THE TWICE-BORN

BY A LATE ASSOCIATE OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

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LONDON
1906

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

To Professor William James

With the best regards of
the Author

June 1906.

TO

SIR OLIVER LODGE, F.R.S., D.Sc., &c.

WHOSE COMPREHENSIVE GRASP OF TRUTH FIRST
LED ME TO REALISE THE ESSENTIAL UNION
BETWEEN SPIRITUAL AND SCIENTIFIC
RESEARCH

THIS SHORT SKETCH IS DEDICATED

WITHOUT PERMISSION BUT WITH SINCERE
ESTEEM AND GRATITUDE

THE TWICE-BORN

CHAPTER I

"HAIL, beauteous Spring!" sang Stella Riches as she came into her boudoir one lovely May morning.

Yes, spring had really come at last, after taking many weary weeks to make up its mind. The winter had been long and dreary, but the Earth was awake now from its nightmare sleep, and the late spring flowers were learning at last to trust in the yearly miracle of Resurrection.

Yet the long, cold winter had found little response in Stella's heart. For *her*, "The winter had passed and the

sound of the turtle was heard in the land" months ago; so far back as last December, when she and Reginald Brooks had made the grand discovery of all the ages—that each was but the half of a most astounding whole, which included Stella + Reginald + an x whose powers and emotions and capacities were still something of an unknown quantity to both the young people in question.

Certainly Stella and Reginald together could solve ideas, and were capable of a power and force of imagination—of an almost creative faculty sometimes—to which both had hitherto been strangers.

Reggie said it was the union of souls. The more prosaic Stella compared it to the wires of an electric battery coming into connection for the first time, and thus generating the current.

Young Brooks had come down to Stella's lovely country home to spend

a few days at Whitsuntide before his fiancée and her doating mother went up to town for the later season.

As Stella came into her pretty boudoir this sunny May morning, Reggie Brooks sprang up from a low chair near the bright little fire with a bow of welcome and an apology for this invasion of her sanctum.

"Dear old Reggie — you know you are as welcome as the flowers," said Stella brightly, looking up at her lover with some pride in his superior inches. Stella Riches gave the impression of a tall woman. Her figure was graceful and well-developed. Her bronze brown hair and bright smile and beautiful violet eyes might have fitted her out as a professional beauty, had she not been saved from such a fate by the unmistakable intelligence lurking behind the said eyes. It was only when she stood

near Reggie Brooks that one realised that his six feet of fine strong English manhood really overshadowed her height by some six or seven inches.

"Do you want to go out, Stella?" said Reggie, casting rather a longing look on the lovely old trees which the May breezes were rocking so gently.

A brilliant blue sky and billowing clouds passing lazily over its surface; the happy birds chattering and congratulating each other on the belated spring morning; all seemed to cry out for some one to join in their apotheosis of merry May — but for once Stella turned deaf ears and blind eyes to their soft wooing.

"Presently, Reggie; would it bore you very much to have a real good talk first? If we go out such a day as this, how can we talk of anything but trees and flowers and exquisite tints of blue

and green with that lawn and that sky before our eyes? And I want you to talk Böehme just now—not butterflies," she added, as a specially lovely brown and gold specimen came in through the open French window.

"Go out, dear, just now—we are busy," she said quaintly, as though speaking to a much-loved, but intruding child.

To Stella Riches, all beasts and birds and insects and flowers had their own personality and seemed part of one big family. Long before St. Francis and his "little brothers and sisters" had been known to her, she had instinctively realised the truth so charmingly accentuated by the Saint whom we all love dearly.

"Now, Reggie, the dear wee thing has gone back to its playfellows, and I want you to listen to this—" Her finger had been marking the place in an old,

small, thin volume which she had brought into the room with her.

"You and I have often talked over our curious psychic experiences — you remember my telling you that I had once seen your exact counterpart in a very real sort of dream, quite two years before we met? You looked so wonderfully happy and joyous and triumphant, and I remember wondering who you were, and *why* you looked so pleased; and I made a note of the dream because it struck me so much at the time, and now we know that it was the evening of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, and you had pulled stroke for Oxford and Oxford had won! And that night you had dined with the crews in London, and there had been great speeches and general glorification and compliments galore all round; and you came and told me about it, you dear

old fellow, though you had never set eyes upon me then, and didn't know that Stella Riches even existed!"

"Told you about it, Stella? how do you mean I told you?"

"Oh well, I mean you came looking so happy and triumphant—I did not know *you*, but I knew that my dream-man had been going through some delightful experience and must have won some sort of victory. How strange it all seems now, doesn't it?"

"Yes indeed—strangely delightful!—but I wish I had seen *you* in the same way before we came together. That would have been the crowning point to the experience."

"But crowning points so seldom come in real life, Reggie—they are bound to come in stories just at the right time and just in the right way—but in real life they often do not come at all—or they come

separated by so many months or even years from the first experience, that half of us have forgotten the earlier occurrence, and fail to trace the buried thread through so many twists and turns in the strands—don't you think so?"

Reggie's thoughts had been far away, in that happy time when he and Stella had first met in London, and the curious sense of recognition that had followed the meeting—but he pulled himself together and gave a murmur of acquiescence to his lady-love.

"Now, Reggie, you are not attending! I know quite well when your wits have gone wool-gathering; you put on such a look of earnest intelligence and deep consideration of my remarks—you are a dear old humbug; but I am going to share my prize with you all the same—chiefly because I cannot understand him alone, and I want to talk things over."

"Understand whom? and who is the *he?*" said Brooks, with a look of comical perplexity.—Stella's mind worked rapidly and she was apt to leave out connecting links.

"Why, Böehme of course—'The Master Mystic,'" reading from the title of the small book in her hand. "Ah yes—here is the passage I want to read to you—

"'As man is spirit, soul, and body, so we find him described in Gen. i. to iii. as existing in three states, first as a *one*, in which the two elements, male and female, are united; secondly as a two, in which these two elements are separated indeed, but dwell in angelic bodies without shame; thirdly as a fallen two, covered with coats of skins, that is, with bodies made like to the beasts which perish.'

"'The change from the first to the second is called a sleep; that from the second to the third is called a death.'

"'Thus the process of recovery involves a like dual action. The spirit must penetrate the sleeping soul and awake it, and the soul and the spirit must then penetrate the dead body and raise it from the dead. So it is said, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." For the action must begin with the spirit awaking the slumbering soul. This is, we must have some true inkling of the need of regeneration before regeneration is attained. Regeneration is the new birth whereby we pass out of death into life.'"

Reggie looked up brightly as Stella finished reading—no need to accuse him of wandering thoughts now!

"Well, Stella, that seems to me pretty clear. The original Adam of the Bible story represents the original creation; 'in God's own image created He him—male and female created He them'—the two

essential elements combined in the one individual. Plato has just the same idea when he speaks of the original Human Being having four arms and four legs, and the two legs and two arms being subsequently cut off, and divided from the other two legs and arms that had originally belonged to it. Plato was only materialising—giving a physical body as it were, to the hidden spiritual truth. But I fancy Plato was describing Böehme's third state; the second state, the angelic body, 'without shame,' would be the 'spiritual body' of St. Paul—the resurrection body of our Lord—that which is sown in corruption—in the third state, that is to say; in corruptible flesh, and raised in incorruption—in the incorruptible resurrection body. That seems quite plain to me; where is your difficulty?"

"Yes; it does seem plain enough as you put it." Stella sometimes marvelled

at the ease with which Reggie made his way through those metaphysical tangles. She had supposed that as a rule the woman had the greater insight into mental problems; but certainly passages which puzzled her in such mystic writings seemed quite clear and simple to her *alter ego*. "But the spiritual body of St. Paul, as you call it, Reggie—do you suppose that to be existing in us now, during our earth life?"

"Yes, of course. I have always felt that Death was the shedding of an outer covering, leaving the inner covering intact. There may, probably must be, other embodiments of the spirit; but this special one is all that we need concern ourselves about just now."

"And you think the coat of skin designates a more grossly material covering than the one spoken of as the spiritual body?"

"Yes, certainly. I suppose our present earth-bodies represent the Fall into matter—the eating of the Tree of good and evil. I have always wondered why it should be good *and* evil, not evil alone. What do you think about that, Stella? Does your book of Böehme extracts help us on that point?"

Stella turned over the leaves hastily. "I cannot see anything about it here, Reggie; but that reminds me that I came to ask a favour as well as to read what puzzled me. You know Mother and I are going up to town next week for the rest of the season, and dear little Mother is so good and patient, but she does get so bored with lectures and addresses and New Thought in all its phases—such silly phases sometimes, I am bound to admit! But on the 14th there is going to be a really good lecture in a private house. Mr. Brodie,

a great friend of mine—oh, how stupid of me to forget! of course you know him well—he was a Don in your Oxford days you told me. Now he has a post at a London college, but the *Alumni* there are liberal enough nowadays to let their staff give lectures in private houses without insisting on anonymous prefixes, as was the case only a few short-years ago. So Mr. Brodie is to give us a drawing-room talk at the Markwells' house in Talbot Square. He is to read a paper first, and then the meeting is open for discussion and questions. That is often the most interesting part of the afternoon. He has called his address 'A Step in Evolution,' and it is sure to be well worth hearing.

"I want to know if you will escort me there, and then Mother need not be on duty. Of course we could not go

anywhere else alone, I suppose; but the Markwells are such old friends. And then Higher Thought people may be cranks, but mercifully they are very seldom in Society with a big S, and therefore won't be scandalised by the fact that a young man and a young woman who have elected to walk through life together should be allowed to go as far as Talbot Square under the same conditions! Mother will be too much relieved to make any difficulties," and Stella turned her bright eyes with an appeal in them to her companion.

Reggie was sufficiently in love to follow wherever Stella beckoned, and in this case he was quite as eager as she could be to hear what his former tutor might have to say on the subject of Evolution.

CHAPTER II

THE Markwells' house in Talbot Square was solid, comfortable, and perhaps a little heavy in its arrangements. Enemies to the Higher Thought were wont to observe cruelly that the house was an echo of the discussions held in it, and the people who gathered there. Use had been consulted before ornamentation, and comfort before either. At the same time it bore no marks of mere luxurious ease. The comfort aimed at was evidently not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Plenty of work to be done and happiness in doing it, were the keynotes of the establishment; and although husband and wife worked side by side in somewhat original paths for the good

of their neighbours, still they did work faithfully, and only devoted an afternoon two or three times in the month to some pleasant and interesting discussion on the advancing Thought of the day, in one of its manifold developments, whether of a purely spiritual or of a more scientific character.

Mr. Brodie, the lecturer on this occasion, had warned his host and hostess that he wished to speak on the subject of his paper from the psycho-scientific point of view. The Markwells themselves and those who attended their meetings had all graduated in the special science of the twentieth century, and knew either experimentally, or through the labours of others, how much pioneer work had already been achieved in this fascinating region. So when Mr. Brodie stood up to read his paper, he was aware that the ground before him was

to some extent prepared for the seed he wished to sow.

He was a man of middle height; broad shoulders, with a hint of the athlete about them—a man still in the early forties, with plentiful brown hair which had a slight wave in it, and a pair of luminous, steadfast dark brown eyes. They looked you through and through, but with no hint of unkindly criticism. Rather, a wide and boundless charity and tolerance, born of extended knowledge, dwelt in their kindly depths.

It was the face of a mystic, but not of a mere dreamer with no capacity for turning dreams into realities.

"I have called my paper for this afternoon, a 'Step in Evolution,'" he said in genial accents, as his eye rested for a moment on Stella and Reggie with a kindly hint of congratulation, for the trio

had not met since the two latter had become engaged.

"Perhaps some of you would be more inclined to call it 'a step in *theoretical* evolution.' But I think we need to be reminded that we are at vastly different stages of school life here—some of us are in the lower forms, others have already reached the sixth form, as we may call it, in this vast Public School of Earth. Therefore the theory of one may be, and often is, the experience of another.

"Some of you in this room may already be aware of the truth of this remark through personal knowledge.

"I wish to speak to you to-day of that body which is enclosed in the physical body of each one of us; which has been called by St. Paul and other Mystics, the spiritual body, but which the advanced science of the twentieth century more accurately designates as the psychic

body. All of us here know something of the writings and experiences of the many pioneers of the last fifty years in this domain of psychical research. Our fellow students in the *Society for Psychical Research* have often called attention to their admirable attitude of suspended judgment in naming their Society thus, instead of calling it more simply the Psychical Research Society, thus assuming that there *is* a Psychical domain that invites Research.

"Well, that may have been a wise and discreet cession to public prejudice twenty years ago, but I think we are all pretty well agreed — (all, I mean, whose prejudices allow of any research at all)—that there *is* an undiscovered country awaiting our exploration, and that the vital question is no longer whether such a country exist, but how and under what most favourable conditions we may penetrate into its forests and jungles? I do

not, however, propose any such daring excursion to-day—I would rather take up the more modest ground staked out as the next step in evolution. Here we have something definite to start from, although it is necessary to recognise from the outset that the very simplest step into the region of our own higher capacities at once lands us in the Psychic Country where mental conditions and mental implements of experiment must of necessity replace the purely mechanical and material instruments of the science of the past.

