresses.

"I do not, as a rule, consume much meat," said Albert, "but I will take some to-day; the keen emotion which my arrival under your hospitable roof has occasioned me, warns me to take this precaution and your theory, dear Master, seems to me wise and just."

"It is not only a reasonable theory," responded the master, but it has been fully tested. The prescribing of excessive fasting, such as is the custom of many religious sects of the East and also of the West, is a mistake. Since biological science has discovered the laws governing the existence of cells, it is well-known that cells, to be kept in good condition, must be nourished as we nourish ourselves. And a cell can properly perform its physical or psychical functions only when it is in a normal state and free from suffering; that each cell has its work to do, one needs only a microscope to prove. We know also that any work requires an expenditure of energy, and that all expended energy must be replaced if the organic functions of the body are to be normally performed. Novices, entering a new life, where cerebral activity is greatly intensified by aspiration and prayer, need an additional amount of nourishment to compensate for the energy expended in unaccustomed ways; it is a manifest and lamentable error to prescribe fasting in their case. And this rigorous discipline results in—what? First, a weakening of the vitality of the organism, then as already stated an abnormal agitation of the brain-cells, which are the conductors of the higher bodily functions. It must be remembered that all the lesser cells, are directed by these superior cells, conduct the purely organic functions; and, when these lesser cells are starved, they are unable to perform these functions and in their necessity, they apply to the brain-cells for the nourishment that they must receive,

These latter cells, being also insufficiently nourished, are, themselves, in an abnormal state of excitation, and unable to answer the incessant demands of the lower cells. The consequence is a deplorable state of the entire body manifested by extreme nervousness. The evil does not stop there ; the brain-cells, being the seat of thought, the agents with whom are stored the impressions produced by the intellectual activities and those of the senses during the entire past life, generate, in a state of hyperexcitation, a potentiality of excessive vibratory force—an abnormal disturbance. In this state, multiplex and heterogeneous images are forced from the store-houses of the brain: in his anxiety to experience some psychic manifestation, the novice mistakes these mental images for revelations of the invisible world, when, in reality, they are only reflexes from nerve-cells over-irritated by the impoverishment proceeding from lack of proper nourishment. So, you see, too strict a diet at the beginning of a novitiate may entail grave dangers.

On the other hand over-nourishment renders the brain-cells drowsy. One feels heavy, sleepy, and incapable of intellectual exertion ; one is under the control of one's animal being and is content merely to digest !

The novice should avoid all extremes. He should take just sufficient nourishment to restore his expended energy only. He should, of course, aim to exclude meat entirely or almost entirely from his diet, but only after he has given up all worldly

matters. He must be the judge of his own dietetic system. The stomach plays a higher part in the evolution of life than you might be led to think; for it is through the medium of the stomach-cells that the other cells receive their nutriment, coarse or delicate, and the evolution of cells by psychic forces is rendered easy or difficult according to the quality of the nourishing substance. These, my dear Albert, are the rules that should govern your diet, and they would answer equally well for anyone desiring to follow the mystic path. These rules can and should be followed by every human being not wholly lost in animalism. On this table you will always find every necessary variety of food."

"I thank you, Master, I am grateful to you beyond expression."

"Let us not speak of that. Let us rather talk of the rules you must observe in order to reach your goal as soon as possible—the gradual Spiritualization of your being. For the first week follow the impulses of your heart. Pray often, and implore especially for Truth—the Spiritual Light; meditate a great deal, there are many solitary places in the park suitable for meditation. Go from time to time to the sanctuary; there you will spend your most serious hours of meditation—the Peace of God abides there.

"And now! my dear disciple, I shall leave you. Occupy yourself as you deem best, the bell will call you to meal. I shall not always be here, but if you need me, you will readily find me. *Au revoir.*" Balthazar pressed Albert's hand, and departed.

At first the priest was disappointed at the prospect of not seeing the Magus as often as he had desired. He felt a little gloomy, but he said to himself, sweeping away the imaginary cloud with an energetic gesture :

“My master knows better than I the line of conduct which I should follow.” Gratified and calm, he repaired to the park, to spend an hour in meditation.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO weeks of the young priest's sojourn in the house of Marius had elapsed. He had made great progress on the path of spirituality. Peace of soul, such as he had not experienced in many years had returned to him. This tranquillity was momentarily disturbed by the receipt of a letter. His Superior wrote asking him to be present at a series of conferences on religious matters which were to begin in a few days. The request was in the nature of a command, and Albert accordingly made his preparations for a few days' absence.

Scarcely had the priest departed when a letter came for Marius; and though he expected one day to receive such a message its early coming surprised him. It was from Miss McDonald, the young lady whose intelligent sympathy had greatly impressed him on the day of the Brahmin's lecture. Her letter, evidently written under stress of intense nervous agitation, revealed an anxious and troubled state of mind. As he read, the noble and saintly countenance of the Magus was brightened by a kindly smile, and, when he had finished, he was lost for an instant in deep thought. Emerging from his reverie, he said to himself :

"She wishes to see me, she is in need of counsel,

she implores my advice. Her suffering must be intense—she is now in the transition stage.—I will write to her.”

Acting upon the word, he wrote immediately, assuring her that he would be most happy to receive her at any time she would like to come.

The next day, as Balthazar was walking alone in the park, according to his custom in deep meditation, William brought him a card and the message that a lady was waiting in the salon desiring to speak with him. The card bore the name of Miss Ethel McDonald. Balthazar hastened to meet his visitor, and, bidding her welcome, cordially offered his hand.

“You are not angry?” said she, smiling brightly, “you were not displeased at my letter? You are not going to consider me either mentally unbalanced or ill-bred, in spite of this indiscreet liberty?”

Her sweet smile could not conceal her anxiety. Balthazar hastened to reassure her. “Would to Heaven,” answered the Magus affectionately, “that your mental state portrayed the general condition of humanity. I assure you I am deeply interested, for it represents a phase through which in the process of evolution all souls must pass. I have undergone the same experience, I have suffered as you suffer now. These are the travails that precede the birth of a great soul.”

“You do not think then that my state of mind can be considered a symptom of mental depression, or a forerunner of insanity, even though my dreams are so strangely beautiful.”

"Quite the contrary " answered Balthazar, encouragingly, " this is probably the first time in your life that you have had manifested in yourself the healthiest and noblest sort of intelligence. Your soul seeks God fervently, lovingly ; it is still exiled from its rightful home, and it is groping for its way. Soon it will find the right path, and will advance resolutely ; then it will be surrounded by heavenly radiance, which will show the road so clearly, that your soul shall never again wander. This radiance will be as a beacon light upon the horizon, seen from afar, signaling the course to the haven. But, my dear child, you are greatly overwrought. Would you not enjoy a few moments of fresh air in the park, and then let me show you our sanctuary ; there you may offer a prayer to Sophia, the Virgin of the World, who is, above all, the guardian of young girls and the patroness of souls in distress,"

" You have expressed my most earnest desire," Miss McDonald replied with evident satisfaction.

Once in the park, Miss McDonald, in delight, filled her lungs with the flower-scented air ; a gentle breeze tempered it to invigorating freshness. Her mind relaxed, the agitation of her soul was calmed. Her senses reveled in the sight of dense groves, vine-clad arbors, and many-tinted flowers.

Seating herself, her eyes dreamy with a poet's love of beauty, she gazed in silence upon the charming scene. Finally, with a deep, contented sigh, she spoke :

" How peaceful it is ! My poor nerves are actu-

ally at rest. How happy you must be in this retreat!"

"It is restful; worldly discord never penetrates to this secluded spot. Quiet is indispensable to repose of soul."

"Did you not say that you would allow me to visit your sanctuary?" said the young lady. "May I remind you of the promise? But—perhaps—outsiders are not permitted to enter?"

"Ah—but I do not wish to think of you as an outsider. Pray come with me."

Balthazar led her to the entrance through which Albert had passed on his first visit to the sanctuary. Throwing the door open for his guest to pass, the Magus took her to the altar of Sophia. He motioned to the prie-dieu. Miss McDonald was well versed in the doctrines of the ancient religions, and she knew that Sophia, Virgin of the World, represented the feminine principle of Divinity. She sank devoutly to her knees, and breathed a fervent prayer. She begged of Sophia to guide her soul on the path that it should follow, and to grant her inspiration and protection. Her prayer finished, she still knelt, lost in contemplation of the beautiful features of Sophia, whose extended arms and open hands seemed to say:

"I am the consolation of the afflicted. Come to me, all ye that are in trouble, confide in me your sorrows, lay your sufferings at my feet—I will comfort you."

A feeling such as she had never known before,

vibrated through her being—an exhilarating influence that heightened all the faculties of her mind, and quickened every attribute of her Ego. Yet, although she quivered with life, expansion, psychic activity, at the same time she experienced a sensation of beatific calm, which pervaded her entire being and brought her peace of heart.

While his guest tasted these delightful emotions, Balthazar also prayed. He asked aid and protection from the Eternal Source of Life for this woman who knelt at his side. He understood the efforts of this soul to free itself from the material bonds which hamper all creatures from the day of their birth, and over whose scattered remnants the spirit rides victorious only after years of struggle. Matter is the chrysalis which one day falls off and leaves the butterfly free to soar on dazzling wings.

Miss McDonald had struggled and was still struggling bravely, and the Magus saw that only one final effort was needed to unclasp all earthly fetters; one more courageous attempt and her soul could live its proper life, safe from material shackles. Balthazar prayed that efficacious grace might be accorded to her from on High, and he vowed to himself to lend her all possible assistance toward the attainment of this distinguished goal.

Miss McDonald rose, a radiant smile on her face, such as could only come from a soul, happy and at peace. The Magus understood, and together they left the chapel. Once outside the consecrated portals, the young woman pressed Balthazar's hand,

and thanked him gratefully for the moments of real happiness she had just experienced, and which she owed to him.

"Your sanctuary," said she, "is a true house of God. Within its shelter, the soul reaches its true element. It finds peace, and can leave far behind the cruel anxieties it is always meeting in the world. Ah, if I could only live in a place like this, or at least, spend a few days of retreat there, when my soul is troubled and I am in need of counsel, as to-day!"

"Your wish is easily fulfilled," said Balthazar, "do you see that small villa? It is comfortable, and there would be room for yourself and your maid. Can you not come here for an indefinite stay—say as long as you are contented? The park and the sanctuary will be at your disposal, your meal can be served in your rooms. In the evening, come to the salon, join in the general conversation and listen to the lectures which are often given, for we have visitors at all times."

"Do you really mean, dear Master," cried Miss McDonald in delight, "that you will let me spend several days in this place of peace, that I can worship in your sanctuary? You offer me this lovely villa?"

"My invitation is meant in earnest, dear child," declared the Magus.

"You are the kindest of men—I am all confusion. But I thank you most sincerely, and I accept your generosity. May I come soon?" she added, happy as a child.

"To-morrow, if you wish."

"Very well, to-morrow then. I shall send my maid ahead, if I may."

The next morning the maid was driven in Miss McDonald's carriage to Balthazar's house. William by his master's orders, met her and helped her to carry her mistress' luggage to the villa.

The maid arranged Miss McDonald's belongings in the cozy parlor, bedroom and boudoir that she was to occupy. The young lady herself, joyous as a bird on its first continued flight, arrived in the afternoon. As she stepped from her carriage, the Magus met her with a cordial welcome. He escorted her to the door of the villa, and left her, saying:

"Here you are at home, my child, a queen in this little domain. I hope you will find it comfortable."

"I do not see how I shall be able to show my gratitude, dear Master, unless I can prove myself a zealous and faithful pupil."

Ethel McDonald was now installed in the villa so generously placed at her disposal. Her maid had arranged her things so conveniently that she might have been in her own apartments. Everything she needed was ready to her hand. She believed that Marius alone dwelt in the main building, so she roamed freely through the most secluded sections of the park, and visited the sanctuary whenever the fulness of her heart, or its momentary emptiness, created a desire for spiritual communion. The natural beauties of the grounds appealed to her strongly; above all she loved a sheltered spot in the

depths of the park, closed in by shrubbery. It was just behind an arbor, where there were a couple of benches, and from it one could watch the comings and goings of visitors, and yet remain unseen, even by occupants of the arbor. With the help of her maid, she removed one of the benches from the arbor to this favored nook, the discovery of which afforded her delight and pride. In this solitary retreat she spent practically every moment that was not consecrated to the sanctuary.

Miss McDonald had now passed three days of perfect contentment in Balthazar's home. She had seen the Magus only for a few moments, and she had not sought him out, as he had told her that for the first few days, it would be best for her to give herself up entirely to meditation and prayer, that she might be able to control her nerves and to regain her poise. After that, she could be benefited by instructions. She had conformed in every detail to his suggestions.

On the afternoon of the third day she ensconced herself in her little nest, as she loved to call it; she was rejoicing at the good fortune that had brought her to Marius' house, when she heard approaching footsteps, and the voices of men in conversation. They were coming toward her down a lateral alley. Her first impulse was to return to the villa; but, on recognizing the Master's voice in conversation with a stranger, she thought it best to remain where she was. She argued to herself that, as he was only passing by, the Magus would prefer that she should

remain unseen, and thus avoid an interruption and the inevitable introductions. Remaining quietly hidden she opened a book she had brought with her, and began to read. But she could not help noticing, as the voices drew nearer, that the stranger's tones were peculiarly harmonious. The two men were walking quickly, and in the direction of the arbor behind which she was concealed. She assured herself that they would continue their brisk pace, and, once passed, she would not see or hear them again. She was destined to appreciate the truth of the old saying :—"Man proposes, but God disposes." Marius and the stranger, no doubt enchanted by the delicious coolness and poetic solitude of the arbor, rested there and seated themselves upon the bench. Miss McDonald sat in hopeless dismay ; the prospect of overhearing a conversation which no doubt would be personal, caused her anxiety and fear. All her natural delicacy revolted at the situation—but what was she to do?

The Magus was speaking, continuing a conversation—

"It is more than three weeks, Albert, since you began your novitiate, if I may call it by that ambitious name ; I want you to tell me what spiritual progress you have made, and how you feel about this venture."

"My dear Master, you know what my state of mind was, when I came here to place myself under your protection. Everything within me was disorder, discord, suffering—frequently I was on the

verge of despair. I did not know what to believe, I was rent by cruel doubts. I did not know where to seek truth, or how to avoid error ; black night and hopeless chaos reigned in my soul. I have already told you with what fervor I have during the last two years, devoted myself to the study of the physical sciences, from astronomy to microbiology, from the infinitely great to the infinitely little ; yet never have I found complete satisfaction. I merely brought myself face to face with problems which I could not solve."

In spite of her efforts, Ethel McDonald could not refrain from listening attentively. It seemed there was another creature who had suffered as she had, who was under the protection of the Magus, who also called him " Master." Albert continued :

" You will recall that, weary, shattered, and discouraged, I finally sought you. It took an entire week for me to become calm, and to regain my poise. Far from the discordant vibrations of the world, breathing the pure air of this park, blessed by the peace of your sanctuary, I have felt, dear Master, your holy influence calming the turmoil of my thought. So to-day, I can say that I am again my better self. I am ready and anxious to continue my novitiate and to profit by the instructions which I hope to receive from you now that my peace of soul has been re-established."

" Could any soul be more like mine ?" murmured Ethel.

" During my few days of absence, I happened

to be thrown in contact with another mind, suffering from religious doubts—a mind that like mine, stands in need of advice and encouragement. The man I speak of is a scholar, a professor of philosophy who in delving for the religious truth which he desired to impart to his seminaries, found only doubt as the reward of his labors. Is it not wonderful what surprising changes are taking place in the minds of men, especially among those who have attempted to solve the highest problems of human understanding!”

“How about women?” added Balthazar.

“Women? Do you actually believe that they go through the same agony of doubt which assails us, that they are capable of entertaining serious and constant aspirations towards the higher verities?”

At these words, a blush reddened the face of the enforced eavesdropper.

“I would like you to read a letter,” said the Magus, “that will soon convince you of the interest some women take in their spiritual development. There can be no indiscretion involved, for as I generally do with all letters I receive, I have erased the signature.”

Some intuition told Ethel that it was her letter the Magus was unfolding: and her heart sank at the thought of hearing her soul’s sickness expounded to a stranger. But her timidity kept her prisoner. The Magus handed a letter to Albert, and asked him to read it aloud. He read:

“Dear and venerable Master: Do not misjudge

me, I beg of you, though I take the liberty of addressing you when I have seen and heard you only once."

Ethel McDonald immediately recognized her own phrasing : she stifled a convulsive cry, everything swam before her eyes, she felt as if she were going to faint. Summoning all her energy, she managed to control the throbbings of her heart. What should she do? . . . She forced herself to face the situation squarely. If she left her shelter now, it would be a confession that she had listened without scruple to the preceding conversation : that might offend the Master. Who would know that it was her letter if the signature was erased ? Marius would not betray her. Persuaded that the novice would never learn the author of the missive, Eve's legacy to her daughters revealed itself : she determined that, since she had been unwittingly forced into this harmless deceit, the best thing to do was to remain quietly at her place and trust to luck not to be discovered.

The novice, whom she had heard addressed as Albert, continued reading :

"If I overstep the bounds of prudence and reserve usual in such cases, it is because I am so deeply in earnest. And even though my motives are purely personal, yet I dare to hope that you will give me your attention and aid me by your advice.

"From the moment when I first saw you at the Brahmin's lecture, I could not keep my eyes from watching you. I know you noticed the persistence

of my gaze, and, with most men, I should have feared to be judged forward and ill-bred, but I know you are too noble to entertain any vulgar or superficial thought. I could not turn my eyes from you for the reason that I saw you surrounded by a luminous atmosphere. It may have been an illusion but even as an illusion, it interested me strangely, for the light which enveloped you like an aureole, varied constantly in intensity and even in color. It seemed as if it might be the active objective manifestations of your thought."

"Why—this must be a remarkable woman," cried Albert in enthusiasm. "This is extremely interesting."

Miss Ethel was in despair at hearing the secrets of her heart exposed to a stranger. But her curiosity was inflamed, and, confident that the novice would never know that she had written the letter, she longed to hear him express an opinion upon the subject matter. So she continued to listen, and he to read.

"For instance, when the Brahmin declared that the law of Brahma must be obeyed, even should it command us to kill our own companions, I saw that light turn scarlet and flare toward the ceiling in great bands; after a while, the radiations diminished in intensity, the perturbation of your luminous atmosphere ceased, and your features resumed their expression of habitual calm."

Albert gave the Magus an interested and questioning glance, which he seemed not to perceive. The

priest felt a certain delicacy in asking about the subject of the lecture, and he contented himself with saying, aloud:

"The writer of this letter is certainly one of heaven's privileged few. What a sensitive and exquisite nature she must possess!"

As he continued reading, there came a deep sigh from the involuntary witness of this scene.

"As I continued to observe these odic radiations—I may so express myself, for I have studied Reichenbach—the conviction grew upon me that you are in intimate communication with certain occult fraternities, which my studies lead me to believe exist in various parts of the world. For many reasons, deduced from varied and personal experiences, I not only believe that such occult brotherhoods exist, but that their psychic auras constitute an element for the elevation and amelioration of the condition of mankind. Something in my judgment, or rather, in my soul, tells me that in some way, you are connected with such a source of beneficent spirituality.

"I have always hoped that the time might come when I should be able, not to enter into direct relation with these superior intellects—my desire is not so presuming,—but to become in some degree en rapport with them, to have my feeble efforts encouraged. But, when I make a spiritual diagnosis, I find in myself only weakness, doubt, uncertainty, vacillating faith, sudden discouragements quickly followed however by bold hopes."

"Unhappy soul," cried the priest, "how well I understand your troubles! I, like you, firmly believe that there are beings upon earth who watch over us, and help us in our efforts to attain to heaven. I, like you, have sometimes been conscious of their presence; in my hours of despondency, I have felt the touch of a mystic hand, a protecting power seems to say to me: "Forward, brother, put weariness behind you—it is unworthy of you."

At these words, Miss McDonald's heart beat even faster. She had become resigned to the position, which, a few moments before had seemed unbearable.

Albert continued reading, his voice vibrant with emotion. "By what right can I ask for recognition from these great minds, I, who cannot yet emancipate myself from the influence of other souls? Alas, I only flit between contradictory impressions, first guided by one, then by another; I have yet to learn the alphabet of psychic science that I may set myself free from the thousand influences and suggestions of other souls and of the inferior spirits with which the air is peopled."

"But," cried Albert, "this is my own diagnosis; she describes my soul as exactly as if she had some highly specialized faculty of psychic observation. And how well she depicts her doubts, and her discouragements. Indeed, hers is a sensitive soul!" Again he picked up the paper to read. Miss McDonald had quite forgotten that her position was a

flagrant breach of the conventionalities, she had become lost in the pleasure of listening.

"I must do myself this justice, if my self-scrutiny is to be impartial—my aspirations are unquestionably earnest, lofty, and ardent. What I lack, alas, is the fortitude to follow a difficult path without deviating. I have been obliged to hew my way unaided through the brambles and thorn-hedges of life; for, up till now, I have never found a companion brave enough to attempt with me the thorny path. There are many whose warm hearts are directed by the noblest emotions, but their minds are not sufficiently enlightened to serve as a balance against these emotions when they grow to be excessive and to which they eventually become slaves. And others, endowed with splendid faculties, carry in their bosoms hearts of flint. And to progress in the spiritual life, surely a vibrant, sympathetic heart must be united with a healthy mind."

The hand, in which Albert held the letter, fell to his knee.

"It was I," said he, in deep regret, who sacrilegiously doubted that women were seriously interested in mystic studies, I who denied them the search for the evolution of the spirit! I am rightly reprimanded. The woman who wrote this letter is eminently the superior of the majority of men with whom I have had occasion to discuss hyperphysical realities! How she analyzes every sentiment, each in its turn! How precisely she pictures them and with what remarkable judgment! So she, like me,

has struggled all these years alone; she, too, has been obliged to concentrate within herself all her emotions, her desires, her cherished thoughts, her fervent aspirations toward the realms of the spirit! And when her poor overflowing heart sought to unburden its confidences to those it deemed noble, she, too, met only indifference, the emptiness of minds which can comprehend nothing spiritual, perhaps even mockery and sarcasm! Oh, poor tender being, I can understand you; my soul has suffered the same feelings that vibrate in yours, and many times mine has bemoaned its loneliness. But I have always felt that we must be brave, that the day of recompense will suddenly burst upon us in a glorious dawning. Then we shall have battled long and perseveringly and given to the beings who watch over us, a guarantee that we have followed, not a simple emotional enthusiasm, but a deep and lasting faith. Our destiny is God, and we beg to be shown the road that leads to His feet. I am carried away by this letter; it expresses my profoundest and most intimate convictions."

In listening to Albert's comments, made beyond question, out of the sincerity of his heart, an indefinable, but no less delicious emotion took possession of Miss McDonald's heart. Could it be possible that this novice, in following the same path, experienced identical sentiment? Did all souls in the throes of the gradual evolution, undergo this phase of doubt, isolation, and discouragement? The man who still held her letter in his hand, had certainly

run the gamut of suffering. She knew then to what trials he had been a victim; and in her heart she pitied him.

The Magus remained in profound abstraction. The priest glanced at him, and continued reading, his voice resonant with thrilling tenderness.

"For years I devoted myself with untiring energy to purely intellectual studies, in the hope that they might enable me to tear the veil from the fearful and mysterious enigma of existence. I have gained from my studies—what? Bitter deception—or, better, the still bitterer truth that researches involving the intellect alone restrict, instead of extend, the horizon of the soul. A barren gain, but is it not true? I have now abandoned without a pang my intellectual studies, so as to consecrate my time entirely to acquiring some comprehension of the spirit, of my intuitive faculties, of the principle of my Ego. I am convinced that, once acquired, that knowledge would lead me to the apprehension of the Universe, of which the creature Man is a summary, a synthesis."

"Indeed," Albert interrupted the reading, "the microcosm, reproduces the macrocosm, physical sciences peremptorily prove this. Ah, the years that I have spent in my observatory, analyzing and trying to reconstruct this synthesis! I loved my telescope, because it seemed to bring me nearer to God. Night after night, I scanned the heavens, always with fresh interest. Then, I turned to the infinitesimal and sought the origin of life; each microscopic world my glass discovered reiterated the infinite greatness

of God and the sublime harmony of the laws of creation. But *where* was Parabrahm? Thus it was that I reached the indubitable conclusion that intellectual studies alone could never lead me to an intimate knowledge of the Creator."

Ethel McDonald listened hungrily to the comments that the young adept made aloud, talking partly to himself, partly to his master. Not only was she no longer displeased at hearing her letter discussed, but she awaited impatiently, though perhaps unconsciously, the opinion that Balthazar's companion would pass upon the writer.

Albert read on :

"Some time ago, I made up my mind to apply to you. That I might be able to give you a thoroughly explicit account of my mental and spiritual health, I determined to note, day by day, the incessant fluctuation and changes which mark my daily life; but I have failed dismally. Can the melody the wind sings to the hoary forest oaks be reproduced on paper? Have we words to describe the subtle shading of golden glory thrown broadcast in the sky by a sun-bathed cloud? It is as useless to try to embody in phrases the sublime emotion of a soul in ecstatic momentary contact with the source of its being; would it not be folly to attempt it? Conception of such infinite heights would cease to exist for one rash enough to endeavor to depict them. My dear Master—permit me to so address you—my fruitless efforts toward expression have dwindled into vague reveries.

"But, though I am unable to explain myself clearly, I feel, in the depths of my soul, that I am in occult relation with benevolent beings of the psychic world, whose classification I cannot determine.

"Sometimes, in my dreams or in my moments of spiritual ecstasy, my soul becomes more than sensitive—I am conscious of the harmonies that fill the ethereal world, the whisperings of the million zephyrs that wanton in psychic zones,—strange thoughts are born in me. I feel, for instance,—that a great mystery is involved in my life, that it will be unveiled here and in this incarnation. This thought has become a conviction, a certainty; it has caused me much mental anguish. However, I have hidden it in my most secret heart, and, under a mask of calm content, it is safe from profane scrutiny.

"To you I admit that this calm seems to me to be the pregnant silence that precedes the storm. It compels me to force down energies, which, should a struggle be necessary in the accomplishment of my mysterious mission I shall sorely need.

"I feel at times that there are innumerable spheres in my being, mental, intellectual, spiritual, divine; they must constitute the means whereby we may ascend toward the Supreme Principle, God, the Real, the Only, the Center, the Burning Heart of Love and Life, from which creation draws its vital sustenance. These spheres form a mighty spiritual ladder. Rising from an abyss, its momentous height reaches to divine splendor. But how ascend it? Who will lift the veil that hides from me the innu-

merable worlds that form the Infinite Perspective of the Divine? I am sure that the soul's destiny is to inhabit such spheres, each in turn, until in some perfect world final evolution is attained. I realize that only my assiduous efforts can regulate the vibrations of my being so as to bring them into harmony with the perfect and eternal vibrations of the transcendent worlds. Then and only then, shall I stand face to face with the unclouded eternal truths of God!"

Albert overcome by emotion, could not proceed. His breast heaved, a sob rose to his throat.

"What an admirable soul," he cried, when he had recovered his voice. "She carries heaven in her bosom!"

Miss McDonald was weeping. The reading of her letter had brought back the very agitations it described. Without a doubt, the sympathetic tone of the reader had affected his listener, even as her words reacted on him. Having controlled his emotion, Albert read on:

"And now, dear Master, my request, will the occult Order with which I feel you are in direct relation, assist me? Will it show me compassion, out of sympathy for a troubled soul? I beg for help that I may fulfil to the last degree my destiny. I pray God for courage and determination that I may not falter, no matter how painful the upward path shall be!

"Do I need to tell you, wise Master, that I am at present in the critical period of transition; any tran-

sition is painful, mine is sometimes agonizing. I need strength, I need sympathy—they are as necessary to me as the air that I breathe. Worldlings may laugh, but You—You understand—will you not aid my struggling soul?

“The combat against Self, against the human Ego is cruel and nerve-racking; little by little it isolates us from our friends, it narrows our social horizon—sometimes I ask myself if the victory I may gain will be sufficient compensation for the enormous sum of effort and sacrifice that I shall have expended. But every hesitation is followed by renewed courage, though even the pride, which the triumph affords, does not hide from me the surprising strength of the malevolent influence that, in discouraging further effort, paralyzes my soul.

“Ah, dear Master, do you not see how much I need guidance, enlightenment, instruction, sympathy, and—dare I add it—a little affection.”

In spite of his efforts, the young man could not restrain a sob. “Poor soul! poor wounded soul!” cried he, his eyes wet with tears, “you, too, ascend your Calvary, you, too, forcing your difficult way, shoulder the heavy burden, not a cross of wood, such as the Saviour bore, but the sum and aggregate of material attractions and of the moral deficiencies of mankind. I understand only too well the sadness and doubt, which, at times, seems to overwhelm you, it is, indeed, a true nostalgia of the soul, a faintness of the spirit, when life seems a thankless task and heaven itself looms dark without a ray of

hope. Then it is that one longs to die ; even Jesus faltered under the weight of his cross.

“ But the soul like Jesus rises not under the scourge of the cruel centurion, but at the vision of a distant golden light dawning through clouds, drawn back by angelic hands. That light gives us heart ; we lift our heads and renew our journey, a little less discouraged. Then—bruised, torn, by the thorns of the roadside, we look anxiously about us, right and left, in search of the sympathy and affection which could strengthen our souls against the fatigues of this painful ascension. Alas—we look in vain. Barrenness, indifference, that is all that humanity offers us ; encouragement comes to us only from above. However, I have always believed in my deepest heart that for each soul there is a sister-soul, and, that when the two vibrate in harmony, according to the law of attraction, they should meet. For many years, I have longed for a companion soul, in whom I could confide my thoughts, sure of comprehension and sympathy, one who would understand and share my aspirations. Ah ! to go through life with such a being, hand in hand, children of God, mutually encouraging each other in hours of darkness, rejoicing together in spiritual happiness, when Heaven should grant a ray of Divine Light ! . . . Dreams, empty dreams ! I have waited long, and in vain ! From God alone can I hope for succor ! However, I know well that, as long as we live upon this earth, we cannot be completely exempted from earthly laws. Our nature’s longing to possess, even in this globe,

a pure and spiritual affection, is the legitimate outcome of those laws. The beloved creature that wrote this letter, is a prey to the same longing, she is widowed in soul, she suffers in her isolation. May you, good Master, support her, may your great and generous sympathy relieve her in her need! God bless and protect you both, noble children of the Eternal!"

The letter lay unheeded on Albert's knee; his glance, full of profound emotion, wandered in space. He was lost in reflection; and, perhaps his spirit dwelt a little longer than his sacerdotal character should have permitted, upon that last paragraph, that cried in despair for sympathy,—affection. But at that particular moment, he was not considering his own position in the world; his soul had taken its flight into psychic regions replete with mystic spheres, whose rare yet vaporous atmosphere, was shot with thousands of brilliant radiations. Horizons bathed in the silver brightness of dawn greeted his eyes, and realms of luxuriant vegetation and pleasant shade, through whose vistas an equatorial sun sent brilliant golden rays. His thoughts were reflected to him in images; and he gazed at these pictures of his own creation in wondering delight. The enchanting possibilities of his life were unfurled before him like a magnificent panorama. Suddenly, they were arrested; he became conscious of Balthazar's glance fixed upon him.

While Albert's imagination rioted in these reflections, Miss McDonald struggled with like emotions.