"But this is no Far-off Country to any one of us—Students or non-Students, we have all lived there since the day of our birth. Some of us, however, like the famous M. Jourdain, 'have talked prose all our lives without knowing it.' Hence the stupid parrot cry of 'one world at a time,' when each one of us is living in

two worlds at a time, whether he resents and ignores the fact or no.

"Our loves and hopes and emotions and ideas all belong to that second world in which we function at the present moment, but the appropriate body belonging to that world of mental experience is in reality the spiritual or psychic body enclosed and sometimes engulfed in our present physical bodies. Our Spirit is the Prisoner in the Dungeon, and with many of us the 'stone walls' *do* make 'the prison' of the Soul, and the thickness of these walls and the heaviness of the gratings prevent our being conscious of that purer and fairer, but quite as real embodiment within, which has its uses and capacities far more finely and exquisitely adjusted than even its physical prison which we appreciate so keenly and truly as a marvel of ingenuity and adaptation.

"But the physical senses of hearing, seeing, touching, &c., which appear to us so marvellous in design, are in reality the prison bars—the *grille* through which alone we can look out upon the physical world. Behind that *grille* is freedom—freedom at any rate as compared with our present limitations—freedom of outlook—of hearing—of touch. The psychic body has also its definite form and its definite organs, but these organs are windows for the spirit and not bars for the prisoner.

"Those in whom some such window has been just set ajar know that these words are true, and have again and again seen that inner body of which I speak—sometimes in bodily presentment—rising out of the outer envelope at the moment when the latter is thrown off.

"The late Dr. Gully had lithographs printed of some very remarkable pictures

drawn by a clairvoyant child of twelve years old. In one of these, the physical body—dead, as we should call it—lay on a couch surrounded by mourning relatives, whilst finest threads were drawn out from the ears, mouth, and nostrils, and these threads formed an ethereal representation of the man, hovering in the air over his physical and discarded embodiment. Between the two, a replica of the umbilical cord was represented, and in a childish cramped hand it was explained that until this cord was broken, the psychic body could not attain perfect freedom, nor desert completely the prison cell in which it had been so long shut up.

"Now this is only one amongst many such cases, and is the more remarkable because the description comes through a child who could not at that age have made, without assistance, a drawing of

so much value even from a technical point of view, and who certainly would not be likely to know about the umbilical cord.

"Doubtless it was this same knowledge which led to the Egyptian custom of burying corn and grain with the physical corpse, in the interest of the spirit still hovering over it.

"Although to most of us this psychic body is a dead letter during our life-time, this is not invariably the case. Probably it has never been invariably the case; but of late years — certainly during the last ten years—some of us have had absolute proof of the existence and functioning of this inner envelope.

"We have experienced the etheric circulation brought through to our outer consciousness under suitable conditions of environment, and many of us realise that the extended vision and extended

powers of hearing are in truth the orderly functioning of the appropriate organs of this inner body, which is so infinitely more sensitive to vibrations of sound and light, even within our own physical range of experience, and whose range of vibratory experience so enormously transcends our own.

"Some, of whom I can only speak tentatively, have penetrated even further than this. To them has been granted the knowledge that this inner body can not only function as we know with regard to finer perceptions of vibrations of sound and light. It can function also with the same superiority of range and intensity in those fields of experience where lies hidden the Key to this world's most sacred mystery, and probably to the secret of all existence. I need not say that I refer to the sacred union, so often terribly abused and misunderstood

when it reaches physical expression, that union which mystics in all ages and in all lands have traced to its divine Fountain, and have there called the union of the Soul with the Source.

"We are familiar enough with the physical reflection of this great Feature of Humanity, but hitherto in our complete ignorance of our present possession of the psychic as well as the physical envelope, it has not struck us that as clairvoyants are persons who can function from the ethereal envelope as regards sight and hearing, so there must be those who can function from this same embodiment with regard to the sacred mysteries of union to which I have already alluded.

"Many amongst us are given to deploring the existence of scientific ignorance and prejudice which have so long barred the gate to knowledge. I would rather see in it the guiding Hand that protects

us from Knowledge however true and beautiful in essence which yet might be harmful to us in our present state of limited existence. The brilliant sunshine which gives life and power to some, may destroy the weakened optic nerve and bring blindness and misery to others.

"And so it is in our present studies—I will not go further into these matters now. I have thrown out to you the suggestions of research and experience which *some* may follow up with advantage.

"To others I would end with a word of warning. I was making the voyage some years ago to Australia, and one of the brightest and merriest of our passengers was a young woman of twenty-five going out to a brother in the Colonies. She joined in all the games on board, and would spend hours over a chess or draught board on deck in the

blaze of sunshine, disdaining hat or any other protection.

"'I love the sunshine after dismal England; how can it hurt any one?' she would say if remonstrated with, and for hours at a time would sit playing games or reading under these conditions.

"Just three weeks out, on the very afternoon of the day when a fancy ball was to be given, I saw this young woman in the Reading-Room on deck, chatting merrily with some companion about the gown she intended to wear. Suddenly she put her head down on the cushion of a couch, and said in an odd, frightened voice, 'I can't see anything—it's all dark—quite dark——'

"Poor girl, three weeks later she was still living in her darkened cabin with every ray of light excluded.

"It turned out that she had always suffered from some deficiency of vision

compared with normal sight, and the ship's doctor said that she of all people should have been shielded from the blazing, and almost tropical glare of the sun, which others might face with impunity.

"I leave this true anecdote for your consideration; the moral is too apparent to need comment.

"Now I shall be glad to answer any questions which some of you may wish to put."

A pause ensued, then a lady rose quietly in her place and remarked that she felt bound to say the lecture had thrown for her a new light on the subject of the Virgin Birth—throwing it *into* rather than *out of* Human Perspective.

All recent attempts to explain it, or to explain it away, seemed to her equally unsatisfactory and unconvincing. Moreover, she had always, in common no doubt with many others, been puzzled

by the insistence upon the genealogy of Joseph as well as of Mary, and by the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of David through relationship with Joseph and not with Mary. Might it not be possible that the Key to the difficulty might some day be found in the direction just indicated by their Lecturer?

Mr. Brodie looked up with keen appreciation of the remark, but when the time came for commenting on the suggestion he merely said that he had listened to it with great interest, and thought it might be considered a legitimate deduction from present facts connected with the psychic body.

"Brodie never would let himself be drawn!" whispered Reggie, as he and Stella got up to accept the invitation to find tea in another room.

Passing his old tutor on the way out,

the latter seized him warmly by the hand.

"So glad to see you again, Brooks, and to see you with Miss Riches. Let me congratulate you both most heartily. Happy people should always do the most work and the best work. We shall look to you two to give us a grand example of this soon, I trust?"

Stella answered frankly for them both, "Thank you so much, Mr. Brodie—we knew you would be pleased. Yes, it will be soon now, I hope. My dear little Mother is getting quite reconciled to losing her child, since Reggie is the Burglar, as she calls him. So my only scruple is removed."

"That is capital," answered Brodie with warm sympathy. "I hope you will let your Burglar break into *my* house some day. No, Miss Stella, I do *not* mean before his imprisonment! I saw

that wicked idea in your laughing eyes. Well, Brooks, when can you come? Shall we say next Sunday evening for a smoke and a talk?"

Reggie accepted with pleasure, and the whole party were soon engaged in discussing the very excellent tea, coffee, and cakes provided by their kind hosts.

CHAPTER III

On the following Sunday evening Reggie Brooks kept his appointment with Mr. Brodie.

The two men found themselves by nine o'clock comfortably seated in the latter's cosy sitting-room, embarked on a conversation which included old Oxford days, as well as the delightful task, for Reggie, of explaining to his old tutor of Brasenose how he and Stella first met and learnt to love each other.

"Well, there was no *falling* in love," said the younger man, in answer to some remark of Brodie's; "we met, and then somehow it never seemed possible to do anything but love each other. Of course it is just the most wonderful thing that

could happen to two Human Beings, and yet it all seemed so natural that Stella and I often say the real miracle would have been that it should *not* happen—when once we had met."

"All the great things of life are natural, my dear fellow—far more natural than the small ones—simply because we were born for the big things; they belong to us in reality; the small things are only the frame-work of the True Picture; but I don't mean by this the small *events*. I begin to think there are *no* small events; each one is so constantly shown to be the link which binds the whole chain of Destiny together."

"Do you believe in Destiny with a big 'D'?"

"Yes, certainly — as I believe in lesson-books; but to my mind there is nothing grim, or terrible, or cruel about it. Our *real* Destiny is the same for all of us

—'To know God and to enjoy Him for ever'; but when men talk of Destiny they limit it to the events of this one life as a rule. I take it, that is what you are asking about just now, as regards my private opinion on the subject?"

Reggie nodded assent, and Brodie continued speaking. "The Destiny of Human events certainly does appear to be fixed and inevitable, but so are the special school-books for each special class in any Public School. You cannot evade the particular book out of which your lesson is to be learnt, but it is more or less within your power to lengthen or to shorten the time required for learning the lesson. That seems to me about the limit of Free Will, even under the most favourable conditions; the time we spend over our lessons, and the spirit in which we attack them. Of course, my dear fellow, I foresee a hundred criticisms on this point—how

far the spirit and the length of study depend on ourselves and how far on antecedent circumstances, heredity, and so forth. All that must be taken into consideration; and yet, broadly speaking, I believe each man has some little area in which he is able to exercise his will, and thus increase his strength. Some men are born country squires, and can hunt four times a week, and thus keep their livers in excellent condition; other men are born city clerks, and can barely manage a spin on a bicycle once a week; others, again, have not even this measure of relaxation and exercise of muscles; but all men can swing their arms and legs about in the most confined space if they are determined to do it; and it is pretty much the same with will power — the feeblest will grows stronger with exercise, precisely as the feeblest muscle develops under like conditions.

"Where my Public School simile really halts is that the whole Form learns from the same books, whereas The Divine Schoolmaster has different lessons for each individual scholar, and the education is immeasurably superior in consequence."

"That reminds me, Brodie, that I wanted to ask you confidentially if you would answer a few questions on the subject of the Psychic Body you were lecturing upon at the Markwells on Tuesday? You must shut me up if I am too curious, but I should like to know one or two things—Stella and I have been talking it over together a good deal. In fact, I promised to try to get a little more light on the subject."

"My dear boy, ask anything you like, and I will do my very best to answer you, so far as lies in my power. At least you may be sure I will answer sincerely; but,

of course, you will understand that one cannot discuss such a question in all its bearings with a mixed audience."

"First, I want to know, if it is not too curious, whether you are personally acquainted with any of these persons who are functioning through the psychic body, as regards the union of which you spoke the other day — do you *know* of any cases where the psychic body has been trained to function in such union to the exclusion of the physical body?"

"Ah, now we come at once to the vexed question of a purely accurate statement. It is difficult enough where material matters are involved. Sometimes it seems almost hopeless in these higher regions of Thought and Fact until some new mental currency has been minted—but I think I can safely answer *yes* to your question. At the same time, I must take exception to your

expression, 'where the psychic body *has been trained.*' Doubtless there must have been training of some kind before any such functioning would be possible, as the seed must go through unknown processes before it pushes out of the ground — but the training has not been *consciously* taking place in the few cases I know. The fact has appeared to be spontaneous, and has become a fact with no antecedent warning. It has been of the nature of what the Roman Catholics would call a 'special grace of God'— but the training and discipline of *Life* that have preceded the event may have been carried on for centuries for aught one knows. At any rate it satisfies my scientific instinct that Evolution should take some such road, and I am fortunate in having been permitted to know at first hand that this purely scientific demand has already been met

in the experience of one or two amongst one's own acquaintances."

"Why do you say your scientific instinct has been satisfied? I should have thought scientists would have been the very first persons to deride and jeer at any such claim?"

"My dear boy, I did not say my scientific acquaintances had been satisfied! I spoke of *my* scientific instinct —that is all I can be responsible for— but the general propositions on which my special views rest would be admitted by every scientist who believes in Evolution. *There must be no gap in the chain, no link wanting, and the transition from one process to another must take place on the same plane of existence.* These requirements are both fulfilled in this recent development.

"The only trouble is that most of the scientists would deny the existence of

the links that bridge over the gap. They would question the very first premiss, and declare that the very idea of a psychic body was all moonshine, let alone any functioning from such a scientific will-o'-the-wisp.

"Certainly they would — of course I only speak of those who have learned something of mental processes through experiment, and therefore are prepared to follow Evolution along the mental spiral; purely physical research is out of court here, but then purely physical research is getting pretty well out of court even in its own domain—we are beginning to find there is no such thing as purely physical, as the word has been understood hitherto. It is being stretched out nowadays like the victim on the Spartan bed, and must be made elastic enough to cover the elastic medium we call Ether for want of a better name,

and invisible rays and radiating centres of Force (whatever that may be in essence), and 'indivisible' atoms now divided and subdivided into electrons and ions, and a whole Cosmos of whirling energies."

"Yes, that is quite true. Even 'purely physical' science is already overlapped by something which fifty years ago would have been denounced as theoretical moonshine. By the way, I came across a very remarkable article in one of the magazines last year—*The Contemporary*, I think it was—treating of the 'Transfiguration of Matter.' It would interest you, and it seemed to me to be so much in line with your ideas the other day that I brought some extracts with me that I made at the time when I had the magazine at hand. The author has evidently got a hint of some evolutionary process which shall some day bridge

over the gap between the flesh and its next embodiment. We look to Death now as the only solvent, but this man's remarks evidently refer to some other less drastic agent. This is what he says—

"'The flesh we are too apt to despise has in it potencies of transformation and transfiguration we little dream of—here on earth it may be developed, if soul development accompanies and assists it, into something essentially and integrally divine. . . . The soul working ever from within may so transfuse and penetrate the outward flesh that it may be gradually transformed into a higher kind of matter.'"[1]

"Yes, that is very interesting. I remember the article, and how much it impressed me. Of course the author

[1] See George Barlow on the "Transfiguration of Matter," *Contemporary Review*, 1904.

here refers to a still later conquest of the evolutionary forces. The *next step* in evolution must be the functioning of a body already enclosed in the flesh garment. Learning to function from that centre, instead of the false centre of our present swaddling clothes, will doubtless in time transfuse and transform the said swaddling clothes into beautiful and appropriate vestments for the indwelling spirit of Man."

"I have just one more extract to read you, Brodie, from a Bishop this time—Dr. Westcott."

"A *Bishop*, John—so that's all right!" quoted Brodie, smiling at Reggie's perplexed face. "My dear boy, you were born too late to quote 'Mrs. Jerningham's Journal.' Never mind! Let us hear the Bishop!"

"'Every change of life which we can observe now, must be from one material

form to another, equally falling under our senses; but such a change may help us to understand how a form, at present sensible, may pass through a great crisis into another which is an expression of the same law of life, though our present senses cannot *naturally* take cognisance of it.'"

"Capital! That puts the whole case into a nutshell. I will match your Bishop by a quotation from the most notable of all the Apostles—

"'And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the *redemption of the body*.' If that is not in line with modern evolution, I don't know what is! Well, Reggie, anything more to ask?" and Brodie gave his pipe a preliminary tapping before putting it away for the night.

"It's too bad to keep you up so late, Brodie—I can see you are dying to go to bed; but one so seldom has the chance of a real talk now that you are such a swell, and so full of engagements, professional and otherwise. I do want to go back for a moment to the beginning of our talk. I understand you to say that you do consider it a practical possibility, even now and here, for some people to function through the psychic body, and this even as regards the union of man and woman?"

"Certainly I consider it possible, because I have known of such cases, where I am absolutely convinced of the *bona fides* and of the good common sense and balance of both husband and wife. But I cannot, of course, say why the conditions necessary should have been found in these special individuals. Nor do I know what in past ages may have gone

to the making of such conditions in the present. Tertiary and Secondary formations of rock may be infants compared with the length of such a process. I only know that the phenomenon has already occurred, also I know that it is still very rare."

Reggie paused for a moment, and then with an air of determination that still hid the real diffidence behind it, went on—"But there is always the possibility of such a thing, between two people who have loved each other very dearly, and, I think, purely, and who had *faith* in the possibility?"

"Yes," answered Brodie gravely, "I think it is possible." Then he put his hand affectionately, and with an impulse of protection, on the younger man's shoulder. "You have asked me a general question, and I have answered it on general grounds and to the best of my

ability; but be careful, my dear boy; don't risk your happiness, and the happiness of one dear to you, for the sake of a scientific experiment."

Reggie looked up reproachfully. "How could you suppose I should be guilty of such crass stupidity? No; it was Stella who made me promise to ask you these things. I suppose our grandmothers would be terribly shocked to know that Stella and I discussed your lecture with all its possible bearings on our own case? It was she who said that *we* might be of the elect in this connection without knowing it, and might be throwing away a grand opportunity, as a savage might throw away a priceless diamond and cling to a bit of coloured glass. I have only one more question to ask. You say you cannot possibly surmise as to special cases where such possibilities might exist? Can you give me any sign

by which we could find out for ourselves? Of course I am not thinking of ascetic negations, but of the full, complete, and more exquisitely attuned vibrations belonging to the Inner body, which in comparison with present physical conditions would be as the priceless diamond compared to the bit of coloured glass. It is to make our union more perfect, not less perfect, that I am asking you these questions."

Brodie knitted his brows and thought seriously for a few minutes, then his face cleared, and he turned round frankly to Reggie Brooks.

"Look here, Brooks, as man to man, I will tell you all I know. It is difficult for me to realise that you have grown to man's estate and to man's responsibilities, having known you so well in the dear old Oxford days. I have no right to withhold the information you demand

from me. It is for you to make use of it or not, as your heart and conscience decide—for you and for her," he added gently. "There are such signs—I spoke the other day of the etheric circulation which is sometimes brought into the consciousness of the individual who has reached a high point in psychic unfoldment. Such an experience, if it occur at all, is more likely to occur when two persons in absolute affinity—tuned to the same pitch of vibration, to put it more scientifically—are brought into close contact. They would then form a battery through which such etheric vibrations could be generated, or rather brought into manifestation, for of course they are working on their own appropriate planes, whether we are conscious of them or not."

"And the results?" Reggie urged in a low voice.

Brodie answered without a moment's hesitation, and in a simple, matter-of-fact way, very soothing to poor Reggie's perturbed mind. He had promised Stella to ask all these questions, but, as has been said already, he was in some ways more sensitive than his fiancée, and perhaps she would have suffered far less had she been able to put her own questions. For Stella was absolutely free from false shame. To her very direct and practical nature, there could be no shame in asking a question where there was no shame in thinking over the subject of the question. To think otherwise would have been in her eyes an insult to her own self-respect, and still more to her respect for Mr. Brodie.

"Of course, the results must be the same as on the physical plane, under similar or possibly somewhat differing conditions. All people do not have

children on the physical plane, but given healthy and normal man and woman, with a healthy and normal affection for each other, and offspring would naturally come in due course. Where the invisible, but not less real, psychic body functions, the children would also be invisible, but not less real, and not even invisible to those amongst us who can already see and hear on the next plane of vibration to our own."

"And would such children have any marked characteristics?"

"Well, of course, they would be conceived under far more favourable conditions, because they would represent the higher faculties and ideas of the parents free from the coarser vibrations of lower physical life. The difference would be of the same nature as the difference between a lovely Beethoven Sonata played by finished musicians and con-

ducted by Richter, and the same Sonata picked out with faltering fingers and heavy touch on a cracked and jangling old schoolroom piano. We are pretty much out of tune down here, you know," added Brodie, with a whimsical smile. "Hamlet was only a type of all Humanity, with his 'Sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh.' To find ourselves in the true psychic is to find the sweet bells once more in harmony."

"From Death to Life—from Death to Life." Why did the words form themselves into a sort of jingling rhyme in Reggie's ears? Suddenly he remembered the Böehme extracts which Stella had read to him one lovely May morning, and their bearing on the present conversation flashed into his mind.

This, then, was the change from the Death to the sleep spoken of by the Great Mystic! "The process of re-

covery which involves a dual action," as Stella's little thin black book had announced — Dual, because spirit and soul together must redeem the "body of death," but in a more special sense a dual action where the chosen man and woman—the Divine Two in One—the Scientific Battery of Positive and Negative Electricities—were involved in the process.

Brodie took up his parable once more as these ideas floated through Reggie's brain.

"And then I must also tell you that these children, conceived and born under such specially favourable conditions, have a great work before them in the Redemption of the Race—or the Evolution of the Race—whichever you choose to call it. Not for long are they allowed to live on the happy and harmonious plane to which they truly belong. In the wonder-

ful Divine Economy they have been appointed at this juncture to help on the struggling Humanity with which, through their parents, they have had a link of connection, so subtle, and yet so strong —it is like a chain of Venetian gold, so slender and delicate to look at that it seems a breath might blow it away, and yet so strong in reality that it can support a heavy weight.

"So these little ones must come into physical incarnation some day through ordinary physical channels; to bear up, each according to his capacity, the heavy weight of our Earth-dragging limitations. But these children of the Sun have taken on no clogging heredity from their earthly parents when this descent into matter occurs. Their heredity is from the higher elements of their True parents, who *whilst yet in the flesh conceived them through these finer conditions.*

So they bring their own joyous and harmonious rates of vibration into the world. They are instruments already in tune in the Great Human Orchestra, which is always struggling to beat its music out. And so, being themselves in perfect tune, they form a standard for others, and can help *them* to catch the true note — and thus by degrees the struggling musicians, who have worked hitherto under such antagonistic and depressing conditions, will find their progress immeasurably hastened and helped.

"In time, also, we are led to expect that this sublimation of matter will reach a point in the conscious experience of the physical Mother where it will be possible for the child of her psychic womb to attach to itself sufficient sublimated matter to respond to its own higher vibrations, and thus eventually come in direct touch with

the outer world, without the present necessity in such cases of a speedy physical incarnation. When such a time arrives, the two worlds, the physical and the psychic, will have found their true note, their common pitch, and the Song of Peace and Goodwill towards men will be no longer a beautiful myth, but a still more beautiful Fact."

Reggie jumped up impetuously, his eyes shining with emotion and joy.

"Good night, old fellow—I shall never forget our talk, nor cease to feel grateful to you for all you have taught me. I shall tell Stella all about it, and she will be just as thankful as I am. It is a glorious thing to look forward to for the Race, even if *we* have no present share in it! What *has* happened to some, may happen to others—will happen to all in time, thank God. But we shall wait a bit and see. I don't

want Stella to have anything but the Best I have to give her, and she will feel the same; because we are bits of each other I think. Anyway, we won't put up with coloured glass until we feel quite convinced that the diamonds are out of our reach."

Reggie stretched out his hand as he said the last words and Brodie grasped it warmly.

"Good-bye and good night, my dearest boy. Sleep over it all and remember night brings counsel—you will wake up to-morrow with all your 'ideas combed out,' as the Americans say, and then you will know just what to say to Miss Riches about it all."

"I shall tell her *everything*," persisted Reggie brightly, as he ran down the four flights of stairs; for the lift-boy had long since gone to a well-earned bed and dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER IV

STELLA RICHES was sitting in the drawing-room of the furnished London house taken by her Mother for the two last months of the season.

Mrs. Riches had gone to a concert at Queen's Hall with a friend who would take her home for tea, and Stella had chosen for once to turn a deaf ear to Tschaikovsky in favour of Reggie Brooks, who was coming presently to give her the result of his long talk with Brodie.

She had given the man-servant strict injunctions that she was not "at home" except to Mr. Brooks, and that tea should be brought up as soon as the latter arrived.

"So you see, Reggie, I have 'stopped

all the earths,' and now we can settle down for a good talk as soon as you have finished your tea," she said brightly, handing a cup to her fiancé as she spoke.

"*My* tea! I like that! How about your tea, Madam?"

"Well, as soon as *we* have finished, then," Stella amended gaily; "I am sure Mr. Brodie will prove more interesting than either your tea or mine—Stephens won't come in to clear the tea-table. I told him we were not to be disturbed. Was it satisfactory—the talk, I mean?" and Stella sat back in her low chair, fixing eager eyes upon Reggie Brooks.

The latter hesitated for a moment. Now that the critical moment had arrived, he rather shrank from repeating the conversation of the previous evening; yet he had promised to do so, and Brodie himself had been quite aware of this. Under the circumstances Stella

had a right to his confidences—without reserve.

"Satisfactory? Yes, I suppose so. Interesting? Most certainly it was—absorbingly interesting," and Reggie proceeded to give Stella a short but comprehensive account of the conversation already noted.

"Well, Reggie, that is just splendid, as an American girl would say. How interesting it will be to find out whether *we* are of the elect, as you call it. If some are already prepared, why not we also?"

"That remains to be seen." It was Reggie's turn now to be prudent in face of Stella's easily aroused enthusiasm—yet Stella had a very level head on her shoulders, and the very fact of this unusual enthusiasm on her part might prove its best justification? Stella was practical, but she was also intuitive.

Why should not her practical grasp of things extend beyond the material questions of what to eat and what to drink, and wherewithal to be clothed?

As this thought filled his mind, he turned frankly to his fiancée.

"I am ready for the experience if you are, Stella—I mean I am quite prepared for what may come to us. If the test of which Brodie spoke should be our test also, well, we can only thank God that we should have been counted worthy of such experience and that we should be so completely of one mind in this matter."

"Now, Reggie, don't talk like an Evangelical parson," was Stella's irreverent response to his remark. "I don't suppose we are a bit more worthy than anybody else, only we have 'got there' somehow or other. What a mercy we have both arrived together!"

"Of course, darling, that is what I mean—I did not mean to cant over any special virtue on our part—but I do think it probably means some very special preparation—but not of necessity during our present School Term."

"That reminds me of our talk over Böehme the other day in Hampshire—don't you think *this* may be the waking up of the dead body and drawing it back into the Soul condition?"

The same idea had struck Reginald when listening to Brodie's conversation the previous evening. Certainly his own mind and Stella's seemed to vibrate together in strange Harmony!

"The same pitch, Reggie?" asked Stella brightly. "I believe you are going to tell me that is exactly what you have been thinking—now, isn't it so?"

"Yes, dear, of course it is—that is no new thing between us, is it? But

how is this thing going to work?—that is what I am thinking of just now. Are we to wait for the Brodie test, as you would call it?—and again, if it should come, what then?"