Her heart had beat rapidly during the comments of the novice upon the paragraphs of her letter which he had just read. He, then, had endured the same soul-sickness, and had sought in vain a little encouragement, sympathy or affection upon his difficult path, his self-imposed Calvary. Like herself, he had never encountered in another the helping hand of encouragement, the gentle warp of affection, the expression of heartfelt sympathy. Weary at length, despairing to find on earth the satisfaction of his heart's desires, he looked to God alone for assistance. And yet, his last words, his final comments, had shown that, in spite of the elevated and ascetic sentiments he had expressed during the reading of the letter, in the depth of his heart there smouldered a spark, which, should he meet his sister soul, might flame into a terrestrial passion. At that point, she forcibly broke off her reflection the frantic throbbing of her heart, her heavy and oppressed breathing, frightened her. She hid her face in her hands, unconscious of her scalding tears. When Albert began again to read, she raised her head to listen. He read :

“I believe that the following is the only explanation of my psychological condition—namely, that I am, as I have said before, in a state of peculiar and extreme sensitiveness, that might be defined: “Die, to be born again.” Perhaps, during this crisis, my psychic being, my higher Ego is to disengage itself from earthly trammels, that it may emerge into the light of Heaven and take its flight.

[Faint, illegible handwriting, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

monies, seemingly from invisible and distant orchestras.

“The gentle vibrations with which these melodious sounds filled the ambient air, gradually dissipated the nebulous vapor. Ethereal, light-dispensing beings began to appear; they were decked in flowers, and radiant with joy. I felt that these were the dwellers of the celestial sphere, where all is Love, Harmony and Happiness. Love reigns there, an absolute sovereign, and shared with his beautiful subjects, the treasures of his kingdom. I understood then that I was present in the transcendental sphere of the affective emotions, where suffering hearts are comforted, where there is found purest satisfaction for those who seek true love, because their desires are sincere and spiritual.

“I gazed in admiration at these happy beings, the felicity of whose existence was written on their faces, when suddenly a woman, or rather an angel, separated herself from them, and advanced towards me. She overtowered the others in height, and she seemed more ethereal and gentler than her companions, though her bearing was majestic as a queen's. She took my hand in hers and bade me welcome with a beautiful smile that won my heart. She spoke to me—her voice was low and musical as the harmonious murmur of an *Æolian* harp.

“Thou art welcome among us,” said she, “orphaned heart, whose desires have been misunderstood, whose aspirations are unsatisfied, who hast never known a being worthy of thy affection. Here,

all is love, the heart is ever enchanted. Envelop thyself in our happiness, dear child of earth, breathe the perfume exhaled by satisfied hearts, abandon thyself to the delights my children find in the satisfaction of their pure and transcendental loves." She ceased speaking, and, bending towards me, she touched my forehead with the star that surmounted her crown. At the magical contact, my whole being was transformed. Fear and oppression vanished, I became light-hearted, free and strong. Thought, reflection, meditation were annihilated, and in their place I was conscious of an ineffable sensation of supreme life, superterrestrial existence, full of the purest and complete joys of spiritual love, absolute felicity in the satisfaction of the affective emotions. I experienced then the joy of having and being loved with an intensity ordinary mortals may not comprehend."

"Poor soul, thirsty for tenderness," cried the young priest. "She possesses an inexhaustible fund of love that has never found response, an infinitely rich and invaluable treasure. Beautiful soul, may the Eternal grant you complete satisfaction, not in dreams, but in reality. May you find here upon this earth your companion soul, your other self, that with it you may take your flight to higher spheres!"

Miss McDonald listened, in quivering attention. Albert's enthusiastic prayer came from the very depths of his heart. What was he thinking now? Why was he at the mercy of tumultuous emotion? Why did he struggle? Why did she weep? Could

it be that here were two souls of like polarity? Had a psychic ethereal current animated two souls that vibrated in unison? Had God in His goodness sent a ray from the celestial sphere to two earthly hearts, alone until now, far on their way toward Him, seeking each for the other? Still in profound abstraction, the Magus silently asked of Heaven a benediction for these children.

Albert again took up the letter. "There I was in my rightful element. In breathing the pure ether that formed the atmosphere of that blessed region, I seemed to assume absolute knowledge, I possessed what might be creative power—I was absolutely happy Alas! it was—only a dream! When I returned to earth, when I was clothed again in my human Self, I was filled with disgust. I was once more in the clutches of discouragement, again alone, without friends, without affection do you wonder that I wept bitter tears!"

The letter ended with a fresh and pressing appeal to Marius for assistance. Albert could not read the last lines—his emotion overpowered him. He laid the letter down mechanically, and sat wrapped in meditation.

Balthazar had observed with interest the effect produced by the letter on his young friend. After a few moments of silence, he asked him—

"What thoughts does this missive suggest to you?"

"It reveals to me a world of thought so vast, profound, and varied, and at the same time so elevated

and sublime, that it leaves me utterly confounded," replied the young priest, earnestly. "The diversity of the impressions this woman relates, some brilliant and hopeful, others somber and despairing, astounds me. Divine flights have taken her to heaven itself; she has been assailed by dreadful torments. She has undergone, every emotion, from acute anguish to those celestial joys experienced in their hopes by all souls thirsty for love and sympathy. May Heaven protect her, may an impenetrable psychic atmosphere shelter her from the coldness of the earth, from the indifference of human hearts! And you, dear Master, surround her by your kindness, be her shield, lavish upon her the loving sympathy for which her poor soul cries!"

As he spoke, Albert turned toward the Master, so that Miss McDonald could see his face plainly. She was struck by the nobility of his features, which revealed the unusual combination of a gentle nature and an energetic will. The tender brown eyes, the broad forehead, the expression that marked him a mystic and a dreamer, the lines of sadness, and of loving kindness, made a deep impression upon her mind.

Soon afterwards, Balthazar and Albert rose and returned to the house. Their departure was a great relief to Miss McDonald, who hastened immediately to the sanctuary.

Kneeling in her accustomed place, at the feet of Sophia, she gazed at the statue for several minutes, then, bent her head upon the rail of the prie-dieu. Her troubled soul was tossed in a whirl of burning

emotion. She tried in vain to analyze her feelings, there was nothing but confusion in her mind. She endeavored to persuade herself that this excessive perturbation was due to the exposition of the history of her soul to a stranger. But, for all her reasoning, she could not hide from herself the strong conviction that this was not the only cause of her present agitation. Tears in her eyes, she lifted her gaze to the face of Sophia, and prayed that the motive of her agitation might be removed, that her peace might be restored, and that the Master might not be held to blame for the disturbance he had involuntarily caused her But she dared not continue in this strain, for she felt that Sophia could read in her heart that the only true cause of her trouble had not been expressed. She feared either to pray or not to pray : she dared not question herself too closely concerning her state of mind. Sinking upon the prie-dieu, she burst into tears. Finally, a little calmer but still sad at heart, she returned to her rooms.

After an hour of revery, a great peace came to her. She arose and looked in her mirror. A woman unconsciously wishes to see the traces any emotion may leave upon her face. She was arranging her hair, when her maid came to tell her that Dr. Marius had called to inquire for her.

“ Ask him into the salon, Mary, I will come immediately.”

She paid more than the usual attention to her toilet, and after bathing away all traces of her tears,

she went to the salon. She forced herself to be calm, and tried to assume an expression of gaiety.

"You are looking very well," said Balthazar, after the greeting, "I am delighted that the routine of my retreat is favorable to your health. You should be thankful that your earnest effort to become a saint, a mystic, have taken from you none of your terrestrial charm,—indeed, quite the contrary."

As he spoke, his eyes never left Miss Ethel's. She felt his glance penetrate the farthest corners of her soul, and she knew that he was reading all that had passed there and what was now passing. She decided, therefore, to speak to him frankly. She launched into an account of her mishaps, not without blushing and hesitancy. She recounted her anxiety, her mixed emotions in the presence of a delicate situation, in which chance had placed her; she told him how she had determined to fly, how she decided to remain that further awkwardness should be avoided; and finally, she described her fright when the reading of the letter began. Then she added:

"It was very unkind of you, Master, to do as you did without my permission; and that I should never have given you. What will this young disciple whom I do not even know think of me?"

"You forget, my child, that he does not even know who wrote the letter, all the advantage is on your side. Thanks to the comments he made upon your letter, you already know his moral and spiritual character. Allow me to add that he possesses a beautiful soul. More than this, your letter has

proved to him that there are women whose souls are greatly developed: so you have been the means of correcting his erroneous opinion, excusable enough, for his studies have kept him from worldly life, where he would have learned to know women and appreciate them at their true value."

"Then he is a scholar?"

"A great scholar, my child. He is familiar with all the natural sciences. He is particularly well versed in astronomy, also in the study of the infinitesimal worlds made visible by the microscope. And far from sinking into materialism, as so many scholars do who will not lift their eyes above the physical world, these sciences have constantly inspired him to seek the Author of the laws that govern the world and make possible the harmony of the Universe. Doubts have at times besieged him. For the very reason that he knows the laws of matter so well, he understands that they have their source in the realm of the immaterial; and he realizes that the Immaterial, the Source of all Force cannot be studied with balances and dynamometers, in physical and chemical laboratories. Yet in these laboratories and by the aid of instruments, he has obtained the first indications of the existence of the real origin of all force. He has come here to study hyperphysical science: he is devoting to the work all the faculties of a soul well advanced on its path of evolution, a soul that ardently desires to reach the deific abode of the Creator of all things. And that is what you also desire to know, is it not, my child?"

"It is my highest aspiration," ejaculated Miss McDonald.

"I came to tell you that this evening at eight o'clock, we will have our first general conversation in the large salon. The subject will be chosen when we are assembled"—"Oh, not this evening, dear Master. The emotions I have passed through have exhausted my strength. To-morrow evening, if you wish," she answered, with an apologetic smile.

"Very well, then—to-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

And the Magus departed.

At the close of that eventful day, the young priest went to his room, said his customary prayer for once fraught with distractions, and retired. However, he could not sleep, he tossed in vain upon his pillow hoping for refreshing slumber. The letter he had read that afternoon persisted in his memory. He pictured its writer as old and disillusioned. He understood perfectly the exquisite sentiments she had expressed, the anxious doubts, the sad discouragements: they were his own experience of life. He sympathized with her in her sufferings, was happy in her moments of bliss, he almost shared her ecstatic flights toward superterrestrial spheres. He recalled her desperate appeals with deep emotion: he almost heard her cries for sympathy. He also stood in need of affection: he called his heart a lonely orphan. Then he asked himself with vague wonder, "Has she ever loved?" If it were true that she had ever given her love to a human being; he must

have been a demi-god ! She could never have loved a man who was not superior to all other men. A soul like hers could give itself only to a soul equally grand and endowed with perfect purity. Thinking over his own life, he was plunged in new depths of thought. He breathed a deep sigh, and, passing his delicate hand across his forehead, as if to drive away unpleasant memories, he said to himself, " My God ! I have consecrated to Thee my soul. Why dost Thou bring back to me anguish that I thought to have cast into the depths of oblivion ? Let me rest in peace ! Let my heart beat only for Thee, my Lord, my Father ! "

A tear coursed down his cheek. Suddenly, as if ashamed of his emotion, he arose, and bathed his forehead in cold water. The refreshing sensation and the force of his will changed his odic condition by calming the emotional cells of his brain. He seated himself in an armchair ; the trend of his ideas completely changed.

After a few moments of meditation, he asked himself why it was that souls earnestly seeking the path of spiritual evolution never addressed themselves to ministers of creeds for aid and counsel. He was obliged to admit, not without sorrow, that these ministers were all bound down to the observance of dogma, to certain unchangeable beliefs ; they were permitted to give only such advice as would be in harmony with these dogmas and creeds. Souls that had reached a certain degree of evolution, had lost faith in such empty teachings,—where then could

they find satisfaction? Their aspirations were toward a much higher religious ideal, the grandeur of which astonishes them.

Before the possibilities and the sublimity of such an ideal they become faint and dizzy, and they dare not venture on the upward road without a guide, without the protection of some one who has trodden the path before them, one who has conquered the difficulties, and reached the mystic heights. Albert was forced to admit that the ministers of creeds were far indeed below the mystic heights.

"Moreover," he added, "I am here myself under the protection of my Master, Balthazar, that I may learn to scale those heights."

CHAPTER V.

THE next evening Miss McDonald gowned herself simply, but not without a touch of coquetry; woman would probably retain just a suspicion of Mother Eve at the threshold of heaven itself. A few moments before eight o'clock Balthazar called for her.

"It is good of you to come," she said. "Though willing enough, I fear it would have embarrassed me to go alone."

The priest had preceded them; he was seated in the salon at one of the far windows, fingering the leaves of a book that lay on the table before him. He had discarded his priestly garb, and was dressed as a plain civilian. Balthazar formally introduced the two, mentioning their first names only.

The majority of American women of the cultured class are finely proportioned in youth, owing to the rigorous physical exercise that is part of their education. Miss McDonald was a rare example of perfection in American womanhood. Slightly above medium height, slender, graceful, of admirable figure and brilliant coloring, a trifle tanned by wind and sun, she was beautiful; but more than that, she was spiritualized. Her beauty of soul showed plainly in the finely chiseled features and clear eyes. The

severe cut of her somber gown set off to advantage the well-rounded outlines of her form and the distinction of her carriage. A rosy blush mantled her cheek for a moment as she realized herself in the presence of one knowing the inmost thoughts of her soul—the intimate sentiments that she had expressed in her letter to the Magus. She consoled herself quickly with the thought that the young man did not know who was the author of that letter, and stepping forward, she extended her hand in cordial greeting.

Albert rose and bowed profoundly, barely touching the hand she offered. He was strongly agitated, and could scarcely account to himself for his emotion. He felt immediately drawn to her by an irresistible sympathy, as well as by an intimation that he was in the presence of a truly superior woman. The commonplace remarks incidental to all first meetings followed, and while they conversed the Magus regarded them thoughtfully. He was considering their souls, not their bodies, and the brilliant aura that surrounded them. This aura was of a bluish white in the neighborhood of the young woman, deepening to a rich golden yellow when it encircled Albert. Balthazar fervently blessed them both—his children, as he affectionately called them.

“Let us meditate a moment,” he suggested, “to invoke the benedictions of our heavenly guardians.”

Each obeyed, bowing the head and clasping the hands as for prayer. After a brief interval of silence Balthazar continued speaking:

"My dear children," he said, "you have come to me that together we may seek eternal truths, the knowledge of which will lead us to God—to the faithful and integral accomplishment of our destiny. You already realize that the task is difficult, that it requires constant battle to overcome the obstacles that beset us, and that temptations, though mastered a hundred times, still continue to assail us. We know also, through long and sad experience, that we are possessed of two opposite forces—the power of good and the power of evil; the one, proving an angel, lies more or less latent in our nature; the other being a demon, an animal, is continually struggling to govern us. The first points toward heaven, the other holds before our eyes a red banner upon which is inscribed all the joys we may procure through our animal nature, if we but close our hearts to the suggestions of our higher being. It is the battle between these two forces that constitute our life. To conquer means to unite with God; to lose means to remain stationary, and sometimes, alas, to retrograde in psychic evolution. You not only understand this, but in your two natures, I am happy to say, the angel has conquered the animal, and to such a degree that I trust the demon may never trouble you again."

At this point the two novices could not repress a murmur of assent.

"Now, another phase presents itself. The animal is conquered, it is no longer necessary to guard against this great evil. Your soul, free from its

chief torment, is at liberty to soar in the direction pointed out by the angel, whose voice perpetually urges it higher. This phase is still more difficult; it is the birth of a new being—a superior Ego. What is the route that this novice should follow? With no experience to guide, how shall a choice be made among the many roads, each represented as the true way to eternal happiness? The soul seeks enlightenment in prayer, but too often falls only deeper into perplexity. As through a mist it sees a thousand paths partly defined, each having some charm, but none sufficiently distinct to decide the soul in its course. Doubt comes, followed by discouragement. Wretched in its isolation, our poor soul looks yearningly at the existing religions of the world, only to discover that each claims exclusive possession of truth; and each shows in support of its claim a long list of martyrs, who died loudly proclaiming the divine origin of the belief for which they gave their lives. And even to-day zealous adherents are found among the different religions willing to renew these sacrifices. Our soul concludes there must be some truth in all these religions, and through diligent study, attempts to separate the grain from the chaff. This process of separation is a difficult task, but through prayer, through aspiration and sincere effort, the soul is able to place itself in harmony with the ideal it is seeking, and builds up a foundation of faith. This is a mere beginning. When once we penetrate the outer surface, we are filled with the conviction that

we have found the true way. Others probing yet deeper in their incessant efforts to reach the eternal, are persuaded to call on science. They hope that by studying the laws of the Universe, they may arrive at a better comprehension of its Author, nor are they mistaken. In these scientific studies they soon find proof that the pretensions of materialists and atheists are false. These latter make matter omnipotent, and narrow the field of their research—in a word, their science is only pseudo science—a study incomplete and imperfect. Is my meaning plain, my children ? ”

“In my humble opinion, Master,” Albert responded, you have defined perfectly the course that a soul pursues during the period of evolution, and exactly indicated the phases through which it passes—doubt, endeavor, doubt again, discouragement, then new born hope finally linked with firm conviction. Science is certainly an immense aid in the development of intelligence and judgment ; it gives us a just apprehension of things, and enables us to distinguish the true from the false. It is indispensable in philosophical studies, and above all, in metaphysics. More than this, science elevates thought. It is through my astronomical studies, principally, that I have been inspired with an insatiable desire to solve the mystery of life. Wondering at the harmony that reigns within the Universe, I have sought with impassioned interest the eternal laws that regulate this harmony. Through a knowledge of this sublime concert of worlds I have

endeavored to construct the universal synthesis. To this I have added the disclosures of my microscope,—the infinitesimal worlds, containing other words yet smaller than themselves, and the minute cells of which all bodies are composed. The various and mysterious rôles enacted by these human organisms excited my admiration, and I was inspired with a feeling of adoration when I allowed my soul to expand toward the author of these masterpieces.

“These marvelous revelations of science have forced upon me a conviction that each being is destined to play a part in this grand cosmic drama that is being constantly enacted. But what is this part? What is our duty? Why are we here, and where are we going? These questions are vital and require a definite and just solution. The first step in the right direction, I am convinced, is an analysis of self. We must study our own sentiments and idiosyncrasies. Why, I ask, does such soul contain these elements of good and bad, for I am certain that both exist. The pseudo-philosophers assert in vain that the bad is only negation—the repression or alteration of the good. This assertion, in my mind, is mere sentimentality.”

Albert paused for a moment, then continued with eagerness.

“What soul once inspired with an ardent desire toward evolution has not been subjected to these pitiless assaults—the incessant struggle of the evil with the good! And this evil force seems at times to be endowed with will, with intelligence. Do not

the attacks come most frequently during discouragement and moral weakness? It would seem that this evil influence is gifted with the power of reason, with discrimination—almost with personality. I will not put forward the question, 'what is good and what is evil?' Philosophers and metaphysicians have made this the theme of numerous volumes; mere debating of the question accomplishes nothing. We have conscience to guide us; we know perfectly when we do right, and when we disregard ethical laws and act contrary to our sense of justice. We fortunately have passed the period that is concerned with the doing of evil. The question that confronts us now is how to do the most good possible, how to most fully develop the divine attributes of the soul, not that it shall merely dream the spirit of its own intent, feasting on fanciful thoughts that have no visible result, but that it may through positive spirituality become a material factor through the grand scheme of the Universe. One soul when thus developed casts forth divine radiations that influence for good all sensitive souls with whom it comes in contact, as through a magnetic current. What, then, are the most efficient means to bring the soul in touch with divinity, with its Author? I believe implicitly that evolution will not cease until the soul merges into the spirit of God, whence it sprung; but even in this last divine stage, I am convinced that each soul will retain its individuality, and enjoy to the utmost the peace that shall encompass it. It is to discover the most direct means of

evolution that I have placed myself under the blessed tutorage of our beloved Master."

"And I for the same purpose," Miss Ethel could not refrain from adding, thoroughly impressed as she was by Albert's eloquence, and by the confidence and fervor with which he expressed himself.

She had listened with marked interest and seemed to experience the same emotions and to fully share the convictions of her companion in novitiate. She had shown especial interest when he had spoken of the temptations to which the soul is incessantly a prey. It was the life of her own soul that he had described so truthfully, with its sufferings, its doubts and its aspirations.

"He has spoken truly, my Master," she said. "Both you and Mr. Albert, in my opinion, have exactly described the evolution of the human soul. I, too, have passed through the phases you have discussed—agony, doubt, aspiration, unspeakable joy. Each soul, I am convinced, must go through the same experience; none is exempt. And the more sensitive the soul, the more acute the suffering, but likewise the joy is manifold."

"My presence here now at the house of our beloved Master," she added with a sigh, "proves that while I have passed through all these stages, I am still far from having conquered my doubts and discouragements. I am seeking with ardor the true path that will lead me from uncertainty to perfect contentment—to the contemplation of all that pertains to the celestial spheres. I believe, as does

Mr. Albert, that the soul may evolve to the point where it shall behold divinity itself, face to face."

"It is true, my child," Balthazar said gravely. "A faith such as yours should be able to scale even the thoughts of the Most High."

"I was also greatly interested, Master," she continued, "in what you said in regard to the religions practised on earth, each one claiming to expound absolute truth. Even I, with my small learning, have studied some of these religious systems with their dogmas and creeds, and in each one have I found some exalted thoughts, some rules of discipline good to follow. But in none of them have I found precepts that entirely satisfy the aspirations of my soul. I am now studying the ancient religions of India. In some of these I find a real satisfaction, for many of their practises show profound sincerity and earnest attempts to gain true spirituality. But it is impossible for me to accept the dogma of re-incarnation in all its phases. The priests of India insist that in this dogma is found the only principle in accord with divine justice, that this gives a new chance to souls born under adverse circumstances and hindered in their efforts toward evolution—conditions they were powerless to alter in a former life. The most elementary law of justice, then entitles them to a new incarnation on earth, in which they may find perhaps opportunities to fulfil their destinies, under circumstances more favorable to their evolution. Perhaps my own degree of evolution is not sufficiently elevated for me to comprehend this

mystery of reincarnation, upon which the Buddhists and Brahmans base their faith. But even so, faith fails me. The Brahmans say one must believe, not reason, that this is a dogma. It is, however, impossible to convince me that the law of divine justice will force me to return to this earth in some body of which I can make no choice, and thus compel me to pass anew through all the perplexities of an earthly existence, perhaps endowed with less force than in a previous life, and therefore more susceptible to temptation and evil influence. It seems to me that this would be to retrograde rather than to advance in evolution—that it is condemnation and punishment rather than a favor to the soul. The Hindoos, moreover, insist that this flesh and bone incarnation shall be repeated innumerable times. This dogma is repugnant to me, I think it cruel, horrible, and I cannot believe a just God has decreed it. Will you explain this to me, my Master?"

Miss McDonald expressed herself with intense earnestness, her cheeks glowed, and her fine eyes burned with the fire of her emotion. Albert stood as one hypnotized. Such strength of soul, such profound science in a woman was a revelation to him. All that she had said was pregnant with reason, with understanding, and he marveled.

Balthazar, in replying, spoke slowly and with a solemnity that plainly showed how much importance he attached to this doctrine of reincarnation, and how anxious he was to make his pupils understand it.

"The mystery of reincarnation," he said, "which is made the foundation of the majority of the Oriental religions, has never been completely elucidated even by the Orientals themselves, for they do not thoroughly understand it. In moments of clairvoyance they have discovered some things they could not explain, and for this reason have given out the dogma 'ONE MUST BELIEVE!' And this reincarnation is a dogma in all their creeds. When it is necessary to impose a belief on the people, a belief that contains, perhaps, a good moral principle, but cannot be demonstrated, nor sustain an assault of steady, methodical reasoning, the priests make it a dogma—that is a fundamental tenet of their religion. Generally they pretend that this dogma is a revelation directly from God himself, a God whose purposes are impenetrable—which it is necessary to believe absolutely, entirely, with the head bowed in veneration.

"Unfortunately for these religions, but fortunately for the evolution of the human soul, our century questions, reasons, and demands enlightenment. Each man wishes to know for himself, and is not willing to believe blindly in the 'ipse dixit' of another man. It is a question of the fate of his soul, the most precious part of his being, the higher Ego that shall survive after death. Naturally, he has a desire to learn as much as possible concerning the fate of this Ego in that other life and the conditions that will surround it. He seeks a solution of this problem, he inquires for the best schools where he

may learn the most advanced theories on the subject ; he seeks to know what are the duties he must perform here below, in order to assure his soul the greatest freedom and felicity beyond the tomb. Experience teaches him that blind and irrational submission to all authority, pretending to spring from a divine source, the authority exercised by the autocratic princes of the past age, and by the constitutional monarchs of to-day, is anything but uplifting. He becomes convinced that the pretenders to this authority generally have only their personal well-being at heart, and that their efforts aim to hold the masses in a state of inferiority—both intellectual and moral—that will assure perfect submission and a firm belief in the divine prerogative of their masters.

“ Man thus bidden to always curb his intellect, to believe without comprehending, has rebelled, and now, asserts his rights. He demands explanations, he questions ; he calls for reasonable, intelligent, responses that will carry conviction to his perplexed soul. His investigations in the domain of science have made him methodical in his examination. He has learned through science that phenomena, apparently entirely independent, are in reality but the links of a chain that holds together all the units of which the Universe is composed, from the minutest microbe to the largest planet. These methodical habits of examination the scientist employs in solving even such questions as this doctrine of reincarnation, preached by the priests of the Orient.”

"How glad I shall be to learn your exact opinion on this important subject," said Albert earnestly.

"Both truth and falsehood are contained in this doctrine of reincarnation," Balthazar continued. "Beyond a doubt certain human beings are reincarnated in flesh and blood within this world ; but it is an error to contend that all human souls return an incalculable number of times to earthly existence. I shall try to explain this truth as clearly as possible.

"In past ages, the priests of India, and of the neighboring countries, were true ascetics ; they lived in monasteries, the sites of which were carefully chosen, and surrounded themselves with conditions most favorable to the spiritualization of their being. These retreats were isolated, separated from all pernicious influences, and surrounded by a pure odic atmosphere, which they improved still more through the agency of mystical fires kept constantly burning. This was a ceremony of their religion ; The sacred fires were fed with fragrant wood, and were stirred into brilliant flame at nightfall. These priests led chaste and tranquil lives, partook sparingly of food, and reduced as far as possible all their physical needs. Existence passed for them with perfect serenity in the shelter of these monasteries, the doors of which never closed behind them. Through incessant prayer they implored the divine powers to reveal to them the mysteries of the invisible world that surrounded them, and which they felt was full of life. They implored these mystic powers to unveil their eyes that they might see, and to attune

their ears that they might hear ; and some of them, leading these abstract lives, separated from the physical world, had the infinite satisfaction of having their prayers answered. The things that passed beyond in the psychic world were revealed to them. It happened that a number of these priests, fearing that the degree of spirituality to which they had attained was not sufficient to permit them to share in the blessings of the mystic world, already revealed to them in part, requested as a favor the privilege of returning to earth in flesh and blood after earthly dissolution. Their aim, in imploring this return, was to continue their spiritualization, which they thought possible only within their monasteries. These priests became reincarnate, but it was owing to the incessant desire they had expressed during their earthly life. The continual projection of this one desire into the astral, into the spiritual ether, made possible the conditions that brought about their reincarnation. Thought is a magnetic power, a creative force that may be utilized for good or evil, of a potency little imagined. It is, as you know, the keystone of magic. These priests convinced, then, of the truth of reincarnation in their own cases, made it a general dogma that they imposed on their adherents—the followers that were later admitted to their temples. To-day, the belief in reincarnations without number is imbedded in the minds of the majority of the Oriental peoples.”

“Is this not profoundly deplorable?” questioned the Abbé.

"I do not know," Balthazar replied, "that this belief has brought about many evil results. In some cases it has done good. Many believers placed in adverse circumstances have striven to walk in right paths in order to gain spiritual promotion in their next incarnation, for their priests teach that what we are to-day is the result of our actions in some past life. True, among the ignorant classes this belief has given rise to some ridiculous customs, such as that of mothers who fling themselves with their new-born infants near the funeral pyre of some great man, or some priest, praying with fervor that the spirit of the dead man may choose for its new earthly dwelling the body of the child.

"I will add that since the arrival among us of certain apostles of these Oriental religions, some re-incarnations have taken place in this country, where the word incarnation was formerly almost unknown. These apostles teach it as a dogma that one must believe, and neophytes, once convinced of the truth of this dogma, let it constantly prey upon their minds. They spend most of their time ardently desiring reincarnation as a means of spiritual progress, and little by little they make preparation through the astral, so that when at last death overtakes them, the mystery they so earnestly wished is actually accomplished.

"But the laws of Nature are immutable; she never retrogrades in her work. Man's reincarnation, in order to take place, must be demanded by him. If he does not make it the principal object of his

prayers his soul takes flight after death in its spiritual body, in which its evolution may be continued if he so desire."

"Your explanation of this intricate question has relieved my mind of a grave doubt," said Miss McDonald, as the Magus finished speaking. "The idea of being again exposed to misery and temptation rendered me extremely unhappy. You have enlightened me, Master. I thank you with all my heart for your inestimable teaching."

"I will add one thing," Balthazar continued, "the dogma of reincarnation should not be accorded more importance than it merits. Whether this dogma be admitted as true or not, it cannot influence the well fortified soul that walks resolutely towards the Absolute; it can affect only weak souls still dominated by fear."

The Magus observed that the young girl was fatigued, and as the hour was late, he touched the bell for William.

"You are tired, Miss Ethel," he said, "I will place William at your disposal, if you wish."

"Thank you, Master," she said, "but I told my maid to call for me, and she is probably awaiting me now."

She affectionately pressed the hand of Balthazar, and wishing Albert a cordial good night, left the room noiselessly, with the easy grace always noticeable in women of refinement,

The eyes of the Abbé followed her with intense

interest. When the door had closed behind her he turned to Magus.

"She is a woman of rare qualities," he said, "she has a remarkable sincerity, and her intelligence far exceeds that of the majority of her sex."

"She is perhaps a woman who will dispel some of your pessimism regarding women in general, as far as their intellectual and spiritual development is concerned," said the Magus.

"You are right, my Master, but you must admit that one rarely meets a woman who has attained a degree of evolution equal to this one, and the one whose letter you permitted me to read, who——Master!" he exclaimed suddenly, "is it possible——" He put his hand to his brow, as if an inspiration had seized him. "Was that letter written by Miss Ethel?"

The silence of the Magus to this direct question was more convincing to Albert than if he had spoken. His agitation became extreme, and Balthazar perceived it immediately.

"Good-night, Albert," he said affectionately, "permit me to leave you; I am a little tired. You, too, I am certain, have need of repose."

Albert, dominated by his emotion, scarcely heard the salutation of the Magus, and had some difficulty in forcing himself to reply with a few polite words.

Left alone, he appeared to have forgotten the suggestion of his master that he had need of repose. He leaned his elbows on the table, rested his face

on his hands, and gave himself up to reflection. A discordant turmoil of ideas surged through his brain. He could not follow a single line of thought. Little by little he collected himself, and his mind centered naturally on Miss Ethel. She the author of that letter which contained the highest and noblest ideas he had ever heard expressed! She was seeking God with the religious ardor of a saint! And her heart was thirsting for sympathy, for affection—for love—perhaps. What beauty of soul! What sublime aspirations!

The heart of the poor priest was filled with emotion, tears flowed from his eyes, but he was unconscious of their presence. He remained for some time completely lost in reverie.

"I am feverish," he said at last, "my head is on fire.—I am beside myself—I must pray!"