Reginald Brooks was resourceful enough in daily life, but he had the temperament of the mystic, and in mental questions he was apt to lean upon the judgment and initiative of his fiancée. She was the practical Partner in the Firm, even where psychical matters were concerned.

"What then, Reggie? Why, of course we are not going to wait for anything or anybody, except, of course, for Mother and her convenience and arrangements. But I told you she had quite reconciled herself to the change coming soon, as it must come sometime—in fact, this very morning she said she would feel much happier now 'when it was over.' She says just now she has only half a daughter,

whereas when we are once married she will have her daughter back again and a son as well.—Mother understands and sees a good deal more than one thinks," added Stella, with the oddly affectionate criticism of the Twentieth Century daughter. "She seems somehow to realise that you are not somebody quite apart from her, but the real other half of her own child, and that she will gain the one thing she has missed in life, the relationship of mother and son. I shall be more to her, not less, when you and I marry, Reggie. Of course, every mother and daughter think this is going to be the case. It scarcely ever *is* the case, because so few Halves get sorted out properly, and so few mothers and children really belong to each other.—Children so often seem as if they have got into the wrong house by mistake, or were only visitors at best. Sometimes the parents

are shy of their children—sometimes it is vice versâ.—I wonder if children *do* get sorted out wrong, just like husbands and wives?" she added, with a smile.

"Not sorted out *wrong*, I suppose," answered Reggie quietly; "but I am quite sure some children get into homes that don't rightly belong to them sometimes, just as wives get husbands and husbands get wives who do not really belong to them either. There is no sort of doubt about *that*. Do you know, Stella, it often strikes me that it is just like the new plan that so many people adopt nowadays of sending their children into foreign homes for part of the holidays? A French boy comes over to an English home for the summer or winter holidays, and an English boy replaces him in Paris or elsewhere. They learn to speak each other's language, and far more than this, they learn to be

more tolerant of one another's ideas. Perhaps we are sometimes 'sent to Paris' on the same conditions, and with the same object when we come *here?*"

"Good boy!" said Stella approvingly. "You always make my thoughts clear to me. I muddle away with facts, but they are all untidily knocking about inside my head. What a merciful Providence it was that sent you to tidy things up for me, Reggie!"

"But talking of marriage, Stella, and your mother being quite willing for it to take place very shortly—well you know, darling, I never have had a thought hidden from you since we met, so you won't misunderstand me now nor think that I mean anything but exactly what I say—I wonder if it is quite honest to marry, and have the whole paraphernalia of friends and flowers, and 'Oh! Perfect Love!' &c., &c., when we are still wait-

ing, and in fact *hoping* for the next spiral, as we may call it?"

Stella looked honestly puzzled. "Not quite honest? What *do* you mean, Reggie? What sort of mare's nest have you found in that dear old head of yours?"

"Well, I mean it would be pretending to be married when we are not going to be married," Reggie stammered out bluntly.

"Not going to be married? but, my darling boy, we *are* going to be married just as soon as the plumbers and painters elect to give us leave—the matter is really in *their* hands now."

"But you know what I mean, Stella."

"No, I don't, dear—anyway it isn't what *I* mean—that is to say, if you think we are going to Church and to have wedding presents showered upon us, and call ourselves Mr. and Mrs.

Brooks, and be Stella Riches and Reggie Brooks in reality! We shall not be anything of the kind—you will be yourself + me, and I shall be myself + you —and that will be something quite different from what either of us has ever been before. Dearest Reggie, we are not going to be celibates—we are going to be ever so much more married than other people—not less married! Surely that is what *you* mean as well as what I mean?" and Stella looked up with entire confidence into her lover's face.

Reginald was startled for the moment. He had always unconsciously thought of himself as having deeper intuitions than Stella. This seemed part of the stock-in-trade that he was bringing into the partnership.

Yet here was Stella going straight down into the very essence of a truth, whilst he had taken at first merely the

outside and conventional view of it. Of course she was right, absolutely and entirely right, and he was almost ashamed that she should detect his halting meaning.

"Yes, Stella, I see," he continued humbly. "It was stupid of me not to see as quickly as you do—but somehow I didn't," he added truthfully.

"You see so many things more quickly and truly than I do, Reggie—it is only fair that I should do a little seeing on my own account now and then:—

> "'What matter I or they?
> Mine or another's day?
> So the right word be said
> And Life the sweeter made?'

Only it is not 'another's day,' in our case, it is our own *one* day, whether the sun rise your side or mine. Your side is my side, and my side is yours—that is the real fact of the matter. Now

we have settled up everything beautifully, and I hear Mother just coming upstairs. Don't run away, Reggie, just when she comes in! She will be so disappointed not to have a little chat on her own account and tell us all about the concert."

. . . . . .

Two months later Stella Riches and Reggie Brooks were "made man and wife," as the phrase goes. They were married in the pretty country church close to Stella's Hampshire home, and both husband and wife elected to make the honeymoon a short one in order that Mrs. Riches might not feel too lonely without her only child.

A delightful cottage, which was in reality a very comfortable and well-built house, with rural surroundings, had been arranged for them within half a mile of Stella's old home, and this was to be their

country retreat whenever London with its many interests, and its absorbing work in various directions, should prove too exhausting for mind or body.

Reginald Brooks was an orphan, with ample means of his own, but he had, fortunately for himself, escaped the curse of competency by starting a hobby early in life. Chemistry had always been his favourite amusement, and of later years his most serious pursuit. He had already done some really good work both in Chemistry and Physics, and had found, in the former especially, many curious points of possible contact and many suggestive facts in connection with his psychic studies or research.

"There won't be much left on the Psychic sieve," growled an old Professor one day, to whom he was explaining his desire to sift psychic facts from the chemical point of view. But Reggie had

found quite enough residuum to offer materials for a lifelong investigation, and in adding Physics to his studies he had had the same object in view, and had found deeply interesting matter for synthesis here also.

When they returned from a fortnight's ramble in Normandy, in brilliant health and happiness, Mrs. Riches was more than compensated for her unselfish devotion to Stella's real happiness, and recognised joyfully as time went on that this was no ordinary marriage of good-natured jars and philosophical adjustments, nor the so-called devotion which has its roots in mutual convenience and mutual self-gratification, but that it was one of those rare unions which rouse so little comment, simply because there is nothing to talk about.

No one discusses the devotion of a wife or the long-suffering of a husband where

the union is really perfect. The soldering is so complete that it leaves no trace—there are no rough edges to smooth down or trim away. The selfish absorption in each other, so often at the expense of others, is not seen in such rare cases. The husband and wife are too completely *one* to need constant asseverations of the fact to convince either themselves or their neighbours. Consequently they can turn their thoughts and energies in other directions.

A double life is either the most selfish or the most unselfish thing in the world. In the first case it merely means that two people are setting their backs against the door of life to fight all comers who would question their right to the best of everything within the door. In the second case there are no closed doors, and therefore there is no need for fighting. The double energy is recognised in many

a lonely heart, which is cheered and uplifted as never before, through the atmosphere generated by the true Battery, an atmosphere which the most sorrowful pilgrim can realise belongs to him also *somewhere*—if not here; *some time*—if not now.

It is the atmosphere of Home, and therefore it is familiar to each one of us. But some of us are nearer Home than others. That is all!

CHAPTER V

WELCOME here! welcome here!
Little Spirits ever dear!
Come and join our Happy Band,
Dancing through the Children's Land!

Do not fear! Do not fear!
Lovely Fairies linger here,
Swaying in the pretty flowers,
Resting in their silver bowers.

Shall we tell you whence they come?
Fairies?—to our Happy Home?
They were Dollies once on earth—
Being loved gives fairy birth!

When we left our dear old Toys,
Who could dream of fairy joys?
Or that on this happy plane
All our playthings live again?

Welcome here! Welcome here!
Little Spirits ever dear,
We will show you fairy dells,
And such lovely flower bells!

Shut your eyes and you will find
What you thought of in your mind;
Open them and you shall see
Thoughts take forms for you and me!

Only pretty thoughts we give,
Only pretty thoughts can live!
Come and play! Come and play!
On this happy Welcome-Day!

Welcome here! Welcome here!
Little spirits ever dear,
Come and join our happy band,
Dancing through the Children's Land.

"Now, dear children, sing the last verse once more, all together, and dance your pretty whirl, and then we will go and greet our little visitors."

A sweet-faced woman, clothed in soft, clinging garments of restful green, stood on a slight eminence surrounded by groups of joyous children, dressed some in violet, some in green as seen through the foam of an ocean wave, others again in pink that looked like the blush of a

pearl, and blending all together were one or two in the forget-me-not shades that lurk behind the billowing clouds of a perfect day in Spring.

But all days are perfect here—in the Children's Land!

They looked up at their Teacher with loving eyes, and sang once more the refrain of their childish song.

"Now, children, follow me!" and the Teacher glided away down the purple mountain side followed by her little Band.

It was literal gliding, for the ground seemed to pass swiftly and silently under their feet, and this is the first thing that might have roused a question in any spectator's mind. One such spectator was obviously present.

A young, tired, and rather perplexed looking girl lay resting on a cushion of beautiful pansies. Her light form seemed

scarcely to touch the exquisite flowers, and yet her attitude was one of perfect repose. An older woman sat by her side gently chafing the small hands and passing loving fingers over the tired brow.

"You want to ask me something—what is it?" she whispered gently. Her companion had not spoken, but in the Children's Land speech is not necessary to convey a question. The calm, noble-looking companion of the newly arrived little earth mother used it rather out of consideration for the perplexities of the latter, and to make her feel more at Home.

"You wonder how you came here—just to this special sphere, I mean? It was thought better and happier for you, because of the children, who would make you feel less lonely just at first."

"But my own little child is not here."

The young mother spoke sadly, and almost tearfully. "I never even saw it, but I heard them saying it was strong and healthy, and would live. And then some one came for me, with a grave, stern face, and yet a kindly face too—and we seemed to rise up in the air, over the bed first, and then quite easily we passed through the ceiling of my room and the roof of the house. It was quite as easy as going through an open door. It seemed so odd never to have known that it was so easy before. Somehow I felt that we could always have moved about like that if only we had known." There was a drowsy accent in the childish words, but her companion roused her into full consciousness again by a question: "And then?"

"Oh! then we were out in the dark night; there was no moon, and the stars were hidden by the clouds, and I was

frightened at first, but my Guide told me to fear nothing, that he was there to protect me, and that nothing could harm me. It seemed so strange to be gliding through the air at first, but very soon one felt that it was really quite natural, and that our clumsy walking down below was far more unnatural. And as I thought this, my Guide smiled, and then his face lost all trace of severity, and he said: 'Yes, you are quite right, you are beginning to remember.' I don't know what that meant, but there was no time to think over his words, for we travelled on so quickly; and then I found myself here on this pillow of lovely flowers, with all the little children round me singing their pretty song."

"The song was for you as well as for others—I knew that their singing would not weary or distress you, because we all vibrate in harmony here. There are none

of the jarring discords of the earth surroundings. Even when listening to the most exquisite music on earth, there are always cross-currents of jarring thoughts, and these enter sensitive minds and prevent their enjoying the most heavenly strains to the fullest possible degree.

"I know you are feeling perplexed and sad about your little child whom you have never known — but very soon you will know her, and far more thoroughly than you could have done had you remained with her; you will be her special guardian, I am told, and you will be able to read all that she is thinking about and wishing as she grows older, and then you can guide and help and counsel her as you could never have done had you not come here. —So all things not only work for good, but really *are* good when we look at them on the right side, where the pattern is, not on the wrong side, where we only see

the seams and the breaking off of the threads."

The younger woman looked interested, but before she could make any further comment her companion resumed her speech.

"Now, as you lie quiet there and rest, shall I tell you something more about this lovely bit of land—the Children's Land, as we call it here—and explain to you, if I can, where they have gone just now, and whom they have gone down to welcome?"

"Yes; please tell me. It soothes my heart to hear about other little children coming over here. Is it the *children* who have come over and the poor mothers who are left upon earth? That must be almost saddest of all, I think."

"That happens often, of course, but these fresh visitors have not come quite in that fashion. They are born of

earthly parents, yet they never lived on earth."

"Still-born, you mean?"

"No—not that either. I must try to explain a little, for doubtless you do not know to what I am referring. You must have been almost a child on earth, not more than eighteen years old, I should say? But nowadays upon the Sorrowful Star every one knows something of the meaning of the word Evolution."

The little mother nodded her head in acquiescence.

"Well, the earth planet is just arriving now at a fresh spiral in evolution—they are beginning to understand now that St. Paul, the Apostle of earth life, was very wise and true to science when he said there were two bodies to each individual even on earth. I lived on earth myself, many, many years ago, but in my day we knew nothing of the literal truth of

what he said. Every one supposed that it was to be taken symbolically of the earth body and the heavenly body. But science has come to help the earth men and women now, and science is finding out the wonderful capacities of this inner body whilst still enclosed in the outer flesh—the Body of Death—as St. Paul called it.

"Some of your earth-race are so far advanced in certain directions that they can hear with the ears of this inner body, and see with its eyes, and use its brain, which vibrates directly with other spheres, and through which have come all the inspirations of genius. Genius is the *functioning through the inner brain, and bringing its products into outer consciousness.*

"And now it is beginning to be understood, and coming into practical knowledge, that the inner body is the ideal of

the outer body in other ways also. It can be used not only for seeing further and more ethereally, for hearing more truly and intensely, for receiving higher vibrations of wisdom and perception, but also for realising in a more intense and perfect manner the great mystery of union, the earthly symbol and pledge of the final union of the soul with the source, which some have called Nirvana and others the Beatific Vision. Union consummated through these finer etheric vibrations (peculiar to the inner body) is, under proper conditions, creative. All union when perfect is creative. Two great souls unite in some work for their fellow-creatures. That work is always creative: it results in something which neither could have achieved alone; or two great minds unite in some intellectual research, and again the union is creative. These 'children of the brain'

may seem to emerge from one brain, but that is never really the case. One partner may be invisible, but not less truly is he there, and it is in the act of union that the child thought springs forth. This is the germ of the old Minerva myth. Wisdom springs from union, but that is not extraordinary, since *nothing* exists save under like conditions. All creation presupposes union, for all creation resolved back into its original elements springs from the Divine essence which conceived all action and all existence in ITS OWN IMAGE — THE DIVINE AND ETERNAL DUALITY."

It seemed to strike the speaker that she was speaking rather over the mental calibre of her young companion. She paused, and then said more simply,—

"And so these two dear little children who are coming to us (Stella and Guy, we are to call them, because these are

their earth names, and will be used when they return)—these two little ones are children begotten by earthly parents who are at last awake to the capacities of their own inner or spiritual bodies. Such children are thus free from the taint of the flesh—of the body of death—and they emerge in due time on to the psychic plane of life, where they will dwell for a period; but they have duties as well as privileges. Dear children! their time here will not be very long. It is well this should be so. Otherwise the wrench would be too great when they have to return to earth. This return will be through the ordinary methods of generation, for the bridge between the physical and the next higher stage was crossed in their *first* conception, and they will enter earth life free from any undesirable heredity or influences from earthly parentage. This latter can have

no power over the Twice-born. The true heredity of each one of us is from GOD our Father; but, even under the most favourable conditions, the soul coming into expression for the first time takes on some influence from the flesh in which it has been conceived and cradled.

"But the Twice-born have experienced their true conception under these finer and more etheric vibrations, as I have explained, and they guard *this* heritage intact. The outer covering alone will come to them through their foster parents, who will be chosen with much thought and care when the time comes for their earthly mission of Peace and Goodwill to begin."

As she finished speaking, the happy voices of many children were once more heard ascending the hills, which lay like a billowing sea of soft brown,

green, and purple velvet shades on every side.

They were still singing their little welcome-song, and in the midst of the group were the two new children whom they had gone to greet.

As they approached, the elder woman rose up swiftly, and the group fell silently apart as she clasped the new-comers in her arms. "My darlings! my darlings! Stella and Reggie's dear, dear little children! How I have longed and watched for your coming! I am your great-great-grandmother, darlings. I begged so hard to be allowed to come here to welcome you both, and at last my prayer was granted."

The two children looked up in amazement, half-startled by the fervour of their welcome. Guy's dark-brown eyes, and Stella's dark-blue ones, were full of wonder and delight, but without a trace of fear or question in them.

They looked so tiny and defenceless, and yet each seemed to radiate out a latent strength and confidence that not even the children who surrounded them so lovingly, had ever yet experienced.

As the little earth-mother looked at them from her flowery couch, she could quite understand what her companion had meant when she described them as being born under happier auspices than ordinary earth children—yes! even than her own little darling, who was never long absent from the loving Mother Thoughts.

CHAPTER VI

NEARLY ten years have passed since Reginald and Stella Brooks plighted their troth in the little country church at Merscombe.

The neighbours have ceased to remark upon their look of radiant youth and happiness, and to wonder from what secret spring of Rejuvenescence it may be drawn.

They are always spoken of as the "young couple," even after ten years of married life.

The most crabbed old lady in the county has found nothing worse to say of them than that it is perfectly ridiculous for old married people to go about looking like a boy and girl, and

if any one is bold enough to suggest that after all their *united* ages are considerably below the limit of the Psalmist, she can only repeat with an air of conviction: "Well, at any rate, nobody has a right to look so happy in *this* sort of a world. It is quite as indecent as it would be to laugh at a funeral."

Yet happiness has brought no lack of sympathy into the lives of our "young couple," and most people declare that it does them good even to look at Stella and Reggie's happy faces. Every one —even the crabbed old lady—is forced to allow that no two people were ever less self-absorbed, or more determined that all should have a share in any blessings, material or spiritual, which they themselves possess.

Stella's mother died two years ago, happy and content to leave her only child in such loving hands, and since

that time the husband and wife have migrated from their pretty home to the house which is even dearer to Reggie, as having been the birthplace of his wife.

The larger estate means, of course, added responsibilities as a landowner, and he cannot now spend as much time as of old over his beloved studies. He has fortunately collected, during the more irresponsible years of life, enough material to aid him now in giving literary form to some of his favourite speculations, and the peace and quiet of the country make the best atmosphere for writing, combined as it is with frequent short visits to London when any special books have to be consulted.

He had just returned from one of these excursions when we resume the record of their lives. It was a cool evening after a hot and rather breathless day in July. Stella had been pitying "poor

Reggie, all day long stuffed up in the British Museum," and had even experienced some vicarious share in his sufferings; for the two were so tuned up to the same note (as is often the case between happily married people) that the physical, as well as mental feelings, of the one were constantly conveyed to the other.

She had come out now to enjoy the cool of the evening, and was expecting to hear at any moment the wheels of the dogcart. The horse's feet struck sharp and clear on the gravel—a light step in the Hall—the usual bright, cheery cry for "Stella!" and in two minutes he was there, giving her a loving kiss, and declaring that it was worth while to have grubbed and groped amongst British Museum MSS. for the sheer pleasure of contrast in getting home again.

"But what have you been doing to yourself, little woman?" he added anxiously; "you look a wee bit worried—has anything happened since I left?"

"No, Reggie; nothing at all except the usual village tragedies—old Wilson has lost a cow, poor old fellow; and Mrs. Latter has had twins."

"Poor woman! how are they getting on?" It would not have struck Reggie Brooks to add "Do you know?" for he was perfectly certain Stella had already taken the worries of the Latter family on to her own shoulders in some form or other.

"Splendidly," Stella replied, in answer to his question; "I have just been down there again. Mrs. Latter is quite bright and cheerful, and the twins—they are a week old now—are such dear little mites—a boy and girl, Reggie," and there was a somewhat plaintive note in Stella's voice as she said this.

Her husband came round to her as she snipped off some roses for the dinner-table, and put his arm over her shoulder, turning her face gently so that he could see the hidden eyes.

"Not grieving, Stella darling? You poor little thing—I am *so* sorry—but we cannot have everything, can we, dear? And we have so much—so much more than other people that sometimes I feel quite ashamed of our own good fortune. People envy us our youth and health and the good things of this world—but they never dream of what makes the real grace and glory of our life. Surely you have no regrets, dear one?"

"Oh no, Reggie—a thousand times no! I could not be so stupid and so ungrateful. It is only that sometimes it seems long to wait—till our cup of joy is quite full, I mean."

"Until we have found them, Stella?"

"Yes, dear, of course I mean that."

"But you have no real doubt in your mind that the day will come? And meanwhile we know they are well and happy, and we possess each other in the most beautiful of all possible bonds."

"Yes, I know, Reggie — I do feel all that at the back of my mind. I suppose that it is only sometimes—when I see these dear little children in their mother's arms, well, then I wonder how much longer my own arms must remain empty."

"But you know that we are always with them at night, Stella?—surely you don't doubt that?"

"No, Reggie, I don't doubt really, but there are moments when I feel that I am a thorough-paced materialist, and am not a bit worthy to be your wife or the mother of our darlings," and Stella brushed away a few tears in determined

fashion, adding, "It's all over now, Reggie —really and truly. I am quite happy again and content to be patient—and I want to tell you of another wonderful dream I had about them whilst you were away—you know I said there was something to tell you, too long to write about? Come up now, and I can send Martin off downstairs to arrange these flowers whilst I come into your dressing-room and tell you my dream. It has only just struck seven, and we don't dine till eight o'clock, as usual."

Sitting in a comfortable chair in her husband's dressing-room, Stella began at once to tell her dream.

"It was the night of the day after you went away, Reggie—that was the day Mrs. Latter had the twins, by-the-bye. She wanted me to be with her, and of course I went down at once with the eldest girl, who came up to tell me

about it. But the doctor was there when I arrived, and the poor woman was over her trouble, and he said she must be left in peace to rest; so I came home soon afterwards and said I would go down again next morning. Well, that night I had such a vivid dream, and I dreamt that we had found our little darlings, and that they were happy and well cared for, but so glad to find us at last—and they knew us at once, Reggie, in some mysterious way. You know how easily all these things seem to come about in dreams! Little Guy had such lovely dark brown eyes and hair, just like a rather dark chestnut with the sun shining on it, and Stella—my little Stella—had dark blue eyes and quite golden hair. They were so happy and joyous, and yet they seemed quite grown up, as we should call it—I mean they *looked* like children, but they talked like grown

up people, and yet—like children also. I can't explain it, but there was not the least little bit of priggishness about them —most children *would* be prigs if they were what I describe, but it seemed absolutely natural to Guy and Stella—they could not possibly have been any other sort of children. That is what one felt in the dream, and the odd thing was that all this did not astonish me in the least. But then nothing ever does astonish one in dreams," she added, with a little smile of amusement.

"But the house, Reggie—that was so quaint—I should know it again anywhere. It stood rather high up, just below some downs and overlooking the sea, and there was a beautiful belt of trees enclosing it on three sides and shielding it from the bleak winds. It was quite open towards the sea, and looked like a dear old-fashioned Manor House of

perhaps 100 or 150 years old. There were some grass fields beyond the house on either side, and the sea was as bright a blue as it is on the Riviera—yet the place was not a bit like Torquay, and that is the only Riviera sea that I know in England; but it was not Devonshire, I am quite sure of that, and the downs beyond the house were not in the least like the Devonshire Tors, or Dartmoor, or any of those places. It was far more bare and bleak, and no rocks about the downs—they were not moors, but just downs, such as you might find near Brighton and the Sussex Coast. But I do *hope* they are not living at Brighton, I do hate the place so much," Stella added frankly. "Dear Mother and I spent a winter there once, and I was never so glad to get away from any place in my life."

"Yes, dear, I know," said Reggie, with

somewhat impatient sympathy. He had heard of the Brighton campaign before, and wanted to know more about the children. "Did you go into the house in your dream?"

"Yes, of course, Reggie; I thought I told you that.—No? Well, this is what happened. I was walking through those grassy fields, along a narrow path in the middle of one, and it led straight up to some iron fencing, and there was the house, just in front of me; and then suddenly *you* were there, but I never saw you coming towards me, and we walked on together till we had almost reached the house, without realising that we were trespassing. You and I were talking about something very interesting, I know, and then I cried out in dismay: 'How rude those people will think us! we shall have to pass right in front of the windows now, and even if we turn back they may

see us and wonder who we are.' There had been an open space between the wire fencing, and we had strolled straight through from the field path without thinking.

"And just then a tall, military looking man came out, and he seemed to take in the situation at once. He insisted on our coming in to rest,—for it seems that we must have walked a long way from somewhere to be there at all—and we went through a pretty hall, hung with old-fashioned pistols, and swords, and assegais, and a few stags' horns; and then we went into a dining-room, where a pretty, fair woman was sitting at lunch, I suppose, and on either side of her a boy and a girl, and I knew at once that they were our children really, and I think somehow the children knew also. Only it all seemed to fade away then—the handsome, military father, and the pretty, faded, fair-haired

mother, and our darlings, and the room, and everything. And then you and I were quite alone in the fields once more, and the air was blowing so fresh and keen from the downs—and then I woke up suddenly, and the quilt had fallen on the floor, and I found that I had left the window too far open, and a gale had sprung up in the night, and the flapping of the blind must have woke me. But was it not queer, Reggie? I wonder if we shall ever see that house? I should know it again in a moment."

"Very queer," said Reggie thoughtfully. "Well, darling, you must be off to dress now. I have heard poor Martin fidgeting about in the next room for the last ten minutes, and giving discreet little coughs now and then. By Jove! it is absolutely ten minutes to eight! Don't be long, Stella; I want to consult you ahout accepting an invitation I found at

my Club this morning. I must send a line before 9.15 P.M. We can talk it over at dinner, and get the answer off in time if one of the stable-boys takes it down to the village."

The invitation in question had come from an old college chum of Reggie Brooks', who had recently returned to England after soldiering a few years in India, and, having come in for a pleasant little fortune from a bachelor uncle, he and his wife had taken a country house on lease in Dorsetshire, not far from Dorchester. Maxwell had never been a very keen soldier, and having no further need of a profession, was inclined to give his agricultural tastes a chance, and see whether he might not beat his sword into a ploughshare with some amount of success. When his wife twitted him with probable failure, he answered with some show of reason,

"Well, it will be a great interest and occupation, and I can afford to lose a bit over it if need be. It won't be so costly as hunting — or even bridge, for that matter."