Slowly he directed his steps toward the sanctuary. The evening breeze cooled his brow, he inhaled the refreshing air with delight. The night was dark and it was with difficulty that he was able to discover the right way. He finally reached the temple, and kneeling before the altar that he could scarcely distinguish in the feeble light of the sanctuary lamp that was kept always burning, he gave himself up to fervent prayer.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS ETHEL, on leaving the main house, returned to her apartments. Her nerves, held in control during Balthazar's lecture, asserted their mastery. Sinking to her knees upon a prie-dieu, she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly. Her breast heaved with great sobs, her body shook convulsively. Finally, her emotion temporarily abated, she lifted her eyes to Sophia's image, and addressed to the Virgin the following prayer :

“O thou dear Mother! endowed with divine power, may my sufferings arouse thy pity! I came to the home of a saintly man, with the earnest desire and the strong determination to find in him an enlightened guide, who would aid me to gain the strength necessary for the pursuance of the way that leads to the highest and purest existence of which a mortal may dream. All my thoughts were centered upon that sacred aim. And now! Beloved Virgin, deign to look upon me! See the agonizing position in which my soul is placed! The earthly love, that I have so long considered unworthy of my heart, that I have persistently put from me as inconsistent with the noblest aspirations of the soul, the love that I have scorned, deeming myself strong and invulnerable—ah, I confess it in shame and humilia-

tion—that love possesses my whole being. Divine Mother, have pity upon me! Be merciful to me, thy daughter, prostrate at thy feet. Consider my weakness, come to my assistance. Help me to tear from my heart this love that occupies the place which thou alone should hold! Oh, holy Mother!”

This invocation, by the outpouring of her heart, brought her comfort. She decided to retire. She called her maid, and prepared for the night. On dismissing the girl, Miss McDonald, feeling wakeful, stretched herself on a luxurious couch; soon she was again assailed by the thoughts she could not banish from her heart. They became so insistent, that she feared to fall a prey once more to those emotions which her fervent prayer had, to a certain degree, conquered. An idea came to her what if she should go to the sanctuary? She went to the window, drew back the curtain, and gazed into the obscurity of the night. Should she go? She shuddered slightly. . . . Suddenly, she saw shining through a breaking cloud, her favorite star, Jupiter. Her courage was renewed, she determined to risk the adventure.

“The sanctuary is close at hand,” she said to herself, “and the road is direct and wide. The park is walled in, and this quarter of the city is perfectly safe. What have I to fear? I am going—to pray.”

She wrapped herself hastily in a long dressing-gown of blue silk, threw a shawl over her shoulders

and left the house quietly. She reached the temple without difficulty and entered it in silence. At first, coming from her brightly-lighted rooms, she could distinguish nothing in the sanctuary except the point of light in the perpetual lamp that burned before the Tabernacle. However she was perfectly familiar with the interior of the building, and she glided noiselessly over the heavy carpet. About half-way to the altar, toward the center of the edifice, she knelt upon a convenient prie-dieu. Her beautiful madonna-like head rested on her clasped white hands, and she was soon lost in a deep meditation, which the darkness, the silence and the pure odic atmosphere of the consecrated place greatly favored.

Her weary spirit gradually rose to those enchanting regions where all is Love and Harmony. Suddenly, she thought she heard a sound. She listened attentively, it was, distinctly, a sigh. Fixing her eyes upon the place whence the sound seemed to come, she thought she distinguished a human form before the tabernacle. As her eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, she saw that the form, extending its arms like a cross, stood facing the altar. For a moment, a very natural fear seized her; but, brave at heart, she quickly regained her self-possession. The human form began to pray aloud, addressing itself to Sophia:

"Thy child stands before thee," prayed Albert, for it was indeed he whom Miss Ethel again met, "he comes, dear Mother, to prostrate himself at thy feet—he is the man who, scorning the things of the

world, joyously consecrated his life to God. He rejected the pleasures and the affections of the world as unworthy of him. He had been taught to despise women; to believe that their incessant deceptions made spiritual evolution impossible. So thy child marked out a path for himself, that he might rise higher and higher, to happiness,—to God. I am that man, O blessed Mother. Up to to-day, I have faithfully followed the road I prescribed for myself; but now—gaze in compassion on thy wretched son—for his heart is torn by the most intense love a man can feel for a woman.”

Hearing these words, Miss McDonald’s hands convulsively clutched at her breast, as if to arrest the wild beating of her heart. She hung upon his words,—strangling, breathless. Thinking himself alone, Albert continued his invocation. His rich, vibrating voice gained a strange and persuasive charm from the intensity of his emotion.

“I am not ashamed of this love, dear Mother,—it is pure as the crystal mountain spring, and the woman who has inspired it is a saint. However, pure and holy though she is who is its object, my homage belongs to God alone. Divine Mother—know my sorrow—it is from thee that I desire aid and counsel. To thee I confide myself, in thy hands I place my future. Inspire and direct me—for I am weak and my soul is anguished. Only to thee, Mother, Mother! do I dare to confess the love that is eating my heart!”

The young man stood before the Tabernacle, pale

as a corpse, his eyes, brilliant with fever, fixed upon Sophia. His lips trembled, his heart beat violently, as if all the blood in his body sought refuge there. His features, even in the contraction of agony, were always noble.

"Dear Mother," he continued, "do not blame me too much, I beseech thee. She is so beautiful in spirit; her soul is a flower of heaven. Her heart, like mine, is isolated, orphaned; it is soul-sick, thirsting for sympathy and affection. She longs to meet a companion soul, that together they may journey upon the fragrant path that leads to God.

Ah! Mother, the letter Miss Ethel wrote—the Master showed it to me."

"He knows it was mine," gasped the unhappy girl, in fright.

"If thou wert human, if thou couldst read that letter as I did, like—me, thou wouldst marvel at its sublime lines, its beautiful language, its heavenly aspirations and its heartfelt appeal for affection. But, dear Mother, I am wandering. . . . I must not forget my sacred character. I am an anointed priest—my life is for the exclusive service of my Lord."

At the words "anointed priest," Miss McDonald gave a piercing cry and fell fainting to the floor; the shock had been too great and too unlooked-for.

To Albert the sound of her cry and of her falling resounded like a thunderbolt. For a moment he knelt as if turned to stone, his arms extended, his eyes fixed. Then, rising with a mighty effort, he struck

a light, and hurried up the center aisle to the prie-dieu at whose foot lay the unconscious girl.

"She! She has heard me then," he exclaimed, "Miss Ethel! Miss Ethel!" his voice was broken with sobs. There was no response; wild anxiety seized him. His vast learning, in any other case, would have suggested a prompt and efficacious remedy, but the deep love he felt for the girl, and his consequent anxiety seemed to paralyze his brain. He placed the candelabrum that he carried upon a neighboring prie-dieu; he bent over her, and his tears flowed again as he saw the seemingly lifeless position of her beautiful form.

Ethel's face was colorless as wax; her pallor was accentuated by the black shadows her eyelashes made upon her cheeks; and her heavy loosened hair added a somber aureole to her death-like appearance. The priest still called to her. Desperate at length, he took her in his arms and tried to lift her. But Miss Ethel was in deep syncope, her beautiful head fell limply against the young man's shoulder, her long, silky tresses, exhaling subtle perfume, caressed his hands and neck,—he was obliged to hold her close to his breast in order to support her weight.

The contact with her young and supple body, whose gentle warmth penetrated the silken fold of the dressing-gown, overpowered his senses for a moment, and he gazed upon her with an expression of infinite rapture and inexpressible love. His anxiety, however, soon aroused him; he repeated her name

many times in tenderest accents, and, unconsciously, he added to his appeal the supplication that she might pardon him for speaking of his love. In the words of a poet and a lover, he told her how dear she was to him, how he suffered in seeing her inert and lifeless. Insensibly he bent his head toward her, until their cheeks touched. Either the magnetism of his touch, or the reaction from the warmth of his cheek roused Miss Ethel from her torpor. She slowly opened her eyes and recognized Albert. Carried away by his emotion, he continued to speak with the utmost tenderness.

Suddenly, the whole scene that she had so unwittingly witnessed was photographed upon her mind, and the blood returned to her face in a flood of color. But her own love was so great and pure that she had no thought of shame. Not yet recovered from her faintness, she did not try to struggle against the rapturous delight which filled her,—a delight she had never experienced even in dreams; in her weakness and loving confidence, she put her beautiful white arms around Albert's neck; the wide sleeves of her gown fell back, leaving her arms bare to the elbows. Hiding her head on his breast, she sobbed, but this time for happiness. He covered her hair with ardent kisses, murmuring in his rich and vibrant voice, a world of love and poetry, whose expressions came unconsciously to his lips. Lost in themselves, for a few moments those two beings, chosen of God, pure in sentiment, noble in aspiration, tasted the most ineffable bliss the Dispenser of

all blessings accords to man on earth. All was forgotten, except the unconstrained wealth of their love.

They were so absorbed in each other that they failed to notice a bright light suddenly filling the sanctuary. The Magus had come through his private entrance, to make his devotions. He carried a lamp with a powerful reflector, and, as soon as he saw his two children wrapped in an embrace, he understood what had happened. Albert and Ethel, suddenly recalled to reality, separated quickly. Balthazar set down the lamp, and came toward them.

"Listen, my children," said he, affectionately, "you love each other. It is only natural, and I am certain there never was a purer or more holy love. At the moment when you read Miss Ethel's beautiful letter, my son, you immediately entered into harmony with the sublime sentiments that she expressed. You, Miss Ethel, by chance and entirely independent of your volition, were placed in such a position that in spite of yourself, you were obliged to hear Albert's praises of your letter. Your noble ideas and aspirations were echoed in his soul; you had not believed this possible of any man, and your heart, which you imagined forever dormant, woke from its lethargy, and began to sing softly a canticle, whose meaning you could not determine, and whose melody you feared to interpret. Harmony was born in your souls, my children, and you loved each other."

Albert and Ethel shuddered with anxiety and

emotion; the Magus had exactly described their love—what would follow?

Balthazar laid his hand on Albert's shoulder and continued:

"My children, now that each knows the other's feeling, now that your hearts have betrayed your secrets, retire to your rooms; it is late and you are in need of rest. I will await you both to-morrow evening at six o'clock, here, in this sacred place."

The chapel-clock struck midnight as he spoke.

"I should say this evening at six," said Balthazar, "meanwhile pray and beseech Heaven to grant you strength."

Seeing that Ethel stood with difficulty, the Magus offered her his arm and escorted her to the villa.

Staggering like a drunken man, Albert returned to his apartments. He threw himself upon a sofa, and hiding his face in his hands, gave himself over to his bitter grief. He could not, he did not even wish to think—the terrible difficulty in which he was involved overpowered him. All his past life, the austere existence of an earnest religious, a priest, a seeker, an inveterate worker, passed through his mind, and especially did he recall the rigid vows of his Order. Then, like a dream of happiness and peace, came the scene in the sanctuary. He could still feel the warm embrace of her white arms, the faint perfume of her hair and garments clung to him;—touching his coat, it was damp with her tears. And yet, he had sworn that his life was God's alone, he had renounced the pleasure of the world.

The combat between duty and sentiment is cruel. Clasp- ing his hands to his aching temples, he cried in agony :

“ My God ! my Father ! have mercy upon me, pardon me, enlighten me ! ”

* * * *

Miss McDonald had thrown herself upon her couch, and now that constraint was removed, she gave free vent to her emotion.

“ A priest ! ”—she exclaimed, “ and I love him. —and he has vowed. . . . ”

Sitting up, she fixed her eyes on space, and tried to think. After some time spent in meditation, she spoke to herself.

“ Can it be I, Ethel McDonald, the woman who prided herself that she had conquered her passions, had become mistress of her emotions—can it indeed be I, who am now in bitter weakness, a prey to the most violent and unrestrained affection. Crestfallen and conquered. . . . ”

“ A priest—a priest,” she continued, sadly. “ Yes, a soul as beautiful and as noble as his, so far advanced on the road to perfection, could place itself in no service but God’s.”

Then, she recalled fondly his declaration of love for her, poured out before the Tabernacle, his caresses, his fervent words as he had held her in his arms—and again, she wept.

“ He loved me even as I loved him,” she cried. “ I say *loved*, for now love is past, it has now become impossible, sacrilegious. How happy we could have

been," she added, trembling, "what a future would have stretched before us; mutual love would have given us doubled strength, to do good, to drive out evil, to fulfil our destiny and ascend together to our God. I may permit myself to think of what might have been," she went on, as if to excuse herself for the thought, "because this love is past . . . yes, past . . . Killed at its birth . . . we will not love each other any longer . . . we must not and we shall not . . . he is a priest."

Her body quivered, and in vain she tried to control her tears. She fell back upon the couch—exhausted, discouraged. She let her face rest in profile upon her clasped white arms, a feeling of calm mixed with weariness pervaded her, and gradually her whole life unrolled itself to her mind, like a panorama. She saw herself haughty and disdainful towards all who had spoken to her of love, or offered her homage; yet she remembered that many of her suitors had been men of whom she might well have been proud—men of sincerity, of high character, of distinction, of morality. But her secret aspirations had a higher object. She loved to accustom her spirit to the superterrestrial, and all her efforts were directed towards obtaining a knowledge of higher things. To rejoice in the immensity of space, to wander at leisure in the spheres where life is first born, to gain possession of secrets which Nature, fearing man's profane audacity, wraps in her mantle, these had been her favorite occupations, the ends she desired.

To attain her aims, she had scorned the pleasures which are the privilege of youth, she had refused the tender love of worthy hearts, she had renounced the enjoyments fortune would have given her. "Higher—still higher," cried her spirit, and she had tried to create in the superterrestrial regions, a dwelling worthy of her soul. And now, she saw herself, prostrate before Sophia, beaten—almost desperate:

"Yes, I love him," she cried fiercely, "I love him as no woman ever loved." Sweet dreaming took possession of her and she followed its guidance.

"His eyes follow me wherever I go. His beloved image is before me when I pray: in my moments of meditation, when my thoughts would concentrate on holy things, it is he whom I see. And, when I contemplate the sublime harmonies of the Universe, the work of God, it is his face that appears to my ravished thoughts—noble, strong, sweet! Even when my soul, free of earthly bonds, floats in infinite space beyond the sun, beyond the stars, his translucent spirit, glorious and shining, comes to seek me. Wherever I am, there is he also. Oh—I love him, without reserve,—passionately—madly." After a moment of speechless emotion, she calmed herself, and spoke resolutely:

"I shall conquer this love—I must, it is my will, I shall conquer it, or die."

Taking a wax candle, blessed by the Magus, she lighted it and placed it on Sophia's altar. Then she retired, exhausted.

Relaxed and drowsy, various reflections passed

through her mind. These thoughts were free from agitation, and she became gradually calm; she felt that superior powers were granting her superhuman strength.

With the return of composure, the resolution to conquer this love, however deep in her heart its roots might have penetrated, even into its holy of holies, grew stronger.

“A priest!” she repeated, but this time quietly, and not without an accent of veneration. “I love him indeed, but, no matter how holy my love is, it is my duty to conquer it. What shall I do? Shall I leave this blessed retreat, never again kneel in the holy sanctuary, where I have found such consolation and strength? Shall I be a coward, and depart in the illusion that I can flee from my heart—flee from my own self? No, I shall remain here,—here I will combat this doomed love, and with the Virgin’s aid, I will be the victor. My love is pure as heaven—why should I not make it indeed divine?”—A sudden inspiration exalted her—“why not turn my love, with all its intensity and passion, into a supreme love of the Virgin Sophia—of God—of Parabrahm?”

Her beautiful eyes shone with celestial brightness; her breast heaved in the sway of the most sacred sentiment a human heart can feel—a sentiment of sublime sanctification. Her countenance radiated with blissful grandeur. She spoke decisively:

“I shall see him daily as before, we will meet in the hall of converse, and before the tabernacle. I

shall love him as a child of God, as one consecrated to His divine service, upon whom the all-powerful Creator has lavished his rarest gifts. He is a priest, and as such, I owe him respect and veneration. Oh ! Parabrahm, come to my aid, that I may carry out this resolution in good faith, direct toward me Thy divine rays in my moments of weakness, that I may not falter. Thou knowest that to serve Thee is my dearest wish, and I make Thy service the sole object of my existence. O thou, divine Sophia, thou, Virgin of the world, thou Heart of Woman, with Parabrahm, the source of greatness, goodness and perfection, hearken to my prayer !”

As she pronounced this invocation and thus offered herself in sacrifice, a celestial fire shone in her eyes, her expression became beatific, the woman was transfigured to a saint. She was beautiful with a divine and superterrestrial beauty. She entered into peaceful reverie, her breathing became calm and regular . . . she slept.

Poor novices ! How little they had realized upon entering the path what sacrifices would await them !

They knew, indeed, that they would be exposed to many battles, that they would wrest hard-won victories, that all purely physical desires would have to be conquered, that the last vestige of egotism must be extirpated from their souls, and in its place must reign perfect altruism. They knew that charity must be the only motive for their actions,—charity as wide as the world, inclusive of the whole human race, sweet as the dawn’s smile peeping above

the eastern horizon. Good will and love toward all living things, must be their predominate thought. And they had prepared themselves worthily for the noble task. The young religious, up to the present time, had won his victories almost with ease; but, since he had met this other soul, as intelligent and educated as she was good and spiritually advanced, he had found that the goal was still far distant. When the beautiful auras of these two rare beings came in contact, they mixed immediately like two currents of opposite polarity; the psychic man was in supreme and perfect harmony with the psychic woman. They found themselves face to face with a situation neither had believed possible and which, in consequence, neither had anticipated. But the unexpected had arisen, and their immediate duty was to adopt the quickest and best measures of defense.

The future will reveal to us the result of their efforts. May Parabrahm be with them! Let us place our faith in Him, and may He grant them victory!

Marius, known to his disciples now by the name of Balthazar, had returned to the Sanctuary; and, while the novices were engaged in secret self-struggle, he was on his knees before the Tabernacle. He was considering the moral suffering of his beloved children. Their anguish impressed him deeply; he discerned the discordant and accelerated vibrations that came from the agitation of their

nerves. The aura that enveloped their bodies was extremely mobile, and in its perturbations their heads were surrounded by irregular odic undulations. In this way Balthazar could identify himself with them, and follow each step of their struggle. He knew all the intensity and passion of their love, and appreciated its purity. He suffered as they suffered.

"It is well that the crisis has come," he reflected. "Before pledging itself to the sublime journey that leads above, the soul should conquer and leave behind every weakness,—its last battle with the senses should be fought and gained. Love, sublime love, the love of those who tread the mystic path, even that love that is almost heavenly, so pure are its desires, is the last sacrifice required of the elect who wish to consecrate their lives to the sacerdotal functions of the Order. No matter how pure terrestrial love may be, it remains still a love between man and woman, and the senses are always present, hidden in some corner, anxiously awaiting an opportunity to show themselves and their power.

"The love my children feel, the one for the other, is the love that should always be present when two human beings contemplate entering into the holy state of marriage. If they marry, saviors will be born,—the whole race will be brought nearer to God. . . . No—in this case—they are destined to priesthood, their love must be purified, elevated, etherealized to the degree that they shall see in each other, not a man or a woman, but two celestial souls, destined to

Heaven's joys, two children of Sophia, Virgin of the World. Then will they perceive in the limitless distances of the Universe the effulgence of the sublime Architect of all that is—PARABRAHM. . . ."

Turning in the direction of the rooms where the novices were now asleep, the Magus extended his consecrated hands towards them and prayed :

"Oh, Parabrahm ! aid Thy children in the struggle they have valorously resolved to make against themselves ; accord them the victory. May the sight of their bleeding hearts move Thee to compassion ; may their agony arouse their mother's sympathy—the divine Sophia. Light their way with the rays of Thy divinity, oh, Parabrahm, send Thy angels to fan their burning brows with caressing wings—let peace return to their souls. They wish to travel the Path that leads to Thee—lend them Thy grace in the ascension."

As the Magus, prayed, an infinite peace gradually descended upon the novices.

Each, at the same moment, woke to see the image of Sophia, whose extended arms had now a new signification. The eyes of the Virgin gazing in their eyes seemed to shine with unusual brilliance. A new and resolute confidence awoke in them, and they knew that the passion which had filled their hearts had been dominated and sanctified.

CHAPTER VII.

THE hour of the meeting with Balthazar in the sanctuary approached; the hearts of the novices beat rapidly. In spite of her resignation and abnegation, Miss McDonald made a careful toilet, and removed all traces of weeping from her face. Once dressed, she seated herself by the open window to await the moment for going to the Sanctuary.

Albert passed the time in calm: he felt perfectly sure of himself. He reflected for a long time upon the scene of the preceding night, upon the affinities existing in two souls created one for the other; he wondered at the attraction born from such affinities, an attraction so powerful that no purely human force could control it. He had proved it only the preceding night, when he, a man of character and advancement, had been carried away by his passion as if he had been a mere boy heedless of any restraint or vow. Again he resolved to force his heart to obey his will, and to kill this sacrilegious love in its germination.

A few minutes before six, the novices left their respective apartments, to go to the temple. Miss McDonald entered by the left-hand door; Albert by the right, which was the nearest to his rooms.

They discovered Balthazar already in the sanctuary : he was kneeling upon the prie-dieu by which Miss Ethel had fainted the night before. It was, as we know, near the center of the building. Albert kneeled not far from the door through which he had entered, but the young woman sought a place near Balthazar, as if she wished to place herself under his protection. The Magus seemed profoundly absorbed in meditative prayer ; seeing this, the novices, also, addressed their invocations to the Powers on High.

After a few moments, the Magus raised his head to see his two children faithful to their promise. Although they were seemingly lost in prayer, and in spite of their apparent serenity, Balthazar could feel, as if by repercussion, the beating of their poor hearts which were far from possessing the peace their owners thought to have given them.

"Approach, my children," said the Master, affectionately, "stand here before me."

The novices obeyed without lifting their eyes ; and stationed themselves in front of his prie-dieu.

"My children," continued Balthazar, "you love each other, and that love has penetrated the most secret corners of your hearts. Do not think that I blame you—you have simply obeyed the laws of attraction, instituted by the Eternal Father Himself. When two souls vibrate in unison, that is to say when they possess the same beliefs, aspirations, and ideals, they are drawn together by an invincible

force. It is quite natural that you should have followed this impulse, and of course, you were subjugated by it.

"So far, all is well. It was inevitable. But from this day forth this love must be transformed into a still higher sentiment. It must be freed of all that is terrestrial, in order that it may ascend to Heaven : it must become divine. You, my children, are destined to the priesthood, your lives are consecrated to the service of the Lord, you belong no longer to yourselves, but to all humanity. You, Albert, are already a priest, and you, Miss Ethel, shall teach humanity the lesson of the future life. This you know ; now accomplish the last manifestation of your earthly love, a manifestation necessary for its elevation to Heaven. Let the magnetism of your beings penetrate each the other in harmonious exchange."

Balthazar left the prie-dieu, and approached the novices. They stood with downcast eyes and beating hearts, not knowing what the Master intended.

"Draw near, my children," said he. They faced Balthazar and came close to him ; gently he pushed them nearer each other. He placed the priest's hands on Ethel's shoulders, and hers on Albert's, then gently bent their heads until their brows touched.

"Pray"—he said to them.

Extending his hands over them, he also prayed :

"Oh, Parabrahm, bless these Thy children. Under Thy protection, may their souls be united, may the

magnetism that their bodies now exchange, be the last manifestation of their earthly love! Purify that love, change it into an affection, constantly more sublime! Lift them to Thyself, and then in their efforts to attain to Thy eternal verities! They are worthy, oh Parabrahm—their lives they consecrate to Thee!"

His hands still extended, he finished his prayer in silence, asking for his children the benediction of the Order of the Magi, begging that they be granted strength and courage, that they might conquer their anguish and alleviate their suffering.

A luminous ray descended upon the heads of the novices during the prayer, enveloping them with a resplendent aureole. In the contact of hands and foreheads, they experienced a bliss formerly unknown to them. A gentle and pleasing sense of warmth penetrated their being, putting every cell into a state of intense vibration. Each felt a hundredfold increase in the powers of sensation, each overflowed with energy, and each enjoyed the purest yet most intense transports of love. And for the moment their love brought them infinite bliss, though it forced the tears to their eyes. Gradually, these vibrations of intense life diminished in force. The first material warmth was now replaced by a milder sensation so rarified that the other seemed to them too gross in essence.

By the time the Magus concentrated his powers in silent prayer, a delightful and spiritualizing influence took possession of the novices. By some

spontaneous suggestion, they separated, and looked at each other through their tears. Although their glance still expressed the deepest emotion, no blush accompanied it. Terrestrial love mastered, if not altogether conquered, they lifted their eyes to Heaven and joined hands: as they knelt thus, Balthazar addressed them:

"It was necessary, my children, that you should thus exchange terrestrial magnetism that in the contact of foreheads your bodies should vibrate in unison, and that by your prayers, and the aid of the Most High this corporeal magnetism may be transformed into a psychic force, elevated, ethereal, divine. Terrestrial love demanded that momentary satisfaction before it could be transformed into a celestial affection. Now, since you have loved each other, and your bodies and souls have met in Spiritual syntonism, and have been assimilated, it is your duty to ascend still higher. You have vanquished earthly love for the sake of divine love, you shall walk the way of God with new determination and new strength: it will not be long, I feel, before the reward of sacrifice will come—heaven will open to you. By degrees, mounting from sphere to sphere, you will come to learn the laws of the Universe and the destiny of Man. Your lives shall be as a sacred hymn, a holy song, a "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," an ascension towards Parabrahm!"

"Amen," answered a voice that seemed to come from the Tabernacle.

"And now, my children, let us pray."

They bent their heads, and a fervent invocation rose towards heaven.

The prayer ended, Balthazar escorted Miss Ethel to the villa; the priest remained before the Tabernacle, praying.

CHAPTER VIII.

BALTHAZAR retired to his apartments and reflected upon the events of the past three days; especially did he review in mind the scene that had just been enacted in his presence.

"They have finally won the victory over self," he said musingly. "It is beautiful! it is noble! How few souls would have proved so brave in such a heart-rending crisis. How many, alas, just entered on the true path, succumb to the attacks of the Dwellers on the Threshold who eternally guard the entrance of the soul's sanctuary. A soul striving for the highest spiritual development possible to attain on this earth becomes loving, tender, sympathetic. It seeks the company of souls similar to itself, in order to communicate its ideals, to relate its experience, and through an exchange of high and noble thoughts, to glean suggestions that may prove beneficial. Obeying the laws of attraction, the soul always finds others kindred to itself; 'soul affinities' they call themselves, and therein lies a danger. Psychic ties are formed, tender sentiments are given birth, and these latter too frequently degenerate into earthly loves. The souls blind themselves by the words, 'spiritual affinities,' and 'twin souls.' The attraction becomes stronger, the evil geniuses

redouble their efforts, and in the end they who are weak and still young in spiritual development, succumb only too quickly to the seductions of the flesh. They then attempt to excuse the sentiments they profane by still insisting that their souls are 'spiritual affinities.' Little may they realize how they debase what is known as real communion of soul. . . . This is, indeed, the greatest calamity that can befall a novice," the Magus continued with a sigh. "It is the one supreme danger against which he should zealously guard."

Albert, meanwhile, continued in fervent prayer until the obscurity of the sanctuary lifted little by little. In the early dawn he returned to his apartments. Thoroughly exhausted through the force of his emotion, he flung himself on his couch and sought repose. For some time he tossed about restlessly without being able to sleep. At length he fell into a sort of stupor, half sleeping, half waking, during which he was dimly conscious of what was going on about him, but was unable to fix his attention; he was in a state of purely organic life.

Suddenly a ball, or rather a circle of light appeared on the field of his vision. His eyes were closed, but he could plainly discern the luminous circle, the interior of which seemed full of movement. Confused images appeared, but at the least effort of his will to decipher them, they vanished. The exercise fatigued him, and he tried again to sleep, turning his face to the wall. The luminous circle now became distinct with vapory images. He

was convinced that these were human forms passing to and fro across a field of light, and he also clearly distinguished the outlines of imposing edifices. Fatigue conquered in the end; a deep sleep took possession of him, and the vision vanished.

When he finally awakened, his spirit was calm. He formed a resolution to make a nine days' devotion in the sanctuary, to say mass each morning for the welfare of Miss Ethel, and to implore daily the benediction of Parabrahm and of Sophia, as much for her as for himself. He would pray incessantly that strength might be given them to conquer their hearts willingly, not remorsefully, and that grace might be accorded them to transform their love for each other into a love for the Divine. And he would further pray that in recompense for this personal sacrifice, they might be granted full spiritual understanding, that they might acquire a knowledge of the highest truths that are unveiled only in the transcendental spheres.

He confided his intention to the Magus, who in turn informed Miss Ethel, and counseled her to assist at the novena.

"I will go," the young girl answered with decision.

The next morning at nine o'clock, the novena was inaugurated by the celebration of the first mass. The Magus was present, and fervent prayers were addressed to Heaven.

The following night, between the period of sleeping and waking, the same luminous circle appeared to Albert. This time it was clearer, and the figures

were more plainly visible. Without being able to fully distinguish them, he could trace the outlines of human forms, and vaguely make out by their architecture the character of the buildings. He became convinced that this was the beginning of the revelation for which he prayed, and he fervently gave thanks to the Higher Powers.

The novena reached its end. The Magus and Ethel had been present at each mass, and from day to day new strength was given the young girl, until at the close of the stated period, she was calm and reconciled. The ninth day she expressed to the Magus a desire to take communion. The latter informed Albert, and at the consecration of the ninth mass, he administered the holy sacrament to Ethel, following the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. At the moment she knelt to receive it, their eyes met as by an irresistible impulse, and thrilled by a mysterious force, each experienced a feeling of celestial spirituality. Conviction entered their souls that success was assured; they had won a complete and brilliant victory over the material attractions that had tempted them.

After the "*Ite missa est*" of this last mass, pronounced by Albert in vibrating tones, Balthazar addressed an eloquent invocation to the Celestial Powers, pleading that the benediction of the Most High be bestowed on these two, His children, and that they be granted divine enlightenment. Standing erect, with arms outstretched, he closed his prayer:

"And now, O, Parabrahm, these two, my children,

Thy devoted servants, are soon to separate, each going to accomplish the mission in the way Thou shalt assign. Be Thou with them! Guide them, and prepare humanity to receive the truths they shall scatter broadcast, wherever they may go."

At these words, the two novices looked at each other in astonishment. But they felt immediately that this was not an indefinite warning that the Magus gave them; a presentiment filled both their souls that according to Balthazar's intimation, their destinies would soon be cast in different directions.

Throughout the nine days, Albert had repeatedly seen the luminous circle of his first vision; but on this last night he was able to clearly discern the object of the apparition.

He saw a vast expanse of water, bounded only by the horizon. Later a transatlantic steamer appeared in which he himself was a passenger. Soon, he distinguished afar off the outlines of a harbor, bordering a large city. A number of golden crosses glittered in the distance, crowning imposing buildings, which he readily surmised were Catholic churches and convents. A moment later, he saw the outlines of another city, still larger, in which a number of superb palaces reared their majestic forms, among which was a scattering of steeples dominating as many churches. A portion of the city appeared to be in ruins. A large enclosure, with high walls, partially demolished, especially attracted his attention. He found himself walking the streets, and surveying the inhabitants, who were different

from any people he had seen in his native America. Finally, he arrived at a large, semicircular area, surrounded by magnificent colonnades leading to an immense structure, surmounted by a dome bearing a flaming cross. The form and style of this monument were strangely familiar; he remembered distinctly having seen somewhere a sketch or a description of it. Suddenly it flashed through his mind this was the Basilica of Saint Peter at Rome! With a firm step he climbed the stairway leading to the entrance of this ancient cathedral. The heavy doors swung back on their antique hinges, a blinding light streamed from the interior, he distinguished nothing. He felt rather than heard the strains of mystic harmony, a music so sweet that it seemed to be of divine essence. The brilliancy of the light overpowered him, he fell to his knees, and remained for a long time in a state of ecstasy and infinite beatitude, which finally merged into a refreshing sleep.

When he awakened, the memory of his vision was clear and distinct in his mind, he was convinced that a change was to take place in his life; why, he knew not. In direct line with his thought, he found on entering the salon a letter awaiting him from his Superior, requesting his return to the college. He made ready to respond immediately to this call, but little did he surmise that his vision was to be so promptly realized. He received an order from his Superior to prepare himself for an imperative mission to Europe; he was to be made the bearer of im-

portant documents to the superiors of the Order in different countries of the Continent.

"Important events are about to take place in France," the Superior told Albert, "which will place the Church in grave danger. The documents you are to bear concern these events and offer sympathy and material assistance to the fathers to whom they are directed. This is an important mission, and will merit the grateful appreciation of the Order."

Albert hastened to communicate the news to Balthazar, telling him at the same time, that the arrangement of his affairs would require an absence of several days.

On the evening of the day set for his departure, the young priest returned to take leave of the Magus and Miss Ethel. Balthazar had taken care to keep the latter fully informed concerning Albert's change of plans, and the three now discussed the spiritual side of his mission. The moments seemed to pass with the rapidity of lightning. Albert was full of enthusiasm, although ignorant of the exact purpose of his mission; he felt that it was to accomplish more than had yet been surmised, and that it was to be of divine importance, else, why had the vision been given him? Finally the moment arrived for them to separate. Miss Ethel arose, and extending her hands toward Albert looked into his eyes without a trace of emotion in her own.

"Reverend Father and dear brother," she said in a low, caressing voice, "may Parabrahm and the Divine Sophia accompany you throughout your

long journey! May they smooth your road from obstacle, and aid you in the fulfillment of your sacred mission. And may you, in your moments of discouragement, for discouragement comes even to the most exalted searchers for truth, give a thought to the sympathetic souls you are leaving behind. Picture them as kneeling often in the Sanctuary, praying for the success of that other mission, the high, noble work to which you are to devote your earthly life."

Albert took in his own the two slender hands held out to him; they were cold as ice, but her face was brave and resolute. He bade her farewell in affectionate terms, then added with deep earnestness,

"But it is not farewell that I am saying, not even 'au revoir,' for my thoughts will be often with you, and the memory of your noble personality will sustain me in my hours of weakness. Our souls are kindred, sympathetic, each is an element of Psychic Force, from which both shall derive strength, and under the leadership of our beloved Master, they shall achieve the noblest work of which each is capable, for the everlasting benefit of themselves and of humanity."

Balthazar placed his hands on the clasped hands of his two children, and after addressing a fervent prayer to heaven in their behalf, said earnestly,

"Your destinies are noble, my children, and your work lies along the most glorious paths. That you may be able to accomplish all that is prescribed for

you, is my dearest prayer. And you, Father," he said, turning to Albert, and addressing him thus for the first time, "some extremely important truths will be revealed to you. They may frighten you, at first, but be a true soldier of God. Do your duty, no matter what the consequence. Parabrahm will protect you. Go, then, taking my blessing with you."

Tears were in the eyes of the two novices, as the Magus finished speaking. Albert bowed his head.

"Farewell, beloved Master, or rather 'au revoir,' Au revoir, Miss Ethel!"

"Good-bye—au revoir."

And the form of the young priest disappeared into the night.

The day following Albert's departure, Balthazar called on Miss McDonald in her little villa. She was on the balcony, and greeted him with a cordial smile.

"Poor child," he thought, "a heroine and a martyr! Her smile is a poem, an elegy, a drama of the soul. Her resignation is complete; it is beautiful. She has won the victory—but at what a price!"

She opened the door herself and ushered him into the reception-room. Her face testified to the pleasure she felt in his visit. She drew a chair near his.

"You are more than welcome, Master," she said sweetly.

"I fancied you might need me," he answered, "and I have come. Was my surmise correct?"

"Entirely so, you must know it without my telling you. I have ardently prayed that you would come. I have need of you, not of encouragement, for I am not grieving, but to give me the force I require. I think the victory is won, but you know what follows, after one's whole heart and soul has striven to attain a determined end—when this end has at last been attained, the reaction comes, and it is this reaction that I fear. I have expended all my energy in the one supreme effort. What must I do to recover myself, and to gain my spent force? I feel the necessity of contact with sympathetic souls, endowed with a superabundance of moral and psychic strength, in order that some of their power may be transferred to me. On whom should I call, but on you, my dear Master? Mrs. Oakley and her husband are excellent friends, thoroughly kind and tender, but their souls are not able to supply me with the spiritual force of which I stand in need. Only you, my noble and loving Master, can grant me this."

"My sympathy is yours, dear child. In a few days you will regain your normal poise—not the condition in which you found yourself before these stirring events, but the highly spiritual state, to which these victories have raised you. You have already been shown through visions that your combat against material things, and your subsequent victories have won the approval of the Higher Powers, and these will lend you aid and guidance."

"It is true, Master; for several nights visions have

appeared to me—visions of celestial beings, vague at first, but now becoming more distinct. They have inspired me with courage, and have thrilled me in a manner I cannot define."

"You are stronger even now," continued Balthazar, observing a glow on her cheek; "I will leave you to your reflections. Above all, do not forget to pray often in the sanctuary, for prayer will place you in direct communication with your spiritual guides. Au revoir, my child."

Ethel attempted to express her gratitude, but failed. She conducted him to the door, "you are my savior," she murmured softly.

When she returned to her apartments, she gave herself up to the consideration of the mystic power that Balthazar exercised over her, and over all other persons with whom he came in contact. She asked herself whether it were possible that a celestial spirit could take possession of a human body and come to earth to aid humanity to true spiritual evolution. She recalled that the Magus, himself, had said in some of his teachings, that mere human beings through incessant striving toward spiritual things, and through living in entire harmony with the highest moral and psychic laws, could attain to a sublime degree of purification and sanctification. Yes, it must be true, she argued, that human beings, even herself, perhaps, could attain to a degree of perfection, similar to that of the exalted Balthazar. This intuition soon became a firm conviction with Ethel. The more she reflected on this subject, the more

convinced of its truth she became. An enobling influence penetrated every fibre of her being; she felt assured that she, too, was pursuing the course that had led to the exaltation of the Magus.

CHAPTER IX

ALBERT boarded the magnificent transatlantic liner that was to convey him from New York to Cherbourg. All was noise and confusion ; huge, grumbling cranes hoisted baggage aboard, passengers, busied and confused, came and went, questioning employés or bidding farewell to friends and relations. Some, happy at the thought of seeing their native lands once more, laughed and talked gaily ; others, mostly women, wept to leave home and country. To Albert the disturbance and uproar were, at first, extremely distasteful ; contrasted with the quiet peace of Balthazar's house, this hubbub was indeed painful. He retired, as soon as possible, to his cabin, and read his breviary. Then he heard the gang-planks lifted, and the winding of the mooring-cables ;—a lugubrious and deafening moan from the siren, and—he was on his way to Europe. Two powerful tugs towed the floating city well into the stream ; there the huge ship put to sea, vibrating from end to end with the pulsing of her machines, like a leaf before the wind. Albert ascended to the hurricane deck ; before him was unfolded the wonderful panorama of the harbor and city of New York, where the miracles built by the inimitable genius of the great American

nation add their share to the natural beauties of the estuary of the Hudson. On account of the many shallows in the bay and the crowded shipping, the liner was proceeding slowly and at half steam. Albert, moved to enthusiasm, contemplated the beautiful picture without heed of the passing time. As if by enchantment, silence had replaced the confusion of the departure; the passengers seemed each to have wrapped himself in his own especial feelings of joy or sadness. Suddenly, a strident ringing was heard near him, and, looking through the great sky-lights into the engine-room, Albert heard the answering sound. The huge vessel trembled, the cylinders wheezed at closer intervals,—it was full steam and away to sea! Albert gazed ahead—before him extended the vast ocean, at whose edge a deeper line merged into the sky. To starboard, he saw a heavy band of yellowish gray, at the extremity of which he could distinguish a high white tower—the lighthouse on Sandy Hook. To the northeast was the almost hidden Long Island shore. The deep-sea swell was already reached, and the ship rolled easily to its rhythmic balance. The bracing ocean breeze fanned his brow, and helped to relax his wearied nerves. A prayer rose in his heart, thanking the Eternal for all the marvels he beheld; his soul was at peace. Darkness settled on the waves, the horizon narrowed. A steward appeared, clanging a large bell. It was the call to dinner; Albert descended and partook of a light meal. Later, he returned to his stateroom and, exhausted by physical exertion and

the emotions of the day, he was glad to retire and spend the night in refreshing sleep.

Early the next morning, he was on the deck, walking briskly and enjoying the invigorating salt air. It was a perfect day, and the young priest felt tranquil and content. It was as if he were leading a new life in a new world, the world of the sea. It struck his fancy that the days to follow of this life, were like clean white pages of a book, upon which, as yet, the march of events had registered no characters. All the mysteries of this life, if mysteries there were to be, would soon be revealed to him. Tired of walking, he sought a secluded corner of the deck; there he placed his rugs and steamer-chair, and, comfortably ensconced, gazed contentedly at the distant horizon line.

His thoughts sought, naturally and easily, the consideration of the events the past three weeks had compassed. He rapidly reviewed the series of strange scenes, enacted in the house of Balthazar, and, gradually, he fell into a state of deep meditation. He tried anxiously to picture the reason for his journey; although it was still unknown to him, a mysterious influence riveted his attention.

He asked himself why he was going abroad, what mission it could be that he was called on to accomplish beyond the one confided to him by his Superior; these and a multitude of other questions remained unanswered. But, in spite of this uncertainty, he was conscious of the penetrative power of a suave and peaceful influence, which brought rest

to his soul ; in the results of his pilgrimage he had full and entire confidence.

His reverie was interrupted by a cabin-boy, who came to announce to the passengers that the day being a Sunday the captain would soon read the Protestant service in the main hall. A traveler, noting Albert's black garments and clean-shaven face, recognized in him a Catholic priest. Advancing, he courteously told the young ecclesiastic that Catholic services would be held at the same hour in the second cabin, as, at the request of the emigrants, a dignitary of the Church had consented to give a short address.

Albert immediately sought the second cabin. The emigrants, had obtained permission to meet there, and were respectfully entering, their heads uncovered. Before them stood an old priest, white-haired and venerable ; the purple cape of his long cassock marked him a high dignitary of the Church. His audience was composed principally of old people of both sexes, in whose weather-beaten faces, the constant struggle for existence, had furrowed deep wrinkles. The lines of sadness in these aged features, aroused Albert's keenest pity. Fifty of these people were emigrants refused permission to enter the country by the American Bureau of Immigration, on account of their years and their lack of resources ; it was feared that, should they be landed, they would soon be a charge upon local charity. Accordingly, the steamship company was obliged to take them back to their starting-point ; and instead of better-

ing themselves, as they had fondly hoped, these poor creatures faced a situation more hopeless even than the misery they had left in embarking for the new world. The venerable prelate, in strong and sympathetic tones, spoke to them of Heaven, of the Madonna (they were principally Italian); he told them that the happiness they had sought in vain on this earth, would be granted to them in the Father's Kingdom, that all their sufferings would be generously recompensed in the future life, that, above all, they must hope and be brave—for the reward indubitably awaited them.

"Pray—pray fervently," he ended, lay the burden of your sufferings at Christ's feet, for has He not said: "Come to me, all ye that are laden, and I shall comfort you."

Tears filled the eyes of his aged listeners; they were resigned to contemplate that they could expect nothing upon this earth, and their hopes centered upon the life to come. And Albert's eyes, also, were moist, at the sight of so much misery.

"Ah!" thought he, "always—always the promise of well-being in an other world. All these Italians have lived in the days when the Pope was also King, when the papacy held the mighty temporal power over the rich and fertile lands of Italy. And what results did the Church accomplish under the administration of these papal kings? As full recompense to her faithful people, even though they consecrated to her all their lives in complete obedience, the Church gave the promise of 'post-mortem' happi-

ness, in certain unmapped celestial zones. And what have her faithful children come to?" he added, looking in pity at the weeping and decrepit group of huddling men and women. "At the end of a life spent in drudgery, with never an interval of pleasure or repose, see them now, poor, feeble, homeless, really without a country; in the end, they fall upon public charity, and, if, indeed, they do not fall dead upon the street from sickness and privation, they draw their last breath in some institution or asylum. Had the Church but done her duty, had she only made an effort to procure a little earthly well-being for her devotees, would it not have been easy to create conditions of existence which would have permitted these people to lead a life of peace, to have a little leisure and to acquire an education? Then they might have been fairly equipped for the struggle of life. Then Italy might have been the happiest and most advanced nation of the world, for she possessed a faith that, properly directed, could have moved mountains. But—alas—the Church labored only for her own advancement and gain, and, to keep the people in a state of passive obedience, she held them down in ignorance and superstition. And this is the result of her nefarious politics! The 'Catholic religion' is wronged and neglected by the 'Catholic Church'!"

Albert gazed once more at the emigrants, now returning to their own quarter of the ship. The prelate who had officiated at the simple service stood by the doorway; his eyes, too, were moist with tears,

and, seeing his venerable head bent in sympathy, Albert felt that he would find with the man congeniality of ideas.

Several uneventful days passed. Albert enjoyed an unprecedented peace of mind. However, the influence of new conditions gradually caused physiological changes. A mysterious disturbance was manifested throughout his organism. The cerebral cells were subject to vibrations whose influence was most poignant at the top of his head—there, waves of psychic force coming from the innermost recesses of the brain seemed to demand an outlet. More violent vibrations, which were, at times, painful, agitated the base of the cranium just above the nape of the neck. He felt that an evolution of the spirit was being wrought in him, an adaptation of his cellular system to a higher psychic state, so he bore in patience the physical discomfort to which he was subjected.

One evening, he was ensconced in his favorite corner on the upper deck. It was quite late, and, as the passengers retired, one by one, to their state-rooms, he was soon left alone. He was looking at his favorite star, Jupiter, which was rising in brilliance; soon, he could not turn away his eyes. By degrees, a vaporous cloud came between his gaze and its object: the light of the star lessened, and soon the planet itself disappeared from his sight. But the cloud became more and more luminous, and of great tenuity, as though it was a sort of ultra-terrestrial atmosphere. He was conscious that a vision

was to be accorded him. In a moment the home of Balthazar was depicted on the field of light, and he saw the Magus kneeling in the sanctuary, praying for him and sending him his benediction. In the sacred place, before the image of Sophia, Ethel, also, knelt, praying fervently, imploring the Virgin to give to the pilgrim all the spiritual treasures of which she is the Dispensatrix. At the sight of this heroic woman, who, in the midst of worldly splendors, had been able to spiritualize her earthly love, to conquer and to kill it in order that she might make of it, a holocaust to the all powerful Lord, Albert was overcome.

He had also conquered his love, but he felt that his was the lesser merit, for had he not many years before, voluntarily dedicated his life to God's service? She, on the contrary, was bound by no vow or obligation: she had never sworn herself to abstain from earthly love. But a potent spiritual force had spontaneously revealed itself in her noble soul at the moment of temptation, and, through it she had conquered self, and destroyed the last attractions of the terrestrial world.

"May Heaven bless her," he murmured. And may the divine Sophia grant her prayer and give to me also strength and courage!"

He noticed with intense satisfaction that a brilliant aura encircled Ethel, showing that, already, the Virgin of the world was conferring upon this child of earth her heavenly favors. He gazed upon Ethel in wonder. She appeared to him like a saint from the brush of one of the great Flemish or Italian

masters ! but her face reflected not only the infinite peace and supreme happiness of the saints, but also extraordinary intellectuality.

He gazed for a long time at this temple scene and at the kneeling girl ; gradually the vision became less distinct, and, finally, it entirely disappeared.

The remaining uneventful days of his ocean passage, Albert accepted as a period of psychic preparation for the physical evolution of his cellular system. Frequently, he was agitated by mysterious vibrations throughout his being. He knew that absolute calm was necessary during this period, and so, as far as possible, he avoided association with his fellow-travelers.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER Albert's departure, Ethel's existence became more and more calm ; the moments she did not spend in her rooms or in the park, were passed in the sanctuary. That consecrated place was more than ever sacred to her ; it was there that she had learned to know Albert, and now, in her thoughts of him, she experienced a happy intimacy of feeling, confident that he thought as frequently of her as she allowed her spirit to seek him. She dared now and without fear, to recall the thrilling scene of their avowals,—a scene of which this temple had been the setting. When she thought of Albert, however, it was as of an intangible being, as of another soul. She took pleasure in the contemplation of this soul, to which she was drawn by a mysterious and irresistible force, just as the magnetic needle is drawn towards the pole. She felt that her happiness and that of the young pilgrim were unalterably connected, and that, should misfortune come to him, she would suffer accordingly. She was deeply interested in the success of Albert's European mission. She prayed that he might appreciate to the full the importance and signification of this mission, and that he might execute it to the entire satisfaction of Him who had ordained it.

Sometimes, in her walks in the park, Miss McDonald stopped at the arbor where, for the first time, she had heard Albert speak. The scene that had been enacted there and which she could never forget, was vividly reproduced in her imagination. There the purity and grandeur of his soul had been disclosed to her. But numerous and frequent as her thoughts of him were, they awakened in her only the most saintly emotions: her life thenceforth, she had determined, was to be only prayer and memory.

Apart from this physical existence, Miss Ethel began to live another and a distinctly separate life; her powers of clairvoyance developed rapidly, and the psychic visions that came to her were remarkably clear and complete. She was certain now that the peculiar dreams of the last few years had been, indeed, visions, introducing her, as it were, to the many places of supra-terrestrial life. These revelations were generally made to her at the beginning of the night; at that time, although she was not yet in a state of sleep, the purely physical functions, however, were nearly suspended, and her soul was free to awake.

One evening, the Queen of the affective regions whose first visit Ethel had related in her letter to Marius, appeared to her: or, rather, the Queen came toward Ethel, and, inviting the sleeper to follow her, she seemed to detach her transcendental personality from her physical body, and to transport it to supra-terrestrial regions. And, while she thus ascended to the ethereal spheres, traversing immense

areas of space, Ethel distinctively discerned her own physical body, lying upon her bed in tranquil repose.

After a moment of rapid flight, she found herself in the brilliant Kingdom of the Sovereign Lady: the seraphic creatures who peopled this land came to greet her in affectionate welcome. In spite of their cordiality, Ethel could not help but notice that they showed her a sort of sympathetic deference and respect, quite in distinction to the genial familiarity of their former manner. The Queen mounted an exquisitely ornamented throne, her companions forming a semicircular group upon its steps. Ethel guessed that this was an occasion of solemnity.

The Queen was ideally beautiful. Her ample robe, rosy in hue, and diaphanous in texture, draped in exquisite lines her majestic form; and the brilliant coloring accentuated the marble whiteness of her perfect arms and shoulders. A magic crown, surmounted by a shining star, the symbol of her vast power, was set upon her superb head. Benignity and grace shone in her features; her smile was irresistible. This was the adorable mistress of the affective spheres, the Queen of Love in all her divine splendor. Her companions, although extremely gracious and beautiful, were almost forgotten in the contemplation of her incomparable loveliness.

An invisible orchestra was heard, whose music, infinitely tender and entrancing, appealed to the gentlest and purest emotions of the heart, and occasioned a sweet languor, full of ineffable delight.

Ethel watched and listened in joyful wonder. The emotion that she felt was no longer tinged with sorrow. Upon her former visit to this sphere, her heart had been thirsty for affection, and weighed down by unsatiated aspirations. Then, enchanting as the regions had appeared, sweet as was the consoling hope offered her, the knowledge that her sojourn was necessarily brief, had saddened her. But now, her affections had enjoyed a moment of entire satisfaction, her heart had beaten in unison with the heart of another, she had possessed the highest joy and happiness that terrestrial love can give, and she knew that this would suffice her until the moment of her physical death. Although she rejoiced in the splendid scene before her, although she delighted in the happiness of its principals, she herself did not feel the joy that she had before experienced.

The orchestra ceased its enchanting melodies. The Queen rose, and beckoned Ethel to approach. The young woman obeyed.

"My child," said the Queen, affectionately, "when your heart sighed, in loneliness, for a worthy love, we heard its complaints, its longings, and its prayers. Every thought of earth reaches heaven, and is received in the psychic regions with which it is in harmony. The sensitiveness of your soul was highly developed, and confident that I could awake your consciousness, I visited you one night, and called you to my kingdom. You heard me, and you came—but you believed it to be a dream. I was able to place myself in direct *rapport* with you, and

to follow you in your terrestrial activities. I pitied and I loved you. From that time, my endeavor was to bring you in contact with a being worthy of you, a soul that possibly was also in need of the assistance of sympathetic affection in order to fulfil a destiny, which was shown to me to be important to the entire human race. You met that being, and love blossomed in your soul and his."

Ethel listened, as if transfigured, to these words.

"You loved each other," continued the Queen, and as each was endowed with a highly-developed soul, you were able to conquer your terrestrial love, or rather, to transform it into a celestial and spiritual affection. You belong no longer to my sphere, you have risen above, beyond my jurisdiction. I have assisted you in your ascension, I made that ascension possible by compassing the meeting of your soul with its peer. By such good actions, we prepare for our own ascension, for we also hope one day to advance, and we count on you to assist us. So far my task has been to hover above the earth, to bring together pure and loving hearts, and so add to the world's happiness. Now, sister, I bid you farewell. You will soon enter the sphere, where now you have a vested right. There you will find information which you are to communicate to the children of earth for their betterment. Yours is a magnificent destiny: fulfil your duty faithfully, and the heavenly powers will never desert you. Sister, return to earth!"

The Queen embraced Ethel affectionately, and

placed her in the escort of two of her companions, who transported the visitor to the earth. Black night replaced the brilliance of the regions of the affective emotions, and everything became indistinct and confused before Ethel's eyes. Suddenly, her physical body, which her higher Ego had just re-entered, awakened, and, in the feeble star-light that filtered through the curtains, she recognized the familiar surrounding of her bedroom.

The impressions of the scenes she had just witnessed were, however, so distinct in her mind, that she did not for a moment doubt the existence of the world which she had just left. She knew it was real, indeed, positive and tangible to the beings that inhabited it, not a sphere of imaginary beings, created during sleep, by the sub-conscious activities of the brain.

"The Queen whom I have just visited," she reflected, "and all the charming members of her court, once lived upon the earth. In this life they did not find the satisfaction of the affective emotions; it was their right, for in every human heart the Eternal has implanted the faculty of loving and the desire to be loved. Unless made unnatural by vice, every inherent faculty of our nature has a right to its legitimate satisfaction. From what I have seen and heard, there is but one logical inference—the faculties and attributes of our nature obtain certain satisfaction, either in this life or in another."

"What a consoling doctrine!" she added. "There will be a recompense for every pure desire, every

actual scenes in a real psychic world, if I do not suffer from the hallucinations of an over-excited mind, then it seems to me that there is an intimate relationship between the terrestrial and the transcendental life."

"My child," Balthazar answered gravely, "there are three worlds which are interchangeably connected, in their evil activities, as well as in their good. These are,—first, the world in which we live, then the two other worlds, our nearest neighbors, one immediately above, the other, below us. Each of our thoughts reverberates in one or the other of these spheres, and is there understood and registered, and the answers sent to us by the inhabitants reach and influence us towards good or ill. However, it frequently happens that these messages come by a most difficult route, for our brains are generally concerned with terrestrial activities, and, moreover, the faculty of interpreting such messages is only very rudimentally developed in most people. Nevertheless, the messages do exist. An electric battery, furnishes a good illustration, the generated current goes straight to its goal and accomplishes its work, but the return current often makes many circumlocutions, before it rejoins the source that produced it. But there is a return current as surely as there is a current of emission. And nothing could expound more clearly the great law that rules the Universe. There is proved the saying of the philosophers "nothing is lost, all is transformed." Everything creates a return current, from the

dynamo that sends its energy into a machine, to the soul that exhales into the spiritual ether, an adoring prayer. And a depraved nature, by its unhealthy passion, its ignoble thoughts, its criminal desires, starts a current which connects it with the spirit of evil. The return current is an inevitable corollary: man finds that for which he seeks—so speaks the Law."

"There comes to my mind at this moment," continued the Magus thoughtfully, "a scene that I once witnessed. I was following with peculiar interest the phases through which, after his death, a certain banker passed. By a most fraudulent and infamous bankruptcy, he had brought distress and ruin to a vast number of small trades-people and workmen. Their savings, representing in many cases years of privation and thrift, were swallowed in his disgrace. I had known him in this life, so his fate in the next particularly interested me. One day I sought him, and, after penetrating a black and opaque atmosphere, I found him. I heard a great tumult around him, and saw a motley crowd of creatures that had once been human. It was easy to perceive that the man was surrounded by the unfortunate beings, who, on this earth, had been his dupes. Some of them, left penniless by his fraudulent operations, had succumbed to despair, and had put an end to their unhappy lives. They now gathered around the financier; one showed his throat and the ugly bleeding gash of a razor, another's neck had the purple mark of the rope, from another's fractured skull exuded a bloody ooze of pulp and brain, a mother held before him

an emaciated child, its features rigid in the death that comes by hunger. Hosts besieged him, directing towards him the impetus of their hate, their thirst for vengeance. They accused him, they heaped him with execrable invectives, they cursed him. Much as he desired to escape from them, he could not break through their circle. Indescribable terror, remorse, despair was written upon his countenance: with clenched hands he tore at his hair, and in his bloodshot eyes gleamed a madman's horror! He begged his persecutors to let him go, he implored their pardon, he made them the most extravagant promises. But those who had suffered through him had been people of little advancement, the memory of their miseries was fresh in their hearts—they did not know what it was to pardon, and his punishment continued without respite. Ah, my dear child, the way of him who transgresses the law of God is indeed hard. Punishment is inevitable, and it is proportioned to the misdeed and the wrong that misdeed caused. No power on earth can accord a pardon, except the offended one himself, Expiation followed by reparation is the only means of effacing the consequences of a fault once committed."

"But, noble Master," said Miss McDonald, "permit me a question. If the banker was surrounded by his victims for many years, as he would be while their hate lasted, would he have any hope of ever again working for his own evolution, or of finding the means to labor for his salvation?"

"Believe me, my child, though he who leaves the path of God may be condemned to suffer intense agonies for centuries, even so, at some time, the occasion will be offered by which he can ameliorate his condition. His good angel is always with him, exhorting him to lift his ideals. Gradually these exhortations are rewarded, the soul's attention concentrates upon the possibilities of a higher life, the more he endeavors to free himself from his surroundings, the less he notices the clamor of their hate. His torturers, too, are open to the same salutary influences, their psychic natures also change, and they, too, make an ascension, learning gradually that hate will not better their condition. In listening to the inner voice of the spirit, they forget their enemy and their terrestrial miseries. Finally they pardon, and offended and offender are advanced on the path by the same effort—*FORGIVENESS AND REPARATION*.

"Not only our crimes, but all our bad actions, all our malevolent thoughts are indelibly enregistered in the astral world. Thoughts as well as actions constitute forces which form definite impressions; and these traces are conserved until an analogous force interposes to efface them. These forces in science, are designated as introconvertible, thus the lines of force in a magnet are converted into electricity by obstructing their free course. Electricity itself is converted into heat and light, by the interference which can be placed upon its currents. In the same way the vibrations of thought, according to

their intensity, can be converted into more or less powerful forces, by means of which repentance and reparation operate and obtain pardon for the fault committed. The most efficacious agents to effect the desired transformation, are the best and most charitable thoughts of the wronged toward the one who has injured them. Then pardon follows quickly and the impress left on the astral world by our evil doings is gradually obliterated by the purer, more wholesome thoughts of those whom we have offended."

CHAPTER XI.

ALBERT, whom we left journeying upon the Atlantic, spent the last days of his passage in peaceful enjoyment of the vivifying ocean air. It acted as a tonic to his nerves—they became calm, and he felt that the physiological change in his being was proceeding normally. The peculiar discomforts of the cerebral region had almost entirely disappeared. The evolution of the cellular system, especially localized at the centers of will and thought, progressed swiftly and harmoniously.

He became more and more convinced that important revelations awaited him in Europe—revelations that would influence his whole future life and he fondly hoped, would furnish him the enlightenment he so earnestly craved.

On the eighth day, his ship cast anchor in the harbor of Cherbourg, France, and he hastened to cable his safe arrival to his American Superior. While writing the message, he felt a presence near him, and turned to encounter the eyes of the venerable Archbishop, who the Sunday before their arrival, had addressed a religious exhortation to the Catholic emigrants on board ship. The aged priest had been indisposed during the voyage, and had rarely left his stateroom. The recognition was mutual, however,

and after exchanging cordial greetings, the two ecclesiastics decided to continue the journey to Paris together. They took adjoining seats in the fast express, and were soon exchanging views with the familiarity of old friends.

Albert learned that his fellow-traveler was returning to Europe after having occupied, for more than twenty years, an archiepiscopal see in one of the largest cities of the United States. He now wished to spend the remaining years of his life in the seclusion of a convent, consecrating himself entirely to God, and making preparation to enter the other world.

Albert, in his turn, confided a few of his plans to the venerable Archbishop. He made no secret of the fact that this was his first visit to Europe, and the Archbishop offered to be his guide in Paris, as far as his strength and health would permit, though he realized that many changes had taken place in the city during the thirty years he had been in America. On arriving in Paris, the two were directed to an excellent hotel, where they secured connecting rooms.

Early the next morning, our young abbé sought the Superior-General of the Order, residing in Paris, and delivered one of the documents entrusted to him by the American Superior. His coming was evidently expected by the Parisian dignitary, who received him most graciously. Albert handed him the despatches, and the Superior requested a few moments in which to examine them in the privacy

of his study. When he returned, his face clearly expressed the pleasure he had taken in their perusal.

"You Americans are rich and generous," he said. "This offer of pecuniary aid, so freely extended to us is a most precious testimonial of your sympathy. Your Superior, moreover, is a Frenchman by birth, and his heart is with us. Fortunately, we are in no pressing need of money; we anticipated the present crisis, and arranged our affairs accordingly. The French government insists that we submit to its decrees or leave the country. It wishes, nay, it demands that we support the Republic—the government of Free Masons. Never! A thousand times would we prefer exile!"

The excitement of the reverend Superior-General was intense; his face became inflamed, and assumed an expression of extreme bitterness. He continued giving vent to his anger in unrestrained vituperation.

Poor Albert stood as one amazed. He had never seen a priest thus lose his temper, and display his passion. He could not understand how a man filling the office of a Superior-General could allow himself to utter these expressions of hate.

The latter was interrupted in the midst of his tirade by the entrance of an ecclesiastic, who, exhibiting a newspaper to the prelate, exclaimed in excited tones,

"Look at this! That scoundrel of a Minister has made another speech in the Chamber of Deputies!"

Albert now became the involuntary listener to a

volley of invectives aimed at the heads of all the French authorities, from the President of the Republic and his Ministers to the officials of the Bureaux, who were generously styled servile slaves.

Albert, observing that his presence had been forgotten, in the heat of the argument, seized the first opportunity that presented itself, to beg permission to withdraw. He explained that a number of important affairs demanded his immediate attention.

"Yes, go," said the Superior-General; "return to your hotel. It would only make your heart bleed to learn of the infamous persecutions that have been inflicted upon us by these low clowns, who actually constitute the government of France. But we will have our revenge," he added bitterly, "when we have our King—our Emperor. Then, the prison for these!" He broke off in the heat of his emotion, and resumed in calmer tones :

"Return soon. Meanwhile, I will prepare the letters which you are to take back to America."

Albert bowed with dignity, and promised to return for the messages. He could not help exclaiming, as he went out,

"My Heaven! what does it all mean?"

He returned to the hotel, and seeking the Archbishop, related to him some details of the scene he had just witnessed. The old ecclesiastic was quick to notice the excitement of his young friend, and wishing to calm him, suggested that they dine, and resume the conversation after dinner.

During the repast, the Archbishop spoke of Paris and its many beauties, its churches, its cathedrals, and other places of worship. The abbé became interested in the conversation, and was quite himself by the time they returned to their apartments. They seated themselves in comfortable arm-chairs, and the venerable prelate resumed the discussion he had interrupted.