It was a dull time in the country for anything of a house party, but the Brooks' had been asked in a friendly way, and Maxwell had warned Reggie that they would only find one or two others in the house, "Amongst them a very nice fellow whom I knew when he and his wife and two delightful children were up at Simla. He was on the Governor-General's staff then, and I was Military Secretary to the Governor of the Punjaub, so we were together up there for a whole summer. I was a bachelor then, as you know, and the Palmers were awfully good to me. I was always in and out of their house in those days. They made acquaintance with my wife when she and I were in

town last month, and now I am most anxious that you and Mrs. Brooks should do the same. I need not say what a warm welcome you will both receive from her. She would have written herself, but I did not want to delay this note for fear you should be making other arrangements. When Dora comes back to-morrow from visiting an old aunt in Worcestershire she will write with all due formality to Mrs. Brooks, to whom I should like to send my love.—May I? Send me a line as soon as you can to say we may expect you, and I will see if we cannot get Professor Mainwaring down for a day or two. I know you and he enjoy a chat now and then, and I looked him up last month at his laboratory, and he promised to come and see us before long. I think you know that I married his niece?"

The letter was answered without delay. An acceptance was despatched, and a

week later found Stella and Reggie under the hospitable roof of Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell. Neither had seen their host since his recent marriage, so the Dorsetshire house was quite new to both husband and wife.

"Well, Stella, have you found your dream house yet?" said her husband in bantering tones, as they were going off to sleep the first night amidst their new surroundings.

"No, Reggie," said Stella, with a quiet smile, "but I am not at all sure that I have not found my dream people."

Reggie begged in vain for further enlightenment. "Find it out for yourself, dear old boy—of course, *you* did not have the dream, and I am much too sleepy just now to wake up and tell it you all over again—but surely you must have noticed Mrs. Palmer's fair hair, and that faded look on her face."

"But Anglo-Indian women always get that look; at least, the women of her generation. Nowadays, with golf and bicycles and hockey transported to the tropics, we shall have young women coming back from Colombo and Calcutta as rosy and radiant as many men are."

"All right, Reggie—be as sceptical as you like; only don't forget that I told you when the time comes."

With this oracular sentence on her lips, Stella fell asleep, leaving Reggie to follow her good example.

CHAPTER VII

THE Dorchester week passed very pleasantly. Professor Mainwaring and Reggie had many interesting talks over chemical problems and their possible bearing upon psychic facts, for the Professor was an open-minded man, and quite ready to listen to theories that he was not prepared to endorse. Meanwhile, Mrs. Maxwell and Mrs. Palmer had discovered a mutual link in the fact that the Worcestershire aunt, to whom the former had just been paying a visit, was distantly connected with her guest.

"She must have been my father's first cousin. Cousin Mary, we were always told to call her when we were children, and she came to stay with my

father and mother occasionally. Rather terrible visits they were, too, for us young ones! I don't think Cousin Mary has much idea of managing children, and she always upset the nursery arrangements, I remember, by wanting our Mother to send away the nurse in office during her stay, and bring us all up on some patent method of her own."

Mrs. Maxwell gave an appreciative laugh. "Poor dear Aunt Mary! She is a well-meaning woman, but she might be rather a grim guardian of youth, I can well imagine. Fortunately my sisters and I were never brought in contact with that side of her: she was my Father's sister, and he resembled her too much in character to brook any sort of interference with his own domestic arrangements."

Stella Brooks felt very much at home with her kind little hostess, and even

more so with Mrs. Palmer, whose fragile looks and rather plaintive voice appealed to her motherly instincts. And last, not least, she had made the discovery that the Palmers had two children, a boy and a girl, the former eight years old and the latter about seven.

"Their names are Geoffrey and Sylvia, she tells me, Reggie! How I *should* like to see them! I suppose you think it very foolish of me, but I cannot help wondering and wondering—and you know they *do* live amongst the downs, for Colonel Palmer was telling me so yesterday: they have an old Manor House on a short lease, because there is no knowing when he may have to take up an appointment in India again. He exchanged into the South Staffordshire a year or two ago, and they are bound to go to India before long, he says—and the house is not many miles from

Bexhill and Eastbourne and that part of the Sussex coast."

"I know that, old girl, for we were talking it all over last night in the billiard room. Palmer is a very jolly sort of fellow, and certainly most hospitable. I fancy he is pretty well off, for it seems they came over here in their own motor-car, and he proposes going back in the same way. The chauffeur is to bring the car over on Thursday to be ready for Friday, when we are all leaving, and, by-the-bye, he is very anxious that you and I should return with them for a day or two before going home. What do you say to the plan, Stella? If you want to see the children, here is your chance! We could send Martin and the heavy luggage home by train if you think you could dispense with her services for a few nights? There are only two spare seats, he ex-

plained to me, when we were discussing ways and means."

"But do you think he has consulted Mrs. Palmer? She did not say anything about it yesterday."

"Of course not, my dear child. The plot was only hatched between us last night after the second whisky and soda, and when we had already taken up our candles for by-bye. But he said she would be delighted, as she was always singing your praises to him, and of course she will mention the matter when you next meet her downstairs."

Reggie was a true prophet so far. At luncheon the idea was mooted again, and when the Brooks' frankly accepted the suggestion, Mrs. Palmer showed as much pleasure as seemed compatible with her rather depressing personality.

India had not suited her during her previous sojourn there, and now that the

chance of having to return shortly, after two years in England, loomed ahead, her naturally despondent temperament painted the future in every shade of gloom. Then, too, the children must be considered. Both were too old to return with their parents, and both too young to be sent to school at present.

"Never meet trouble half way, or it is apt to save you even that much of a walk," the good-tempered, bluff Colonel used to say, when these vexed questions arose for discussion. "We have not reached India yet, and who knows what may turn up after all?" But this Micawber-like attitude did not appeal to his wife, and in suggesting that the Brooks couple should pay them a little visit, the Colonel had been as much influenced by the hope that it might cheer up his wife, as by any thought of pleasure for himself.

Friday was a brilliantly fine day; the car had arrived safely on the previous evening, and the *partie carrée* (not including the chauffeur) started off in excellent spirits.

An *al fresco* luncheon had been packed up by their hospitable hostess, and they were to reach Portsmouth, where the whole party broke the journey, in time for a 7 P.M. dinner. The children had had their bread and milk, and were tucked comfortably into bed when the four friends found themselves in the hotel dining-room discussing an excellent dinner, "as hungry as hunters."

Next day proved equally fortunate in weather and equally uneventful, which is also generally fortunate where motors are concerned.

As they sped over the last mile or two of their journey, and a sudden turn in the road disclosed their goal—a pretty,

old-fashioned Manor House, standing high above the road and under the sloping downs—Stella clutched her husband's arm and whispered excitedly, "Look, Reggie, look!" Colonel Palmer turned quickly towards her, hearing the whisper at his back. "What is the matter, Mrs. Brooks? Nothing wrong, I hope! By Jove! I must look out, though—this is rather a sharp turn from the road into our drive. It's all right, Brooks, don't let your wife be nervous!" The last words were spoken as the car was guided cleverly and safely into the long drive that skirted round the back of the building, leaving the front of the house in undisturbed possession of the grass fields and flowery meadows that Stella had described so graphically in her account of the dream.

Reggie remembered this, and knew that it was excitement and not nervous-

ness that had made his wife whisper the words that the Colonel had naturally misunderstood.

As the car drove up to the door two young children ran out to welcome their parents, and were soon clasped in the Mother's arms. Evidently she was very fond of her children, and they kissed her in a gentle, protecting way that seemed rather strange in such young things.

Reggie remarked upon it to his wife later, and was surprised to see tears in her eyes as she answered him. "Of course, Reggie, they would not be just like ordinary children. Oh, *can't* you understand even now? The same house, and the same trees, and the downs, and now the same children. Surely you noticed Geoffrey's lovely chestnut curls, and Sylvia's dark blue eyes and golden hair. It as all just as I saw it in the

dream—they are *not* Geoffrey and Sylvia at all—they are our own little Stella and Guy."

"Hush, darling!" said Reggie soothingly. As a matter of fact he had noticed the coincidence, but had feared to say so to his wife, lest it should be too much for her self-control.

At this moment there was a timid knock at the door, and when it was opened two little heads looked in rather timidly.

"Sylvia and I asked if we might come and show you the way downstairs, and Mama said we might." Geoffrey was the spokesman, but Sylvia's little hand was giving him an encouraging squeeze all the time.

"How thankful I am they don't call her Mother!" passed through Stella's mind, as she left the room with one little hand clasped in her own on either side,

and Reggie bringing up the rear. In this order they reached the drawing-room, where Mrs. Palmer was already sitting, dressed for dinner, and evidently somewhat tired from the long day in the strong sea air.

"I do hope the children have not worried you, Mrs. Brooks," she said, in her plaintive voice, as all four entered together. "They were so very anxious to be allowed to bring you down, and I did not like to refuse—but I stipulated that they should not hurry or disturb you. I hope, children, you remembered your promise."

The two looked up quite brightly, but with some evident surprise. Sylvia was silent, but Geoffrey said laughingly, "You funny little Mama! you did not really think Sylvia and I should do anything we had promised not to do?"

There was no suspicion of the bud-

ding prig in the boy's words, but a disinterested spectator would have been struck by the curious detachment in his manner. It was quite respectful and very affectionate, but "Sylvia and I" seemed to have some tie in common not shared by their parents, nor even altogether by the visitors of their parents. Yet the children were curiously free from any timidity with Stella or her husband. Sylvia slipped her little hand into Reggie's, as she stood quietly by his side, and Geoffrey brought his favourite puppy, a dear little ball of fluff, to show Stella, and placed it confidingly on her knee, not doubting that she would love and admire it as much as he did. It all seemed so natural, so much more like a continuation of relationships already existing than the forming of any new ones, that visitors and children alike seemed quite startled when Mrs. Palmer

said rather sharply, "Now, children, run off to bed! You were only to stay up half-an-hour later to-night, you know, in honour of our return. And I am sure Mr. and Mrs. Brooks have had enough of you."

There seemed to be no reason why either Reggie or Stella should give the usual polite disclaimer to this speech. Not a shade of hurt feeling lurked in the sensitive little faces of the children—not a hint of resentment! They kissed their father warmly, threw their arms in the same curiously protecting way round their mother's neck, and then turned quite happily and frankly to the two guests. It was Sylvia's little childish accents that made themselves heard now for almost the first time. "Mama is afraid of our tiring you, you see," she said quaintly, "but Geoffrey and I know you are not tired. We love you very

much, and you and he (with a nod in Reggie's direction) love us too. We have been waiting for you ever so long, and we knew you would come some day soon. Geoffrey dreamt it last night."

"Now be off, little chatterbox!" said Colonel Palmer genially. "Time for all good little people, &c., &c. God bless my soul! one never thinks of them as good little people, though! I haven't heard Sylvia talk so much in all her life—she is a quiet little mouse. I didn't catch what she was telling you about her dream—or Geoff's dream, was it?"

"Dinner was announced ten minutes ago, Edmund."

The fractious accents came from his wife, who added rather anxiously: "I am afraid the children are getting queer ideas in their heads and reading too much, but it is difficult to know how to manage them. They seem so well able

to manage themselves always, and I must say they are very good and don't worry visitors as a rule. I can't think what makes them so anxious to be with you and your husband, Mrs. Brooks! They are not fanciful generally in that way."

To Stella it seemed a blessed fancy—only she called it a blessed fact!

. . . . . .

The three days passed for Stella and Reggie in a sort of blissful dream. The children were with them continually, always bright and loving, and seeming to take it as a matter of course that they should be allowed to show their Mother's visitors everything of interest about the house and grounds. Colonel Palmer, of course, generally accompanied his guests, but Mrs. Palmer frankly acknowledged that she was not equal to standing about in the stable-yard or ad-

miring the poultry and pigs indefinitely, and being taken round to see rabbits and guinea-pigs by the delighted children. So she lay on the sofa quietly during their absence, on the morning after the drive from Dorchester. Her husband soon looked in, drawing a breath of relief as his eyes fell on the shaded couch.

"Phew! It's hot to-day, though!—even in the shade of the trees; and how Brooks and his wife and those little beggars can stand it, *I* don't know! There they are, as happy as kings, and just like four children playing about with each other. I left Geoff riding on Brooks' shoulder, and Sylvia telling Mrs. Brooks a fairy tale under the trees. We have done the horses and the pigs and the poultry and the pets—three p's running—and they seemed so confoundedly happy together that I thought

I might make tracks and do a bit of writing—no, not here, dear," as his wife half rose from her sofa. "I will go into my own den and have a smoke there, and see about answering that letter of Powell's. There has been some question of my making an exchange of battalions with him, but I don't think he is very keen. And after all, India means better pay, and in a few years now I shall get my pension if I stick to it. We have to think of the little kids as well as ourselves, and it may make a deal of difference to them some day if their old Dad sticks to his job, and retires with a K.C.B. perhaps, who knows? It's all on the cards, and there is always the chance of a scrimmage over there, east or west."