"Catholicism in France, at the present time, is passing through a sad crisis," he said. "The clergy, which enjoyed extraordinary privileges under the monarchical régime, cannot reconcile itself to a Republican form of government, although the Pope favors the Republic, which has proved itself just, as well as stable. The clergy turns a deaf ear even to the Pope's counsel, and continue to show in schools and churches, strong opposition to the powers of the State."

The Archbishop promised to take Albert to call on a friend of his, an old priest, who was conversant with French politics. In his letters, written to the Archbishop in America, this priest had deplored the attitude of the clergy and the religious congregations toward the Republic.

"He can probably explain the real cause of this profound antagonism," the Archbishop affirmed.

The two lost no time in seeking this priest. He was indeed old, white-haired and of venerable aspect, but thoroughly alert. He received the American prelates most cordially; his expression betokened a sympathetic nature, a wholesome, earnest spirit.

The conversation opened with reminiscences of

the events that had occurred in the youth of the two old friends. A discussion of more recent happenings followed, and the great question then perplexing the minds of the French people was naturally touched upon.

"I observe from your letters," the Archbishop began, "that your sympathies are with the progressive party of the French Catholic Clergy."

"Certainly," came the response; "there is no alternative for any sincerely religious and honest believer. I will explain, if you wish. To sum up the religious situation, two parties exist at the present time. The Congreganistes, on one side, are blindly and absolutely opposed to a Republican form of government. They mainly demonstrate their hostility through the instruction given in their schools. They teach principles contrary to the liberties of the people—liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, and use every effort to make the Republic hated, and the loss of the monarchy regretted; all this with the hope that the monarchy will some day be restored to power.

"The majority of the French priests, especially the high clergy, are in sympathy with the Congreganistes, and with them form a powerful political party, whose aim is to establish the Church as absolute authority in public affairs. Its religious signification is relegated to secondary consideration in their thoughts and efforts. This is the party that firmly opposes the education of the masses; they are the apostles of obscurantism or darkness.

“The other party, of which I am proud to acknowledge myself a member, is a progressive, intelligent, reasoning body ; it is moreover truly religious. And we are obliged to witness the defamation of our faith, to see our beautiful, holy religion forced to play the sacrilegious role of humble servant to these disloyal egoists, men as irreligious as they are ambitious.

“The high clergy, as I said before, are not only in profound sympathy with, but actually originated the political party of obstruction. It obliges us, the priests, to lend active co-operation to its underhanded intrigues, and to institute a political propaganda among our parishioners. And this propaganda is not established through persuasion and preaching, but through the secrecy of the confessional,—through threats employed to secure votes for favored candidates, whose personalities may be antagonistic and even odious to the voters.

“Already, a number of highly enlightened ecclesiastics, horrified by these outrageous intrigues, have sent in their resignations to their Bishop, frankly stating, as men of religious conviction and honor, their reasons for asking to be relieved of their priestly functions.

“But this cannot be true!” Albert exclaimed forcefully. “All you are telling me occurs in some other church,—not in the Roman Catholic,—not in the Church of Jesus Christ! This state of affairs surely cannot exist in noble France, the beloved daughter of the Roman Faith!”

"Ah, my child," responded the old patriarch, "you are young, and your soul sickens at the debasement of our beautiful religion. I will add that for every priest who has the courage to resign, because, perhaps, he has means to do so, an even hundred remain, holding the same views, but forced by circumstances to suffer in silence. To resign their priestly functions would plunge them in abject poverty."

"It all appears as an ugly dream," said Albert, pressing his hand to his burning brow. "When will it end, O, Heaven!"

"For us," the priest resumed, "the end is only too apparent. Refusal of the Orders to abandon their convents, forced ejection; stubborn defense, clashing of swords; intense feeling for and against the clergy, and finally—but who can predict the future? Let us hope and pray that finally the pure and holy religion will triumph.

"Listen. I have just received a pamphlet, published by the 'Petits Clercs' of St. Joseph at Seyssinet. They are all destined to the priesthood, and take the vow of foreign missionaries. The pamphlet contains a little poem that I consider a gem. It is this:

THE VOCATION. *

"Come," a voice entreats, "oh, child of earth;
My blessing take—son of my love thou art—
Come unto me—I give thy soul new birth.

Why tarry? Wouldst thou grieve thy Father's heart?

* Translated from the French.

Thou shalt be priest, oh, child! What dost thou fear?

Thou shalt be priest! a King! This shalt thou be.

Nay, more—a God! Behold me bending near—

I AM A PRIEST. Thou shalt be like to me!

Thou shalt be priest! Oh, miracle divine!

Thy voice shall call, ‘Come Lord,’ and I will hear—

My tabernacle leaving, child of mine,

The Host, within thy hand,—I shall appear!

Thou shalt be priest! The angels from on High

Shall bend to thee—thy name is sacred There.

‘Hush! ’tis a priest of God who passes by,’

Lo! angels bow their heads in silent prayer.”

“Come,” the Voice entreats, “oh, child of earth;

My blessing take—son of my love thou art—

Come unto me—I give thy soul new birth.

Why tarry? Wouldst thou grieve thy Father’s heart?”

The venerable priest read the first few stanzas of this sublime poem in a sympathetic manner, but his voice broke at the last and ended in a sob. The old archbishop and Albert were too deeply moved to speak. After a few moments of silence, the French priest said:

“We recognize in this poem the sentiments that filled our young souls when our religious aspirations carried us into the priesthood.”

“And these sentiments exist in the hearts of all novices, I am sure,” said the American prelate, “when priesthood is made their ideal.”

“It has always been and still is my ideal,” Albert said with firmness. “What demon, then, has breathed its malicious breath upon the face of France, to thus deteriorate the religious sentiment of her priests? I say ‘deteriorate’ through charity.”

"This demon," responded the venerable priest, with deep solemnity and profound sadness, "*is the demon of Worldly politics in the Religion of God!*"

Albert and the archbishop lowered their heads in acquiescence. They felt that they had just heard a supreme truth, and their hearts swelled with painful emotion; the aged priest had spoken as if inspired. After a few moments of sad meditation, Albert asked with a tremor of anxiety in his voice:

"Is there no hope of reawaking the true religious sentiment of France?"

"Yes, but we must look across the waters for aid. America alone can save us. A truly progressive, Catholic movement has been inaugurated in that country—a movement showing a high degree of spirituality, as well as intelligence. In France we refer to this movement as 'l'Americanisme.' Our enlightened priests look anxiously and hopefully toward the New World. They realize that you Americans have the courage of your convictions; you have liberal thought, and are actively seeking the good, the true, the beautiful. You carry the same intensity of purpose into your spiritual life that you manifest in your worldly affairs. Your daily actions are in accordance with your belief, and your conscience.

"I pray that young America may continue to thus harmonize religion with knowledge, and to permit the priest the benefit of scientific research and deep study, that he may manifest his glorious ideal in his conduct, his sermons, and his teachings. A number

of our poor priests may emigrate to America soon, there to remain until God shall indicate that the time is ripe for their return to our noble France. Then shall be planted here anew a purified, spiritual Catholicism; then shall the truly religious spirit be reborn, and this spirit shall be aroused through intelligence, learning and knowledge. The adherents of this new Catholicism shall no longer be blind or ignorant, but uncorrupted and unafraid. France will have before her a new ideal, and the sad philosophies of materialism, positivism, atheism, neantism, and 'tutti quanti,' will no longer have excuse for being.

"None of these unhappy 'isms' can give the least satisfaction to the legitimate aspirations of the soul; on the contrary they leave us without ideal, they stifle the nobility within us, and sever, without pity, the ties that bind us to Heaven."

The priest's beautiful tribute to America brought a smile to Albert's lips; he felt that the French patriarch, in what seemed to be mere exultation of soul, had spoken the truth.

"I trust, my reverend Father," he responded, "that you may prove a veritable prophet; the hope you have given is a great consolation. During the few days I have been in France, my soul has been overwhelmed with grief; but even in the depth of my sadness I feel a profound faith in God. He will not abandon France! And so I accept your prophecy."

The next day, Albert visited the cathedral of

Notre-Dame. The architectural grandeur of that noble edifice especially impressed him; he walked through the nave and long aisles of the church, admiring the height and boldness of the gothic arches, supported by tall columns. He appreciated the beauties of the paintings and sculpture, but they aroused in him no enthusiasm.

"This is not the house of God," said he; "there is no spiritual aura in this temple. It seems more like the tomb of Catholicism; I cannot pray here."

He left the church, his mind depressed by unhappy reflections. On returning to the hotel, he found the archbishop awaiting him. He told the latter of his visit to Notre-Dame, and of the unpleasant impression the church had made on his mind.

"God does not dwell there," he said. "The whole atmosphere of France chills my heart. I am in a hurry to leave this beautiful, corrupt city. I shall hasten to see the Superior-General about the letters he wishes me to take to America. I should be fearful of losing all faith, if I remained here longer; let us go to Belgium, my venerable friend. Belgium is surely a thoroughly Catholic country. You have offered to conduct me; let us go, then, and revivify our souls in its pious atmosphere."

CHAPTER XII.

THE next day our two congenial travelers were driven to the Gare du Nord, where the archbishop purchased two first-class tickets to Brussels, Belgium.

The journey passed without incident. Albert spent his time admiring the fertile country through which they passed, chatting pleasantly with his companion the while. At the end of a few hours they arrived at the old Brabantine city, and went immediately to the Hotel de l'Univers. They partook of a frugal dinner and retired early, for the elder priest was already complaining of fatigue.

The next morning they assisted at mass in the old cathedral of St. Gudule, and a few hours later set out for the capital of the neighboring province, which besides being the largest city of Flanders, is the diocese of the bishop and the center of the Flemish Catholic population. The bishop of this city and our American prelate were old friends. They had pursued their theological studies together at Rome, and the sympathy which made them comrades then had not been forgotten with the years.

The elder of the two, zealous and intensely religious, had started out to devote his life to making

catholic converts of the semi-savage people, living at that time in the neighborhood of the Great Lakes in the United States and Canada. The other, high born, wealthy, and accustomed to a life of luxurious ease, returned to his native country as soon as he was admitted to orders. He passed a number of years comparatively uneventful, then, thanks to his family influence and personal fortune, as well as to his faithful and intelligent work, he had conferred upon him the episcopal cross and miter.

This was the first meeting of the two in years, and upon recognizing each other, they embraced with emotion. The prince of the Belgian Church immediately invited the American archbishop and his young friend to share the hospitality of the episcopal palace, and his offer was gratefully accepted. Our two travelers were shortly afterwards installed in comfortable and spacious apartments especially reserved for strangers, and almost immediately dinner was announced. They were shown into an antique, Flemish dining-hall, lighted with long, narrow windows, its walls covered with oak panels black with age, and hung with ancient ware of Flemish and Dutch design.

The conversation between the two friends touched naturally on the events that had occurred during their separation.

The Belgian prelate could not conceal his wonderment as he listened to the recital of his old class-mate. He learned with amazement that the latter had spent his younger days in missionary work

among the half-civilized tribes of Indians in North America. He had taken his sister with him to this wild country, and the two had attempted the work together. They had lived in a blockhouse, a sort of hut constructed of trees and branches, roughly hewn, and plastered together with clay and mud.

His sister, a noble and worthy Christian woman, had attended to the household duties, and in addition had taught a number of the Indian girls to sew, to read and to write. The first efforts of the curé were directed toward learning the language of these Indians, and he soon mastered it sufficiently to converse with them. He was aided in his efforts by two French-Canadians, who were his interpreters at first. These men had married Indian wives and were living in the village with them. They were fully aware of the scorn with which such alliances are regarded in both the United States and Canada, and were shamefaced in the presence of the curé; they were inclined to regard him in a hostile light, far more as an enemy than as a friend. At the end of two years he contracted the malarial fever, which is prevalent in these humid climates, where the heat in summer is almost intolerable. The fever undermined his health, but he kept nobly at his work and succeeded in making a number of converts.

After five years of service in this retreat, his bishop transferred him to a large village in Illinois, where he was called upon to labor with a mixed community composed of French-Canadians, Bretons, Belgians, Swiss and Italians. They had all been

instructed in the Catholic religion, and were supposed to have remained more or less true to the faith, but the problems of their daily lives had caused them to fall into profound indifference, as far as religion was concerned. The people of these different nations were formed into separate colonies, each retaining the old-world prejudices, and their individual superstitions. The duty imposed on the new curé was to reunite these people and bring them back to an earnest practice of the Catholic faith. After a number of years, he finally accomplished this seemingly impossible task, and as reward for his service, was given the administration of a parish in Chicago. He continued to work with his accustomed zeal, and finally had bestowed upon him the high honor of an archbishopric.

The tale which the Belgian bishop had to unfold was of a different character. He had started out as a vicar, attached to one of the fashionable churches in the Belgian capital. This office was an important one, gained through the influence of powerful friends, and shortly afterwards he found himself involved in politics. He was a man of rare intelligence, deeply learned, a good orator, and thoroughly a diplomat; it is not surprising that his rise was rapid. He was promoted from canon to dean, and in a comparatively short time, he reached the height of his ambition, and was given the cross and miter. After this his political field was considerably enlarged; and he showed great discretion in the organization of his diocese. The curates of his

bishopric, aided by their vicars, were charged to make themselves personally conversant with the political opinions of their parishioners, and to keep separate lists of the members of the Catholic party, of the Liberals, of the Socialists, and of the unclassified. The object was by judicious pressure to bring them all over to the Catholic political party. A certain number of curates placed under a dean would meet each month, read their reports in detail, submit their new projects for the dean's approval, and ask his advice and direction. These deans would, in their turn, meet once a month at the palace of the bishop, where a grand council would be held, at which numerous resolutions were drawn up and acted upon. It was at these meetings that candidates for all the important political offices of the province were chosen, and this choice was always ratified by the provincial convention. Thanks to this ingenious organization, the Catholic party formed an enormous majority in all the legal assemblies and councils of the bishopric, with the exception of one or two large cities, where Socialism had made immense progress.

The deputies sent by the province to the Chamber of Representatives and to the Senate belonged exclusively to the Catholic party. The Church being thus assured of a majority, was in a position to control the legislative bodies, and to see that bills were passed providing for the erection of churches, convents and other religious buildings, and for the appointment of curates and vicars to these new

places. Care was also taken to have Catholic teachers appointed to the schools.

During his recital, the face of the Belgian prelate plainly showed the egotistical satisfaction he felt in the work he had accomplished; he did not give a single thought to the baneful result this policy would entail upon the nation.

Shortly afterwards, an attendant announced that several persons, who had been summoned to the palace, were awaiting his Grace. The bishop excused himself to his guests for a few moments, with the polished ease of a man of the world, and explained that the time for some important elections being near, he was subject to frequent interruptions.

The archbishop and his companion retired to their apartments. A little salon, luxuriously furnished, separated their two rooms, and here their host had placed a number of choice cigars and several bottles of wine and other liquor, which our two friends, entirely unaccustomed to these worldly indulgences, left untouched. Both were plunged for a time in sorrowful musings. It was with difficulty that Albert was able to control his painful emotion. He looked inquiringly at his friend with eyes that reflected the thoughts that agitated him. Both were silent, each seemingly awaiting the pleasure of the other. Finally, the younger man could contain himself no longer, and turning to his companion, he spoke courteously, but with deep feeling.

“What I have heard since entering this palace,

coming as it did from the lips of one who ought to be the spiritual guide of the people entrusted to his care, astounds and pains me. I feel that if I am forced to listen a second time to such doctrines, it will be beyond my power to conceal my disapproval if not my disgust. The bishop is our host and has received us with cordiality; I do not wish to have an altercation with him. In order to avoid this embarrassing situation, I ask permission to leave you. You must know the deep regret I feel in parting from you, but the separation seems obligatory. Are we really in Belgium, in Catholic Belgium?"

"I have already decided to leave to-morrow morning," responded the archbishop. "We will go together. I had intended to visit an old college friend whom I have not seen for half a century; his château is in an adjoining village. I am sure that he will give us both a cordial welcome. I have heard that he belongs to the Liberal party, as they call it here. Come with me, then; we shall probably hear him express opinions diametrically opposed to those we have heard this evening."

The abbé was only too willing to accept this invitation; and the two, after taking leave of the Belgian bishop, who expressed surprise and regret at the brevity of their visit, took the train for the little town of Z——, to seek the archbishop's friend.

The Flemish chatelain received his old classmate affectionately, and extended to Albert a hearty welcome. He was tall, with firmly set shoulders,

which age had not been able to bend. His features were rugged, showing determination of will, but his eyes beamed with extreme benevolence. His general aspect recalled to mind the portraits of the rigid Flemish burgesses, painted by the old masters of the Renaissance. These Flemish communiers were of the caliber of martyrs, strongly opposed to oppression by popes and princes, and willing to sacrifice their all, without hesitation, for the realization of their ideas.

Albert was more than favorably impressed by his host, and despite the disparity in their age a lively sympathy emanated from the one to the other.

Faithful to the old Belgian custom, the chatelain hastened to offer his guests some refreshment; the wine he poured was of the best vintage. The conversation immediately took a cordial turn. They were interrupted in the midst of a pleasant discussion by a village fanfare, little in accord with their sentiments. The chatelain opened the window and pointed to a cortège that was passing along the main road in front of his house.

"Here is a spectacle that will surprise you American priests," he said. "Look at it. It is a Catholic village fanfare. Notice especially the man in the long cassock with the large felt hat, puffing away with delight at that huge cigar, and beating the drum with such force. He is the vicar of our village. Is that not conduct worthy of a man who has consecrated his life to the Lord, and is it not conducive to the spiritual elevation of the people among whom

he lives! And that fine gentleman, dressed in the height of fashion, who marches in front of the procession, accompanied by the old priest, is the candidate they are presenting for one of the offices in an approaching election. They are going from tavern to tavern, buying liquor for the crowd, hoping by this means to gain the support of the electors, and too often they succeed! Is this not a noble and seemly manner for professors of the Catholic religion to accomplish the divine mission with which they are charged? What do you think of it?"

Albert was humiliated and sad, and beads of perspiration formed on his brow.

"If I had not seen it with my own eyes," he said finally, "I would not have believed it. But why do your curates and vicars take part in this affair; how are they concerned with the result of this election?"

"Their object is the triumph of their party at any cost," his host responded, "and to bring this about, they are using all possible means. It is worthy of remark that a number of their protégés, elected by them, are men with but little religion, who show themselves at church only when they are obliged to do so. They belong to the Catholic party merely to forward their own interests. As soon as they have the majority in any legislative assembly, they use their influence to grant great subsidies to the clergy in the form of appointments, and to decree the construction of churches and convents, and to have

Catholic priests or nuns placed in charge of the schools. To these latter, learning is limited to the rudiments of the Catechism and to a knowledge of prayers and litanies. Here in our little village we have one of these religious schools, taught by Catholic sisters. This school has received the support of the common council, to the detriment of a lay school formerly established here, and directed by regular government instructors, who had made a specialty of pedagogy. The convent of sisters absorbs about four thousand francs,—more than half the revenue of our community ; therefore street and other improvements affecting the health of the town, have become impossible.”

“ But surely your Bishop objects to this method of establishing a propaganda ? ” Albert exclaimed.

“ On the contrary, the Bishop encourages it. Last week he sent our curate a large sum of money to buy votes, although his purpose was not so baldly stated. The money is supposed to be spent for the propagation of the faith.

“ We have among the inhabitants of this village a number of workmen, who are employed in the factories of a neighboring town. They, like your American workman, have formed themselves into leagues and hold regular assemblies, at which all matters concerning the community are discussed. Just now they are agitating the question of elections, and the most intelligent of these men are fully aware of the ignoble part that the clergy plays in politics. They make a strong point of this to draw

into Socialism those of their comrades who still believe in the good faith of the clergy. They exaggerate the faults of our priests, and bring up statistics to prove how many of our curates and vicars are attached to the things of this world, while they preach renunciation to their parishioners, and promise them the recompense of the elect in the future world.

"In this way the working element—the element comprising the majority,—the great mass of the people, is detaching itself from religion, and becomes each day more and more materialistic. Total indifference follows quickly in the wake of the hatred they bear the priest and the doctrine he professes—a blind hatred that does not distinguish good from evil. The clergy, through entangling itself with civil affairs has brought about this disastrous result."

"But, it seems to me," Albert replied, "that, if the true religion were being preached to the Socialists, the Christian principles that have been inculcated in them in their infancy would come to the surface. What is lacking, perhaps, is a man of spirit, a courageous priest, a veritable apostle of Christ, who would make them comprehend that religion is not the enemy of true socialism, of which Jesus of Nazareth himself was one of the first adepts."

"Such a man exists. We have in Belgium an abbé of rare gifts, a man of spirit, who is entirely devoted to the material improvement of the working classes. He realizes that a workingman, frequently

burdened with a large family, for whose wants he can scarcely provide, in spite of incessant toil—and who is plunged into misery through the least relaxation or sickness, has no time to think concerning the development of his spiritual being. This abbé formed several associations or societies, designated by the name of Democratic-Christians. He preached to his adherents, with the fervor and vigor only profound conviction can give, that the rights of God and the rights of man are in complete harmony—that there can be no true fraternity and no true Socialism, whose principles are not based on religion. He maintains that faith in God and faith in justice of cause ought to march side by side.

“This doctrine of democratic Christianity soon brought him a number of adherents. It was a strong party, homogeneously united, and formed rapidly a body whose members were practical Catholics, who in all that concerned religion set the best possible example. Ah, well, what do you think became of it? You believe, no doubt, that the Bishop encouraged this noble movement, this tentative elevation of the masses through religion? A profound mistake! The rapid manner in which this new party recruited its adherents, the popularity of the abbé, which increased wherever he went, his prestige and the power he began to acquire with the masses, alarmed the High Clergy and the directing classes of the old Catholic party. They feared the people would become too advanced, that they were accorded too many concessions by the abbé, who in teaching

them their duties as Christians, taught them also their rights as members of the great human family, and they decided to nip this new doctrine in the bud. Some official remonstrances were sent to the abbé, who could scarcely believe his eyes when he read his Bishop's letter. He went immediately to the episcopal palace, and explained his aims and his motives with the eloquence of a soul profoundly convinced, and with the inspiration that only justice of cause can give. He showed how urgent it was to prevent the masses from falling into purely materialistic Socialism, which would result in absolute Atheism in time,—an Atheism that the Socialistic party was then openly professing. He maintained that the success of his own doctrine in so short a time proved that he was on the right road. But he was promptly interrupted by his superior, who informed him that his advice was not desired, and ordered him to abandon his propaganda, and to dissolve the associations he was directing. The poor abbé was thunderstruck. He could not prevent himself from remarking, however, that his Bishop had not accorded any consideration to the religious side of the new work—the side which had appealed so strongly to the abbé, and for which he had decided to sacrifice everything.

“Half dazed he left the palace, giving no promise. He entered the nearest church, and addressed a fervent prayer to God, pleading for aid and consolation in the horrible situation in which he was placed. Little by little he regained his composure, and made

his way home. He immediately summoned the leaders of his party to a solemn mass, which had been set for the next day in honor of the Holy Spirit; he wished to prepare them for the decision he was to make after the mass. They responded to his summons and prayed with fervor. The abbé administered the holy sacrament of communion to them, and from his manner they divined that something unusual had taken place. Immediately after the communion, they assembled in the vicarage, and their leader read them the letter he had received from the Bishop, and told them in detail the conversation that had passed between the latter and himself. He told them that he had been ordered to abandon his followers, and this after the arduous task of uniting them into the one large family. His disclosure came like a blow - some were not able to contain their grief, and the abbé himself was overcome by sadness. Others, however, were filled with indignation, and some even gave vent to expressions of disloyalty toward the Bishop.

"The abbé, immediately called for silence, and told them that invectives are harmful weapons. He asked them to consult their own conscience, and to ask it whether they were worthy the title of 'Democratic-Christians,' and to decide whether they were willing to remain faithful to their religious principles, and to achieve gradually, taking their faith for a guide, the vindication of their social rights. They all responded in the affirmative.

" 'If that is your determination, my children,' said

their leader, 'we will continue our work, strong in our right, and with the Lord on our side. We will put our faith in God, and let come what may!'

"That was noble, was it not? But let me tell you what happened. When the Bishop learned the decision of the abbé and his adherents, he notified the former that if he persisted in his disobedience, he would be deprived of his ecclesiastic functions. The abbé responded through a letter, couched in respectful terms, that he was convinced of the justice of his cause, and that he considered it his sacred duty to make a fight against the Atheism, so prevalent among the masses. He reiterated that he could not abandon the people who had placed themselves under his spiritual guidance in good faith, and, in order to benefit their fellow men, had endeavored to attain Christian virtue. The Bishop referred this letter to Rome, and received an order to restrain the abbé from celebrating mass, thus depriving him of his most sacred prerogative. All this, however, was of no avail. The abbé to-day has more adherents than ever, and is adored by his followers; but he is deprived of the privilege of saying mass, and is scarcely permitted to enter a church. What do you Americans, coming from the land of liberty, think of this?"

Albert's face expressed sad surprise mingled with indignation, and the Archbishop, raising his eyes to Heaven, responded merely with 'a gesture of despair. A moment later a domestic brought a mes-

sage to the chatelain, and the latter excused himself to his guests, suggesting that they take a walk during the time he would be occupied with an affair of importance. The two friends acted on his suggestion, and were soon strolling through the village. Each, absorbed in his own somber thoughts took but little notice of the magnificent panorama spread out before them. Albert, after a long silence, finally raised his eyes to his companion, with an expression of such distress, that the latter, fully interpreting the mute question, responded :

“ Yes, my son, we have come to this beautiful, industrious Belgium, formerly so full of faith and loyalty, only to learn that our beloved Catholic Church has fallen into folly and degradation. I understand how revolting this must appear to your young enthusiastic soul, so little accustomed to the ways of the world. It may serve, though, as a lesson that will afford you some benefit. We look to America for the regeneration of the Catholic Church ; her younger priests, of whom you are one, must perform this stupendous work. Through them faith must be reinstated, and humanity must be shown the true paths—the world must be taught that man’s spiritual nature alone should constitute the priest’s field of action, and that the clergy must in no way identify itself with political matters. Its interference with the affairs of state, its participation in political maneuvers, leads only to the degradation of the Church and of religion.

“ To-day, as in the time of St. Peter, the Catho-

lic religion is strong, indivisible, supreme—but the Church—the Church is fallen, and has been lowered to the rank of a political machine, and they who ought to be her ministers, the champions of religion, have become the most active, and frequently the most corrupt party agents.”

Albert bowed his head in silence, and the two ecclesiastics slowly followed the road leading back to the château. They were stopped half way by a group of Liberals and Catholics, who were holding an animated discussion in the village streets, and the spectacle further disheartened them. Their host rejoined them, immediately on their return, and the conversation became more general. Incidents of the voyage were discussed, and the chatelain listened with interest to his guest's description of America. The following day, the two travelers took an affectionate leave of their host, thanking him heartily for the reception he had tendered them. They decided to depart that evening, if possible, for Italy, in order to visit Rome, the Eternal City.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE abbé and his venerable companion were still depressed by the sad condition of Catholicism in France and Belgium, when they took the train for Italy. They seated themselves comfortably in their compartment, and were gratified to observe that the car contained only one additional traveler. They, necessarily, took minute notice of the man, who was to accompany them on the long journey from Brussels to Rome. He was of middle age, with an attractive, intellectual face, black eyes and light olive complexion. In type he was distinctly an Italian of the upper class, whose expression showed the innate love of music and appreciation for the fine arts that dominates southern natures. His behavior and gestures bespoke him a man of refined instincts and polished manners, and our two ecclesiastics surmised correctly that they would be put to no inconvenience on his account.

The first few hours passed slowly, as is usual on long railway journeys; each traveler settled himself at ease, and allowed his thoughts to wander at will, keeping a languid eye on the fleeting landscape, meanwhile, and conjecturing a little about the end of the trip.

After awhile, the two priests exchanged a few words concerning their mission, and observing that their companion had closed his eyes, they continued the conversation in low tones in English. The Italian—we shall designate him by this familiar title, henceforth, with due apology to him—opened his eyes a trifle on hearing a foreign language, listened a few moments; then, smiling slightly, closed his eyes again. The priests talked on, discussing their religious experiences in Europe, in accents expressing deep sadness; they dwelt at some length on the difference between the Catholicism practised in America by themselves and other true priests, and that practised in the countries they had just visited.

From time to time the Italian opened his eyes—not with the air of a man heavy with sleep, but with the quick, lively movement of one fully conscious of what is going on about him; at intervals he became so interested in parts of the conversation as to forget his role of sleeper!

He knew now that his two companions were Catholic priests from America. He had already surmised, from their vestments, that they belonged to some Christian order, but whether Catholic or Protestant he had not determined. The priests wearied at length, for the night was far advanced, and by this time the Italian slept in earnest.

On the second morning, the three travelers entered naturally into friendly conversation, and after a few commonplace remarks concerning the voyage, the Italian, in a most engaging manner invited the

priests to breakfast with him in the dining-car; he gave as naive reason, that since they were now on Italian soil, it was his pleasure to act as their host. The priests showed plainly their appreciation of his offer, but since the train on which they were traveling was not bound for American soil, where they, might have a chance to reciprocate, they smilingly declined. But they explained the situation with such delicacy that the Italian, himself, was obliged to admit the justice of their refusal. This little exchange of politeness, given and received with so much tact, showed plainly that the three belonged to the same cultured class of society; formal barriers were cast aside, and the three conversed on familiar ground. They compromised by breakfasting at the same table, and returned together to their respective compartments.

After an hour spent in conversation on a variety of subjects, the train passed through a small city, in the center of which a magnificent cathedral, surmounted by a golden cross, was silhouetted against the blue sky. The Italian was quick to observe the expression of admiration that lighted Albert's face, when he beheld the edifice, and after several questions had been asked and answered, the Italian ventured to remark.

"If I am not mistaken, you gentlemen are Catholic priests belonging to some American Order?"

Both ecclesiastics bowed their heads in smiling assent.

"I am pleased to learn it," the Italian continued.

"I have recently had the good fortune to hear several discourses by two of your compatriots, one a bishop, and one an archbishop, whom I met on their way to Paris from Rome. They were leaders, I believe, of the doctrine that we call 'Americanism.' I will frankly confess that I severed connection with the Roman Church some time ago—though my frankness may seem misplaced. I was not only enchanted but deeply affected by the words of these two American prelates, whom I went to hear from mere curiosity—on the advice of some friends, as unbelieving as myself. These friends had been profoundly impressed by their sermons, which were deeply religious, but also strongly philosophic.

"The exalted religious philosophy of the sermons impressed me also. The prelates preached simply, but it was the religion of God,—Christianity in all its pristine purity. They rarely mentioned the Church, and when they did, it was referred to as the humble servant of religion. Here in Europe, especially in Italy, the rôles are reversed; here religion is considered the humble servant of the Church. The Church is superior, omnipotent, omniscient and infallible! She insists that her interpretations of religion be accepted without question; all must bow to her decisions. She has power, influence, fortune."

The American priests looked at each other significantly, as their companion continued:

"The Roman Church in Italy—pardon the plain language, my Fathers—constantly abuses the prestige religion gives it, in order to increase its temporal

and worldly power. Kings and mendicants, nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, are all obliged to bow before it, on pain of excommunication, or other dire punishment.

“Italy has for a long time submitted almost silently to the galling yoke of the Roman Church. The patience of the people may be rightly condemned as culpable, but to-day men of broad intellect plainly see that for centuries the Church has kept the masses in a state of ignorance, bordering on stupor; they have been befooled through vapory promises of eternal happiness to be obtained in some enchanting paradise—after death. They have been told that according to the magnitude of their suffering here below, the greater will be their glorious recompense in the life beyond.

“While the minds of the people have remained dormant, beguiled by these promises, the Church has busied itself with its own interests, gaining excessive power and enormous wealth. Little by little, this egoistic, worldly conduct on the part of the Church has become apparent to intelligent thinkers among us, and many in Italy stand ready to-day to openly condemn her iniquity. They have lost all faith in the professions of the Church. But it has taken centuries to even partially open the eyes of the Italian people, who are, as history recounts, more superficial than practical, and but little given to concerning themselves with affairs of to-morrow. They are dreamers, idealists: they have idealized the Church, as they have poetry and art.

"The Roman Empire, whose princes had need of fabulous sums, in order to gratify their inordinate tastes, through taxes and imposts, forced the people to lives of extreme frugality. And in order to prevent them from thinking too earnestly about their deprivations, regaled them through continued fêtes given in the large arenas, and allowed them to participate in the triumphal receptions tendered the old Roman heroes. And this state of affairs gave rise to the familiar saying that at last the people demanded only "*Panem et cyrcenses*," bread and their arenas, and these being given them, they were content.

"It is indeed true, alas," said the elder of the priests.

"And now my reverend Fathers," continued the Italian, who had succeeded in intensely interesting his auditors, "the Italian of to-day, the product of centuries of submission on the part of his ancestors, finds in his blood the taint of indifference so tenderly nurtured by the old Roman Empire. Only the modern saying of the people reveals a shade of thought, perhaps, indicating that their indifference and carelessness is not voluntary, but merely a covering that conceals a secret despair. To-day their cry is "*Feste, Farina, Forca*," "*fêtes, flour, and after these—the deluge!*" This is called the philosophy of the three F's, and eloquently depicts the hopeless aspirations of the Italian people.

"The Church ended by becoming a monopoly. She and the nobility became exclusive proprietors

of entire Italy. The people possessed the three F's; it was sufficient—they should be content!

“Well, my Fathers, you must know the rest. The people awakened at last, and rose in revolt. They reclaimed the property confiscated by the Church, and deprived the Pope of his temporal power. Since that memorable epoch, the Italian people have become alert, progressive, but unfortunately, they have lost all respect for the Church. They consider it merely an obsolete institution, that proved false in all the sacred professions made during its omnipotence. The people maintain that when she had power she was an oppressor and did absolutely nothing to ameliorate the wretched condition of the masses.

“To-day, I repeat, we look only to science and to industrial progress for our advancement. Through them only we hope to regain our former rank among political powers—the rank of which the oppression of the Church has robbed us.”

The Italian finished. He had spoken with warmth and fervor, and throughout the discourse Albert's face had worn an expression of extreme sadness. It seemed that the farther he journeyed through Europe, the more the conviction was forced upon him that Catholicism—the Catholicism he loved and whose high tenets and sublime mysteries he understood, had lost the faith and respect of the intelligent classes in each country he visited. His heart grew even more sad as he realized that he was rapidly approaching the eternal city of Rome, where, no

doubt, fresh suffering and more disillusionment awaited him.

"Rome," cried the conductor, and the train was brought to a sudden stop.

The two priests shook hands affectionately with the Italian, and bade him a cordial farewell. They were convinced that he was thoroughly sincere, and had only expressed his true convictions—convictions that had been forced upon him.

Albert and the Archbishop were driven immediately to the Hotel *La Minerva*, which is patronized almost exclusively by the priesthood. The interior court of this establishment is sheltered by a glass roof, and forms a delightfully cool and attractive reception hall. It was here that the priests rested until shown to their rooms.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning, after breakfast, the abbé ordered a carriage, and the two ecclesiastics were driven to the Basilica of St. Peter, the supreme monument of Catholicism ; it was necessary to cross an imposing bridge, beneath which flowed a wide river.

"This is the Tiber," said the Archbishop, touching Albert's arm.

The latter started, and a shiver passed through his body, as he recalled the terrible scenes of which this river had been a mute witness ; he thought of the dark ages, when its waters had been clogged with the bodies of the first Christians, put to death through horrible torture by the order of the Roman Cæsars. He thought, then, of other epochs, full of promise, when on the banks of this famous river, Rome had been reborn—the home of the Popes—the heart of Catholicism.

They arrived in due time at the entrance to the grounds extending before the Basilica. The Archbishop signaled the driver to halt, for he wished to give his companion an opportunity to view the incomparable Place de St. Pierre, and the magnificent cathedral, the most imposing ever erected in any country in honor of Christianity.

The abbé at once recognized the Basilica, and devoted to it all his attention. But despite the clearness with which the final vision had come to him, he had not realized the grandeur, the noble majesty of the edifice; its imposing proportions now elicited his admiration—bordering on ecstasy. He did not see the superb columns that surrounded the park, nor the magnificent statues erected on all sides—he saw only the cathedral, with its vast scintillating dome, surmounted by an immense golden cross. His priestly heart thrilled as he thought that he was one of the militant soldiers of this Catholic faith, which numbers among its adherents the greater part of the civilized, Aryan races—this great religion, whose influence is felt throughout the world.

The Archbishop watched him with a benevolent interest, envying the emotion that thrilled him. Albert's face wore an expression of radiant happiness, of sweet and holy ecstasy. In contemplation of the superb spectacle before him, he seemed to have momentarily forgotten the sad disillusion with which his recent journey had overwhelmed him.

"How glorious it is—how noble—how grand!" he exclaimed, at last. "In our young America, where monuments have not yet had time to attain the artistic perfection revealed here, we can scarcely conceive of anything like this. Come, let us go nearer the Basilica, if you will."

They alighted, and went on foot through the grounds, until they reached the main stairway leading to the temple. They slowly mounted the stone

steps, crossed the magnificent portal, and entered the sacred edifice. Albert, half dazzled, let his gaze wander around the immense Basilica—then to the central dome, whose extreme height inspired him with wonderment. Advancing a little, he saw the artistic, superbly finished statues of the various Popes, who had reigned in the Catholic Church; the imposing cathedral formed a frame worthy of them. Throughout the interior the decoration and ornamentation were incomparable.

Filled with admiration, the young priest felt that only sublime inspiration and intense faith had produced these masterpieces at epochs so far apart. Dominated by his emotion, he instinctively wished to give thanks to the All-Powerful God, who had made it possible for him to behold these marvels of religious art. Without waiting to seek a *prie-dieu*, both he and his companion prostrated themselves on the cold marble that formed the floor of the cathedral, and raised their thoughts piously to Heaven. Arising, they made a more minute inspection of the church.

Albert soon observed, with conflicting emotions, the worldly, almost profane, behavior of numerous groups of tourists, who, guide-book in hand, were making a tour of the Basilica, stopping before objects of interest, as they would before pictures in a museum or show cases at a fair, and expressing their opinions in loud, strident tones. Albert remembered, then, the words of a number of his confrères, who had told him that this superb temple, ‘dedicated to

the glory of God,' had been lowered to the rank of a simple museum, awaking in most visitors only a vague curiosity, in which was mingled neither piety nor respect.

The elder priest, observing Albert's sad expression, naturally divined his thoughts, and said in a low tone :

"This magnificent Basilica of St. Peter is one of the wonders of the world, attracting all classes of tourists ; but how few, alas ! come with a desire to revive their faith ! Fervor in religious sentiment seems to be found only among the lowly—the unfortunate. Here we have an example."

The Archbishop, in speaking, directed his friend's eyes toward the colossal figure of St. Peter, before which a group of Italians, belonging evidently to the lower strata of society, were kneeling, praying devotedly. Rising, they prostrated themselves anew before the statue of the first apostle of Christ, kissing his sandals with veneration.

Touched by this simple act of pure, tender devotion, Albert stood for a long time in deep contemplation before the statue of the pontiff. The Archbishop motioned to him, at length, and the two continued their tour of the Basilica. A profound emotion took possession of the abbé, when he had leisure to muse in detail on the many marvels of art on which his eyes rested in quick succession—rare creations of beauty so incomparable as to exceed the most fertile imagination. He moved as one in a dream ; he seemed to have entered a new and trans-

cidental world—the hot blood mounted to his brow. Overcome by his feeling, he suggested to his companion that they go outside, declining the latter's offer to visit the Vatican just then, for he wished a chance to collect his thoughts. They sought their carriage, and were driven rapidly through streets dominated by magnificent monuments and churches. Returning to the hotel, they ordered some light refreshment, and Albert retired to his room for a few moments. Once alone, he drew from his pocket the image of Sophia, and endeavored to address a prayer to her; but his heart was too full for utterance; he was speechless, as he had been in the Basilica. He kissed the image with fervor; then, after bathing his face in cool water, he became calmer, and rejoined the Archbishop. After a short rest, the carriage was ordered again, and they set out for the Vatican. They alighted before the huge bronze gateway that forms the main entrance to the Palace of Popes, and mounted the great stairway, the 'Scala Regia,' as it is called. The Archbishop conducted his young friend to the apartments of the 'Illustrissimo Reverentissimo Cameriere' of His Holiness. They were immediately received by the princely and holy Chambellan, who greeted the elder priest with every mark of respect, and accorded to the younger a smiling welcome. The Archbishop formally requested that the two be permitted to visit the palace, and the Cardinal Chambellan granted him a permit at once, admitted them to the scientific and artistic collections as well as to all other parts of the

palace—with the exception of the apartments of His Holiness, and a few of the private offices of the cardinals. He placed an official at their service to act as guide and to explain the various points of interest.

The official led them first to the 'Scala Regia,' which opens into the Sistine Chapel, where the Holy Father himself celebrates mass. Albert accorded only superficial attention to the magnificent decorations of this hall, for his heart was filled with emotion at the thought that he was about to enter the private chapel of the High Chief of Christianity. Their conductor knocked at the door of the sanctuary, and it swung open. The abbé entered the holy place, and immediately prostrated himself and prayed with fervor.

Arising, he surveyed the interior of the chapel. Beautiful paintings, depicting scenes in the lives of Christ and Moses, looked almost lifelike in the dim light; the rich ornamentation, touched here and there with gold stood out in bold relief, and the sculptor's art showed in the exquisite marble figures framed in artistic niches; the huge columnar supports, ornate with sculptured tracery, symbolic of strength and power, especially attracted his attention. A marble partition separated the main body of the chapel from the part sacred to His Holiness, and the abbé, resting his eyes on the altar before him, fully realized the immense power for good placed in the hands of this sovereign pontiff, the commander of more than a hundred millions of the faithful, scattered over all parts of the world.

"May the Omnipotent ever guide and direct His Holiness," Albert prayed, "and show him the true spiritual Path."

He drew himself with difficulty away from the chapel, and followed their guide through numerous halls containing masterpieces of the great artists, and sculpture of incomparable artistic value, until they reached the library. He wished that he might spend a year in this latter hall, replete with all human knowledge from the beginning of civilization to the present day. It was nightfall before they thought of leaving the ancient palace, with its wonderful attractions. They returned to the hotel more than ever impressed by the mighty power exerted by the Roman Catholic faith.

After dinner, the two repaired to the Archbishop's room, and discussed the events of the day. Albert tried to depict to his companion the profound emotions he had experienced at the sight of so many marvels. He avowed that a priest who had not visited Rome could have only a faint idea of the grandeur of the faith, to which he had devoted his life. He spoke with enthusiasm, and the prelate recalled his own younger days, when his soul also had been full of this same ardor, of this divine fervor. He recalled his first mass, celebrated in this very city, and sighed softly.

For a long time they talked of Rome and of her grandeur, and at last, when the abbé rose to leave, the Archbishop said,

"To-morrow Holy Week begins. I suggest that

together we attend the functions at a few of the different churches. We can commence by assisting at the solemn mass that will be celebrated at the Basilica, followed by the consecration of the palms."

Albert acquiesced willingly enough in this project, and early the next morning they appeared for the second time at the Basilica. The ceremony was simple but impressive; at the close, the blessed branches were distributed, and Albert zealously preserved his. The two following days they attended the religious exercises of different churches, and on Wednesday presented themselves anew at St. Peter's, and entered just as the choir were chanting the "Lamentations," and the "Miserere." The cortège of cardinals and canons, wearing their sacerdotal vestments, profoundly impressed Albert. The high dignitaries seated themselves in the stalls reserved for them, and the choir, still rendering the "Lamentations" in plaintive accents, knelt on the marble steps of the great Basilica in an attitude of prayer. It was a spectacle never to be forgotten, one of grandeur mingled with sadness,—of beauty blended with pathos.

Later, they visited various churches, among others the San Giovanni in Laterano, Jesu, Santa Maria and Sopra Minerva, this last being opposite the hotel at which they were stopping.

Albert was leading an entirely new existence; he seemed to be under the dominion of a mysterious influence, that prevented him from planning far

ahead—or from questioning; he simply lived and prayed.

At last the day of Easter Sunday arrived,—the day on which the Pope was to officiate at the High Mass. Thanks to his influential position, the Archbishop easily obtained two cards of admission to this important ceremony. At the sight of the Head of the Church in the pomp of his pontifical robes, a feeling of deep veneration filled Albert, and he could not restrain his tears. There before him stood the successor of St. Peter, the Sovereign Pontiff, the King of kings, the Infallible Guide of Christianity! During the holy sacrifice, he frequently raised his eyes to the Pope. The impression that he received was that this Pope was a holy man, a man convinced of the importance of his high functions and of the supreme authority he wielded, thoroughly sincere and earnest—in a word, a worthy successor of St. Peter, and a true minister of Christ.

On leaving the church, the young priest hastened immediately to his hotel, and sought the privacy of his room in order to quiet the violent emotion to which his soul was a prey. Once alone, he placed himself on his knees, and addressed a fervent invocation to the Lord. He thought of his former life, of the doubts that had assailed him concerning the truth of the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church; he reviewed in mind the period he had passed at the home of the Magus, Balthazar, to whom he had entrusted the spiritual direction of his soul, when his duty as a Catholic priest was to have addressed him-

self to the Head of his Church, near whom he now was.

Several light taps on the door interrupted his disquieting reflections. He turned the key, and the Archbishop entered the room; the latter noticed immediately the disturbed state of his young friend, and half divined the cause of the emotions that agitated him. He sighed deeply, for he, himself, had experienced the same doubts, and had passed through the same state of suffering.

"I came merely to wish you good-night," the elder priest said with delicacy.

He extended his hand, which Albert affectionately clasped, bowing his head to receive the Archbishop's benediction.

The abbé slept heavily from sheer fatigue, but toward midnight he awakened with a nervous start. His mind was in too excited a state for him to sleep, despite his physical weariness; his thoughts kept reverting to happenings of the day, and to other scenes and incidents of his voyage. How much he had passed through! What disillusionment had come to him! Then, he thought earnestly of the Italian, his traveling companion, who had given such a concise religious history of Italy and of the sad rôle played by the people.

He thought of what he had seen in France, and of the scenes he had witnessed in Belgium.

Toward morning, sleep visited him again, and he did not awaken until seven o'clock. After breakfast he returned to his room, where he found the vener-

able Archbishop awaiting him. The latter observed that the abbé's face had the same careworn expression, and drew him into conversation.

"I understand your feelings perfectly," he began, "and I sympathize with you from the bottom of my heart. You are overwhelmed with sadness; I, myself, have passed through all these stages, these agonies, these doubts. Twenty years ago I was in the same state that you are now.

"My youth, also, was spent in a religious atmosphere, and from an early age I was destined for the priesthood. When finally I was consecrated priest in Rome, I said my first mass in the Basilica of St. Peter. I have never experienced a happier day than that.

"Shortly afterwards, I was made an assistant vicar in a country vicarage, presided over by a priest, who was frequently ill. I put my whole soul into the work. After studying the weaknesses and spiritual needs of my parishioners, I filled my sermons with practical counsel, tending to instruct them in true fraternal life, in charity toward each other, and to inspire them with love for God. Many in the community spoke of the beauty of my sermons but my curé informed me that my instructions from the bishop were to confine my teachings to explanations of the Gospel. I obeyed, but the instructions curbed my enthusiasm. I took no joy in transmitting the sterile explanations, handed down from past centuries. My ministry grew distasteful to me. The conviction was slowly forced upon me that the

existence of a country parish curate was too material for a serious priest, who had voluntarily devoted his life to the service of God. Choice viands, rare wines and elaborate dinners seemed to occupy all the leisure time of these curates.

"They gave no thought to exalted ideals, nor to the progressive spiritualization of their beings.

"Ah, well, my young friend, my soul became thirsty, homesick. It aspired to heights not to be reached in this stifling atmosphere. After months of prayer, during which I pleaded incessantly for guidance and counsel, I determined to emigrate to America, to become a missionary, in order to preach the word of God in new fields. My curé willingly recommended me to my Superiors, and three months later, I embarked for New York. From there I was sent to the Territory of Dakota, where, in the midst of a settlement of Sioux Indians, some French-Canadians had started a colony that had prospered. They cultivated small farms, but lived mainly from hunting and fishing. The white men had intermarried with the Indians, and these Indian women did most of the work, as is still the custom in their tribe.

"The first years of my ministry were full of hardship and discouragement. The men had been reared Catholics, but were renegades of the worst kind, lacking even respect and sympathy. They attended my first mass with mocking smiles on their lips. During the first winter, which was bitterly cold, I was even obliged to forage for wood for my fires. Aided by the Powers on High I persisted in

my efforts, for I felt that I had here a field that would bear excellent harvest. But I related most of this in your presence to the Belgian Bishop," he broke off abruptly.

"Continue, my Father, I beg you," the abbé insisted, "I am only too glad to hear a full account of your struggles and devotion. You have already revived my spirit."

"I continued, then, with my mission, uniting charity with faith. I interested myself in the worldly affairs of the people as well as in their spiritual growth, and gave them what material assistance I could; I attended them in their illnesses, and through all these means sought to bring them back to religion, and to inspire them to lead upright, moral lives, and to develop good-will and charity toward each other.

"My ministrations, proving successful, were appreciated by my Superiors. At the end of three years, I was called to a curacy in a little city—and afterwards, to other curacies of greater importance. At length, at the end of twenty years, I was raised to the dignity of a bishopric. With my health considerably broken by my labors, I started on a tour of Europe. I desired above all to visit the scenes of my childhood and to there awaken the emotions of my youth—to rejuvenate my spirit, if possible, and to refresh myself in an atmosphere full of faith,—sincere, and refreshing. I wished to revisit Rome, to say mass at the same altar that had been the witness of my first consecration.

"Ah, well—I saw in the little city where I was born the same scenes which we together have witnessed in France and Belgium. The intense animosity existing between two parties—the Church on one side, and the Liberals on the other, was in evidence there also, and all the evil results that follow—hatred between neighbors, slander, scandal and ill-will. What I found most sad was that a number of the friends of my youth, whom I had left faithful and believing, devoted to their religious duties, had become unbelievers, scorning their religion. And the working classes—those devoted to industrial labor, had become Socialists, and entirely irreligious.

"You see, now, my young friend, that I can fully sympathize with your state of mind."

Albert bowed his head. "My venerable Father," he responded, "my heart is weary of it all, and I am in haste to return to America, where the Catholic Church has not yet been degraded into a mere political party. I hope she may never become so, but I realize that even there she is in danger."

"To-morrow, if you wish," the Archbishop answered, "we will visit the Director of the American College or Seminary, to whom I have a letter of introduction. From what I have learned of him in America, I think we will find him a priest of great merit and of liberal views. I hope that we will discover at this college a ray of light bright enough to penetrate the gloom that has encircled us in these other places."

The next morning the two ecclesiastics visited the

American Seminary, and were received by the Director himself. He was a man of fine presence, and proved thoroughly sympathetic. He invited our two priests to remain to dinner, and the three were soon on familiar terms. Albert informed the Director, whom he addressed as Monsignore, that this was his first visit to Rome, and to Europe, and was asked by the latter to state his impressions. Albert answered without hesitation, delicately turning the sense of the question, that he had been deeply impressed by the beauty of the religious buildings, by the churches as well as the cathedrals, by their great age; by the wonderful paintings and sculpture that ornamented the interiors, and by the wealth of their reliquaries."

The face of the Director indicated that this was not exactly the response that he had expected. The archbishop, who understood, ventured to inform Albert that the Monsignore desired to learn his impressions as a priest—what he thought of the manner in which Catholicism was conducted in Europe.

The abbé remained silent, while an expression of sadness overspread his countenance.

The Archbishop answered for him, and addressing their host, described frankly all the religious and irreligious scenes they had witnessed in France and Belgium, and told of their meeting with the Italian, and of the conversation that had followed. He explained in detail the deplorable impression that all these scenes had produced on a soul as pure and as deeply religious as that of the young abbé who had

come to Europe, strong in faith, with a hope that he would draw fresh inspiration from the Source of Catholicism, that he would be fortified in zeal, and be endowed with the Holy Spirit. He had thought, then, to return to his own country, carrying with him some of the divine influences which had surrounded him, and to distribute to his people the many blessings that he had received.

The Monsignore looked concerned and grieved, as his eyes sought those of the young priest.

"Alas, my reverend Father," he began, "you have described in vivid but true colors the condition of the Catholic church in Europe to-day—a condition for which the Church of Rome is largely responsible. The Church has lost faith in its own dogmas, and seems to be abandoned, in a large measure, by the Divine Spirit: it has become worldly, material, confining all its energy to the establishment of its political power. In your travels, you have learned the direful consequences of all this; the priesthood has been merged into a mere political organization, a lawful body, if you wish, but one in which true religion no longer plays a part.

"This wretched degeneration of Catholicism in Europe must fill Americans, like yourselves, with dismay; but you may take hope in the knowledge that in America the Church still retains much of its purity, and that your priests, accustomed from infancy to think for themselves, are more faithful and sincere to the vocation they choose. They do not follow the priesthood merely as a career that will

make them comfortable and exempt them from work ; but because they feel irresistibly drawn to religion. In Europe, generally, the contrary is the case, and here the saying has become proverbial that 'the priesthood is an excellent and paying profession.'

"The new movement now going on in our country, which is designated here as 'Americanism,' is destined to purify religion, and to rouse it from the inanimate state in which it languishes, even in some parts of America. Its influence is already being felt in foreign countries, and in some instances it is being directed by native priests. I have had the pleasure of entertaining the three chief leaders of this American movement, and feel assured that they are truly the elect of God ; their principal dogma is the spiritualization of the human soul. Their aim is to mount higher and higher toward the Supreme Being, by constantly seeking purification through prayer and meditation. They also believe in developing the mind through positive, scientific and social studies, in order that priests may lead the learning of the century and thus be able to guide their followers along divine paths, believing sincerely in the power of knowledge.

"The papal college of Rome, called the Sacred College, is strongly opposed to this 'Americanism' merely because it is so progressive. Its promoters have been summoned to appear, one after the other, before the college, where they have been strongly urged to desist in their teachings, but they have nobly maintained the justice of their doctrine, which they continue to uphold, though in a very conservative

manner. The Pope, divining their power in America, has addressed a special sermon to them, thoroughly non-committal, but giving them to understand nevertheless that they must confine themselves to the dogmas promulgated by the Church."

"As for myself," the Monsignore continued, "I am thoroughly in sympathy with the new, progressive doctrines of Americanism, and for this reason, the cardinals regard me with suspicion, and I am daily expecting that my functions will be revoked. The entire American college is indeed regarded with disfavor. I must confess that an American seminary in Europe, and above all, in Rome, is a grave mistake. Our young people in seeing the manner in which the priests here conduct themselves must necessarily lose respect for religion. Better a thousand times prepare our young priests for their holy ministry in our own country, where the grand ideals of Catholicism have not yet been sullied by the materialism so prevalent in Europe."

Both his guests responded with a fervent "Amen" as the Monsignore finished speaking. They took their departure, shortly afterwards, cordially thanking their host for the encouragement he had given them.

They returned to their hotel, but before retiring, the Archbishop proposed to his companion that they both go to St. Peter's on the following morning, there to hold a solemn mass, during which they would implore the Founder of Christianity to inspire the high clergy of Rome to revive the true religion in its holy purity, and to abandon its political role,

which was accomplishing so much evil. After the mass, the venerable priest concluded, he would seek the cloister of which he had spoken, that during the remainder of his days, he might, through solitude and prayer, prepare himself for his future life.

Albert acquiesced willingly to the project of his aged friend, that they say their last mass at the Basilica, remarking that this would be a worthy and significant manner in which to spend their last day together—especially since it might be their final farewell in this life.

For a long time the young abbé could not sleep; he knew that the time for his departure for America was approaching, and he questioned whether it was not his duty to present himself to some high authority in the Church, and thus seek guidance; but with his soul in its disturbed state he could not make up his mind. He would, however, following his vision, visit the ruins of ancient Rome—the remnant of Paganism vanquished by the religion of Christ. Still perplexed in mind, he finally slept.

Early the next morning, the venerable Archbishop came to say farewell to his young friend. He had received a telegram, which necessitated his immediate departure.

“Let us kneel,” said he, and Albert obeyed.

Placing his hands, trembling with emotion, on the head of the abbé, the aged priest prayed.

“Holy Powers of Heaven, whose presence I now feel near, watch over this noble child, who has placed himself under Thy special protection; inspire him

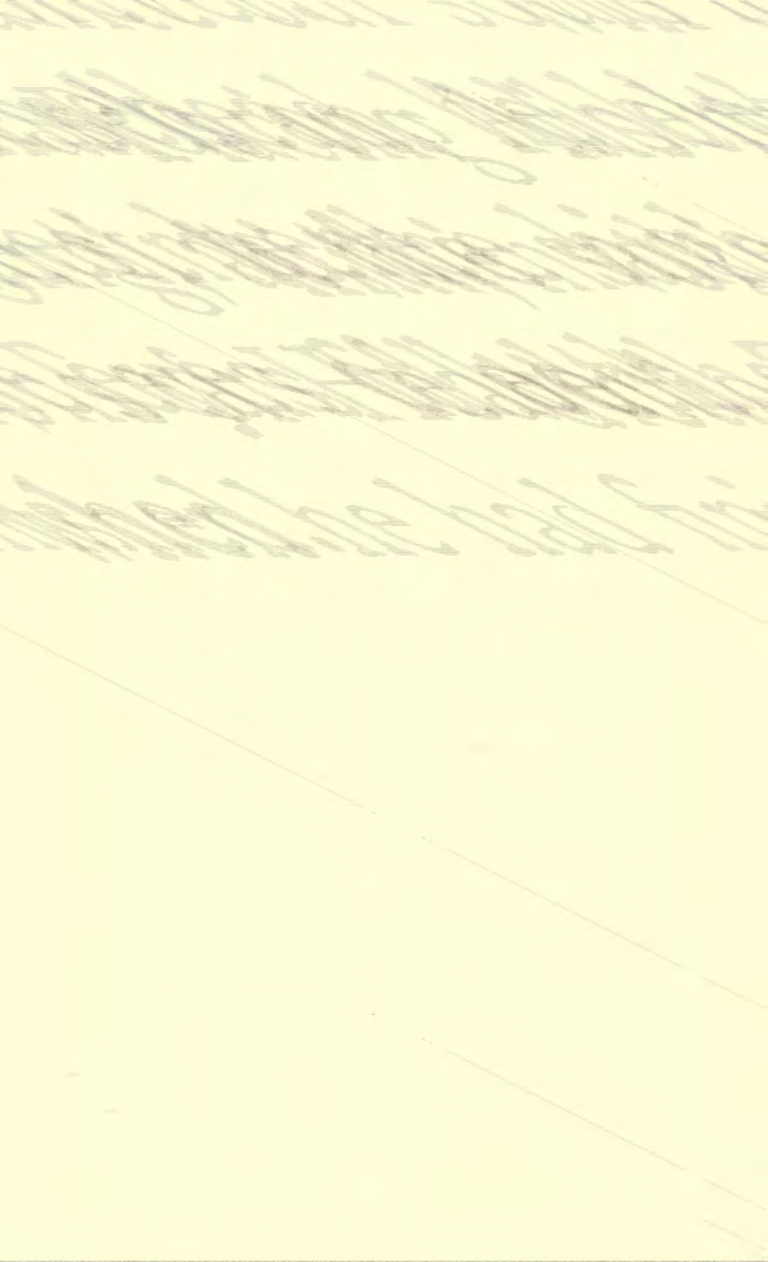
in his mission, that he may be able to revive the religious spirit in our beautiful Catholic religion. He will suffer much; agony and doubt may almost overcome him, but with Thy help he will conquer all. Give him strength, give him courage; he is worthy of the mission for which Thou hast prepared him. Lead to victory—the victory of humanity and of God.”

Turning to Albert, he continued:

“And you, my young and noble companion, your destiny is great, your mission is sublime. No matter how much your soul may suffer, you will conquer in the end. Many false paths are followed by souls trying to advance toward God. You will instruct them rightly, you will show them the true mystic Path leading directly to the Deity. You should be convinced from to-day that you have been elected from the children of God to act as a spiritual guide to souls, who, animated as you have been, have consecrated their lives to the Lord. Courage, then, my young friend. Advance toward the accomplishment of your destiny, with head raised to Heaven, and with a supreme confidence that the Powers on High are constantly with you.

“Arise now, that I may give you a fraternal embrace, the last in this world, perhaps, but one that will unite our souls forever.”

Placing his hands on Albert's head, he blessed him, invoking, at the same time, the highest benedictions of Heaven. Tears filled the eyes of both, when he had finished.



justice, even in their most sublime flights. To the east he saw the summit of a high mountain, surrounded by dusky clouds, veiling the blue of the heavens, and seemingly heralding the approach of a storm. This was Vesuvius ! The sight thrilled him ; he had often wished to visit this natural phenomenon. He learned that a party of tourists were planning to make an ascent of the mountain the next morning and received permission to add his name to the list.

The party set out early, taking the beautiful and picturesque route of San Giovanni Teduccio É Portici, which gave them a superb view of the bay and the neighboring isles. At the termination of the coach road, they were transferred to the mountain railway, which carried them almost to the summit. They went the remaining distance on foot, making their way through ashes and lava, in which they frequently sank up to their knees. Reaching the highest ledge, they attempted a descent into the crater. A suffocating smoke, seemingly controlled by an invisible power, forced them back. Rumbling noises were heard and a shower of molten rock scattered in clinker-like particles over the travelers. The guides advised a retreat, and the party was soon on its way back to Naples, turning willingly from a glimpse of the lower regions to a contemplation of the bay in its placid loveliness. In the distance Ischia, Capri and the Ponga Isles were clearly outlined against the transparent waters of the Mediterranean.

During the descent, our young priest, recalling

his scientific researches, mused of the gigantic forces imprisoned in the heart of the earth. How insignificant man's little power seemed in the presence of the natural phenomena he had just witnessed, whose terrible latent energies had rent in twain a thousand strata of rock and sand!

The descent was rapid. In a comparatively short time Albert returned to his hotel, and being thoroughly fatigued, immediately sought his apartments.

He devoted a portion of the next day to visiting the Aquarium of the Stazione Zoologica. With much courtesy the director, himself, a scholar of universal reputation, accompanied him, and explained in detail the character and object of this model institution. He was shown the tables occupied by scholars sent from all parts of the world to continue their scientific researches in this handsomely equipped laboratory, for the Mediterranean is famed for furnishing the richest and most varied marine fauna known to science.

Albert was shown specimens of the strange sea creatures, which he had studied formerly through description only—some of them so low on the scale of existence as to give no evidence of life, other than their taking of nourishment. These were exhibited as the line of demarcations between plant and animal life. However slight the function, Albert observed, all these creatures obey some immutable law;—all are given the attributes and qualities necessary to their kind of existence; each enacts the role assigned by the Omniscient Law Maker.

During the afternoon of this same day, he visited the catacombs, and here also discovered an example of the intelligence or instinct—or the occult perception accorded inferior creatures—even plants usually considered merely “growth.”

The tombs of these catacombs are of stone and at long intervals they are opened and the bones are removed. At one of the highest points along the gallery, a small window has been built with a wooden shutter, that when open reveals a fig-tree growing close to the outer wall of the catacombs.