Mrs. Palmer gave a melancholy sigh. Sometimes the very breeziness of her husband's moods seemed to increase her

depression. It was almost in Cassandra tones of gloom that she said as he left her now, "Well, Edmund, '*che sara sara*'—I wish you could have arranged the exchange. I don't like the idea of leaving the children behind this time. Somehow I feel as though we should never see them again if we do——"

"Nonsense, Rose—that is sheer morbidity! You really do give way too much to gloomy anticipations. Remember what poor Haweis used to say, 'When a man comes to me and complains of religious depression, in nine cases out of ten, I say to him, "My dear friend, the trouble is not in your soul. It is the digestion that is out of order—don't come to me. Change your cook."' I don't think the cook is to blame in this case. By the way that *chaud-froid* of hers was excellent last night. Don't forget to tell her I said

so; and do for goodness' sake get out a bit more—you can have air without fatigue. Why not let me drive you and the Brooks' over to Milnthorpe this afternoon? We can have tea there, and get back in plenty of time for your snooze before dinner."

"They won't care to go without the children," said Mrs. Palmer, in almost tragic accents.

"Then let the children come by all means. It will do the little kiddies good. We can easily make room for them between us. It is not like having a stuck-up lady's-maid to accommodate. Couldn't have asked Brooks to take *her* on his knee." And the Colonel laughed heartily as a vision of the prim and proper Martin crossed his mind's eye.

Two days later Stella and her husband returned home, but not before they had

extracted a promise from their late hosts that, all being well, the same party should gather together for Christmas in the Hampshire home.

Stella restrained her tears with difficulty when it came to the last good-bye. Even the bright faces of the children were overcast as Sylvia's little timid hand stole into Stella's at the hall door, whilst Reggie called out cheerfully, "Good-bye, chicks! we shall soon meet again. Papa and Mama have promised to come and see us and bring you with them very soon."

Safe in the railway carriage at last, and alone, Stella no longer restrained her tears.

"I can't help it, Reggie. I *did* try not to let Mrs. Palmer see how much I felt the wrench of parting with them. Poor woman! I can see that she is a little jealous about them, and it is quite

natural. Of course she does not understand, and it must seem rather strange that they should be so much more at home with us than with their own parents. And yet how charming they are to the Palmers! No children could be more dutiful and affectionate. I do feel so proud of them! Don't you, Reggie?"

CHAPTER VIII

It was the day after Christmas at Merscombe Hall.

The Palmers and their children had arrived a day or two before Christmas Day; Mrs. Palmer greatly perturbed because the South Staffordshire were already practically under orders for India, and her husband's exchange of battalions not yet effected.

"The Powell business fell through after all—some one else had been nibbling, but I don't fancy it will come to anything. I am to have a wire by Tuesday at latest. Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk. If we have to go, I am not at all sure it won't do Rose more good than harm to have a thorough

change of scene. What worries us most is about the children. That tiresome old cousin of hers—Mrs. Maxwell's aunt, by-the-bye — seems the only available home for them for the next year or two anyway, and I believe she has made some offer of the kind. Wants to try some patent method with them, I suppose. Rose always says she was a great hand at educational experiments. I don't half like the idea, neither does my wife really, although she is too loyal to her own family to say so. But nothing has been settled yet. If this new man fails me also, we must harden our hearts and set about arranging something for the poor little kids. Our lease has six months longer to run, and we shall sail in March if we go at all. I had a passing thought of getting some friends to use the house and make a home for the children down there just at first.

But perhaps it is better for them to make the break with the old life at once."

The Colonel did not often commit himself to so long a speech, and even his optimistic view of things seemed a little shaken by his perplexities.

"Why not let *us* have them?" said his companion eagerly. He and young Brooks were discussing the matter in the smoking-room after the ladies had gone to bed.

"Stella would love to have them, and so should I. And you know you could trust us to do the very best we could for them? Certainly they would not miss any love and care that we could give them."

"I know that, old fellow. It is most awfully kind of you and Mrs. Brooks—for of course you have consulted her about it already?"

"Oh, dear me, yes!" interpolated Reggie, rather naïvely. "We have talked it over many times when speaking of the chance of your having to leave them."

There was a shadow of anxious thought in the Colonel's usually bright and careless eyes.

"You see, Brooks, this is just how things stand. Rose is awfully fond of the kids, though I sometimes think she is puzzled by them—they are so happy together—awfully affectionate little beggars so far as we are concerned, but they always seem so satisfied and contented with one another. Rose is just about 'as good as they make them,' you know, but she is a wee bit jealous, like most of her sex—or ours also for that matter. The tact those children show is something marvellous, and yet I can see she sometimes resents their being so inde-

pendent of any companionship but their own. There are some nice children in the neighbourhood, and Geoff and Sylvia are great favourites everywhere, and full of fun too, but they never seem really to *need* other children in order to amuse themselves. Then, again, they are always good when visitors come—no whining or trying to get indulgences at second hand, or worrying grown-up people, as so many spoilt children do—I must say *that* for them, although I *am* their father. Rose must have had an uncommonly good way with them, or else we are very lucky. But you see, my dear fellow, that all this made it the more remarkable when they both took such an uncommon fancy to you two, and showed it so unmistakably—and the fact is—well, you understand. I think, to tell the honest truth, the wife is a little bit jealous of you both. Nothing in the

world would make me happier than to leave them in Mrs. Brooks' charge, but I am afraid Rose might worry over it, and feel that she would never be the same to them again."

"I see," said Reggie slowly. He was greatly disappointed, and dreaded telling Stella the result of his talk with Colonel Palmer.

"Well, the offer stands open anyway—remember that! Some day Mrs. Palmer may see things differently. *We* shall not change. Send the children to us any time you like at twenty four hours' notice."

"Thanks, old fellow! I know you mean it," and the men parted with a friendly nod at the top of the stairs leading to their respective bedrooms.

The night after Christmas Day had been appointed for the Christmas Tree, which Stella had spent so many happy

hours in arranging for "her children," as she called them when she and Reggie were quite alone. They had asked some twenty children in the neighbourhood to come over for the festivity, and all were now standing in various attitudes of expectation round the radiantly lighted tree. Pretty little fairies presided over the various branches, and little Geoffrey, looking up, whispered to Sylvia, "Do you remember the fairies, Sylvia, and how we used to play with them? Only these are dead fairies and those were alive."

Sylvia gave a quick little nod of assent, but turned round in doing so, to help a little neighbour who had been told to choose a dolly from the beautiful branches, and whose small mind was distracted between the conflicting charms of a sailor boy in real serge with a crimson tie, and a lovely young lady in pink chiffon, who could open and shut her eyes and squeak

out "Mama" in addition to these charms. Stella noticed also with joy how kindly Geoffrey spent time and patience in helping the younger boys to choose what they would like best, and she saw that both Geoffrey and Sylvia had carefully refrained from taking the prettiest of the various presents, when their turn came in point of age. Most of the other children were younger than themselves, so this meant a good deal of unselfish restraint.

Reggie Brooks was betrayed into some mark of approbation, but felt almost reproached by their look of innocent amazement.

"But it is not kind of us at all! Sylvia and I love to see the little children look so happy, and of course we want them to have what they like best. We should be very *unkind* if we didn't feel like that, shouldn't we, Sylvia?"

Sylvia was too shy to answer, but her

smile showed how fully she endorsed her little brother's statements.

It was a new code of childish ethics to Reggie. Not kind to do certain things, but very unkind *not* to do them. No wonder the Palmers were a little puzzled sometimes by their offspring!

In the midst of the festivities a footman came quietly behind Colonel Palmer and handed him an orange-coloured envelope on a silver tray. One glance, and the Colonel pushed it into his waistcoat pocket as he gaily responded to the appeal of one little maiden to reach down for her some silver apples which "Mrs. Brooks said she might have."

"So you shall, my little maid," he said genially. The die was cast now. The "new man" had elected to stay in England after all, and the Colonel felt a tightening at his throat when he looked at his "little Kiddies," and wondered when they would

all have another Christmas Tree together. Fortunately his wife had not seen the telegram delivered to him, so he would say nothing to spoil the happiness of their evening.

That night, however, she detected some change in his manner, and insisted upon knowing whether he had received any bad news.

"Not bad, Rose—only just what we knew was most likely to happen. Stanley elects to stay at home after all, and *we* have our marching orders."

Then he spoke once more of the offer made by their host and hostess with regard to the children, but Mrs. Palmer put difficulties in the way, as he had anticipated.

Like most fair-haired, gentle little women, she had an iron will in the few matters where she cared enough to exercise it, and her husband at such times was like putty in her hands.

"We could not possibly take advantage of such an offer from comparative strangers," she said gently, but her husband knew the intensity of purpose covered by those gentle accents. He was not prepared to ride rough-shod over her prejudices, however much he might disapprove of them. There could be no possible question which home would be happiest and best for the children in his eyes, but having pointed this out and suggested her "sleeping over the matter," he was not much surprised by her equally gentle decision next morning. "We must thank them very much, Edmund. It is truly kind of them to make such an offer, and I like them both most sincerely. But I should never have a happy moment away from the children. It is bad enough to be going to that detestable country again; but to feel that my children might be forgetting me, and were perfectly

happy without me, that would be infinitely worse than a billet in the N.W. Provinces."

Nothing would move her from this standpoint, and the Colonel knew by previous experience how hopeless the position was unless he were prepared to take it by storm.

And for this he was not prepared. Old Miss Blackiston might not be an ideal guardian, as Mrs. Maxwell had once said, but at least she was a good and honourable woman. She would never be unkind to the children, nor fail in conscientious care of them, and her home was pretty and healthy, and the Worcestershire neighbourhood all that could be desired. And so, when parents and children left Merscombe, Reggie and Stella saw them go with drooping hearts. The children clung to them with an almost agonising affection, and for once seemed too much

absorbed in their own grief to hear the querulous tones of Mrs. Palmer, who told them more than once "to say good-bye once for all, or they should miss their train if the carriage did not start quickly." It was not that the poor children were wilfully disobedient, but they were really stupefied with grief when parting with their much-loved friends. Future plans had not been openly discussed before them, but it was always acknowledged that the little pair seemed to "know things before they happened," so Stella was not at all surprised by their pitiful tones, as they clung to her and Reggie in turn, whispering sadly, "When shall we ever, ever see you again?" And yet when the carriage was passing out of the Merscombe Park gates, and Stella and Reggie had impulsively rushed out by a short cut across the grounds which would intercept it, two little April faces looked

out at them from the open window, and two eager little voices cried out, "Good-bye dear, dear Mr. and Mrs. Brooks. We shall meet again—not very long! not very long!"

"Poor little dears! How little they guess!" said Reggie, as he and his wife returned slowly home. But Stella pondered over the words, and felt sure that some meaning lay hidden in them, a meaning which the children themselves would have been puzzled to explain.

CHAPTER IX

SCARCELY six weeks had passed since the happy Christmas gathering at Merscombe before Reggie Brooks and his wife read in their *Times* that the troopship *Serapis* had sailed for Bombay, carrying the Palmers with it to the East. March had been first spoken of, but owing to some fresh arrangements at the War Office, the time of departure had been hastened by nearly a month. In fact, the Colonel and his wife were at Lahore by the first week in March, and he was already contemplating sending Rose up to the Hills as soon as a bungalow could be taken there for the season. The voyage had been a rough one, beginning badly with the Bay of Biscay,

which had hitherto treated them so well. Arrived in Lahore, they found the weather already showing signs of a break. The winter freshness had quite departed, and there was an oppression in the air which could scarcely yet be called heat, but which was most exhausting to an invalid, and very unusual for the time of the year.

"I will tell you what it is, Rose, we must get you up to Dharmsala as soon as possible! This place will be a stew-pan before long; never knew such weather for the third week in March! It is absurd; but there must be an unusual amount of electricity in the air, or something has gone wrong with the Clerk of the Weather. I have a good mind to apply for a few days' leave, 'u. p. a.,' and we will go up together as soon as April comes and look out quarters, and

when the 'leaves' begin I can come up and join you there for a bit."

Rose Palmer was only too glad to accept the suggestion. The heavy oppressive air of the city had tried her strength and spirits very much since she had landed in Bombay, and it seemed as if she would breathe more freely when once away from the dusty cantonments. They were only living in a furnished bungalow *pro tem.*, which had been placed at their disposal by a friendly brother officer until they could find one to suit them. If the Dharmsala plan were carried out, it would be easy for her husband to "chum" with one or two bachelor friends for the summer, and join her later on the Hills for as much leave as he could manage to take. She was fretting after the children also, and was glad of anything to distract her mind.

Driving to the band in the evening, with a tennis club and a bicycle ghymkanah now and then, was not much to fill up the long, lonely days; for Colonel Palmer had a good deal of office work on hand just now. She would feel far less lonely in reality when able to take strolls and drives in the lovely Hill country, and Edmund would soon be able to join her there, for a time at least, if he got early leave.

And so it was arranged for the Colonel to escort his wife to the Hills on April 2nd, and after settling her there, to return to his duties at Lahore.

. . . . .

Meanwhile Geoffrey and Sylvia had begun a new life in the Worcestershire home, and the Brooks' had already received one or two notes from the children describing their new surroundings cheerfully, but saying very little about

their guardian. Still they did not seem to be actually unhappy; but then, as Stella remarked to her husband, they never would be really unhappy so long as they were together. "Thank God for that," she said fervently, too unselfish in her love for them to wish that any shadow of regret should darken their young lives, through missing her.

"Perhaps Solomon would have given the children to me after all!" she said whimsically to her husband one afternoon. "Poor Rose Palmer seems to have wanted them to be just a little unhappy always, whilst she was away! at least I gather that from what the Colonel said to you, Reggie?"