The remarkable feature about this fig-tree is that it has pushed its roots through the aperture in the subterranean passage and thence to the inner wall. These roots have forced their way little by little among the tombs, entwining first around the nearest, and then reaching out through sprouting tendrils to the next, in order to get more nourishment. At present fully a hundred feet of roots and branches trail along the walls; and over the tombs a fine network is woven where the long tendrils have forced a way through chance openings. The manner in which these roots have sought and discovered nourishment amid such uncanny and seemingly barren surroundings, shows something closely resembling an almost human intelligence. The guides point with interest to the fig-tree, heavy with luscious fruit, growing in the garden, and then to the roots intertwined among the tombs of the dead, from which a life-giving nourishment is drawn.

Returning to his hotel, the abbé made preparations

to go aboard his vessel, scheduled to set sail early the next morning for his beloved America. He had wished to visit the ancient city of Pompeii before embarking, but time was lacking and he was forced to forego the pleasure of viewing its historic ruins.

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER an eleven days' passage from Naples, Albert was once again in the port of New York. The first person whom he met on the quay, extended his hand in cordial greeting. Albert gazed in amazement—it was the Magus Balthazar.

"You?" cried the young priest, "you? How did you know—from so far."

"I am here," said the Magus smiling, "to bid you welcome, or rather to congratulate you on your return to America. Arrange about your baggage with these customs officials, and then join me. My carriage will take us to the railway station. When once we are at home, report as quickly as possible to your superior, obtain his permission to return to me; come and occupy your former rooms, and tell us all the incidents of your voyage."

At the word "us" Albert's heart pulsed rapidly: his eyes were full of questioning.

The Magus guessed his inquiry. "Yes," said he "Miss McDonald is still at the villa; she, too, will be delighted to see you."

Albert pressed Balthazar's hand significantly. His attention was then occupied with the officials, and, after these details had been satisfactorily arranged, Albert and the Magus were driven to the depot.

Arrived at home, the young priest immediately sought his superior, and handed to him the letter that he had brought from France, which was simply a receipt for the documents he had delivered.

His superior kept him for a long time in conversation : but Albert limited himself to answering the questions put to him. Finally, he was at liberty to go.

The next day he presented himself at the house of Balthazar.

The Magus and Miss Ethel were in the salon, awaiting him. At the sight of the traveler, Miss Ethel, vibrant with joy, came toward him, offering her hand in cordial greeting.

"Father, I am most happy," said she, in affectionate intonation, "to join our beloved Master in bidding you welcome to our home. I say 'ours'—for so the Master permits."

The word "father" from her lips, brought back to Albert the clear-cut memory of the past. He pressed her hand tenderly, expressing, as best he could, the sincere delight with which he found himself once more in the company of his two dearest friends.

At the Master's invitation, Albert entered the room he had occupied prior to his departure. It was with true happiness that he saw again the statue of Sophia, and he bent his head to speak a few words with her, as one speaks to a mother seen again after long absence.

Finally, he visited the Sanctuary. He kneeled at the first prie-dieu, and almost immediately the

blessed influence of the temple permeated his being. He regarded Sophia, the Lamb of God, and the mystic emblem of the All-Seeing-Eye. He recalled to mind his last prayer, said here upon the eve of his departure for Europe; he thought of his fervor, his faith, his enthusiasm. The contrast of these sentiments with the desolating scenes he had witnessed, moved him to bitterness and sorrow. He sank into deep meditation.

That evening, Balthazar, Miss McDonald and Albert met in the salon. There they remained until long after midnight, while Albert related the details and incidents of his journeys. He shared with them his observations and discoveries in France and in Belgium, supposedly the most Catholic country in the world. He told them of the Italian he had met on his journey to Rome, of his arrival in the Eternal City, and of his distressive interview with the Director of the Seminary, at the American College in that city, and ended with an account of the truly providential meeting with the Archbishop, who had become, during the remainder of his travels, a guide, companion, and counselor, and whose friendship and clear-headed religious views had been of inestimable value, as well as a grateful consolation, in his hours of despondency and need.

In recounting them to his sympathetic listeners, Albert had himself lived again the scenes of which he spoke; he re-experienced the joys and sorrows of the past, and they lost none of their intensity in the repetition.

Miss Ethel did not attempt to hide her emotion; the events of Albert's story aroused in her soul the same sentiments by which he was agitated. She tried, however, bravely, to control her excitement: but her flaming cheeks and brilliant eyes betrayed her.

Balthazar, though he remained seemingly calm, followed the recital of his protégé with intense interest.

It was already early morning: the strain of fixed attention had wearied all, three good-nights were said, and, a meeting having been arranged for the next evening, each retired to rest.

* * * * *

The presentiment became duly strengthened in the minds of the novices that the proposed meeting was to mark an epoch in their lives. They had determined that, in relation to the events of Albert's voyage the time had come when they should ask of Balthazar instructions and advice as to the future conduct of their lives. To be worthily prepared for the reception of the teachings of the Magus, each spent the greater part of the day praying in the Sanctuary and meditating in seclusion.

Balthazar, spent most of the day in his private apartments in prayer, he fasted. When evening came, the three friends were again assembled in the salon.

"Let us pray," said Balthazar. "May Heaven illumine us with a celestial ray, that I may be inspired to show you the truths faithfully and clearly, and

that your souls may be enabled to comprehend in their entirety that which I am now permitted to expound to you."

"I understand, my children, that the most intense desire of your hearts is to comprehend Religious Truth, to learn what the Supreme Being expects of you, the role He has assigned to you in the great Drama of Creation. You wish to know His will, and to conform to it,—to march, heads high, soldiers of God, upon the Path that leads to Him—the Lord of the world, the Creator of the Universe. You are conscious in the depths of your being of a chord that vibrates at the thought of the Eternal—you feel that you are in relationship with Him."

"I cannot tell you, dear Master," responded Albert, "how much it will mean to me, after the doubts and discouragements of my journey, to hear from your sainted lips the real truth of religion, and the legitimate office of the priest who, as the director, leader and counselor of souls, is necessarily so indispensable a factor in the scheme of the world's salvation."

"I believe," continued the Magus, "that you must first understand the 'Great Arcana,' the great Plan of the universe in which we live and of which we form an integral part;—else, you cannot justly comprehend the mission of a priest as a religious leader and teacher. It is first necessary to consider the fundamental laws that rule the universe, and then, the activities that are engendered by these laws.

"It is my task, my children, to explain to you, as clearly and succinctly as the abstract nature of the subject will permit, these fundamental laws. Follow me attentively. First, let us unite in prayer to ask the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that my words may be God's sacred truth."

The three bent their heads, and besought the Holy Spirit for light and grace. Together they added "Amen"—and rose.

The noble face of the Magus, impressive in its solemnity, was illuminated as by a soft and brilliant light. So evident was it that the Spirit of God was with him that the two novices were ready to kneel at his feet, in homage and obeisance.

In grave melodious tones, he spoke :

"The primal cause of all that is, the first principle of the Universe and all that it contains, is the incomprehensible, inscrutable, unmanifested, an insolvable and eternal mystery—the ABSOLUTE! No human mind, however high it may have mounted on the steps of the Throne, can apprehend the idea of the ABSOLUTE—it is beyond the reach of intellect, intuition, clairvoyance itself. HE, the Absolute, is the origin of all creation,—of all life: HE is Omniscience, Omnipotence, all that was, is, and shall be. HE is, eternally, Himself and unchangeable. HE is Life, Motion, Existence! all that is, is of HIM and from HIM, yet, although always giving, HE is never depleted, for HE is forever receiving and is throbbing from very fulness. The ABSOLUTE is the Principle, *the Core of all Force*, the Origin of all Motion, the

Primal Cause of all Manifestation, the Center and Sphere of SUPREME POTENTIAL. From this Center, —His great Heart, pulsing and vibrating with Life, —flow into space emanations, which form a second Sphere, encircling the first like a halo. This is the Aura of the ABSOLUTE, and constitutes the zone of PURE SPIRIT. This zone is impregnated with all the attributes and Potentialities of the ABSOLUTE Himself, for it is Himself.

“ From this Sphere of Pure Spirit, as a first differentiation, emanate primarily the SPIRITUAL IONS which are the initial units and principles of all Soul-formation ; secondly, the Ions of Force, and thirdly the Ions of Substance. Although differentiated, these three series of Ions are one, constituting as an aggregate the Source of all Creative Force of the Universe. They represent the first phase of the voluntary involution of the Absolute in His descent into matter. They are the General Parent of all Existences—they are the occult ultimates of the ions that are already recognized by Modern science. The Spiritual Ions, or the first radiations from the zone of Pure Spirit, are, as I have stated, the units and initial principles of soul-formation ; they are potentially supreme. Next in power come the Ions of Force—they are the occult messengers of the ABSOLUTE, the unquestioning executors of HIS never-varying laws. The Ions of Substance are also ultimates,—the ultimates of those ions that have replaced the atoms of science. They are infinitesimal,—beyond the reach of any invented, or ever

imagined microscope, yet they are REAL SUBSTANCE—the first cosmic matter in its highest condition of etherealization or sublimation. I repeat, for it must be understood beyond a question of doubt, that these Ions, in the most infinitesimal degree of their differentiation are the ultimate and occult principles of all Spirit, Force and Matter; nevertheless, these Ions still remain one, and are the First Emanations from the Sphere of Pure Spirit, which Sphere is a zone of secondary emanations from the ABSOLUTE Himself. Therefore these Ions are still—HIMSELF.

“The Spiritual Ions inseparably united in the past, with the Ions of Force and Substance, must remain so united throughout the æons of future ages.

“Through countless peregrinations in the accomplishment of their multifarious destinies, the Ions must, fatally, obey the dictates of the Absolute during His voluntary descent into matter—His involution; and this involution is eternal. These Ions exist and perform their mission in perfect but passive harmony until Involution has attained the extreme limit of materialization, when matter has reached its lowest potential of vibration. Then, the Absolute has offered Himself in divine holocaust to the countless existences presently to spring from his bosom.

“Matter is now King! Matter holds the Omnipotent a prisoner in its embrace. From supreme Unity, the Absolute has now diffused and disseminated Himself into the infinitude of the infinitesimal. His

sacrifice of Himself is now complete. In divine abnegation He is totally absorbed into matter; yet matter is still Himself.

“With the total absorption of the Absolute in Matter, with His renunciation of active will, comes Chaos. Fiery elements combat in violent efforts to form planets; lurid flames shoot up for incalculable distances in mid-space; tremendous shocks rend the surface of forming worlds. Terrific electric disturbances circle round them, they are the last throes of warring Matter approaching its lowest potential. Gradually these disturbances subside. The fiery elements confine themselves to zones or burning spots. Vaporous bands form around them; gradually, slowly, during ages their temperature lessens—until finally the lowest potential of energy in matter is attained, followed by glacial epochs or apparent immobility and stagnation.

“At this point Involution is complete; and, as there can be no cessation in cosmic motion (the Supreme Law of the Universe being continuous activity), Evolution has here its beginning. The Divine Essence henceforth gradually divests Itself of matter, or, rather, it spiritualizes matter, that It may return to the bosom of the Absolute from which It was a direct emanation.

“The process of the evolution of animate and inanimate nature is conducted by the occult workings of the Spiritual Ions, whose activity is the never-ceasing energy of the Absolute, immanent in them. Accelerated vibration is produced, constituting a call

to life and action. The Spiritual Ions are no longer content to remain passive and buried in a shroud of matter. They begin to vibrate forcibly; they have a work to accomplish, they must free themselves from the domination of the Ions of Substance, with which they are, however, indissolubly united. In the awakening to life they find allies in the Ions of Force also immanent of the Absolute, and acting by His influence. Together they wage war against the Ions of Substance, knowing instinctively that the victory will award them a high destiny. This victory will also benefit Matter by elevating and purifying it, for MATTER is also GOD. From this moment, Evolution will proceed on its infinite journey, developing slowly and by infinite transformations, creations of constantly ascending types. This process operates first in the mineral, then in the vegetable, last in the animal Kingdom. Animate nature gradually tends towards perfection in the moral, intellectual and spiritual worlds; in overcoming matter and liberating the ABSOLUTE from its bonds, it gradually incorporates more and more of the Divine. So, the evolutionary process will continue until the Sphere of Pure Spirit is again attained. There the great souls who have labored to evolve the Divine in their own lives and in the lives of all with whom they are brought in contact, they, the higher products of spiritual evolution, shall dwell in everlasting bliss."

Balthazar ceased speaking. After a few moments of silent reflection, Albert hazarded a question.

"Master," said he, "these processes of Involution and Evolution are based upon immutable laws. Modern science, at its best, is but an earnest search after the basic laws of the Universe. Do you think science will ever discover these secrets and place before the world in a tangible fashion supported facts that will enable educated men to comprehend these great problems of Involution and Evolution?"

"Yes, my son," replied the Magus; "positive science has already made great advances toward the solution of these two important problems. The mere discovery that such a process as evolution exists and that it is one of the fundamental laws governing the activities of the Universe is an achievement of vast importance. The theory of Evolution is a magical ladder standing upon the earth, but ascending to the sky; every new discovery along the lines of this theory is a fresh rung in the ladder, enabling men to mount nearer and nearer to the Creator, the ABSOLUTE!"

"The deduction from what we have already considered, from the authoritative fact of positive science, and from the unquestionable existence of return currents (of which we will speak later) is—that the evolutionary process was preceded by the involutionary.

"So it is that the incessant labors of modern science have made it possible to state, at least broadly, these two fundamental laws.

"The law of evolution being admitted, several distinguished scholars, urged on by a dominating anx-

iety to know the greater problems of science, consecrated their energies to a study of the principles guiding the creation of material forms or their evolution and the breath of life that animates them.

"As you are so deeply interested, I will place before you the results obtained by patient researches in the domain of the imponderable—a work begun by a distinguished scholar—Colonel Albert de Rochas."

The venerable Magus placed a magnificent volume upon the table, entitled, "*Les Sentiments, la Musique et le Geste.*" *

The novices, turning its pages, and listening to Balthazar's eloquent explanations, felt that a corner of the veil which hides the secrets of the universe was being lifted for them.

"The interesting results obtained by Madame Watts Hughes, and reproduced by M. de Rochas, concerning the vibrations caused by low velocity upon certain substances, offer a wide field for thought and experiment. By the methods of positive science, in a restricted area of experimentation, forms are obtained which resemble flowers, plants, algæ, infusoria, diatoms, and shells. The researches of a number of competent investigators, corroborate the importance of the study of vibratory forces, as regards the formation of the types with which Nature surrounds us. The results are of especial interest as they render comparatively easy of comprehension

* See Appendix.

by means of the tangible facts obtained, the action of cosmic vibration upon the primitive Ions of Substance, the force by which these Ions are urged into the groupings and aggregations, which eventually produce the "ions of science," atoms, molecules, finally, material substance visible to a microscope.

"We know already from our consideration of the nature of cosmic Ions, that they are entities, complete in themselves, endowed with polarity, that is—the powers of attraction and repulsion. Under the sway of powerful vibration coming from the zone of Pure Spirit, these Ions are constantly meeting in space innumerable other Ions of like nature, but differing in substance and polarity. Therefore, they form without cessation agglomerations of Ions, held together by polar attraction according to the degree of affinity existing between individual Ions. These agglomerations soon come in contact with other colonies of Ions, and, following the same law of attraction, the two are united into an amalgamation of Ions possessing certain special attributes and definite forms. So, by numberless transformations, the ions known to science are finally produced. Now, the laws governing these formations of Ions into colonies are the very same laws that cause grains of sand, powders, viscous matter to assume certain geometrical forms under the force of vibration. As M. de Rochas shows in his drawings, these colonies of sand grains, etc., have a north and a south pole, and a well marked diamagnetic region. His experiments, however, deal only with a slow and limited vibratory

force, acting exclusively on flat surfaces ; consequently only a few forms can be produced. Cosmic vibration, on the other hand, acts with incalculable force upon an infinite variety of Ions of substance, whose spherical surface—(for all primordial forms are spherical) offers countless possibilities of variation. Innumerable forms are therefore created, yet each Ion retains forever its power, its characteristics, and its attributes.

“These processes of agglomeration continue up to the point when they become visible to the microscope ; from that time we can watch the slow combination of forms by which visible nature is produced.

“In this manner evolution proceeds until it reaches man—and its physical processes are varied only by the influence of innumerable and differentiated occult forces, of which I will speak later.

“We need only consider the primitive forms of each new series in creation ; for, a type once formed, it reproduces itself according to ordinary generation.

“All creative energy in nature is then transmitted by means of vibration. The action of vibration is always manifested in a co-ordinate, regular, mathematical, geometrical manner, e. g.—the forms of snow-flakes, the figures traced on window-panes by ice, the crystalizations formed in chemistry by evaporation and condensation. Native crystals found in nature confine themselves, so to speak, to six types—the perfect cube, the two right prisms, the rhomboid and the two oblique prisms.

“We may borrow from the scholarly work of M. de

Rochas, the table of vibrations whose effects have been stated by science.

TABLE OF VIBRATIONS

WHOSE EFFECTS ARE RECOGNIZED AND STUDIED.

	Number of vibrations per second.	
1st Octave.....	2..	
2d ".....	4..	
3d ".....	8..	
4th ".....	16	} Sound.
5th ".....	32	
6th ".....	64	
7th ".....	128	
8th ".....	256	
9th ".....	512	
10th ".....	1024	} Unknown.
15th ".....	32,768	
20th ".....	1,047,576..	
25th ".....	33,554,432	} Electricity.
30th ".....	1,073,741,824	
35th ".....	34,359,738,368	
40th ".....	1,099,511,627,776	} Unknown.
45th ".....	35,184,372,088,832	
46th ".....	70,368,744,177,644	
47th ".....	140,737,468,355,328	} Heat.
48th ".....	281,474,976,710,656	
49th ".....	562,949,953,421,312..	Light.
50th ".....	1,125,899,906,842,624..	Chemical Rays.
51st ".....	2,251,799,813,685,248	} Unknown.
57th ".....	144,115,188,075,855,872	
58th ".....	288,230,376,151,711,744	
59th ".....	576,460,752,303,423,488	} X-Rays.
60th ".....	1,152,921,504,606,846,976	
61st ".....	2,305,843,009,213,693,952	} Unknown.
62d ".....	4,611,686,618,427,389,904..	

"From this table we perceive that modern positive material science has stated and proved the existence of a definite number of vibrations which, in a single second of time, manifest themselves in a manner which absolutely surpasses human comprehension.

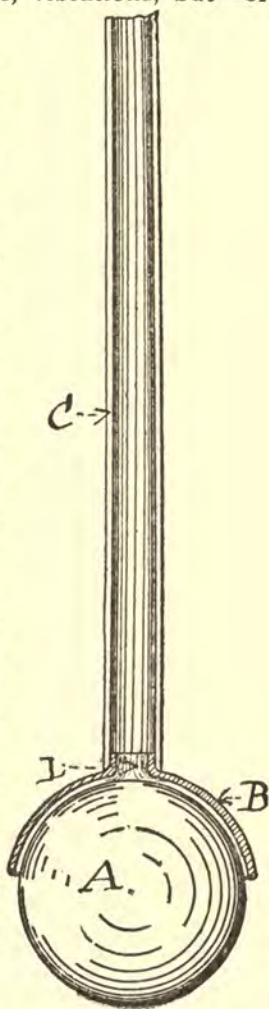
“The most important fact shown by these physical experiments is, that the force which produces the vibrations, increases in strength in direct ratio with their number. Let me give you an example: one it is true, which may be of no service to you, but which will prove the incomprehensible power of cosmic energy. Suppose a cord to be stretched horizontally, and attached to two fixed posts. Draw the cord to you with sufficient force so that when you release it, it will make sixteen movements in one second of time, that is to say, it will vibrate sixteen times, then you will hear the lowest sound the human ear is capable of receiving. To obtain a higher note—that is, to create a greater number of vibrations, it is necessary to exert a proportionally greater force in snapping the cord.

“We see, by the table, that the vibrations from the twenty-fifth to the thirty-fifth octave, constitute the electric current. How prodigious must be the energy which can send this current in the twenty-eighth part of a second along the transatlantic or transpacific cables—from one hemisphere to another! Yet the vibrations from the twenty-fifth to the thirty-fifth octave are infinitely slow compared to those produced at the sixty-second octave. Read the number of vibrations which constitute the sixty-second octave—and then try to imagine the energy which engendered those vibrations—your intellect will be crushed! However, that energy is like the sigh of an infant compared to the awful power that produces the vibratory undulations supporting the worlds in space. M. de Rochas

asks, in his book 'Undulations, vibrations, but—of what?' We answer—'Vibrations of cosmic Ions;'—occultists would say—'vibrations of the universal ethereal Light.'

"Now I wish to show you an instrument by which our professor of physics illustrated his theory of how the worlds were held suspended in space. That noble scholar, had, without doubt, an intuition of the Infinite. His demonstration so impressed me, that I constructed for myself a similar instrument. It may seem to you a child's plaything, but even as a toy, it speaks eloquently to the adult brain. Did not the fall of an apple from its branch suggest to Newton the law of gravitation? To-day, a study of cosmic forces may bring about a considerable modification of that law.

"*A* is a light sphere of wood, *B* a circular cap made of the same kind of wood, hollowed at the diameter of the sphere, and able to cover a quarter or



a third of the ball. Upon the upper part of this cap is a protuberance to which is attached a rubber tube *C*. The protuberance and the cap itself, are penetrated by a hole *D*. I place the ball in my hand, taking the cap and tube in my other hand, I cover the ball with the cap. If I remove my hand from the ball, the ball will fall to the ground. But if I blow through the tube while the ball is in the hollow of the cap, and then remove my hand, the ball will remain suspended in the air a little below the cap, and it will begin to revolve on its axis. And so it will remain suspended as long as my breath coming through the tube produces a force upon the surface of the ball proportionate to its weight and surface."

The Magus had illustrated as he spoke : the priest and Ethel had followed the experiment with understanding interest.

"My children," continued Balthazar solemnly, his noble features aglow with inspiration, "this toy that I hold in my hands shows us how the worlds are held in space. The breath of the Eternal, filling the Universe, acts upon the stars and planets even as the human breath acts upon this ball of wood. It creates an actual atmosphere around them.

The Divine Breath is transformed into different cosmic currents by the interference of worlds which it approaches. Because of this interference its potentiality is gradually lowered and the immense force of its vibration is slowly reduced and transformed into Etherealized Cosmic Light, Cosmic Magnetism, then, terrestrial Magnetism—Electricity

Magnetized—Electricity proper—and finally differentiated into elements constituting an atmosphere in harmony with the state of material density and the conditions of life in each particular world.

“I intend, my children,” continued the Magus, “to limit my instructions to the consideration of the laws of *Involution*, or the *descent* of the Absolute into Matter, and the laws of *Evolution*, or *liberation* of the Absolute from Matter. In the consideration of these laws, I will especially deal with the position Man holds in regard to the liberation of the Absolute. Man should know the part destiny sets for him to play, it is his duty, his religion, his fate,—and all his beliefs should tend toward it. Man should know that in liberating the Absolute, he liberates himself and that, after the many evolutions which shall spiritualize him, he will rise in the last ascension, with the Absolute whom he has liberated, to the realm of Pure Spirit. But, first, I must make a short digression. I wish to consider for a few moments the laws of the cosmogony of the universe, which, though unknown as yet to man, have been foreseen by several of our great scientific minds.

“The earth which we inhabit, as each of the stars that people the firmament, is an individual cell in the organism of the Absolute. The totality of stars and worlds forms the body of the Absolute even as the totality of cells form the body or organism of vegetable or animal life. As it is above so it is below. *That which is true in the heavens is true on the earth; the Macrocosm is the prototype of the Microcosm.*

“We know that the human organism is composed of hundreds of millions of cells, each having its particular function. Biology has shown that, considering their diameter, these cells are frequently separated from one another by a comparatively considerable space. In analogy, a vast distance exists between the cosmic cells,—planets, stars, suns. The same forces which rule the universe and hold the worlds in their places, govern the cells of living organisms.

“Science has taught us that the worlds possess polarity and diamagnetism; the same science has demonstrated that the living cell is polarized, and that it has a well-defined equatorial zone, as is shown plainly in the process of mitosis, or multiplication by cell division.*

“The terrestrial cell upon which we live has its north and its south poles connected by magnetic lines interrupted only by the neutral equatorial band, otherwise, the dia-magnetic zone. Like the animal cell, the earth has a solid membranous covering, its exterior crust; beneath this is the cytoplasmic region, in whose depth is found the nucleus, the nucleoli, the centrosomes, and the mysterious chromosomes whose important organic functions have been recently discovered and studied by an eminent Californian biologist, Dr. Gustav Eisen, and after him by Dr. Hector Lebrun of Brussels.

“As yet the psychological functions of the chrom-

* See in the Appendix of “In the Sanctuary” an account of the polarity of the cell, its equatorial region and its general mitosis.

ozomes and their composition are undetermined by science; although it is thoroughly recognized that they play an important role in the evolution of the cell—a point we will consider later.

“The gigantic cell-worlds that follow a predestined route in the immensity of the heavens, are subject to the same laws and conditions which rule the microscopic animal cell. They follow the same course of development, they multiply by division, they disorganize by granulation. Comets, shooting stars, meteors, leonides, double stars, rings of Saturn, Jupiter's red spots, and other celestial phenomena tend to prove the theory of cosmogony that I am expounding to you.

“It is well known that cells—the cells of the human body, for example—can become diseased; indeed disease in cells is the sole cause of man's organic troubles. The mind of man has a direct influence upon the health of a cell. Constant thought, uninterrupted and ardently focalized upon a certain field of activity—for instance, the acquisition of a fortune—subjects the brain cells to an abnormal agitation, which weakens their power of alimentation, prevents them from recuperating their spent vital and nerve force, and consequently, shorten their lives. Thought which focalizes upon an action whose success demands the exclusive employment of dishonest, immoral or unnatural means, affects the aura of the cell detrimentally. In consequence of being forced to fulfil functions for which it was not created, and prevented from accomplishing its proper work the cell

becomes sick or atrophied. Each cell must work out its evolution towards the Absolute, even as worlds and complex beings work theirs.

“But the pernicious thoughts which vitiate the aura of the cell and so affect its moral and normal state, first act upon the general aura of the man who degrades himself—so the disease of the cell is really a direct consequence of the moral degradation of the man himself. Who can ask without a shudder the terrible question—what becomes of the cells, the humble artisans of the great work of evolution, when they fall under the influence of thoughts suggested by a state of acute animalism, under whose yoke so many fine minds to-day rest as slaves?

“But if the animal cell suffers and becomes diseased by the profanation of its aura through the impure thought of the creature who gave it birth—what of the terrestrial cell? Its aura is constantly profaned and polluted, not only by the evil thoughts of men—(whose auras constitute an integral part of its aura)—but above all by the lamentable epochs of war, when an immense volume of terrible thoughts are projected with unbelievable force into the Astral, and the earth's aura is horribly corrupted.

“Because of the wicked assassinations, the implacable hatreds, the unmentionable bestialities engendered by war, the terrestrial cell becomes diseased. Its feverish state is manifested by epidemics such as cholera, smallpox, the virulent plagues and other horrible scourges; its interior disorder is shown by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, the breaking of

the crust, the flooding of whole sections by the sea.

"Everything in the universe is upon a responsible basis. The Absolute is in all things, and all things are Himself! The law of evolution, or the return of Matter to the zone of Pure Spirit, and finally, to the Absolute is the Supreme Command,—the *Word of God*. The life that dares to oppose this law perishes. "Progress or death" is the ultimatum of this inexorable command. The tiniest of microscopic cells, the most insignificant animal of the uni-cellular world suffers if it disobeys this law. And, by the discordant vibrations which it projects into the astral, it affects the harmony of the Universe. Discord, to the Absolute, is pain: therefore the Absolute is hurt by the suffering of an infinitesimal cell—for is not that cell an integral part of Himself—is it not—Himself!"

"The responsibility of life—how little we recognize it," exclaimed Miss Ethel, covering her face with her hands.

"It is indeed true," answered the Magus; "and, to comprehend the importance and grandeur of his destiny and its mighty responsibilities, Man must study the occult laws that rule the worlds."

Balthazar remained silent, lost in deep thought. Neither the priest nor Ethel spoke, each being too deeply impressed by the magnificent theory that had been expounded to them. Two sentiments divided the supremacy in their hearts: one, a feeling of adoration for the Supreme Ruler of the great Cosmic

Plan, and a deep-rooted wonder at the transcendental justice and scope of His laws; the other, a sense of the immense responsibilities connected with life, and the necessity of recognizing and performing the duties thereof.

Gradually the two listeners regained their normal calm. But, seeing the Magus seemingly oblivious of them in his meditations, they hesitated to interrupt his train of thought.

After a few moments, however, Balthazar lifted his eyes, and, meeting their attentive gaze, smiled upon them fondly. "Go now, my children," he said kindly, "to seek your rest. Reflect upon these grave matters at your leisure, and, when we meet again to-morrow evening, do not hesitate to voice your questions and opinions."

Thanking the Magus with sincerity and affection the novices departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next evening, when the Magus joined them in the salon, Albert and Miss Ethel were in earnest discussion. The Magus entered into the spirit of their conversation, and Albert soon turned to him in solicitous inquiry.

"The transcendental importance of the theory of Cosmogony which last evening you so clearly elucidated to us," said he, "offers food for long and profitable meditation. The logical sequence of the great cosmic manifestations, the laws of their genesis and development, the inevitable nature of their effects, should give an entirely new trend to the efforts of modern science. And, dear Master, if it is not overtaxing your kindness, I should like to ask your opinion upon a phase of cosmogenic science, which, though it is yet obscure, you have already touched upon."

"I shall be glad to answer your question," said the Magus kindly.

"Recent discoveries in advanced chemistry suggest the question," said the priest. "Investigators discover a metal or the base of a metal formerly unknown to science; usually these discoveries are

made by chance. Now is there not some general line of experimentation, in following which the laws governing the constitution of metals could be disclosed? Then we could abandon the blind gropings by which chemistry so often feels its way. We already know that there must be, in nature, many undetermined metals, indeed many whose traces science has not yet even perceived. May I ask your opinion, dear Master?"

"Your question concerns a field of cosmogenic science upon which I had not intended to touch, as it is a considerable digression from our main subject—man's role in the evolution of the Universe. But the demand indicates that the study will soon follow; so I will endeavor to explain succinctly this branch of science.

"Analytical Chemistry, the science to which you refer, has made remarkable progress. Like the child who takes a rattle to pieces in order to find out what causes the noise, chemistry destroys nature that it may find what is hidden within, and learn the cause of the phenomena that surrounds us, and upon many of which our very lease of life depends.

"Of late years especially, analytical chemistry has penetrated far into the interior of created things. It has disintegrated, decomposed, dissolved, separated: then taking the results obtained by this labor, it has again disintegrated, decomposed, dissolved, separated. And so the destructive process goes on,—always concerning itself with the last results obtained. But it soon reaches the point where it can

analyze no further: the unknown faces it, an insurmountable barrier—it is powerless to proceed. But science never confesses itself beaten; it makes this statement: “My final resultant, the last substance obtained by my analysis, is an elemental, final, simple substance—there is nothing beyond it in this category.

“A little later, perhaps, another analytical chemist, whose furnace can create a higher temperature, who uses more powerful acids, a more energetic combination of reactivities, attacks the substance pronounced an element by his predecessor or contemporary, destroys certain parts of it, preserves others, and shows, in his turn, that the so-called element is formed of many hitherto unrecognized components.

“The chemist, by his processes of demolition, gradually approaches primitive matter, that is to say, the point where all matter is metallic, emerging from the last phase of involution, from Chaos! At this point Matter, at its lowest ebb of potential, gives forth radiations that cause death, for in Matter, at its initial stage of evolution, the forces which give life are not yet active.

“Analytical Chemistry is the science of destruction. A celebrated physician in Paris said recently in speaking of the powerful drugs and disinfectants of metallic bases discovered daily and used upon suffering humanity:—‘Chemistry is Death!’ He spoke more truly than he knew.

“The more powerful its destructive agents become, the more bases of new metals will Analytical Chem-

istry discover. These metals will often be practically of its own creation, they will never have existed individually, although their bands may be incontestably produced in the spectroscope. The Ions of Substance, whose agglomerations, forming infinite variety, finally constitute solid matter, are forced by the implacable artificial power created by science, to enter new and heterogeneous combinations. Analytical chemistry, by its own means, creates a new composite, the chemist discovers it, and the base of a new metal is proclaimed !

“In destroying the magnetic electrified cohesion which constitutes the essence of life, Analytical Chemistry destroys life itself. Every time that matter is disintegrated by chemical means, a certain amount of electricity is set free, or, in other words—so much vital force is released and returned to nature.

“Chemistry destroys active vital force, leaving in the substance it attacks only incipient life, for the actual principle of life, etherialized magnetism, like the cosmic Ions themselves, cannot be destroyed. Analytical Chemistry, at the end of its powers, leaves in a substance only the qualities of death. The last products of its analysis, emitting radiations of extraordinary penetrative power, drives the vital force out of the most intimate tissues of an organism. These radiations can destroy even the electro-magnetism of the human body. They nullify electricity in any body that they encounter : they instantaneously destroy the electric charges of Leyden jars, or of the

most powerful accumulators. Radiations that can kill electricity, the element of life, are certainly Messengers of Death!

"We should be just, however, to analytical chemistry; it has its good and profitable side. It is the soul of industrialism and commercialism: it is the cause of an intense human activity, though, as the world now stands, it is not always conducive to high morality."

The priest and Ethel had followed the demonstrations of the Magus attentively. They realized the great importance of the subject-matter, and recalled immediately their knowledge of the destructive radiations from Radium, and from the Roentgen rays, which are the resultant of the disintegration in Crookes' vacuum tube of a simple electric current.

The priest, thanking the Magus for the interesting digression, begged permission to ask another question. It was granted.

"Men of great scientific repute," Albert began, have nowadays taken active interest in synthetical chemistry: instead of destroying, they wish to recreate. They have even attempted the formation of life, the vivifying of protoplasm, artificially created according to the formula of analytical experiment. Others, even more advanced, have attempted to fertilize the eggs of certain inferior marine organisms by means of artificial fertilizing matter. It seems true that these men have succeeded in producing a living germ in the egg, which develops up to a cer-

tain degree, and then dies. Learned Master, what do you think of these experiments?"

"Synthesis in science, my children," answered Balthazar, "is claiming the modern attention. Chemistry has made itself the partner of physics, and together they have sought the basis of life. It was discovered that electricity played an important part in the composition of life-phenomena, and, as electricity belongs to the domain of physics, the name of physico-chemistry was given to the new science springing from the discovery. Biology also joined forces with the twin sciences."

"The principle of life? Ah—that is the great problem among men of learning, and yet, my children, the solution is simple,—those principles rest in the Absolute who is Life itself, and in the ultimate Ions which emanate from the zone of Pure Spirit. These Ions, passing through numberless differentiations, proportioning the force of their vibrations to the condition of the organisms which they generate, distribute life throughout the Universe; and, as life is inherent in them, they themselves constitute portion of the life they create—the faculty or power of self-preservation and of reproduction. In the lower forms of life, this faculty is limited to the affinity existing between molecules, because of the attractions or repulsions of their polar system. In a higher order, instinct joins this faculty, and produces sex, while organisms of a superior nature add the inestimable faculty of intelligence, which should guide their lives. However, it is true that some



PHOTOGRAPH OF ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE.

inferior forms of life can be artificially created, and that they do, for a certain period, manifest definite vital activities."

"Let me cite to you a few experiments made with the electric current: they will aid you in the study of the part played by electricity in the organism.

"Here is a spark or electrical discharge reproduced on a photographic plate. The negative side, the upper part of the picture, shows feathery forms resembling the leaves of plants. The lower or positive side is composed of filiform traces resembling the roots of plants or tree. Between the leaves and the roots is a solid portion—the union of positive and negative.

"Here is another image of condensed or focalized electric energy, constituting an electric entity of the highest interest. In the great cosmic plan of creation, the plumous forms draw the magnetic electric energy from the great universal reservoir of Forces, and condense this energy in one gigantic spiral at its point of highest potential. This central spiral unfolds itself, differentiates its energy, and terminates in the formation of multiple Comets which gradually fill space and form worlds."

"Dear Master," said Albert, "in one of your inestimable instructions you spoke of a return current which was everywhere present in nature, and you promised then to explain its properties at some future time. Would it be asking too much of you to beg for that explanation now?"

"Indeed, this is a suitable time for its discussion,"

answered the Magus. "The current which is called by science, 'the return current,' plays a most important part in the great Cosmic plan. Its existence is universal. The emission of any force, physical, intellectual, occult or spiritual creates a certain void in the emissary of that force : that void is filled, that force is reconstituted by a return current, which reacts slowly or instantaneously, according to the subtlety of the expended force. This return current is most clearly manifested in the science of electricity, where no current can possibly be emitted unless the way is prepared for a return current which establishes a circuit. A striking example is transportation by means of electricity. The current is generated in the dynamo, conducted through wires to the motor, which it set in action, moving the cars by converting a part of its energy into motion, then returning to its starting point to replenish itself. The return circuit is in this case partly made by the rails, and partly by wells of water placed at either extremity of the electric line, and by other means.

"One of the peculiarities of the return current is that it seeks for itself the easiest route, even if it is obliged to destroy the obstacles that oppose it. In large cities where the iron water pipes are under the electric roadbed, it frequently happens that the electrolytic action of the return current perforates the pipes. The return current endeavors to reach the water that the pipes contain, that it may by this means regain its dynamo.



ELECTRIC ENERGY FOCALIZED.
Photograph from experiment by
T. Burton Kinraide.

“ Without a well-established return current we could neither telegraph, cable or telephone.

“ In wireless telegraphy, the use of X-rays, etc., success depends directly after the emission of power, upon an unobstructed return current.

“ The currents of emission of all the forces in the Universe have their first action in INVOLUTION which is the current emitted by the Absolute, from Himself into Substance. The return currents take the most direct route, EVOLUTION, or liberation of the Absolute from Matter, in order to return to their point of original emission—that is—to the Absolute Himself.

“ The return current is manifested in the movement of stars, in the circulation of blood and sap in animals and plants, in the tides, in the humidity which is taken up from the earth to be returned to it as rain.

“ The action of the return current is shown most powerfully in the realm of the occult.

“ All thought projected into the astral is brought back to the brain that emitted it by the return current. If the thought sent forth is great and noble, the return current brings an influx of thoughts still more grand and noble. If aspirations, prayers or acts of adoration are projected toward the sphere of Pure Spirit, the return current invariably brings back to the brain that emitted them, benedictions, lofty inspirations spiritual force and divine encouragement. Impersonal prayers of an elevated character fervently imploring guidance upon the Path, tend

directly towards the zone of Pure Spirit, towards the Absolute Himself; they are endowed with such force that nothing can resist them. God Himself descends into such a heart to answer its prayer; it creates a return current so strong that it brooks no interference.

"Because of the return current, science has spoken a great truth: 'Nothing is created, and nothing is lost.' In truth, all expended energy through a return current, replenishes its source."

"Dear Master, Miss Ethel and myself are now anxious to hear from you the part that Man should play in the Cosmic Plan, or at least, in the planet which we inhabit. Your lucid explanation of the theory of Cosmogony, *Involution* or the voluntary descent of the Absolute into Matter, and *Evolution* or the liberation of the Absolute from Matter—seems to us to indicate Man's part clearly—that he shall consecrate all the energies of his life to the liberation of the Absolute."

Balthazar answered in the solemn tones which he habitually used in speaking of great truths.

"Man's part on earth is to assist the Absolute to divest Himself of Matter. And by aiding the Absolute, Man liberates himself. The Absolute who dwells in Man is surrounded, often submerged by Matter and it becomes Man's destiny to liberate Him. How can Man best attain this end? The solution of that question makes plain the destiny of the human race.

"Let us endeavor to arrive at the solution in a

rational manner, simple perhaps, but strictly philosophical.

“We know already that the original constituents of the Universe and all that it contains, are the three series of ultimate Ions—the Spiritual Ions, the Ions of Force, and the Ions of Substance. In the rational and harmonious development of these Ions consists the evolution of man, the accomplishment of his supreme destiny and the liberation of the Absolute.

“In the inferior natural orders evolution proceeds harmoniously, because the cells constituting elementary matter have not the arbitrary power of deliberation, they follow the impulse given by the immanence of the Absolute to the Ions of which they are formed. But man’s free individual will changes the field of action. Man is the master, he is able to give extraordinary impetus to one or the other of the three series of Ions; and, if these ultimate Ions develop inharmoniously, the liberation of the Absolute is hindered.

“For instance, take a man who gives unusual preponderance to the Ions of Substance;—he becomes a materialist. He lives for good eating, and voluptuousness; he directs his efforts towards acquiring riches, that he may satisfy his animal tastes and his selfish idleness. He does exercise the Ions of Force in developing a strong individual will, and perhaps, on Sundays, in a fine church, the Spiritual Ions are slightly vibrated. But that man fails to fulfil his destiny, the Absolute in him is not liberated.

"Again—a man may give undue preponderance to the Ions of Force.

"For example the leaders of religious sects, frequently, in their anxiety to preserve their faith, and their zeal to propagate it, devote all their energies to exalting their special dogmas. In this way they develop an indomitable will-power—they abuse the Ions of Force, developing them at the expense of the Spiritual Ions, which, though benefited by their prayers and aspirations, are fatally dominated by the Ions of Force.

"The preponderance of the Ions of Force is sometimes accompanied by an equal preponderance of the Ions of Substance, which occasions gross materiality. Religious leaders whose Ions are inharmoniously developed do not fulfil their destiny—for the Absolute immanent in them is not liberated.

"I was personally acquainted at one time with a man who exemplifies my statement. In him the Ions of Force were abnormally developed, culminating in a rigid and stern will which no power could bend.

"He was a Magician—he called himself a Magus—of great power. He had pursued his occult studies in India, under the guidance of men who could rightly be called workers of miracles.

"He was swarthy in complexion, his hair was long and black, his eyes, blue-black and very brilliant—in short, a peculiarly impressive physiognomy. During his long sojourn in the Orient he had acquired an extensive knowledge of Cosmogony. He admitted

the voluntary descent of the Absolute into Matter in favor of humanity, and the evolution or liberation of the Absolute through Man. The principal dogma of his creed (and indeed many of his beliefs were grand and beautiful), was that God, in becoming the voluntary prisoner of matter, put Himself under the dominion of Man, who can command Him and to whose will God must submit. In a word, Man must force God to obey, must make Him execute the transformations of Matter in the miracles which the magician desired to produce. In order to obtain this result, one must constantly cultivate the positive side of character, so that the will may be trained to surmount all obstacles. 'Will can create what it desires,' was his saying; and, indeed, this good magician, caused to appear in the midst of a blue summer's sky, black clouds furrowed by lightnings, grumbling with thunder. Later, he commanded several rainbows to appear near the horizon, and they appeared. He claimed that he commanded God to assume these forms, and that God, being the prisoner of Matter, was obliged to obey. This was his religion—he did not doubt its supremacy.

"So powerful were the emanations of magnetism from this singular man, that after spending an hour or so with him, in the discussion of his theories, I invariably retired with an acute headache, due to the discordant vibrations coming from his iron will and penetrating to the most secret convolutions of my brain."

"He was a sad example of abnormally developed

Ions of Force, and subsequently degraded Spiritual Ions. He certainly failed of fulfilling his destiny, and he was, perhaps, a little sacrilegious.

"The normal development of Spiritual Ions is the supreme destiny of man. The Ions of Force in him are intended to aid and abet the Spiritual Ions, to form a will strong enough to keep man resolutely upon the Path that leads to God, to deliver him from temptation, to speak an emphatic 'No,' to the suggestions of his lower nature, and to hold the Ions of Substance in their proper place.

"The Ions of Force and the Ions of Substance have an important function in the evolution of the Spiritual Ions in Man. The unified action of Ions of Force and of Substance in their innumerable combinations and transformations, produces the intelligence which lies at the root of all science, in industrial and commercial progress, in all the arrangements and machinery that constitute advanced civilization, easy, comfortable life, free from the anxieties that hamper spirituality.

"Ions of Substance and of Force normally developed,—that is, matter directed by Intellect,—are the most solid basis on which to rest the evolution of Spiritual Ions. These latter, coming from the sphere of Pure Spirit as a first series, are the most powerful of the three, and, in their return to the Absolute, they incessantly urge the other Ions to accompany them upon their divine pilgrimage. And so—all things are spiritualized."

"The Spiritual Ions, as we have already noted,

are the first principles of all 'souls,' consequently of the human soul. To cultivate these Ions, to evolve the soul, to seek always and progressively the Spirit of the Absolute, that is the destiny of man—that is the liberation of the Absolute from matter. In the well-balanced man, the Ions of Force and of Substance fulfil harmoniously their destined part: they are the devoted servants of the Spiritual Ions, giving them all possible assistance, that divine souls may be formed, that the Absolute may be liberated, that man may be spiritualized and the return of the Absolute hastened—for, when the Absolute is liberated He will take with Him to the Eternal Regions the souls of the men to whom He owes His liberation.

"A few words of caution to the novice—before we part. The Spiritual Ions, too, may be abnormally developed, and their evolution consequently retarded.

"If over-developed Ions of Substance produce gross materialists, if over-developed Ions of Force produce workers of uncanny miracles, over-developed Spiritual Ions may produce spiritual insanity.

"There are, in India, unfortunate beings, who, acting under a religious impulse which amounts to fanaticism, place themselves upon a straight column. There they stand, for months at a time, suffering fearful torture which they imagine is conducive to spirituality through the development of a powerful will. This is spiritual insanity. Common sense is as indispensable in religion as it is in all other

activities of life. The evolution of the Spiritual Ions is carried on in an atmosphere of calm, meditation, and, above all, prayer. Prayer is supremely powerful! *Pray, pray always, and still pray*, should be the motto of him who desires to keep resolutely upon the Path of God.

"Good thoughts, good actions, good will, tolerance, all the attributes of man's higher nature, aid in the development of the Spiritual Ions and in the evolution of the soul.

"In accomplishing the liberation of the Absolute, we bring about our own liberation. The soul in the higher degree of evolution is formed of Spiritual Ions of primitive purity, direct emanations of the sphere of Pure Spirit—in such souls the Absolute Himself dwells!"

The countenance of the Magus was radiant, his whole person seemed luminous,—so transfigured had he become in the deliverance of weighty doctrine. After these last words, he paused, the novices were silent and motionless under the spell of fixed attention.

Gradually the Magus regained his habitual calm; he gazed upon the novices with an ineffable smile.

"Master, master," cried Albert, no longer able to control his enthusiasm, "it seems as if a prophet of the Lord had revealed to us the sacred truths, had described our destiny and our duties. You have shown us the Religion of God—the Absolute in all His grandeur. It is complete, and it forms a universal gospel."

Continuing as if speaking to himself: "But then there is no more need for priests! What part is there left for a priest to play?"

"The priest's place in the plan of humanity," answered Balthazar, "becomes more necessary, serious, and responsible than ever before. The evolution of the soul must begin with the priest, the minister, the rabbi,—the religious director. He must occupy, as it were, the chair of religious philosophy; and, just as the professor of mental and moral philosophy must keep himself in touch with the progress made by the world in the branch that he teaches, so the religious director must be conversant with, at least, the broad lines of scientific and philosophic progress. The priest should be the most erudite member of the community in which he dwells, then he may speak authoritatively to young graduates from the universities, whose minds are nearly always involved in religious and philosophic doubts and questionings. He must be able to interest them in the right teachings, and to show them their destiny. Like Brahmanism, which has teachings and consolations for every grade of intellect and faith, the priest, minister, or professor of divinity, must be able to give to each soul according to its need. Be it ignorant or learned, the soul must be supplied from the vast fund of cosmogonic philosophy which the priest must possess."

"In personal character, a priest, being the superior of his flock in learning, should also lead them in charity and tolerance, especially towards other re-

ligions. Each religion has its points of truth, and modern conditions show that, in some future day, however distant, all religions may be made one.

"The churches of to-day will still be used. No man, however advanced on the path of evolution, can afford to shut himself off from religious association with other men. He needs to frequent churches or temples, to assist at religious exercises, to pray under a consecrated roof. The sacred music, the solemn organ-notes, the impressive ceremonials, all reach the heart and set it in vibration, bringing it warmth and joy; profound emotion is created, and without a deep feeling, religion is of little value.

"This, Father Albert, is the career that awaits you. There was one thing lacking to your pure and sincere heart in order that you might rightly assume the role of teacher and director of souls, the guide upon the journey to salvation, in order that you might fully understand your mission and its responsibilities. Your European journey gave you the experience you needed. You saw in your travels priests and congregations, existing aimlessly, without profound conviction, religious only in name, using the mantle of religion to cloak their material and political designs. You saw priests and people amusing themselves, playing at religion '*à jouer au bon Dieu!*' — a mockery of the Eternal. In all justice, you must admit, that numberless members of clergy or congregation simply obeyed orders without realizing the futility, sometimes even the blasphemy, of their actions.

"You witnessed the results of this irreligious religion—the heinous opposition it makes to a government elected by the people. The ban of the Eternal is upon it, and its false apostles. The 'Fiat' of the Absolute has been plainly written before men's eyes, in imperishable script, 'Progress, or die'—it is the Law!"

"France, unconsciously, has become the agent of the Eternal! She is the first to inaugurate a régime that will purify religion. She has, unwittingly, shown herself to be the humble servant of God, and, in accumulating the energy necessary to complete the work of purification, she has also accumulated forces which will reinstate her, in the near future, to her former position of prominence. She will show the civilized world, as in the past, her superiority in learning and in sympathy for oppressed nations.

"God will aid her to this end, giving her first internal harmony and prosperity. France is great and generous, and many of her priests will extend sympathy and help to the noble band, rallied under the banner of 'Americanism.'

"I, also, am needed in France—in a few days I shall leave you, my children. My aid, encouragement, and counsel may help many a noble priest, sad at heart, suffering, but already far on the path of evolution. These men, joining forces with the American party, intend to force Rome to progress. And if Rome refuses, they will form an independent Church, upon which will rest the direct benediction of God.

"My absence is temporary. Meanwhile, I leave you to the guidance of the Spirit. Come and go from this house as you may please. But I charge you do not neglect the Sanctuary."

The two novices knelt before him. The Magus rested his hands on their heads and called upon them the solemn benediction of the Lord.

* * * * *

"Farewell, my children," were Balthazar's last words to Albert and Ethel a few days later. "A great destiny awaits you; you shall become leaders of men, you shall show men the way to God. Be faithful to your mission. And—farewell!"

* * * * *

In another volume we shall follow the destinies of Father Albert and Miss McDonald, strongly foreshadowed in the parting words of the Magus Balthazar.

FINIS.

APPENDICE.

FORMS GENERATED BY VIBRATIONS.¹

In the beginning was the word
All things were made by him, and without
him was not anything made that was made.
(*The Gospel according to St. John.*)

Mrs. Watts Hughes² uses an apparatus which she calls *Eidophone*. It is composed mainly of a thin and elastic india rubber plate (B) stretched over a receiver (C) into which a sustained note is transmitted by means of a tube (A) Fig. I.

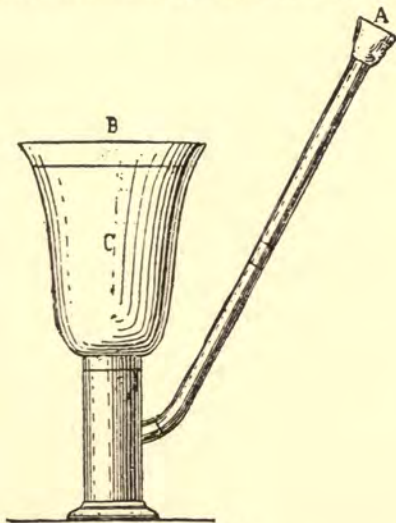


FIG. I.

¹ *Les Sentiments la Musique et le Geste*, by Albert de Rochas, Grenoble, Librarie Dauphinoise France.

² *Voice Figures*, London, Hazell, Watson and Vinez.

Upon the plate substances are placed whose particles are movable, by mutual relation one to another such as sand, powdered lycopodium, and more or less viscous liquids. Next let a sufficiently powerful tone produced by a flute, horn or organ be transmitted into the instrument and regular figures are obtained whose character varies with the substance, the pitch and intensity of the sound used. But with a very clear human voice, sufficiently strong and skillfully handled, the most beautiful results are obtained.

These vibrations may be divided into two great classes:

The first in which one studies the forms produced by the vibrations of sound upon the vibrating plate itself by covering it with various substances which are more or less fluid.

The second in which one studies no longer the forms produced upon the plastic substance that covers the vibrating plate, but the impressions made by these forms upon another rigid plate, likewise provided with a plastic substance, placed in contact with, or very close to the vibrating plate.

FIRST CLASS.

FIGURES OBTAINED UPON A VIBRATING PLATE.

For movable substances to be placed upon the vibrating plate four kinds are used, namely:

For group A a heavy powder;

For group B a light powder;

For group C a liquid;

For group D a more or less thick paste.

When sand (for example) is spread upon a vibrating plate and when appropriate notes are transmitted into the tube by singing, the sand is seen to scatter, leaving the center or centers of motion and accumulating in the nodal lines or lines of repose, thus forming figures on the plate which change their position,

GROUP A—HEAVY POWDER.

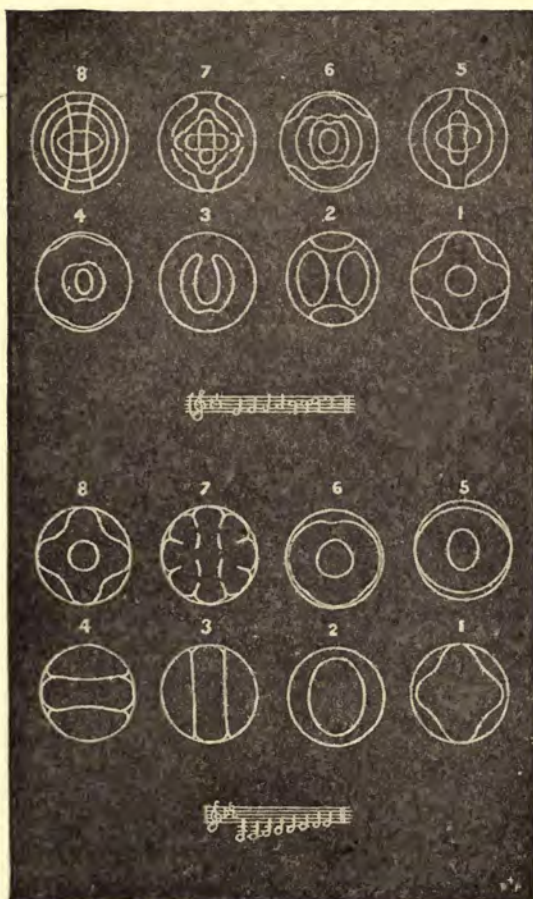


FIG. II.
FIGURES MADE WITH HEAVY POWDER.

APPENDICE
GROUP B—LIGHT POWDER.



FIG. III.
FIGURES MADE WITH LIGHT POWDER.

and whose complexity increases in the same proportion as the pitch of the sound rises. Fig. II represents the figures thus produced by notes of two successive scales in a tone of E flat upon a plate of $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches in diameter.

If instead of a heavy powder, a light powder is used such as powdered lycopodium, and one proceeds in the same manner, the powder will accumulate at the place where the vibration is greatest, leaving the nodal lines (Fig. III) exposed. Faraday has given us the explanation for this phenomenon.



FIG. IV.

FIGURES IN THE FORM OF MARGUERITES MADE WITH
A VISCOUS LIQUID.

If a quantity of colored paste (about the size of a pea) is placed in a little water exactly upon the center of vibration and an appropriate note is sung, the mass will greatly contract at first. But after a moment the sides will begin to vibrate, and if the note is continued to *crescendo* beautiful petals perfectly regular and symmetrical will begin to burst forth presenting the form of marguerites.

Their form becomes more and more perfect in proportion as *crescendos* and *rinforzandos* follow each other in succession.

The larger and thicker the mass of the paste is that constitutes the first little ball, or pea, the lower ought to be the

notes produced; the lowest note having brought forth a marguerite is B flat placed two octaves below that which is inscribed on the staves of the key of G.

If a small quantity of colored paste is placed upon the vibrating plate, *and if water is poured around it on all sides* when an appropriate note is sung the paste can be seen sending forth the petals through the water, as it does in forming marguerites; but these petals are always of the number of three or a multiple of three; hence they are called *forms of pansies*. The notes that produce them are softer than those that form marguerites and their crescendo is more progressive.

Besides figures of marguerites and pansies which form two distinct classes, other figures varying in size have been observed whose petals resemble those of a rose, geranium, chrysanthemum, primrose, etc. These forms depend on the quantity and the degree of consistency of the paste used, and undoubtedly also on the quality of the sounds given out by the voice; but the analysis of these various causes made by observations that are likewise delicate, is very difficult, and it cannot be demanded of the first experimentalist who investigates in this direction.



FIG. V.

FIGURES OBTAINED WITH PLASTER OF PARIS.

One obtains, likewise, forms of another character by using plaster of Paris, in powdered form. This proves the complexity of the phenomenon. (Fig. V.)

SECOND CLASS.

FORMS OF IMPRESSIONS OBTAINED UPON RIGID DISKS PLACED IN CONTACT WITH OR VERY CLOSE TO THE VIBRATING PLATES.

The vibrating plate is coated with a colored paste. Next a rigid disk (e. g. of glass) having the same dimensions as the plate, is likewise covered very uniformly with a fine layer of the same paste. The latter having been placed upon the receiver of the eidophone, is covered with the disk in such a manner that the two coated surfaces adhere very exactly. Next a note is sung into the eidophone; the disk is then separated from the plate. On the two coatings lines of adhesion are then seen such as Fig. VI represents.



FIG. VI.

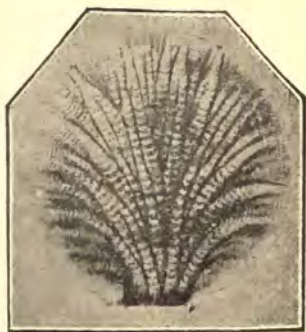


FIG. VII.

If the disk is removed, while a loud note is kept sounding in the eidophone, the result is different. Generally across the lines of adhesion little lines arranged at equal distances one from the other are seen to form (Fig. VII.)

By changing the pitch of the note, the time during which the disk and the plate have been in contact, and finally the



FIG. VIII.

nature of the plastic substance with which these objects have been coated, figures of the same kind are obtained but more complex like those of Figs. VIII.



FIG. VIII.

FIGURES OBTAINED BY IMPRESSION UPON RIGID DISKS
PLACED VERY CLOSE TO VIBRATING PLATES.

When the paste used upon the rigid disk is sufficiently fluid so that an impression can be easily made upon it, and when powerful notes of appropriate pitch are sounded, figures in the form of ferns are produced on this plate (Fig. IX).

With smaller disks and plates, a powerful note of appropriate pitch can produce forms of *trees* (Fig. X).



FIG. IX.



FIG. X.

It is possible to obtain impressions on the disk without placing it in contact with the vibrating plate.

For the purpose of obtaining this result with greater facility, a hand eidophone has been constructed of which Fig. XI gives a sufficiently clear idea.

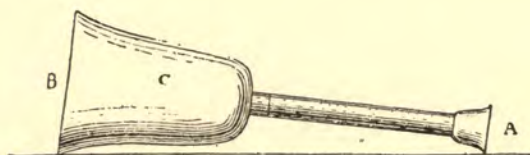


FIG. XI.
HAND EIDOPHONE.

The plate and the disk having been coated as before, the rigid disk (it can be of as large dimensions as desired) is placed upon a horizontal table with its moist surface turned upwards. Next the vibrating plate is fixed upon the receiver of the eidophone,

held by the hand of the person making the experiment. A long continued note is transmitted into the eidophone which is held immovable or allowed to slide very close to the coating of the plate.



FIG. XII.

FIGURE PRODUCED BY HIGH A.

By transmitting various long continued notes into the eidophone whose plate was kept at the same inclination and at the same distance from the disk placed on the table, very strange figures

composed of curved lines are obtained which seem to represent the sonorous waves, their number being proportional to the

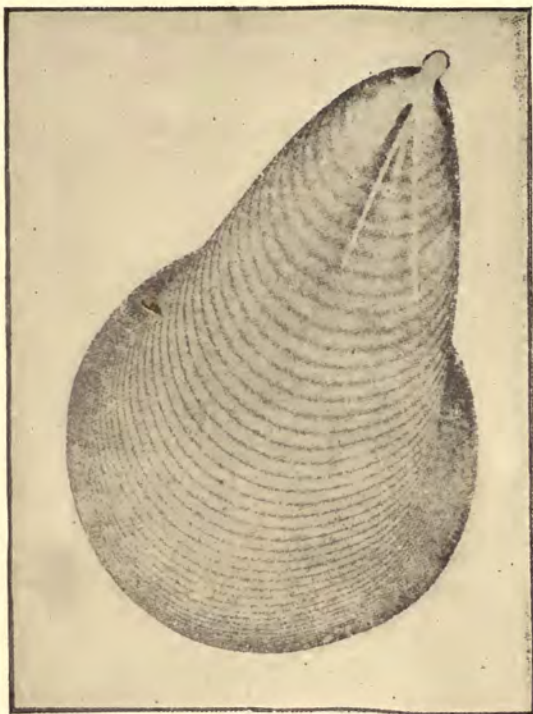


FIG. XIII.

FIGURE PRODUCED BY LOW A.

number of vibrations which correspond to the notes that produce them.

Thus Figs. XII and XIII on the preceding pages produce the figures corresponding to A, written on the staves of the key G and to A an octave below.



FIG. XIV.

By moving the vibrating disk over the various parts of the fixed disk and by varying the notes, the inclination of the plate, the composition of the plastic substance and its degree of density, more and more complicated combinations can be obtained like those produced by figures XIV, XV and XVI.

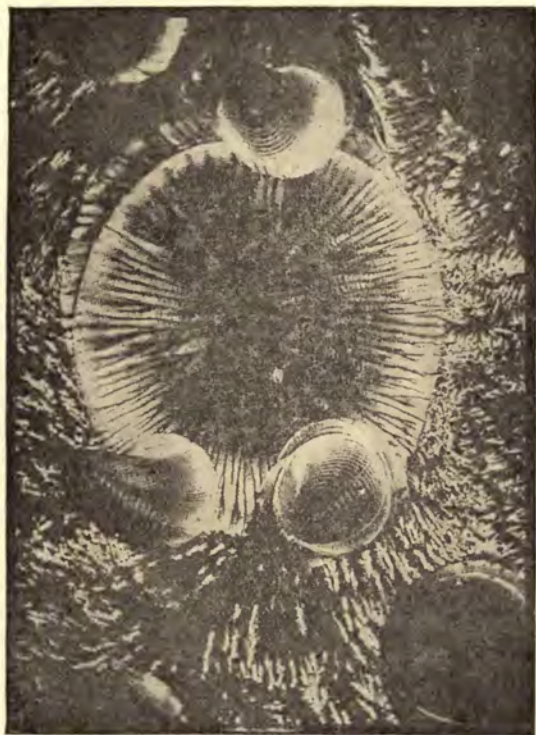


FIG. XV.



FIG. XVI.