"Poor woman! one must not be too down upon her, Stella. After all, how few people are capable of really unselfish love! They can put themselves to personal inconvenience, but that is a

very small matter after all—some people revel in being uncomfortable—otherwise there would be no American sleeping-cars! but how many can really rejoice in the happiness of the beloved one, if it does not consist in being in their own company? Very few, I am afraid."

"But most parents like their children to 'have a good time' when away from home."

"Ah yes, but not to have such a good time when they are permanently away from home. That is where the crux comes in!"

. . . . .

A week after this conversation all England was ringing with the news of the "terrible Indian earthquake." Lahore a wreck! Dharmsala in ruins! Thousands of natives killed and a whole Ghoorka regiment swept out of existence!

The news reached Reggie and Stella with the evening papers one sunny April day.

A day or two later came mitigated, but sufficiently terrifying accounts of the tragedy. Many buildings in Lahore had suffered, although no Europeans in that city had lost their lives. The beautiful golden temple at Amritsar had also suffered, in common with countless other interesting relics of the great Hindu past.

"Mercifully they have contradicted the report of Europeans killed in Lahore," said Reggie, passing the *Globe* to his wife a day or two after the first news had arrived. "So we know the Palmers are safe, thank GOD."

But the thanksgiving was found to have been premature.

When the corrected list of Europeans crushed to death at Dharmsala was tele-

graphed, Colonel and Mrs. Palmer's names were found amongst the victims, and it was some weeks before a belated letter reached Miss Blackiston, posted from Lahore, and explaining Colonel Palmer's absence from that city with his wife during the fatal first week in April.

A day or two after the receipt of this in England, Mr. and Mrs. Brooks were astonished to receive a lawyer's letter from an unknown firm.

It turned out to be from Messrs. Simpson & Black of Lincoln's Inn Fields, enclosing a letter entrusted to them to be forwarded to Mrs. Brooks of Merscombe Park, Hants. The covering letter was to inform Messrs. Simpson and Black that in the somewhat improbable event of Colonel and Mrs. Palmer not living to return to England "they wished their two children, at present under the care of Miss Blackiston of the Grange,

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, to be transferred to the guardianship and complete control of their esteemed friends, Mr. and Mrs. Brooks, of Merscombe Park, Hants; such guardianship to continue until each child had attained the age of twenty-five, when they would be competent to take life into their own hands. Colonel and Mrs. Palmer trusted, however, that they would continue to have the benefit of the affection and sound advice of said Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Brooks for many years beyond these limits."

Having glanced through the perfunctory epistle in the Colonel's bold, straightforward writing, Stella opened her note, which came from poor Rose Palmer herself.

It was short and very pathetic in its curious suggestion of some coming misfortune.

"LAHORE, *March* 31*st*, 1905.

"MY DEAR MRS. BROOKS,—I always liked you and your husband so much, and I knew how happy my darlings would have been with you; but I am afraid I was very selfish about them! There seemed to be such a curious attraction between you four, and somehow I resented it. I thought they would learn to love you better than their father and myself, and this is why I begged him to arrange for them to go to Worcestershire, and he gave in to my wishes.

"To-morrow we start for the Hills, where he is to leave me for the present, joining me later on; but of course he settles me down there first. You know how he used to laugh and call me Cassandra when I told him of my dread of coming out here again? Well, that dread

has grown stronger since I arrived in this country. It is against all reason, and I never mention it to him now. But it grows and grows from day to day! I should have opposed this scheme for going so early to the Hills, but that I *knew* nothing can really alter Destiny in these matters. If we don't go to the Hills, then something will happen on the Plains. And so I am starting with him to-morrow; but I write as a dying woman might write, although feeling well in health. But I *know* that neither Edmund nor I will ever see England again, although I have no conception as to what is going to happen to prevent this, nor when it will happen. It may come sooner or later, but it will come.

"And so I write to implore you and your husband to take our darling children to your hearts and home when no other is open to them. I have told Edmund

only how much I repent my selfish refusal of your previous offer, and that it would be an enormous relief to my mind if he would write the letter to our lawyers, which will be shown to you with this one. In it he makes all arrangements necessary with regard to the future of Geoff and Sylvia. They will be no burden to you financially, although I know this would have made no difference in your granting my last request.

"God bless them and you and your husband! At last I can feel quite resigned and even happy in knowing how they will be loved and cared for.

"I think it will not be long before my Cassandra prophecies, as Edmund calls them, are fully justified.

"Always with sincere gratitude to you both, your attached friend,

"Rose M. Palmer."

And so, without any effort on Stella's part, the terrible Indian tragedy brought in its wake the solution of a seemingly hopeless problem. She and her husband had often wondered how "the tangled skein could all come right at last!" To see and hear nothing of the children was misery. To invite their letters and encourage their visits seemed a disloyalty to the poor mother in her far-off exile, since they knew her views on the subject so well.

But now that Mrs. Palmer's own hand —alas! for that poor dead hand!—had given them freely and joyfully into Stella's keeping, there was nothing to dim her happiness, except sympathy with the parents, buried in that far-away Hill station.

And yet even that sorrow was to a great extent unnecessary, and Stella recognised this as the moments went

by, and Geoff and Sylvia, though quiet and subdued at first, and talking often of their earth parents with tender sympathy and affection, yet by degrees recovered the health and spirits natural to such young creatures.

Death did not hold the same grim, mysterious meaning for them as it does for most children, or for most grown-up people for that matter!

"I don't think Mama was ever quite happy here," said little Sylvia thoughtfully, sitting on Stella's knee on the lawn where the roses were already beginning to bud. "She had such bad headaches always, and she won't have any headaches now. And I think Papa would not have been really happy without her. He always knew what she wanted better than any one else. He would not have liked her to go alone. She never *did* travel alone, you know!"

The child's grave tones, her assumption that "Mama" was destined to take the journey anyway, and the suggestion that Papa went as an anxious travelling companion, would have caused Stella to smile, if she had not long since realised that her little daughter's quaint way of putting things was generally the true way, minus conventional phrases.

And so the happy life of the quartette still goes on.

Reggie and Stella feel that they are learning far more than they can teach, but the little ones are the last to be conscious of this. They know that "Father and Mother" are very kind, and that life down here is far more happy than ever seemed possible to their dream memories.

For at night they go back to the Children's Land, and sometimes now can bring memories of it through into waking

life. "It is 'sleeping life' really, Mother, down here, only no one seems to know it!"

Stella was helping her little son with his garden when he said this one morning. He and Sylvia often let drop these small pearls of wisdom in the most casual manner.

The children had suggested "Father and Mother" on their own accounts, and Stella fancied they thought it more loyal not to say "Papa and Mama," as they had been taught to call their earth parents.

At tea that same afternoon Sylvia suddenly looked up from her bread and butter, and said earnestly, "Mother, darling, we want to know if you and Father would mind our having new names now that we have come to live with you always?"

Geoffrey's eyes seconded this petition.

"New names, darlings; how do you mean?"

Sylvia looked rather reproachfully at Geoffrey. It was *his* turn to explain things!

"Well, Darling" (Geoff always called his Mother *Darling*, after reading Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's book), "you know what I said this morning about *this* life being the dream? You see, Sylvia and I go into the real life when we go to sleep; and when we were quite little, I suppose we did not remember much about it when we woke up here (I mean, of course, when we went to sleep *there*). But now that we are getting older, somehow we always remember about the lovely Children's Land, as we call it."

"And, Geoff, do tell Mother about *them*," said little Sylvia eagerly.

Geoff evidently understood the cryptic allusion.

"Oh yes, Darling! I was forgetting that part. Do you remember when you and Father first came to see us before dear Papa and Mama went away, and we told you we had been looking for you, and knew we should meet you soon?"

Stella nodded in assent, and Geoffrey continued,—

"Well, that was because we had seen you and Father in Children's Land often and often when we were little mites, and though we could not remember much, we always remembered your two faces; and when you came, we knew you were our dream Father and Mother; no, I mean our real Father and Mother," and a look of distressed perplexity came over poor little Geoff's expressive face, and Sylvia caught the shadow of it. "*This* was the dream life, so of course the other must be the real one; but then how about poor Papa and Mama?"

Reggie had joined the party by this time, and understood the puzzled little faces.

"Never mind, old fellow, get on with your story," he said cheerily. "We can put the puzzle together some other time. Tell us now about the names, and why you want to change them."

"Not to *change* them, Father dear," said Geoff gently. "Of course Sylvia and I would not change the names dear Papa and Mama gave us; but up there, where we go at night— Oh, and I forgot to say, it's so funny, but you and Darling are never there now, not since we came to live with you. What was I going to say? Oh, I remember! We only thought perhaps you would let us *add* two names to our own. Sylvia wants to add Stella to her name—that will be Mother's name too—and I should like to add Guy to mine."

"But why Guy?"

"Well, you see, in Children's Land they always call us Stella and Guy, and so we thought it would be nice to keep the names here too, if you and Father don't really mind."

"Very well, darlings; now run off to the schoolroom, and Mother will come and read to you very soon."

Two happy little faces disappeared from the room, and the husband and wife were left alone.

"Isn't it *wonderful*, Reggie? Everything has fitted in now, down to the very last little bit of the puzzle, and some day when they are older we can tell them, and then they won't worry their poor little heads about the true and the dream-parents any more. I don't think it would seem in the least odd to them. They must know and learn so much in the Children's Land.

That is why things seem so natural to them which puzzle older heads so often. Now I must be off to keep my promise. We are deep in Hans Andersen just now. They don't seem to care much for any of the modern Fairy Tales. Sometimes I think they know more about fairies themselves. But they *love* Hans Andersen, and so do I!"

. . . . . .

That night Stella sat by her two children as usual whilst the nurse went downstairs for her supper—a somewhat protracted festival at times. Mrs. Morris knew how quickly the time passed when her mistress was sitting by the children's beds—watching their slumbers and dreaming castles in the air for their future. What would they do in the world? these two darlings who lay so peacefully sleeping before her, perhaps far away already in their natural sphere of

life? They must have been sent down here for some very special purpose—to help to raise and comfort and encourage their fellow creatures in some way perhaps impossible for those born under less favourable conditions, conceived in less than Four Dimensional Space!

"God bless and keep my Darlings!" murmured the anxious Mother, "and help and strengthen them for their life-work here, and give them happy, happy times of refreshment whenever they are drawn back for Strength and Renewal.

"To charge the battery," she said, smiling to herself, as she thought of how Reggie would probably express the same thought.

Turning round she found him close beside her. He had come in noiselessly to take her off to bed, and she put her finger on her lips as their eyes met. "Morris will be up directly,

Reggie — I cannot leave them till she comes."

At that moment Guy and little Stella, who had been sleeping peacefully, started up in bed and remained sitting there staring into the empty air with bright joyous looks of eager recognition.

"There, Mother darling!—don't you hear? It's the song of the Children's Land!—but I do wish they did not want us so *very* much! You see, Stella and I will be grown up soon, and then we could not be with them anyhow —but they don't seem to understand— they sing that little song every night now, but generally we know nothing about it till the morning. Can't you hear, Mother darling? I think it is you and Father being here to-night that makes it so clear—why, Stella and I can hear every word! Can't we, Stella?"

Again the two children listened eagerly.

But the watching parents could not distinguish the words, though every empty room is full of sound.

Guy looked disappointed until Stella made the happy suggestion that they should repeat the words "verse about"; as their playfellows had disappeared again.

"We did not see them to-night, only heard them, you know," amended little Stella conscientiously, as Guy gave the first verse of the song.

SONG FROM THE CHILDREN'S LAND

"Do not linger! Do not linger!
Come to Children's Land once more!
Every night you join our revels;
Then—you leave our Happy Shore.

Why not stay? we love you dearly,
And you know we've loved you long;
Fairies cannot dance so brightly
If you do not heed our song!

Surely here you must be happy?
Earth to us seems cold and sad;
Leave the dreary Star behind you,
Come where all is bright and glad!

When you come—*then* Father, Mother,
Shall be with you once again;
So you will not miss their Faces
On this happy, peaceful Plane."

Guy had forgotten the bargain and repeated all four verses. Then he paused for breath, and Stella concluded, but *her* verse did not come from the Children's Land; unless indeed it were inspired by the dear great-grannie?

"No! but we are little soldiers;
GOD's great army is our ground;
He has chosen out our quarters,
In His Ranks we must be found!"

The children lay back sleepily and the happy Mother covered them over tenderly.

"Guy and Stella will never desert

their post," she said proudly, as she and her husband left the room hand in hand; for Mrs. Morris had returned as little Stella's rhyme finished, but had shown no surprise at the unusual proceedings.

"Law, mum! don't you worry! They are off again already, I declare! Better children I don't ask — but they are a bit queer sometimes! I suppose their poor dear Pa and Ma never 'ad nothing the matter with their 'eads?" she added, with the true British curiosity of the domestic class.

Stella could hardly speak for laughing as she and Reggie retired to their rooms, but she smothered her feelings nobly until they were both out of earshot.

"Oh, Reggie, don't you see how exactly Mrs. Morris expresses the dear old Philistine British Public?

"'Not a bad sort, but something queer in their 'eads!'"

That is just what people are saying about *us*—only our friends don't drop the 'H!

THE END

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co
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